

Heroes of Great Britain

EPIC & LEGENDARY HEROES SERIES

SELECTED AUTHORS

Heroes of Great Britain

Selected Authors

Libraries of Hope

Heroes of Great Britain
Epic & Legendary Heroes Series

Copyright © 2021 by Libraries of Hope, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher. International rights and foreign translations available only through permission of the publisher.

Cover Image: King Arthur, by Charles Ernest Butler (1903). In public domain, source Wikimedia Commons.

Libraries of Hope, Inc.
Appomattox, Virginia 24522

Website www.librariesofhope.com
Email: librariesofhope@gmail.com

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

King Arthur and His Knights 3

Preface 4

How Arthur Became King 6

The Good Sword Excalibur 17

The Great Feast & What Followed 21

Arthur's Court & the Order of the Round Table 29

King Arthur & the Princess Guinevere 37

The Coming of Gareth 43

The Story of Sir Gareth & Lynette 50

Sir Ivaine 58

Sir Balin 70

Sir Geraint and Enid 77

Arthur and Sir Accalon 83

How Arthur Fought with a Giant 89

How Arthur Fought with Rome 93

The Knight with the Badly Made Coat 99

Sir Lancelot & Sir Brune 103

The Adventure of King Pellenore 112

Sir Lancelot and His Friends 116

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen 124

Sir Lancelot and Elaine 131

The Search for the Holy Grail 141

The Death of Arthur 151

Legends of King Arthur and His Court 157

Preface 158
Introductory 159
The Coming of Arthur 164
Marriage of Arthur and Guinevere 168
Gareth and Lynette 174
Gareth and Lynette 181
Launcelot and Elaine 187
Launcelot and Elaine 195
The Holy Grail 202
Guinevere 220
The Passing of Arthur 225
Stories of King Arthur's Knights 235
Geraint and Enid 237
Lancelot and Elaine 254
Pelleas and Ettarde 263
Gareth and Lynette 272
Sir Galahad and the Sacred Cup 288
The Death of King Arthur 299
The Adventures of Beowulf 305
Introduction 306
Hrothgar and Grendel 317
Beowulf's Voyage 320
Beowulf's Reception 323
Hunferth's Story 328
The Fight with Grendel 332
The Joy at Heorot 336

Feud of the Danes and Frisians 340
Grendel's Mother Avenges Her Son.....343
The Fight with Grendel's Mother 346
Hrothgar Thanks Beowulf for his Help.....352
Beowulf Returns Home.....356
The Fiery Dragon 361
The Fight with the Dragon.....365
The Death of Beowulf.....371
References.....379

Heroes of Great Britain



King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table

King Arthur and His Knights

Preface

This reading-book is designed primarily for pupils of the fifth and sixth grades, although it is believed that those of other grades can read it with profit. The stories have been collected from Sir Thomas Malory's Morte d' Arthur and Tennyson's Idyls of the King. The material taken from the former source has been chosen with the view of presenting strictly suitable reading, and has also at times been slightly altered for the purpose of giving greater unity and continuity to the stories. In the tales taken from the Idyls of the King it has been necessary to omit certain themes and motives, but the characters have been treated in such a way as to preserve; as far as possible, Tennyson's conception of them. It is scarcely necessary to state that the customs and manners described are not those of the sixth century, the time of the Anglo-Saxon invasion, but those of the chivalric age, the period when the stories of Arthur were collected. So far as there has been an attempt to retain the quaintness of style found in the old sources, it has been by means of simple constructions rather than by the use of much archaic diction. The aim of the book is to give children an interest in the literature dealing with the great Celtic legend of King Arthur, and to arouse their admiration for the sturdy national virtues of which the English race has always been proud.



All about him old oaks stood like giant guardians.

How Arthur Became King

Once upon a time, a thousand years before Columbus discovered America, and when Rome was still the greatest city in the world, there lived a brave and beautiful youth whose name was Arthur. His home was in England, near London; and he lived with the good knight Sir Hector, whom he always called father.

They dwelt in a great square castle of gray stone, with a round tower at each corner. It was built about a courtyard, and was surrounded by a moat, across which was a drawbridge that could be raised or lowered. When it was raised the castle was practically a little island and very hard for enemies to attack.

On one side of the moat was a large wood, and here Arthur spent a great deal of his time. He liked to lie under the trees and gaze up at the blue of the sky. All about him old oaks stood like giant guardians watching sturdily over the soil where they had grown for centuries. Arthur could look between the trunks and see rabbits and squirrels whisking about. Sometimes a herd of brown deer with shy dark eyes would pass, holding their graceful heads high in the air; sometimes a flock of pheasants with brilliant plumage rose from the bushes. Again there was no sound except the tapping of a bright-crested woodpecker, and no motion but the fluttering of leaves and the trembling of violets half buried in green moss.

At times, when it was dim and silent in the wood, Arthur would hear bursts of merry laughter, the tinkling of bells, and the jingling of spurs. Then he would know that knights and

ladies were riding down the road which ran beside the trees. Soon the knights would appear on horses, brown, black, and white, with gaily ornamented saddles, and bridles from which hung silver bells. Often the saddles were made of ivory or ebony, set with rubies or emeralds. The knights wore helmets laced with slender gold chains, and coats of mail made of tiny links of steel, so fine and light that all together hardly weighed more than a coat of cloth. Usually the legs of the knights were sheathed in steel armor; and their spurs were steel, or even gold. The ladies sat on horses with long trappings of silk, purple, white, or scarlet, with ornamented saddles and swinging bells. The robes of the ladies were very beautiful, being made of velvet or silk trimmed with ermine. Arthur liked to watch them, flashing by; crimson, and gold, and blue, and rose-colored. Better still, he liked to see the pretty happy faces of the ladies, and hear their gay voices. In those troublous times, however, the roads were so insecure that such companies did not often pass.

Sometimes the knights and ladies came to visit Sir Hector. Then Arthur would hurry from the forest to the castle. Sir Hector would stand on the lowered drawbridge to greet his guests, and would lead them, with many expressions of pleasure, into the courtyard. Then he would take a huge hammer hanging from a post, and beat with it on a table which stood in a corner of the courtyard. Immediately from all parts of the castle the squires and servants would come running to take the horses of the knights and ladies. Sir Hector's wife and daughters would then appear, and with their own hands remove the armor of the knights. They would offer them golden basins of water, and towels for washing, and after that put velvet mantles upon their shoulders. Then the guests would be brought to the supper table.

But Arthur did not spend all his time dreaming in the woods or gazing at knights and ladies. For many hours of the day he practiced feats of arms in the courtyard. It was the

custom in England to train boys of noble birth to be knights. As soon as they were old enough they were taught to ride. Later on, they lived much among the ladies and maidens, learning gentle manners. Under the care of the knights, they learned to hunt, to carry a lance properly, and to use the sword; and having gained this skill, they were made squires if they had shown themselves to be of good character.

Then, day by day, the squires practiced at the quintain. This was an upright post, on the top of which turned a crosspiece, having on one end a broad, and on the other a bag of sand. The object was to ride up at full gallop, strike the board with a long lance, and get away without being hit by the sand bag.

Besides this, the squires had services to do for the knights, in order that they might learn to be useful in as many ways as possible, and to be always humble. For instance, they took care of the armor of the knights, carried letters and messages for them, accompanied them at joustings and tournaments, being ready with extra weapons or assistance; and in the castle they helped to serve the guests at table. After months of such service, they went through a beautiful ceremony and were made knights. In the country round about, Arthur, of all the squires, was the most famous for his skill in the use of the lance and the sword, for his keenness in the hunt, and for his courtesy to all people.

Now, at this time there was no ruler in England. The powerful Uther of Wales, who had governed England, was dead, and all the strong lords of the country were struggling to be king in his place. This gave rise to a great deal of quarreling and bloodshed.

There was in the land a wise magician named Merlin. He was so old that his beard was as white as snow, but his eyes were as clear as a little child's. He was very sorry to see all the fighting that was going on, because he feared that it would do serious harm to the kingdom.

In those days the great and good men who ruled in the church had power almost equal to that of the monarch. The kings and the great lords listened to their advice, and gave them much land, and money for themselves and for the poor. So Merlin went to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the churchman who in all England was the most beloved, and said:

"Sir, it is my advice that you send to all the great lords of the realm and bid them come to London by Christmas to choose a king."

The archbishop did as Merlin advised, and at Christmas all the great lords came to London. The largest church in the city stood not far from the north bank of the Thames. A churchyard surrounded it, filled with yew trees, the trunks of which were knotted with age. The powerful lords rode up in their clanking armor to the gate, where they dismounted, and giving their horses into the care of their squires, reverently entered the church.

There were so many of them that they quite filled the nave and side-aisles of the building. The good archbishop, from where he stood in the chancel, looked down on them all. Just behind him was the altar covered with a cloth of crimson and gold, and surmounted by a golden crucifix and ten burning candles. In front of him, kneeling under the gray arches which spanned the church, were the greatest men in the kingdom. He looked at their stern bronzed faces, their heavy beards, their broad shoulders, and their glittering armor, and prayed God to make the best man in the land king.

Then began the service. At the close of the first prayer some of the knights looked out of the window, and there in the churchyard they saw a great square stone. In the middle of it was an anvil of steel a foot high, and fixed therein was a beautiful sword. On the sword was some writing set in with gold which said:

"Whosoever pulls this sword out of this stone and anvil is the real king of all England."

The knights who read this told the archbishop, but he said:

"I command you all to keep within the church and still pray to God. No man is to touch the sword until all the prayers are said."

After the service was over, the lords went into the churchyard. They each pulled at the sword, but none could stir it.

"The king is not here," said the archbishop, "but God will make him known. Meantime, let ten good knights keep watch over this sword."

The knights were soon chosen, and then the archbishop said that on a fixed day every man in the kingdom should try to pull the sword out of the anvil. He ordered that on New Year's day all the people should be brought together for a great tournament to be held on the south bank of the Thames, near London bridge. After a few days spent in jousting among the knights, each man should make the trial to find out whether or not he was to be king.

The brave youth Arthur did not know of the contest that was to be made for the sword. Sir Hector told him that he was to go to a tournament, but he did not tell him the reason for holding the tournament. So Arthur rode to London with Sir Hector; and Sir Kay, who was Sir Hector's oldest son, was with them.

Sir Hector and Sir Kay rode soberly in front. They were tall, stalwart men and rode black horses, their dark figures making shadows on the light snow that had fallen. Arthur, riding behind them, felt exhilarated by the crisp winter air which caused the blood to dance in his veins. Sometimes he stood up in his saddle and flicked with his sword the dead leaves on the oaks. Again he made his horse crush the thin crust of ice that had formed in tiny pools on the road. He was so happy in the thought of the tournament he was to see, that he could have sung for joy.

The road was not very wide, for few carts passed upon it, but it had been well worn by riders. Sometimes it wound through a bit of thick woods; again it rose up over a gently rolling hill. From the hilltops the riders could see London far in the distance. It looked at first like a gray haze; then, as the three came nearer, the buildings, large and small, grew plain to the sight. The castles and huts, barns and sheds, smithies, shops and mills, stood out in the keen sunlight. A high wall surrounded them, while on one side flowed the river Thames.

After they had entered the city, and had passed the churchyard, and had almost reached London bridge, Sir Kay discovered that he had left his sword at home.

"Will you go back for it?" he asked Arthur.

"That I will," said Arthur, glad of the chance to ride longer in the delightful air.

But when he reached their dwelling, he could not get in. The drawbridge was raised, and he could not make the warden hear his calling. Then Arthur was disturbed and said to himself:

"I will hasten to the churchyard we passed, and take the beautiful sword which I saw in the stone. It does not seem to belong to anyone, and my brother Kay must have a weapon."

So he rode on till he reached the churchyard, dismounted, and tied his horse to a sapling. The ten knights who guarded the sword had gone away to see the combats in the tournament. Arthur ran up and pulled lightly but eagerly at the sword. It came at once from the anvil. He hurried to Sir Kay, who was waiting for him on London bridge. Sir Kay knew that the weapon was the one that had been fixed fast in the stone, but he said nothing to Arthur, and the two soon overtook Sir Hector, who had ridden slowly to the field where the tournament was taking place. Sir Kay immediately told his father what had happened.

The good knight at once spoke with great respect to Arthur.

"Sir," he said, "you must be the king of this land."

"What mean you, sir?" asked Arthur.

Sir Hector told the wondering youth the reason why he was destined to be king. Then he said:

"Can you put this sword back in its place and pull it out again?"

"Easily," replied Arthur.

The three returned to the great stone, and Arthur put back the sword. Sir Hector tried to take it out, but failed.

"Now, you try," he said to Sir Kay.

But Sir Kay, in spite of great efforts, also failed. Then Arthur, at Sir Hector's bidding, tried, and at once pulled forth the sword. At that Sir Hector and Sir Kay knelt before Arthur.

"Alas," said Arthur, raising them from the ground, "my own dear father and my brother, why do you kneel to me?"

"Nay, my lord Arthur," said Sir Hector, "I am not your father. You are of higher blood than I am. Long ago, when you were a little baby, Merlin brought you to me to take care of, telling me that you were to be the king."

"Then whose son am I?" cried Arthur.

"There are two stories: the one that Merlin tells, and the one that old Bleys, the master of Merlin, tells. Merlin brought you to me, saying that you were the son of King Uther and Yguerne his wife. But because the king was dead and the lords powerful and jealous, he told me to guard you in secrecy lest your life be taken. I did not know whether the story was true or false then, but you were a helpless child, and Merlin was a wise sage, and so I took you and brought you up as my own."

Arthur was so astonished that he did not ask to hear the tale that Bleys told. He stood gazing at Sir Hector, who said:

"And now, my gracious lord, will you be good to me and mine when you are king?"

"I will, indeed," replied Arthur, "for I am more beholden to you than to anyone else in the world, and also to my good

lady and foster mother, your wife, who has reared me as if I were her own child. If it be God's will that I shall sometime become king, ask of me then what you will."

"Sir," said Sir Hector, "I ask that you make my son Sir Kay, your foster brother, the steward of all your lands."

"That shall be done," said Arthur, "and more. He shall have that office as long as I live."

Then the three went to the Archbishop of Canterbury and related to him the story of Merlin and all that had occurred. At his request they told no one else.

At the command of the archbishop on Twelfth day, which is the sixth of January, all the great lords assembled in the churchyard. Each tried to draw forth the sword, and each failed. Then the untitled people came and tried. Everyone failed until at last Arthur stepped forward. He hardly more than touched the sword when it came away in his hand.

At this many of the great lords were angry.

"He is but a boy," they said, "and not of high blood."

They refused to believe the story of his birth told by Merlin and Sir Hector. And because of all the quarreling, it was decided to have another trial at Candlemas, which fell in the month of February. Again Arthur was victorious. Then the great lords decreed that there should be another trial at Easter, and again Arthur succeeded. Next they decided to have a final trial at the feast of the Pentecost, which fell in May.

Meanwhile, Merlin advised the archbishop to see that Arthur had a bodyguard. So the archbishop selected several knights whom the former king, Uther, had trusted. These were Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere; Sir Geraint and Sir Hector and Sir Kay were also chosen. These brave men formed a bodyguard for Arthur until the feast of the Pentecost.

At this time Arthur again drew out the sword from the anvil. Then the common people, who had so far let the lords



He hardly more than touched the sword.

have their will, cried out:

"We will have Arthur for our king, and we will have no more delay, for we see that it is God's will that he shall be our ruler."

Then all the people knelt down, high and low, rich and poor, and begged Arthur's pardon for the delay he had undergone. Arthur forgave them, and taking his sword, reverently placed it on the great altar beside which the archbishop stood. This was a sign that he meant to dedicate himself and his sword to God.

Afterward the crowning was held, and all the brave men and fair ladies in the land were present. The lords wore beautiful robes of velvet and ermine, with gold and jewels on their breast-plates. The ladies' robes were of purple and white and scarlet and gold and blue, and they wore many pearls and rubies and diamonds, so that all the place where they were assembled was glowing with light and color.

But Arthur, who wore a plain white robe, did not think of the beauty and richness. He was very grave, knowing that he was about to take a solemn oath. He bowed his head, while the archbishop set upon it the golden crown, which gleamed with jewels. Then he stood up before his people, and vowed that he would be a good king and always do justice. All the people uncovered their heads and vowed to serve and obey him; and when he smiled kindly on them as he rode slowly through the throng, they threw up their caps and shouted joyfully: "Long live King Arthur! Long live the King!"

King Arthur chose worthy men for his officers, making Sir Kay steward as he had promised; Sir Ulfius he made chamberlain, and Sir Brastias warden. Arthur gave offices also to Sir Hector and Sir Bedivere and Sir Geraint.

After his crowning the king set about righting all the wrongs that had been done since the death of King Uther. He gave back the lands and money that had been taken from widows and orphans, and would permit no unkindness to any

of his subjects. Thus, at the very beginning of his reign, his people began to call him

"Good King Arthur"

The Good Sword Excalibur

Soon after the crowning of King Arthur, he was journeying through the land with Merlin, the wise old magician, when they met a knight who challenged Arthur to a combat. The two fought, and at last the knight wounded Arthur severely. In the end the king was victorious, but he had lost so much blood that he could go no farther. Merlin took him to a good hermit who healed his wound in three days. Then the king departed with Merlin, and as they were slowly riding along he said:

"I am still weak from the blood I have lost, and my sword is broken."

"Do not fear," said Merlin. "You shall lose no more blood and you shall have a good sword. Ride on trustfully with me."

They rode in silence until they came to a lake, large and quiet, and as beautiful in color as a pearl. While Arthur was looking at its beauty, he became suddenly aware of three tall women, with fair, sweet faces, standing on the bank.

"Who are they?" the king asked.

"Three queens who shall help you at your worst need," answered Merlin. "Now look out upon the lake again."

Arthur turned his eyes upon the lake and saw that in the distance a slight mist had arisen. Through it the figure of a lady glided over the surface of the water. Her robe appeared to be made of waves which streamed away in flowing curves from her body. Her head and shoulders seemed wrapped in foam tinted with the colors of the rainbow, and her arms glittered with sparkles which came from bubbles of water. She was so wonderful that Arthur looked at her for some time



Arthur and the Lady of the Lake

before he asked softly:

"Who is she?"

"She is the Lady of the Lake," said Merlin. "She lives in a rock in the middle of the lake. See, she is coming toward us. Look at what is beyond her in the water."

Arthur looked and saw rising above the surface of the water an arm clothed in pure white. This arm held a huge cross-hilted sword, so brilliant that Arthur's eyes were dazzled.

When the Lady of the Lake approached nearer, he said:

"Damsel, what sword is that? I wish it were mine, for I have none."

The lady smiled, saying:

"Step into yonder boat, row to the sword, and take it, together with the scabbard."

So Arthur entered a little boat that was tied to the shore, and rowed out to the sword. As he took it and the scabbard, all gleaming with jewels, the hand and arm vanished into the water. And when Arthur looked about, the three queens and the Lady of the Lake were also gone.

As Arthur, still gazing at the sword, rowed to shore, Merlin said to him:

"My lord Arthur, which pleases you more, sword or scabbard?"

"In truth, the sword," replied the king.

"Let me assure you," said Merlin, smiling gravely, "that the scabbard is worth ten of the sword. While you have it with you you shall never lose blood, no, no matter how sorely you are wounded. So see that you guard it well."

The king, who was looking at the sword, sighed.

"There is writing on the sword," he said.

"True, my lord, written in the oldest tongue in the world."

"Take me on one side," said Arthur, "and Cast me away on the other. I am glad to take the sword, but it saddens me to think of casting it away."

Merlin's face grew sad, too. He was so wise that he knew what was going to happen in the future, and he was well aware that when the time came to cast the sword away, much evil would have befallen the good King Arthur. But he knew that the time was yet very far off; so he said:

"You have taken the sword. Now use it to make justice and right prevail in all the land. Do not think of casting it away until you must."

Arthur grew joyful again as he felt the strength of the good sword in his hand, and the two rode cheerfully forward through the country.

The Great Feast & What Followed

Although Arthur had been crowned king, he was by no means sure that all the nobles of the land would accept him as ruler. In accordance with the custom of the time, he gave a feast in order to find out who were his friends and who his enemies. All who came to the feast would, he supposed, consent to be his followers.

He chose the largest hall in London, and had the walls hung with rich cloths. Upon the floor, strewn with rushes, were placed trestles, and across these, boards were laid. Upon them fine white linen was spread, and golden salt-cellars, wine-bowls, and water-jugs set about.

When the guests assembled there were so many that Arthur was delighted, for he thought they were all his friends. He sat at the head of one table, and Sir Hector sat at the head of the other. Arthur wore a gold crown on his head, but it was no brighter than his hair, and the blue turquoises with which it was set were no bluer than his eyes. From his shoulders to the ground hung a magnificent red robe with gold dragons embroidered upon it.

The cooks and squires came in from the kitchen carrying food, their ruddy faces beaming from the heat of the fires. First of all, sixty boars' heads were borne in on silver platters. Then followed, on golden dishes, peacocks and plovers which had been so skillfully cooked that their bright colors were preserved. After the guests had eaten all they cared for of this food, tiny roasted pigs were brought in, and set on all fours upon the tables. By this time, all the gold and silver goblets which had been filled with wine needed refilling. Then the

squires carried in beautiful white swans on silver platters, and roasted cranes and curlews on plates that glowed like the sun. After that came rabbits stewed in sweet sauce, and hams and curries. The last course consisted of tarts and preserves, dates and figs and pomegranates.

The supper began about five o'clock, and the guests ate and drank into the night. Although it was past Easter time, the weather was a little cold, and so upon the stone flagging between the two long tables the king ordered fires to be lighted. The bright flames darted up, flashing on the gold threads woven in the hangings of the walls, and on the steel armor of the lords, and gleaming on the jewels set in the gold and silver goblets which the squires were carrying about. At one side sat a band of musicians singing of the glories of King Arthur, and of the folk-tales of his ancestors and people, accompanying themselves on their harps.

After the guests had risen from the tables and gone to their camps, Arthur sent messengers to them with rich gifts of horses and furs and gold. But most of the lords received the messengers scornfully.

"Take back these gifts to the beardless boy who has come of low blood," they said; "we do not want them. We have come here to give him gifts of hard blows with our hard swords."

The messengers were astonished to hear these things spoken of their good king. Nevertheless, they told Arthur all that had been said to them. He sent no answer back, but he called together all the lords whom he was sure were loyal to him, and asked their advice. They said to him:

"We cannot give you advice, but we can fight."

"You speak well, my lords," answered Arthur, "and I thank you for your courage. Will you take the advice of Merlin? You know that he has done much for me, and he is very wise."

The lords and barons answered that they would do

whatever Merlin advised. When Merlin came to the council hall he said:

"I warn you that your enemies are very strong. They have added to their numbers so that now you have against you eleven mighty kings."

At this the lords looked dismayed.

"Unless our lord Arthur has more men than he can find in his own realm," said Merlin, "he will be overcome and slain. Therefore I give you this counsel. There are two brothers across the sea; both are monarchs and both very strong. One is King Ban of Benwick, and the other is King Bors of Gaul. Now these two have an enemy, also a powerful ruler. Therefore, send to the brothers, King Bors and King Ban who are now both in Benwick, and say to them that if they will help Arthur in his war against the eleven kings, Arthur will help them against their common enemy."

"That is very good counsel," said the king and the lords.

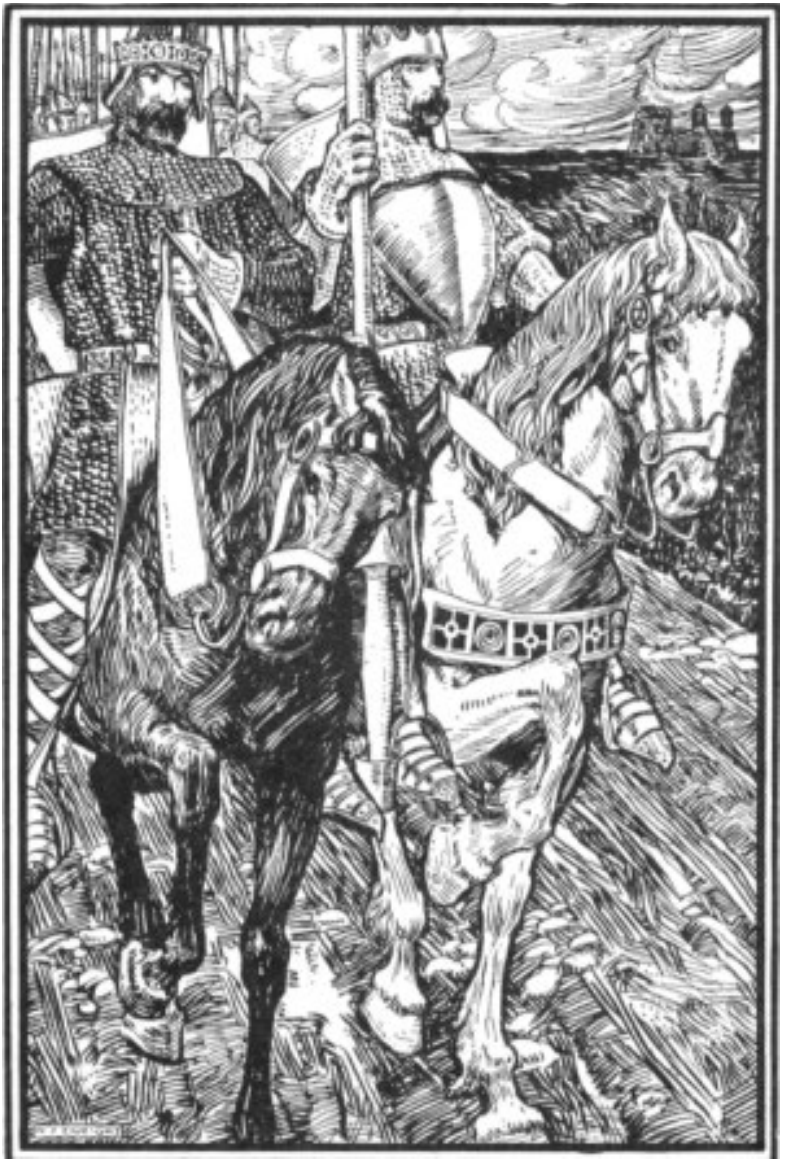
So they chose Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias as messengers, and these two hurried away, hopeful of success. When they reached the town in Benwick where King Bors and King Ban were, knights came forth to receive them and to hear their message. As soon as it was learned from whom they had come they were led into the presence of the brothers. Both were very large men. King Bors was dark, and was dressed in black armor. King Ban was dark, too; the colors that he wore on his shield were green and gold. He was the father of Sir Lancelot, the knight who afterwards became the most powerful of the followers of Arthur.

The two kings received Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias with much favor.

"Tell King Arthur," they said, "that we will come to him as quickly as we can."

Then they gave splendid gifts to Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias, who hurried back to Arthur with the message.

In a short time King Bors and King Ban arrived with ten



King Bors and King Ban

thousand of their soldiers, and as Arthur had ten thousand, they felt certain of victory. They went into Wales, a country which Arthur's followers knew well, and waited confidently for the enemy.

The eleven kings collected a great host of sixty thousand men, fifty thousand on horseback and ten thousand on foot. They marched towards the place where Arthur was, and set up their camp near a wood about a mile distant. When Merlin knew this, he said to Arthur and the two kings:

"This is my advice: Set upon your enemies at midnight when they are unprepared, and then you will have the advantage."

So Arthur and the two royal brothers and the twenty thousand soldiers crept up to where the eleven kings and their men lay. They took a road circling round the wood. Moving with great caution, they drew nearer and nearer until they could see first the camp fires in a circle around the white tents; and then, against the flashing flames, the dark figures of the men who were keeping guard. Sometimes they were afraid that the noise they made would alarm their enemies, but on account of a heavy windstorm, they were unheard. When his men were quite near, Arthur gave the word of command. The whole army uttered a great shout, and ran forward in companies upon their enemies. In a few minutes they had knocked down most of the tents, and killed many soldiers.

It was a dreadful thing to be attacked in the dark without warning. But the eleven kings were brave men, even though they were so unjust to Arthur in trying to take his kingdom from him, and made a good fight. Perhaps they would have made a better one if they had known how few the men were under Arthur.

Before day dawned, Merlin told Arthur to draw back his troops. This he did, leaving about ten thousand of the enemy dead behind him. He, however, had not lost very many men.

At daybreak Arthur and his followers saw that the lay of

the land could be used to their advantage. Between them and the enemy was a narrow road, bounded on one side by a lake, and on the other side by a dense wood. One part of this wood, however, was thin enough to allow men to hide in it.

"Now," said Merlin, "let King Bors and King Ban take their soldiers and hide in the wood for a long time. Then, my lord Arthur, stand up before the enemy with your men."

"Why shall we do this?" asked Arthur.

"Because," said the wise old man, "when the eleven kings see how few in number your troops are, they will let you proceed down the passage. They will think that if you march close to them they can overcome you. But you can fill up this narrow road with more and more men from the wood. Then the enemy cannot surround you."

"That seems very good," said Arthur.

"And at last," continued Merlin, "when the eleven kings are weary, let King Bors and King Ban come forth. Then surely the courage of our enemies will fail."

The plan was carried out. Arthur's men marched down the passage. The green wood was on one side, and on the other was the lake, the water of which was so clear that it reflected the bodies of the soldiers with their shields and helmets. The sun shone on their armor. The little birds in the woods sang as they passed. But the men were thinking of nothing but the expected battle.

When they had come close to the enemy, they saw the eleven kings all in a row, mounted on big handsome horses. Their fifty thousand men were behind them. Suddenly these rode forward and the battle began.

It was a fierce fight. In a very short time the field was covered with overthrown men and horses. Broken shields and helmets lay on the ground, and many of the knights who had been fighting on horseback were unhorsed, and were fighting on foot. Arthur galloped here and there among his enemies, conquering with his trusty sword all with whom he fought.

The woods and the water rang with his sword strokes. The noise drowned the sweet songs of the birds, but still they sang, and flew about gaily, all unaware of the grim death-struggle going on beneath them.

Finally the time arrived for bringing forward King Bors and his men. The great dark king went thundering down upon his enemies. When the King of Orkney saw him coming, he cried:

"Oh, we are in great danger! I see King Bors, one of the best and bravest kings in the world, and he is helping our enemy."

Then the other kings were astonished, for they did not know that Arthur had sent outside his country for help.

"But we will fight on," they said, "no matter how powerful he is."

While they were still fighting, but with great loss of courage, they heard the loud sounds made by the hoofs of other tramping horses, and King Ban rode down on them, followed by his men. His black brows were frowning, and his green and gold colors glittered in the sun.

"Alas, alas!" cried the King of Orkney, "now in truth are we lost, for here is another king, no less great than his brother Bors. But we must neither flee nor yield."

The eleven kings, being agreed to this, continued the battle, though so many of their men were killed that the King of Orkney wept. When he saw some of his men running away, he wept still more, for he thought it was better to die than to be a coward.

Though they did not intend to run away, the eleven kings thought it would be wise to retreat to a little copse nearby. It was late and they were tired and wished to rest before fighting again. King Bors and King Ban could not help admiring these rulers.

"In truth," said King Ban, "they are the bravest men I ever saw. I would they were your friends."

"Indeed, so would I," replied Arthur; "but I have no hope of that, for they are determined to destroy me, and so we must fight on."

At this moment Merlin rode up on his great black horse.

"Have you not done enough?" he cried to Arthur. "Of their sixty thousand men there are left but fifteen thousand. It is time to stop, I say. If you fight on, they will win the day. The tide will turn against you."

Arthur hesitated and Merlin said:

"The eleven kings have a great trouble coming of which they are ignorant. The Saracens have landed in their countries to the number of over forty thousand. So your enemies will have so much fighting to do that they will not attack you again for three years."

Then Arthur was glad, for it had grieved him deeply to fight so long and to lose his good soldiers.

"We will fight no more," he said.

"That is well," replied Merlin. "Now give presents to your soldiers, for today they have proved themselves equal to the best fighters in the world."

"True, indeed!" exclaimed King Bors and King Ban.

So Arthur gave gifts to his own men; and a great deal of gold to the brother kings, both for themselves and for their soldiers. And the two kings went home rejoicing.

Arthur's Court and the Order of the Round Table

After Arthur had proved his prowess in his contest with the eleven kings, he decided to establish his Court and the Order of the Round Table. The place he chose was the city of Camelot in Wales, which had a good situation, being built upon a hill. He called the wise Merlin and ordered him to make a great palace on the summit of the hill. Through his powers of enchantment, Merlin was able to do this very quickly, and within a week the king and his personal attendants were settled in the palace.

The main part consisted of a great Assembly Hall built of white marble, the roof of which seemed to be upheld by pillars of green and red porphyry, and was surmounted by magnificent towers. The outside walls of the hall were covered with beautiful rows of sculpture. The lowest row represented wild beasts slaying men. The second row represented men slaying wild beasts. The third represented warriors who were peaceful, good men. The fourth showed men with growing wings. Over all was a winged statue with the face of Arthur. Merlin meant to show by means of the first row that formerly evil in men was greater than good; by the second that men began to conquer the evil in themselves, which in time caused them to become really good, noble, and peace-loving men, as in the third row. And finally, through the refining influence of Good King Arthur and his wise helpers, men would grow to be almost as perfect as the angels.

The main doorway was in the shape of an arch, upheld by pillars of dark yellow marble. The hall was lighted by fourteen

great windows, through which the light streamed in soft colors upon the marble floors. Between these windows, and along the cornices, were beautiful decorations. There were carvings in white marble of birds and beasts and twining vines. There was mosaic work of black and yellow and pink marble and of lapis lazuli, as blue as a lake when the clear sun shines full upon its surface. Under the windows were many stone shields, beneath each of which was the name of a knight. Some shields were blazoned with gold, some were carved, and some were blank. The walls were hung with beautiful tapestries which had been woven by the ladies of the land for Arthur's new palace. On each had been pictured some episode from the life of King Arthur; the drawing of the magic sword from the anvil, the finding of the good sword Excalibur, his deeds of justice and acts of kindness, and his many battles and wars.

The two wings of the palace contained the dining hall and kitchen and the living apartments of all the members of the court who made their home with the king. The dining hall was only a little less beautiful than Arthur's great Assembly Hall. The walls were hung with cloths of scarlet and gold. The deep fireplace was supported by four bronze pillars. In the middle of the room were long tables made of oak boards set on ivory trestles. At a banquet the walls were hung with garlands of flowers or festoons of branches.

The great kitchen had stone walls and stone flagging. The fireplace was so large that there was room for a whole ox to be roasted, and above hung cranes from which half a dozen kettles could be suspended, and pots of such a size that pigs could be boiled whole in them. All about the walls were cupboards. Some were full of plates of wood, iron, steel, silver, and gold, and flagons, cups, bowls, and saltcellars of gold and silver. Others were used for the storing of cold meats and fruits. There were several tables on which the cooked food was cut, and benches upon which the cooks rested when they

were tired of serving the hungry eaters.

Well might they have grown tired.

Supper, the most important meal of the day, lasted from three until six, and often longer. But the cooks, and the little scullion boys who washed the pots and pans, and the attendants who carried in the food to the dining hall, all wore contentment and happiness on their faces as they hurried about with their long blouses tucked out of harm's way; for to serve King Arthur and his guests was considered a real privilege.

The sleeping rooms were furnished with chests, and chairs, and beds spread with fine linen and with ermine-lined covers. Hangings of various colors were upon the walls. On the floors were strewn rushes, and among them was thrown mint which gave forth an agreeable odor.

After Arthur, his officers, and his servants had been in the palace a few days, the king formally established his Court. He invited all the knights who cared to do so to come with their families and retinues and live with him. Some preferred to remain in their own castles, but others gladly went to live with the king. Soon all were comfortably settled.

The king's officers were very important members of Arthur's court. First of these came the Archbishop of Canterbury, who held the highest place in the king's regard. It was his duty to conduct the church services for Arthur and his followers, and to christen, marry, and bury the people of Camelot. Next, Sir Ulfius as chamberlain superintended the care of the king's rooms. Sir Brastias, who was warden, superintended the servants. Sir Kay, who was steward, had charge of all the food and the kitchen. Sir Hector, as treasurer, took care of the king's gold and rendered the accounts. Sir Geraint managed all the tournaments and outdoor sports of the knights and squires. There were other officers to help these, and all did their work faithfully and lovingly.

The knights whom Arthur chose to be members of his

Round Table were mostly selected from these officers. As members of this order there were one hundred and fifty of the knights who had shown themselves especially brave in battle and who were devoted followers of the king. Next to being king, the greatest honor which could fall to a warrior was to be made a member of the Round Table, for all who belonged to the order were dedicated to the service of God and mankind. There is no glory greater than such a dedication.

In his great hall Arthur had placed a huge table, made round in shape so that there should be neither head nor foot, a higher place nor a lower place. Arthur wished all who sat there to be equals. These chosen knights were to give him council in times of peace and of war.

It was a solemn hour when the knights took their places. The Archbishop of Canterbury blessed them and their seats. Then each one came to Arthur, who stood at the top of the Assembly Hall, and did him homage. Next they took their vows. They promised to be brave and good, never false, or mean, or cruel. If anyone with whom they fought begged for mercy, they would show him mercy. And they vowed never to fight for a wrong cause or for money. Each year at the feast of the Pentecost they were to repeat these vows.

Other members of Arthur's Court were old, brave knights who could no longer fight, but who liked to be near the king and his warriors, and gave the wisdom of age and experience to his councils; young, ambitious, and promising knights who had had but little real experience in battle; and faithful squires who had had no real experience at all. Boys from six to fourteen years were pages. There were others who transformed Arthur's Court to a place of grace and beauty—the mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters of the warriors.

Although they did not help in the councils of war, these ladies were of great assistance in training the knights to be tender and courteous. They taught the little pages good manners and unselfishness. They assisted the knights in removing

their armor when they came in tired from riding or fighting. They sat with Arthur and the knights in the evening in the dining-hall, singing or playing upon harps, or listening to the tales that were told. When the knights were away the ladies stayed in their own chambers, hearing wise readings from the Archbishop of Canterbury, or other learned men, listening to Merlin's words of wisdom, and embroidering the beautiful hangings and cushions which were to adorn the palace.

It was a month before Arthur's Court was established, and during that time the city of Camelot was a scene of continual merriment. The people of the place were glad that the king had come, for that meant much gain for them. Those of them who did not live in the palace had their houses or shops on the streets which wound about the foot of the hill. Many of the shops belonged to armorers, who had armor of all sorts for anyone who would buy. They were glad in their turn to buy the swords of famous knights which had been used in great battles, for such weapons they could always sell again at a good price. These shopkeepers and the servants and the squires and the warriors all united to make the city of Camelot a beautiful one, for the sake of their king. The streets were kept strewn with rushes and flowers. Rich awnings and silken draperies were hung from the houses.

All day long processions passed, made up of the followers of all those lords who gave allegiance to the king. They carried the banners of their masters, crimson, white, or scarlet, gold, silver, or azure, making the streets glow with color. The marching squires wore ornamented blouses, drawn in at the waist, long silk stockings, and shoes of embroidered leather. The bowmen were dressed in green kirtles, rather shorter than those of the squires, and wore dark woolen hose; they carried their bows and arrows slung across their shoulders. The servants were dressed in much the same way, except that their blouses were longer and of various colors. Many knights rode in the processions, their long plumes waving in the wind,

their armor shining, and their falcons perched upon their wrists.

All day long, too, bands of musicians played on flutes and timbrels and tabors and harps; bands of young men and women sang songs in praise of the king; story-tellers went about relating old tales of famous heroes. The young men showed their strength by tumbling and wrestling, and their grace by dancing; the young women also danced.

The wise Merlin often passed along the streets, walking silently among the merry throngs of people. Sometimes the little Dagonet danced at his side, Dagonet the king's jester, a tiny man who made merriment for the Court with his witty sayings. He always wore a tight-fitting red blouse and a peaked cap ornamented with bells, and he carried a mock scepter in the shape of a carved ivory stick.

Whenever Arthur appeared before his people, church-bells were joyously rung and trumpets were sounded. The king, as he rode, distributed presents to the poor people:—capes, coats, and mantles of serge, and bushels of pence. In a dining-hall at the palace, feasts were held on those days for them, and they were also open for all the people who might come.

When the weather was beautiful, tables were placed on the sward outside the palace, and those who cared to, ate under the shade of the trees, listening to the music of the blackbirds, whose singing was almost as loud as that of the chorus of damsels who sang in the palace. Every hour the servants carried in and out great quarters of venison, roasted pheasants and herons, and young hawks, ducks, and geese, all on silver platters. Curries and stews and tarts were innumerable. In the midst of the sward a silver fountain had been set from which flowed sweet wine. Even the great feasts of the year, which were held at Christmas, upon the day of the Passover, at Pentecost, upon Ascension day, and upon St. John's day, were not as wonderful as these feasts, when the

king held holiday with his people.

On these days of merriment, when the people were not eating or drinking or marching in processions, they were at the tournament field, watching the combats. Here the best of Arthur's knights, mounted on strong horses and wearing heavy armor, were ranged on two sides of the field. Behind each row was a pavilion filled with ladies. Four heralds stood ready to blow the trumpets which gave the signal for the combats. Each herald wore crimson silk stockings and crimson velvet kirtles, tight at the waist, and reaching half-way to the knee.

When it was time to begin the heralds blew the trumpets, the ladies bent over eagerly, and the knights spurred their horses forward, riding with their lances in rest. In a moment clouds of dust arose, circling up as high as the plumes on the knights' helmets, and their lances crashed against each other's shields. Many of the lances broke. Sometimes the shock of contact overthrew a knight. But no one was hurt, for the good King Arthur had ordered that the combats should be friendly.

When the jousting had lasted for several hours, those knights who had shown themselves the stronger, received prizes from the ladies. The prizes were suits of armor ornamented with gold, and swords with jeweled hilts. The knight who, of all, was the strongest, chose the lady whom he considered most beautiful, and crowned her "The Queen of Love and Beauty."

During the month of feasting, Arthur made knights of some of the squires. A young squire was first obliged to show his skill in tilting at the quintain. Then his father presented him with falcons and sparrowhawks for hunting, and arms and robes. He also gave robes and arms to his son's companions, and, to their mothers and sisters, furs and embroidered robes, and belts of gold. Finally he gave money to the singers and players, and servants, and to the poor people of

Camelot.

At about sunset the young squire went into the church, where the Archbishop of Canterbury held a solemn service. The youth took the armor which he had chosen, and placed it on the floor in front of the altar. He was then left alone, and all night long he prayed fervently to God to give him strength to be a noble and true knight. In the morning the king came to the church, attended by his nobles and by the archbishop. The squire laid his sword on the altar, thus signifying his devotion to Christ and his determination to lead a holy life. King Arthur bound the sword and spurs on the young man, and, taking Excalibur, he smote him lightly on the shoulder with it, saying, "Be thou a true and faithful knight."

Then the squire took a solemn oath to protect all who were in distress, to do right, to be a pure knight, and to have faith in God. After that the Archbishop of Canterbury preached a solemn sermon.

When the month of feasting and holiday was ended, the members of the Court returned to their usual habits of life. The Knights of the Round Table went forth to right wrongs and to enforce the law. All who were in distress came to the king for help. And to the whole country Arthur's Court was famous as a place where unkindness was never done, and where truth, justice, and love reigned.

King Arthur & the Princess Guinevere

After Arthur had been established in his Court for some time, his neighbor, Leodogran, the king of Cameliard, asked him for help in a battle. To this Arthur cheerfully consented, and gathered his warrior men about him.

It chanced, as he and his men were marching past the castle of Leodogran to meet the enemy, the king's daughter, Guinevere, who was the most beautiful lady in all that land, stood on the castle wall to watch her father's allies pass. Now she did not know, of all the knights who rode by, which was Arthur. Many wore gold and jewels on their armor, while the king's armor was plain.

But Arthur saw her bending over the wall. She was slender and graceful; her black hair fell in two long heavy braids over each shoulder; her eyes were large and black. And Arthur felt a warm love spring from his heart for her, and said to himself:

"If I win this battle for Leodogran, I shall ask him to give me the princess Guinevere for wife."

His love for Guinevere made him fight even more bravely than usual, and he soon won the battle. After he had returned to Camelot, he told his knights that he wished to marry the princess. They were very glad, because they, too, had seen her and thought her the most beautiful lady they had ever beheld.

Then Arthur said:

"I will send my three good knights, Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere, to King Leodogran to ask for Guinevere."

The three knights set forth gayly, feeling certain that King



Arthur saw Guinevere bending over the wall.

Leodogran would be glad to marry his daughter to their great Arthur. When, however, they came to the castle of Leodogran with their request, the king hesitated. He bade them wait for a little while in the room adjoining his large hall. Then he said to himself:

"Arthur has helped me, indeed. I know, too, that he is powerful. But I hear strange stories of his birth. There are people who say that he is not a king's son. However great he is, I cannot give him my only daughter unless he is really a true king, born of royal blood."

He called the oldest knight in his kingdom and said to him:

"Do you know anything about Arthur's birth?"

The old man looked very wise and said:

"There are two men who do know; the younger of them is twice as old as I am. They are Merlin, and Bleys, the master of Merlin. Bleys has written down the secret of Arthur's birth in a book."

Then King Leodogran laughed a little and said:

"My friend, your words have not helped me much. If Arthur had not helped me in my time of need more than you have helped me now, I should have been lost indeed. Go and call Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere."

So the old man brought in the three knights, and Leodogran said to them:

"I hear strange tales of your king's birth. Some say that he is indeed the son of the late King Uther, but others say that he is the son of Sir Hector. Do you believe that he is Uther's son?"

They said "Yes," and then told King Leodogran that Sir Hector had brought up King Arthur as his son, for fear that those who wanted the throne would kill the child; and that Arthur was undoubtedly Uther's son.

Still King Leodogran could not make up his mind. He bade the three lords remain with him for a few days.

Meanwhile the beautiful Queen Bellicent came to the Court, and Leodogran asked her advice.

"Do you think Arthur is a great king?" he asked. "Will he always be great?"

"He is very great," said the queen. "And all his people love him. Perhaps he has not many lords, but their deep love makes up for their small number."

"That may be true," replied the king.

