

TALES OF THE
ROUND TABLE



Etta M. Chant
on her 9th birthday
from Aunt Margaret.



TALES OF THE ROUND TABLE

*BASED ON THE TALES IN THE
BOOK OF ROMANCE EDITED BY
ANDREW LANG*

WITH 4 COLOURED PLATES AND 21 OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

By H. J. FORD

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

NEW YORK AND BOMBAY

1903

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THE DRAWING OF THE SWORD

PART I

LONG, long ago, after Uther Pendragon died, there was no King in Britain, and every Knight hoped to seize the crown for himself. The country was likely to fare ill when laws were broken on every side, when the corn which was to give the poor bread was trodden underfoot, and there was no one to bring the evildoer to justice.

When things were at their worst forth came Merlin the magician, and fast rode he to the place where the Archbishop of Canterbury dwelt. They took counsel together, and agreed that all the lords and gentlemen of Britain should ride to London on Christmas Day, and meet in the Great Church. So this was done.

On Christmas morning, as they left the church, they saw in the churchyard a large stone, and on it a bar of steel, and in the steel a naked

sword, and about it was written in letters of gold, "Whoso pulleth out this sword is by right of birth King of England".

They marvelled at these words, and called for the Archbishop, and brought him to the place where the stone stood. Then those Knights who fain would be King tugged at the sword with all their might; but it did not stir.

The Archbishop watched them in silence, and when they were faint from pulling he said: "The man who shall lift out that sword is not here, nor do I know where to find him. This is my counsel, therefore, that two Knights be chosen, good and true men, to keep guard over the sword, until some one comes who can draw it forth."

This was done. But the lords and gentlemen-at-arms cried out that every man had a right to try to win the sword, and they decided that on New Year's Day a tournament should be held, and that any Knight who wished might enter the lists.

So on New Year's Day the Knights, according to custom, went to hear service in the Great Church, and when this was over they met in the field to make ready for the tourney. Among them was a brave Knight called Sir Ector, who

brought with him Sir Kay, his son, and Arthur, Kay's foster-brother.

Now Kay had unbuckled his sword the evening before, and in his haste to be at the tourney had forgotten to put it on again, and he begged Arthur to ride back and fetch it for him. So Arthur set out, and when he reached the house, found that the door was locked, for the women had gone out to see the tourney, and though he tried his best to get in he could not.

He rode away greatly vexed, and said to himself, "Kay shall not be without a sword this day, I will take that sword in the churchyard, and give it to him". He galloped fast till he reached the gate of the churchyard. Here he jumped down, tied his horse to a tree, and running up to the stone, seized the handle of the sword, and drew it out; he then mounted his horse again, and delivered the sword to Sir Kay.

The moment Sir Kay saw the sword he knew it was not his own, but the sword of the stone, and he sought out his father, Sir Ector, and said to him, "Sir, this is the sword of the stone, therefore I am the rightful King". Sir Ector made no answer, but signed to Kay and Arthur to

follow him, and they all three went back to the church.

THE DRAWING OF THE SWORD

PART II

LEAVING their horses outside, the two Knights and Arthur entered the church, and walked into the choir. There, upon a holy book, Sir Ector bade Sir Kay swear how he came by the sword.

“My brother Arthur gave it to me,” said Sir Kay.