"Besides that," added the queen, "they are good men. As you know, the Knights of the Round Table are bound by vows to be kind and true and merciful and helpful."

"I have heard it," said the king.

"Moreover," went on Queen Bellicent, "Arthur has powerful friends: Merlin, the magician, and the Lady of the Lake, who gave him his sword Excalibur, and the three fair queens, who will help him when he needs help most."

"Yes, yes," said King Leodogran, "if all this is true, Arthur must prevail over his enemies. But is he the son of King Uther and Queen Yguerne? You are the daughter of Queen Yguerne by an earlier marriage, and, therefore, Arthur's half-sister if Arthur is really Uther's son. You ought surely to know the truth."

Bellicent waited a little while, and then said:

"King Leodogran, I do not know what the truth is. There are two stories: the story Merlin tells and the story Bleys tells. Merlin says that Arthur is Uther's son, and indeed I should like to believe it."

"But you are not sure?" asked the king.

"I am not sure. For my mother Yguerne was dark, and King Uther was dark. Their hair and eyes were black like mine. Yet Arthur's hair is as bright as gold. Besides, there is the story of old Bleys."

"What is his story?"

"He says that Uther died, weeping because he had no heir. Then Bleys and Merlin, who were present at his death, passed

together out of the castle. It was a stormy night, and as they walked along by the lake they were forced by the roar of the tempest to look out upon the waves, whipped by the wind.

"Suddenly they saw a ship on the water. It had the shape of a winged dragon. All over its decks stood a multitude of people shining like gold. Then the ship vanished, and a number of great waves began to roll in towards shore. The ninth of these waves seemed as large as half the sea. It was murmuring with strange voices and rippling with flames. In the midst of the flames was a little fair-haired baby who was borne to Merlin's feet. Merlin stooped and picked it up, and cried, 'The King! Here is an heir for Uther!' This, King Leodogran, is the story Bleys told me before he died."

King Leodogran wondered very much. Then he said:

"But did you not question Merlin about this?"

"Yes," answered Queen Bellicent. "I asked him if this story of Bleys was true. He would only answer me with a riddle."

As King Leodogran was still silent, she said:

"Do not fear to give your daughter to Arthur, for he will be the greatest king the world has ever seen."

Leodogran felt less doubtful. While he was thinking, he fell asleep and had a dream. He saw in his dream a field covered with mist and smoke, and a phantom king standing in the cloud. He heard a voice which said, "This is not our king; this is not the son of Uther." But suddenly the mist disappeared and the king stood out in heaven, crowned.

King Leodogran took this dream for a good sign. He called the three knights, Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere, and said to them:

"Say to your king that I will give him Guinevere for his wife."

So the three hastily returned to King Arthur, who was overjoyed with their message.

In the month of May he sent Sir Lancelot, the son of King Ban, for Guinevere. When she came, the Archbishop of

Canterbury married them. And he blessed them and said that they, with the help of the Knights of the Round Table, must do much good for the land.

The Coming of Gareth

The beautiful Queen Bellicent had many sons, all of whom had gone out in the world except the youngest. His name was Gareth. His two brothers, Gawain and Modred, were with the good King Arthur, and Gareth longed to join them. His mother, however, would not let him go.

"You are not yet a man," she said. "You are only a child. Stay a little longer with me."

So Gareth stayed. One day he came to his mother and said:

"Mother, may I tell you a story?"

"Gladly," she replied.

"Then, mother, once there was a golden egg which a royal eagle had laid, away up in a tree. It was so high up that it could hardly be seen. But a youth, who though poor was brave, saw it, and longed for it. He knew that if he could get it, it would bring wealth and prosperity to him. So he tried to climb. One who loved him stopped him, saying, 'You will fall and be killed if you try to reach that height.' Therefore the poor boy did not climb, and so did not fall; but he pined away with longing till his heart broke and he died."

Queen Bellicent answered:

"If the person who held him back had loved him, that person would have climbed, and found the egg, and given it to the youth."

"That could not be," said Gareth. "Mother, suppose the egg were not gold, but steel, the same steel that Arthur's sword Excalibur is made of."

The queen grew pale, for she now understood his

meaning.

But Gareth spoke on:

"Dear mother, the gold egg is the glory to be won at Arthur's Court; I am the poor youth, and you are the one who holds me back. Mother, let me go!"

Then Bellicent wept, and she said:

"Oh, my son, do not leave me. You love me more than Gawain and Modred. You are all I have left in the world."

But Gareth replied:

"Mother, I waste my strength here."

"No, no," she said. "You shall hunt; you shall follow the deer and the fox, and so grow strong. Then I will find you a beautiful wife, and we shall all live together till I die."

Gareth shook his head.

"No, mother. I do not want a wife until I have proved myself to be a worthy and brave knight. I wish to follow Arthur, my good king and uncle."

"Perhaps he is not the true king and your uncle," Bellicent said. "At least wait a little till he has shown himself to be the greatest king in the world. Stay with me."

"Nay, mother," he said. "I must go."

Then the queen thought of a plan which she hoped would soon make him willing to stay home.

"If I let you go, my son, you must make me a promise. The promise will prove your love to me."

"I will make a hundred promises," cried young Gareth, "if you will only let me go."

"Then," she said, "you must go in disguise to the court of Arthur. You must hire yourself out as a kitchen boy. You shall wash the pots and pans for a whole year and tell no one that you are the son of a queen."

Queen Bellicent was sure that Gareth would not wish to make such a promise. He was silent a long, long time. He had hoped to take part at once with the Knights of the Round Table in great deeds. At last he said:

"I may be a kitchen boy and still be noble in heart and mind. Besides, I can look on at the tournaments. I shall see King Arthur and Sir Lancelot and Sir Kay. Yes, mother, I will go."

Queen Bellicent was very sad. All the days before Gareth's departure her eyes followed him until he felt that he could not bear to see her grieve longer. So in the middle of the night he rose quietly and woke two of his faithful servants. They dressed themselves like plowmen and started towards Camelot.

It was Easter time and the young grass was a bright green. The birds were beginning their chirping, although it was not yet light. As the dawn came, they saw the early morning mist sweeping over the mountain and forest near Arthur's city of Camelot. Sometimes the mist drew away and showed in the distance the towers gleaming like silver.

One of the servants said:

"Let us go no farther, my lord Gareth. I am afraid. That is a fairy city."

The second said:

"Yes, lord, let us turn back. I have heard that Arthur is not the real king, but a changeling brought from fairyland in a great wave all flame. He has done all his deeds with the help of Merlin's enchantment."

The first one spoke again:

"Lord Gareth, that is no real city. It is a vision."

But Gareth laughed and said:

"Arthur is real flesh and blood, a brave man, and a just king. Come with me to the gate of his city, and do not be afraid."

When they reached the gate of the city, they stared in amazement. It was made of silver and mother-of-pearl. In the center was carved the figure of the Lady of the Lake, with her arms outstretched in the form of a cross. In one hand she held a sword, and in the other a censer. On both sides of her figure

was carved the story of the wars of King Arthur. Above all were the figures of the three queens who were to help Arthur in time of need.

The three looked till their eyes were dazzled. Then they heard a peal of music, and the gate slowly opened. An old man with a long gray beard came out to greet them, and returning led them up past the gardens and groves and roofs and towers of Camelot to Arthur's great palace on the summit of the hill.

Gareth hardly thought of the splendors of the palace. He approached the arched doorway of the Assembly Hall, thinking only as his heart beat quickly, that at last he was to see the good King Arthur. Even before he entered he heard the voice of the king. For it was one of the days when Arthur was giving judgment to his people.

The king sat on a throne made of gold and ivory and ebony. On its arms and back were carved great dragons. Arthur wore a gold crown which was not brighter than his own beautiful hair and beard. His blue eyes were as calm and clear as the sky in summer time. His trusty knights stood about him on each side of the throne. The tallest of these, who had a worn, browned face, and piercing dark eyes, under frowning brows, must be, Gareth knew, the famous knight, Sir Lancelot.

As Gareth entered, a widow came forward and cried to Arthur:

"Hear me, oh, King! Your father, King Uther, took away a field from my husband, who is now dead. The king promised us gold, but he gave us no gold, nor would he return our field."

Then Arthur said:

"Which would you rather have, the gold or the field?"

The woman wept, saying:

"Oh, King, my dead husband loved the field. Give it back to me."

"You shall have your field again," said Arthur, "and

besides I will give you three times the amount of gold it is worth to pay you for the years King Uther had it."

Gareth thought that Arthur was indeed a just king. And while this was passing through his mind, another widow came forward and cried:

"Hear me, oh, King! Heretofore you have been my enemy. You killed my husband with your own hands. It is hard for me to ask justice or favor of you. Yet I must. My husband's brother took my son and had him slain, and has now stolen his land. So I ask you for a knight who will do battle and get my son's land for me, and revenge me for his death."

Then a good knight stepped forward and said:

"Sir King, I am her kinsman. Let me do battle for her and right her wrongs."

But Sir Kay, Arthur's foster brother, said:

"Lord Arthur, do not help a woman who has called you her enemy in your own hall."

"Sir Kay," replied Arthur, "I am here to help all those who need help in my land. This woman loved her lord, and I killed him because he rebelled against me. Let her kinsman go and do battle against the man who has wronged her. Bring him here, and I shall judge him. If he is guilty he shall suffer."

While Gareth was still listening to the king's words, a messenger entered from Mark, the king of Cornwall. He carried a wonderful gold cloth which he laid at Arthur's feet, saying:

"My lord, King Mark sends you this as a sign that he is your true friend."

But Arthur said:

"Take back the cloth. When I fight with kings who are worthy men, after I have conquered them I give them back their lands, and make them my subject-kings and Knights of the Round Table. But Mark is not fit to be a king. He is cruel and false. I will not call him friend."

The messenger stepped back in alarm. Arthur said to him

kindly:

"It is not your fault that Mark is unworthy. Stay in this city until you are refreshed and then go back home in safety."

While the king judged other cases, Gareth looked around the great hall. Underneath the fourteen windows he saw three rows of stone shields, and under each shield was the name of a knight. If a knight had done one great deed, there was carving on his shield; if he had done two or more, there were gold markings. If he had done none, the shield was blank. Gareth saw that Sir Lancelot's shield and Sir Kay's glittered with gold. He looked for the shields of his brothers, Sir Gawain and Sir Modred. Sir Gawain's was marked with gold, but Sir Modred's was blank.

Meanwhile, Arthur had judged all the cases. Then Gareth came forward timidly and said:

"Lord King, you see my poor clothes; give me leave to serve for twelve months in your kitchen without telling my name. After that I will fight."

"You are a fair youth," Arthur replied, "and you deserve a better gift. However, since this is all you ask, I will put you under the care of Sir Kay, who is master of the kitchen."

Sir Kay looked at Gareth with scorn.

"This youth has come from some place where he did not get enough to eat," he said, "and so he thinks of nothing but food. Yet if he wants food, he shall have it, provided he does his work well."

Sir Lancelot, who stood nearby, said:

"Sir Kay, you understand dogs and horses well, but not men. Look at this youth's face; see his broad forehead and honest eyes, and beautiful hands. I believe he is of noble birth, and you should treat him well."

"Perhaps he is a traitor," Sir Kay said. "Perhaps he will poison King Arthur's food. Yet I believe he is too stupid to be a traitor. If he were not stupid, or if he were noble, he would have asked for a different gift. He would have asked for a

horse and armor. Let him go to my kitchen."

So Gareth went to the kitchen. And there he worked faithfully at hard tasks, such as cutting wood and drawing water. Sir Lancelot spoke to him kindly whenever he passed him, but Sir Kay was always very strict and severe. Sometimes Gareth grew discouraged and wished his mother had not exacted such a promise of him.

Whenever there was a tournament he was happy. He liked to watch the horses prancing, and the brave knights riding, with the sun shining on their helmets and lances. And he would say to himself:

"Only wait till the twelve months have passed, and then I shall ask King Arthur to let me do some brave deed. Perhaps someone will come to the hall and demand to have a wrong righted. Then I will beg the king to let me do that act of justice."

Such thoughts kept him cheerful. And indeed, before many weeks, his chance came for doing a great deed.

The Story of Sir Gareth & Lynette

Gareth served in the kitchen of the king only one month, for his mother became sorry for the promise she had asked of him, and sent armor for him to Arthur's Court, with a letter to the king telling who the youth was. With great joy Gareth then went to Arthur and said:

"My lord, I can fight as well as my brother Gawain. At home we have proved it. Then make me a knight—in secret, for I do not want the other knights to know my name. Make me a knight, and give me permission to right the first wrong that we hear of."

The king said gravely:

"You know all that my knights must promise?"

"Yes, my lord Arthur. I am willing to promise all."

"I will make you my knight in secret, since you wish it," Arthur said, "except that I must tell Sir Lancelot. He is my dearest knight, and I keep no secrets from him."

Gareth said that he would be glad to have Sir Lancelot know. Accordingly the king spoke to Sir Lancelot about Gareth.

"I have promised him that he may right the first wrong we hear of," said Arthur, "but as he has not yet proved what he can do, I want you to take a horse and follow him when he sets forth. Cover up the great lions on your shield so that he will not know who you are." Sir Lancelot agreed. Then Gareth was secretly made a knight.

That same day a beautiful young damsel came into Arthur's hall. She had cheeks as pink as apple blossoms, and very sharp eyes.

"Who are you, damsel?" asked the king, "and what do you need?"

"My name is Lynette," she said, "and I am of noble blood. I need a knight to fight for my sister Lyonors, a lady, also noble, rich, and most beautiful."

"Why must she have a knight?" questioned Arthur.

"My Lord King, she lives in Castle Perilous. Around this castle a river circles three times, and there are three passing-places, one over each circle of the river. Three knights, who are brothers, keep a constant guard over these passing-places. A fourth knight, also a brother, clad in black armor, stands guard in front of my sister's castle. We have never seen this knight's face or heard his voice, but his brothers tell us he is the most powerful and daring knight in the world. All these four keep my sister a prisoner."

"And why?"

"Because they want her to marry one of them so that they can have her great wealth. She refuses, but they say that they will have their way. In the meantime, they demand that you send Sir Lancelot to fight with them. They hope to overthrow Sir Lancelot, thus proving themselves the greatest warriors in the land. But I believe that Sir Lancelot could overthrow them; therefore, I have come for him."

Arthur remembered his promise to Sir Gareth, and did not speak of Sir Lancelot, but asked:

"Tell me what these four knights, your enemies, are like."

"The three I have talked to are vain and foolish knights, my lord," answered the damsel. "They have no law, and they acknowledge no king. Yet they are very strong, and therefore am I come for Sir Lancelot."

Then Sir Gareth rose up, crying:

"Sir King, give me this adventure."

At this, Sir Kay started up in anger, but Gareth continued:

"My king, you know that I am but your kitchen boy, yet I

have grown so strong on your meat and drink that I can overthrow an hundred such knights."

The king looked at him a moment, and said:

"Go, then."

At this all the knights were amazed. The damsel's face flushed with anger.

"Shame, King!" she cried. "I asked you for your chief knight, and you give me a kitchen boy!"

Then, before anyone could prevent, she ran from the hall, mounted her horse, and rode out of the city gate. Gareth followed, and at the doorway found a noble war horse which the king had ordered to be given him. Nearby were the two faithful servants who had followed him from his mother's home. They held his armor. Gareth put it on, seized his lance and shield, jumped upon his horse, and rode off joyfully.

Sir Kay, who was watching, said to Sir Lancelot:

"Why does the king send my kitchen lad to fight? I will go after the boy and put him to his pots and pans again."

"Sir Kay, do not attempt to do that," said Sir Lancelot. "Remember that the king commanded him to go."

But Sir Kay leaped on his horse and followed Gareth.

Meanwhile, Sir Gareth overtook the damsel and said:

"Lady, I am to right your wrong. Lead and I follow."

But she cried:

"Go back! I smell kitchen grease when you are near. Go back! your master has come for you."

Gareth looked behind and saw that Sir Kay was riding up to him. When Sir Kay was within hearing distance, he shouted:

"Come back with me to the kitchen."

"I will not," said Gareth.

Then Sir Kay rode fiercely at the youth. Gareth, however, struck him from his horse, and then turned to the damsel, saying:

"Lead on; I follow."

She rode for a long time in silence, with Gareth a few paces behind her. At last she stopped and said:

"You have overthrown your master, you kitchen boy, but I do not like you any better for it. I still smell the kitchen grease."

Sir Gareth said, very gently:

"You may speak to me as you will, but I shall not leave you till I have righted your wrong."

"Ah!" she said, scornfully, "you talk like a noble knight, but you are not one," and she again galloped in front of him.

Presently, as they passed a thick wood, a man broke out of it and spoke to them:

"Help! help! they are drowning my lord!"

"Follow! I lead!" shouted Gareth to the damsel, and rushed into the wood. There he found six men trying to drown a seventh. Gareth attacked them with such vigor that they fled. When the rescued man had recovered, he thanked Gareth warmly.

"I am the lord of the castle yonder," he said, "and these are my enemies. You came in time."

Then he begged Gareth and the lady to stay all night in his castle. They agreed, and he led the way. He took them into his large hall and was about to seat them side by side at a dining table. But the damsel said in scorn:

"This is a kitchen boy, and I will not sit by him."

The lord looked surprised. He took Gareth to another table and sat beside him. After they had eaten, he said:

"You may be a kitchen boy, or the damsel may be out of her mind, but whichever is the case, you are a good fighter and you have saved my life."

The next morning Gareth and the damsel set forth. They rode for a while in silence, and then she said:

"Sir Kitchen Boy, although you are so low, I would like to save your life. Soon we are coming to one who will overthrow you; so turn back."

But Gareth refused. In a little while they came to the first circle of the river. The passing-place was spanned by a bridge. On the farther side of the bridge was a beautiful pavilion, draped in silk of gold and crimson colors. In front of it passed a warrior without armor.

"Damsel," he cried, "is this the knight you have brought from Arthur's Court to fight with me?"

"Ah!" she said, "the king scorns you so much that he has sent a kitchen boy to fight with you. Take care that he does not fall on you before you are armed, for he is a knave."

The warrior went inside his tent for his armor, and the damsel said to Gareth:

"Are you afraid?"

"Damsel," he said, "I am not afraid. I would rather fight twenty times than hear you speak so unkindly of me. Yet your cruel words have put strength into my arm. I shall fight well."

Then the knight came forth all in armor, and he said:

"Youth, you are a kitchen boy. Go back to your king; you are not fit to fight with me."

Gareth rode at him fiercely, saying:

"I am of nobler blood than you."

He fought so well that soon his enemy was overcome. Then Gareth said:

"Go to Arthur's Court and say that his kitchen boy sent you."

When the knight had departed, Gareth rode on, with the damsel in advance. After a little while she stopped her horse, and when he had caught up with her, she said:

"Youth, I do not smell the kitchen grease so much as I did."

Then she galloped off, laughing over her shoulder, while Gareth followed her, a little more slowly.

When they reached the second circle of the river, the damsel said:

"Here is the brother of the knight you overthrew. He is



Gareth rode at him fiercely.

stronger than the first. You had better go home, kitchen boy."

Gareth answered nothing. Out of the tent by the bridge which crossed the second circle of water, came a knight, clad in armor which glowed like the sun. Lynette shouted to him:

"I bring a kitchen boy who has overthrown your brother."

"Ah!" shouted the knight, and rode fiercely at Sir Gareth.

The two fought for a long time. The warrior was strong, but Sir Gareth was stronger, and at last overthrew him, and sent him back to Arthur's Court.

The damsel Lynette had ridden far ahead of him. When he came near her, she said: "The knight's horse slipped, and that is why you overcame him. And now are you ready to fight with the third knight, for there he stands?"

At the third and innermost circle of the river stood the third knight, clad not in armor, but in hardened skins. Sir Gareth saw that he was more powerful than his brothers. The two at once began to fight on the bridge, but Sir Gareth's sword could not pierce the hard skins. Again and again he tried and failed. He grew tired, and began to fear that he should be conquered. But all at once, when his strokes were becoming feeble, Lynette cried out to him:

"Well done, good knight! You are no kitchen boy, but a brave lord. Strike for me! Do not lose. You are worthy to be a Knight of the Round Table."

When Sir Gareth heard this, he was so encouraged that he made a final great effort and threw his enemy over the bridge into the water. Then he turned to Lynette, saying:

"Lead; I follow."

But Lynette, proud now of her valiant escort, and humbled and ashamed at her misjudging of him, said:

"No, we shall ride side by side. I am very sorry I called you a kitchen boy, for I know that you are a noble knight."

They rode happily side by side till dusk, when they came in sight of Castle Perilous. Just as they were about to cross the moat, a knight overtook them. It was Sir Lancelot, who had

been delayed because he had stopped to help Sir Kay after Sir Gareth had thrown him from his horse.

The great knight, as he rode up to the two in the twilight, seeing only the shields which Sir Gareth had taken from the three knights, thought the young man was an enemy, and attacked him. Sir Lancelot was so strong that he soon overcame the youth.

As he fell, Lynette cried out in shame and sorrow, and Sir Gareth said:

"Oh, I am thrown."

Sir Lancelot knew Sir Gareth's voice, and raised him up, saying:

"I am Lancelot, and I am sorry to have overthrown you, my friend."

Sir Gareth said that it was no dishonor to be beaten by Sir Lancelot. Then the three rode into the castle, and there they met the fourth knight, who was all covered with black armor.

Sir Lancelot wished to fight with him, but Sir Gareth would not permit it.

"This must be my adventure," he said.

Sir Gareth rode at the knight, expecting to meet a very strong man, but he easily unhorsed him. His enemy cried:

"Oh spare my life; I am not a knight."

Then he took off his helmet and showed the face of a young boy.

"My three brothers made me pretend to be a fierce knight," he explained. "They thought it would make people more afraid if they believed we were four strong knights."

Sir Lancelot and Sir Gareth laughed heartily, and so did Lynette. They took the boy into the castle, where Lynette's sister, Lyonors, who was now freed from her money-loving captors, greeted them with much joy. She put before them a great feast, and this time Sir Gareth and Lynette sat side by side. Afterwards a marriage was made between them, and they went to live with King Arthur in Camelot.

Sir Ivaine

Among Arthur's Knights of the Round Table was one who was a mixture of good and bad, as indeed most people are. His name was Sir Ivaine; brave, kind-hearted, and merry; but at the same time fickle, sometimes forgetful of his promises, and inclined to make light of serious things.

One night, in the early spring, the knights and ladies of Arthur's Court were sitting in the dining-hall. The king and Guinevere had withdrawn, but were expected to return. Supper had been served, and the last course, consisting of pomegranate seeds and dates, had just been carried off. A fire had been built in the deep hearth, and the four bronze pillars in front were lighted by the flames. Four little pages in blue and white velvet kirtles sat on stools watching the fire, and perhaps dreaming of the days when they, too, should be warriors and have adventures.

Sir Ivaine was telling of his experience with the Black Knight.

"It was when I was very young," he said; "indeed, I had just been made a knight. Someone told me of the wicked Black Knight who lived, and still lives, in a wood a long way from here. Knowing that he did much evil, I determined to kill him. I rode to the wood where he lived, and in which I found a marble platform. In the middle of it was a sunken space holding a fountain. I walked to this, and following the directions of some writing which was on the stone, picked up a cup that lay at hand, and filling it with water, poured it into the fountain.

"Then a great storm of wind and rain arose, and when it

was at its height the Black Knight rode up and began to attack me. We fought for a little while, but he easily overthrew me. Thinking me dead, he rode back, leaving me on the ground. But after a time I was able to mount my horse, and went back to my mother's castle."

At this moment the king and the queen entered, unperceived by anyone except Sir Ivaine. The young man, who was always polite, sprang to his feet; then the other knights rose. Sir Kay, who was not always sweet-tempered, said to Sir Ivaine:

"We all know that you are very polite, but you have more courtesy than bravery."

At that Sir Ivaine said:

"I was almost a boy when the Black Knight overthrew me, but I could conquer him now."

"It is very easy to say that after you have eaten," said Sir Kay. "Almost any knight feels brave and self-satisfied when he has had a good supper of venison."

The king asked what the conversation was about, and Sir Ivaine repeated the story of his adventure, adding:

"And, Sir King, I crave your permission to set forth tomorrow to slay this Black Knight who is a pest in the land."

"I have heard of this man," said the king, "and have often thought of sending someone to punish him. But he lives far away, and it has been necessary heretofore to right first the wrongs nearest home. Yet now his evil deeds and persecutions must cease. Tomorrow a company of us will set forth and conquer him and all his people."

The king named some half-dozen of his knights, Sir Ivaine among them, who were to undertake this adventure.

Sir Ivaine was displeased; he thought that the adventure should be his alone. So he rose in the middle of the night and stole away unattended, determined to go in advance of the others and kill the Black Knight. It did not occur to him that in proving himself brave, he was also proving himself

disobedient.

He rode forth in the darkness, humming merrily to himself. At daybreak he reached a valley, and as he went through it, saw a great serpent fighting with a lion. Sir Ivaine stopped to watch this curious combat. At first the two fighters seemed evenly matched, but soon the huge serpent wrapped all its folds about the lion and began squeezing it to death. When Sir Ivaine saw this, he drew his sword and killed the serpent.

When the lion was free, it bounded up to Sir Ivaine, and he was afraid that it meant to kill him; but it fawned at his feet like a spaniel. He stroked it, and put his arms about its neck. When he mounted his horse, the beast followed him, refusing to go away. Then Sir Ivaine made up his mind that they were to be companions.

For many days the two kept close together, and at night Sir Ivaine would go to sleep with his head on the lion's neck. One day, as they came to a square castle set in a meadow, some people who stood on the castle walls began to shoot arrows at the lion, but Sir Ivaine stopped them, telling them that the animal was tame.

Then they told him that it was their rule that no one should pass by that castle without doing battle with their lord. Sir Ivaine told them that he was quite willing to obey their rule; so they opened the castle gate. They said he must make his lion stay outside, but Sir Ivaine refused to do this. He promised, however, to make the lion lie down quietly; then the two were allowed to enter.

The courtyard was a large paved place, in which there were a score of armed men. Presently the lord of the castle came forward. This lord was much larger than Sir Ivaine, and the lion, on seeing him, began to lash its tail. But Sir Ivaine ordered it to be still, and it at once obeyed.

Then Sir Ivaine and the knight battled together. The knight was powerful, but Sir Ivaine was very agile and skillful. He was not able to strike so hard as could his enemy, but he

was better able to avoid blows. Therefore it was not long before he got the advantage and overthrew the lord.

When this happened, the lord called for help, and ordered his armed men to kill Sir Ivaine. The whole twenty began to obey this treacherous order, but just as they were about to fall upon Sir Ivaine, the lion bounded among them, roaring savagely. With a few strokes of its powerful paws it disabled the men. Sir Ivaine told the lord of the castle that he must ride to Camelot and give himself up to Arthur to be judged for his treachery. Then Sir Ivaine rode away from the castle; and now that the lion had saved his life, he became very fond of the animal.

After many days of travel, Sir Ivaine reached the forest in the midst of which was the castle of the Black Knight. He rode to the platform of stone, dismounted and poured water into the fountain. As before, a storm arose, and at its height the Black Knight appeared.

He recognized the armor of Sir Ivaine, and said:

"Aha! I see I did not kill you before, but you shall not escape me this time."

"The best man shall win," said Sir Ivaine, cheerfully.

Then the two began a great combat. Their swords clashed so that the noise of the fountain was drowned; they fought so eagerly that they were not even aware of the storm. It was not long before the Black Knight began to grow weak from the many powerful and death-dealing strokes from Sir Ivaine's sword. At last, seeing that he was mortally wounded, the Black Knight turned his horse and galloped in the direction of his castle.

Ordering the lion to stay where it had lain during the combat, Sir Ivaine followed. But he could not quite catch up with the Black Knight, although gaining on him inch by inch. By the time the castle moat was reached, Sir Ivaine was only five feet behind. The horses thundered one after the other over the bridge. The Black Knight rode under the portcullis,



He dismounted and poured water into the fountain.

or sharp iron gate, which was raised. The instant he was inside, the portcullis fell, in order to shut out Sir Ivaine.

But Sir Ivaine had already passed beneath it, and as it fell his horse was cut in two. Even the long plume in Sir Ivaine's helmet was shorn off, and lay outside the gate.

Sir Ivaine sprang to his feet and drew his sword to renew his attack upon the Black Knight, but he was already dead, and lay across his panting horse's neck.

Then Sir Ivaine realized what his recklessness had cost him. There he was, alone in a strange castle, the lord of which he had killed. Soon the people of the castle would come and capture him, for he could not escape, since the portcullis was down.

He ran into the castle, and up the stairs leading to the turret. He was fast growing weak from the wounds he had received, and his armor was heavy. Moreover, in spite of his care, it clashed at every step, and he was afraid someone would soon hear him. He had all but reached the top of the stairs when the door of the turret room opened, and a little maiden looked down upon him. He begged her not to cry out, and telling her who he was and what he had done, asked her to hide him.

"I will," she said, "because you are brave and you are wounded, and because you have killed that wicked tyrant, the Black Knight. He does not own this castle at all; it belongs to a beautiful lady, his cousin, who is my mistress. He keeps her here a prisoner because she will not marry him."

Then the little maiden led him into the turret room. She concealed his armor in a hole in the side of the wall, and told him to hide himself between the two mattresses of the bed. Before he had time to do so, however, they heard a great noise in the courtyard, and looking down, saw that the body of the Black Knight had been discovered. Near it stood a beautiful lady, more beautiful than any Sir Ivaine had ever seen, except Queen Guinevere. She was dark like the queen, and her eyes

were as bright as stars. He would have looked at her a long time, but the little maiden begged him to hide without delay.

"Quick!" she cried. "The men have seen that there is the front part of a horse inside the gate, and know that the person who has killed our lord must be here. Even now they have begun the search, for they all love the Black Knight, although my mistress does not, and they will hang you if they find you."

So Sir Ivaine crept between the mattresses, and the little maiden hurried down the stairs and went to her beautiful mistress. Presently Sir Ivaine heard men tramping up the turret steps. They often stopped, trying all the doors they came to, and at last entered the room in which he lay. One of them, peering into the hole in the wall where his armor was, said:

"Here is armor."

But another replied:

"That is some that once was used by our master; there is no need to drag it into the light."

Then they searched among all the furnishings of the room, but found no one. At last, as they were leaving, one of the men thrust his sword twice through the mattress. The second thrust cut deeply into Sir Ivaine's arm; but as the knight was brave, he did not utter a cry.

When the men had gone, he crept out, and found that the cut in his arm and his other wounds were bleeding badly. Just then the little maiden came in with food. She cried out in alarm when she saw the blood, and quickly tore a piece of linen from her robe for bandages. When all the wounds had been carefully attended to, she gave him a plentiful supper and promised to take care of him until there was a good opportunity for him to escape.

She visited him every morning, and told him the day's news in the castle. He learned that a lion kept roaring about the walls, and that the bowmen had tried to kill it, but could not. Sir Ivaine was sure that it was his lion, and longed to have

it, but knew that this was impossible. And she told him how the people of the castle had been angry at their lady because she would not marry the Black Knight; but now that he was dead, acknowledged her as mistress and obeyed her in everything. The little maiden said she thought that if the lady were told that Sir Ivaine was hidden she would probably see that he had a safe conduct out of the castle.

"I want never to leave this castle," said Sir Ivaine; "for I love your lady."

This pleased the little maiden, for she had learned to respect Sir Ivaine. So she went to the lady of the castle and told her all about the stranger. The lady had Sir Ivaine moved to a rich apartment where she could visit him often and help the little maid in her care of him. She did not tell her people, however, that this stranger knight had killed their lord.

As Sir Ivaine recovered, he soon found courage to tell her how beautiful she was, and that he loved her more than anything in the world. He said that if she would marry him, he would stay with her forever, and never seek for more adventures. All he asked was that she would let in his lion, which still continued to roar outside the castle walls. When the lady heard the story of the lion, it seemed to her that if Sir Ivaine were so kind to an animal, he would probably be much kinder to her.

So she said that she would marry him. The people of the castle saw and liked him, and agreed to obey him as their lord. When they were told that the lion they had tried to kill belonged to him and must be admitted to the castle, they showed some fear. Sir Ivaine told them that there was no need of this, for the beast was very gentle, and was making noise only because of its desire for its master. He went outside the castle walls and called. Soon there was heard a loud roaring; a big yellow body bounded out of the forest, and the lion came leaping to its master's feet. It frisked about him, and rubbed its head on his arm, just as a favorite dog might do. When the

people saw how tame it was, they were no longer afraid.

Sir Ivaine and the beautiful lady were soon married, and for a long time everyone was very happy. Sir Ivaine sent a letter to King Arthur telling the result of his adventure. Soon the messenger returned bearing rich gifts from the king and Guinevere, and an invitation to come to Camelot whenever they wished to. The lady, however, persuaded Sir Ivaine to promise to remain with her in her castle.

One day a party of the Knights of the Round Table rode into the courtyard. They were going on a great adventure, and stopped by the way to see how Sir Ivaine and his beautiful wife fared. When Sir Ivaine saw them, all his old-time love of fighting came back, and he went to his lady and begged her to let him go with the knights.

"Ah, my Ivaine," she said, "you told me that you would never leave me."

"A knight ought to seek adventures," he said. "And I will return to you."

She paused for a while and then said:

"I will let you go if you will promise to come back in a year and a day; that is, next Whitsuntide."

He gladly promised, and she said:

"If you break this promise, I will never see you again."

But Sir Ivaine was sure he would not break the promise, because he loved her too much for that.

So off he rode with the knights, followed by his faithful lion. The lady and the little maiden waved farewells to Sir Ivaine from the tower until they could no longer see him; then they again took up the life they had lived before he came to the castle.

Sir Ivaine rode with the knights for many months, and had many adventures. At last, just as the year was drawing to a close, he started homeward. On the way, however, he stopped at Arthur's Court to pay his respects to the king and the queen. They both remembered him and greeted him

kindly.

A great tournament was being held at that time in Camelot, and the king asked Sir Ivaine if he would like to take part. Sir Ivaine was pleased, for he loved the display of such combats. During the three days of the tournament he distinguished himself greatly.

On the evening of the third day, as the knights were sitting in the great hall of the Round Table, a little maiden entered. She went up to King Arthur and gave him a ring.

"This ring," she said, "is one Sir Ivaine gave my lady. She returns it, and has vowed never to see him again because he has broken his promise to her."

Then, before anyone could stop her, she left the hall, mounted her horse, and rode away. Sir Ivaine sprang to his feet, staring wildly. Whitsuntide had fallen on the first day of the tournament, his year and a day had more than passed, and he had forgotten his promise!

He rushed from the hall and down the hill through the streets of Camelot, out of the city gate, and into the forest. He ran on and on until he fell exhausted.

The next day he awoke in a fever, and would have died but for his faithful lion. The poor animal tried to make Sir Ivaine rise, but seeing that he could not, dragged him to the edge of a brook, where he could drink when he was thirsty. The lion also brought him game. At first Sir Ivaine would not touch it, but finally began to eat it raw.

After a time he became better, physically, but his senses were gone. In his madness he wandered all through the woods, fighting with the trees and bushes. The lion always followed him, protecting him from other animals and from men.

One day when the lion was absent finding food, Sir Ivaine lay asleep. A good hermit came up to him, and pitying his condition, lifted him in his arms and carried him to his hut. He bathed the poor knight, cut his hair, and put a robe upon

him. He was laying him upon a bed when the lion came roaring to the door and dashed it open.

When it saw the hermit tending its master, it fawned at his feet. After that Sir Ivaine spent much of his time in the hut. The lion supplied him with food, bringing meat to the hermit, who always divided it into four parts: three parts he gave to the lion, and one he cooked for Sir Ivaine and himself.

Sometimes Sir Ivaine would run away from the hermit and wander for days in the forest. The lion took care of him, and always led him back to the hermit's hut. Once, however, Sir Ivaine set forth in the direction of his wife's castle. At night the lion tried to take him to the hut, but in vain. For days he wandered, always in the same direction, until at last he reached the wood where the stone platform was. He laid himself down upon it and slept. Soon a lady and a maid appeared. The lion sprang at them, but when it reached their feet, it licked the lady's hand, for she was its mistress.

It took her robe in its teeth and pulled her gently to the spot where Sir Ivaine lay. At first she would not look at him, because she had not forgiven him for breaking his promise. But the little maiden said:

"Dear mistress, look at him. The story which the knights of Arthur's Court told us about his madness must be true. If you will but look at his face you will see that it is the face of a man who has lost his senses."

Then the lady knelt beside him. When she saw his worn features and his tattered garments, she began to believe that he really had lost his senses from grief. She sent the little maiden to the castle for an ointment she had. It was so powerful that if it were rubbed over a person who was ill, it would cure him, no matter what his disease was. When the little maid brought it, the lady put it upon Sir Ivaine, but so gently as not to rouse him.

After several hours, Sir Ivaine awoke. At first he hardly knew where he was, but soon he recollected all that had

happened, and seeing his lady near, begged her to forgive him. This she did, and they were reconciled. Sir Ivaine was sure that he would never again forget to keep a promise.

For some months they lived very happily in the castle. Then they went to Camelot in order to be near to Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

Sir Balin

In Arthur's Court there dwelt a poor knight named Balin, who had accidentally killed the cousin of King Arthur, and had been taken to the court of the king for trial. He had lived there almost as a prisoner for six months, until it was decided that he had not meant to do wrong. All his money was gone, and his clothes and armor were poor. He was sorry for this, but he was still more sorry that he was not doing brave deeds like the other knights.

One day when he sat in the great hall at Camelot, looking at the shields which were carved or covered with gold, a damsel entered who wore a rich mantle, trimmed with fur. As Arthur and the knights looked at her, she let it fall to the floor, and they saw that she wore a heavy sword.

"Damsel," said Arthur, "why do you, a maiden, wear a sword?"

"Alas!" said the maiden, "I should be glad if I did not wear it. It is very heavy, and causes me pain. But I am forced to wear it until I meet a knight who can take it from me."

"Surely many knights could do that, and gladly," the lords said.

"No," said the lady. "It seems that there is but one knight in all the world who is to take the sword. I heard that there were brave knights at the Court of King Rience, the enemy of King Arthur, and I went there. Yet no one could unfasten the sword. Now am I come here on the same errand."

"In truth, damsel," said the king, "you are right welcome. My knights shall try to take your weapon."

Then, at a sign from Arthur, a knight stepped forward.

But, even though he exerted all his strength, the sword could not be unfastened.

"Sir, you need not pull so hard," said the damsel. "The one who is to take the sword will do so easily."

All the knights tried except Sir Balin, who stood back because of his poor clothes. Yet he wanted very much to see if he was the chosen knight, and just as the damsel was going away, he said:

"Damsel, will you let me try? I am poorly clothed, but my heart tells me that I may succeed."

The damsel saw that he had a good face. But his clothes were so poor she doubted if he were really a knight.

"I am afraid you will fail," she said.

"Ah, maiden," he returned, "poor clothes are but the outside. Good deeds are just as worthy, whether done by a rich person or a poor one. Many a man who is badly clothed has real valor and kindness."

"That is very true," she said; "so try, good sir."

Then Sir Balin seized the hilt of the sword, and the weapon came away easily. All the lords wondered, and the lady said:

"You are a good knight, the best I have met. You shall do many brave deeds. And now, give me my sword again."

"No," said Sir Balin, "I should like to keep this sword, for I have no other."

"Alas!" said the maiden, "I am sorry to hear these words, for now I must give you the sword."

"Surely he deserves it," said Arthur, "for it weighed heavily on you."

"Yes," she replied, "but it is a misfortune for him to keep it. He shall slay with it the best friend he has in the world. It is going to prove his destruction."

Sir Balin would not believe her.

"I could not slay my best friend," he said. "Besides, I am willing to meet whatever happens, and I wish to keep the

sword."

Then the maiden departed in great sorrow, while Balin said to the king:

"My lord, give me permission to leave your court."

"I do not like to lose you," said the king. "Perhaps you are angry because you were in prison so long. You must know that it takes time to find out who is innocent and who is guilty."

"My lord," answered Sir Balin, "I know it is not wise to make a judgment hastily, and I do not blame you for keeping me in prison. I love you, and wish to leave your court that I may do some deed worthy of the Round Table."

Then Arthur said that he might go. Soon a servant brought to Balin a fine horse and good armor which were the gifts of the king. Balin at once took leave of Arthur and the knights, and rode away, singing as he rode, for he was very happy. Sometimes he stopped to lift up his shield and admire it. It had a blue emblem upon it, and to Sir Balin's eyes its beauty was that of the sky, the soft blue of heaven.

Sir Balin rode until he was tired. At last, from the crest of a hill, he saw a gloomy stone castle, and galloped towards it joyfully, hoping to rest there.

At a turn of the road, he saw a cross with gold letters upon it. He stopped to read the words, which were: "Let no knight go to the castle, for great danger is there."

"Oh," said Sir Balin, "I am used to danger. I fear nothing," and he went on.

Presently an old man started up beside the road. He had a long gray beard, and was dressed in a long gray robe that sparkled with little specks of frost. The old man said to Sir Balin:

"Did you not read the letters on the cross?"

"Yes," replied Sir Balin, "but I am not afraid."

"Oh, Sir Balin, you of all men should fear to go to that castle," the old man said.

"Why?" he asked in amazement. "Nevertheless, I shall

go."

"Sir Balin, Sir Balin!" cried the old man after him, "you are too self-willed. You will be very sorry for what you have done before you die."

But Sir Balin rode on without fear, and soon reached the gate of the castle. A hundred beautiful ladies and many knights welcomed him. They took off his armor and put a rich crimson cloak upon his shoulders. Then they led him into a banquet hall where there was music and dancing. They set food before him, and he ate, thankfully. He was very happy, feeling sure that he could rest here for many days.

Just as he was thinking this, the lady who was mistress of the castle said:

"Sir knight, it is the rule of this castle that every lord who comes here as a guest must fight."

"That is a hard custom," said Sir Balin.

"Yet you need fight but once," answered the lady. "We have here the knight who entered just before you came."

"Alas!" said Sir Balin, "I would rather not fight, for I wish to rest. Since such is the custom of the castle, however, I must do my part. Let someone bring my armor."

A servant at once came up to him with a suit of black armor.

"This is not my armor," said Sir Balin. "My armor is not painted black. It is honest gray steel, decorated with blue."

"It is the custom of the castle to wear black," they told him. "This armor is as good as your own."

Sir Balin felt sad, he could hardly tell why; and was very sorry that he had ever come to the castle. Putting on the armor, however, he went into the courtyard and mounted his horse. No sooner was he ready than another knight, clad all in black, entered the courtyard.

The two knights rode together so fiercely that the shock threw them both off their horses in a swoon. After a time they recovered and began to fight on foot, pressing each other near

the walls of the castle.

Sir Balin was fighting with the sword that he had taken from the damsel in King Arthur's Court. It was a strong sword, and whenever it struck, the armor of his opponent cracked. They fought till their breath failed, and then they rested. Each knew that never before had he dealt with such a strong enemy.

Then they fought again, and gave each other seven deep wounds, the least of which would prove fatal. All the ground was red with blood, but Sir Balin fought on still, for the people of the castle were watching from the walls, and he wished to be thought a great warrior. So at last he used all his remaining strength and gave the other knight such a hard blow that he fell to the ground. Sir Balin knew that it was a death stroke. He felt that he, too, was about to die, and said:

"Who are you? I never fought with such a strong knight before."

The other answered faintly:

"I am Sir Balan, the brother to the good knight Sir Balin."

Then Sir Balin cried out:

"Alas, alas! that I should live to see this day!" and he fell backward in a swoon.

Sir Balan was dying, but he crawled on his hands and knees to where Sir Balin lay, and took off his helmet only to discover the face of his brother. Then he wept bitterly till Sir Balin recovered from his swoon.

"Alas!" said Sir Balan, "if we had but worn our own armor we should have known each other. And now we must die; we have killed each other."

Sir Balin was too full of remorse to weep.

"All this is my fault," he said. "As the old man on the road told me, I have been too self-willed. First, I would have the damsel's sword, although she told me that I should slay with it the best friend I had. That is you, Balan. And then I would enter this castle in spite of warnings. I deserve to die, but it is



They fought till their breath failed.

a hard punishment that I should have killed you, my brother."

Soon some ladies came from the wall into the courtyard, and to them Sir Balin said:

"We are two dear brothers who have killed each other. I pray you, promise to bury us in the same grave."

The ladies wept as they made the promise. The two brothers put their arms about each other and waited for death. They hoped to die together, but Sir Balan died first. Soon after, when Sir Balin had also died, the ladies buried them together, and put a stone above the grave, telling the sad story of their combat and death.

Sir Geraint and Enid

One of the bravest knights in King Arthur's Court was Sir Geraint. Once he was in the forest with Queen Guinevere and one of her maidens, when a lady, a knight, and a dwarf rode by. The queen told the maiden to go to the dwarf and ask who his master was.

As the maiden approached them, she saw that the knight had a very proud face. She asked the dwarf his master's name, but he said, roughly:

"I do not know."

"If you do not know," answered the maiden, "I will ask him myself."

She started to ride up to the knight, but the dwarf struck at her with his whip. Upon this, she went back and told the queen and Sir Geraint what had passed. Sir Geraint was very angry, and he said to the queen:

"Fair queen, I will ride after this knight and his dwarf and avenge the insult done to your maiden. If I succeed, I shall return in three days."

"Do so," said the queen, "and I trust you will succeed, not only in this, but in all things which you attempt. Some day you will love some fair lady. Before you marry her, bring her to me, and no matter how poor or how rich she may be, I will clothe her for her wedding in the most beautiful garments in the world. They shall shine like the sun."

So off rode Sir Geraint, keeping at some distance behind the lady, the knight, and the dwarf. At last, after passing through many woods, he lost sight of them as they disappeared beyond the top of a hill. Sir Geraint rode up, and saw

below him, in a valley, the one street of a little town. On one side was a fortress, so new that the stone of which it was built was still white; while on the other side stood a gray old castle, fast falling into decay. He saw the three people he was following enter the fortress.

In the little town there was a great deal of noise and bustle. At first Sir Geraint could not find any place to stay, for the houses were all full. He stopped before a servant who was scouring his master's armor, and asked what all the noise meant. The servant said:

"The Sparrow-hawk," and went on working.

Then he met an old man carrying a sack of corn, and asked him the same question. The old man made the same reply. Next Sir Geraint approached one who was making armor, and questioned him. Without looking up the man replied:

"Friend, he who works for the Sparrow-hawk has little time for answering questions."

Sir Geraint was vexed, and said:

"I am weary of hearing of your Sparrow-hawk. I do not understand what you mean. Will you not tell me where I can find a place to stay for tonight? And will you not sell me some armor? I have but my sword."

Then the man looked up, and said:

"Your pardon, sir. We are all very busy here, for tomorrow we hold a tournament, and our work is not half done. I cannot give you armor, for we need all that we have in the town. As to lodging, all the room is taken. However, perhaps Earl Iniol in the castle will receive you."

Sir Geraint rode over to the gray old castle, and as the gate was open, entered the ruined courtyard. Dismounting, he went into the hall. Here he found the earl, an elderly man dressed in clothes which had once been handsome, but were now old and worn. To him Sir Geraint said:

"Good sir, I seek lodging for the night."

The old Earl Iniol answered:

"Sir, I was once rich and am now poor; nevertheless, I will gladly give you the best I have."

As he spoke, someone in the castle began to sing. The voice was very sweet. Sir Geraint thought he had never heard anyone sing so wonderfully.

"That is my daughter Enid," said the earl.

Then he took Sir Geraint into a room in which sat an old lady in a faded velvet gown. She was the earl's wife. By her side stood Enid in a faded silk gown. She was as beautiful as her voice was sweet, and after watching her, Sir Geraint said to himself:

"I already love this maiden."

He said nothing out loud, only looked at her. Earl Iniol spoke to her:

"Enid, this good knight will stay with us. His horse is in the courtyard; take it to the stall and give it corn. Then go into the town and buy us some food."

Sir Geraint wished to put away his horse himself, but the old earl said:

"Sir, we are very poor, but we cannot permit our guest to do any work. I pray you, stay here."

So Enid took the horse to the stall. After that, she went into the town and soon returned with meat and sweet cakes. Then, because most of the rooms in the old castle were in ruins, she cooked the meat in the same hall in which they were to eat. When the meal was ready, she waited on her father and her mother and Sir Geraint. The knight watched her and loved her more and more.

When they had risen from the table, he said to the earl:

"My lord, pray tell me what the people of this town mean when they speak of the Sparrow-hawk."

The earl's face grew sad, as he said:

"That is the name given to the young knight who rules in this town."

"Does he live in the fortress?" asked Sir Geraint. "And do a lady and a dwarf ride with him?"

"Yes," said the earl.

"Ah, then he is the man I am in search of," said Sir Geraint. "I must fight with him before three days are over. I am Geraint of King Arthur's Court."

"I know your name well," said the earl. "We often hear of your great deeds at Camelot. Many times have I related to my Enid the story of your brave deeds."

"I am bound to do my duty with the other knights," answered Sir Geraint. "And now tell me more of this Sparrow-hawk."

"Alas! he is my nephew," said the earl. "At one time I ruled this town. My nephew, the Sparrow-hawk, was powerful, too, and he asked to unite our power by marrying Enid, but neither she nor I wished it. Then he collected a body of men and attacked me, and took all my wealth, leaving me nothing but this old castle."

"Tomorrow," said Sir Geraint, "I will fight in the tournament with this Sparrow-hawk, and conquer him, and give you back your lands. But I lack armor."

"I can give you armor, although it is old and rusty," said the earl. "But no one is allowed to fight in this tournament unless there is some lady he loves best in all the world. Then he fights for the sake of this lady, and if he wins, receives the prize, which he in turn gives to her."

"What is the prize?" asked Sir Geraint.

"A hawk, a sparrow-hawk made of gold. This nephew of mine is very strong and has always overcome every knight who has opposed him in these tournaments, which are held yearly. It is because he has won the prize so often that he is called the Sparrow-hawk. But tell me, is there some lady whom you love?"

Then Sir Geraint said:

"I love this child of yours, my lord, and will gladly make

her my wife if you will permit it."

The earl was very glad, but Enid was afraid, for she thought she was not worthy of such a great knight. Yet, she knew she loved him, and said so, and soon promised to go with him to Arthur's Court within three days.

The next morning, the earl and Sir Geraint and Enid went to the field where the tournament was to take place. Many knights and ladies were there. The ladies sat under a pavilion which was draped in purple velvet ornamented with gold, while the knights were on horseback. A herald blew a trumpet, and the knight who was called the Sparrow-hawk galloped into the field.

He rode around it three times, and then went up to the pavilion and said to his lady:

"I give you the gold sparrow-hawk again, because no one dares to fight with me for it."

Then Sir Geraint rode forward in his rusty armor and said:

"I will fight with you."

The knight looked upon him, and gave a very scornful laugh as he rode at Sir Geraint. The two clashed together and began to fight fiercely, while all the people watched. Twice they had to stop and rest. For a long time they seemed evenly matched, and no one could decide which would win. But when Sir Geraint looked to where Enid sat in her faded silk gown among the richly dressed ladies in the pavilion, he grew very strong and struck his enemy such a blow that he fell to the earth.

"Now, Sparrow-hawk," said Sir Geraint, "I have overthrown you. You must do two things: you must ride with your lady and your dwarf to Arthur's Court and ask pardon of Queen Guinevere because your dwarf struck her maiden; and you must restore all the riches you have taken from your good uncle, Earl Iniol."

This the knight promised to do. And afterwards, in Arthur's Court, he grew very sorry for his evil deeds, and

became a good man.

Meanwhile, Enid was making ready to go to Arthur's Court with Sir Geraint. She was sorry that she had only her robe of faded silk. She remembered a robe her mother had given her before the Sparrow-hawk took their riches. It was of velvet, the color of mother-of-pearl, with gold leaves and flowers and birds embroidered upon it.

While she was thinking of this beautiful robe, her mother entered the room, carrying it. Enid gave a cry of joy, and her mother told her that the Sparrow-hawk had just given it back, together with other robes and gold and jewels. "Put it on, Enid," she said, and helped her daughter to array herself in the handsome gown, exclaiming: "How beautiful you look, my dear child! Sir Geraint may well be proud to fetch such a fair lady to King Arthur's Court."

Just then the earl entered to tell them that the knight wanted Enid to ride with him to Camelot in the faded silk dress in which he had first seen her.

Enid, although she was deeply disappointed, at once put on again her faded gown. When Sir Geraint came in he saw that the earl's wife was also disappointed, so he told them that the queen had promised to dress his bride in the most beautiful robes in the world for her wedding. At this both the ladies were much pleased.

So after bidding farewell to her parents, Enid rode with Sir Geraint to Camelot, where the queen welcomed her, and gave her a robe that was as bright as the sun. Then the good Archbishop of Canterbury married Sir Geraint and Enid amid great rejoicings.

Arthur and Sir Accalon

There was a woman in Arthur's Court named Morgan le Fay, who had learned a great deal about magic. She was a wicked woman, and hated the king because he was more powerful than she, and because he was so good.

However, she pretended to be a true friend to him, and the king believed in her. One day when they were talking together, she asked him if he would not let her take charge of his wonderful sword Excalibur, and its scabbard. She said that she would guard them so carefully that they would never be stolen. As she was very eager, Arthur granted her request.

One day in time of peace, King Arthur went out hunting with a certain knight named Sir Accalon, who was the lover of Morgan le Fay. They rode for a long time, and when they were tired, stopped to rest beside a great lake. As they looked over its shining waters, they saw a beautiful little ship, which sailed straight towards them, and ran up to the sands at their feet. It was all covered with golden silks, which waved in the gentle wind. King Arthur and Sir Accalon climbed into it and examined it thoroughly, but they found no one on board.

They rested on two couches which were on the deck, until it grew dark. Then they were about to return home, when all at once, a hundred torches, set on the sides of the ship were lighted, and suddenly there appeared twelve beautiful damsels who told the two that they were welcome, and that they should be served with a banquet.

Presently the maidens led the king and the knight into a room which had a table covered with a white cloth embroidered in purple. It bore many golden dishes, and each dish had

a beautiful design carved upon it. Some dishes had vine-leaves, others ivy-leaves; some had angels with long robes sweeping back in graceful lines; and all these dishes held choice food. The king and Sir Accalon ate to their hearts' content.

Then the damsels led them into two separate chambers. King Arthur was tired and so sleepy that he gave but one glance at his bedroom. He saw that it was hung in red silk embroidered with gold dragons and griffins. Then he threw himself on his bed and slept very soundly.

When he awoke, he found himself not in the pretty bed-chamber, but in a dark place. He could see nothing, but all about him he heard the sound of complaining and weeping. He was much bewildered, but in a moment he cried:

"What is this? Where am I?"

Then a voice answered:

"You are in prison, as we are."

"Who are you?" asked Arthur.

The voice replied:

"We are twenty knights, prisoners, and some of us have been here as long as seven years. We are in the dungeons of a wicked lord named Sir Damas. He has a younger brother, and the two brothers are enemies, quarreling about their inheritance. Now the younger brother, Sir Ontzlake, is very strong, but Sir Damas is not strong, and moreover, he is a coward. So he tries to find a knight who will fight for him against Sir Ontzlake.

"But Sir Damas is so much hated that no one will fight for him. So he goes about the country with a body of rough men, and whenever he sees a knight, he captures him. Then he asks him to fight with Sir Ontzlake. So far, all the knights have refused, and have been thrown into prison. We do not have food enough, but we would rather die here than fight for Sir Damas, who is so wicked."

At that moment a damsel entered the prison with a torch,

which faintly lighted the dismal place, and advanced to the king.

"Sir," she said, "will you fight for my lord, Sir Damas? If you will, you shall be taken from this prison. If you will not, you shall die here."

Arthur considered for some time, and then said:

"I would rather fight than die in prison. If I fight, will you deliver also all these prisoners?"

The damsel promised, and Arthur consented to fight. While she went to tell Sir Damas, Arthur said to the other prisoners:

"My friends, I do not know Sir Damas, and I do not know Sir Ontzlake. I do not know whether they are bad or good. But I will fight, and then, when I have conquered, I shall judge between them, and do justice to both."

"That is a good plan," said the knights, "but why are you so sure that you will conquer?"

"I am Arthur, the King," he replied.

At that the knights set up a great cry of joy, and the king continued:

"I shall send for my good sword Excalibur and the scabbard, and with these I shall surely win."

So when Arthur and the knights were led out of prison, the king sent the damsel who had visited them to Morgan le Fay for his sword and scabbard.

Meantime, the knight who had accompanied Arthur on the little ship, Sir Accalon, also awoke. He found himself in the palace of Morgan le Fay, and he wondered very much where Arthur was. He went to the lady, who said to him:

"My dear lord, the day has come when you can have great power if you want it. Should you like to be king of this land, instead of Arthur?"

Now Sir Accalon was a traitor at heart. He wanted very much to be king, even if the good Arthur was to be killed; so he said:

"Yes, truly."

Then she said:

"You shall be king, and I shall be your queen. All you need to do is to fight a great battle, which you shall win. I have been using my magic. It was I who sent the ship of silk to you and Arthur. I had him put into prison, and I had you brought here."

Sir Accalon wondered very much. Then she told him of the fight King Arthur was to make against Sir Ontzlake.

"But I have caused Sir Ontzlake to fall sick," she said, "and he cannot fight. I shall go with you to his castle and you can offer to fight for him."

"I to fight with the king!" cried Sir Accalon. "He would surely overthrow me."

"He cannot," said Morgan le Fay, "because you are to fight with his sword. A little while ago he sent to me for Excalibur and the scabbard, but I returned him a false sword which looks like Excalibur, and a false scabbard. You shall take the true ones, and then you shall surely overcome him and rule this land."

Then Sir Accalon was glad, and he hastened with the lady to the castle of Sir Ontzlake. They found him groaning because he was ill and because Sir Damas had sent him a challenge to fight with a knight, and he could not accept it. He was much relieved when Morgan le Fay told him that Sir Accalon would fight in his place.

Early in the afternoon, King Arthur and Sir Accalon rode into the field where the combat was to be held. Arthur did not know who Sir Accalon was, nor did anyone else, except Morgan le Fay. Two sides of the field were full of people who came to watch, half of whom were friends of Sir Damas, and the other half were friends of Sir Ontzlake.

Arthur and Sir Accalon rode at each other so furiously that at the shock of the meeting both fell off their horses. Then they began to fight fiercely with their swords. The king

could make no headway with his false steel, but whenever Sir Accalon struck at Arthur he drew blood.

The king was much amazed. He grew weaker and weaker, but still he kept on his feet. Those who watched him were sorry for him; they thought they had never seen a man fight so bravely. At last Arthur's sword broke, and fell in two pieces on the ground. When Sir Accalon saw this, he cried:

"Now, yield to me."

"I will never yield," said the king, "and if you do not get me another sword, you will be shamed before all men, for it is an unknightly thing to fight with a defenseless man."

"I do not care," said Sir Accalon. "If you will not yield, defend yourself with your shield as best you can."

He rushed at the king. Arthur was so weak that he could hardly stand, but he guarded himself as well as he could with his shield. Soon he could do no more, and fell to the ground.

At this moment the Lady of the Lake, who had given Arthur his sword, came upon the field. She was invisible, but anyone who had listened intently could have heard a sound like the ripple of water as she walked. She caused Excalibur to fall out of the hand of Sir Accalon and drop near Arthur.

When it fell, Arthur saw that it was his own Excalibur. He grasped its handle and some of his strength came back. He struggled to his feet, and rushing up to Sir Accalon, seized the scabbard of Excalibur and threw it far over the field.

"Now," he said, "send for a second sword and fight with me."

Then Sir Accalon was afraid. Yet he thought that Arthur was so weak that he could still be overcome. So he sent for a second sword, and they began to fight again. Arthur's strength, however, had largely returned, and in a short time he gave Sir Accalon a mortal stroke.

Sir Accalon fell to the ground, and the king, leaning over him, cried:

"Tell me who you are."

Then Sir Accalon was filled with remorse, and he said:

"Oh, my king, I have been a traitor to you, but now I am dying, and I am sorry for what I have done. I deserve my death."

He told the king his name, and all about his treachery, and that of Morgan le Fay.

King Arthur was sad.

"It is very hard to be deceived in a friend," he said, "but I forgive you freely. I will try to cure your wound, and sometime I shall trust you again."

"You cannot cure me," said Sir Accalon. "I am dying. Let them carry me off the field."

So he was taken to a neighboring abbey, while the people crowded about the king to congratulate him, but Arthur said:

"I am sad at heart. My victory is no comfort to me, for today I have lost a friend whom I believed true."

Then he called the two brothers, Sir Damas and Sir Ontzlake, and judged their cause. He decided that their property must be divided equally between them, and that they must be friends. They promised never to quarrel again. Arthur told them that they must be kind to other knights and to all people. He said that if he heard that they were not, he would come and punish them.

After this, Sir Damas gave back to the twenty knights all their money, and they went on their way rejoicing. King Arthur mounted his horse and rode over to the abbey, where he sat by the bed of Sir Accalon till the poor knight died. Then the king went back alone to his Court at Camelot.

How Arthur Fought with a Giant

Once upon a time King Arthur and some of his knights were sailing in a ship. The king, being tired, went to sleep in his cabin, and began to dream. It seemed to him that he was sailing with his people when a great dragon flew out of the west. This dragon had a blue head and a gold back. Underneath he shone like a rainbow. Flames of fire rushed out of his mouth and covered land and sea.

As he flew, there came out of the east a great bear, very rough, and as black as coal, and with wings that flapped like windmills. The bear and the dragon roared loudly, and they began to fight and struggle till the sea was all red with blood. At last the dragon conquered.

When the king awoke from this dream he sent for Merlin and told him of it, and asked for an explanation.

"My lord," Merlin replied, "the dragon betokens yourself; the colors on its body are signs of your glory. The bear betokens some tyrant who torments the people and whom you will slay."

Soon after this, the ship in which the company was, came in sight of land. When they had anchored, the knights noticed on the beach a crowd of people who were weeping. Descending from the ship, Arthur asked one of the men what troubled them, and what was the name of their country.

"Good sir," returned the man, "this is the country of Brittany, and we weep because our county is desolated by a giant. He makes us bring him food. First, he ate up all the oxen we had, and then our horses. Next he demanded our children, and now there are no little ones in the land. Today

he took our good duchess of Brittany, and carried her off to his mountain."

"Alas!" said the king. "It grieves me to hear this, not only because a cruel deed has been done, but because the duchess of Brittany is my cousin's wife. I must save this lady. I will fight with the giant."

"Good sir," cried the people in amazement, "it is not possible! A whole company of us dare not attack him, and yet we account ourselves brave men."

"That may well be," replied Arthur, "and yet with my good sword and scabbard, I have no fear."

Then the men said:

"If you will go, my lord, yonder is the great mountain where the giant lives. At the top, two huge fires burn continually in front of a cave, and in that cave are greater treasures than you can dream of. They are all yours if you will but slay this monster."

Arthur replied nothing to them, but called Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere, and rode with them to the foot of the mountain. From that point he ascended alone. When he was nearly to the top he came upon a woman, clad all in black, who sat weeping by the side of a newly-made grave.

"Good woman, why do you weep?" asked Arthur.

"Hush, hush!" she cried, "or the giant will hear you and come and kill you. He can hear me, but the sound of weeping delights him, and therefore I need not restrain my grief."

"Why do you grieve?" the king asked.

"Alas! Because my good mistress, the duchess of Brittany, is dead. The giant has killed her."

At that Arthur gripped tightly the handle of his sword and said:

"I will kill this wretch before I am an hour older."

"Ah, my lord," said the woman, "the greatest kings in the country are afraid of him. He has a coat embroidered with the beards of fifteen of them. He demanded these beards as a sign

that they acknowledged him as lord."

"There is at least one king who does not acknowledge him as lord," shouted Arthur, as he strode hastily forward.

When he reached the top he saw the giant asleep in front of the two great fires before the cave. He was taller than the tallest pine that ever grew. His arms were as big as the trunk of an oak tree. His mouth was as large as a cave, and from it and his nostrils came forth fire and flame like that from the mountain of Vesuvius. Although his huge eyes were closed, flashes of lightning seemed to shoot from beneath the lids. At his side was an iron club as large as a steeple. About him stood trembling old women fanning him as he slept.

King Arthur approached the monster, and said to him:

"Wretch, awake and fight, for your hour has come."

The giant, starting up, looked down scornfully upon the king and, laughing, threw his great club at Arthur. But the king leapt aside and the club fell harmlessly on the ground, making a hollow where it struck.

Then Arthur rushed toward the giant, waving his good sword Excalibur. The giant caught him in his arms, in order to squeeze him to death. The king's armor pressed closer and closer about him, and he began to lose his strength. But he kept his hand upon his scabbard, and so did not die.

In a few minutes the monster, making sure that Arthur was dead, dropped him to the ground. After the king had recovered himself, he sprang to his feet, and taking his sword, threw it at the giant. The good steel pierced his neck, and he sank to the ground, shouting so loudly that Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere at the foot of the mountain heard, and trembled for their master's safety.

Then the giant again seized Arthur in his arms, and the two began to roll down the mountain side. Whenever Arthur was able to, he struck at the giant with his dagger, wounding him sorely. At last, still struggling and rolling, they came to the spot where Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere were. These two

loosed the giant's arms from the king, who then gave one last blow to the monster, killing him. Then he sent Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere for his sword Excalibur.

When the people on the seashore heard what Arthur had done, they fell on their knees and thanked him, offering him all the giant's treasure. He said, however, that he would leave it with them to divide among the poor people of the country. For himself, all he wanted was the giant's iron club.

The people sent fifty men to the top of the mountain to get it for him. As they had no horses, it was a long time before they could drag the club to the seashore. There they put it on a barge. It was so heavy that it pressed the barge down till the water came almost to the edge of the vessel. Then King Arthur bade the people good-by, and took ship with his knights. The grateful men of Brittany stood on the shore, and shouted and waved until the ship could no longer be seen.

How Arthur Fought with Rome

In the time of the great Roman, Julius Cæsar, about five hundred years before King Arthur was born, the people of Rome conquered Britain. They made many improvements in the land, building roads and walls, the remains of which may be seen to this day. But they also forced the Britons to pay them much money. All the kings did this up to the time of Arthur. He, however, considered that England was his own. He had conquered the lesser kings, and made one realm of all the land, over which he ruled with wise government. So he refused to send any money to Rome.

Once King Arthur's knights were all together in the great hall. It was a time of peace, and they spent the days in riding and hunting. On this day, while the king was sitting on his throne, twelve old men entered, each bearing a branch of olive, as a sign that they came in peace. They were the messengers of the emperor of Rome, and, after bowing to the king, they said:

"Sir, our mighty emperor sends you greeting, and commands you to acknowledge him as lord, and to send him the money due him from your realm. Your father and his predecessors did this, and so must you. If you refuse, the emperor will make such war against you that it will be an example to all the world."

At this the young knights laid their hands to their swords, but the older knights, who had self-control enough to hide their feelings, waited to see what the king would do.

Arthur bowed courteously to the messengers, and told them that he would soon give them an answer. He

commanded a knight to take them to a lodging, and to see that they had all they needed, and he ordered that no harm should be done them. Then he called a council of his great lords and asked their advice.

Sir Lancelot, Arthur's favorite lord, spoke first, saying:

"My lord, we have rested for many weeks, and can make sharp war now. In days gone by, we should not have dared attack the Romans, and indeed, our attempt will make the world wonder. But of a truth, we ought to fight."

Then spoke King Angus of Scotland:

"My lord Arthur, you are the greatest lord on earth. You have made all of us lesser kings your subjects, and bound the kingdom together, and stopped our civil wars. We love you and we will help you. We pray you to make war on these Romans. When they ruled our elders, they demanded much gold and made our people very poor. If you will fight, I will furnish you with twenty thousand men, and will bear all the cost of them myself."

Then all the other lords promised to furnish men and arms. When Arthur heard this, he was glad of their courage and good will. He called in the messengers and said to them:

"Return to your emperor. Tell him that I refuse his command, for I owe him nothing. I have won this kingdom by my own strength. Tell him that I shall come with all my army to Rome and make him acknowledge me as lord."

Then Arthur told his treasurer to give the messengers gifts, and to take them safely out of the country. Sir Lancelot conducted them to the sea, where they took ship and sailed to France. On they journeyed over the Alps and into Italy. When they told the emperor of Rome their message, he said:

"I had thought Arthur would yield."

But the messengers said:

"Sir, his face would have told you, if you had seen it, that he would never yield. In truth, there is need of fear, for he is a great king and surrounded by great knights."

"This is foolish talk," the emperor said. "Remember that we are Romans. We have ruled the world for centuries, and a little king of little England shall not make us fear. You say that he is coming to fight with us. We will take a few troops and go forthwith to France to meet him."

The messengers begged the emperor to take many troops.

"My lord emperor," they said, "these men of Arthur are very numerous and very brave."

So at last the emperor brought all his men to France, and there, whenever he found people who were loyal to Arthur, he killed and laid waste.

Meanwhile, Arthur had gathered together all his troops. He bade farewell to Queen Guinevere, who was so grieved that she fell in a swoon. Then he rode off at the head of his men till they came to the sea, and there they embarked in ten thousand boats and sailed to France.

They marched till they came near to the troops of the emperor of Rome, where they rested for the night. In the morning they rose at dawn and looked at the Roman legions. These were encamped in a green field which glittered with the gold on their tents and armor. The emperor's tent was of purple silk and bore on the top a golden eagle, the emblem of Rome.

Two of Arthur's knights, Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain, rode out to the emperor, and told him that their king had come.

"That I see," said the emperor laughing, "and he shall soon return."

The two knights made no answer, but rode back to Arthur. Soon all the soldiers on each side made ready for fighting. The preparation was careful, for they knew that the contest was to be a great one. The emperor of Rome addressed his soldiers:

"Romans, remember that Rome is the chief city of the world. I do not say fight as men; I say to you, fight as Romans.

Then you will surely conquer these Britains."

King Arthur galloped up and down before the front rank of his men, looking at them carefully. He was on a beautiful white horse whose mane rose and fell in the wind like a wave of the sea. His soldiers cheered lustily for their beloved commander. Then King Arthur raised his hand for silence, and spoke in a loud, clear voice:

"My knights and men whom I love, remember that you are fighting today for your rights and for the independence of Britain. Strike well, and do not forget that great courage is as powerful as great numbers."

With that, he gave the signal for attack. The Romans stood in full battle array with their emperor in front. Beside him were sixteen kings with gold helmets and silver armor. The English approached, shouting a battle-cry.

Then the Romans, at the call of the trumpet, rushed forward, and in a moment the two great armies clashed together. Clouds of dust arose through which could be seen at intervals the heads of horses and the helmets of men. The few poor shepherds and women who stood on the outside did not know that the greatest battle of the time was going on under that cloud of dust.

Inside the cloud there was great confusion. Britains and Romans were fighting side by side, so closely packed that sometimes it was hard to strike. All fought bravely, but no one did so well as Arthur and Sir Lancelot. The battle did not cease until it was dark. Each side had lost many men. King Arthur wept as he rode over the field and counted his dead knights, and even his beautiful horse drooped its head as if it, also, understood.

But the next day the two armies began to fight again, and when the emperor finally saw that his men were losing and that most of the kings who were helping him were dead, he said: "This Arthur is a demon and not a man. I will fight with him myself and end this battle." And before anyone could



King Arthur raising his hand for silence.

stop him, he spurred up to King Arthur and said:

"You on the white horse who refuse to pay me tribute, come out that I may kill you."

Then Arthur rode quickly towards the emperor. The two men began to fight, and Arthur soon saw that he was contending with a powerful man. He gave the emperor many a stroke with Excalibur, but he himself received deep blows. At last the emperor pierced Arthur's helmet, and wounded him deeply in the cheek.

King Arthur raised his good Excalibur with a last effort and struck his enemy with it so fiercely on the head that the blow cleft the helmet and pierced to the emperor's chin. He fell from his horse without a moan. When the Romans nearby saw that their ruler was dead, they gave a great cry of grief and rushed upon Arthur, but his good knights protected him.

At last, seeing themselves conquered, the Romans surrendered. Arthur found among his prisoners three senators, and among the dead, sixty senators, the sixteen kings, and the emperor.

He was sorrowful, for he knew that they were great men. So he had them embalmed and laid in chests of lead. Around each chest flags were wound, and the shields of the dead warriors placed on top. Then he said to the three surviving senators:

"Take these noble dead bodies back to Rome. When the Romans see them they will never again dare ask tax or tribute of me. I will not go to Rome and take the city from you, but if ever you send to me for gold, I shall invade your land and never rest till all Italy is mine."

The senators bowed their heads. Then they laid the body of the emperor on a car, all alone, with the gold eagle above him. They laid the bodies of the kings and the senators two by two on chariots, and so went slowly towards Rome. And never again did the kings of Britain have to pay a tax to the Romans.

The Knight with the Badly Made Coat

One day when Arthur and his knights were in the hall of the Round Table, a young man entered. He was so large that his shoulders were as wide as the doorway, and he could hardly squeeze through. The knights looked at him in amazement, for he was almost a giant.

When he came closer to them, they saw that he had on a coat which was far too large for him. It hung in wrinkles and folds all over his back, and the sleeves were so long that he had to turn them up almost to the elbow. The coat was of rich material, gold cloth, but it was old and blood-stained.

The young man strode up to the king and said:

"My lord, my name is Brune. I can tell you no more than that. I beg you to make me a knight."

At this Sir Kay laughed and said:

"He must be called The Knight with the Badly Made Coat."

"Call me what you will," said the young man. "Yes, I take that name, for I will not tell my real one."

Then Arthur spoke to him gently:

"Young man, you ask a great thing. All those in my Court who are made knights must serve for a long time as squires. If they prove themselves loyal and brave, I make them knights. But I must always know whence they come, and who their fathers are."

"My lord," said the young man, "I do indeed ask a great thing. I would gladly tell you more of myself, but I am under a vow to reveal no more than you already know. Yet I will tell you this, further. I am the son of a noble who was as big as a

giant. My good father was very peaceable and did not care to fight; so he never came to your Court, and you did not hear of him. He lived at home with my mother and me, and the simple people who plowed the land about our castle.

"Everyone ought to have loved him; but he had one enemy. One day, six years ago, when I was only a boy, my father and I were in the forest. My father was sleeping at the foot of a tree, and I was bathing in a brook nearby. This enemy, who wanted my father's lands, came up and drove his sword into my father's heart. Then he rode away. I ran up to my dead father and took off the coat which he wore and put it on. I swore never to take it off, and never to tell my father's name or where I came from, till I had avenged his death.

"Then I rode home to our castle, but our enemy had taken possession of it, and had made my mother prisoner. As I was not yet grown up I vowed that I would stay with the good shepherds nearby till I was strong enough to pull up a young tree by the roots. Then I would go to King Arthur's Court and ask to be made a knight. So every month I have tried to uproot a young tree. This morning I succeeded, and here, my lords, I am."

The knights were much moved and prayed the king to make him a knight. They said that they would teach him to use arms. The king said that he would wait to see what sort of man Brune was.

A few days after this all the knights rode off to a tournament and Brune was left at home with a few soldiers. He was in the castle yard practicing some of the lessons in warfare which the knights had been teaching him. While he was hard at work, Queen Guinevere with twelve soldiers who were her bodyguard passed by.

As she was speaking kindly to Brune, they heard a terrible noise, and looking in the direction from which it came, saw a dreadful sight. A fierce lion which had been confined in a tower of stone had broken out of its prison and was rushing



The King touched him lightly with his sword.

towards them. The twelve soldiers fled, leaving the queen and Brune alone.

"Ah," said Brune, "not all the cowards in the world are dead."

He stood still while the lion bounded towards him. He had dropped his sword, and as the beast leaped upon him, he seized its head in his hands. Then he slowly, slowly, bent its head back. It was a strong lion, and with the effort the muscles on Brune's neck stood out like great ropes. Presently, the queen and Brune heard a loud crack and they knew that the lion's neck was broken. Brune loosed his hold, and the huge tawny body dropped to the ground, quivered a moment, and was still.

While this was going on, the king and his knights returned. They saw at a glance what Brune had done, and cheered him loudly. The king rode up to him.

"Kneel down," he said.

Brune knelt down by the body of the lion, and the king touched him lightly with his sword, saying:

"Sir Brune, I make you a knight of my Round Table. Be always loyal, brave, and merciful."

Then all the knights were glad, but Sir Brune was gladdest of all.

Sir Lancelot & Sir Brune

After Sir Brune, the Knight with the Badly Made Coat, had been at Arthur's Court for some months, he became eager to seek for the enemy of his father. Sir Lancelot, who took an interest in the big young knight, advised him to wait and try his strength at some smaller adventure first.

One day, when Sir Lancelot was away hunting, a damsel entered Arthur's hall. She carried a black shield which had painted on it a white hand holding a sword. She bowed to the king and said:

"My lord, I come for a knight to undertake the adventure of the black shield."

"And what is that adventure, fair damsel?" asked the king.

"That I may not tell you," answered the damsel, "except that it will cause much fighting and bloodshed to the knight who chooses it."

Some of the knights were eager to go, and Sir Kay pressed forward to finger the shield.

"Do not touch it, good Sir Kay," said the maiden, "for this adventure is not for you. I am to choose the knight."

She passed up and down the hall, looking into the face of each one. When she had seen them all she came back to Sir Brune and said:

"Young Knight with the Ugly Coat, will you take this shield?"

"Gladly, if my king allows," said the knight.

Then Arthur gave his permission, and Sir Brune followed the damsel out of the hall. Her horse was black, and wore white trappings. Sir Brune's horse was as brown as an autumn

leaf. The two mounted and rode away. Sir Brune began to talk to the damsel, whose name was Elinor. At first she was agreeable, but after they had ridden many miles she became scornful, and told him she was sorry she had chosen him.

Sir Brune felt sad, because he had begun to love the damsel. He was afraid she did not like him because his coat was poor. He did not speak to her any more, but rode on sorrowfully beside her. After a long time they came to a castle enclosed by high walls. The gate stood open, and the damsel Elinor pointed to it and said, sighing:

"Since you have not left me as I hoped you would, go in there. You will find your first adventure. I may not tell you what it is."

Sir Brune galloped inside the gate. There he saw a hundred knights on horseback, armed and waiting for him. He had to think and act quickly. So he decided to rush in between the knights and put his back against the castle wall. Then he could fight with his back protected. He did this, though not without receiving some spear-wounds. Then he began to fight.

The lady of the castle, whom the knights were keeping prisoner, watched the fight out of the window, and grieved for the brave young man who had so many against him. She began to speak to him in a low voice:

"Young knight, if you can only get to the left side of the castle wall, there is a secret door through which you can escape. If you look, you will see that one portion of the wall is made of black stones. Strike the stones with the hilt of your sword, and a door will open through which you can ride out."

The other knights did not hear what the lady said, for they were farther away from her than Sir Brune was. Even he could hardly catch her words. He took a quick glance to the left and saw that there was indeed a portion of the wall marked with black stones. Then he began to work his way carefully towards the secret gate.

He was obliged to move slowly for fear the knights would guess what he was doing. Moreover, it was becoming very hard to fight, because of his many wounds. However, he at last came near the door; then he backed his brown horse up against it, struck the black stones with the handle of his sword, and the door opened. The knights shouted with rage, but they were unable to reach him in time. Sir Brune escaped, leaving behind him twelve men dead.

He was very weak, and he made his way painfully to the side of the wall where the maiden Elinor waited for him. She ran to meet him, and led him gently to a brook in a forest nearby. There she took off his armor and bathed his wounds, anointing them with a precious salve she carried.

Sir Brune thought that she was sorry because she had been scornful of him, and he began to talk to her. But she said:

"Do not talk to me. If you want to please me, go back to Arthur's Court."

Sir Brune did not know why she spoke so, but he was too tired to think. So he lay down on the grass by the brook and went to sleep.

Meantime, at Arthur's Court Sir Lancelot had returned from his hunting expedition, and was told how Sir Brune had gone out with a damsel on the adventure of the shield.

"Oh!" cried Sir Lancelot, "what have you done! He will surely be killed. Merlin has told me what this adventure of the shield is. Many and many a knight has taken it up and each has been killed. A knight who vows to follow this adventure has to meet dangers of all sorts. This young untried Sir Brune will certainly be killed."

He called for his horse and arms, and said to the king:

"My lord, I will ride after this poor young man and give him what help I can. Perhaps I shall be too late; but if not, I shall ask him to give me this adventure of the shield."

Then Sir Lancelot mounted his horse and rode after Sir

Brune. When he came near the brook where Sir Brune and the damsel had rested, he heard the sound of a great combat. Spurring forward he saw Sir Brune, fighting single-handed against six knights. Sir Lancelot rushed to the rescue and quickly overthrew the enemy. He found that they belonged to the company of the hundred knights whom Sir Brune had attacked. He ordered them, first of all, to free the lady of the castle, and then to go to Arthur's Court and surrender themselves to the mercy of the king.

Poor Sir Brune was almost dead, but Sir Lancelot revived him, and in a feeble voice he thanked Sir Lancelot for his help. But the damsel begged:

"Take him back to the Court of your king. I do not want him to follow this quest any longer."

"This is surely ungrateful of you," said Sir Lancelot. "He has fought bravely and well."

"The maiden scorns me, though I love her," bitterly said Sir Brune.

Then the damsel Elinor cried out:

"I will tell the truth. I love you and I am afraid you will be killed. Therefore, I wish you to return to Camelot."

Sir Brune was very glad, and he said:

"I have pledged my word and must follow this quest. When I have succeeded we shall go together back to Arthur's Court."

"Give this adventure to me," said Sir Lancelot, "and go back now with the damsel."

But Sir Brune refused. Then Sir Lancelot said that they must undertake the adventure together, and Sir Brune consenting, they rode slowly forward. Soon they came to an abbey, where they rested for some days until Sir Brune was well.

Then they traveled as the damsel gave directions. She always knew what they had to do. At times they passed through woods full of wild beasts, some of which attacked

them. Again they passed over enchanted meadows where wicked magicians tried to cast spells over them. They also fought with many knights. However, they escaped all dangers, although it is certain that Sir Brune would never have succeeded without the help of Sir Lancelot.

At length the damsel Elinor told them that they were nearing the last adventure. She pointed to a castle on a hill; a square structure built of black stones, with a turret on top. The damsel told them that at the gate of the castle were two huge dragons. These they must slay.

"Whose is the castle?" asked Sir Brune.

"It belongs now to the wicked Lord Brian of the Isles," answered the damsel.

At this Sir Brune gave such a loud shout that the dragons on top of the hill heard him and roared in reply.

"Ah!" cried he, "that is the name of my enemy, who killed my dear father. At last I shall slay him."

He rode off so quickly that Sir Lancelot had much trouble to keep up with him. It seemed scarcely five minutes before they came to the dragons; terrible creatures, all of green, with eyes and tongues of flame. And their wings were as large as the sails of a ship.

Sir Brune had never before seen a dragon, but he was not afraid. He fought very bravely, and even when the teeth of the dragons crunched on his helmet, he did not lose courage. After a fierce fight of half an hour, the two knights had killed the dragons.

They hoped to rest, but at that moment the castle gate opened and a porter appeared.

"Enter and fight," he said.

Both spurred forward, but the porter said:

"One only may enter."

"Let me go," said Sir Brune to Sir Lancelot. "Remember I am to avenge my father's death. It may be that Lord Brian of the Isles is waiting just inside the gate."

Sir Lancelot consented, and the porter led in Sir Brune and locked the gate. Inside were two great knights, the brothers of Lord Brian of the Isles. They were almost as large as Sir Brune. Together they set upon him. He was already tired from his fight with the dragons, but his desire to avenge his father strengthened his arm. One brother was soon overthrown. When the other saw that, he yielded. Then Sir Brune sent them both to Sir Lancelot outside the gate.

While Sir Brune was looking about him, a third knight appeared at the end of the courtyard. He was quite as large as Sir Brune, and as he came spurring up, the noise of his horse's hoofs was deafening. Sir Brune recognized him as Sir Plenorius, the cousin of Lord Brian.

"Ah!" cried he, "where is that wretch, Lord Brian? Am I to fight with all his family before I meet with him?"

Sir Plenorius wasted no words. He rushed upon Sir Brune and struck him with his long spear. The blow broke Sir Brune's helmet, and he had much trouble to guard his head with his shield. He fought courageously, but he became weaker and weaker. Then Sir Plenorius stopped fighting.

"I know you will never yield," he said. "You are the bravest knight I have yet seen. In truth, I loved your good father, and grieved because my cousin slew him. I have no love for my cousin, Lord Brian of the Isles, but I am vowed to fight for him as long as he lives, or until I am overcome."

Sir Brune was about to answer, but he fell back in a swoon. Sir Plenorius lifted him gently in his arms and bore him into the castle. He carried him up the winding stairs to the turret room, and gently laid him on a bed. Then he went back to the courtyard.

Meantime, Sir Lancelot, hearing the porter shout that Sir Brune was killed, beat on the gate, but nobody would let him in. Then with great difficulty he climbed the castle wall and leaped down. Sir Plenorius was just about to care for the horse of Sir Brune.

"Give me back my friend!" cried Sir Lancelot, fiercely. "Where is my friend?"

Then he began to fight with Sir Plenorius. Sir Plenorius was so much larger than Sir Lancelot that he thought he could easily overcome him. As the fight went on, however, he found himself all but defeated.

"Yield now to me," said Sir Lancelot. "I am Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

Then Sir Plenorius said:

"Ah, my good lord, I know of your fame. If we go on fighting, you will certainly kill me. Yet I do not want to yield, so I ask you to treat me as I have treated Sir Brune."

When Sir Lancelot heard how Sir Plenorius had spared Sir Brune, he said:

"You are a gentle knight. I am sorry you are vowed to the service of Lord Brian of the Isles. He shall surely die."

Sir Plenorius answered:

"When he is dead, I will come to Arthur's Court as one of his followers."

All this time Sir Brune was lying in a swoon on the bed in the turret room. But at last he came to himself and looked about him. He saw near him his sword and shield; so he lifted them up beside him. As he lay still, trying to recover his strength, he heard stealthy footsteps coming up the turret stairs. They came nearer and nearer. Suddenly, in rushed Lord Brian of the Isles. He knew that Sir Brune was there, alone and wounded, and he intended to kill him as he lay defenseless. Sir Brune understood this and he cried:

"Ah, wretch, you were ever a coward. You come to kill me as I lie wounded here, just as you killed my poor father while he slept. But the sight of you makes me forget my wounds."

At these words, and at the fierce rage which shone in Sir Brune's eyes, Lord Brian, who was indeed a coward, tried to retreat. But Sir Brune sprang to the doorway.



He pushed him until he was but a step from the edge.

"You shall never go down by these stairs, villain," he said, "for I will kill you!"

Lord Brian rushed to the window and sprang out upon the battlements. Sir Brune followed him, though with difficulty. The two began to fight, and Sir Brune soon saw that his enemy was trying to push him close to the edge of the battlements, that he might fall down into the courtyard below.
Sir Brune, at this, put himself behind Lord Brian, deter-mined to cast him off instead. Slowly he pushed him, until Lord Brian was but a step from the edge. Then Sir Brune lifted his shield and struck his enemy with it. The wicked lord lost his footing, and was dashed to pieces at the feet of Sir Lancelot and Sir Plenorius in the courtyard below.

They ordered his soldiers to bury him, and while Sir Lancelot went to care for Sir Brune, Sir Plenorius went down the hill to find the damsel Elinor. She came back with tears of joy to Sir Brune.

When Sir Brune was well enough to travel, he visited all the castles of Lord Brian, in search of his lost mother. He was very much afraid that she was dead, but at last he found her alive, in the very castle which had belonged to his father. There was great joy at their meeting. He took her to Arthur's Court, whither Sir Lancelot had already conducted the damsel Elinor. A few days afterward Sir Brune and the damsel were married amid great festivities.

The Adventure of King Pellenore

In Arthur's Court, every knight or lady who was found unworthy was banished; yet it often took some time to discover one's real character.

One of the ladies of Arthur's Court was named Vivien. She was very pretty, and as graceful as a willow wand, and so bright and attractive in her ways that no one suspected her of being very wicked.

Among Arthur's bravest warriors was King Pellenore. He had once had a great fight with Arthur, but after that they had become friends, and King Pellenore had been made a Knight of the Round Table. He was not often at court, for he spent much of his time seeking for adventures. Now and then he would return and put away his armor. Then he rode with the ladies or talked to the other knights.

The lady Vivien admired King Pellenore for his valor and his mighty deeds, and whenever she could she talked with him about his adventures. One afternoon she begged him to go for a long ride with her through the forest. So their horses were brought and they set forth. Just as they were passing a thick part of the wood, a beautiful golden-haired lady stepped out.

"Good sir knight," she cried to King Pellenore, "I ask your help. I am here in the wood with the dear lord who is to be my husband. He is sore wounded, for an enemy crept up behind him as we were riding to Arthur's Court, and thrust a sword in his back."

Then King Pellenore turned his horse's head toward the maiden.

"Gladly will I help," he said; "lead me, maiden."

But Vivien called him back.

"Do not go with her," she said. "She may be a witch. Ride on with me."

"She is no witch, but a good maiden," said King Pellenore.

Then the golden-haired lady spoke again. "Oh, sir knight, help me! I must go to Arthur's Court to see my father. My dear lover is going to ask permission to marry me. Help us or he will die."

"Assuredly I will help you, damsel," said King Pellenore.

Vivien held his arm, but he put her gently aside. When the wicked woman saw that he was going to leave her, she made her horse plunge and throw her to the ground. There she lay as if in a faint.

King Pellenore did not know what to do. He felt as if he must help the beautiful lady, and yet he could not leave Vivien. So he said:

"Fair damsel, you shall have my help. I have never wanted to aid anyone so much as I do you. I must save your lover and bring you both to Arthur's Court. But let me first ride back with this lady who has swooned. Then I will return here to you."

"Alas, alas, I fear it will be too late," cried the damsel, turning back into the forest.

Then King Pellenore lifted Vivien on her horse, and tied her to its back by her long green scarf. At this she opened her eyes and groaned, and said that she was very sick. She made him ride very slowly to the court.

King Pellenore did not talk to her. He was thinking all the time of the golden-haired maiden. As soon as he reached the city gate he gave Vivien over into the care of a knight who was passing, and galloped back to the woods.

When he reached the spot where the beautiful damsel had spoken to him, he turned into the thick part of the wood and followed a narrow path. It was so narrow that the

branches of the trees on both sides struck his shoulders, but still he hurried on. The path ended in a glade, and there he saw the lady and her lover lying on the grass.

"Alas, alas!" the lady said, "my dear lord is dead and I am dying."

Then King Pellenore saw that the fair young knight who lay on the ground was very pale and quiet, and that all the grass about was blood-stained.

"Ah, good knight," said the lady, "after you left me, a lion ran out of the wood and slew my lover with one stroke of his paw. He has wounded me so sorely that I too shall die."

Then King Pellenore wept.

"I wish that I had made Vivien wait here," he said, "and had helped you. I fear I have done wrong."

He sat down and took her golden head on his knee, and spoke to her gently till she died. Then he put her body and her lover's body on his horse, and walked beside them sorrowfully until he reached Arthur's Court.

Near the great hall he met Arthur and Merlin and several knights.

"I am a miserable man," he said.

Then the wise Merlin said: "You are more miserable than you know. This beautiful lady was your own daughter who was stolen from you as a child. Only lately she learned who her father was. She was coming here to seek you."

Then King Pellenore wept loudly.

"This is my punishment," he cried, "for not aiding the maiden. The one who needs help most should be given it first, and she needed it more than Vivien. I am indeed punished."

"And you shall be punished yet more," said Merlin; "and in good time, Vivien also for the part she took. Some day the friend whom you most trust shall deceive you, and you shall be betrayed to death."

King Pellenore bowed his head meekly.

"I have deserved it," he said. "And now I must bury my

dear child and her lover."

The beautiful golden-haired lady and her lover were buried with great mourning, and it was many a day before King Pellenore cared to seek for adventures.