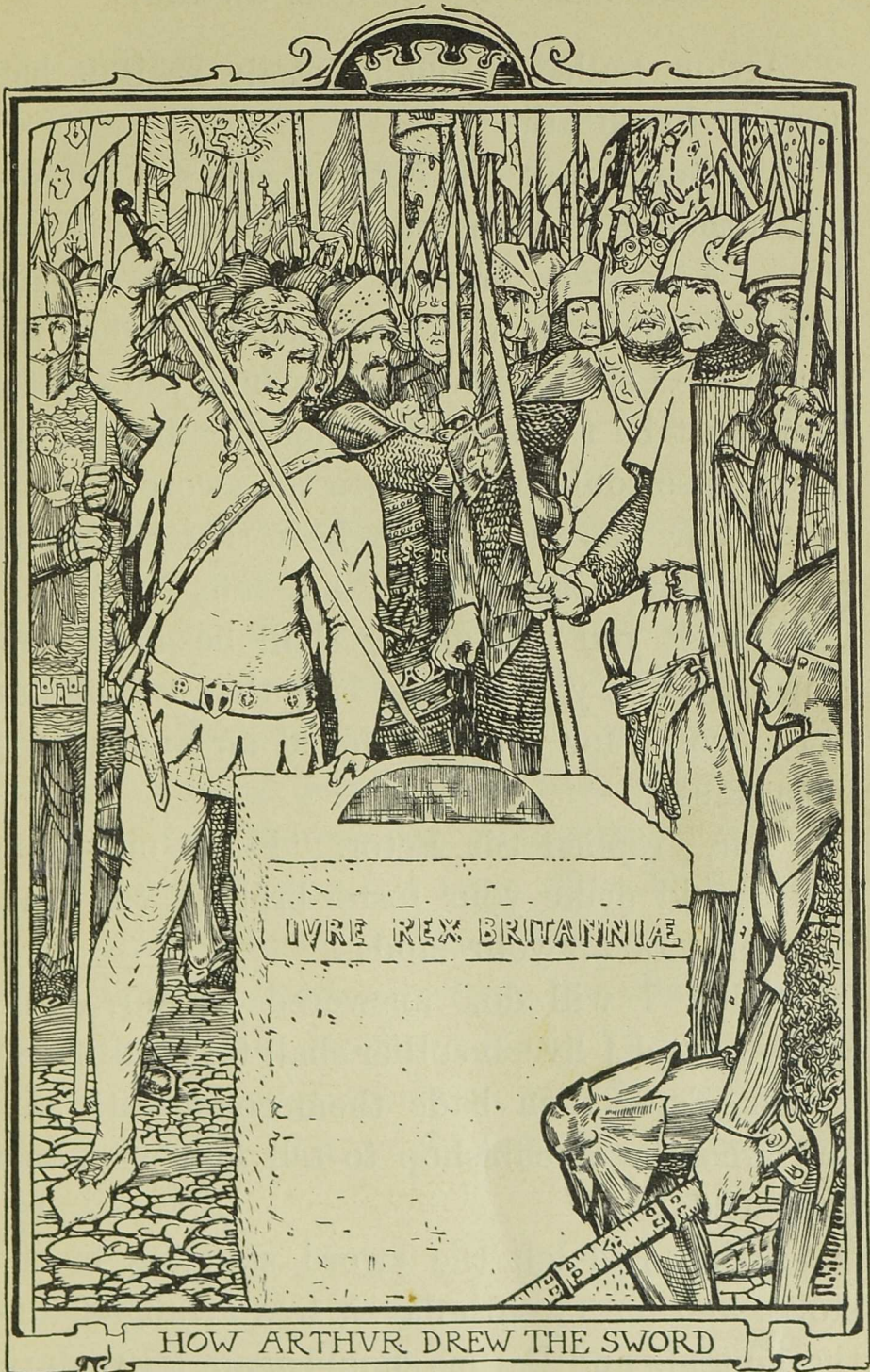
“How did you come by it?” asked Sir Ector, turning to Arthur.

Arthur described the manner in which he had drawn it from the stone.

“Were any Knights present when you did this?” asked Sir Ector.

“None,” replied Arthur.

“By drawing that sword,” said Sir Kay, “you have proved yourself to be the rightful King of this land, for, the sword being enchanted, no other man could have drawn it. Put the sword back again into the stone, and we will see you draw it forth.”



HOW ARTHUR DREW THE SWORD

Arthur pulled it out as easily as if it had been in its sheath.

“Arthur,” said Sir Ector, “you are not my son, although I have brought you up as if you were. You were brought to me when a baby by Merlin himself, who promised that when the time came I should know from whom you sprang. You must be the son of Uther Pendragon, for no one else could have drawn the sword.”

Arthur was grieved to hear that Sir Ector was not his father. “If I am King,” he said, “ask what you will and it shall be given you. I owe more to you and my lady than to any one in the world, for you have loved me and treated me as a son.”

“Sir,” replied Sir Ector, “I ask only that you should make your foster-brother, Sir Kay, Seneschal of all your lands.”

“That I will do,” answered Arthur, “and while he and I live, no other shall fill that office.”

Sir Ector then bade them come with him and seek the Archbishop to tell him what had happened.

Arthur had left the sword standing in the stone, and on Twelfth-day it was arranged that the Knights and Barons should again try to draw

the sword. None could draw it, and when the Barons saw Arthur do what no one else could do, they vowed that they would never allow him to be King, a boy whose blood was no better than their own.

It was agreed to repeat the test at Candlemas, when more Knights would be present, and meanwhile the sword was to be carefully guarded.

At Candlemas the same thing happened, and at Easter also. When Pentecost came, the common people were present, and saw Arthur draw the sword. They cried with one voice that he should be their King, and no other Knight having been able to pass the test, they all had to acknowledge Arthur as their King.

Rich and poor fell upon their knees before him, and Arthur took the sword, and before the Archbishop, offered it upon the altar, and the best man there knighted him. The crown was then placed upon his head, and he swore to be a true King, and to do justice all the days of his life.

THE STORY OF SIR BALIN

PART I

IN those days many Kings reigned in England, and they were constantly waging war upon one another. Arthur, hearing that his country was being ravaged by Ryons, King of North Wales, called all his Knights and gentlemen-at-arms to Camelot, there to hold a council.

When they had assembled, and the town was filled with armed men and horses, a damsel rode into Camelot with a message from the Lady Lile of Avelion.

She asked to be led before King Arthur, and when in his presence, she allowed her fur cloak to slip from her shoulders, thus displaying a richly wrought sword buckled at her side.

“Why do you wear this sword, damsel?” asked King Arthur, “it is not an ornament for a woman.”

“I would that I could find a Knight to rid me of the burden,” she replied, “for its weight is intolerable to me. The man who can deliver me from it must be mighty of deeds and pure of heart, for no other can draw the sword from its

sheath. The Knights of King Ryons' Court have each tried and failed."

"Let me try," said Arthur, "not that I pretend to be the best Knight, but it is meet that I should try first." The King took the sword by the hilt and pulled with all his strength, but the sword held fast.