Sir Lancelot and His Friends

Sir Lancelot was acknowledged by all the knights of the Round Table to be the bravest of their number, and the one whom the king loved most. He was not often at court, because he was nearly always engaged in adventures which took him away from the town of Camelot. The knights were always sorry when he went away, yet they were sure he would return safely and with much to tell them.

One day Sir Lancelot called his nephew Sir Lionel, and told him to mount his horse, for they must go to seek adventures. Sir Lionel was very glad, for it was a great honor to be chosen as a companion by Sir Lancelot. They rode off through a deep forest, and then across a wide, treeless plain. The sun was shining hot and bright, and when they reached a clump of trees, Sir Lancelot bade Sir Lionel dismount. Then the two sat in the shade to rest.

It was not long before Sir Lancelot fell asleep. While Sir Lionel kept guard, he saw three knights furiously pursued by another knight, who was very large. This knight overtook the three knights, one after another, and overthrew them, and bound them by the reins of their bridles. Sir Lionel, who was young and self-confident, thought that he would like to fight with this knight. So he mounted his horse very quietly without waking his uncle, and rode into the plain.

When the big knight saw him coming, he laughed and rode up quickly. At the very first stroke, young Sir Lionel fell to the earth. The strong knight bound him fast to the other three knights and drove them all to his castle. There he took off their armor and clothes, and beat them with thorny sticks.

After that he threw them into a deep dungeon where there were many other knights.

Meanwhile Sir Hector, the foster father of King Arthur, hearing that Sir Lancelot and Sir Lionel had gone in search of adventures, determined to join them; so he rode hastily in pursuit. When he had gone some distance through the forest, he met a wood-cutter, and asked him if he had seen Sir Lancelot and Sir Lionel. The man replied that he had not.

"Then do you know of any adventure which I can seek?" asked Sir Hector.

The man answered:

"Sir, a mile from here is a strong castle. On one side of it is a large stream, and by that stream a large tree. At the foot of the tree is a basin of copper. Go and strike on that three times with your spear and you will meet with an adventure."

"Thank you heartily," said Sir Hector.

He rode on and soon came to the tree. Hanging on it were a great many shields, and among them Sir Lionel's. There were also shields which belonged to other knights of the Round Table. Sir Hector knew that the knights must be prisoners, and he grew very angry.

He struck sharply on the copper basin, and at once a huge knight appeared.

"Come forward and fight!" cried the knight.

"That I will," said Sir Hector.

"But I shall win," said the knight, "for I am the great Sir Turquaine."

Sir Hector had heard of this powerful knight whom so many of Arthur's lords had tried in vain to overthrow. But he was a brave old man, and so he began to fight fearlessly. He wounded the big knight once, but the knight wounded him many times, and at last overcame him. He picked Sir Hector up and carried him under his right arm into the castle.

"You are very brave," he said, when they had reached the great hall. "You are the first knight who has wounded me

these twelve years. Now I shall give you your freedom if you will swear to be a follower of mine."

"I shall never swear that," said Sir Hector; "I am a follower of King Arthur."

"I am sorry for that," said Sir Turquaine, "for now I must treat you as I do all my other prisoners."

Then he took off Sir Hector's armor and clothes, and beat him with the thorny stick, and threw him into the dungeon. There the old man found Sir Lionel and many other knights.

"Is Sir Lancelot here?" asked Sir Hector, feebly.

"No," said Sir Lionel, and told how he had left Sir Lancelot sleeping.

Then Sir Hector became cheerful.

"Sir Lancelot will surely find us," he said, "and give us our freedom."

But Sir Lancelot still slept on under the tree. Soon four beautiful ladies rode by, and, seeing a sleeping knight, dismounted to look at him. They at once recognized him as Sir Lancelot, the bravest knight in the land. One of these ladies was Morgan le Fay, whom Arthur had forgiven for her treachery to him. She said to her companions:

"I will cast a spell over him, and we will carry him to my castle. Then, when he wakes, we will make him choose one of us as his wife."

The other three agreed, and Morgan le Fay cast her spell. Then the four women lifted the knight upon his horse and went with him to the castle of Morgan le Fay. They put the knight in a richly decorated chamber and left him.

In the morning he awoke and wondered where he was. Soon a fair damsel entered with food, and he asked her to explain how he came to be in that place.

"Sir, I cannot," she said. "But I can tell you this much: you are under a spell. In twelve hours the spell will break, and perhaps I can help you then."

After the damsel had gone out, the four ladies entered.

They were clad in most beautiful robes. One had on silk that looked like the foam of the sea. Another had on velvet that seemed like moss from the forest. The third wore satin that was the color of maple leaves in autumn. Morgan le Fay wore a robe that looked like a storm-cloud, and her diamonds were like stars.

"Choose one of us for your wife," she said, "and you shall be very happy."

But Sir Lancelot said:

"Fair ladies, I have no wish to marry. I would rather fight for my good King Arthur who needs me."

At this the ladies were angry.

"You shall stay here till you choose," they said. "And if you will not choose, then you shall die in prison."

They went out, and Sir Lancelot remained alone all day. At dusk the fair damsel came to him.

"My lord," she said, "the spell is broken now, and I can help you. These ladies are not kind to me, and I am going to run away. I will take you with me on one condition."

"Name it, damsel," he said.

"I am a king's daughter," she said. "My father is King Bagdemagus."

"He is a good man," Sir Lancelot said. "I know him well."

"My father has been fighting in a tournament," said the maiden, "and has been overcome, with all his knights. He feels very sad. Now, in two days there will be another tournament at which he must fight. If you help him, he will surely win and be happy again."

"I will gladly help him," said Sir Lancelot.

Then the damsel bade him walk softly with her. She opened twelve great doors one after another. Each had a lock with a key so heavy that the maiden had to use both hands to turn it. At last they reached the courtyard, and there she gave Sir Lancelot his horse and armor. She also mounted a horse, and the two rode away.

After riding all night, they came to the court of King Bagdemagus. He was overjoyed to welcome Sir Lancelot, for well he knew that none could overcome that good knight in combat. All day there was music and dancing and feasting. Sir Lancelot, however, could not be merry. He kept thinking of his nephew, Sir Lionel, and wondering where he was.

On the morning of the tournament Sir Lancelot asked King Bagdemagus to furnish him with a white shield, because he did not want to be known. The king did so, and also gave each of the three knights who rode with him a shield of the same color. Sir Lancelot went with the knights into a little leafy wood near the field where the tournament was to be held.

Meanwhile King Bagdemagus rode to the tournament with sixty men, and met there the king of Northgalis with eighty men. They began to fight, and soon those on the side of King Bagdemagus began to be worsted. Then Sir Lancelot, with the three knights, dashed out of the little wood and into the thick of the fight.

No one could stand against Sir Lancelot. One of King Arthur's knights, Sir Modred, the brother of Sir Gawain and Sir Gareth, was fighting against King Bagdemagus. Not knowing who Sir Lancelot was, he rushed upon him. Sir Lancelot unhorsed him, but would not hurt him, because he was a Knight of the Round Table. Years afterward he was sorry he had not killed him, for Sir Modred proved to be a traitor to King Arthur.

Sir Lancelot fought so well that, for his sake, all the prizes of the tournament were given to King Bagdemagus, who was greatly rejoiced, and offered large gifts to Sir Lancelot, and begged him to be his guest for a time. But Sir Lancelot was so anxious to find out what had become of Sir Lionel that he could not remain. So the next day he set forth.

He rode back towards the clump of trees where he had fallen asleep while Sir Lionel kept watch. On the highway he

met a damsel riding on a white palfrey.

"Fair damsel," said Sir Lancelot, "can you tell me of any adventures hereabouts? I am Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

"Oh, Sir Lancelot," said she, "it is indeed fortunate that you have come, for there is here a knight named Sir Turquaine who has put in prison many of the knights of the Round Table. You shall fight with him for the freedom of your friends."

Then she turned her horse, and Sir Lancelot gladly followed her. She brought him to the tree on which hung the shields of his brother knights. Sir Lancelot let his horse drink a little water, and then he struck on the iron basin at the foot of the tree so fiercely that the bottom fell out.

No one appeared, however. Then he rode up to the castle of Sir Turquaine. Near the gate he met the big knight. He was on foot, driving his horse before him. On the horse lay a knight, securely bound. Sir Lancelot recognized him as Sir Gaheris, the brother of Sir Gawain and Sir Gareth.

"Put down the knight," said Sir Lancelot. "Mount and fight."

"Gladly," said Sir Turquaine. "Before long you will be sorry for your challenge."

Then the two rode at each other. Their horses' feet beat the dust into clouds, and they used their swords so fiercely that their armor rang continually like the clanging of heavy bells. They fought until they were breathless, each bleeding from many wounds. Then Sir Turquaine, leaning on his sword, said:

"By my faith, never have I fought with such a strong man before. I admire you, and I would be your friend. You fight as they say that knight does whom I hate most in all this world. If you are not that knight, I give you my friendship, and shall free all my prisoners for your sake."

"That is well said," replied Sir Lancelot. "Tell me who this knight is whom you hate so much."



He struck so fiercely the bottom fell out.

"He is Sir Lancelot of the Lake. For hatred of him, I kill or imprison all the knights of the Round Table whom I can find."

"Then let us begin to fight again," said Sir Lancelot, "for I am Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

Then they struck at each other furiously, and soon gave each other so many wounds that the ground was covered with blood. Sir Turquaine was a brave man, but he was not so strong as Sir Lancelot. After a long conflict he fell, mortally wounded, to the ground. Then Sir Lancelot unlaced his helmet and eased him as well as he could till he died. Afterwards he left Sir Turquaine, and went to the porter who held the keys of the castle.

Sir Lancelot took the keys and unlocked the doors of the prison. He led the poor knights out into the daylight and struck off their chains. Sir Lionel and Sir Hector were overjoyed to see that their deliverer was indeed Sir Lancelot. Each knight found his own armor in the armory, and his own horse in the stables. After that a servant came with four horses laden down with venison, and the poor knights, who for a long time had had nothing but bread and water, enjoyed a good meal. Then Sir Lancelot rode away in search of new adventures.

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

One day in May Queen Guinevere invited ten ladies and ten knights to ride a-Maying with her the next morning in the woods. So at the appointed time they assembled, all dressed in green silk and green velvet, the color of young grass. The knights wore white plumes in their helmets, and the ladies wore white May-blossoms in their hair. They rode off very happily, telling the king that they would return before noon.

Now the good King Bagdemagus, for whom Sir Lancelot had fought, had a bad son named Sir Malgrace. For a long time he had wanted to capture the queen and carry her off to his castle. He had been afraid to try, however, because of her large bodyguard. All the young knights of the Round Table liked to ride with her and protect her. They took good care of all the ladies of the Court, but they loved the queen most.

When Sir Malgrace heard that the queen was out a-Maying with only a few knights, and these not fully armed, he determined to take her prisoner. So he called together eighty men-at-arms and a hundred archers, and set out. Soon he came upon her and her attendants. They were sitting on a little hill, with wreaths of flowers and leaves on their arms and necks. Before they could rise to their feet, Sir Malgrace and his men dashed upon them.

"Traitor!" cried the queen. "What would you do?"

"I will carry you to my castle, fair queen," he said. "And never again shall you go free."

"I will not go with you," said the queen.

Then the ten knights drew their swords and set on the hundred and eighty men of Sir Malgrace. They fought so well

that they overthrew forty. Still, they could do little against such numbers, and soon all were wounded. When the queen saw this, she cried out:

"Sir Malgrace, do not slay my noble knights, and I will go with you. I would rather die than cause them further harm."

The knights said that they would rather perish than be prisoners to Sir Malgrace. However, upon an order from their lord, the archers tied up the wounds of the queen's followers, and put them on horseback. Then the whole company rode slowly towards the castle of Sir Malgrace.

Sir Malgrace kept close to the queen for fear she would escape. Once when they were in a thick part of the wood he rode ahead to break the branches so that they should not strike her face. Then the queen whispered to a little maiden who rode near her:

"If you can do so, slip away from the company. You are so small that perhaps they will not notice you. Take this ring and give it to our greatest knight, Sir Lancelot, and pray him to come and rescue me."

The little maid waited until she thought the time for escape had come, and rode off as quietly as she could. Sir Malgrace saw her go, and suspected that the queen had sent her. He ordered his archers to shoot at the child, but she escaped unhurt.

"Madam," said Sir Malgrace to the queen, "I know well that you have sent for Sir Lancelot, but you may be sure that hither he shall never come."

Then Sir Malgrace ordered his archers to stand guard on the road and shoot down any knight they saw.

"But if he should be Sir Lancelot," he said, "be sure that you do not venture very close to him, for he is hard to overcome."

Meantime the little maid reached Arthur's Court in safety. She found the king and his knights very anxious because the queen had not returned. She told her story, and gave the

queen's ring to Sir Lancelot.

"Bring me my armor!" shouted Sir Lancelot. "I will rescue my good and dear queen before the night falls. I would rather see her safe here again than own all France."

He put on his armor and mounted his white horse and rode off without delay. The little maid led him to the place where the ten knights had fought with the hundred and eighty. From this point he traced them by the blood on the grass and on the road. At last he reached the archers.

"Turn back," they said. "No one may pass here."

"That I will not," said Sir Lancelot. "I am a Knight of the Round Table, and therefore have the right of way throughout the land."

At that they shot their arrows at him. He was wounded with many of them, and his white horse was killed. Sir Lancelot tried to reach the men, but there were so many hedges and ditches in the way that he could not. They hastened back to tell Sir Malgrace that a knight whom they had not succeeded in killing was coming to the castle.

Sir Lancelot tried to walk, but his armor was too heavy for him to carry in his wounded state. He dared not leave any of it behind, for he would need it all in fighting. Just as he was wondering what he could do, a carter passed him, driving a rough wagon.

"Carter," said Sir Lancelot, "let me ride in your wagon to the castle of Sir Malgrace."

The carter was amazed, for in that day a knight never entered into a cart unless he was a condemned man going to be hanged. Sir Lancelot, however, did not stop to explain. He jumped into the cart and told the driver to go quickly.

Some of the ladies of Queen Guinevere were looking out of their window, and one said to her: "See, my queen, there is a poor knight going to be hanged."

The queen looked out of the window and recognized Sir Lancelot by the three lions blazoned upon his shield. She was

overjoyed, and waved him a glad greeting as he came up to the castle gate.

Sir Lancelot beat on the gate with his shield, and cried:

"Come out, false traitor, Sir Malgrace; come out and fight. If you do not, you will be branded as a coward forever."

At first Sir Malgrace thought that he would keep his gates shut fast and not answer the challenge. But in those days it was a sign of great cowardice not to accept a challenge. Moreover, since Sir Lancelot had been able to reach the castle in spite of the archers, he was afraid other knights of the Round Table might do the same. Then they would besiege him and force him to surrender. Still he was afraid to fight. So he went to Queen Guinevere and said:

"Fair queen, remember how I saved your ten knights when I could have killed them. Now I am sorry I took you prisoner. I beg that you will go to Sir Lancelot and urge him not to fight. Then I will entertain him in this castle with the best I have, and tomorrow you shall all go back to the court."

Then the queen said:

"Peace is always better than war. I will do the best I can."

So she went down to Sir Lancelot, who still beat upon the gate, and besought him to come in peaceably, for Sir Malgrace was sorry for what he had done. Sir Lancelot was unwilling, for he knew that Sir Malgrace was a traitor, deserving punishment. Still, he could not refuse the queen anything she asked him, and, therefore, he entered the castle.

Sir Malgrace greeted him with politeness, and served to him and to the others of Arthur's Court, a great banquet. After that, to the surprise of everyone, he rose and accused the queen of treason. All the company was astonished. Sir Lancelot was very angry.

"If you say the queen is a traitress," he cried, "you shall fight with me, although you were afraid just now."

"I am not afraid to fight," said Sir Malgrace.

"When and where will you meet me in combat?" asked Sir

Lancelot.

"In eight days," replied Sir Malgrace, "in the field near Westminster."

Sir Lancelot agreed to this. Then Queen Guinevere rose with all her attendants and went into the courtyard. Their horses were brought them and they mounted. Sir Lancelot was the last to pass out of the banquet hall. As he was going through the door he stepped upon a trap which Sir Malgrace had prepared for him. The trapdoor fell and dropped him into a dark dungeon.

When the queen and her knights and ladies had ridden out of the courtyard, they noticed that Sir Lancelot was not with them. They supposed, however, that he had ridden off by himself, as was often his custom, so they went without him to Camelot, and told the king what had happened. He was very angry at Sir Malgrace's accusation, but he was sure that Sir Lancelot would punish Sir Malgrace, and so vindicate Queen Guinevere.

Meantime, the unhappy Sir Lancelot lay bruised in the dungeon, feeling very sure that Sir Malgrace meant to starve him to death. He lay hungry and thirsty for nearly two days. Then Sir Malgrace peeped in to see if he were dead.

"Ah, traitor!" cried Sir Lancelot, "I shall overcome you yet."

At that Sir Malgrace shut the trapdoor hastily, as if he were afraid that Sir Lancelot could leap up ten feet in the air. That one look, however, cost the wicked knight dear, for the daughter of the porter saw him shutting the trapdoor, and was curious to know who was in the dungeon. So at night she opened the trapdoor and let herself down by a rope.

When she saw Sir Lancelot she was very sorry for him. He offered her much money if she would free him. At last she said:

"I will do it for love of Queen Guinevere and not for money."

She let him climb up by the rope, and took him out of the courtyard. He was so sick that he went to a hermit's hut and rested for several days. When next Sir Malgrace looked into the dungeon he heard no movement. Then he rejoiced greatly, for he thought Sir Lancelot was dead.

When the eighth day had come, all the knights of the Round Table assembled in the tournament field and waited for Sir Lancelot to appear. They all thought he would surely come. But Sir Malgrace rode jauntily about the field. Many of the knights wondered at his courage, not knowing the reason for his confidence.

The herald blew his trumpet once, but Sir Lancelot did not appear; twice, and still he did not come. Then up started several knights and begged the king to let them fight instead of Sir Lancelot.

"He has been trapped," they said, "or he would be here."

While the king was hesitating whom to choose, in rode Sir Lancelot. He dashed up to Sir Malgrace.

"Here I am, traitor," he said. "Now do your worst."

Then they fought, but at the first stroke Sir Malgrace fell to the earth.

"Mercy!" he cried, "I yield to you, Sir Knight. Do not slay me. I put myself in the king's hands and yours."

Sir Lancelot was much vexed. He wanted to kill Sir Malgrace for his treachery, and yet, since the man had asked for mercy, he could not. So he said:

"What, coward, would you stop already? Shame upon you! Get up and fight."

"I shall not rise unless you take me as one who has yielded," answered the knight.

Then Sir Lancelot said:

"Traitor, I make you this offer: I will take off my helmet, unarm my left side, and tie my left hand behind my back. In that way I will fight with you."

Upon hearing this, Sir Malgrace rose to his feet, sure now

of killing Sir Lancelot.

"My lord King," cried Sir Malgrace, "you have heard this offer. I accept."

The king was very sorry that Sir Lancelot had made the offer. However, it was impossible to withdraw it. A squire came and disarmed Sir Lancelot, so that his head and left side were without cover; and since he had only one arm to fight with, he could not use his shield.

Then Sir Malgrace dashed at him, aiming for his left side. Sir Lancelot waited till he was very near, and then lightly stepped aside. Before Sir Malgrace could turn, Sir Lancelot lifted his spear and struck his enemy such a blow that he broke his breastplate and pierced his heart.

The body of Sir Malgrace was carried off the field and taken to the castle of his good father; Queen Guinevere was proclaimed innocent of treason; and Sir Lancelot was honored more than ever by his king and his queen.

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

Every year King Arthur's knights held a grand tournament among themselves, and contended in friendly combat for a prize. This prize was a diamond.

Once, in the early days of his kingship, Arthur was walking on a craggy hill, when he came upon the skeleton of a man who had once been a ruler. The skull still wore a gold crown set with nine large diamonds. King Arthur took the crown and had the diamonds unset. Each year at the friendly tournament he gave one of these diamonds as a prize.

There had been eight tournaments, and at each Sir Lancelot had won the diamond. The jewel that was to be given as a prize at the ninth tournament was the largest and most beautiful of all. Everyone, of course, expected that Sir Lancelot would win it, but only a few days before the contest he announced to the king that he would not compete.

Then the queen was vexed, for she loved Sir Lancelot more than all the other knights, and it gave her great joy to see him always successful in the tournaments. Therefore she urged him to change his decision.

"My queen," he said, "I told the king I would not fight."

The queen replied:

"My advice is that you go in disguise. The knights who contest with you do so but half-heartedly, for they know your great fame and feel sure of failure. If they did not know who you were, they would fight better and win more glory for themselves. Then fight as a stranger knight, and afterwards explain to the king."

Sir Lancelot took her advice. He rode away over the

woods and hills till he came to the castle of Astolat, where he decided to stop and ask for a disguise. He knocked on the gate, which was opened by an old dumb servant, and entered the courtyard. The lord of Astolat came to meet him with his two sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine, and his beautiful daughter Elaine. The lord of the castle said:

"Fair sir, whoever you are, you are welcome. You seem to me much like a Knight of the Round Table."

"That I am," said Sir Lancelot. "Hereafter I will tell you my name; at present I wish to remain unknown. I must enter the coming tournament as an unknown knight, and I should like to leave with you my great shield, for it is as well known in Camelot as I. Will you keep it and lend me another one?"

Then answered the Lord of Astolat:

"You may take the shield of my son Torre. He was hurt in his first tournament, and has not been able to fight since. My son Lavaine will gladly go with you to the tournament. Perhaps," added the lord, laughing, "he can win the diamond, and put it in his sister Elaine's hair."

"Nay, father, do not make me ashamed before this noble knight," said the young Lavaine. "I know I can never win the diamond for Elaine, but I can at least do my best to fight."

"Gladly will I take you for a companion," said Sir Lancelot, "and if you can, win the diamond for this fair maiden."

"Such a diamond," said Sir Torre, "is fit for a queen, and not for a simple girl."

Sir Lancelot smiled to himself. He was sure that he should win the diamond. Then he meant to give it with the eight others to Queen Guinevere. He spoke kindly, however, to the beautiful Elaine.

"In truth, this fair maiden is fit to be a queen."

Then Elaine lifted her eyes and looked at him. He was twice as old as she was. His face was cut and scarred with wounds which he had received in battle, but as she looked at

him, she loved him, and felt that she would continue to love him till the day of her death.

They went into the great hall where a supper was laid. Sir Lancelot talked of King Arthur and his goodness and all his glorious deeds. Elaine thought that even Arthur could not be so brave as this wonderful lord. All night long she dreamed of him. In the morning she rose early and went down in the courtyard where Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavaine were mounting their horses.

"Fair lord," she said boldly to Sir Lancelot, "will you wear my token in your helmet?"

Then said Sir Lancelot:

"Fair maiden, I have never worn favor nor token for any lady in the tournaments. This is well known to be my custom."

"But if you wear my token," she said, "there will be far less likelihood of your being known by your fellow knights."

"That is very true, my child," he said. "Bring it to me. What is it?"

She held it out to him; it was a red sleeve embroidered with pearls. Sir Lancelot bound it in his helmet and said:

"I have never done so much before for any maiden."

Then he and Sir Lavaine bade Elaine farewell, and the beautiful maiden ran up to the tower of the castle and watched them from the window for a long time. When they were out of sight she asked the old dumb servant to carry Sir Lancelot's shield to the tower. It was a large shield of silver, with three lions emblazoned upon it in gold and blue, but its polished surface was covered with dents and scratches. Elaine knelt before it, and made a story for each scratch and mark, picturing to herself the contests in which the good shield had taken part. For many weeks she stayed near it all day long in the turret, watching for Sir Lancelot and her brother to return.

Meanwhile those two had ridden lightly to Camelot, and

when they were almost there, Sir Lancelot told Sir Lavaine his name. The young man was astonished. He was very happy, too, to think that he was a companion to the great knight of whom he had heard so often.

When Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavaine arrived at the field where the tournament was to be held, they stood looking at the king, who sat upon the great carved chair which had dragons' heads for the arms and the back. On his red robe was embroidered a golden dragon, and a golden dragon was also on his crown. Above him, set in a canopy, was the ninth diamond. All about the king to left and right were rows of ladies whose robes gave to the pavilion in which they sat the brilliant hues of the rainbow.

Sir Lancelot said to young Sir Lavaine:

"Look at the king. You think I am great, but he is greater than I. I can fight better than he can, but his soul is greater than mine. Aim to become a Knight of the Round Table, and follow the example of goodness which Arthur sets for his knights."

At this moment the trumpets blew as a signal that the tournament was to begin. The knights spurred their horses forward, and in a moment their spears and shields clashed. Sir Lancelot rode lightly here and there, overthrowing everyone with whom he contested. All wondered at the skill of this unknown knight. Then Sir Lancelot's kinsmen, his nephew, Sir Lionel, and others, were angry and jealous.

"Our Sir Lancelot should be here," they said, "to overcome this stranger knight."

"Perhaps this is Sir Lancelot," said one. "Two knights cannot fight so well in this world. It must be Sir Lancelot."

"No, no," said the others; "Sir Lancelot would never wear a lady's favor, and this knight wears a red sleeve embroidered with pearls. Let us set on this man and teach him that if Sir Lancelot is not here, we, his kinsmen, will fight for his fame."

Then all together they bore down on Sir Lancelot. His



She staid near it all day long in the turret.

horse went down in the shock, and he himself was wounded. A spear had pierced his breastplate and snapped off in his side.

Young Sir Lavaine rushed to help Sir Lancelot. The great knight rose slowly and, with the help of his friend, drove back his kith and kin to the far side of the field. Then sounded a great blare of trumpets, and the king proclaimed the stranger knight victor.

"Come forward," the herald cried, "and take your diamond."

But poor Sir Lancelot said:

"Talk not to me of diamonds. Give me air. I fear me I have received my death wound. Let me go hence, and I bid you follow me not."

Sir Lavaine helped him upon his horse, and they two rode slowly off the field. When they were near the neighboring forest the great knight fell from his horse and cried:

"Pull forth the spear-head which is in my side."

"Oh, my lord," said Sir Lavaine, "I am afraid you will die if I draw it forth."

"I shall die if you leave it," said Sir Lancelot.

So Sir Lavaine drew it forth quickly, causing Sir Lancelot to faint from the pain. Then a hermit who lived nearby came to them, and bore the wounded knight into his hut, where for many a week Sir Lancelot lay between life and death.

When Arthur found that the unknown knight had gone, no one knew whither, he was sorry. He called the light-hearted Sir Gawain and said to him:

"Go forth, take this diamond and seek the stranger knight. Do not cease from your search till you have left the diamond in his hand."

Then Arthur went to the queen. She had been ill and had not attended the tournament. When the king told her all that had happened, she cried:

"A stranger knight! My lord, my lord! That was our dear

Sir Lancelot. He was fighting in disguise."

"Alas! he is hurt," said the king. "Perhaps he is dying. He said that he would not fight. He should have told me that he meant to fight in disguise. The truth, my queen, is always best."

"Yes, my good lord, I know it," she said. "If I had but let our Lancelot tell the truth, perhaps he would not have been wounded. You would have called on his kinsmen to cease."

For many days the king and Guinevere waited in deep anxiety for news of Sir Lancelot. Meantime, Sir Gawain rode forth and sought for the great knight in vain. At last he came to the castle of Astolat, where he was welcomed by the lord and Sir Torre and the fair Elaine. He told them the result of the tournament, and how the stranger knight had won. They showed him Sir Lancelot's shield.

"Ah!" said Elaine, when he had told them the name of the unknown knight, "I knew that he must be great."

Sir Gawain guessed by the expression of her beautiful face that she loved Sir Lancelot. So he said:

"Fair maiden, when he returns here for his shield, give him this diamond, which is the prize he won. Perhaps he will prize it the more because you put it into his hand."

Then Sir Gawain bade them farewell and rode off, lightly singing. When he told Arthur what he had done, the king said:

"You should have done as I bade you, Gawain. Sir Lancelot deceived me about his disguise, and you have disobeyed me. The kingdom will surely fail if the king and his rules are not honored. Obedience is the courtesy due to kings."

Meanwhile the fair Elaine went to her father and said:

"Dear father, let me go and seek the wounded Sir Lancelot and my brother."

"Nay," said the lord, "it is not a fitting thing for a young maiden like you to seek a wounded knight. He is not your

lover. It cannot be."

"I would give him his diamond," she said, "and since he is so sorely wounded, I would take care of him. It is not fitting, my father, but I cannot live unless I know where he is and how he does."

Then, because he loved his child very much and had never refused any request she made of him, the old lord let her go in care of Sir Torre. The two rode for a long time, until at last, near Camelot, they met Sir Lavaine. Elaine ran up to him and cried:

"Lavaine, take me to Sir Lancelot."

Sir Lavaine was much astonished that Elaine knew the name of the stranger knight. He was glad to see her, because he thought she could help his friend. Sir Lancelot seemed glad to see her, too, and the beautiful maiden cared for him so tenderly that the old hermit said he never could have recovered without her nursing. When he was well enough, they all rode to the castle of Astolat.

There Sir Lancelot remained for a few days; then he took his shield and prepared to return to Camelot. Before he went he asked Elaine if he could not do something for her in return for her care of him.

She grew very pale and then she said:

"I am going to say something which I should not. I love you. Take me with you to Camelot."

Sir Lancelot said very gently:

"My poor little maiden, if I had meant to take a wife, I should have wedded earlier. All the court knows that I love only the king and the queen. You do not really love me. Some day you will marry a young knight, and then I shall give you many castles and much land as a dowry."

"I will have nothing of all that," said Elaine.

She turned away and climbed up to the tower, while her father said to Sir Lancelot:

"I pray you, be discourteous in some way so that she will

cease to love you. Such love is madness."

"It is not my habit to be discourteous," said Sir Lancelot. "However, when she stands at the turret window to wave me farewell, I will not look up at her."

Sir Lancelot rode sadly away, and did not look up at the window where Elaine stood. She watched him till he disappeared, and then she fell in a swoon. Day after day she pined away, and one morning she said to her father:

"Dear father, I am going to die. When I am dead, take my bed and cover it with rich draperies. Then dress me in my most beautiful clothes; put a letter I have here in my hand, and lay me on the bed. Set it on a barge, and let our dumb servant steer it down the river to Camelot."

Her father wept, and promised to do all that she asked.

Sir Lancelot had gone to the Court, where he was received with great rejoicing. For many days the knights and ladies held great feasting in his honor, and the king and the queen would hardly allow him to leave their presence. One day while the three stood looking out of the palace window, they saw a black barge come slowly down the river.

It stopped at the palace door, and the king, going down, saw on it the beautiful maiden Elaine, pale in death. She was dressed in white satin, and bore a lily in her left hand and a letter in her right. The king ordered two of his knights, the good Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval, to carry Elaine into his great hall. Then Arthur read the letter, which said:

"Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake: I, Elaine, the maid of Astolat, come to take my last farewell of you, for you left me without a farewell. I loved you, and my love had no return, and so I died."

The knights and ladies wept. Sir Lancelot said to Arthur:

"My king, I grieve for the death of this maiden, but as I did not love her, I could not wed her."

The king answered:

"You are not to blame, Sir Lancelot. The world has in it

much that is sad as well as much that is joyous. There are happenings for which no human being can be blamed. It would be a fitting deed, however, if you had this maiden richly buried."

Sir Lancelot ordered a splendid funeral, such as should be given to a queen. Over Elaine's grave was raised a beautiful tomb on which was carved her figure, with the left hand holding a lily; at her feet lay the shield of Sir Lancelot, and the sad story of her death was written on the tomb in letters of gold and blue.

The Search for the Holy Grail

In Arthur's Court there were many virtuous knights and ladies, but the best of all was a beautiful maiden, sister to Sir Perceval. She was so good that the evil in the world oppressed her, and she could be happy only when she was praying for all people to be made better.

Once a good old man told her what was meant by the Holy Grail.

"Grail," he said, "is the word for the cup out of which our Lord Jesus drank, the night that he held the last supper with his disciples. Therefore, it is called holy. There is a tradition which says that for a long time after the death of Christ the Holy Grail remained on earth, and anyone who was sick and touched it was healed at once. But then people grew to be so wicked that it disappeared from earth. It is said that if a person in our day were only good enough, he could see the Holy Grail."

"Really see it?" asked the maiden, eagerly, "or see it in a vision?"

"I do not know," answered the good old man, "but either one would be a great happiness. For a real sight of it, or a vision, would show the person who saw it that he was sinless."

Then the beautiful maiden prayed more than ever. She became so thin and pale that it seemed as if she were almost transparent, and at last she lay dying. One morning she sent for her brother, Sir Perceval, and for his friend, Sir Galahad.

Sir Perceval and Sir Galahad were the two best knights in Arthur's Court. They were not so powerful as Sir Lancelot or Sir Geraint or Sir Gareth, but they had purer souls than these.

When they came to the bedside of the maiden, she said:

"Oh, my brother and my friend, I have seen the Holy Grail. Last night I was awakened by a sound like the music of a silver horn across the hills. It was more beautiful music than any I have ever heard. Then through my window shone a long cold beam of silver light, and slowly across that beam came the Holy Grail. It was red like a beautiful rose, and the light reflected from it covered all the walls with a rosy color. And then it vanished. Now I beg you to seek it; and go to the hall of Arthur and tell all the other knights to take the quest. If they can but see the Grail, it will be a sign that they are good, and that the world is growing better."

As she spoke, Sir Galahad's face wore an expression so like her own that Sir Perceval was amazed. But the maiden took from the side of her bed a sword-belt, and gave it to Sir Galahad.

"Fair knight," she said, "I have made this golden belt of my hair, and woven on it, in crimson and silver thread, the device of the Holy Grail. Put on this belt, bind your sword to it, and go forth; for you, too, shall see the Holy Grail."

Then Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval went away quietly, for they saw that the beautiful maiden had not long to live. That night they went to Arthur's hall. The king was absent with the queen, but most of the knights of the Round Table were there, and to them Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval told the vision that Sir Perceval's sister had seen.

As they spoke, suddenly the torches in the hall were extinguished; there was a loud sound like thunder and a sudden cracking of the roof. Then a beam of light, seven times stronger than day, streamed into the room. Across the beam stole the Holy Grail. But it was covered by a luminous cloud, so that its shape could not be seen. Slowly it vanished away.

There was silence in the hall for a long time; the knights were awe-struck and could not speak. At last Sir Perceval rose in his seat and said in a low tone:

"My sister saw the vision of the Holy Grail, but I, because I am more sinful, have seen it covered with a cloud. Yet because I wish to see it, I vow to spend twelve months and a day in search of it. I will pray, and live as holy a life as I can, and perhaps this vision will be mine."

Then good Sir Bors, the cousin of Sir Lancelot, made the same vow, as did also Sir Galahad and Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain and many others. After the vows had been taken, King Arthur entered. When all had been explained to him, his face grew sorrowful.

"If I had been here," he said, "I should not have allowed you to swear the vow. None of you really saw the Grail; you say it was covered with a cloud."

Then Sir Galahad cried out:

"My king, I saw the Grail, all crimson like a ruby, and I heard a voice which said, 'O Galahad, O Galahad, follow me!'"

"Ah, Galahad," said the king, tenderly, "you are fit for this quest, this search, but the others are not. Sir Lancelot is our strongest warrior, but he is not like Sir Galahad. Most of you, my knights, are men with strength and will to right wrongs; that is the work you are fitted for. You have fought in twelve great battles with the heathen, but only one of you is fit for this holiest of visions. Yet go, and fulfill your vow."

The faces of the knights were downcast. The king continued:

"While you are gone, I shall need your strength here at home, but you will be following a wandering fire. Many of you will never return."

All the company felt sad. The next day when the knights departed upon their quest, the king could hardly speak for grief, and many of the knights and ladies wept. Those who had sworn the vow went together to the great gate of the city of Camelot, and there they separated.

During the next twelvemonth many a poor laborer who

had been wronged came to Arthur's Court to find a knight who would fight for him, and many a poor widow and maiden. But because so many of the knights of the Round Table were absent there was little help to be had, and Arthur's face grew sadder and sadder as time went on.

At last, after the twelvemonth and the day had passed, those in Camelot began to look for the return of the knights who had taken the vow. Alas, though they waited all day long, only Sir Gawain, Sir Bors, Sir Perceval, and Sir Lancelot returned. In the evening the knights of the Round Table assembled in the great hall. When each was seated, the king rose, and said to those who had been upon the quest:

"My lords, I need only look at your faces to know that you have fared ill. I dare not think of those of you who have not come back. And now, Perceval, my knight who, next to Galahad, has the purest soul, tell me what has happened to you."

Sir Perceval rose slowly from his chair and said:

"Dear my liege, when I left your court on the sad morning that we all set forth, I did not feel the grief that many of the other knights felt. I had been fighting so well, so many lances had gone down before my stroke, that I was full of confidence in what I could do.

"I rode happily, planning all the great victories I should win. I was sure if I righted a great many wrongs, I should soon see the Grail. But after many days I began to grow weary. I was riding through rough forests, and the branches bruised me and my horse; there seemed to be no great deeds to do. I could not even slay wild beasts, and so be of use to the poor country people. My bed was on the hard ground, and my food was wild berries.

"One day I came to a great castle, and here I decided to rest. When I entered, I was warmly greeted and brought to the princess of the castle. I found her to be one whom I had loved long ago in her father's court. I was but a young squire

and she was a great princess, and so I had gone away without telling her how dear I held her.

"She greeted me kindly, and after a time she began to love me. Soon I wondered whether I was fit to see the Holy Grail. I thought perhaps I was one of those who were pursuing a wandering fire. And then the people of the castle begged me to marry their princess, and be their lord and live a happy and easeful life.

"One night I awoke, and thought longingly of the Holy Grail. Whether I were fit to see the vision or not, I had at least sworn to seek it for a year and a day. And yet, I had not tried two months! I rose hastily, dressed, and left the castle. Then for many days I prayed and mourned. At last I sought a holy hermit, and told him all I had done and thought since I had left Arthur's Court.

"The good hermit, after a short silence, said: 'My son, you have not true humility. You have been too proud of your strength, and too sure in the beginning that you were fit for the vision. You have always thought first of yourself and your own glory, and not of the good you could do.'

"I went into the chapel of this hermit, and prayed to be relieved of the sin of pride. As I prayed, Sir Galahad entered. He was clad in silver armor, and his face looked like that of an angel.

"'Oh, my brother,' he said, 'have you not seen the Grail?' And after I had answered, he said:

"'From the moment when I left the court of our king, the vision has been with me. It is faint in the daytime, but at night it shines blood red. I see it on the mountains, and in the lakes, and on the marshes. It has made me so strong that everywhere I am able to do good. I have broken down many evil customs. I have fought with pagan hordes and been victor, all because of this blessed vision. Perceval, I have not long to live. I am going to the great city above, which is more beautiful than any earthly city. Come out with me this night, and before you

die you shall see this vision.'

"Then I followed Sir Galahad out of the chapel. We climbed a hill which was steep and rugged, Sir Galahad going first, and his silver armor guiding me. When we came to the top, a storm broke over us, and the lightning seemed to follow us as we descended the hill on the other side. At the bottom of it there was a great black swamp, leading to the sea. It was crossed by a huge bridge built by some forgotten king. Here Sir Galahad left me and ran over the bridge till he reached the sea. His armor shone like a star, far away at the edge of the water. And then I saw him no more.

"I knelt on the black ground and wept, and wished that I were as good as Sir Galahad, and could do deeds as he did, not to win glory, but to help those who needed help. And as I wept, I was aware of a great light over me. I looked up and saw a silver beam, and across it slowly moved the Holy Grail. It was no longer muffled in a cloud, but shone crimson as a ruby.

"I made my way back to the chapel and prayed all the rest of the night. In the morning I found Sir Galahad's body by the sea. He was beautiful as a saint, though he was worn and thin from long self-sacrifice. I buried him and then turned my steps to Camelot.

"And now, my lord Arthur, I shall never fight again. I shall become a monk and pass my life in prayer as my sister did. Among my brother monks, there will be very many little deeds of service I can do. Thus will I spend my life."

All the knights were very much moved and the king looked affectionately at Sir Perceval, but he did not speak to him. He turned to Sir Gawain and said:

"Sir Gawain, was this quest for you?"

Then Sir Gawain, always light-hearted and easily turned away from one thing to another, said:

"Nay, my king, such a search is not for one like me. In a little time I became tired. I talked to a holy man who told me



And across it slowly moved the Holy Grail.

that I was not fit for such a vision. So I journeyed till I came to a field with silk pavilions and very many knights and ladies. And with them I lived happily for the year."

The good king looked displeased, but his face grew tender as he turned to Sir Bors.

"Bors," he said, "good, faithful, and honest you have ever been. Tell me what you have seen."

Sir Bors, who stood near Sir Lancelot, said:

"My lord Arthur, after I had started on the quest, I was told that madness had fallen upon my kinsman, Sir Lancelot. This so grieved me that I had but little heart to seek for the Holy Grail. Yet I sought for it. I believed that if God meant me to see the vision he would send it.

"I traveled till I came to a people who were heathen. They knew much of magic, but nothing of God. I stayed with them, and tried to teach them our faith, but they were angry because I would not believe in their gods, and they put me into prison.

"I was there many months in darkness and cold. But I tried to be patient, and prayed that my patience would count for something, although I could not do any good deeds. I had at least been faithful though I failed.

"One night a stone slipped from my prison wall, and I could see a space of sky, with seven stars set across it. Then slowly across the space glided the Holy Grail. My happiness was great, for I had seen the vision.

"The next morning, a maiden who had been secretly converted to our religion released me from prison, and I came hither."

Then the king spoke to Sir Lancelot.

"My Lancelot, the mightiest of us all, have you succeeded in this quest?"

Then Sir Lancelot groaned.

"O, king!" he cried, "your mightiest, yes; and yet, far better it would be if I were like Sir Galahad. A great sin is on my soul, and it was to be rid of this sin that I undertook the

quest of the Holy Grail. A hermit told me that only by putting this sin away should I ever see the vision. I strove so hard against it that my old sickness came upon me. I became mad, and rode up and down among waste places, fighting with small men who overthrew me. The day has been when the very sound of my name would have made them tremble.

"At last I came to the sea and saw a boat anchored near the shore. I stepped into it, loosed the anchor, and floated away. For seven days I sailed, and at last I came to an old castle. I entered and heard a voice singing. I followed it up, up for a thousand steps. At last I came to a door, which burst open before me. Perhaps I dreamed, and yet I believe I saw the Holy Grail, though it was veiled and guarded by great angels. I thought I saw all this, and then I swooned away. When I came to myself, I was alone in the room. It was many days before I made my way back to Camelot."

For a long time there was silence in the hall, and then Sir Gawain said:

"Sir king, I can fight, and I always shall fight for you. But I do not believe in this vision. All the knights were mad, like Sir Lancelot. They did not really have the vision; it was but fancy."

Then the king spoke gravely to Sir Gawain.

"Sir Gawain, you are indeed not fit for such a vision, but you should not doubt that others have seen it. I was right, my knights, when I said that most of you would follow a wandering fire. How many of those who left me have not returned, and never will!"

The knights looked at the empty chairs. The king went on:

"Sir Galahad was the only one who completely saw the vision. He was indeed blessed, and fit for such a quest. You who were unfit should have stayed with me to help govern this land."

The knights were silent and sad; then the king said:

"My dear knights whom I love, always remember this: whether you seek for a vision, or do humble service as Sir Perceval will for his fellow-monks, or fight to right wrongs as Sir Lancelot does, whatever you do your aim must be to make yourself useful to the world by the work for which you are best fitted."

The king rose from the Round Table and left the company, Sir Lancelot following him. Then the other knights departed, one by one, and the great hall was left empty, with its shields glimmering in the moonlight.

The Death of Arthur

King Arthur's Round Table had lasted many years, and the knights had done much to help the people of the country; yet there were traitors to the king among his own subjects. One of these traitors made war in a distant part of the kingdom, and Arthur went with most of his knights to punish him. His nephew, Sir Modred, the brother of Sir Gawain and Sir Gareth, ruled in his stead at Camelot.

Now Sir Modred was a wicked knight. He hated the king and the queen, and Sir Lancelot. Since King Arthur was absent a long time, Sir Modred had the opportunity of doing much harm. He let evil go unpunished; he allowed bad customs to come into the country; and at last he raised a rebellion against the good king.

When Arthur returned to Camelot to quell this rebellion, he had lost many of his faithful knights. Sir Hector was dead, and Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias; Sir Kay was dead, and Sir Bors, and Sir Gawain. Sir Lancelot was far away. Sir Bedivere alone remained of those who had been with Arthur since he had first ruled in Wales and Britain.

The king and Sir Bedivere, with the help of such knights as still were faithful, tried to put down those rebels. They drove the traitors back until they came at length to Lyonnesse by the sea. Here the last great battle took place.

The night before the battle, Sir Bedivere heard the king praying. Then Arthur slept, and when he awakened he called to his friend:

"Sir Bedivere," he said, "I have had a dream. I thought that Sir Gawain came to me and told me that tomorrow I shall

die."

"My lord, it is but a dream," answered Sir Bedivere. "You are great; you have done much good which will last forever, and you will live many years yet to perform many gracious acts. The day will soon dawn, and you will win the battle."

Arthur shook his head.

"This is not like my other battles. I have no heart for it. It is hard to slay my own people, even if they are traitors."

Day came, but no sun. A cold white mist lay over land and sea. It chilled the knights to the bone. And when the battle began, the mist was so thick that no one could see with whom he was fighting. Friends slew each other, not knowing whom they killed. Some could not fight at all, for it seemed to them that those moving on the battle-field were ghosts of warriors long since slain. There was many a noble deed and many a base one done in that mist.

The fighting went on with clashing of lances and shields throughout the afternoon, and then the sounds grew fainter, till there was silence. At last, towards sunset, a wind from the west blew the mist away. Then Arthur, with Sir Bedivere by his side, looked over the field of battle. He saw but one man standing; all the rest were dead on the seashore. And the tide had risen, and was swaying the helpless hands, and tumbling up and down the hollow helmets and the broken spears that once had fought with Rome. The king's face was white, and his voice was low as he said to Sir Bedivere:

"There lie my slain, who have died for me. I am king only of the dead."

"Nay, lord," said Sir Bedivere. "You are king everywhere still. Now strike a kingly stroke against the one traitor who still stands."

Sir Bedivere pointed at the one other living man, and the king saw that it was Sir Modred. Arthur threw down his scabbard and lifted his good Excalibur. Then he sprang upon the traitor. Sir Modred struck the king on the helmet, which had

been worn thin in many battles. The stroke cut through the steel, and wounded Arthur mortally, but he used his ebbing strength for one last blow with Excalibur, and killed Sir Modred.

The king sank to the ground, but Sir Bedivere lifted him, and bore him to a ruined chapel near the seashore. When he had laid him down by the broken cross in the chancel, Arthur said:

"You know well that my Excalibur was given to me by the Lady of the Lake. I have used it like a king. And now the time has come to obey the writing on the blade. So take my sword Excalibur, and throw it far out into the lake."

Sir Bedivere took the sword and went out from the ruined chapel. He walked amid the graves of ancient knights over which the sea wind was singing. He passed the barren cliffs and chasms, and reached the lake at last.

He lifted Excalibur, and as he did so the moon came from behind the clouds. The light fell on the hilt of the sword, and all the jewels shone. Sir Bedivere looked until his eyes were dazzled; he could not throw the beautiful weapon away. So he hid it in the weeds upon the shore of the lake, and returned to the king.

"What did you see or hear?" asked Arthur.

Sir Bedivere replied:

"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds, and the wild water lapping on the crags."

King Arthur, faint and pale, said:

"You have betrayed me. You have acted a lie. Had you thrown the sword, something would have happened, some sign would have been given. Go back now, and throw it into the lake."

Sir Bedivere went back and again picked up Excalibur. As he looked at it he said aloud:

"Surely it is not right to throw away such a precious thing. It would please the eyes of people forever. I know it is wrong

to disobey the king. Yet he is sick; perhaps he does not know what he is doing. If I keep Excalibur and store it in a great treasure-house, people will look at it throughout all the coming years, and feel great reverence for the king who fought with it."

So again Sir Bedivere hid the sword and returned to the king, who asked:

"What have you seen or heard?"

And Sir Bedivere replied:

"I heard the water lapping on the crag, and the long ripple washing in the reeds."

Then the king was very angry.

"Ah, unkind!" he cried. "You, too, are a traitor. Because I am dying, I have no authority. You refuse to obey me, you who are the last of my knights! Yet it is possible for a man to fail in his duty twice, and succeed the third time. Go now, and throw Excalibur."

Sir Bedivere ran quickly and seized the sword, shutting his eyes that he might not see its beauty. He whirled it round his head and threw it far out over the lake. It flashed in the moonlight and fell. But before it reached the surface of the water, an arm, clothed in pure white, rose and caught it, brandished it three times, and then drew it under the water.

When Sir Bedivere went back to Arthur, the king knew that he had been obeyed.

"I am dying," he said. "Lift me on your back and carry me to the lake."

Then Sir Bedivere carried the helpless king, walking quickly through the place of tombs, and over the crags, and past the chasms, till he came to the smooth shining lake. There beside the bank was a barge, all black. The deck was covered with stately figures of people clad in mourning. Among them were three fair queens with crowns of gold—the three queens who were to help Arthur at his need.

They had come to take him away, Sir Bedivere did not

know where. When they saw the wounded king, they gave a cry of grief that seemed to rise to the stars. Then they lifted him into the barge. The tallest put his head on her knees, and took off his broken helmet. She called him by name, weeping bitterly.

Poor Sir Bedivere cried:

"Oh, my Lord Arthur, you are leaving me. Where shall I go? The great Round Table is broken up forever. What shall I do?"

Then Arthur answered:

"Old customs pass and new ones come. God makes his world better in many ways. The Round Table did its work and now has disappeared; but something else will surely come to advance the cause of truth and justice. Pray for me and for yourself. More things are done by prayer than this world dreams of. And now, farewell! You shall never see me again, my Bedivere. My work is done; yours, too, is nearly over. Farewell!"

Then the barge moved slowly away, while those on board lamented. Sir Bedivere watched it till it disappeared amid the shadows over the lake. Then he rose slowly and wandered back to Lyonnesse.

After a time he went to Camelot. There was a new king there, who was good, and new customs, also good. But Sir Bedivere was too old to change his way of life. He spent the rest of his days in Camelot, but he lived only in the past, dreaming of the time when King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table ruled in the land.

Legends of King Arthur and His Court

Preface

These stories of King Arthur are retold in the faith that chivalry in its highest sense is not dead among us; and that as long as Christian manhood survives, so long will the chivalric instinct be an important factor in it.

After a study of the many different versions of the legends, the author decided to follow that of Tennyson. The poet strips the stories of the barbarities found in the earlier writings on the subject, and brings to them the nobility of his own ideals. Sidney Lanier says: "We might fairly trace the growth of English civilization by comparing with the earliest conceptions of King Arthur the latest ideal of him in our literature given us by our own great master Tennyson."

In the reproduction of the stories, the words put in the mouths of the characters are, almost without exception, taken verbatim from the poet. If the author has succeeded in imbuing these pages with aught of the spirit of ideal knightliness, the inspiration also is due to the same great master.

Frances Nimmo Greene.
Montgomery, Ala.
August, 1901

Introductory

Feudalism and Chivalry

During that period of the world's history known as the "Middle Ages," there existed in most of the nations of Europe a peculiar form of society called "Feudalism."

This system was distinguished by the great power exercised by the nobles: each lord or baron was like a petty king, owning great tracts of land and ruling all the people who dwelt thereon. Those who lived on the lands of a baron were called his "vassals" or "liegemen," and they were under oath to obey their liege lord in time of peace, and to follow him in time of war. Thus a baron, when he chose to fight, could summon his vassals round him and go out to battle leading a small army all his own.

As the vassals swore allegiance to their lords, so the lords in turn swore allegiance to the king; and they were under oath to assemble their liegemen and go to the aid of the king whenever he was attacked by an enemy, or whenever he himself chose to begin a war.

It was a common occurrence during feudal times for one baron to make war on another in the same kingdom; and it was sometimes the case that a faithless lord would take up arms against even the king himself.

Now these powerful nobles built great castles of stone and fortified them so strongly that they were all but impregnable. They were usually built on high, steep places, and were surrounded by massive walls with openings protected by heavy iron gates. As a further means of protection, wide ditches or

"moats" were sometimes dug around the outer walls, and flooded with water. There were drawbridges held up against the walls by chains, and these could be lowered to give passage across the moat. When any one desired admission to one of these strongholds, he would "wind" or blow his horn at the gate; the watchman in the tower that crowned the wall would survey the newcomer critically, and send an account of him to the lord of the castle, who decided whether or not the stranger should be admitted.

These were the times also in which men encased themselves and their horses in armor, and fought hand-to-hand with spears and swords and battleaxes.

Although a bad system in many respects, feudalism had its place in the advancement of civilization; for out of it sprang "Chivalry," that influence which, next to Christianity, has been the greatest factor in the development of true manhood.

Chivalry as an institution meant a certain system of knighthood. As a sentiment — or better still, an inspiration — it means a consecrated devotion to honor, courtesy, valor, gentleness, gallantry.

One of the principal features of Chivalry was the great honor and conspicuous gallantry accorded the female sex. The historian Hallam says that "the love of God and the ladies was enjoined as a single duty" on the aspirant to knighthood.

Customs of society generally spring from rational foundations, and the deference paid to women must surely have had its origin in the awakening of man to the fact that it is the part of the strong and valiant to protect, rather than to oppress, the weak.

The Training of a Knight

The first step towards knighthood was taken when the

boy became a "page." From the age of seven to the age of fourteen the youths of a noble family were taught the etiquette of chivalry and the use of light arms. They were constantly thrown in the company of ladies that they might early learn gentleness and courtesy.

At the age of fourteen the youth was made a "squire," and entered upon more serious duties. He became the attendant of some knight, whom it was his duty and pleasure to follow into many a thrilling adventure. It was also a part of the squire's service to attend to his master's weapons and armor, and to ride with him to battle or tournament. When in battle, it was his duty to keep near his lord to render whatsoever aid he could. Sometimes it was his good fortune to dash in at a crisis and win distinction for himself.

At the age of twenty-one the young squire reached the goal of his ambition and became a "knight."

The act of conferring knighthood was very important, and was generally attended with impressive ceremonies. The young candidate had first to fast and confess his sins, after which he spent a night in prayer. The next morning, after bathing himself as a sign of purification, and donning costly robes, he was escorted to church, where he was examined, that it might be seen if he were worthy to receive the degree. If he was adjudged worthy of ennoblement, he was allowed to partake of the sacrament and to take the vows of knighthood the vow that he would be "a good, brave, loyal, just, generous, and gentle knight; that he would be a champion of the church and clergy; that he would be a protector of ladies; that he would be a redresser of the wrongs of widows and orphans."

Then a belt of white and gold was clasped about him, and the golden spurs of knighthood were fastened on his heels. After which, the king or some great noble completed the ceremony by striking the kneeling youth on the shoulder with the flat of his sword, and saying to him,

"Sir Knight, arise!"

How well the knights kept their vows, or how humanly they failed, has furnished to the world a store of legends that should not pass away, since they represent the beginning of better things.

The Tournament

The principal form of amusement in chivalric times was the "tournament" or "tourney," generally held to celebrate some notable occasion. Tournaments usually took place within an oval space, which was railed off for the purpose and was called the "lists." Around this oval were arranged tiers of seats for spectators, many of whom were ladies.

When the time came for the trial at arms, two parties of knights — the challengers and those who accepted the challenge — withdrew to opposite ends of the lists. And a fine spectacle they must have made, for they were armed from top to toe, and mounted upon splendid war horses that loved the charge not a whit less than did their riders. Each knight was distinguished by characters or pictures emblazoned on his shield (for all had their faces covered with vizors); each often decorated his helmet with a "favor" from a lady, such as a scarf or a glove. The fair one was highly honored by such a compliment, and she whose knight won in the combat was regarded with much envy.

When everything was ready, the two knights who were chosen to "tilt" first, rode out from their parties and reined their horses exactly opposite each other at the far ends of the lists. Then all became intense excitement; the spectators almost held their breath as the two combatants sat silently regarding each other, with long spears held "in rest," awaiting the signal for the onset.

When the heralds cried, "Let them go!" the two hurled together in the center of the lists, each bent on unhorsing his opponent by a well-aimed thrust of his lance. He who was

successful in bearing his enemy to earth was greeted with loud applause, and was allowed to choose another antagonist.

The first part of the tournament was given up to these single combats, and the knight who was able to unhorse the greatest number was given a prize and made the hero of the hour.

The grand climax came, however, when all the knights in the tourney formed lines at opposite ends of the field, and rushed together in the center, with a clash of arms that made the earth tremble beneath. In this, as in the single combats, great honors awaited the victorious side.

The people then gave themselves up to merrymaking and feasting; and the glories that they had witnessed were their chief subject of conversation until the next tournament.

Such, in brief, were the incidents of the tourney. There was a more serious side, however, and a full account of all its phases would fill a volume.

It is not a wise thing to disregard the steps by which we have ascended — to attempt to judge by twentieth century lights the ages that, in God's providence, have made us what we are.

The practices of Chivalry were designed to cultivate in men that courage and gentleness and high sense of honor essential in all ages to ideal character. If they were not the *best* means of doing this, they were the best known in those days, and we should judge them only by their results.

The institution of Chivalry is dead; but its spirit is immortal, and makes its home in whatever heart is great and generous enough to harbor it. Its latest and best expression is the modern "gentleman" — not the imitation, but the *real* one.

The Coming of Arthur

"Who should be king save him who makes us free?"
Tennyson.

When Uther Pendragon was king in Britain, there lived in that country a wonderful magician named Merlin. Now this Merlin, though not a bad man, was at one time persuaded to help the king do an evil deed. In return for this help Merlin exacted a promise from Uther that when a son should be born to the king, he — Merlin — should be allowed to have the child and rear him as he should choose.

The magician could read the future, and of course knew that a little prince would be born. He also knew that the king would die shortly, and that great dangers awaited his heir. Maybe it was for this reason that the old magician made Uther promise to give the future prince to him — that he might protect the lad in his tender years and prepare him to be king. Whatever was Merlin's reason for wanting possession of the prince that was to be, one thing is sure — it was a good reason, as was afterwards proved.

Time passed on, and a son was born to the king; but instead of the little prince's birth being heralded abroad amid the rejoicings of a glad people, the infant heir to the proudest throne in Britain was slipped by night out of the castle gates, and given to Merlin to be carried away; and nobody was told that a future king had come into the world.

King Uther trusted Merlin. He believed that the mighty magician would care for his son, and would in time bring Arthur (for so the child was named) to the throne which was

rightfully his.

And Merlin proved worthy of that trust. He gave the child to a good old knight, Sir Anton, to rear, and himself watched over the boy through all the dark days and through all the glorious days which followed.

Nor was Merlin's the only hand that guided the uncertain steps of Arthur's youth. There came to the child from time to time three beautiful and mysterious queens, who taught him many wonderful things.

But greatest among all the friends of his boyhood was the "Lady of the Lake" — she who is said to have known "a subtler magic than Merlin's own." No mere mortal was she, but a mystic being who dwelt down in the blue depths of the lake, and had "power to walk the waters like our Lord."

When Uther Pendragon died, the unhappy land was for many years ravaged by rival knights, each of whom struggled to make himself king. It was during this dark period that Arthur, all unconscious of his kingly origin, grew up to his splendid manhood: grew up to catch the sunlight of a brighter day in his tresses, and the blue truth of Heaven in his eyes. And no man save Merlin knew him to be King Uther's son. He who told me this story says that once, when Arthur and Merlin were walking along the shore, the young prince complained that he had no weapon; when suddenly from out the bosom of the lake there rose a mighty arm, holding a splendid sword. Arthur rowed across and took the brand. And when he examined the bright, jeweled hilt, he found written on one side, "Take me," but when he turned the other side he read, "Cast me away." And his face was very sad till Merlin said, "Take thou and strike; the time to cast away is yet far off." Arthur took the sword and called its name "Excalibur" — cut steel.

Now when the time was ripe for Arthur to be declared king, Merlin advised the quarreling lords and barons to gather together on a certain day in the largest church in London, to

see if God would not show them who should be king.

The people respected and feared the old magician; so at his suggestion a mighty concourse gathered on the day appointed, to wait for a sign from God.

When mass was ended — lo! Merlin stood before them with Arthur at his side. He placed the young prince on a high seat and proclaimed to the people:

"Here is Uther's heir, your king!"

Then were there loud shouts of denial from each who would himself be king, and a hundred voices cried, "Away with him! No king of ours!"

But Merlin by his magic caused Arthur to be crowned, and as "the savage yells of Uther's peerage died," Arthur's warriors cried, "Be thou the king, and we will work thy will who love thee!" Then the people went down on their knees; and, lifting up their eyes, they beheld a sight so passing fair and wonderful that a hush fell upon the throng.

In the center of the dais sat the fair-haired, god-like King. Through the casement above him three rays of light — flame-color, green, and azure — fell upon three fair queens who had silently taken their places about him. No one knew whence they had come; but they were ever by Arthur's side in time of need.

Merlin, the enchanter, stood beside him; and also near the King, "clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful," was the Lady of the Lake. Before Arthur, at his crowning, was borne his sword, Excalibur — the brand which she had given him.

Those who were truest and best, the flower of Britain's chivalry, crowded about the King on his coronation day and desired that he knight them with his wonderful sword, Excalibur. As Arthur looked upon them, his own truth and purity seemed mirrored in their faces; for one who saw it says, "I beheld, from eye to eye, through all their order, flash a momentary likeness of the King."

Then in low, deep tones the young King administered to them the oath of knighthood. So sacred and so exalted were the vows which he required of them that, when they arose from their knees, their faces bore witness to the solemnity of the ceremony. Some were deadly pale, some flushed, and others dazed "as one who wakes half-blinded at the coming of a light."

No wonder the knights paled or flushed at the sacredness of their vows; for kneeling at the feet of Arthur they swore by the cross of Christ

"To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their king,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity."

"The coming of a light" indeed! The coming of Arthur was the coming of God-like manliness to an age of barbarity and sin. Well might old Merlin and you and I and all the world exclaim,

"O true and tender! O my liege and King!
O selfless man and stainless gentleman!"

Marriage of Arthur and Guinevere

At the time of the coming of Arthur, many petty kings ruled in the isle of Britain. They ever waged war upon each other and wasted all the land; and from time to time heathen hordes swarmed over the seas and ravaged what was left. So there grew up great tracts of wilderness "wherein the beast was ever more and more, but man was less and less."

The land of Cameliard, where Leodogran was king, was the most unhappy land in all the isle; it was constantly a prey to wild beasts and wilder men. The boar and wolf and bear came day and night and wallowed in the gardens of the king, or stole and devoured the children. Leodogran's own brother rose up against him; then the heathen came, "reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood."

King Leodogran knew not where to turn for help, till he heard of Arthur, newly crowned. When people told him of this splendid young king, he sent messengers to Arthur, saying, "Arise and help us thou! For here between the man and beast we die."

Arthur had not yet done any deed of arms, but true to his knightly spirit he arose and went into the land of Cameliard at the call of a fellow-creature in distress; and with him rode a goodly company of knights.

Now it chanced that Guinevere, the beautiful daughter of the king of Cameliard, stood by the walls of her father's castle to see the arrival of King Arthur and his company. But Arthur rode "a simple knight among his knights," and wore no sign or symbol by which any one could recognize his rank; so Guinevere did not know him to be the young king. But he, in



Guinevere sees Arthur by the castle wall.

passing, looked down upon the lovely maid and ever after carried her fair image in his heart.

But Arthur did not tarry at the castle to see the beautiful princess; he rode on and pitched his tents beside the forest. He fought a mighty battle with the heathen and drove them out of the land of Cameliard. Then he caused the forests to be cut down, letting in the sunlight, and made broad pathways for the hunter and the knight. And having done this, he returned to his own kingdom.

Meantime, while Arthur was absent, the great lords and barons of his kingdom, joining with a score of petty kings, rose up against him with the cry, "Who hath proven him King Uther's son?" And he returned from his victory over the heathen to find his own people in arms against him.

When the King and his knights reached the field where the traitor forces were gathered, the day was so clear that the "smallest rock on the faintest hill" could be distinctly seen; so when they advanced and flung their banners to the breeze, they were marked at once by the waiting enemy. Then, to clarion call and trumpet blast, with the shoutings of a thousand rebel throats, the traitors came thundering to meet the King's army. And right valiantly did the true and loyal receive the shock! Then horse to horse and man to man the battle raged — now lost! — now won! Suddenly a blinding storm came down upon them, and the fires of heaven, lighting up the red earth, showed Arthur in the foremost of the battle, fighting like a young god.

And lo! the foe turned and fled. Arthur's knights would have followed, dealing death among the flying numbers, but the ever merciful King cried, "Stop! They yield!"

> "So like a painted battle the war stood
> Silenced; the living quiet as the dead,
> And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord."

And Arthur laughed upon the dark-eyed Launcelot, the knight whom he loved and honored most, and said:

"*Thou* dost not doubt me king, so well thine arm hath wrought for me today."

"Sir and my liege," cried Launcelot, "the fire of God descends upon thee in the battlefield; I know thee for my king." Whereat the two "sware on the field of death a deathless love," and Arthur said, "Man's word is God in man; let chance what will, I trust thee to the death."

When the king had put down the rebellion, his whole heart and mind turned to the beautiful Guinevere; and he straightway sent three of his trusted knights to Leodogran, saying,

"If I in aught have served thee well, give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife."

Now the old king was sore troubled at the message. He was deeply grateful to Arthur for having saved him from his enemies, and he realized what an advantage to himself it would be to be allied to so great a warrior; but he had heard many conflicting stories about Arthur's birth, and he did not wish to wed his daughter to a man who might not be the son of a king.

So he summoned his gray-haired chamberlain, and after him the knights from King Arthur's court, and asked many questions concerning the birth of Arthur.

Not satisfied with the testimony of these—for all believed in the royal descent of Arthur, though none could prove it—Leodogran next questioned Bellicent, Queen of Orkney and sister to Arthur. Her story was scarcely more convincing. But it came to pass that night that King Leodogran dreamed a dream in which he beheld Arthur standing in the heavens, crowned. And he awoke and sent back the knights, answering, "Yea."

King Arthur was glad at the tidings, and dispatched the knight whom he loved and honored most to bring the Queen.

And Launcelot departed in the latter part of April, and returned among the May flowers with Guinevere.

With the fair young bride King Leodogran sent to Arthur a goodly company of his most valiant knights, and also a wonderful round table, which was said to be large enough for the accommodation of an hundred and fifty persons.

Now this round table had been given Leodogran by King Uther Pendragon, and was said to possess magic powers. King Arthur was much pleased with these gifts. He received the stranger knights into his own order, and placed the round table in the banquet hall of the castle. And there ever after the knightly were wont to meet, to feast and exchange noble converse. From that time King Arthur's knights were known as the Knights of the Round Table.

No fairer marriage morn has ever dawned upon the world than that on which the King and Guinevere knelt before the holy St. Dudric to exchange vows of deathless love.

The great city seemed "on fire with sun and cloth of gold." Beyond, the fair fields of Britain were white with the flowers of May, and white were the flowers that decked the marriage altar, and white the raiment of King Arthur's knights who stood round him, "glorying in their vows and him."

And there before the altar Arthur said:

"Let chance what will, I love thee to the death!" And the Queen replied:

"King and my lord, I love thee to the death!"

Then the holy Dudric spread his hands above them saying, "Reign ye, and live and love and make the world other, and may thy Queen be one with thee, and all this order of thy Table Round fulfill the boundless purpose of their King."

The bridal train left the church amid a joyful blast of trumpets; and Arthur's warriors sang before the King,

> "Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May;
> Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd away!

Blow thro' the living world 'Let the King reign.'

Shall Rome or heathen rule in Arthur's realm?
Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm,
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

Strike for the King and live! His knights have heard
That God hath told the King a secret word.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

Blow trumpet! He will lift us from the dust.
Blow trumpet! Live the strength and die the lust!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

Strike for the King and die! And if thou diest,
The King is king, and ever wills the highest.
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May!
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

The King will follow Christ, and we the King,
In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign."

Gareth and Lynette

Part I

King Arthur became mightier day by day. He drew the many petty kingdoms under him; he overthrew the heathen in twelve great battles and drove them out of the land; he crushed out the Roman power in Britain, and "made a realm and reigned." Verily the King *was* king and ever willed the highest!

Bellicent, wife of King Lot of Orkney and sister to Arthur, was the mother of many stalwart sons, some of whom were knights at Arthur's court. The youngest, fairest, and tallest of them all, Gareth, was kept at home by the over-foolish fondness of his mother.

Strong of limb and stout of heart, the young lad was ever restive under his mother's coddling, and longed for the excitement of the lists and the sterner joys of the battlefield. And he ever plagued her to allow him to be gone, saying:

"Man am I grown, a man's work must I do."

But the queen mother steadfastly refused him leave to go, and tried to distract his thoughts, saying:

"Stay; follow the deer. So make thy manhood mightier, sweet, in the chase."

But Gareth answered her: "Follow the deer? Follow the Christ, the King! Else wherefore born?"

At length, worn out with his pleadings, the queen thought to quiet him by granting his request, but on conditions such as he would certainly reject. Looking keenly at him all the while, she told him that he must go in disguise to Camelot,

and hire himself as a kitchen knave in the King's palace, to serve a twelvemonth and a day; and that until he had fulfilled this term of service, he should not make himself known.

Great was the chagrin of Bellicent when Gareth assented to her terms; but when he lingered the half-hope rose in the queen's heart that he would yet resolve to stay.

She did not know her son.

Early one morning, while the castle was yet asleep, Gareth arose and clad himself like a tiller of the soil; and taking with him two serving-men, disguised like himself, he quietly slipped away to King Arthur's court.

When they were come to Camelot, the "city of shadowy palaces," their joy and wonder were great indeed; for Camelot was the work of ancient kings who wrought the history of their days in stone, and of the enchanter Merlin, who by his magic raised castle, palace, wall, and tower.

The clang of arms was heard ever and anon, as the knights passed in and out of their halls; the eyes of pure women glanced shyly out of the casements; "and all about a healthful people stept, as in the presence of a gracious king."

With his young heart hammering in his ears, Gareth ascended to the hall where the King held court. There he beheld with his own eyes the great Arthur Pendragon, seated, crowned; and the far-famed knights of the Round Table, who watched with loving eyes their lord, eager to do his bidding. Gareth's manly heart beat high when he heard King Arthur's clear, deep tones: "We sit king, to help the wronged throughout all our realm."

Ever and anon there came to Arthur men and women from various parts of the country, to complain of wrong suffered or misfortune endured. And the King hearkened with an ear of sympathy to their complaints.

As each tale of suffering was recited, some knight would cry: "A boon, Sir King! Give me to right this wrong."

The King would grant the boon, and the knight would

ride away to redress the wrong, counting himself most happy in being allowed to do battle for Christ and for the King.

There came a messenger from King Mark of Cornwall, bearing a magnificent present of cloth of gold which he laid at the feet of Arthur. He told the King that Mark desired to be made knight of the Round Table.

Then the King, who had been but a moment before all gentle courtesy to a peevish woman, rose in a mighty wrath and cast the gift into the fire. He told the messenger to return and to warn Mark of Cornwall to keep forever out of his sight; for Mark was a traitorous, lying king — a craven, coward thing that would strike when a man was off his guard. Then quickly softening, Arthur said to the frightened messenger:

"It is no fault of thine"; and he bade Sir Kay, the seneschal, look to the man's wants and treat him courteously.

Then came Gareth, leaning on his two companions, and cried:

"A boon, Sir King! For see ye not how weak and hunger-worn I seem, leaning on these? Grant me to serve for meat and drink among thy kitchen knaves a twelve-month and a day, nor seek my name. Hereafter I will fight."

The King answered him, saying: "A goodly youth and worth a goodlier boon! But if thou wilt no goodlier, have then thy will. Sir Kay shall be thy master." Then the King rose and departed.

Launcelot, whose keen, dark eyes had watched the scene, now spoke to Sir Kay, and called his attention to the noble appearance of Gareth. He advised the seneschal to use the boy kindly, saying that he was no doubt come of noble blood. But the rough Kay told Launcelot to attend to his own affairs, and thereafter made life very unpleasant for Gareth.

In spite of his hard master, the petted youth found his service not unbearable. He was doing his duty; that was comfort enough. He listened with pleasure to the chat of his fellow-knaves concerning the great lords above them. Best of

all, he liked the stories about Launcelot and the King — about their love for each other, and how "Launcelot was the first in tournament, but Arthur mightiest on the battlefield." And it was in this lowly company that Gareth first heard the prophecy which said that the King should not suffer death, but should pass away from mortal sight, none knowing whither.

Once in a while Sir Kay would give Gareth leave, and he would hasten away to the jousts to watch the great deeds of arms, learning as he looked. And Launcelot was ever kind to him.

After many weeks, Queen Bellicent relented and sent arms to her son, releasing him from the promise which she had required of him.

Gareth then hastened to the King and told him all. His royal liege and kinsman received him gladly and made him knight of the Table Round. Then Gareth begged that his name and state might still remain unknown, save to Launcelot; and also that he might be granted the next quest.

The King consented; but he summoned Launcelot privily and, having told him Gareth's secret and request, charged him to take horse and follow when the young knight should set forth on his first quest.

"Cover the lions on thy shield," he said to Launcelot, "and see he be nor ta'en nor slain."

Now that same day there came to the court a beautiful damsel, demanding help. Not in suppliance came she, but in a passion of indignation. And she proceeded to tell the King in no very humble terms about the condition of certain parts of his realm, and what *she* would do if *she* were king.

Arthur, ever courteous to a woman, disregarded her impatience and gently asked her name and need.

Somewhat pacified by the manner of the King, the damsel told him that her name was Lynette, and that she had come to fetch a knight to deliver her sister, the Lady Lyonors, who

was imprisoned in Castle Perilous. She said that there was a river which flowed in three loops about the castle, and that this river was crossed by three bridges, each of which was held by a mighty knight; that there was a fourth and more terrible knight, in league with the others, who besieged the castle and declared that he would take it and force the Lady Lyonors to wed him. Lynette further told the King that it was the boast of this last-named knight that he would defeat the mightiest in the land and wed the Lady Lyonors with glory. It was because Lynette had promised to fetch Launcelot to combat this knight that he had allowed her to pass from Castle Perilous; and now she demanded of the King that Launcelot return with her and slay these four and set her sister free.

"A boon, Sir King — this quest!" cried a strong young voice; and lo! Gareth, in kitchen garb, stood up among that knightly company.

The King had promised. He knit his brows for a moment, then, looking up, said: "Go."

All save Launcelot stood amazed. The face of Lynette burned with indignation as she lifted her arms and cried:

"Fie on thee, King! I asked thy chiefest knight, and thou hast given me but a kitchen knave!" Then, ere any man could stay her, she fled down the long hall, sprang upon her horse, and dashed away.

Flinging off the loose garment of the kitchen knave and displaying to the astonished knights a full suit of armor, Sir Gareth strode after her. At the door he found a splendid horse, a shield, and arms, which the King had provided for him. Losing no time, he sprang upon his charger and rode after the ungrateful damsel whom he had undertaken to aid. Then straightway Sir Launcelot covered the lions on his shield and followed at a distance.

After her first wrathful dash through field and forest, Lynette checked her horse somewhat to reflect, when, to her great indignation, she saw the "kitchen knave" in full armor,



Lynette and Arthur.

close behind.

"Damsel, the quest is mine. Lead and I follow," he said in gentlest courtesy.

But Lynette scorned his services, calling him "knave" and "scullion." And she railed against King Arthur for sending a serving-man to bear her company and fight her battles. Then she whipped up her steed again, thinking to escape Gareth's unwelcome championship; but the young knight followed close behind her.

Now it chanced that Lynette, in her blind wrath, gave little heed to the direction of her journey; and Gareth, not knowing the way, unquestioning, followed his reckless guide. Soon they realized that they were lost. They had entered a deep and tangled wood, and the shadows of evening were sifting down about them. On and on they went, trying to find a way out, when presently they came upon six tall men bearing a seventh, bound, to a lake hard by. Seeing that the villains were about to drown a helpless man, Gareth dashed among them with drawn sword and dealt mighty blows right and left. Three he felled to the earth, and the three others, seeing the fate of their companions, left their victim and fled through the forest. Then Gareth unbound the maltreated man, who proved to be lord of a great castle nearby. The baron was deeply grateful to Gareth for having delivered him, and asked what reward the young knight would like to receive.

"None," said Gareth bluntly. "For the deed's sake I have done the deed, in uttermost obedience to the King." Gareth then said he would be much pleased if the lord would grant them entertainment in his castle till the morrow. The good baron took them home with him and treated them right royally. The willful Lynette had determined to see no good in her knight, so she only tilted her nose a trifle higher and pretended to believe that he had succeeded in his valorous deed by accident.

Gareth and Lynette

Part II

The next morning the baron told them what path to take, and they mounted and rode away. Lynette, still taunting the young knight, advised him to turn back; for they were hard upon the first of those dreadful knights whom he had come to combat.

"Lead and I follow," was Gareth's only reply.

Soon they came to the first of the three great loops of the river which wound around Castle Perilous; and Gareth beheld the bridge that was sentineled by the knight "Phosphorus."

Just across the stream they saw his silk pavilion all gay in gold and white, with a crimson banner floating over it. Before the pavilion paced a knight unarmed. But when he saw Lynette and her champion he called:

"Daughters of the Dawn, approach and arm me!"

Out of the pavilion came three rosy maidens with the dew glistening on their hair. These armed the knight in blue armor and gave to him a blue shield.

When the knight of the azure shield was mounted and ready, he and Gareth placed their spears in rest and dashed together. Both spears bent in the shock, both knights lay unhorsed on the bridge; but Gareth, springing lightly to his feet, drew his sword and, showering fierce blows upon his enemy, drove him backward. Then Lynette — half in scorn, half in astonished admiration — cried after him: "Well stricken, kitchen knave!"

In another moment Gareth had his foe on the ground,

defeated.

"Take not my life; I yield!" cried Phosphorus.

But Gareth refused to spare him unless Lynette would ask it. At first the damsel scorned to beg a favor of the "kitchen knave"; but, seeing that Gareth was in earnest, she at length condescended to crave mercy for the defeated knight.

Then Gareth pardoned Phosphorus, first having made him promise to go to the court of Arthur and offer himself as a true and loyal knight — nevermore to bear arms against the King.

As if repentant of having cheered him on in his combat, Lynette now treated Gareth with the greater scorn and taunted him the more cruelly as they rode towards the second loop of the river. There they found the knight "Meridies," "huge, on a huge red horse," bearing a shield with the great sun blazoned on it.

He and Gareth met in mid-stream. A fierce combat ensued, during which the horse of Meridies slipped on the rocks and fell with his rider. Then Meridies yielded him to Gareth, being too much bruised by his fall to continue the fight.

Gareth compelled from him the same promise which he had required of Phosphorus; and he and the damsel rode forward.

If Gareth believed that his victory over the second knight would win him the favor of the Lady Lynette, he soon realized his mistake. She only laughed at him, saying that he could not have won the victory had not the horse of his foe slipped and fallen.

Then came the combat at the third bridge with the third knight, "Hesperus." Old and strong was he, and clothed in many tough skins. No rosy maidens came tripping out to arm him for the fray, but a grizzled damsel, bearing old armor crowned with a withered crest.

Here also was Gareth victorious — this time by the help of no accident, but by the very strength of his good right arm.



Gareth pitches Hesperus over the bridge.

The struggle was long and fierce, and many times he was in dire danger; but he returned to the fight again and again, like a man who knew not how to fail.

Lynette, acknowledging his valor at last, cried out to cheer him, again and again:

"Well done, knave knight!" and "Strike, thou art worthy of the Table Round!"

At length, inspired by her voice, Gareth ended the combat by closing his strong arms around his foe (for both had been unhorsed) and pitching him over the bridge into the stream below.

"Lead and I follow," he said to the damsel; but Lynette replied:

"I lead no longer; ride thou at my side." She then very graciously apologized for her former rudeness to him. Of course a knight who had had the example of the gentle King before him knew how to forgive a maiden's waywardness; and the two rode on together, friends.

Then came the night upon them; and the damsel told him of a cavern, hard at hand, where the Lady Lyonors had caused to be placed bread and meat and wine for the refreshment of the good knight who should come to deliver her. As they were about to enter the cave, Launcelot rode up and made himself known to them, and the three went in together.

Then Gareth told the maiden who he was — a prince in disguise — and she was much pleased to find that her champion was so great a personage.

Worn out with travel and with fighting, Gareth finally dropped into a deep sleep; and while he slumbered, Lynette and Launcelot planned his next adventure for him.

There was one of the four knights yet to be overthrown, "Nox," the most terrible, who besieged the Lady Lyonors in Castle Perilous. He it was who had allowed Lynette to ride out of her sister's castle, that she might bear his challenge to Sir Launcelot.

Now Lynette knew that Nox would not do battle with any less famous knight than Launcelot; and since Gareth had fought so valiantly all her other battles, she wished him to win his full measure of glory by defeating the fourth and most terrible knight of all. Neither did the generous Launcelot wish in any wise to lessen Gareth's glory by taking upon himself the chief battle. So while the youth slept, Launcelot and the maid decided that Gareth should bear the shield of Launcelot — that Nox might mistake him for the knight whom he had challenged, and so not decline to do battle with him.

So it came about that when they mounted and rode again, Gareth went before, bearing the lions of Launcelot. Suddenly Lynette rode forward to his side and grasped his shield. There was now no trace of the scornful damsel of the day before. Self-blame and fear paled her lovely face, and her eyes were full of pleading as she begged her knight to give back the shield to Launcelot.

"Wonders ye have done; miracles ye cannot. I swear thou canst not fling the fourth," she cried. And in her fear for him, she told horrible stories of Nox to deter him from his purpose.

"O prince!" she cried, "I went for Launcelot first. The quest is Launcelot's; give him back the shield."

But Gareth would not yield, so Lynette fell back, sighing, "Heaven help thee!"

After a few more paces she pointed in front of them and whispered, "There!"

Through the shadows of night the gloomy walls of Castle Perilous rose before them. On the plain in front was pitched the huge pavilion of Nox — jet black, with a jet black banner floating above.

Gareth seized the long black horn that hung beside the pavilion and blew three mighty blasts thereon in challenge. Suddenly lights twinkled in the castle, and the Lady Lyonors appeared at a window with her maidens to see the champion who had come to deliver her.

They heard hollow tramplings and muffled voices, and presently the curtain of the great black pavilion was drawn aside and the monster, Nox, rode out. High on a night-black horse, with night-black arms, he rode.

On his breastplate were painted the ribs of a skeleton, and instead of a crest a grinning skull crowned his helmet.

The monster paused, but spoke no word. All stood aghast with horror. A maiden at the castle window swooned. The Lady Lyonors wept and wrung her hands; and even Launcelot felt the ice strike through his blood for a moment.

Those who did not shut their eyes for terror saw Gareth and the black knight suddenly dash together; and they could hardly trust their own sight when they beheld the great Nox unhorsed. They looked again and saw Gareth split the fearful skull with one stroke of his sword, and with another lay wide open the helmet beneath it. Then — wonderful to relate! — there appeared out of the cloven helmet the bright face of a blooming boy. He yielded him to Gareth, crying, "Knight, slay me not!"

When Gareth consented to spare his life, the boy told that the three knights at the bridges were his brothers, and had compelled him to array himself in that fearful guise to frighten the inmates of the castle never dreaming that any hostile knight could safely pass the bridges.

Then was there great rejoicing and merrymaking at the castle; the Lady Lyonors was free. And news was carried back to King Arthur how well his young knight had struck for the right and him.

> "He that told the tale in older times
> Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
> But he that told it later, says Lynette."

Launcelot and Elaine

Part I

Once upon a time a king and his brother fought to the death in a lonely glen; and such was the horror which thereafter clung about the place, that no man went to cover their ghastly bodies with their mother dust, and no man walked that way again for fear.

Now it chanced that Arthur in his wanderings — ere they had crowned him king — strayed into this horror-haunted dell, not knowing where he was. Nor did he realize it till he stepped upon a skeleton, and saw roll from the head thereof a glittering diadem. He ran after the crown, and picked it up and placed it on his head — his heart all the while whispering, "Lo, thou likewise shalt be king."

In the after years, when he became king indeed, he caused the nine large diamonds that ornamented the crown of the dead king to be taken out. And he proclaimed, each year thereafter for nine years, a great joust, in which the knight who should bear him most valiantly should be rewarded with one of these priceless gems.

Eight years passed and eight jousts were held, and in each Launcelot won the diamond. Now when the time was come for the last diamond joust, great preparations were made throughout the realm, for this was to be the most splendid of them all.

Launcelot was so easily first in all knightly deeds, it came to be said about the court that men went down before him in the lists through the very power of his reputation, and not

through any superior strength or skill that he possessed.

Hearing this gossip, Launcelot conceived a plan by which to prove to the knights their mistake. He pretended to the King that an old hurt pained him, so that he must needs remain at home from this trial at arms.

It grieved the King sorely that his best beloved knight should miss the last and greatest joust of all; for he had felt sure that Launcelot would win in this as in all the others. So he rode away with his knights, sorrowing to leave Launcelot behind.

No sooner had the King left, than Launcelot mounted his horse and, taking a seldom-trodden path through the forest, went by a longer route towards the field of tournament. But he had never ridden that way before, and he soon lost himself in the lonely wood.

After many wanderings, he saw on a far distant hill a stately castle. To this point he directed his good steed, and soon arrived before the massive gate of Astolat. He wound the horn which hung beside it; and forth there came to admit him an old, myriad-wrinkled man, who made signs to the knight that he was dumb.

The lord of Astolat and his two sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine, met him in the court with kindly welcome. And the daughter of the house, she who for her beauty and her purity was called "the lily maid of Astolat," came also to greet him.

The host asked the stranger's name and state, adding that he supposed him, by his bearing, to be one of King Arthur's knights.

Launcelot told him that he was one of the Table Round, but craved that his name might be his secret, since he wished to attend the coming joust in disguise; and he begged also that a shield be lent him, that none might recognize him in the lists. For Launcelot had decided to tilt as an unknown knight, that no man might be overawed by his great reputation.

The lord of Astolat courteously allowed his secret, and

told him that he might bear the shield of Sir Torre, which was "blank enough" Torre having been injured in his first tilt, so that he was never again able to bear arms. The old man added that Lavaine wished to go also and take part in the diamond joust.

As they stood thus in pleasant converse, Elaine, the lily maid, watched the handsome face of Launcelot worshipfully, marking here and there a scar from an old wound. And from that moment she loved him "with that love which was her doom."

That night Launcelot abode at the castle of Astolat, Sir Lavaine having promised to ride with him on the morrow to the place of tournament. The attendants spread meat and drink before them, and pleasant moments were spent in feasting and talking together. Much the people of Astolat asked about King Arthur and his Round Table knights. Launcelot told them at length the story of Arthur's glorious wars; and none knew better how to tell it, for he was ever nearest the King in those hard-fought battles. Yet he spoke not of his own valor, but always of the King's, ending with:

"I never saw his like; there lives no greater."

"Save your great self, fair lord," whispered Elaine in her foolish heart; and she loved him all the more.

All night the lily maid lay and dreamed of Launcelot; and when early dawn was come, she arose and robed herself and stole down the long tower stairs to say good-by to her brother, so she told her throbbing heart.

Lavaine was making ready for the journey, and Launcelot waited in the court, patting his charger's neck. His quick ear catching a light step, the knight looked up and beheld in the dewy light of dawn a maid so fair and flower-like that he stood silent, more amazed than if seven men had set upon him. "He had not dreamed she was so beautiful" —he looked and wondered, but he did not love.

Suddenly a wild desire flashed in the heart of Elaine. She

had heard how the knights wore in the lists "tokens" or "favors" from ladies whom they loved or wished to honor; and she much desired that this great knight should wear her favor in the coming joust. Her young heart beat high with fear, yet she could but ask the courtesy of him, and she said:

"Fair lord whose name I know not — will you wear my favor in this tourney?"

Now Launcelot had never worn the favor of any lady in the land, and he had a secret reason for wishing not to do so now; so, disliking to refuse a maiden bluntly, he merely told her of his custom.

But Elaine would not take the half-expressed refusal. She told him that since such had been his wont, the wearing of a lady's favor at *this* joust, where he wished to be unknown, would but help to complete his disguise.

"True, my child. Well, I will wear it; fetch it out to me," answered Launcelot.

The maiden then brought out to him a red sleeve embroidered with pearls. And he bound it to his helmet, saying with a smile:

"I never yet have done so much for any maiden living."

When Lavaine brought out Sir Torre's shield to Launcelot, the knight gave his own to Elaine, saying:

"Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield in keeping till I come." Then Lavaine kissed the roses back to the cheeks of the lily maid, and Launcelot kissed his hand to her, and the two knights rode away.

• • • • • •

"Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable,
Elaine the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the east
Guarded the sacred shield of Launcelot."

Thus says the poet. And he tells us further how she placed

the shield where the sun's first rays would strike it and waken her from dreams of the great knight for whom she had it in keeping; how, later, fearing rust, she embroidered a case to enclose it, fashioning with slender silken threads designs like those on the shield itself, each in its own color; how, day by day, she stripped the cover off and studied the naked shield, making for herself a pretty history of how each dint and cut had been made — in what tournament or on what battlefield. Thus passed her days in vain and sweet imaginings.

The two knights rode on to the lists, and as they journeyed the elder said:

"Hear, but hold my name hidden; you ride with Launcelot of the Lake." Lavaine was surprised and abashed at the great name, and stammered as he replied:

"Is it so indeed?" Then, as if to himself, he murmured, "The great Launcelot."

When they reached the lists by Camelot, in the meadow, the young, unproven knight was overjoyed at the gorgeous sight which met his eyes. The great semicircular gallery of seats, filled with richly dressed spectators, "lay like a rainbow fallen upon the grass." The knights, magnificent in their armored array, were already assembling in the lists. The Round Table knights were the challenging party, and those who came to tilt against them were kings, princes, and barons, and knights from far and near.

Lavaine let his eyes wander till they found the clear-faced King. In high estate King Arthur sat, robed in red samite. The golden dragons of his father, Uther Pendragon, or Uther Dragonhead, stood out in all the carvings about the royal seat. A golden dragon, clinging to his crown, writhed down his long robe. Two others formed the arms of the chair of state. Just above the King's head, in the ornaments of the canopy, was a golden flower, the center of which was the ninth and largest diamond, the prize of the day.

Launcelot's eyes also sought the King, and he said to

Lavaine: "Me you call great — I am not great; there is the man."

There was little time for converse then. Lavaine beheld the company of knights divide — they that assailed and they that held the lists taking positions at opposite ends of the great oval field. With helmets crested with their ladies' favors or with nodding plumes, and long lances bedecked with pennons that danced to the lilt of the breeze, the great company of knights awaited the signal for the onset. And no less impatient than their riders, the splendid war-horses quivered for the spring.

As the knights formed lines for the coming shock, Launcelot, signaling to Lavaine, drew out of the range of combat. The younger knight would fain have entered the sport at once, but the wish of Launcelot was law to his hero-worshiping heart, and he followed his leader.

Suddenly the heralds blew a mighty blast on their trumpets; the knights struck spur; and riders and steeds, alike wild with the joy of conflict, hurled them together in the center of the lists. Then for a few mad, glorious moments the hard earth trembled with the shock, and the clear air of morning reverberated with the thunder of arms.

Launcelot tarried a little till he saw which was the stronger party; then hurled his force against it, Lavaine following his lead.

The knights of the Round Table were by far the mightier in the field till he of the scarlet sleeve dashed against them. Then was Launcelot Launcelot indeed. No need to speak of his glory. "King, duke, earl, count, baron — whom he smote, he overthrew."