"Sir," said the damsel, "there is no need to pull so hard to draw the sword, which, if it is to be drawn at all, will come with little trouble."

"I cannot draw it," said Arthur, "and now it is for my Knights to try."

"Alas! alas!" cried the damsel, when each Knight had tried without success, "if there are no Knights in this Court both true of heart and blameless, then I know not where to go."

Now at this time there chanced to be at Arthur's Court a poor Knight, who had been kept a prisoner for a year and a half because he had slain the King's cousin.

He was of high birth, and his name was Sir Balin. Having but recently been set free, Balin stood apart and watched the others try to draw the maiden's sword. His heart beat fast when his turn came to try, and he shrank from performing the duty because he was meanly dressed.

The damsel had bidden the King and his Court farewell, and was setting out on her homeward journey, when Balin called to her, and begged that in spite of the meanness of his dress she would allow him the privilege of trying to draw the sword.

“Sir,” replied the damsel, “fine clothes do not make fine deeds, therefore try I pray you.” The Knights, who had walked up while Balin had been speaking to the damsel, then saw the sword glide from its sheath by the damsel’s side and held in Balin’s hand.

“In truth,” said the damsel, “this is the best Knight that I have ever found ; but, Sir, I pray you, give me the sword.”

“No,” said Balin, “I pray you let me keep it.”

“It is for your own sake that I ask for it,” replied the damsel, “for if you keep that sword you will with it kill the man you love best, and it will bring about your own ruin.”

“I will take what befalls me,” said Balin, “but I pray you let me keep the sword.”

The damsel left in great sorrow, and the next day Sir Balin armed with his new sword rode away in search of adventures.

He was the victor of every fight he entered in, and won such renown that he became known as Sir Balin le Savage, the Knight of the two swords.

THE STORY OF SIR BALIN

PART II

ONE day he was riding forth when at the turning of a road he saw a cross, upon which was written in letters of gold, "Let no Knight ride towards this castle".

Sir Balin was still reading the writing when there came towards him an old man with white hair, who said, "Sir Balin le Savage, this is not the way for you, so turn again and choose some other path". The old man vanished, and a horn blew loudly, as a horn is blown at the death of a beast. "That blast," said Balin, "is for me, but I am still alive," and he rode to the castle, and was met and welcomed by a number of Knights and ladies.

When they had feasted, the lady of the castle said to him, "Knight with the two swords, it is our wish that you fight the Knight who guards yonder island. According to our

law, we can permit no man to leave this castle until he has fought before us."

"That is a bad custom," replied Balin, "and my horse is weary, still I should be unwilling to depart without gratifying your wish."

"Sir," said a Knight to him, "your shield does not look strong; I will lend you another."

Sir Balin took the proffered shield, and led his horse to the shore, whence they were ferried across to the island.

The boat had no sooner grounded upon the farther shore, than a maiden came running towards him and cried, "O Knight Balin, why have you left your own shield behind? How can you be known if you carry another's shield?"

"I truly regret having left my own shield behind," said Balin, "and I regret having come to this country at all, but for very shame I must go on."

He then examined his shield and armour, and mounted his horse.

After riding a short distance towards a castle that stood upon the island, he perceived a Knight, clothed in red, and riding a horse with red trappings, coming towards him.

The Red Knight looked at Balin, and noticed



The Damsel Warns Sir Balm.

that he carried two swords. "There is only one Knight that carries two swords," thought he, "yet it cannot be Balin for that is not his shield."

They rode at each other with their spears in rest, and were so evenly matched that they bore one another to the ground, where they lay unconscious for some minutes. As soon as they had recovered their senses, each Knight rose, and such a fight began that all beholders were filled with dread lest either of the gallant Knights should be killed, so valiantly did they fight.

At last the place was red with their blood, seven great rents in the armour of each displaying the wounds beneath.

"What Knight are you?" asked Sir Balin le Savage, leaning upon his sword.

"My name," said the other, "is Balan, and I am a brother of the good Knight Balin."

"O unhappy day!" cried Balin, and he fell fainting to the ground. Balan pulled off his brother's helmet so that the fresh air might revive him.

"Woe is me!" said Balin, opening his eyes. "All this has been wrought by the Knight who



The Death of Balin and Balan

gave me his shield in exchange for my own. If I could live I would destroy that unhappy castle, and the Knight whose treachery has brought me to this."

"Alas! brother," said Balan, "had you killed me it would only have been to make yourself a captive, for I have been forced to guard this castle ever since I slew the Knight who kept it before me."

The lady of the castle and her companions then came forward and made great moan over the dying Knights. Balan begged her to bury them side by side where they lay, and this she promised to do, weeping with her ladies as she gave the promise.

The Knights died, and the lady placed a tomb over their grave, and upon it she wrote Balan's name only, for she did not know the name of the other Knight.

But Merlin knew, and the next morning he wrote Balin's name upon the tomb also. Then he unscrewed the pommel of Balin's sword, and screwing another pommel on it, bade the Knight who was with him handle it. The Knight could not, and Merlin said, "No man but the best man in the world shall handle that sword, and he will



1901 LANCELOT AT THE CHAPEL HJDFORD

be either Sir Lancelot or his son Sir Galahad. With that sword also Sir Lancelot will slay the man he loves best, and his name is Sir Gawaine."