The spectators half rose in their seats in astonished admiration at his deeds; the eyes of the great King brightened; the knights in the lists were wonderstruck that other than Launcelot should almost outdo the deeds of Launcelot. There arose in the hearts of the Round Table knights a keen jealousy



(From an old tapestry)

that a stranger should surpass in chivalric deeds the mightiest of their order. The cousins of Launcelot — fine knights and strong — determining to overthrow the stranger, and thus leave their kinsman peerless still, suddenly bore down upon the disguised knight — a mighty company against one man. One lance, held downward, lamed the charger of the unknown knight; another sharply pricked his cuirass, and passing through it, pierced deeply Launcelot's side. And the head thereof broke off and remained.

Then did Lavaine right gallantly. Fired by the danger of his beloved lord, he bore a seasoned and mighty knight to earth, then brought the horse to Launcelot where he lay.

Sweating with agony, the great knight mounted the steed. At the rise of their leader, whom they had thought defeated, the courage of Launcelot's party blazed out afresh, and, with the knight of the scarlet sleeve fighting furiously in front, they pressed the Round Table knights back — back — back to the very extremity of the lists. Another wild blast of trumpets proclaimed the unknown knight victor of the day; and his party cried, "Advance and take your prize!"

But Launcelot answered, "For God's love a little air! — My prize is death. Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me not." So saying, he and Lavaine vanished from the field. The two made their way quickly into a deep poplar grove, and rode for many weary miles till they came to the cave of a hermit. The old friar took them in, and staunched the blood which flowed from Launcelot's wound when the lance-head was drawn out. Though this good hermit had much knowledge of healing, and though he and Lavaine nursed faithfully the wounded knight, for many days Launcelot lay between life and death, nor could they tell which way the scale would turn.

Launcelot and Elaine

Part II

Now on that day when Launcelot and Lavaine disappeared from the lists, there was great wonder and pity among the knights and ladies there. The party which Launcelot had so gloriously led went straightway to the King, saying:

"Sire, our knight through whom we won the day hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize untaken, crying that his prize is death."

The King was troubled. His great heart was filled with pity that so good a knight was perhaps wounded to the death; then, too, he had suspected through it all that the unknown hero was no other than his best beloved Launcelot. So, taking the diamond from the heart of the flower where it blazed, King Arthur gave it to Sir Gawain, and charged him to ride night and day till he should find the knight who had so dearly won it, and give it him. And he charged Sir Gawain also to return speedily and bring news to court of how the stranger fared.

Sir Gawain went unwillingly. The feasting and merry-making at the joust were yet to come, and he loved the banquet and the company of great ladies better than he loved the service of the King. But the King was king; and the knight took the diamond and rode away in quest of Launcelot.

He passed through all the region round, and stopped at all places save the hermit's cell. At length, wearied with fruitless searching, he tarried to rest at the castle of Astolat.

Here he told the story of the joust to the fair Elaine, who

well-nigh swooned at the news of Launcelot's hurt. Then she brought him Launcelot's shield; and when he saw the lions thereon, he knew full well that the unknown knight was indeed Launcelot — and so he told the lily maid.

Gawain was tired of the quest, and, believing that Elaine knew where Sir Launcelot was hidden, he persuaded her to take the diamond in keeping for its owner, and rode back to court.

Arrived at Camelot, the unfaithful knight well knew that he must make some excuse to King Arthur for having left the diamond in any hand save that to which the King had sent it. So, relying on his sovereign's great deference to women, Gawain ended the story of his fruitless journey by pretending that he thought the rules of courtesy bound him to leave the diamond with the maiden.

The "seldom-frowning" King frowned and answered:

"Too courteous, truly! Ye shall go no more on quest of mine, seeing that ye forget obedience is the courtesy due to kings."

Far away the maid of Astolat ever kept the image of Launcelot in her guileless heart. Day by day she watched for him, but he did not come. At length, heart-sick with waiting, she crept to her father's side and besought him to allow her to go in search of Lavaine. The old man guessed her secret, and fain would have detained her at home; but she had ever been a petted, willful child, and he could not say her nay. So, in the company of her good brother, Sir Torre, she set out to find her knight and bear the diamond to him. At length, riding through a field of flowers near the poplar grove, they came upon Lavaine, practicing on his steed.

Right joyful were they at the meeting, and Lavaine guided them to the wounded knight in the hermit's woodland cell. Low on a couch of wolfskins lay the great Launcelot, gaunt and pain-wasted, scarcely more than the bare skeleton of his mighty self.

With a dolorous little cry, the maid slipped down beside him, and, when he turned his fever-kindled eyes upon her, she held up the gem, saying falteringly:

"Your prize, the diamond sent you by the King." Then, in a breaking voice, she told him of all the events which had followed upon his disappearance from the lists.

She was kneeling by his side; and, as one might caress a child, he kissed her sweet face, and turned and slept.

Through many a weary day and many a wearier night, the maid of Astolat watched over the mightiest of King Arthur's knights; and at length the hermit told her that through her untiring care the knight had been saved from death. They tarried yet a little while till Launcelot's hurt was healed, and then the three rode back to Astolat

Now after they were come to her father's castle, Elaine for many days arrayed herself in her loveliest robes — for Launcelot was long their guest — and sought to learn if the knight returned her love.

At last the time came when the knight felt that he must leave them and go back to the service of the King. He was so deeply grateful for Elaine's tender care of him during his woful sickness, that he besought her to allow him to do her some service or to grant her some boon in token of his gratitude. He was lord of his own land, he told her — rich and powerful; and that what he willed he could perform.

"Speak your wish," he pleaded little knowing what that wish would be. Then suddenly and passionately she spake:

"I have gone mad. I love you; let me die!"

"Ah, sister," cried Launcelot, "what is this?"

"Your love — to be your wife," she answered simply, and she held her white arms out to him.

But Launcelot answered, "Had I chosen to wed, I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine; but now there never will be wife of mine."

And she said, "Not to be with you, not to see your face,

— alas for me then, my good days are done!"

Alas! The day of parting had come, and she who had loved him back from death to life had not won a dearer name from him than "sister."

Then Launcelot sought to lessen her heartache, saying that this was not love, but only the first wild fancy of her youth. He told her that it would soon give way to a deeper, nobler affection for someone better suited to her years. And he promised that when she should thus find the real love of her life, he, Launcelot, would endow her lover with half his realm beyond the seas. And more than that — that he would be her knight in all her quarrels, even to the death.

But the maid replied, "Of all this will I nothing," and fell swooning to the earth.

Now it chanced that the lord of Astolat, wandering in a grove, heard what passed between Elaine and the knight. He was sorely grieved because of his daughter's sorrow, but he could not find it in his heart to blame Sir Launcelot. The knight had treated her with all tender courtesy, and since he could not love her, it was but honorable that he should not wed her. So after the maid had been borne to her chamber, the father went to Launcelot and begged the knight that he use some rough discourtesy to her, that she might cease to love him. The lord of Astolat knew full well that knightly courtesy is quick to win the hearts of maidens; and he felt that if Launcelot could for once lay aside his grace of bearing toward her, Elaine would conceive a dislike to him, and sigh no more for his love.

It was not in the nature of Launcelot to do an unknightly act, but seeing the wisdom and the real kindness in such a course, he promised to try.

On the evening of the same day he called for his horse and armor, and prepared to leave for the court of King Arthur. Elaine uncased his shield and sent it down to him. Then she flung her casement wide and looked down to see

Launcelot ride away. She knew he had heard her unclasp and open the casement, but the knight did not look up. Without so much as a glance or a wave of the hand in farewell, he mounted and rode sadly away. "This was the one discourtesy that he used."

The shadow of a great sorrow settled down upon Astolat. No more the lily maid with light and joyous step flitted up and down the narrow turret stair. No more her laughter rang among the gray walls of the castle. High in her tower to the east she gazed upon the empty shield-case, while her sighs echoed the moanings of the wind outside. And in those days she made a little song — "The Song of Love and Death" she called it — and sang it there among the shadows all alone.

"Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain;
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

I fain would follow love, if that could be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
Call and I follow, I follow! Let me die."

Her clear voice, rising high on the last note, rang like a wild sweet cry throughout the castle, and her brothers, shuddering, said, "Hark, the phantom of the house that ever shrieks before a death!" For in those days there dwelt in each house a spirit that shrieked shrilly and fearfully whenever the death of a member of that household was nigh. The lord of Astolat and his two sons hastened to the east tower, and found Elaine already with the shadow of death in her eyes. Then was there great mourning among them.

Elaine gave a pale, little hand to each of her brothers and recalled to them their childhood: how they had often taken her on a barge far up the great river; how they would not pass beyond the cape with the poplar on it, though she cried to go on and find the palace of the King. And she told them that

she had last night dreamed a dream; in which she thought herself alone upon the tide, with the childish wish still in her heart; that she had waked to feel the longing again. And she begged them to let her go thence, beyond the poplar and far up the flood, that she might find rest at last in the palace of the King.

Then came a holy priest and ministered to her spirit; and when he had passed from thence, the maid besought Lavaine to write for her a letter to Sir Launcelot. Her sorrowing brother wrote as she bade him, and offered to bear the letter to the knight. But she answered:

"I myself must bear it." While they marveled, she told them that when death should come to her, they must place the letter in her hand and send her up the flood, with only the dumb old serving-man to row her. She told them also how they should deck her body and the barge which was to bear her to the King; and her father, weeping, promised her.

Ten sad mornings passed, and on the eleventh her father placed the letter in her hand and closed her fingers on it, and that day she died.

And they placed her on the barge, with the dumb old servitor, and sent her up the shining flood to find the palace of the King — even as they had promised.

Great was the wonder at the palace that day, when the black-draped barge stopped at the foot of the marble steps which led down to the water's edge. Fairer than anything they had dreamed of lay the beautiful dead. In her right hand was clasped a lily, and in her left, the letter to Sir Launcelot. The barge was draped in black from prow to stern; but the fair girl was covered with cloth of gold drawn to her waist, and decked with the shining glory of her golden hair.

She did not seem as dead, but only fast asleep, and "lay as though she smiled."

The guards of the palace and the people, gaping, stood around, and whispered, "What is it?" Then gazing on the

silent boatman's face, they said:

"He is enchanted, cannot speak — and she, look how she sleeps — the Fairy Queen so fair!"

Then was there great trouble in their hearts; for it had been prophesied that the King would not die, but would pass into fairyland. And many feared that this was a fairy barge, come to bear their King away from them.

While thus they marveled, King Arthur and many of his knights came down to the water's edge to see.

The dumb boatman stood up and pointed to the dead.

The King caused two of his purest knights to uplift the maiden and bear her into the palace. Then came they all to see her — and even Launcelot, whom she had loved.

King Arthur took the letter from her hand and read it aloud in all that company. It was the strange, sweet story of her love and death; and recounted how, because her knight had left her, taking no farewell, she had come thus to take her last farewell of him. The letter ended with an appeal to Launcelot to pray for her soul.

All eyes turned on Launcelot, many of them reprovingly. But the sorrowful knight lifted up his voice, and told them the whole sad story of the maiden's love for him, and why he had left her, bidding no farewell. When he had finished, no man blamed him more.

Then, by order of the King, they bore the lily maid to the richest shrine in all the realm, there to hold burial service over her. The King himself led the funeral train, and all the knights of the Table Round followed him, in martial order. And King Arthur caused a tomb to be opened for Elaine among the royal dead.

Then, "with gorgeous obsequies, and mass, and rolling music," as for a queen, they laid her golden head "low in the dust of half-forgotten kings." And Launcelot, sorrowing, cried:

"Farewell — now at last!"

The Holy Grail

Thus runs an ancient legend: When our blessed Saviour hung upon the cross, Joseph of Arimathea, one of his loving followers, brought a crystal bowl and caught the blood which fell from the Master's wounded side. This bowl, or cup, was the "Holy Grail," and was the same from which our Lord had drunk at the Last Supper with his disciples.

In the long, dark days of persecution which followed the passion of Christ, Joseph was driven out of the Holy Land, and took refuge in the desolate island of Britain. Here the heathen prince, "Aviragus," granted him a marshy spot in Glastonbury wherein to dwell.

The day of miracles had not yet passed, and the good Joseph asked for a sign from God by which to know if here were a fitting place to found a church of the true faith. After much fasting and prayer, he planted his dry and hardened pilgrim staff in the ground one mid-winter night — and lo! on the morrow it was crowned with leaves and flowers, as a sign of how the faith of Christ would blossom in this barren, heathen land. And ever since that time the winter thorn blossoms at Christmas in memory of our Lord.

Now Joseph had brought the Holy Grail to Britain with him, and for many years the precious vessel remained on earth to bless mankind. So potent was it for good, that all who beheld or touched it were freed from whatsoever ills afflicted them.

However, the times grew evil, and the Holy Cup was snatched away to heaven; and for many weary decades of sin and suffering its healing powers were lost to the world.

In the time of King Arthur, when Arimathean Joseph had been sleeping under the winter thorn at Glastonbury for four hundred years, there awoke in the hearts of the people the hope that the holy vessel would return to earth to bless the high efforts of their great and good King.

Chiefest among those who longed for the return of the Grail, was the gentle sister of Sir Percivale, a pure and spotless maiden who had withdrawn from the world to the sheltering peace of a convent. This sweet-eyed nun had heard the story of the Holy Grail from the priest to whom she confessed her sins, and ever after spent her days in prayer that it might come again.

"O Father, might it come to me by prayer and fasting?" she had asked. And the priest had replied, "Nay, I know not."

But after many days her heart's wish was granted. For one night as she lay sleeping in her narrow convent cell, she was wakened by a sound as of silver horns blown over the far distant hills. At first she thought of hunters; but as the mists of sleep cleared from her brain, she realized that no harp or horn or anything of mortal make could wake those heavenly sounds. As she lay thus, listening to the bugle call from Paradise, there streamed through her cell a cold and silver beam, adown whose radiance glided the Holy Grail, uncovered. Rose-red it shone, with a glory that was not of earth, and the white walls and all around crimsoned in reflection of its blessed light. Then the music faded, the vision passed, and the rosy quiverings died into the night.

On the morrow, the gentle nun spake to her brother Percivale, saying, "The Holy Thing is here again among us, brother; fast thou too and pray, and tell thy brother knights to fast and pray, that so perchance the vision may be seen by thee and those, and all the world be healed."

Very great was the wonder in Camelot when Sir Percivale's sister told of her vision of the Holy Grail. Far and wide the news was spread, and there was much rejoicing that

the blessed cup had come down again to the children of men.

Now there had recently come into King Arthur's court a bright boy-knight by the name of Galahad. He had been reared by the nuns in a convent hard by; but none knew whence he came, and many were the surmises concerning his origin.

Clad in white armor from top to toe, with locks of gold and a face of angel sweetness, Galahad moved among the Round Table knights, a spirit of faith and purity.

"God make thee good as thou art beautiful" King Arthur had said when he made him knight; and the prayer was not in vain, for the flawless purity of Galahad's beautiful face was but the visible expression of a soul as fair.

Now it came to pass that when this nun beheld Sir Galahad, she cut off her shining locks and braided therefrom a strong sword-belt. And she bound it on him, saying, "Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen, and break thro' all, till one will crown thee king, far in the spiritual city." And the glorified light of her eyes passed into his soul, and he believed in her belief.

At the Round Table of King Arthur there was one seat which no man dared to occupy. "The Siege Perilous," Merlin had called it, when he fashioned it with strange inscription and device. Perilous — because none but the pure might sit therein in safety. Many, who had deemed themselves above reproach, had come to grievous misfortune by attempting to occupy that "siege." The great Merlin himself had once dared its powers, and had been swallowed up for evermore.

But Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom, cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!" This came to pass on a summer night when a great banquet had been prepared in Arthur's hall, and the knights were assembled for feasting. The bold Sir Galahad took his seat in the Siege Perilous. The wondering company looked to see some dread judgment smite him down, and marveled much when no evil thing befell.



The nun and Galahad.

Something wonderful did come to pass though something so wonderful that all that knightly company were stricken dumb as they beheld. Scarcely had Sir Galahad taken seat, when there came a dreadful sound as if the roof above them were riven in pieces. A fearful blast swept down upon the castle, and awful thunders boomed along the sky; and in that pealing was a cry which no man might interpret. Suddenly there streamed along the hall a beam of light "seven times more clear than day," and adown that clear beam moved the Holy Grail. Not as to the pious nun — clear and uncovered — did it come to these men of might. A luminous cloud veiled it from their eyes, and none might see who bore it.

While yet the vision lingered, each knight beheld his fellow's face as in a glory, and they arose from their seats, staring dumbly at each other.

When the Holy Thing passed from them and the light faded and the thunder ceased, they found their tongues again.

Sir Percivale was the first to lift up his voice; and he sware before them all that, because he had not seen the Grail uncovered, he would ride a twelvemonth and a day in quest of it. Then knight by knight the others followed the example of Percivale; and took his vow upon themselves.

Now, by a sad mischance, King Arthur was not among his own when the vision of the veiled cup passed before them and they sware the solemn vow to ride a twelvemonth and a day until they saw the Grail, uncovered. He had journeyed to a remote part of his kingdom to right some wrong, and returned Justin time to find the vision passed and his strangely excited knights in tumult — some vowing, some protesting. He spake to the nearest knight, saying, "Percivale, what is this?"

Then Percivale told him what had come to pass, and how the knights had vowed their vows because they wished to see the holy vessel, uncovered.

But the King exclaimed,

"Woe is me, my knights! Had I been here, ye had not

sworn the vow."

Then the bold Sir Percivale —

"Had thyself been here, my King, thou wouldst have sworn!"

"Art thou so bold and has not seen the Grail?" replied King Arthur. Percivale answered him,

"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light, but since I did not see the Holy Thing, I sware a vow to follow it till I saw."

The King then asked them, knight by knight, if any had seen it; but all replied,

"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows."

"Lo, now," said the King, "have ye seen a cloud? What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

Then on a sudden the clear voice of Galahad rang from the other end of the hall:

"I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail. I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry — 'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me!"

"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the King, "for such as thou art is the vision, not for these!" And he spake to his knights at length, and strove to show them how unfitted were such men for such a quest; how much more necessary it was for them to be in their places at his side — quick to see the evil everywhere and strong to strike it down — than abroad in the land, "following wandering fires."

But he had ever taught his knights that "man's word is God in man," and he ended sadly, saying,

"Go, since your vows are sacred, being made."

On the morrow the knights prepared them for their journeys, after holding a farewell tournament, in which Sir Percivale and Sir Galahad did many mighty deeds of arms.

Great was the mourning throughout Camelot when the people learned that their beloved protectors and champions were to be lost to them for many days. A great crowd gathered to see the knights depart; and Queen Guinevere cried aloud,

"This madness has come on us for our sins!" Alas, poor Queen! It was into her own heart that she looked; for she had not proved a loving wife to Arthur, nor a good queen to the land of Britain, nor a true woman in the sight of God.

Then he who had built up the high order of the Table Round who had redeemed a broad kingdom from wild beasts and heathen hordes — who had struggled to revive in man the image of his Maker — sat in empty halls. Misfortune and sorrow and treason crept nearer and nearer to the blameless King, and his Round Table knights were abroad in the land, "following wandering fires."

Sir Bors

"... Sir Bors it was
Who spake so low and sadly at our board;
And mighty reverent at our grace was he."

Thus the poet describes the gentle cousin of Launcelot. Of all the Round Table knights, Sir Bors was the most quiet and the most unassuming. He too had sworn to follow the Holy Grail, but in such humbleness of spirit that he felt "if God would send the vision, well; if not, the Quest and he were in the hands of heaven."

Now it chanced that Sir Bors rode to the "lonest tract of all the realm," and found there among the crags a heathen people, whose temples were great circles of stone, and whose wise men, by their magic arts, could trace the wanderings of the stars in the heavens.

Much these strange people questioned Bors of his coming; and when he told them of the Quest, and talked boldly of a God they knew not, their priests became offended, and caused him to be seized and bound and cast into prison.

Now the cell into which he was cast was loosely fashioned of huge stones, but so massive were these rocks no human

hand could move them.

All day long he lay in utter darkness, but when the silence of night came, one of the great stones slipped from its place, as if by miracle. Through the opening thus made, Bors could behold the sky above him as he lay bound on the floor. The seven clear stars of Arthur's Round Table looked down upon him "like the bright eyes of familiar friends," and exceeding peace fell upon his troubled spirit.

All at once, across the stars, a rosy color passed, and in it glowed the Holy Grail, uncovered! The vision faded; but its blessed radiance lingered long in the heart of the man who lay bound to the rocks for the truth's sake. In a little while a maiden, who, among her pagan kindred, held the true faith in secret, stole in and loosed the cords which bound him, and set him free.

Sir Launcelot

Alas for the knight whom Arthur loved and honored most! Evil came to Launcelot, and he opened his once pure and loyal heart and let it in. Then came a long, dark struggle between his baser and his better self — a fight so evenly waged and so desperate, that a mighty madness would sometimes seem to possess him, and he would fly from the haunts of men, to return, wasted and gaunt with the struggle.

While thus in secret Launcelot harbored the sin that he both loved and hated, the knights took upon themselves the quest of the Holy Grail; and he sware with the others, in the hope that he might find the Holy Thing, and thus be healed of his grievous sin.

So he too went forth; but while he yearned and strove and suffered, his madness came upon him once again, and whipt him into waste fields far away, where he was beaten down by little men. Then he came in his shame and sorrow to a naked shore, where a fierce blast was blowing. He found there a

blackened bark, anchored. He entered it and loosed the chains which fastened it, saying,

"I will embark and I will lose myself, and in the great sea wash away my sin." Seven days the vessel drove along the stormy deep; but on the seventh night the wind fell, and the boat grated on a rocky coast.

Looking up, Launcelot beheld the enchanted towers of Castle Carbonek "like a rock upon a rock" above him. He disembarked and entered the castle. Two great lions guarded the way, and made as though they would rend him in pieces, but a voice said to him,

"Doubt not, go forward!" And into the sounding hall he passed, unharmed. And always, as he moved about the lonely place, he heard, clear as a lark and high above, a sweet voice singing in the topmost tower. Then up and up the steps he climbed — and seemed to climb forever. But at length he reached a door: a light gleamed through the crannies, and he heard in heavenly voices sung,

"Glory and joy and honor to our Lord,
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail!"

Then in his mad longing, he flung himself against the door. It gave way, and for one instant he thought he saw the Holy Grail, veiled in red samite, with kneeling angels around.

But a heat as from a seven times heated furnace smote him, and he swooned away.

When he returned to Camelot — he knew not how — he sadly told the King,

"What I saw was veiled and covered; this Quest was not for me."

Sir Percivale

In that last tournament which was held before the knights departed on the Quest, Percivale had done many doughty



Launcelot beholds the towers of the Castle Carbonek.

departed on the Quest, Percivale had done many doughty deeds of arms: so when he rode from Camelot, his hopes were high and his spirit was proud. "Never heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth so green"; for in his pride and strength he was sure that he would find the Holy Grail.

But as he rode, the King's dark prophecy that most of them would follow wandering fires, came to him, again and again, and seemed to make the day less fair.

Then every evil word that he had spoken, and every evil thought that he had harbored, and every evil deed that he had done, rose up within him, crying, "This Quest is not for thee!"

On he rode, and diverse and strange were the adventures that befell him. For many a weary day he seemed to be mocked by the phantoms of a feverish dream. Hungry and thirsty, he pressed toward flowing streams beside which gorgeous apples grew; but when he put the fruit to his lips, it withered and crumbled into dust. Homelike scenes appeared before his tired eyes, only to fall into dust as he approached. Then the vision of a great armored horseman, splendid as the sun, came riding down upon him and opened its arms as if to clasp him, but it too fell away to dust. Again he heard a voice calling to him, "Welcome, Percivale, thou mightiest and thou purest among men!" And, seeking the voice, he rode on till he reached a splendid city on the summit of a great hill.

But when he gained the height, he found the city deserted, with but one man there — aged and poor — to welcome him. Alas! Even the old man — in greeting him — fell into dust and vanished from sight. Then Percivale cried in despair,

"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself and touch it, it will crumble into dust!"

In his disappointment he rode down into a quiet vale, deep as the hill was high, and sought the advice of a holy man who dwelt in a hermitage hard by a little chapel. When the knight had told of all his distracting visions, the good man

said,

"O son, thou hast not true humility, the highest virtue, mother of them all. Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself, as Galahad."

Though his arm had been strongest in the farewell tournament, Galahad rode out of Camelot with his young heart fired by higher glories than his own. Purer joys than all earthly fame could give, were pulsing through his heart; a flutter of wings was in the air, and angel voices whispered,

"O just and faithful knight of God, ride on! The prize is near."

And it was near. So near that through all his earthly wanderings it went before him like a guiding star, always visible to him. In Arthur's hall he had seen the Grail, uncovered. By night and day, on naked mountain-top or in the sleeping mere below, in blackened marsh or on crimson battlefield, the cup of God shone before his eyes.

God did make him good as he was beautiful; and by the almighty power of goodness he rode through all the land, shattering evil customs as he went. He passed through pagan realms and made them his; he clashed with heathen hordes and bore them down; he broke through all, and in the strength of faith, came forth victor.

Now it came to pass that while Percivale yet abode in the Vale of Humility, Galahad appeared before him in shining silver armor. The two made great joy of each other, and they and the old hermit went into the little chapel to kneel in prayer and partake of the Lord's Supper.

While they were yet kneeling, the Holy Grail came down upon the shrine, and the face of the Christ-child descended and disappeared into the sacred elements. But only Galahad's eyes were open to the vision.

Then he told them that his time was near at hand; that he would go thence, and one would crown him king "far in the spiritual city." And he said to the saddened Percivale,



Galahad rides out of Camelot.

"Thou shalt see the vision when I go." When the day began to wane, he and Percivale departed thence and climbed to the top of a high hill. A fierce storm arose, and lightnings lit and relit the shining armor of Galahad and fired the dead trunks of trees around. They passed on, and came at length to a great marsh which ran out into the yet greater sea. And behold! there appeared a seemingly endless bridge that stretched out, pier after pier, into eternity.

Then lo, a wondrous thing! Galahad leaped upon the bridge and sped along its shining length; and as he passed, span after span of the bridge sprang into fire behind him, so that the bold Sir Percivale, who fain would have followed, could only stand and behold. But glorious was the vision at last vouchsafed to Percivale's aching eyes. Thrice above the head of Galahad "the heavens opened and blazed with thunder such as seemed shoutings of all the sons of God." His armor glistened like a silver star above the great sea, and the Grail, now all uncovered, hung like a burning jewel o'er his head.

Then far in the distance, somewhere, where sea and sky met, rose the spiritual city; and Galahad and the Holy Thing passed in together, to be seen no more of men.

Only a tithe of the searchers returned to Camelot — to a saddened King in a decaying city. Of those who did come back, the greater number had grown cold, and careless of the Quest.

The mightiest of King Arthur's knights had seen the Grail, but not unveiled, and scarce could say he saw; two of the truest and bravest had beheld the holy cup in fleeting visions and from afar off; but Galahad had been crowned king, far in the spiritual city.

Verily, King Arthur knew his knights when he cried,

"Ah, Galahad, Galahad, for such as thou art is the vision, not for such as these!"

SIR GALAHAD

Alfred Tennyson

My good blade carves the casques of men,
My tough lance thrusteth sure,
My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
The hard brands shiver on the steel,
The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,
The horse and rider reel;
They reel, they roll in clanging lists,
And when the tide of combat stands,
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
That lightly rain from ladies' hands.
How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favors fall!
For them I battle till the end,
To save from shame and thrall:
But all my heart is drawn above,
My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine
I never felt the kiss of love,
Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill;
So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes,
A light before me swims.
Between dark stems the forest glows,
I hear a noise of hymns:
Then by some secret shrine I ride;
I hear a voice, but none are there;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,

The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chants resound between.
Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
I find a magic bark;
I leap on board: no helmsman steers:
I float till all is dark.
A gentle sound, an awful light!
Three angels bear the Holy Grail:
With folded feet, in stoles of white,
On sleeping wings they sail.
Ah, blessed vision! blood of God!
My spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides the glory slides,
And star-like mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne
Thro' dreaming towns I go,
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,
The streets are dumb with snow.
The tempest crackles on the leads,
And, ringing, springs from brand and mail;
But o'er the dark a glory spreads,
And gilds the driving hail.
I leave the plain, I climb the height;
No branchy thicket shelter yields;
But blessed forms in whistling storms
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.
A maiden knight to me is given
Such hope, I know not fear;
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
That often meet me here.
I muse on joy that will not cease,



Three angels bear the Holy Grail.

Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
Whose odors haunt my dreams;
And, stricken by an angel's hand
This mortal armor that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
And thro' the mountain-walls
A rolling organ-harmony
Swells up, and shakes and falls.
Then move the trees, the copses nod,
Wings flutter, voices hover clear:
"O just and faithful knight of God!
Ride on! the prize is near."
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange;
By bridge and ford, by park and pale.
All-arm'd I ride, whate? er betide,
Until I find the Holy Grail.

Guinevere

The King raised to knighthood others to fill the places left vacant by the Holy Quest, but the new knights were not the old; and even some of those who were first to take the vows fell away from their faith and their loyalty to the King.

Though King Arthur was a "selfless man and stainless gentleman," his character was a standard not too lofty for any man; yet there were those of his knights whose hearts were made of baser stuff, and who complained that the King expected too much of them, thus excusing to themselves their own shortcomings. Some grew quickly tired of the strict bonds in which the oath of knighthood held them; others waged long and bitter war with the evil in their own hearts, to fail at last; while a few — a very few — followed the King to the end, faithful even unto death.

Disaffection crept among them like a silent, dread disease, till Modred, Arthur's own nephew, turned traitor. Ambitious, keen-eyed, cruel, this Modred had long planned to make himself king in Arthur's stead, but had masked his disloyalty with a fawning smile, biding his time. His opportunity for open revolt came with the failure of the Holy Quest; for many of the knights had come back discouraged, and many had turned away. These dissatisfied ones Modred succeeded in winning to himself, and he and they allied themselves with the heathen. Hordes of these enemies to the King had been steadily gathering in the North, while they who might have held them back were following wandering fires.

But the decay of Arthur's cherished Order, and the treachery of friends and kindred, were not the bitterest of the

disappointments which came to the blameless King. The crudest pang of all, and the one under which his great heart broke, was the faithlessness of Launcelot and Guinevere — the "knight whom Arthur loved and honored most," and the woman to whom he had given the whole of his mighty love — the two to each of whom he had declared,

"Let come what will, I trust thee to the death."

How it all came to pass is too sad a story to tell; but it is something to remember that poor Launcelot bitterly repented his disloyalty, and that when he met Arthur face to face in battle, he stayed his hand and would not strike the King. In after years, when Arthur had passed away, Launcelot spent his days in a monastery, praying that he might meet the King in "that better world that makes this right."

Guinevere had never loved the King. Hers was a soul incapable of understanding the height and purity of his, and she had early tired of his lofty ideals and come to look for companionship elsewhere. Not many years, and the whole kingdom was agog with tales of her vain and foolish behavior, and of how she did not love King Arthur.

Many are the sins which the old stories attribute to her, and all who tell the tale agree that it was through the folly and wickedness of the Queen that the Round Table knights were led away from their holy vows.

Modred, the traitor, hated Queen Guinevere and had long sought an opportunity to reveal her sins to the King; for Arthur alone, in all that land, trusted her faith and loved her still.

Now when Modred and his heathen allies broke in open revolt against the King, Queen Guinevere knew that the hour of dreaded disclosure was at hand and, fearing the just wrath of her husband, she fled by night from his castle and took refuge in a convent many miles away.

Here, while the storm of battle was gathering, the Queen sat silent and wretched, and thought long upon the sins that

had raised the fearful conflict. She seemed to read scorn and reproach in every innocent thing about her, and sorrow and remorse came and made their home in her breast. At last one sad day she heard the tramp of mailed feet and a cry "The King!" ring along the halls. Like one changed to stone she sat, until the familiar step was near at hand; then falling prone on the floor, she covered her face with her shadowy hair that she might not see the reproach of his sorrowful eyes.

In a voice "monotonous and hollow like a ghost's" the King spoke to her. There was no trace of wrath in his tones, but his calm and awful sorrow was worse than reproach. He told her how her sins had spoiled the great purpose of his life, and that through her he was going to "that last dim battle in the West" to meet his doom, if prophecy had spoken truly.

"Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me that I, the King, should greatly care to live," she heard him say, and she crept a little nearer and clasped his feet. Then, gently still, he told her he had provided that she should be protected there; that he would leave to guard her some of his still faithful few, lest one hair of her head be harmed.

"Let no man dream but that I love thee still," he said. "And if thou purify thy soul, hereafter in that world where all are pure we two may meet before high God. Lo! I forgive thee as Eternal God forgives. Farewell."

With face still covered she heard his steps retire, but when he was gone, she stole to the casement and watched him ride away to meet his doom. Then suddenly stretching out her white arms to him she cried,

"O, Arthur! Gone, my lord? Gone through my sin to slay and to be slain!"

Who shall measure the despair of that heart which too late realizes that what it has lost is its all in all! Arthur had gone to his doom, and nothing was left to the poor Queen but the knowledge that she loved him, now when her love was of no avail. Never until that moment in which he forgave her



Guinevere takes refuge in a convent.

grievous sins, did she know him for what he was — "the highest and most human too."

"We needs must love the highest when we see it," she told her aching heart — but Arthur was gone, and he did not know.

Then in the keenness of her despair she remembered the one hope he had given her — that some day they might meet again; but she knew full well that that could never be until she had grown worthy of him.

So through the sad years which followed, she strove and worked and prayed, to shrive her soul of sin; and in the fullness of time she died, and passed into that better country to which 'the love of the highest' leads.

The Passing of Arthur

When King Arthur had bidden farewell to the Queen at the Convent of Almesbury, he joined the main body of his faithful followers, and moved on towards the west to meet the traitor forces.

At the close of the first day's march, the Round Table knights halted and pitched their tents for a night's rest. While the army slept, the bold Sir Bedivere, "the first of all his knights knighted by Arthur at his crowning," moved quietly among the slumbering hosts, unable himself to rest; and as he slowly paced, he heard the restless moanings of the unhappy King: —

"I found Him in the shining of the stars, I marked Him in the flowering of His fields, but in His ways with men I find Him not!"

and again —

"Nay — God my Christ — I pass but shall not die!"

At last, wearied out, King Arthur slept; and in his sleep there came to him the ghost of Gawain, lightly blown along the wind. As the frail phantom passed, it cried to him,

"Hail, King! Tomorrow thou shalt pass away. Farewell! There is an isle of rest for thee, and I am blown along a wandering wind."

The King waked with a start, crying,

"Who spake? Thine, Gawain, was the voice!" And Sir Bedivere, being near, answered,

"My King, let pass whatever will, elves and the harmless glamour of the field, as yet *thou* shalt not pass"; and he entreated King Arthur to throw off the melancholy spirit that

possessed him, saying that they were now hard upon the traitor Modred and the faithless knights.

"Arise, go forth, and conquer as of old," he cried to his beloved lord.

But the King answered him, saying,

"Far other is this battle whereto we move, than when we strove in youth, and brake the petty kings, and fought with Rome. Ill doom is mine to war against my people and my knights. The king who fights his people fights himself. The stroke that strikes them dead is as my death to me."

Then, though sorrowing deeply, the King arose and moved his hosts while yet it was night. He pushed the forces of Modred, league by league, back to the western boundary of Lyonesse. Here the long mountains ended in a coast of shifting sand, and beyond this was the ever restless sea.

The traitors were at last at bay: there on the waste sands by the sea-shore, the Round Table knights closed with them in that last "weird battle of the West."

As they fought, a death-white mist came down upon the sea and land, and confusion fell upon the struggling forces, so that no man beheld whom he smote.

"Friend and foe were shadows in the mist, and friend slew friend, not knowing whom he slew." Weird indeed was that last battle, and the hosts that waged it were as men possessed. Some, as they fought, were haunted by visions of golden youth, while others met the faces of old ghosts upon the battlefield.

All the long day the swaying forces struggled, and many were the base deeds done, and many the knightly ones. When evening descended, a dread hush fell upon the scene of battle, and a bitter wind came out of the north and lifted the mist from the field of conflict.

And lo! the scene of blood was seemingly deserted, save by the wounded, the dying, and the dead, and by King Arthur and one faithful knight. Sir Bedivere was with him still — Sir

Bedivere, the first at Arthur's feet for knighthood, and the last at his side in battle in fulfillment of his vows.

When the King beheld his loyal follower, he cried to him,

"O Bedivere — on my heart hath fallen confusion, till I know not what I am, nor whence I am, nor whether I be king. Behold, I seem but king among the dead." And the bold Sir Bedivere answered,

"If the dead have kings, there also will I worship thee. But still thy life is whole, and still I live who love thee." Then he pointed King Arthur to where, among the dead and dying, the traitor Modred stood, unharmed. At sight of his false kinsman and bitter foe, the King was stirred by a mighty wrath, and grasping Excalibur, he cried to his faithful knight,

"King am I, whatsoever be their cry; and one last act of kinghood shalt thou see yet, ere I pass." So saying, like a lion roused, he rushed upon the traitor.

Modred had seen and was ready for the coming shock; and he dealt Arthur several grievous wounds upon the head. But with one last and mighty stroke of Excalibur the King laid the rebel dead at his feet, then himself fell fainting from the wounds he had received. Then was the good Sir Bedivere sore troubled. He lifted the wounded King tenderly, and bare him to a chapel hard by the field of battle. There in the moonlight, at the foot of a broken cross, he gently laid him down and ministered unto him. At length Arthur, opening his blue eyes, said,

"The sequel of today unsolders all the goodliest fellowship of famous knights whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep they sleep — the men I loved —" and a little later still he whispered, "I perish by this people which I made."

Then summoning his strength with an effort, he talked to the sorrowful Bedivere at length. He reminded his faithful knight of Merlin's prophecy, which said that the King would not die but would pass away to come again. He gazed at his good sword Excalibur and minded him of the words of the

seer, spoken to his restless youth:

"Take thou and strike; the time to cast away is yet far off." He *had* taken and had stricken well — not one stroke for his own glory, but all for the glory of his Master, Christ. But the time to cast away was now at hand; and knowing this, he told Sir Bedivere, "Thou take my brand, Excalibur, and fling him far into the middle mere: watch what thou seest and lightly bring me word."

Then Sir Bedivere answered him, saying, "It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus, aidless, alone; yet I thy hest will all perform at full, watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

With this promise on his lips, Sir Bedivere took Excalibur and bare it as he was bidden to the side of the lake; but as he paused by the margin, the full moonlight fell upon the jeweled hilt, causing its gems to sparkle with a thousand dyes. The old knight gazed long and wistfully at the jewels, till their brilliance dazzled his eyes and dulled his purpose. He could not bring himself to throw away such wealth; so he bethought him that he would conceal the brand among the many-knotted water-flags, and bear a false report to the King.

"Hast thou performed my mission which I gave? What is it thou hast seen, or what hast heard?" the King asked of him when he returned. And the knight replied,

"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds, and the wild water lapping on the crag." King Arthur, pale and faint, exclaimed, "Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name, not rendering true answer like a noble knight. Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again, and do the thing I bade thee."

Then went the knight a second time to the side of the mere, but temptation came again into his heart. This time it was not the lust of wealth that stayed his hand from flinging Excalibur. He minded him of the great King now about to pass away, and of all the mighty deeds of arms of the Round Table knights; and he felt that relics of the noble Arthur would be

an inspiration to men in coming ages. He fondly pictured to himself how the mighty brand, if he preserved it, would hang in some treasure-house in after times, and how men would wondering, say,

"King Arthur's sword, Excalibur, wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake."

"The King is sick and knows not what he does," he said to excuse himself; so he hid the blade a second time, and strode slowly back to the wounded King. Then Arthur spake:

"What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?" And Sir Bedivere answered,

"I heard the water lapping on the crag, and the long ripple washing in the reeds." Hearing this the King was wroth indeed, and his eyes flashed with their wonted fire as he cried,

"Ah miserable and unkind, untrue, unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me! Authority forgets a dying king!"

In his deep anger he accused Sir Bedivere of wishing to keep the sword for the sake of its precious hilt. Then softening a little, he said to the knight that a man might fail in duty twice, and the third time prove faithful.

"Get thee hence," he cried, his eyes kindling again, "but, if thou spare to fling Excalibur, I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then Sir Bedivere arose quickly and ran leaping down the rocks to the water's edge. He snatched Excalibur from where it lay among the rushes, and shutting his eyes that he might not again be tempted, he wheeled it and threw it far into the middle mere.

And lo! as the brand left his hand, it flashed through the air like a streamer of light from the great Aurora of the North. But ere it dipped the wave in falling, a mighty arm rose out of the bosom of the lake, clothed in white samite — mystic, wonderful — grasped the blade by the hilt, brandished it three times, and drew it under in the mere.

Then went Sir Bedivere back and told the King the

mighty wonders he had seen. King Arthur heard and believed, and he said to the knight,

"My end draws nigh; 't is time that I were gone. Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight, and bear me to the margin." His strength was fast failing, but he half raised himself from the pavement, that the old knight might the better clasp him.

When Sir Bedivere looked into the wistful blue eyes, his own filled with remorseful tears; and he knelt down and received the weight of his master, and bore him tenderly from the place of tombs. Down the long rocky coast he strode with his burden, and ever and anon King Arthur whispered,

"Quick, quick, I fear it is too late!"

At last they reached the lake-side. The winter moon shone out in full glory, and they beheld, far in the silvery distance, a dusky barge heaving toward them. As it nearer came, they saw that it was "dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern," and that its decks were crowded with stately forms, "black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream."

Nearer still it came; and lo! among its spectre band were the three fair queens who ever came to Arthur at his need. The vessel touched the shore and the King said,

"Place me in the barge."

Wondering, the bold Sir Bedivere did as he was bid, and the three fair queens put forth their hands and received the wounded King. Then the tallest and fairest of the three took his head in her lap and unbound his casque. They chafed his hands and called him by his name, and they wept and bathed his white face with bitter tears.

> "So like a shattered column lay the King;
> Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
> From spur to plume a star of tournament,
> Shot through the lists at Camelot, and charged
> Before the eyes of ladies and of kings."



Sir Bedevere throws Excaliber into the mere.

The barge put off from shore, and the heart-broken Bedivere cried to his departing lord,

"Ah! my lord Arthur, whither shall I go? Now I see the true old times are dead, when every morning brought a noble chance, and every chance brought out a noble knight." Arthur answered slowly from the barge,

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new, and God fulfills Himself in many ways." And he told his sorrowing knight that he was going on a long journey to the happy island of Avilion, where falls not hail nor rain nor snow, nor ever wind blows loudly — where, among deep meadows and fair orchard lawns, he would be healed of his grievous wound.

Then the barge moved off into the night, leaving the sad Sir Bedivere to follow its course with aching eyes. Long he stood there, revolving in his mind memories of the dead past; till at last the east began to lighten and the barge became but a speck against the rim of coming dawn.

"The King is gone!" he groaned. But hark! Across the waters from the utmost east there came sounds "as if some fair city were one voice around a king returning from his wars." And straining his eyes yet farther, Sir Bedivere watched the lessening speck till it vanished into light, to cast anchor on the shining shore of Avilion.

Thus Arthur passed away from the scenes of earth — to come again in the hearts of happier men in better times; for there's never a triumph of right over wrong-doing, never an act of gentleness or courtesy or manly daring, but in itself fulfills something of the great King's prophecy:

"I pass, but shall not die!"

> "'Arthur is come again; he cannot die.'
> Then those that stood upon the hills behind
> Repeated — 'Come again, and thrice as fair';
> And, further inland, voices echoed — 'Come,
> With all good things, and war shall be no more.'

At this a hundred bells began to peal,
That with the sound I woke, and heard indeed
The clear church-bells ring in the Christmas morn.'

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 everyone 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 tomorrow.'

'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 tomorrow.'

'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 someone 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.



BESIDE·HER·STOOD·HER·BEAUTIFUL·DAUGHTER·

And as the dining-room was the 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 tomorrow's tournament.'

'Arms I can give you,' said the Earl, 'though they are old and rusty; but you cannot fight tomorrow.' And the Earl told

Geraint that the Sparrow-hawk gave a prize at the tournament. 'But every knight who fights tomorrow 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 anyone 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 tomorrow,' 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, everyone could see that he was a Prince.

A great many lords and ladies and all the townspeople came to see the tournament.

Then the Sparrow-hawk came to the front of the great crowd, and asked if anyone 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 today 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 everyone 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


WOODS AND SWAMPS
ENID AND GERAINT RODE IN
THROUGH
SILENCE

he knows they are there.' And Enid turned back. Geraint frowned as he saw her coming to speak to him, but Enid said 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 wayside, 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. 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.


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 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


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

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.

'Tomorrow 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 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


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

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 anyone 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 today. 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 battle-field 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 today,' 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 adventures 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 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 someone 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 tonight, and tomorrow 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 someone 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.

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.'


THE·LADY LYONORS·

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 all 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 overthrew 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 sunbeam 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.


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

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, 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 battle-field.

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.

The Adventures of Beowulf

Translated from the Old English and Adapted to the Use of Schools by Clara Thomson

Introduction

If any one were to ask you why you are proud of England, and why you would rather belong to it than to any other country in the world, you would no doubt have a great many answers ready. You might say, because it is so rich, or so powerful, or because the people living in it have so much liberty. But perhaps one reason for admiring and loving it would not occur to you till the last; yet it is a very good one, and one that seems better and better the older you grow, and the more you read and learn. And it is this. England has had better writers and poets than any other land except Greece; as far back as we know anything about our countrymen they were poets as well as soldiers and sailors. But the soldiers and sailors and poets all helped to make one another famous; for the soldiers and sailors did great deeds, and the poets made great verse about them.

Now, as of course you know, the English did not always live in the island which has been theirs so long. When we first hear of them, they were living in what is now North Germany, on the shores of the Elbe; or, as some people think, in what is now Schleswig-Holstein. There were many other tribes living near them, the chief of which were the Frisians, the Jutes and the Danes, and over the water, on the other side of the Baltic Sea, were the Geats and the Swedes. All these people were closely related to one another; they were like brothers and sisters who had grown up and separated, but still remembered the things they had done and the games they had played when they were at home together. The languages they spoke were at first very much alike, though as the years went by they

became more and more different. So it is not wonderful that the stories these tribes had were the same too.