He wrote these words on the pommel of the sword.

He then made a bridge of steel to the island, six inches in breadth, over which no man who was guilty of any evil deed could pass.

The scabbard of the sword he left on that side of the island, so that Sir Galahad should find it. The sword itself he put in a magic stone which floated down the stream to Camelot. And the same day Galahad found the scabbard, and riding to Camelot he spied the stone and drew the sword from it.

THE QUESTING BEAST

PART I

KING ARTHUR fought and won many a battle before he was acknowledged by the other Kings of the country to be lord of them all.

Many times the course he pursued was that directed by Merlin the magician, without whose

advice King Arthur would not have succeeded in his object. By means of his sword Excalibur he won a fame for invincibility, although, in obedience to Merlin's orders, he never drew it until things were going ill with him.

It was this sword Excalibur which had been given to him by the Lady of the Lake. Riding with Merlin one night, Arthur came to a lake, and from the middle he beheld an arm upraised, holding aloft a sword.

"Look!" said Merlin, "that is the sword of which I told you."

The King looked again; across the surface of the water he saw a maiden moving towards him. "Maiden," said he, "I pray you tell me whose sword that is out in the lake yonder."

"That sword is mine," the maiden answered, "and I will give it to you if in return you will make me a gift when I ask it of you."

"By my faith," said the King, "I will give you whatever you ask."

King Arthur and Merlin rowed to the sword in a barge that floated by the shore, and when it was taken by the handle the arm disappeared, and they rowed back to the land bearing the sword and the scabbard that belonged to it.

The virtue of this sword lay in its brightness. When wielded in combat it dazzled the eyes of the foe, and the scabbard, when buckled about the King, rendered him unassailable, for its magic power prevented him from losing blood however sorely he might be wounded.

Attracted by the successes that attended him in whatsoever he attempted, many Knights flocked to King Arthur's standard. Among them was Sir Ban, King of Gaul, who remained ever his steadfast friend.

It was in one of the wars in which at that time King Arthur was continually engaged, in company with King Ban and Sir Bors, that he met Guenevere, the daughter of the King of Cameliard, the lady whom he afterwards married.

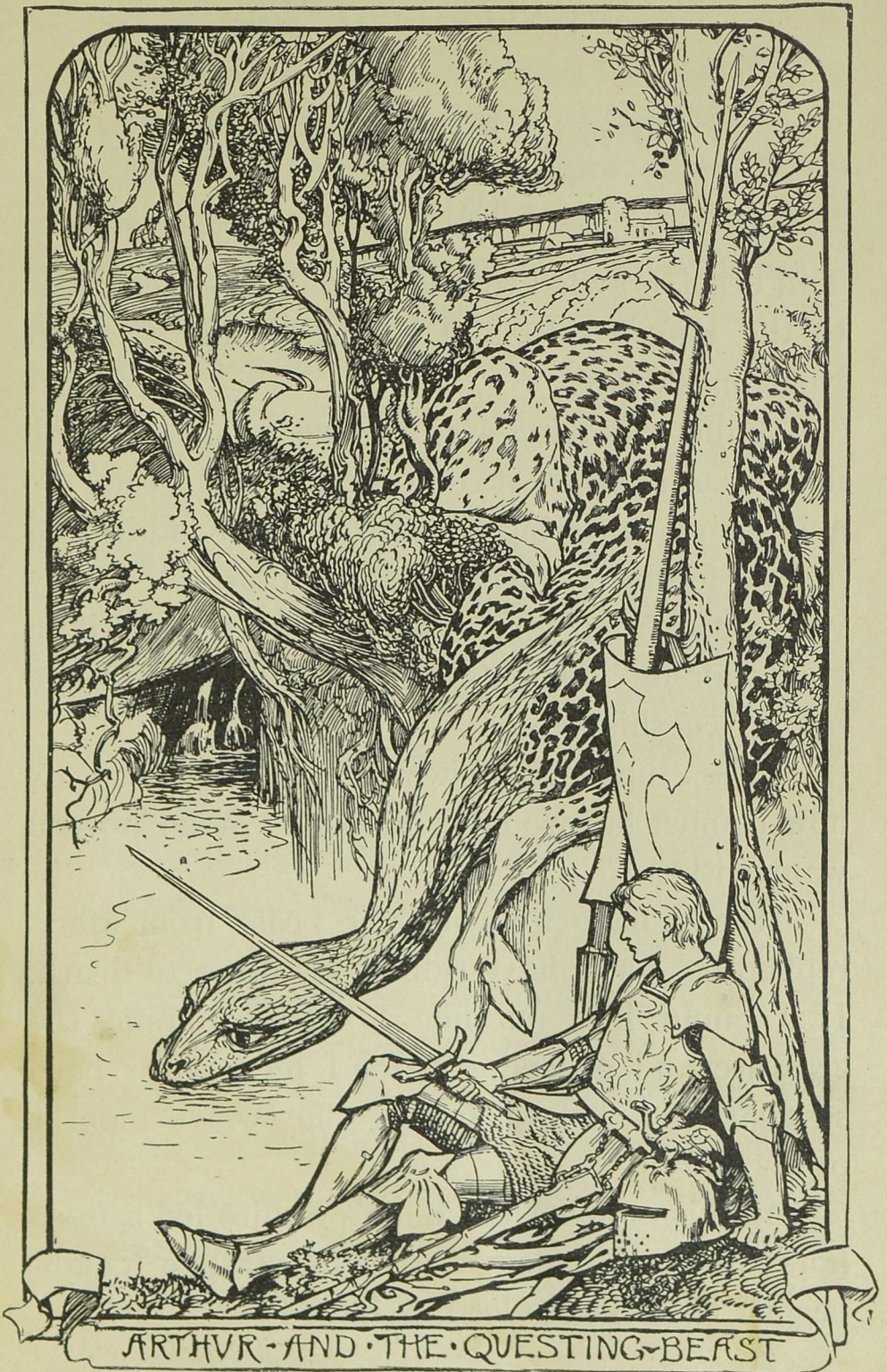
Having parted with King Ban and Sir Bors, who departed for a while to their own countries, the King went to Carlion, a town on the river Usk, where he dreamed a strange dream.

Throughout the night he wandered over his country, which was overrun with gryphons and serpents slaying and eating his people. He attacked the monsters, and, after many fearful

contests, killed the last, although sorely wounded himself.

He woke from his dream with the memory of the ugly creatures in his mind, and to shake it off he summoned his Knights to hunt with him, and they rode fast for the forest. The King spied a hart crossing his path, and giving chase, he soon lost his companions. The chase was a long one; the hart still went as fast as ever, and at last the King's horse fell dead beneath him.

He sat under a tree and rested, and presently he heard the baying of hounds sounding in the woods. The noise was so great that he fancied it must be a full pack, though what pack hunted that neighbourhood he did not know. He raised his head to look for the leading hound, and crawling towards him he saw a strange beast, making by itself the noise of a pack of hounds.



ARTHUR AND THE QUESTING-BEAST

THE QUESTING BEAST

PART II

THE beast crawled to the edge of the well close to the King's side, and having drunk its fill it went on its way.

While the King was conjecturing as to the manner of creature it could be, a Knight rode up, and seeing the King beneath the tree, addressed him as follows: "Knight of meditations, I pray you rouse from your sleepiness to tell me if in your wakeful moments, you have seen a strange beast pass this way".

"Yes, indeed," answered Arthur, "and by now it must be two miles distant. What do you want with it?"

"Sir, I have followed the beast from afar," replied he, "and have ridden my horse to death. If I could find another I would pursue the creature and overtake it, for I have never been so near to it before, during the twelve months of my search."

At this moment the King's Squire led a fresh horse up for his master, and the strange Knight begged the King to let him have it.

“Sir Knight,” said the King, “let me follow the quest for you ; the adventure pleases me.”

“Ah fool !” replied the Knight, whose name was Sir Pellinore, “it would be in vain, for none can slay the beast except me or my next of kin ;” and without more words he sprang into the saddle and rode a little way off. “You may take my horse by trickery ;” cried the King, “but I should like to prove to you that I am the better Knight.”

“When you want me,” answered the Knight, “come to this spring ; here you will always find me,” and spurring his horse he galloped away. The King watched him out of sight, and then bade his Squire bring him another horse as quickly as he could.

The Squire would have some way to go, and the King sat himself down again beneath the tree to await his return. The silence of the woods around, and the babbling of a brook that made its way down the hillside near by, soothed the King into his former drowsiness, and from meditation he fell into sleep. From the shadows of the woods a boy stole out, walked to the sleeping King, and having carefully taken stock of him, returned to the woods.

Presently he walked to the King again, and the King woke from his sleep.

“You have been very thoughtful,” said the boy, “and for some reason. It was truly a wonderful beast that passed you a few hours ago. It was unfortunate, too, that Sir Pellinore should have taken your horse by trickery, for he would not have won it in fair fight. It is folly, however, to let the mind dwell on matters of small moment, however irritating they may be.”

The King was amazed at the temerity displayed by the youth in addressing him in this way, and at the knowledge of his own thoughts and actions possessed by him.

“I know all your thoughts,” continued the boy, “and that Uther Pendragon was your father, and your mother was the Lady Igraine.”

“How can you have this knowledge, boy?” said Arthur angrily, but the boy answered, “I know your history better than any man living, and I know how you will die, and can detail the manner of death that awaits you.” The boy at this point walked away again.

Presently an old man came to the well and sat down to rest.

“What makes you so sad?” said he to the King.

“I may well be sad,” replied Arthur, “there is plenty to make me so. The responsibilities of a crown are heavier than many imagine. A boy just now told me things which he had no business to know, the names of my father and mother being one of them.”

“He told you the truth,” said the old man, “and he could have told you many things more had he been minded to do so. He could have told you that your sister would have a child, Mordred by name, who would some day destroy you and all your Knights.”

“Who are you?” asked Arthur, in a wondering voice.

“I am Merlin, and it was I who came to you in the likeness of a boy. I know all things; how you will die a noble death, receiving your death wound surrounded by your fallen Knights. My end, on the other hand, will be shameful, for I shall be buried alive.”