There was one story about a great hero called *Beowulf,* which probably they all knew and often repeated. But for many years it was not written down, because at that time these people did not know how to write long stories, though they had a kind of rough alphabet consisting of letters called *runes,* by which they could express short sentences. And when they learned how to write, it was an Englishman who put the tale into the form in which we have it, so that it has come down to us in our own language. But because Beowulf, the hero, is a Geat, and the other chief people in the poem are Danes, it has been thought that the Englishman did not compose it himself, but only translated it from one of the other languages.

This, however, does not matter very much. The customs and habits of all the tribes living on the shores of the Baltic were so much alike at that time, that when you know about one you know also about the others. If the poem was not made by an Englishman (and a good many scholars think that it was), the hero of it felt and talked and acted like one; and to this day Englishmen feel and talk and try to act in very much the same manner. And by means of it we can learn a great deal about our ancestors, how they behaved at home and abroad, how they fought and feasted and sailed the seas, and were never so happy as when they were in search of some fresh adventure, full of danger and peril.

In *Beowulf* we read a great deal about kings, in fact the whole story is about royal people. But these kings were at first chosen from among the freemen of the tribe. Any man who was cleverer, or stronger, or braver than his fellows might be elected; and though the choice often fell on the eldest son of the last king, it was not always so. You will see in the story how Queen Hygd wanted Beowulf to be king after her husband because her son Heardred was only a little boy. The

people considered the king as their chief, but they did not think that all the land belonged to him. He might have more land than other free men, but what they had belonged to them quite as much as that of the king belonged to him. The king, however, expected to receive gifts from his people, and when his tribe conquered in war, he had the largest share of the booty.

Now in every nation there are always some people who like best to stay at home quietly and farm the land or work at a trade, and others who are more restless, and like to go out and seek adventures. It was the custom for men of the latter kind to enter the service of a king, to form a sort of bodyguard round him, and to be always ready to help him in case of need. These men were called *thanes;* they were generally young men of noble birth, and that king was most glorious who had the most and bravest thanes. It was considered a terrible disgrace for the thanes to desert their lord in battle; they stood round him to the last, and, if he fell, they fought over his dead body till they won the victory or were themselves killed. You will read in the story how Wiglaf, Beowulf's thane, helped his master against the dragon, and how angry he was with his companions who were frightened and ran away. In return for their service the king supported his thanes, giving them food and lodging and clothes and armour. If a thane performed any very great service, he received in reward some beautiful present — a sword or helmet, or perhaps a golden collar. And people who had the best arms seem to have received the most honour from their comrades.

Besides the king and the thanes there were the *freemen,* who formed the largest part of the tribe. At first every freeman possessed a certain amount of land; he might bear arms and take part in the government of the country. The richest and most powerful of the freemen were called *eorls*, and the others *ceorls*, and the life of every freeman was supposed to be worth a certain fixed amount; that is, if a man were killed, the

murderer would have to make to the relations of the dead man a payment, great or small, according to the rank of the slain.

Last of all in the tribe came the slaves or *serfs*. They were generally captives taken in war, and were as much the property of their master as his sheep or cows. A slave could not bear arms or have any voice in government; and if he were killed, his lord, not his children, claimed the payment.

The freemen lived in *homesteads*, which consisted of a piece of land fenced round by a hedge, and sometimes by a ditch or moat as well. Inside the hedge there would be one large hall, thatched or tiled, with a hole in the middle of the roof for the smoke of the fire; the gables were sometimes ornamented with antlers. *Heorot,* the palace of King Hrothgar, was decorated in this way; that is why it was called *Heorot,* because in the old English language, heorot meant *hart* or *deer*. Inside this hall there were benches and tables that could be moved when they were not wanted, and in the palace there was a *dais,* or platform, at one end, on which the king and the chief men sat.

Besides this big hall, and separate from it, though still within the fence, there were a number of smaller buildings, where the women slept, or where the cattle and corn were kept. From what is said in the story of *Beowulf*, we must suppose that the king's private room was at a little distance from the hall, and was called his *bower*.

Quickly was Beowulf fetched to the bower.

A collection of such homesteads would form a village, and the uncultivated land that separated it from other villages was called the *mark.* This was generally covered with forest, or it might be fen or moorland; but every year, as the villages grew larger and larger, there was less of it. People were afraid to go through the mark, especially after dark, for they thought that

it was inhabited by evil spirits, goblins and fairies, or wolf-men and giants like the one you are going to read about.

All the men at that time wore a tunic down to their knees, and cloaks fastened with a metal clasp. A freeman wore his hair long, and carried in his girdle a dagger, which was used for all sorts of purposes. Round his neck he wore a golden collar or necklace, and sometimes he had bracelets on his arms. When he went to fight, he would have a "*byrnie*" made of steel-network; a wooden shield covered with hide, a sword, spear, and dagger, and a helmet. We hear a great deal about armour in *Beowulf*, and we can form a very good idea of what it was like. As there were no coins, payments were often made by means of arms, which were richly ornamented and very valuable. A great part of the king's treasure, from which he rewarded his thanes, consisted of swords, helmets, and byrnies, and these were generally handed down as heirlooms from father to son. The sword hilts were made of twisted gold or silver wire, woven into beautiful patterns and set with gems; and the blades were adorned with a running pattern, or with runes which told who was the maker. Some famous swords actually had names; you will hear of several such in this book. The shield was made of yellow lime wood, covered with skins, which were fastened on with heavy nails or bosses, arranged in patterns; sometimes it was made still stronger by bands of iron. The byrnie was something like a crocheted jersey, only, instead of the links being made of wool, they were made of tiny rings of iron put together by hand; the closer and firmer they were the better was the garment. Last of all must be mentioned the helmet, which was made to look as terrible and fierce as possible, in order to frighten the foe in battle. It was made of iron, ornamented with gold and silver wires, and on the top there was the image of a very horrible, grinning boar. The reason people chose this as their crest was that when they were heathen they believed in a god called *Frea,* to whom the boar was sacred; and they thought that if they

wore its image on their helmets, Frea would take care of them, and prevent them from being killed.

Like most people who live near the seashore, like the Greeks in times long before these, the Old English cared passionately for the ocean and everything connected with it. They loved to roam over the stormy water, when the winds blew fiercely against them, and their little boats rocked up and down on the crests of the waves. In the winter, when the tempests prevented them from going out, they grew restless and impatient, and gladly welcomed the call of the cuckoo, which told them that spring had come again, and summoned them to set out once more. An Englishman loved his ship as if it was a living being, and had all kinds of pretty names for it. It was the "sea-bird," the "sea-horse," the "wave-farer," the "wave-steed," the "float with foaming neck," or the "curving prow." When it sped through the water, driven by a fair wind, it seemed to him as if it were moving by itself, just as a horse would do. And one of their funeral customs was to place the dead man in his boat with all his armour, and set fire to it, and let the wave carry it away. Perhaps you have read the beautiful poem which Longfellow has translated, that tells of the death of the god Balder:

> They launched the burning ship.
> It floated far away
> Over the misty sea,
> Till like the sun it seemed
> Sinking beneath the waves:
> Balder returned no more!

But in this story Beowulf is buried on land. You will see how they made a pile with wood, and put him on it, with his armour, and then set fire to it. Then they buried his ashes in a mound on the seashore. Such mounds are still to be seen, and are called *barrows*.

In the days when the poem of *Beowulf* was first made, the English were still heathen, and worshipped many gods; but before it was written out in the form we have it they had become Christian, and were ashamed of their old faith, though they could not altogether forget it. In the old days they had believed in the gods *Tiw, Woden, Thor,* and *Frea*, whose names still form part of the words Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. They thought, too, that there had once been a race of mighty giants who fought with the gods, especially with Thor, who crushed them with his hammer. The immense caverns by the seashore, the huge rocks and pillars of stone that looked as if some powerful hand must have put them there, were thought to be the work of giants; and any particularly valuable or strong sword, whose maker was not known, was supposed to have been wrought by them. The famous smith *Weland*, who made Beowulf s coat of mail, was descended from the giants, though he learnt his art from the dwarfs to whom his father had apprenticed him. Long after the English had become Christian they thought that there had really been such a person as Weland; and there is a place in Berkshire called Wayland Smith's Cave, which is evidently named after him.

Another heathen belief that we can trace in *Beowulf* is the idea that the lives of men were watched over by a goddess called *Wyrd* or *Fate*. Even though the poet believed in God, he still could not quite free himself from this thought, and often, when he speaks of a man's death, he says, "Fate bore him away," "Fate carried him off," "Fate swept him hence." This looks as if the man who wrote down the poem as we have it still believed in such a goddess; for though he must have altered many things, he has left the passages which speak of her.

The Old English also believed in elves and dwarfs, and *nicors* or water spirits, who lived in the untravelled country between the villages, or on the waste land by the sea. The

dwarfs and elves were tiny, misshapen creatures, fond of mischief, hiding under ground, where they hoarded treasure and forged wonderful weapons. With these they would sometimes tempt a man into their dwellings, and keep him a fast prisoner there. We do not hear much of the dwarfs in *Beowulf*, but there is a good deal about the *nicors*, who hid in the cracks and crevices of the rocks on the seashore.

To guard themselves against the malice of dwarfs, elves, and witches, the Old English had rhymes or charms which they would say over when they thought they were in danger from these creatures. They believed, too, in the use of "spells," or words that possessed a peculiar magic power. The hoard of treasure guarded by the dragon in Beowulf was under a spell, so that anyone who touched it was doomed to some dreadful end. We are particularly told that *Beowulf* did not try to get it because he was greedy, but because he wanted to punish the dragon. But even to him the spell was fatal, and so he lost his life.

Such were some of the beliefs of our ancestors, and in the long winter evenings, when the wind howled outside, they would often sit together telling these stories to one another. And when a sailor or warrior returned from a journey, a feast would be held in his honour, and there would be "joy and laughter of heroes." The traveller would be given the place of honour, and the lady of the house would go round among the guests, saying something kind to each, and filling their horns with mead from a big goblet that she carried in her hand. The horns were real ox-horns, hollowed out and plated with gold and silver ornaments; as they could not stand by themselves, they had to be emptied at one draught, so that a great deal of *mead,* which was a mixture of ale and honey, was drunk at the banquet. And while the guests were drinking, the *scop*, or minstrel, would chant songs about bygone warriors, and remind men of the great deeds of their ancestors. No doubt the story of *Beowulf* was often told in this way.

Now you must know from experience that it is much easier to remember poetry than prose; you would learn more poetry in five minutes than you could prose in ten. So these people found, and therefore they put their stories and history into verse, and one man learnt it by hearing another say it, because, as has been said already, the lays were not written out for a long time. Some great leader would perform a wonderful deed, and the minstrel would make a song about it. Then another minstrel would learn it from him, and perhaps add something of his own invention to make the story more attractive and wonderful. Or he might join to it other stories that he had heard about other heroes, and speak as if their deeds had all been performed by one man. And it would thus go on increasing and being altered till it would be very difficult to say what parts of it were true and what parts had been added by the minstrels. A great many clever and learned people have spent much time in trying to decide what parts of *Beowulf* are true; they agree that there was really a King Hygelac, and that he may have had a kinsman who was very strong and brave, called Beowulf. They say, too, that King Hrothgar actually lived, and that perhaps *Heorot* was the same as *Leyre*, a village about four or five miles from Roeskilde in Seeland. You will find it marked in the map of Denmark, but you must remember that no one can be sure whether this is the same place. And all the stories about Grendel, and Grendel's mother, and the fight with the dragon, are *myths*, or fairy tales, which have crept into the story.

Although we have talked all this time about the *poem* of *Beowulf*, you must not think that it is a poem like those you learn and read. In the first place, though it is in English, it is so old, and the language has altered so much since it was made, that you could not understand it unless you learned how to read it just as you learn French or Latin, though you would find it easier than those languages. That is why it has been translated for you here, because it is a story that every

English boy and girl ought to know and be proud of.

Then, again, the poem is not rhymed like this:

> Attend, all ye who list to hear our noble England's praise;
> I sing of the thrice famous deeds she wrought in ancient days;

nor is it in what is called blank verse, like this:

> Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
> But he'll remember with advantages
> What feats he did that day; then shall our names,
> Familiar in his mouth as household words,
> Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,
> Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
> Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered.

But all the same, it is written in a very careful and elaborate way. Each line is divided into two; each half line contains a certain number of syllables which have more weight, or take longer to pronounce than the others; and two words in the first half line, and one in the second, begin with the same letter. For instance:

> Tham *w*ife thā *w*ord | *w*el licodon.
> To the *w*oman those *w*ords | *w*ell pleased.

This is called *alliteration*, and English poets still use it a great deal. You will find many examples of it in Lord Tennyson's poetry, e.g. —

> Now flash the *l*ights on *l*awn and *l*ea.

And now it is time for you to turn to the story itself. From it you will learn what our ancestors thought about life, and how it should be spent. They believed that it should be passed

in strife and work, and that no one should be easily daunted by difficulty or failure; and that if these come, as they must to all men, they should be used as a spur to fresh endeavour. They thought that when a man was disappointed or sad it was cowardly for him to sit down and lament. What he must do was to try again, and see if he could not make things better. They knew that it is not the complaining or discontented people who count for anything in the world's progress, but the "bold, brave" men, who are not afraid to face hardships and to overcome them. And to them it seemed, as it must to all right-thinking men and women, that death itself is better than a life which brings no good to other people, and is spent only in idleness and self-indulgence.

Chapter I
Hrothgar and Grendel

The original force, the direct smell of the earth or the sea, is in these ancient poems, the sagas of the North. — *Emerson.*

Once upon a time, long ago, before the English had come to Britain, there dwelt in Denmark a king named Hrothgar. To him was granted much prosperity and success in war, so that all his companions obeyed him gladly, and his band of thanes grew ever larger.

Now it came into his mind that he would command a mighty palace to be built, a lofty hall, greater than had ever been known before, that he might sit therein, and distribute benefits to his people, to both young and old, according as God had prospered him. Then the work of adorning the place was made known among all the nations, and in course of time it came to pass that this fairest of halls was finished, and the king gave it the name of Heorot. There he did as he had vowed, and gave away treasure to his men at the banquet. And every day, beneath the lofty roof of that spacious hall, there was heard the sound of joy — playing on the harp, and the sweet song of the minstrel who knew how to relate all the history of mankind from the beginning. He would tell how the Almighty made the world, and the shining plain encircled by water; and had appointed the sun and moon as lights for the dwellers on earth, and had adorned the bosom of the world with leafy trees, and had given breath to all living creatures.

But now a terrible disaster happened. In the waste land that lay between the palace and the sea there lived a frightful

fiend called Grendel. He was exceedingly fierce and strong, a horrid monster, dwelling in the difficult places of the morass, where none could come at him, yet always warring on men, and hating them to be happy and prosperous. So that when the sound of royal cheer reached him in the shadowy retreat of the fen, he was angry and spiteful, and determined to make an end to it. And as soon as night fell, he came, stalking through the darkness to the beautiful palace where the thanes were slumbering after the feast. There they slept, careless of harm, and recking little of any foe. The horrid creature, grim and greedy, immediately attacked them, and carried off in their sleep thirty thanes. Afterwards, rejoicing in the prize, he returned with his booty to his dwelling.

Then at dawn, at break of day, Grendel's attack was made known to men. Much weeping was there then instead of joy, a great cry at morning tide. The mighty king sat grieving there, exceedingly sorrowful for the loss of his thanes, yet despairing of any remedy. But the next night the enemy came again, and performed a worse deed, carrying off others of the men. Therefore the thanes would sleep no longer in the hall, but sought a safer resting-place elsewhere, for the hatred of the monster was made plain to them by clear tokens, and they who escaped from his grasp kept themselves afterwards far aloof from him.

So was he mighty and strove unrighteously until at last that beauteous palace stood empty and desolate by night, and for twelve winters' space the great king was vexed and troubled by the enemy. And at last it became known throughout many peoples how Grendel warred against him and waged hostility in unceasing conflict, and pursued both old and young. But perpetual mists hung about the fen, and none could tell whither the evil one had fled when the morning broke, and he quitted the fair hall where he had spent the hours of darkness. Very often sat the king with his wise men in council, considering what it would be best to do. But none

could give any aid, or devise any means of help, and so Hrothgar continued to suffer sorrow, and looked for no relief from the foe.

Chapter II
Beowulf's Voyage

This is the happy warrior; this is he
Whom every man in arms should wish to be.
• • • • • •
Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
A constant influence, a peculiar grace;
But who, if he be called upon to face
Some awful moment to which heaven has joined
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,
Is happy as a lover; and attired
With sudden brightness, like a man inspired.
— *William Wordsworth.*

Now, on the other side of the channel that separates Denmark from Sweden, in the country of the Geats, there reigned a king called Hygelac. One of his thanes, named Beowulf, who was also his nephew, was a most famous man in that nation; renowned among all men for his might, noble and powerful. He in his home heard tell of the deeds of Grendel, and gave orders that a good ship should be prepared for him; saying, that since Hrothgar had need of strong men, he would sail across the water to visit him. And when his friends knew of his intention, they were far from dissuading him from it, although he was dear to them; but, on the contrary, they encouraged his enterprise and wished him well.

So he chose out fourteen of the boldest men that he could find, among them a wise old mariner, learned in ocean craft,

to go with him on the journey; and the time passed by till the boat lay ready at anchor beneath the cliff, where the streams dashed the foam against the sand. Then, carrying on board excellent armour and many a bright ornament, the eager men pushed off amidst the spray; and the boat, driven by a fair wind, sped like a bird across the waves.

The voyage was not a long one, and about the same time next day the seafarers saw land in the distance; steep cliffs and broad promontories gleaming in the sun. Then they knew that their journey was at an end; they jumped out, their armour rattling as they went, and gave thanks to God who had granted them so easy a passage.

But the Danish landward, whose duty it was to guard the cliff, saw the armed men bearing their bright shields over the plank that led from the deck to the shore, and he wondered greatly who these strangers might be. So, riding on his horse, and brandishing in his hand a mighty spear, he advanced towards them, and addressed them thus:

"Who are ye, having arms, and clothed in coats of mail, who thus come guiding over the ocean your high-built boat? I am the warden of the shore, and keep guard lest any foe should approach the country with hostile ships. Never before have any warriors dared to come thus boldly hither, nor do ye know the password agreed on among our kindred. Moreover, in all the land I have seen no mightier man in arms than is your leader, unless his face belie him. Therefore, O strangers, ere ye go further inland, free to travel in the land of the Danes, I must know forthwith from whence ye come, and what is your family and race."

Then the wise Beowulf answered him thus: "We are of the race of the Geats, friends and comrades of King Hygelac. My father was renowned among the people, a noble prince called Ecgtheow. He lived many years ere he departed, grey-haired, from the earth, and his memory is still cherished by wise men throughout all nations. Now be thou gracious to us, since we

have come on a friendly errand to thy lord, the son of Healfdene. Nor, as I think, need there be any secret concerning our mission. Thou wilt know, if what we have heard be true, that in the dark night some mysterious foe vexes and pursues his men with enmity and slaughter, showing unheard-of malice towards the Danish folk. And for this reason am I come, so that perchance I may aid Hrothgar in his distress, and with a bold heart and good counsel show him how he may overcome the fiend; or at least discover whether there may be any cure for his griefs or remedy for his misfortunes; or whether he is doomed to suffer continual sorrow while that most beauteous house shall crown the hill."

Then answered the warden, that undaunted thane: "He who considers well may know by words as well as deeds a good warrior from a foe, and I perceive that this band of warriors is friendly to the Lord of the Danes. Depart, therefore, bearing your arms and clothing as I shall guide you; and I will command my servants to keep your boat safely from every enemy, and to faithfully guard it upon the sand, till it shall carry you again over the sea to the kingdom of the Geats."

"So the spacious ship, made fast by the anchor, tarried on the rope, and the men followed their guide inland. The golden boar images on their helmets, bright and burnished, shone as they marched; they hastened onwards until they saw in the distance the glittering roof of the lofty palace where the ruler dwelt. Its light shone over many lands.

Then the coastguard, courteously showing them the road thither, turned his steed, saying:

"It is time for me to go. May the Almighty Father keep you safely for the rest of the way. Now I must hasten to the seashore, there to keep watch against the hostile troops."

Chapter III
Beowulf's Reception

The great antique heart: how like a child's in its simplicity; like a man's in its earnest solemnity and depth.

— *Thomas Carlyle.*

The street was paved with variously coloured stones and the warriors followed the steep path upwards. As they approached the palace their byrnies shone in the sunlight, and their chain armour, brightly twisted with links of iron, jingled as they walked. Then the tired seafarers, weary with the voyage, turned to the benches and leaned their weapons against the wall of the dwelling; their broad shields hardened in the forge, together with their ashen spears tipped with grey iron, for the band was well equipped with arms.

But they had scarcely sat down when a warrior approached them and began to ask them who they were and whence they came. "Whither do ye carry your glittering shields, your steel byrnies and bristling helmets, O throng of soldiers? I am the thane and messenger of Hrothgar, but I have never seen so many strangers come hither more splendidly equipped. Methinks it is in boasting, and nowise as exiles, but for some heroic purpose, that thus ye have fought our king."

Then the stout leader of the Geats swiftly returned answer as he had done before to the coastguard: "We are the subjects and comrades of Hygelac. Beowulf is my name. If the great prince thy lord will graciously grant us a hearing, I will forthwith make known to him my errand."

So the messenger, whose name was Wulfgar (he was a man greatly honoured for courage and wisdom), replied that he would speak to the king as Beowulf entreated, and speedily return with the answer that his lord deigned to give. Then departing quickly, he hastened to where Hrothgar was sitting on the dais, old and hoary, among his band of thanes. He approached courteously, for well he knew the custom of knighthood, until he stood opposite the ruler of the Danes, and addressed him thus:

"Hither are come, voyaging from afar over the ocean, a troop of Geatish men, the chief of whom is called Beowulf. They entreat thee, O my prince, that thou wilt grant them an audience. By their dress and armour they seem well worthy of the respect of earls; especially is the leader, who has guided these men of war hither, deserving of all praise."

And as soon as Hrothgar heard the name of Beowulf, he remembered who he was, and what was his family, and replied gladly:

"I knew him well when he was yet a child; his father was called Ecgtheow, and to him Hrethel, King of the Geats, gave his only daughter in marriage. It is their son, who has now grown to manhood, and has learned the use of arms, who has come hither to visit me. Many marvellous things have I heard concerning him; for the seafarers, they who have brought hither precious treasures as an offering from the Geats, have told that he is of wondrous might, and that he has the strength of thirty men in his handgrip. I trust that the Almighty; God has sent him hither as a consolation, and as a help against the fury of Grendel. I shall reward the good man well for his courage. Now hasten quickly, bid the band of peace enter freely. Say plainly with words that they are welcome to the land of the Danes."

So Wulfgar went towards the door of the palace, where Beowulf and his men were still waiting, and gave him the king's message: how he was commanded to say that Hrothgar

knew all about their race, and that these guests from over the sea were heartily welcome at his court. "Now ye may go, armed as ye are, to speak with Hrothgar; but leave here your bucklers and death-dealing spears until the audience be ended."

Then the chief arose, surrounded by his men, a throng of chosen thanes; but some stayed behind to guard the armour as their lord commanded. So Wulfgar guided them beneath the roof of Heorot until Beowulf stood on the dais where Hrothgar was sitting. Full worthy looked he then in his bright armour, fairly decked with ornament, and strongly forged by the cunning of smiths; and worthily did he address the aged king.

"Hrothgar! All hail! Behold in me the kinsman and warrior thane of Hygelac; many fair deeds have I already performed in my youth. The affair of Grendel was made known to me in my home; for the mariners say that this palace, fairest of halls, stands desolate and deserted by every man as soon as the evening light is hidden beneath the vault of heaven. Therefore have my people, the best and wisest men, exhorted me that I should seek thee, O Hrothgar, because they know well the strength of my arm. They saw how I came in my armour, blood-stained from the enemy, when I bound five of the race of giants, and in the waves slew monsters by night. I suffered dire distress, yet I avenged the feud of the Geats, who had undergone much sorrow from the enemy that I destroyed. And now I alone will strive with the fiend Grendel and settle this matter with the giant. So now, thou great protector of the Danes, will I entreat thee for this one sole boon: that since I have come thus far hither thou wilt not refuse to let me and my bold troop of men cleanse Heorot of this evil presence. And because I have heard that in his recklessness the giant takes no account of weapons, I also shall scorn, (so Hygelac approve,) to wear a sword or yellow buckler in the fight, but with my grasp I shall attack

the enemy and strive for life, foe against foe. For the man whom death bears hence must needs think that such is the will of God. And I doubt not that if he may, Grendel will in this treasure hall devour undaunted the people of the Geats, even as he often did the nobles of the Danes. Nor, if death shall be my fate, wilt thou have any need to bury me, for he will bear the bloody booty hence; the wretched monster will remorselessly eat of it; it shall stain the recesses of the fen; nor wilt thou need any longer to care for my entertainment. But if I fall in the fight, I beg of thee to send to Hygelac the excellent corselet that guards my breast; it is an heirloom from Hrethel, and was made in days of yore by Weland. Fate goeth ever as it must!"

Then Hrothgar, glad to see the son of his old friend, began to tell him of the ancient love between himself and Ecgtheow; how Beowulfs father had been a mighty warrior, and had slain Heatholaf, one of the Wylfings. Therefore he could stay no longer with his own people, because the Wylfings would have made war on them, for it was the custom in those days that if one man killed another, the kindred of the dead would seek satisfaction from the tribe of the slayer; so he left his home, and sought the South Danes across the ocean tide. That was in the days when Hrothgar was still young, and his elder brother had been dead but a little while, leaving him to rule the prosperous city, the treasure town of heroes. Afterwards the quarrel was settled by a money payment; Hrothgar sent to the Wylfings across the ridge of the waters many a precious treasure and they swore an oath to keep the peace.

But after dwelling on these old memories for a little space, the king's mind returned to his present trouble and he began to tell his guest about his affliction.

"Grief it is to me to say to any man," he went on, "the shame that Grendel has put me to by his hostility in Heorot. My throng of thanes, the warriors of my hall, is much diminished. Fate has swept them away into the horror of Grendel.

Yet may God easily cut off the dread foe from his deeds. Full often, over the brimming beakers, drinking mead, my followers have vowed to await Grendel's attacks in the hall with the fierce play of swords. Then, when morning has come, and day has broken over the palace, behold, it was all spattered with gore, and every bench flowed with the blood of heroes. Afterwards I had fewer valiant men, for death had carried them away. But sit thou now to the feast and make known thy intention; speak thou to the assembled warriors as thy mind shall prompt thee."

Then room was made in the banquet hall for the Geats, and they went to sit down in the pride of their strength. The thane whose business it was to carry round the ornamented flagon did his duty and poured out the sparkling mead for the guests. At intervals ; the minstrel sang sweetly in Heorot, and there was much joy among the heroes, the mighty company of Danes and Geats.

Chapter IV
Hunferth's Story

Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook?
Or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?

• • • • • •

He esteemeth iron as straw and wars as rotten wood.
The arrow cannot make him flee, sling-stones are turned with him into stubble.
Darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of the spear.

— *The Book of Job.*

Now, though most of Hrothgar's men rejoiced to see Beowulf, and honoured him for his generous thought in coming to their help, there was one who looked on him with dislike and envy, and was jealous of the favour shown him by the king. This was Hunferth, who was sitting on the dais at Hrothgar's feet. And when he heard what this visitor intended to do, he grew angry and moody, because he could not bear that any man on earth should obtain greater honour than he himself. So he began to rake up old tales that he had heard of Beowulf, and tried to turn them to his hurt, saying scornfully: "Art thou that Beowulf who once strove on the wide sea in a swimming match with Breca, when ye two in boasting dared to breast the wave, and for vainglory risked your lives in the deep water? There was no man, friend nor foe, who could dissuade you from that sorrowful journey; but ye swam in the surf, stretching out your arms over the waves, and stirring up the surge with your hands. So did ye glide across

the ocean, while the waves weltered in wintry storms, and for seven nights ye laboured in the tumult of the seas. But in the end the victory was with Breca, for his might was the greater. Then on the morning of the eighth day the tide bore him to the shore of Norway, whence he visited his beloved home, the fair city of safety, where he ruled over many people, over towns and treasure. Truly did he perform all his boast against thee. Therefore I fear much that some great injury may befall thee, though thou hast performed such doughty deeds hitherto, if thou keep to thy intention, and watch this night for Grendel."

Then Beowulf, who knew how false Hunferth was, and how he had twisted things from the truth, grew angry, and answered indignantly:

"Lo, my friend Hunferth, drunken with wine, thou last said many things concerning Breca and his journey. But I will tell thee the truth, that I indeed had greater strength on the sea and power in the waves than any other man. When we two were yet children, we made the vow together that we would venture thus out upon the ocean, even as we afterwards did. In our hands we bore our naked swords, so that we might guard ourselves against the whales. He could not swim more quickly than I, nor would I leave him on the wave. So for five days we were together in the sea, until the rush of the water separated us; the weather was fierce and cold; dark grew the sky, and the north wind blew cruelly against us. The ocean became stormy; the sea monsters were angry in mind, and turned grimly upon me. But my coat of mail, fast forged with links of iron my adorned byrnie, shielded well my breast and preserved me against the attacks of the enemy. And though one spotted creature seized me firmly in his grasp, and tugged me to the bottom, yet was it given me to kill the foe with my battle-axe, and to slay the mighty monster with my hand. Thus, in spite of their rage, I came safely from them, and none of the slaughterous wretches had joy of my body,

nor feasted on my corpse, basking round the banquet in the depth of ocean; but in the morning, wounded by my hand, they all lay dead on the shore, slain by the sword edge, so that they could no longer hinder the way of the seafarer across the foaming flood. Then, like a bright messenger from God, the sun rose in the east; the waves sank to rest; and I could see in the distance the broad promontories and windy cliffs; the tide had borne me to the land of the Finns. For if a man be only bold of heart, and if his time to die has not yet come. Fate will often spare him thus, and bring him safely out of the hardest strife. However, it had been granted to me to kill nine monsters with my sword, and never yet have I heard of a fiercer strife, nor of any man more terribly troubled in the ocean. Breca never yet performed in battle so terrible a deed, nor yet didst thou thyself. Not that I boast of it, but this I say, that the fiend Grendel would never have committed such terrible crimes against thy lord, nor brought such shame to Heorot, if thou hadst been so cunning and fierce as thou wouldst have men believe. But the giant has found that he need not fear any foe, nor think that any man will come against him; therefore he does as he will, Slaying and devouring the people of the Danes. But now shall the courage and might of the Geats soon be made known in the strife; and when the air-clad sun of another day shall shine in the south, all men shall go glad-hearted to the feast."

These bold words cheered Hrothgar, for he fully believed that Beowulf was able to do as he had promised, and he trusted to him to kill Grendel. The hope of deliverance filled everyone with joy; great gladness was there then among the heroes, laughter and mirth and pleasant talk.

Then Queen Wealhtheow, the wife of Hrothgar, went down among the guests, for in those days it was the custom for the hostess to carry the mead to the company. Beautifully arrayed in a gold-embroidered garment, and decked with glittering gems, she took the beaker first to her husband, bidding

him be blithe and glad at heart; and he received it from her joyfully. Then she passed with the bright goblet among all the others in turn, until at last she came to Beowulf. But here she stopped, giving him kind words of greeting, and thanking God that what she had so long wished for had at length come to pass, and that she could trust to any man for help. And as the valorous warrior took the cup from her hand he answered courteously:

"This I had in mind when I embarked on the ocean and went on board with my band of men, that I would fulfil the desire of each one of your people, or perish in the strife, in the grip of the fiend. Either shall I perform a valiant deed or meet my end here in the banquet hall."

These brave words pleased well the high-born lady, and she returned to sit on the dais by her lord. Louder and louder grew the revelry; many a bold word was spoken, till at last it was time to go to rest. Wan night came slowly down, and the shades of darkness veiled the fair shining of the sun; so they all knew that the hour had come for that fierce battle with the fiend.

Then Hrothgar spoke words of encouragement to Beowulf. "Never before, since I could lift my shield aloft, have I entrusted to any man the high hall of the Danes. Have now and hold this best of houses; be mindful of glory, and make thy valour plain; be watchful against the foe. And if thou win the fight and save thy life, I will give thee whatever thou desirest."

Chapter V
The Fight with Grendel

No, there is a necessity in Fate
Why still the brave bold man is fortunate.
He keeps his object ever full in sight,
And that assurance holds him firm and right.
True, 'tis a narrow way that leads to bliss.
But right before there is no precipice;
Fear makes men look aside, and so their footing miss.
— *John Dryden.*

Then King Hrothgar departed with his band of thanes from the hall, content to think that he had left a warrior to guard the palace against Grendel. No small service, indeed, had Beowulf offered to perform for the Danish people.

He himself, however, thought little of this, so great was his trust in the grace of God and in his own courage. So he took off his iron corselet and his helmet, and gave his good sword to the attendant thane, telling him to take good care of them. Then, before he lay down on the bench, he spoke a mighty word to his men:

"In nowise do I deem myself less powerful in battle works than Grendel himself. Therefore will I not slay him with the sword, easy as that would be, since, though so terrible in deeds of war, he does not understand the use of weapons. But if he seeks a quarrel tonight, I will forego my arms, and God shall give the victory as seems best to Him."

Then the warrior lay down to rest, bowing his head upon the pillow, and round him slumbered many a bold seaman.

None of them expected ever again to see their home, or to return to the people among whom they had been brought up, such woeful tales had they heard of the murders committed in that treasure hall. However, this great happiness was given them by God, that by the might of one of them alone the fiend was overcome. So it is often proved that the Almighty guides and guards the fates of men throughout the world.

Then in the misty night the dim monster came striding through the gloom, when all the thanes who guarded the palace were fast asleep. All but one, who, determined that the foe should no longer drag off the prey amidst the shadows, lay watching there and awaiting with stern courage the beginning of the fray.

So the wretched Grendel, leaving the cloud-capped cliffs, approached the lofty hall, thinking to entrap the men who slept therein. But though this was by no means the first time that he had visited Hrothgars home, he never before nor afterwards met with a stouter warrior with his men. He at once broke open the door; the iron bars fell asunder as soon as he touched them. Full of evil thoughts, he burst through the portal, and fiercely advanced across the gleaming floor; as he went his eyes gave forth a hideous light most like to fire. And when he saw how the throng of kinsmen was slumbering peacefully together, his mind exulted, for he intended ere daylight came to rob them of their lives; the horrid monster thought that he would soon enjoy a bounteous feast. But their time had not yet come, nor indeed was he ever again after that night to eat of mankind.

Meanwhile, Beowulf was watching him stealthily to see how he would begin the treacherous attack; nor did the giant delay, but quickly seized at the first a sleeping warrior, whom he tore asunder; he crunched his bones, and, lapping his life-blood, swallowed great morsels whole. Soon he had eaten the dead man every whit, even to his feet and hands. Then he stepped nearer, and attempted to seize Beowulf as he lay on

the bench; but the hero, supporting himself on his arm, suddenly grasped the evil one, and Grendel knew at once that he had never met on earth with a mightier grip than this. He was filled with terror, but could in no wise escape; he felt that death was on him and was fain to flee into the darkness, to mingle in the tumult of evil spirits.

Then the bold warrior remembered the words he had spoken the evening before. He stood upright and grappled firmly with the fiend; their fingers cracked as the foe tried to escape him, thinking, if possible, to twist himself from his hold and to flee away to the hiding-places of the fen. But it was all in vain, and he knew too well that this was an unlucky journey he had made to Heorot.

So great was the din of the fight that the hall shook with it, and all the Danes, listening in the distance, were filled with terror at the sound; indeed, it was a great wonder that the palace did not give way in the strife; and if it had not been so firmly and skilfully united with strong bands of iron, it would have fallen to the ground. It is said that though it had never been supposed before that any might of man could shake that splendid hall, and that if it perished it would be by fire, yet in this terrible fray the wall quivered and trembled, and the mead benches were torn from their supports.

Louder and louder grew the tumult, and a great fear fell on those who were hearkening, when they heard the horrible war-whoop of the wounded monster, as, fettered in the grasp of the foe, he bewailed his pain. In no wise would the hero allow him to escape unhurt, for he knew that his life was of no avail to any man.

Then Beowulfs men, thinking to protect their lord, drew out their ancient swords, for these brave comrades did not know that the best steel on earth was powerless to pierce the hide of the enemy. But the giant, who had formerly committed so many crimes with a mirthful mind, found that his covering would not avail him now that the valorous nephew

of Hygelac had him fast in his hands; and as he struggled his sinews burst apart, and his arm was wrenched from its socket.

Thus had victory been given to Beowulf; and Grendel, sick to death, fled away in despair to seek his home beneath the marshy cliffs; full well he knew that his end had come, and that the number of his days was complete. So had the Danes had their desire, and the brave stranger from afar had cleansed the hall of Hrothgar and saved it from the foe. He rejoiced greatly in that night's work, for he felt that he had carried out the mighty vow he had made, and had cured the evil from which they had suffered so much vexation and distress. And in token of his victory he took the hand and arm that were torn from Grendel in his flight and hung them upon the rafter beneath the spacious roof, that all men might gaze upon them there.

Chapter VI
The Joy at Heorot

The seasons change, the winds they shift and veer;
The grass of yesteryear
Is dead; the birds depart, the groves decay;
Song passes not away.
Captains and conquerors leave a little dust,
And kings a dubious legend of their reign;
The swords of Caesars, they are less than rust;
The poet doth remain.

— *William Watson.*

Then in the morning, as men say, the treasure hall was surrounded by a great throng of warriors; the leaders of the people came from far and near along the highways to view the wonder, and to observe the tracks of the enemy. Nor was anyone at all sorry for his defeat, but they gazed gladly at the marks of his footsteps, which showed how he had fled away, wounded and overcome and covered with shame, to the home of the sea monsters. There beneath the cliff they beheld how all the water surged with blood, and how the waves wherein the fiend had hidden were stained with battle gore; in the fen refuge he had miserably laid down his life.

And when they had all seen this, they departed again merrily, both old and young, riding on their dappled horses. And there was much talk among them of Beowulf: how that north and south, between the seas, on earth's wide plain or beneath the vault of heaven, there was no worthier earl than he. Nor did they at all belittle their king; but they praised

Hrothgar too, and called him a gracious prince. At whiles they would make their horses leap, or set them to run races where they knew the roads were best; and all the time the king's minstrel, meditating lays and thinking of bygone deeds, considered how he might put together another poem, celebrating the great feat of Beowulf. Already he had made many songs of brave adventures in old days, one especially which told how Sigmund, the son of Volsung, had slain the brood of giants and had won great glory after death by striving with a dragon who guarded a heap of treasure beneath a hoary rock. Him he had slain, and, seizing the gold, had loaded his boat with it and returned home. And yet another story he told of the bad King Heremod, who was a trouble and disappointment to his people, who had looked to him for protection; quite unlike Beowulf, who was greatly loved by all his comrades.

So all the morning the horsemen thronged the streets, and the minstrel considered his song; and when evening was come they went again to the palace to look at the arm and claw of the monster. Hrothgar came too, followed by a great company of warriors, and his queen with him, leading her train of maidens. And when the king reached the hall, and looking up saw the lofty roof, glittering with gold, and Grendel's hand hanging from it, he began to speak thus:

"For this sight may thanks forthwith be given to the Almighty! Many a sore trouble have I suffered at the hands of Grendel, and for many years I despaired of any cure for my grief, while this best of houses stood desolate and stained with blood. All men were filled with woe, and none thought that they would ever be able to guard the mighty hall against the evil spirit. But now, by the help of the Almighty, a warrior hath brought to pass that deed which none of us could by any thought accomplish. Well may the maiden whose child thou art say that the Lord was gracious to her in giving her so good a son! And now I vow to thee, O Beowulf, that henceforth I

will consider thee as my son, and love thee as a kinsman; nor shalt thou have any lack of thy desire in those things that I can give thee. Very often have I for a smaller service given to a less valiant warrior ornaments and treasure; but thou hast performed such a deed that thy fame shall be spoken of for ever and ever! May the Almighty always reward thee, even as He has already done!"

But Beowulf replied that the conflict had been a great joy to him, and he wished that the king himself might have seen the enemy, faint to death in the fight. He had hoped to slay him on the spot, but he was too strong for that, and had got away; however, he had left his arm and claw as a sign of his defeat; he had been mortally wounded, and lived no longer. Then the hero said no more concerning the fight, but all the men gazed again at the monstrous hand before them. Every nail was as hard as iron, and they all said that no sword could harm him who had been able to carry off the fist of the giant.

Then commands were given that the hall should be gaily adorned, and throngs of men and women crowded in. The golden tapestry on the wall glowed with colour, marvellous to behold, but signs of the fray could still be seen in the broken ornaments; the roof, however, had remained unhurt. The time for the banquet was come, and all the thanes turned to the benches to enjoy the feast, while Hrothgar and his brother Hrothulf joined heartily in the revelry, draining many a deep cup of mead.

And when the banquet was over the king called for the treasures with which he meant to reward Beowulf. They carried in an embroidered banner on a staff, together with a helmet and byrnie and a jewelled sword; never were four such priceless gifts more gladly bestowed by one man on another. The roof of the helmet was adorned with a crest wound about with twisted wires, so that no weapon, however powerful, could cleave it in battle. Then, besides all these, eight horses with gold-plated bridles were led into the hall, of which one

had a splendid saddle, studded with gems; this was the war seat of Hrothgar, when the great king rode out to the strife. But now he gave to Beowulf both steeds and weapons, and bade him make good use of them; and thus he rewarded him well for the service he had done him. Nor did he forget Beowulf's men, but gave a fair sword to each; and he commanded that money should be given to the kinsfolk of those whom Grendel had killed, to make up for their loss.

Chapter VII

The Minstrel Tells of the Feud of the Danes and Frisians

Ho! then the music
Of battles in onset,
And ruining armours,
And God's gift returning
In fury to God.

— *William Henley.*

Thus there was song and merriment among the assembled guests, while the minstrel touched his harp, and, mindful of the great deeds of yore, began to tell of the old feud between the Danes and the Frisians; how Finn, the King of the Frisians had married Hildeburg, a daughter of the Dane Hoc. That marriage had caused great woe, and Hildeburg had reason to mourn the death of many dear ones, who fell doomed to death by the spear. For her brother Hnaef came to spend some months in the city of Finn, bringing with him no less than sixty followers, and for some time they lived peaceably in the dwelling appointed to them. But one night they heard the din of approaching warriors, the clash of shields and rattle of spears and iron corselets. Starting up, and hastily girding on their swords, they hastened to the doors, and soon found that it was Finn himself who had come against them with his men. Fiercely for five days they held that hall against the foe, and not one of their number was slain; but at last Hnaef fell, and so Finn won the victory. But it had cost him the lives of many of his men, and among them that of his own son; and when

the sixth morning dawned, the unhappy queen must needs feel, in the very place where she had before known the greatest bliss, heart-breaking grief at the loss of her dear ones.

Then the body of Hnaef was carried out to be burned, and Hildeburg commanded that her son should also be laid on the pyre, and given over to the flames. Bending above her dead, she wept bitterly for her loss, while the smoke rose to heaven and the fire consumed their bodies.

But now Hnaef was dead the Danes chose another leader, a warrior called Hengest. He made peace with Finn, who gave him many treasures, and took a solemn oath that no man should break the compact by word or deed; and if any Frisian should so much as mention the feud, he was immediately to be put to death. And Hengest dwelt in peace with Finn all that winter.

Yet all this time he thought of his people and of his dead lord; he longed for his home, though it was impossible to embark on the sea, so stormy was the surge, and the waves were fettered in ice. But when the next year came, bringing the bright spring weather, he thought rather of revenge than of departure, and listened readily when his men urged him to battle. Then, when all was ready, Finn met with a terrible death at his own home; the palace was strewn with dead bodies, and the king lay lifeless among his band. So was Hnaef revenged, and the Danes returned to their own home; but Hildeburg they took with them, together with all the treasure they could find in Finn's palace.

Thus ended the song of the minstrel, but the sound of revelry and delight still continued. As on the evening before, Queen Wealhtheow, decked with glittering jewels, went round among the company, bearing the wine flagon, from which she filled their horns. "Receive thou this cup, my lord," she said to Hrothgar, "Be joyful, O protector of the nation; be gracious in gifts and words to the people of the Geats, now that thou hast peace at home and abroad. It has been told me

that thou wilt treat Beowulf as thy son. Heorot, that bright treasure hall, is cleansed; now mayest thou freely enjoy all thy power, until the time shall come when thou must depart from the world, leaving thy kingdom and thy people to the care of thy kinsman Hrothulf."

And now Hrothgar gave to Beowulf yet another gift, a beautiful golden collar studded with gems, which had not its like in the whole world. It had already passed through many hands, for it was so precious that all men desired it, and it was famous among many nations. So that when Wealhtheow bore the goblet to Beowulf, who was placed in the seat of honour between her two sons, she addressed him thus:

"Rejoice, O Beowulf, in the possession of this collar; prosper greatly, and shield thyself well against the foe. Be thou a kind adviser to my boys. Thou hast acted so that far and near on every side, even to where the sea washes the windy cliffs, all men shall honour thy name forever. So be thou all thy life a noble prince, and when my son shall become king, help thou him by friendly deeds. For in this place is each man loyal to the other, mild of mind, and their lord is gracious."

Then she went again to her seat, while the feast went on, and in that beauteous palace mirth and joy prevailed.

Chapter VIII

Grendel's Mother Avenges Her Son

Light thickens, and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood:
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse;
Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse.
— *Shakespeare.*

So that night, little dreaming of what fate had in store for them, the thanes of Hrothgar slept in the palace, as they had not ventured to do for many years, but to Beowulf and his men another room was given. As soon as the feast was over they cleared the benches and covered them with pillows and bolsters; then they lay down to rest, placing at their heads their wooden shields, studded with bright bosses; and by their sides they laid their lofty helmets and mighty spears. For it was their custom, whether at home or in the camp, to be always ready for battle, so that they should never fail their lord in his need.

Thus they fell asleep, but one paid dearly for that evening slumber. They little knew that a kinswoman of Grendel still lived and that she would come tonight to avenge his death. This was his mother, a horrible creature, who had her home in the cold currents of water beneath the cliff. And when she found that her son was dead, she was filled with wrath and greed, and determined to go a sorrowful journey to punish those who had killed him.