There was no time then to say more, for the Squire returned leading a horse, and the King mounted and rode fast to Carlion.

HOW MORGAN LE FAY TRIED TO KILL KING ARTHUR

PART I

KING Arthur's sister, Morgan le Fay, was skilled in magic of all kinds. She bore her brother a grudge because he had slain in battle the Knight she loved, and she determined to have revenge as soon as an opportunity occurred. In order that suspicion should not be aroused, she always kept a smiling face, and no one guessed the deep passion within her heart.

One day Morgan le Fay asked Queen Guenevere for leave to go into the country. The Queen wished her to wait until King Arthur returned to the Court, but Morgan le Fay represented that the news she had received was so bad she could not wait, and the Queen allowed her to depart without delay.

Early next morning she mounted her horse, and rode all day and night without drawing rein.

At noon of the following day she reached the Abbey in which King Arthur was resting. He had fought a hard battle, and having had

little rest for three nights he was sleeping soundly.

“Do not wake him,” said Morgan le Fay, who by her magic knew that she would find him at this Abbey tired out. “I will rouse him myself when I think he has slept long enough, meanwhile I will sit by his bedside.”

The nuns dared not refuse her, so Morgan le Fay went straight to the room in which King Arthur lay, grasping in his hand the sword Excalibur.

Now Morgan le Fay had determined to steal the sword. She was much dismayed to find that she could not do this without waking the King, and she knew that if he woke and found her with the sword she was a dead woman. She therefore had to content herself with the scabbard, and hiding it under her cloak she mounted her horse and rode away.

As soon as the King awoke, he noticed that the scabbard was not in its place, and he asked the nuns angrily where it had gone.

The nuns replied that his sister Morgan le Fay must have taken it with her under her mantle.

“Alas!” said King Arthur, “you have indeed watched me badly.”

“Sir,” they replied, “we dared not disobey your sister when she wished to enter your room.”

“Saddle the best horse that can be found,” said the King, “and bid Sir Ontzlake find another and make ready to ride with me.”

Together the two rode away from the Abbey, and stopped only to ask a cowherd if he had seen a lady pass that way.

“Yes,” said the cowherd, “a lady passed by here, with forty horse behind her, and they rode into the forest yonder.”

They rode on until at last King Arthur saw Morgan le Fay and her company riding ahead through the forest. She looked back, and when she saw that she was being overtaken, she rode into a lake that lay in the plain at the edge of the forest. Into the lake she threw the scabbard, crying, “Whatever betides, my brother shall not have this,” and being heavy with gold and jewels it sank to the bottom.

Then she fled into a valley in which great stones were strewn about, and there she turned herself and her men and horses into blocks of marble.



MORGAN LE FAY CASTS AWAY THE SCABBARD

The King had almost overtaken her, and when he rode up and found that she and her company had disappeared, he thought that some evil had befallen her on account of her misdeeds, and set about searching for the scabbard.

High and low he sought for it, but being unable to find it, he returned to the Abbey.

As soon as the King had gone, Morgan le Fay turned herself, her men, and her horses into their proper shapes again, and with them she rode to the country of Gore, the towns and castles of which she strengthened, for she greatly feared King Arthur.

HOW MORGAN LE FAY TRIED TO KILL KING ARTHUR

PART II

WHILE Morgan le Fay was strengthening her castles, and making all preparations to repel the invasion she expected King Arthur would make of her territory, he had rested at the Abbey and had then returned to the Court at Camelot. He told the Queen of the adventures he had met with, how Morgan le Fay had stolen his scabbard,

and she rejoiced to have him safely back again. The Court declared that Morgan le Fay deserved to be burnt for her treason, their opinion being that she had intended to kill the King. It happened that one morning a damsel arrived at the Court of King Arthur, and she brought a message from Morgan le Fay, praying him to accept a mantle covered with precious stones as a gift, and begging him to forgive her in whatever she might have offended him.

The Knights of the Court were all present, and the present being a magnificent one, they were inclined to believe in the genuineness of Morgan le Fay's message of peace. The King was thoughtful, evidently turning the matter over in his mind, and seeking for some motive in this sudden repentance of his sister. The mantle pleased him, however; he could see no reason for suspecting treachery, and he was about to throw it over his shoulders when the Lady of the Lake stepped forward and begged a word with him in private.

"What do you wish to say?" asked the King, "speak here and fear nothing."

"It is merely advice I have to offer," said the lady. "Do not put this mantle on, Sir, or

allow your Knights to put it on, until the messenger has worn it in your presence."

"Your words are wise," answered the King. "I will act on the suggestion!" Turning to the maid who had brought the present, he said, "Damsel, I desire you to put on the mantle you have brought me so that I may see it, and catch fully the effect of the wonderful jewels that adorn it".

"Sir," she replied, "it does not become me, a poor maid, to wear a garment designed for a King."

"By my head," cried King Arthur, "you shall wear it before I put it on my back, or on the back of any of my Knights."

Then the maiden wept, and fell on her knees before the King, entreating him not to force her to put it on her shoulders.

The King refused to listen to her.

She threw herself upon the ground in an agony of fear and implored the King to have mercy upon her. He was inexorable. "You would have had me put it on," he said, "and if it has harmful properties which you know of, then you deserve to suffer from them." He signed to the Knights standing near her to put

the mantle upon her, and no sooner had it touched her than she was burnt into ashes, which lay in a heap upon the floor.

The King was filled with anger at the unnatural act of his sister, and regretted that she herself had not suffered the penalty of her treachery.

HOW THE ROUND TABLE BEGAN

WHEN King Arthur had fought and conquered many of his enemies, he asked Merlin one day if he would advise him to take a wife.

“Is there any woman you love better than another?” asked Merlin.

“Yes,” replied King Arthur, “the fairest and best woman in the world I believe to be Guenevere, the daughter of Leodegrance, King of Cameliard. In her father’s house stands the Round Table which my father gave to him.”

“Then, Sir,” said Merlin, “your mind being already made up, I know my advice will be useless, otherwise I should say that I could find you a better and as fair a wife as she.” Merlin,

however, suggested that he should take a good company of Knights, and ride to the Court of King Leodegrance to tell him that King Arthur desired to wed his daughter. To this Arthur gladly assented, and Merlin rode for Cameliard.

Leodegrance was overjoyed at the honour paid to him. "As for lands to endow my daughter with," he said, "I would give whatever King Arthur chooses; but he has lands enough, so I will give him instead the Round Table, which was the gift of Uther Pendragon, his father.

"It will seat one hundred and fifty Knights, and of that number I lack fifty, what with wars and sickness, so may-be King Arthur will accept that with my daughter."

When King Arthur heard the message conveyed by Merlin, he was filled with joy, and said to those around him, "The news is very welcome, for I have long loved this fair lady, and the Round Table is dearer to me than great riches".

He then ordered Sir Lancelot to ride and fetch Guenevere, and preparations were made for the marriage.

Invitations were sent round the land, for King Arthur was anxious that all his Knights should be present at his wedding.

When the day arrived, however, no more than twenty-eight Knights were there. With these Arthur was obliged to be content, and he bade the Bishop of Canterbury bless the chairs placed by the Round Table, and the Knights took their seats in them.

“Fair Sirs,” said Merlin, when the Bishop had finished his blessing, “rise and pay homage to your King.”

The Knights rose, and in every seat, written in letters of gold, appeared the name of the Knight who had occupied it. Young Gawaine, the King’s nephew, then prayed King Arthur to knight him on the day of the wedding, and the King had just promised to do this when a poor man entered the courtyard, bringing with him a youth mounted upon a mare. The man drew near, and bowed low before the King. “I have heard it said, my lord,” said he, “that at the time of your marriage you would grant any man the boon he craved.”

“That is true,” replied the King, “provided the boon will injure neither my subjects nor my Kingdom.”

“I thank you for your gracious words,” said the man; “the boon I crave is that you will make a Knight of my son, who desires it above all things. Each day he beseeches me to bring him to you, and while his thirteen brothers are tending the cattle, he employs his time in watching tourneys and casting darts.”

“What is your name?” said the King to the young man.

“Sir, my name is Tor.”

“Where is your sword?”

“It is here, my lord.”

Tor fell on his knees, and, holding out his sword to the King, prayed that he might be made a Knight of the Round Table.

“A Knight I make you,” said King Arthur, touching him upon the neck with the sword, “and if you prove yourself worthy, you shall be a Knight of the Round Table.”

The next day King Arthur also knighted Gawaine as he had promised.

THE DEATH OF MERLIN

SIR TOR before long proved by his gallant deeds that he was worthy of a seat at the Round Table. He and many other Knights went out to seek adventures, and one of them, Sir Pellinore, brought back a damsel to King Arthur's Court.

Merlin saw her, and fell so deeply in love with her that when out of her company he grew morose and dissatisfied with everything about him.

The damsel, who out of respect for his grey hairs should have desisted, led Merlin on, laughing at him in secret. The Wizard, though aware of his folly, was powerless to check it, and feeling that before long some evil would befall him, warned King Arthur above all things to guard his sword Excalibur, foretelling that this sword and its scabbard would some day be stolen by a woman he trusted.

"You will sorely miss my counsel when I am dead," added Merlin.

"Since you know what will happen to you," said the King, "why do you not guard against it?" But Merlin persisted in following the maiden, whose name was Vivien, and she gradually drew

from him many of the secrets and much knowledge of the magic for which he was famous.

At last she grew tired of him, and while in Cornwall, Merlin showed her one day a rock under which great marvels were hidden.