She came then to Heorot, where the Danes were sleeping, scattered about the hall. They woke as soon as she rushed in,

but at first they were not greatly alarmed, seeing that it was but a woman who attacked them; nevertheless they quickly grasped their weapons, tugged out their swords, and lifted high their bucklers; there was no time to don their helmets nor their good byrnies when the terror seized them. The monster was in haste to be gone. Immediately she was discovered she tried to rush out and save her life; but as she went she snatched up and held fast in her grip one of the men. His name was Æschere, and he was Hrothgar's favourite thane; indeed, he had accompanied him on many journeys between the seas; a famous warrior whom she carried off in his sleep.

Then there was a great cry in Heorot; sorrow once more filled the palace; the king especially was sad at heart when he heard that his beloved thane was dead. Beowulf was at once sent for to the king's chamber, and ere day had broken the noble champion went with his companions where the prince was waiting. As they crossed the room the planks dinned beneath their tread; and thus Beowulf approached and asked the king whether he had spent a pleasant night.

"Nay," answered Hrothgar, "ask thou not after joy! Sorrow is come again to the people of the Danes. Dead is Æschere, the elder brother of Yrmenlaf, my counsellor and adviser. Oft was he my comrade when the hosts hurtled together in battle and the helmets crashed; such as a man should be, a noble prince, even such was Æschere. Now has some wandering spirit been his slayer in Heorot; nor do I know whither the fiend, exulting in her booty, has escaped. She has avenged the quarrel, because last night thou didst kill her son who had so long warred against my people. He paid for this with his life, and fell in the fight, and now another has come, a mighty manslayer, to avenge her kinsman. For this may many a man who mourns for Æschere be sad at heart; the hand which once availed for every joy lies low forever.

"True it is," continued the king, "that I have sometimes heard the dwellers in the land talk in the hall of two strange

monsters, mighty giants, who lived in the fens; one of whom, as far as they could tell, was like a woman; and the other in the shape of a man, though far greater than any human creature, trod the desert paths. Him in days of old the country people called Grendel, but they knew nothing of his father, or if, indeed, he ever had one. These evil spirits haunt the dim, mysterious land; the abode of the wolf, the breezy cliffs, the perilous way of the fen, where the mountain stream glides forever downwards between the windy slopes, the flood beneath the earth. Not far from thence, at the distance of a mile, lies the sea; over it hangs a frosty grove, a firmly rooted wood leans over the water. There every night may a dread wonder be seen; the sea glows with fire. Among the sons of men there is none so wise that he knows what lies at the bottom of that deep; and the strong-horned deer, hard pressed by hounds, will rather give up his life upon the shore than hide his head within that flood. It is no holy place, for there the mounting surge rises wan to the sky; the wind stirs up a horrid tempest till the sky grows gloomy, and the heavens weep.

"Now thou alone canst help. The place thou knowest not yet — the perilous spot, where thou mayst find that sinful creature. If thou outlive the strife, I will give thee great store of treasure, money and twisted gold. Say if thou dare!"

Then answered Beowulf: "Sorrow not, wise prince; better is it for every man that he should avenge his friend than that he should sorrow over much. For all must die at last; therefore let him who may win glory ere his death, so that his memory may afterwards be cherished among the people. Arise, O ruler of the kingdom, and let us swiftly go hence to view the track left by Grendel's kinswoman! I promise thee that she shall not escape under cover, nor in the bosom of the earth, nor in the mountain wood, nor in the ocean deeps, go where she will. Only have thou patience in thy grief today, as I expect of thee."

Chapter IX

The Fight with Grendel's Mother

O, my lord, lie not idle:
The chiefest action for a man of great spirit
Is never to be out of action. . . .
Virtue is ever sowing of her seeds:
In the trenches for the soldier; in the wakeful study
For the scholar; . .
of all which
Arise and spring up honour.

— *John Webster.*

Then the old king leapt up, thanking God for the cheering words of Beowulf, and commanded that a horse with flowing mane should be saddled for him. In a little while all was ready, and they set out, the good prince worthily surrounded by a troop of foot soldiers, bearing their shields with them. The footprints of the monster were easily visible through the woodland ways, where she had gone along the paths towards the misty moor, carrying with her the dead body of Hrothgar's chief thane.

Thus the heroes climbed the narrow, rocky paths, the steep ways and difficult tracks, a road that none had gone before, passing as they went many a sheer precipice and mysterious cavern, haunted by nicors and evil spirits. Then, suddenly, Beowulf, who with a few other wise men had gone on before to survey the spot, came upon the mountain trees overhanging the grey cliff, a joyless wood; beneath it lay the water, turbid and troubled.

But what was the grief of all the Danes, and how great was their distress, when they found the head of Æschere, their former companion, lying there on the ocean cliff! They all sat down, and gazing at the tide, saw that it welled with warm blood. All along the surface of the waves strange monsters were lying: curious dragons of the sea, swimming amidst the foam; and the promontories were scattered with elfish creatures who oft at noon performed difficult journeys upon the deep; sea serpents and untamed beasts. But as soon as they heard the sound of the war horn they rushed away, fierce and wrathful. Beowulf, however, managed to wound one of them as it sped away; the arrow pierced its body and its speed slackened; then his comrades attacked it with their boar spears, and the wondrous sea voyager was dragged lifeless upon the shore; all the warriors gazed upon the grisly stranger.

And now Beowulf, recking little of his life, girded himself with his armour. His corselet, broad and beauteous, fairly adorned by hand, must descend into the deep; well must it shield his breast lest the spiteful battle grip of the foe should hurt his life. The bright helmet, also, adorned with treasure and encircling ornaments, crowned by cunning smiths in days of old with the boar crest, must now mingle with the surge of ocean; so skilfully was it made that no sword nor battle axe could cleave it. Last, but not least, of his arms was a famous sword, which Hunferth, who had repented of his scornful words on Beowulf's arrival, had lent him. It was called Hrunting, and was one of the greatest of old treasures; all the blade was adorned with a beautiful pattern and the edge was exceedingly sharp and hard; hitherto it had never failed anyone who had carried it to war, nor was this the first time that it had helped to perform a mighty deed. Hunferth himself, however, would never have been able to wield it, for in spite of the boasts that he was wont to make at the feast, he was too great a coward to risk his life under the wave, or to perform a heroic action, and so he forfeited renown and the glory

of great deeds.

And now Beowulf was quite ready, and turning to the king he made his parting speech:

"Remember, O wise prince and ruler of men, now that I am ready for the enterprise, how formerly we talked together, and thou didst promise that if I lost my life thou wouldst perform for me a father's duty. Therefore, if I die, I trust to thee to protect my men. And send to Hygelac, beloved Hrothgar, the treasures thou hast given me, so that when he looks upon them he may know that I have found thee a generous friend. And let Hunferth have, in exchange for his, my good sword with the wavy pattern; since now I will win glory with Hrunting, or die in the endeavour."

Then, without waiting for an answer, the prince of the Geats hastened swiftly, and dived into the surge. Long was it ere he touched the bottom, and the grim and greedy fiend who had inhabited the flood for a hundred years discovered that one of the race of men was seeking from above the land of the monsters. Quickly clutching at him, she held the prince in her deadly grip; yet she could not hurt the hale body, for his corselet shielded him so well that her fingers could not pierce the closely woven links of iron. But the sea wolf dragged the ring-decked prince with her to her house, grasping him so firmly that, in spite of his daring, he could by no means wield his weapons. Many a wondrous beast oppressed him as he swam; many a sea monster broke with fierce tusks his battle sark, and evil creatures followed hard upon him.

All at once he perceived that he was in a strange battle hall, where no water touched him, nor, on account of the roof, could the wild rush of the flood reach him; and he saw the white flame of a fire burning brightly. Then it was light enough for him to see the terrible woman of the ocean. He made a fierce onset at her with his sword, nor withheld the blows, so that the blade sang a furious war song on her head. But then he found that the edge would not cut, but failed him

in the fight, though before this it had been used in many a mighty strife, and had often cleft the helmets and corselets of the doomed. This was the first time that its power had not availed.

Yet notwithstanding this, Beowulf did not despair; but mindful of glory, he threw aside the adorned sword so that it lay on the ground, and trusted to his own strength, the might of his grip. So every man should do who means to gain lasting fame in battle, nor care greatly for his life.

Then, reckless of danger, he seized Grendel's mother by the shoulder. Swelling with rage, he flung his deadly enemy to the ground. It was but a moment before she caught at him again, paying him for that onslaught with fierce grasp, and clutched wildly at him. Suddenly, wearied at heart, the warrior stumbled and fell. Swiftly did she sit upon her foe, drawing her dagger, broad and brown-edged, to avenge her son. But on his bosom lay the woven corselet; it shielded well his life and withstood the entrance of point and edge. Then indeed would the champion of the Geats have gone under the sea floor had not his battle byrnie, his strong corselet, been his help, and mighty God, the all-wise Lord, directed the victory and decided it aright.

Afterwards he easily got up again, and saw among the armour that was heaped on the floor of the dwelling a victorious sword, made by huge men of old, of powerful edge, a glory of warriors. Most choice of weapons was it, but greater than any other man could bear to the battle play, good and glorious, the work of giants. He seized the sword hilt; rough and grim in battle, he drew the adorned blade; despairing of life, he struck out fiercely, till the hard weapon smote her neck, and broke the bone rings.

The weapon's point advanced through her death-doomed body till she fell lifeless to the ground. The blade was gory, and the warrior rejoiced in his deed.

Then the bright beam shone forth; the light gleamed

within even as the candle of the sky shines fair from the heavens. Beowulf gazed upon the dwelling, and, grasping his weapon by the hilt, he advanced, wrathful and resolute, along the wall. In no wise was that gigantic sword useless to the warrior; and if he had found Grendel still alive, he meant to avenge on him the many raids he had made against the Danes, when at one time he had slain and eaten in their sleep fifteen of Hrothgar's men, and at another time had carried off an equal number. But he had already paid him the reward for this. Grendel was dead, and he now saw him lying lifeless, worn out with the strife and the fate that had met him at Heorot. So now nothing was left but to smite off his head with the giant's sword; the body rebounded from the hard blow of Beowulf s weapon.

Soon the wise men, who were watching the water with Hrothgar, saw that the surge had become yet more troubled, and freshly stained with blood. The grey-haired men began to talk together of the hero, and they all said that no one could hope to see him come again victorious to seek the king; for it seemed certain to them that the sea wife had devoured him. At last the ninth hour[1] came, and Hrothgar and his train quitted the cliff and departed home. But Beowulf's men refused to give up hope. Sick at heart, they sat there, hoping against hope, and scarcely expecting ever to see him again.

Meanwhile the hero had gone all through the cave, gazing at the treasure that was hoarded there; but though it was so great, he would take nothing with him but Grendel's head and the hilt of the sword with which the monster had been slain. Nothing more of it was left, for a wondrous miracle had chanced to the blade. So hot was the creature's blood that the steel had melted away like ice in spring, when the Almighty Father, who hath power over times and seasons, unloosens the fetters of the frost, and sets free the ocean current.

[1] About three o'clock in the afternoon.

Then he who had before known such fierce strife of wild creatures, dived up again; but now since the evil spirit had lain down her life and given up these fleeting days, the surge was cleansed. So the warrior, stern of mind, came swimming to the shore, rejoicing in his sea booty, the mighty burden that he bare with him.

As soon as they saw him his band of thanes rushed to meet him, thanking God and rejoicing that they might see again their prince safe and sound. Quickly they unloosed his helmet and byrnie, and hastened back the way they had come; glad at heart, they took the familiar path. They carried with them from the cliff the head of Grendel, but it was so heavy that four men could scarcely bear it on battle spears to the treasure hall; and so at last the warrior, surrounded by his thanes, reached the palace.

Chapter X

Hrothgar Thanks Beowulf for his Help

Great souls are always loyally submissive — reverent to what is over them; only small, mean souls are otherwise.

— *Thomas Carlyle.*

So the bold prince of thanes came glorious to meet Hrothgar, with the head of Grendel borne before him into the hall where the warriors were feasting, a terrible spectacle for men to gaze on. Then spoke Beowulf, and said thus:

"Behold, O Hrothgar, we have joyfully brought thee as a token of victory the head which now thou viewest. Hardly did I escape with my life, but in strife beneath the water I performed the deed with difficulty; and unless God had helped me, I should have perished in the conflict. Nor in that fight could I defend myself with Hrunting, though the weapon be worthy; but the Almighty, who so often helps men in their need, granted me to see, hanging bright against the wall, an old gigantic sword, which I seized and swung as a weapon. Then, as opportunity served me, I slew in the strife the guardian of the dwelling; but the fairly wrought sword all burned up as soon as the hot blood touched it; only the hilt could I carry from the foe. Truly have I avenged the foul deeds, the slaughter of the Danes, as it was meet. Now I promise thee that henceforth thou mayest slumber free from care in Heorot, with thy bold band of thanes, and all thy men, both young and old; for no longer needst thou dread on their account the slaying of earls, as thou didst before."

So speaking he put the golden hilt of the ancient weapon

into the king's hand; so that after the fall of the evil spirits that wondrous work of smiths passed into the possession of the best king who ruled in Scandinavia. And when he gazed upon the sword, he saw that it was graven with strange writing, which told of the beginnings of the old war with the giants, who were slain in the flood; they were a race hateful to God, who therefore punished them by drowning in the watery tide. There were also golden letters on the sword guards, which told by whom that excellent sword with twisted hilt and device of dragons was first made.

Then all were silent, and Hrothgar spoke thus: "Lo, he who remembers things of old and performs righteousness and truth, may well say, friend Beowulf, that a better earl than thou was never born. Thy fame has gone out through many nations; yet dost thou bear it always with wisdom and meekness. Bounteously will I fulfil towards thee my promise, as we spoke before; and thou shalt be granted for a long time as a consolation to thy people. Far unlike Heremod, who turned fiercely upon his subjects, and mad with anger, slew the companions of his table until he departed solitary from the bliss of men. Although God had exalted him in the joy of his strength above all men, yet did a bloodthirsty passion surge in his breast; nor would he distribute to the Danes the customary gifts. In punishment for this he experienced great unhappiness, suffering a life-long sorrow. Take warning by this, O excellent hero; for I, old in years, have told thee this tale for thy counsel. The ways of God to men are exceeding strange, and it is hard to say how the Almighty, who hath power over all things, distributes wisdom, wealth, and valour. At one time He lets the mind of a prince turn to worldly joy; He gives him in his home all earthly bliss, the high city to hold, and makes him so mighty in wide dominion and in the goods of this life that he becomes proud, and in his folly thinks that all this shall never end. He dwells in gladness, and nothing harms him — age, nor sickness, nor sorrow from the foe; so the soul

grows careless, and he heeds not the approaching doom.

"Then suddenly he is overtaken by grievous sin. All that he ruled so long seems mean and poor. He gives no longer, even in boast, the golden collars, and he despises and scorns the destiny that God has appointed for him. So in the end it happens that his body wastes away; doomed to death, it decays, and another succeeds him who ungrudgingly distributes treasure and heeds not fear. Beware, therefore, beloved Beowulf, of such a fate. Choose thou the better lot, the eternal counsel, and guard thyself against arrogance. Because it is but for a little while that the fame of thy might endures; then again it may happen that death suddenly overcomes thee, either by disease or war, or the embrace of the flame, or by the whelming of the flood, or the grip of the sword, or the flight of the spear, or fierce old age, till the brightness of thine eyes grows dim and passes away. So did I myself for many years reign over the Danes, and kept them well from the onslaughts of other peoples, from spears and swords, until I thought that I had no foe under heaven. And lo, a reverse came to me, grief instead of joy, when Grendel became my guest. Great sorrow was mine, continual mourning on account of the feud. But now let there be heartfelt thanks to the Creator because He has permitted mine eyes to behold the gory head of the fiend. Go now to thy seat, covered with glory; enjoy well the feasting, and tomorrow I will reward thee with many a precious gift." Thus they talked and feasted till the shadows of night grew dark above them and they sought repose. Beowulf, most of all, needed rest after the labours of the day, and a courteous thane, guiding him to his chamber, waited on him and attended to all his needs. So they slumbered, while the spacious gold-decked roof soared high above them, till the black raven blithely told of the joy of heaven. Then came the bright sun gliding over the plains, and the strangers arose to seek their ship and to fare back to their own nation. And when their brave leader had sent the sword Hrunting back to Hunferth,

and had given him thanks for the loan, he went once more to seek Hrothgar, and to bid him farewell.

Chapter XI
Beowulf Returns Home

If rare merit be the rarest of all rare things, it ought to pass through some sort of probation. The temple of honour ought to be seated on an eminence. If it be open through virtue, let it be remembered, too, that virtue is never tried but by some difficulty and some struggle. — *Edmund Burke.*

Then said Beowulf: "It is time for us to bid farewell, for now I must return to my own prince, King Hygelac. Thou hast used us well, and granted to us all our desire. Now if at any time I may deserve thy love by battle deeds more than I have yet done, I shall be at once ready. If in my home across the water I should hear that the neighbouring peoples make war on thee as they did before, I will bring to thy help a thousand thanes. For shouldst thou have any need of men, I know that Hygelac, the lord of the Geats, will gladly assist me in bringing an army to thy aid. And if thy son Hrethric shall enter into a treaty with the court of the Geats, he will find there many friends."

"Those words hath the wise God put into thy mind," answered Hrothgar. "Never have I heard so young a man speak more prudently. Strong art thou of might and great of mind, a speaker of good words. And if any mishap should befall Hygelac, if grim war or fell disease should smite thy lord and thou shouldst survive him, I count on the hope that the Geats may have no better king to choose than thou, if thou wilt consent to rule them. The better I know thee, the more dost thou please me, and thou hast acted in such a manner

that while I reign over this land, peace shall prevail between the Danes and the Geats, and their ancient feuds shall be forgotten. Much commerce shall there be between us; our people shall greet one another on the ocean, and the boats shall bring across the water many a gift and token of friendship."

Then Hrothgar gave yet more presents to Beowulf, bidding him seek his lord with those gifts and come again quickly. He fell on his neck and kissed him, shedding tears when he considered how he might never see his friend again. For his grief was too great to be hidden, and he yearned for the hero as for his own son.

But at last the farewells were said, and Beowulf and his men made their way to the shore, where their boat was riding at anchor. And as they went they praised the gifts of King Hrothgar, who, indeed, was a king worthy of all honour, reigning blamelessly till the day of his death.

When they reached the shore, they found the coastguard who had met them on their arrival, waiting to bid them good speed. He rode at once to greet them, saying that the brightly armed visitors had the good wishes of all the Danes in their homeward voyage. Then the ring-decked ship on the sand was laden with the horses and treasures that the king had given them; the mast soared high above the gifts of Hrothgar. And Beowulf gave to him who had taken charge of the boat a sword with a handle of finely wrought gold.

So they betook themselves to the ship, which now set off, stirring the deep water as it cut through it, and leaving the land of the Danes behind. The wind filled the sail and drove it onwards; the deck resounded, and the prow sped lightly through the foaming waves until the voyagers saw once more the well-known headlands of their native land. Then, hastened by the wind, the boat reached the shore, where the harbour master, who had been for some time expecting Beowulf s return, was waiting to greet them. The anchor was

dropped, and the ship made fast, so that it could not be swept away by the tide; and Beowulf commanded that it should be unloaded, and the royal gifts of Hrothgar borne upon the land. And now he set out for Hygelac's palace, which stood near the seashore, at a short distance from the haven. It was a magnificent building, in which the king dwelt with his young wife Hygd, a gracious lady, gentle and well-spoken. Accompanied by his band of thanes, the hero went along the sands in the bright sunlight to visit the royal couple and tell them all about his adventures.

And as soon as they heard of his arrival, and how he had returned from the conflict covered with glory and unhurt in body, they rejoiced greatly; and Hygelac at once commanded the hall to be cleared and gave Beowulf a place opposite to him, while Hygd went round among the guests with the wine-flagon, just as Wealhtheow had done at Heorot.

Then the king began to ask Beowulf about his adventures, and what had happened to him since they met last. "How did it fare with thee on the journey, my beloved Beowulf, when thou didst suddenly determine to seek over the salt water a conflict at Heorot? Hast thou at all helped the mighty Prince Hrothgar in his well-known trouble? I was reluctant to let thee go, and sorrowed much at thy departure; long did I plead with thee not to attack the monster, but to let the Danes themselves wage war against Grendel. Thanks be to God that I am permitted to see thee once more safe and sound."

"It is well known, my Lord Hygelac," replied Beowulf, "how I met Grendel in a mighty encounter, and what a terrible conflict we two waged in the hall, because he had formerly committed so many crimes against the people of the Danes, and had brought them continual misery; but I avenged it all. For as soon as the voyage was at an end, and I had seen Hrothgar, and told him the reason of my coming, he appointed me a seat near his own son; we feasted together, and in all my life I have never known greater mirth among

heroes than we enjoyed then. At times the glorious queen passed through the hall, carrying the beaker, and saying kind words of cheer to the guests; and sometimes the king's daughter Freaware, who is betrothed to Froda's son, bore the mead cup among the assembled warriors.

"So we rejoiced all the evening; but when the sun, that jewel of the sky, had sunk beneath the horizon, the terrible night-haunting demon came to seek us, where we, as yet unharmed, were guarding the treasure hall. Quickly did the fiend seize one of the warriors, and laid him low, swallowing all his body; for the foe would in no wise go empty-handed out of the palace. Too long would it be to tell how I avenged the death of our comrade, and made known by that deed the glory of thy people. However, the monster escaped, though he was wounded to death, and, sick at heart, sought the ocean bottom, leaving his right hand as a sign of his defeat. And when next day we sat together at the banquet, Hrothgar loaded me with treasure in reward for the victory. Again did we enjoy mirth and glee; and at times the old king would tell stories of his youth, while the minstrel touched his harp and wakened many an ancient lay. So took we our delight till eventide.

"But not yet were the sorrows of the Danes ended. That night there came to the palace another monster, the mother of Grendel, to avenge the death of her son, and carried off Æschere, a mighty warrior and the king's chief thane. She bore his body in her hateful embrace far away beneath the mountain stream. That was a terrible grief to Hrothgar, and he solemnly implored me to perform a deed of valour in the deep and to slay the fiend. Then, as is well known, I discovered her retreat, and after a fierce fight struck off her head. And in reward Hrothgar gave to me many a bright treasure, which now, my lord, I will bring to thee. For now I return to serve thee again as my gracious king. No other chieftain have I save thee alone, O Hygelac!"

So he commanded his men to bring in all the gifts that Hrothgar had bestowed upon him: the lofty helmet, adorned with the boar crest, the grey byrnie, and the excellent battle sword, saying:

"All this war raiment did Hrothgar give me, and commanded that I should bring kind words of greeting from him to thee. He told me that the corselet first belonged to his brother, King Heorogar; now take thou it, and rejoice in the possession of all these treasures."

Then also were four dappled horses, exactly like one another, led into the hall, which likewise he gave to Hygelac; for Beowulf was loyal and faithful to his uncle as a kinsman should be, and both were mindful of good deeds to each other, and in no wise meditated treachery or plotted plans of murder. But the golden collar, which was the greatest of all these treasures, he gave to Queen Hygd, so that from that time her bosom was magnificently decked; he gave also to her three slender steeds with brightly adorned saddles.

And Hygelac gave to Beowulf a splendid sword, an heirloom from his grandfather Hrethel, than which there was no more precious treasure among the Geats; he laid it on his breast, and gave him also power over seven thousand men, together with a palace and a throne in the land of which they were both natives.

So did Beowulf thrive well, and was greatly honoured by the king and all his people. For he bore himself always worthily, performing good deeds towards his followers, ever gracious and friendly, and mindful of good fame.

Chapter XII
The Fiery Dragon

Like to a lonely dragon, that his fen
Makes feared and talked of more than seen.
— *William Shakespeare.*

And so the years wore on, bringing many fierce battles and perilous encounters and great sorrows to the people of the Geats. For their good King Hygelac went in war against the Franks, and was slain by the enemy. Beowulf was with him in the strife, but could not save his life, though he slew Daeghraefen, the standard bearer of the foe; and then, as the story goes, escaped to the fleet by swimming across the sea, bearing as booty thirty suits of armour. And when he returned to the Geatish court, Queen Hygd, whose son Heardred was still a child, offered him the throne, and asked him to rule the country for her. But he refused, and stood loyally by his cousin, supporting him by deed and counsel, until another feud broke out, this time between the Swedes and the Geats. For the young King Heardred gave shelter to Eadgils and Eanmund, two Swedish princes who had been banished by their uncle Onela because they had rebelled against him. Therefore Onela invaded Geatland and slew Heardred.

Then the kingdom fell to the lot of Beowulf, and he ruled it well in war and peace for fifty years. A noble king was he!

Now it happened that many hundreds of years before, a certain prince, whose friends had all perished in war, and who felt his own end approaching, had hidden in a cavern near the seashore a great pile of treasure. Lonely and desolate was he,

bereft of all his friends; and thus he mourned as he bore into the rocky dwelling the wealth of men now passed away:

"Hold thou, O earth, since men may no longer possess it, the wealth of those departed. Lo, in days of yore, men drew it from within thy bosom; but war swept them away; terrible slaughter bore each man from me; all my people quitted the earth and the glad society of the mead hall. No sword-girt thane have I now to brighten the gold-chased tankard and the precious beaker; the brave host has departed elsewhere. Now they lie low for ever who of old polished the bright helmet; the woven corselet crumbles into dust along with him who wore it, and shall fare forth no more in battle with the heroes. No longer is there heard the pleasant sound of the harp, nor playing of the glee-wood; the goodly hawk no more soars through the hall, nor does the swift steed beat with his hoofs the roads of the city. Slaughter hath swept away many a soul of man!"

So, sad at heart, he lamented in sorrow; all alone he wept bitterly day and night, till the flood of death overwhelmed him also. And the treasure lay there for many years forgotten and unheeded.

But after a long while a terrible dragon, flying by night, breathing out flame and encompassed by fire, found the treasure heap open; and straightway he took up his abode in the cavern under the earth, where, old in years, he guarded the heathen hoard, though he was no whit the better for possessing it. For three hundred years this awful monster kept watch in the cliff over the vast treasure chamber; till it happened that a man, passing by while the dragon slept, chanced on the hoard and took from it a golden beaker. This he bore as an offering to his lord, begging him at the same time for protection against the vengeance of the dragon. Thus was the treasure discovered and the hoard broken into.

And the lord granted his servant's prayer, and looked for the first time on this wondrous vessel wrought by men in

ancient days.

But when the dragon awoke and discovered his loss, he was filled with anger; he snuffed fiercely along the rock and soon found the footprint of the robber, who had stealthily crept almost as far as the monster's head; and he began to seek eagerly along the ground for the man who had wronged him in his slumber. Hot and angry, he turned round and round the cave, but could perceive no man in the waste. Delighting in thoughts of vengeance, he turned back to the hoard, and sought once more for the missing goblet, but in vain. Mad with wrath, he could hardly wait until the evening came; and when the day had set according to his will, he would wait no longer in his home, but went forth, eager for slaughter, breathing out flame. Such was the beginning of a terrible persecution of the country folk, a feud that ended sorrowfully for the lord of that people.

For the dragon flew swiftly across the land, spewing out coals of fire which burned the fair dwellings of the realm, and caused great distress among the people, because there was no living thing that the loathsome creature would leave unharmed. Far and wide throughout the country was seen the damage that he wrought; all night he worked evil to the folk of the Geats, but ere daylight he darted back to the cavern, where he thought none could come at him to wreak vengeance on him for his hateful deeds.

And at last he grew so bold and rash that he consumed with his fiery breath the king's own palace. Quickly was the disaster made known to Beowulf, and the good man grieved greatly, feeling terrible sorrow. Contrary to his wont, he was also much troubled in mind, thinking that since the dragon was thus permitted to destroy the fair fortress of his people, he must have unwittingly offended against the ancient law of God. Nevertheless, knowing that regret and sorrow could not alone work a cure, he determined to do what he could to avenge the misfortunes of his people on the ruthless foe.

So he commanded that a wonderful buckler should be made for him, wrought all of iron, because he knew well that the ordinary wooden shield, with its metal bosses, would be consumed at once by the fiery breath of the dragon. And he determined to attack him alone, for, being altogether fearless, he scorned to take an army against the enemy; nor did he count the worm's warring for aught. And good reason had he to trust in his own might, if men will but consider what glorious deeds he had already performed; how he had freed the palace of Hrothgar, and had slain Grendel and his mother. And another noble feat did he bring to pass, when he went with Hygelac against the Franks, and the king met his death by the sword. Then Beowulf escaped by swimming in the flood, bearing on his back thirty suits of armour; nor had the Franks any reason to boast of victory, since few returned to seek their homes. And again, after he became king, he had avenged on Onela the death of his cousin Heardred. All these perils and difficulties had he outlived, and though he was now old and grey, and oppressed with age, his heart was as strong and fearless as in the days of the cleansing of Heorot.

Chapter XIII

The Fight with the Dragon

Whoever fights, whoever falls,
Justice conquers evermore;
Justice after as before.
And him who battles on her side,
God, though he were ten times slain.
Crowns him victor glorified,
Victor over death and pain
Forever.

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

Therefore, after he had inquired into the cause of the dragon's persecution, the king of the Geats went to view the lair of the enemy. He took with him eleven companions, as well as the thane who had robbed the hoard of the beaker, and who now went unwillingly and sorrowfully to show the way to the cavern near the sea where all that wealth was hoarded. It was no easy task for any man to go and obtain that treasure.

Then the brave king sat down on the cliff and bade farewell to his thanes. He was filled with sorrow and foreboding, for he felt in some strange way that the days of his life were numbered. And now he began to review all his past years, and to think how it had gone with him, since his grandfather Hrethel took him, a child of seven years old, to bring up in his court. "Well did he treat me," said Beowulf, "giving me treasure and entertainment, nor did he love me less than his own sons, Herebeald, Haethcyn, and Hygelac. The eldest of

these was in unseemly wise slain by his brother Haethcyn, who missed his mark, and laid him low with his battle shaft. That was a loss which could not be made up, a crime for which there was no atonement. And very grievous was it for the aged father, who stood by unable to help while his son became a prey to the ravens. Every fresh day brought to him anew the memory of his loss; full of sorrow, he saw the empty hall, bereft of joy, where lately his beloved child had delighted in the revelry of warriors, the sound of harps and youthful games; all the wide fields and streets seemed desolate and waste. Thus he sorrowed, and at last, overwhelmed with grief, passed away, and was succeeded by Haethcyn, his second son. But he too was slain in war with the Swedes, and then the good King Hygelac ruled the land. He also waged many a mighty war, and I was ever with him, his companion in the van; and in the last fight, when he fell by the hands of the Franks, I slew for his help the standard bearer Daeghraefen."

So he mused, lost in memories of his long life's adventures, and of the many perils he had undergone Now was the last struggle near, when he must attack in its cavern the mighty dragon that had worked so much harm to his people, and he turned again to his men saying:

"I would in no wise bear a sword nor any weapon against the dragon, if I knew how else to perform my vow against him as I did formerly against Grendel. But I know too well the venom of his breath; therefore I will wear upon me both shield and byrnie. I will not retreat a foot's breadth from the foe, but it shall go with us both as God the Creator wills. Await ye here upon the cliff, O armed men, the ending of the fight, to behold which of us may outlive the wounds of battle. Not for you is it, but for me alone, to perform this valorous deed against the monster, and now will I gain boldly the gold hoard or perish in the strife!"

Then the famous warrior arose, and advanced along the cliff, a way that no coward would attempt; he gazed at the

rock, and saw how a stream of water was welling from the archway that led to the cavern, hot from the war-like breath of the enemy; so great indeed was the heat of it that no one could approach it without being burned.

Therefore, filled with wrath against the foe, Beowulf shouted aloud, till his stout challenge resounded beneath the rocky crags, and the guardian of the hoard heard the voice of man from without. Exceeding fierce was he, knowing that it was no longer the time to seek for peace, and he moved to meet the avenger. First there came out of the cliff a terrible smoke, the hot breath of the monster, and the earth echoed with his snorting. Then Beowulf, eager for the strife, raised aloft his buckler and brandished his good sword, strong and sharp of edge. Each of the fighters felt alarm at the sight of the other, as the grisly worm, with curving body, advanced headlong to the fray.

Then the Geatish king, protecting his body with his shield, lifted high his hand and struck at the spotted terror with his mighty sword, so that the edge turned on the hard bone, and served the hero less well than he had need, surrounded as he was with peril. Fiercer and fiercer grew the fiend after that blow; he cast out terrible fire from his nostrils, scattering far and wide the battle flame, and evil was the plight of the old king, whose sword had failed him in his necessity. For a space there was a pause between them, and then once more the fell foes rushed together; the body of the drake heaved with his snorting, and yet again did he encompass the lord of the people with smoke and fire.

Then those thanes of Beowulf, who, if they had acted as befits the companions of a king, should have stood round him and helped him in his distress, were filled with fear, and slipped away to the wood to save their lives. All but one, who saw with shame the cowardice and dishonour of his fellows.

This was Wiglaf, a brave warrior, who mourned much when he saw his lord suffering in that fiery conflict. And he

remembered all the benefits that he had received from him, the good estate and the liberties of the land. Then he could restrain himself no longer, but seized his yellow shield and the ancient sword that had once belonged to Onela, a strong and worthy weapon, as the dragon was soon to prove. And as his fellows ran to the shelter he shouted to them words of angry reproach.

"Well do I remember how when we sat at the banquet drinking mead, when our lord bestowed on us many a precious gift, we vowed that we would repay him well for those, boons if such need as this should ever happen, and he should require our helms and swords. So did he choose us from the host, and desired us to accompany him on this adventure; he called us to glorious deeds, and gave us treasures, because he deemed us worthy warriors and stout men of battle. And though he thought to perform this heroic work alone, because he is more mighty than any man, yet is the day now come when he has need of valorous servants; therefore let us fare to him and help him in the fierce whirl of the flame! God knows that I would rather far that the fiery cloud should clasp me along with my gold-giver, than that we should bear back our bucklers in safety to our homes, unless we have first of all laid low the foe and defended manfully the Geatish king. He merits not that he alone should bear the pain and fall unhelped in the battle; but I will share with him my sword, my byrnie and my shield."

So speaking, he advanced through the tumult of the smoke, bearing his helmet to the assistance of his lord.

"Beloved Beowulf," quoth he then, "be strong in battle, even as in the days of thy youth thou didst vow that thou wouldst never suffer thy glory to grow dim. Now shalt thou work once more a mighty deed and defend thy life. I will help thee as I may!"

No sooner were the words spoken than the furious dragon, flecked with smoke and flame, came out again against

his foe. Swiftly was Wiglaf's wooden shield burned up in the glow, but the young warrior fought on under the shield of his kinsman, and failed not in valorous deed, although his buckler was all consumed.

Then once more Beowulf summoned his strength; mindful of glory, he struck out with his war bill, and drove it into the head of the foe; with that blow the sword broke, so that it was no further use to him. Mad with the wound, the dragon rushed at him for the third time, grasping his neck till he was almost choked and his life blood bubbled forth in streams.

But men say that in that hour of peril the good thane showed forth his might, his strength and cunning; and though his hand was scorched in the fire, he smote the monster lower down, so that his sword dived in its middle, and the flame and smoke began to grow less. And as it abated the king made a desperate rally; he seized the short dagger that he wore in his girdle and cut the worm in twain. Thus they had together felled the fiend and brought about his end.

But this was the last deed of heroism that the king was ever to perform. Gradually the wound that the dragon had given him began to swell and burn, so did the venom of the foe boil in his breast. He moved along the cliff and sat down on a rock, and looked upon the worm's cavern, the work of giants, marvelling how the arches, standing firmly on strong pillars, held it up within. But Wiglaf fetched water, and unloosed his master's helmet, washing the stains of battle from the war-wearied king.

And Beowulf knew that he had reached the end of earthly joys, that the number of his days was made up, and pitiless death was near; so he began to speak and to utter words of farewell.

"Now if any heir had been given me, any son to come after me, I would give to him my armour and war gear. Fifty winters have I ruled this folk, so that no king of neighbouring peoples durst greet me with his army, nor show hostility to me. At

home I awaited what might befall me: I governed well my own; I sought no quarrel, nor swore any oaths unrighteously. For all this will I rejoice, now that I am sick to death, because I go to the Creator innocent of slaughter and the murder of kinsmen. And now that the dragon lies, slain by a sore wound, bereft of his hoard, go lightly, O beloved Wiglaf, to examine the treasure beneath the hoary cliff. Speed thou quickly, that I may look upon that old-time wealth and plainly see the cunningly-wrought gems; so may I afterwards more easily give up my life and the rule which I have held so long."

Chapter XIV
The Death of Beowulf

O good grey head which all men knew,
O voice from which their omens all men drew,
O iron nerve to true occasion true,
O fallen at length that tower of strength
Which stood foursquare to all the winds that blew!
Such was he whom we deplore.
The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.
The great world victor's victor will be seen no more.
— *Lord Tennyson.*

Then Wiglaf quickly obeyed his dying lord, and plunged into the cavern. And as he went along the lair the victorious warrior beheld many a sunny jewel and much glistening gold lying on the floor and piled against the wall; there stood mighty flagons, goblets that had been the delight of men gone by, unpolished and stripped of ornament. Many a helm he saw also, rusty and ancient, many a bright bracelet cunningly twined; beakers and platters and weapons of war. Most wonderful of all, he saw leaning above the hoard a marvellous shining banner, handworked with interlaced gold. So bright was its gleaming that he could see by its light all the floor of the cavern, and plainly scan the magic store. And he bore on his bosom from that dwelling the huge treasures wrought by giants of old; seized as he liked goblets and dishes, and that most beauteous flag; likewise he took with him an iron-edged sword. Then, laden with gems, he hastened back to his master, dreading lest he should find him dead whom he had

left so sorely stricken. But the king still lived, and Wiglaf began again to tend him and to bathe his wounds.

And Beowulf looked on the treasure and began to speak thus concerning it:

"Now will I give thanks to God, to the Eternal Lord, that He has permitted me to see the marvel that now I gaze on — that ere my death-day it was granted to me to win such treasure for my people. But now that for this hoard I have sold my life, and laid it down, supply thou the need of my folk. No longer may I tarry here. And bid the warriors build a barrow for me on the wave-washed cliff, which shall be lifted up for ever as a remembrance to my people; and the seagoers who guide the high-masted ships across the misty waters shall afterwards call it the Mount of Beowulf."

Then the great-hearted king took from his neck his jewelled necklace and gave it to his young thane, together with his gold-decked helmet, his ring and byrnie, bidding him to use them well. "For thou," said he, "art the last of all our kindred. Fate hath swept into the keeping of the Creator all my friends, those valorous earls, and now go I to seek them."

These were the last words of the aged lord ere he bowed to death, and his soul departed to find the judgment of the just.

And now Wiglaf beheld both the foes, who had so lately striven together, lying dead. Sorely did he grieve to see his dear lord prone on the ground, wounded past help. And there also lay his slayer the loathsome terror, reft of life and overcome in the battle; no longer might he have power over the jewel hoard, for the sharp swords had wrought him woe, so that he should fly no longer at night time over the land. Few men have ever lived bold enough to attack him or to dare disturb him in his lair; and Beowulf himself had paid for the treasure with his life.

Then in a little while those ten cowardly thanes who had not ventured to help their lord in his dire need with the flight

of their arrows, quitted the wood, and came shamefully back to where the dead hero was lying. They looked on Wiglaf as he sat there wearied, the foot champion close to Beowulf's shoulder, still bathing the face of his master with water; all in vain, for it availed nothing, nor, however much he desired it, could the good thane hold back his king's fleeting life or turn aside the decree of the Almighty. But he looked angrily at the dastards and fiercely rebuked them for their disloyalty.

"Lo! Well may those say who tell the truth, that the lord who gave you treasures, yea, the very armour that now ye stand in, who continually was bestowing helms and byrnies at the banquet, erred greatly in his giving when he cast away on you this war gear. For little cause had he to be proud of his comrades-in-arms when the strife overtook him. However, God permitted him to avenge himself alone with his dagger; small help could I give in the conflict, though I smote the worm with my sword so that the heat of the fire grew less. Too few warriors thronged round the prince in the stress of the battle tide. Now ye shall enjoy no more, nor shall any of your kindred, the getting of treasure, nor giving of swords, nor bliss of your heritage. Even of the rights of citizenship shall ye be deprived, when once the nobles shall hear far and wide of your shameful flight and disgraceful deed. Death itself is far better for every man than a life of dishonour."

Then he commanded that the news of the battle should be announced to the people who were awaiting on the shore the result of the fight. They had sat there all morning, sad at heart, expecting one of two things — either the return of their lord or the ending of his days. And the messenger rode along the cliff, making no secret of what had happened, but telling the tidings to all the host.

"Now lies the joy-giver, the lord of the Geats, fast on his deathbed, slain by the drake; but by his side slumbers his enemy, quelled by the dagger; for he could in no way wound with his sword the horrid monster. Wiglaf, the son of

Weohstan, sits yet by Beowulf, near his dead lord; the great-hearted warrior still keeps guard over friend and foe."

Then he reminded the people of all the great deeds of the departed hero; of the many wars he had undertaken, especially against the Franks and the Swedes; and now there was cause to fear that the foes would renew their strife, when they heard that he who had hitherto guarded the realm so manfully against the enemy was dead at last.

"And now," he ended, "we had best make haste to go and see our king, and bring the ring giver to the funeral pile. And with him shall be burnt no solitary treasure, but much of the countless hoard of gold that has been bought so dear shall now be wasted by the flame and covered with fire; no one shall carry off a single gem in remembrance, nor shall any fair maiden wear the jewelled ornament on her neck, now that the host leader hath ceased from laughter, from sport and social mirth. War shall arise, and many a cold morning shall the spear, clasped in the hand, be lifted aloft; and the sound of the harp shall no longer awaken the warriors; but the wan raven, rejoicing in the prey, shall tell to the eagle how he fared in the feasting, when with the wolf he despoiled the slain."

Thus spoke the messenger, and all the war band arose and went sadly beneath the Eagle cliff, with welling tears, to look upon the marvel. They found then, stretched on the sand, their dear lord, who had so often given them many a boon in bygone times; his last day had come, and he had died in wondrous wise. Also they saw a stranger sight — the dragon lying opposite him, a terrible monster scorched with fire, full fifty feet in length. All round him lay beakers and bowls, dishes and jewelled swords eaten away by rust, as if they had been in the earth a thousand years; for that pile of treasure was all encircled with spells, so that none might touch it save him whom God thought fit to open the hoard. And those who had hidden the wealth there had cursed it till doomsday, saying that the man who plundered it should be condemned for ever

to dwell in the regions of evil spirits, fast in hell bonds, branded with crime. Beowulf, however, had not sought it with greed, but for the defence of his people; and though he did not himself know that this would cause his death, yet would he willingly have departed sooner into the merciful keeping of the Creator.

And now Wiglaf addressed the assembled people, saying:

"Often must many men suffer punishment for the crime of one alone, even as now it has happened to us, who have lost our lord through the theft of one man. We could not by any means persuade our king not to attack the gold warden, nor to let him lie where he had been so long, and guard the den till the end of time. A heavy fate befell us; the treasure is revealed and gained by a sorrowful conflict; hard was the lot that drew thither our king. After the way to the cavern had been opened up, I entered in and saw all the treasures of the hall. Hastily went I and seized in my hands the mighty burden of ancient jewels, and bore it out again to my lord. Then he was still living, wise and prudent. And he spake many things in his sorrow, and bade me give you a message, commanding that ye should make for him a great and mighty barrow on the place of his burning.

"Now let us hasten to seek and to view again the heap of treasure, the marvel beneath the cliff; I will guide you thither, that ye may see closely the jewels and the gold. Let the bier be made ready by the time of our return, and carry our dear lord to the place where he shall long abide in the keeping of the Creator."

Then he commanded that many men should carry the fuel from afar towards the body of the dead. "Now shall the coal and the leaping flame consume the strong warrior, who so often experienced the shower of barbs and the storm of darts, sent forth from the string above the wall of shields; when the shaft did its work, and, winged with feathers, followed the arrow."

And Wiglaf chose from the throng seven together of the best of the king's thanes, and went with them into the cave, bearing in his hand a lighted torch. They had no thought of drawing lots for the wealth that they saw lying unguarded in the lair, but they made haste to carry it out on to the shore. And then they shoved the dragon over the sea cliff, and let the wave bear him away and the flood overwhelm the guardian of the hoard. But the great heap of countless jewels was piled on a waggon, and the body of the dead king was borne to the Whale cliff.

Then they prepared for him, as he had desired them, a strong funeral pile, hung round with helmets and shields and bright byrnies, and in the midst they laid their beloved lord. Then they began to kindle a mighty death-fire upon the hill; the smoke ascended dark above the glow of the cinders, the roar of the flame mingled with the sound of weeping, while the rush of the wind grew calm. And as the body wasted away, they lamented sorrowfully the death of their chief; and an ancient woman, with hair all unbound, chanted a mournful lay for Beowulf, prophesying slaughter and bondage of the people now that their protector lay lifeless on the pile.

Then the Geatish people made a barrow on the cliff, both high and broad, easily seen from afar by the seafarers; and in ten days they had finished the monument to their dead hero, encompassing his ashes with a mound as best they could devise. And they put in the tomb as many of the rings and treasures as were left from the burning; they let the earth-grot hold in its bosom that wealth of ancient men; and there it still remains, as useless as ever it was before. Afterwards twelve warriors of noble birth rode round the mound, proclaiming their sorrow, mourning the king; many a lay they made concerning the prince; they spoke of his courage and praised his brave deeds, even as it befits a thane to honour his lord, and to remember him lovingly when he has passed away.

So the folk of the Geats mourned the fall of their

chieftain; they said he was of all kings on earth most gracious to men, kindest to his people, gentlest to the nation, and most worthy of praise.

References

Warren, Maude Radford. 1905. *King Arthur and his knights.* Chicago; Rand, McNally & company.

Greene, Frances Nimmo. 1901. *Legends of King Arthur and his court.* Boston; London, Ginn & Co.

Thomson, Clara Linklater. 1899. *The adventures of Beowulf.* London; H. Marshall