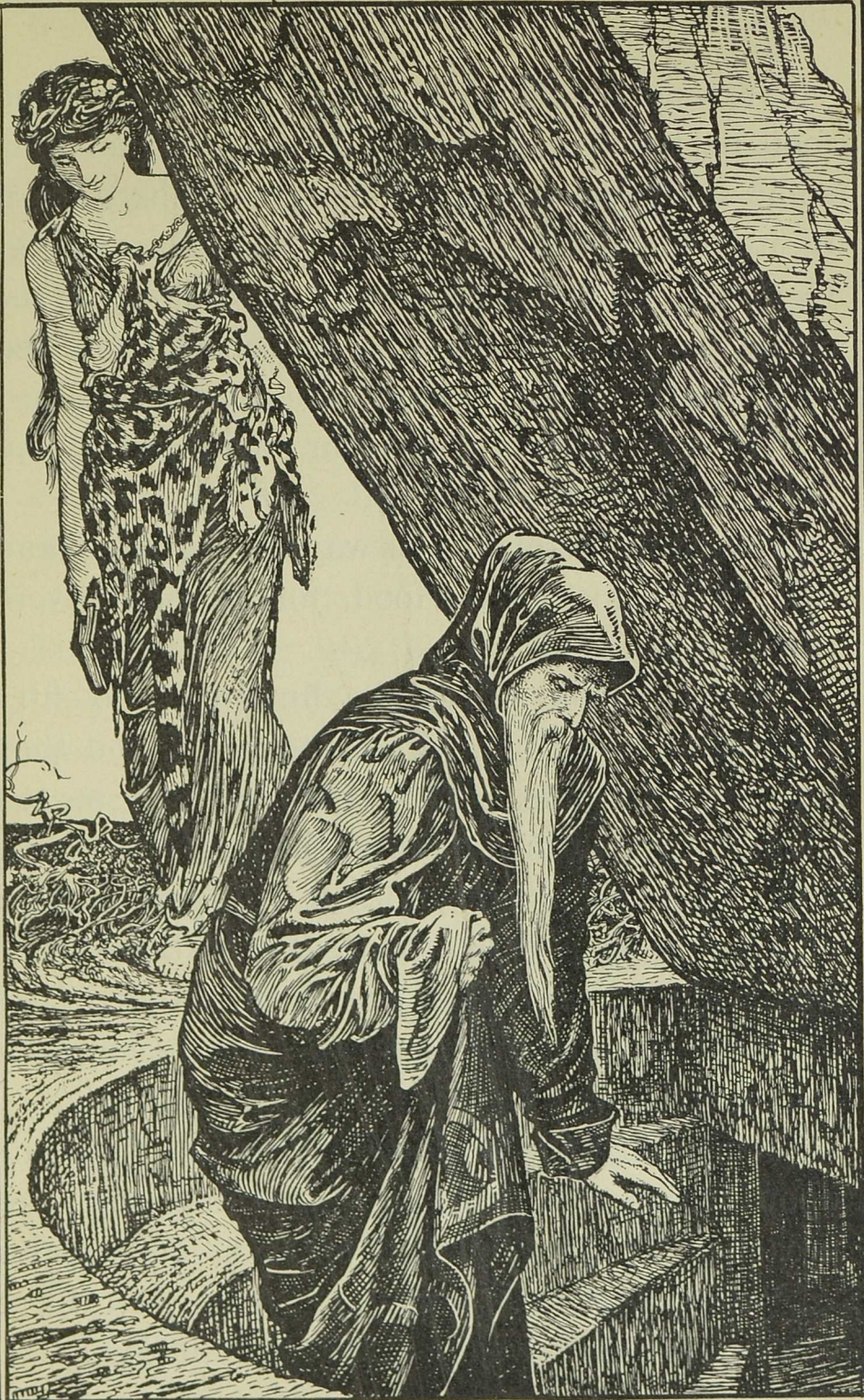
Vivien begged the old man to show her these marvels, and Merlin, in spite of his wisdom, consented to crawl beneath the rock to reveal them to her.

No sooner was he under it than Vivien, by means of the magic he had taught her, caused the rock to roll over and bury him alive. This was the fate that Merlin had told King Arthur awaited him; and the damsel departed, armed with his magic, and pleased to be rid of the old man. In this way the wisdom of man proved useless against a woman's guile.

WHAT BEAUMAINS ASKED OF THE KING

PART I

WHEN Pentecost drew near, King Arthur commanded the Knights of the Round Table to keep the feast in the great castle of the city of Kin-Kenadon.



MERLIN AND VIVIEN

It was the King's custom to partake of no food on the day of Pentecost until he had seen some marvellous deed performed, or had heard of its accomplishment. On that morning Sir Gawaine, while looking from a window of the castle, espied three men on horseback, followed by a dwarf, coming towards the castle gate.

He saw them alight from their horses and hand the reins to the dwarf.

Sir Gawaine made his way to the King, and said, "Sir, go to your food, for strange adventures are at hand".

King Arthur called the hundred and fifty Knights of the Round Table together, and they sat down to dine. They were scarcely seated than two young men entered the hall, supporting upon their shoulders another handsome young man, taller by a cubit than either of them. He was wide in the chest and large handed, but he leant upon the others as though he were ashamed.

King Arthur beckoned them to the dais upon which he sat. As the young man approached, he drew himself up to his full height.

"King Arthur," said he, "may God bless you and the fellowship of the Round Table. I

have come hither to pray you to make me three gifts."

"Ask," said King Arthur, "and you shall have them."

"Sir, this is my petition for this feast; the other two I will lay before you on some future occasion. Give me meat and drink, I pray you, for one twelvemonth."

"Meat and drink I give to every man," said the King, "so that is but a small favour. But tell me your name!"

This the young man explained he could not do, and Arthur, after speaking kindly to him, charged Sir Kay, the Steward, to see that the young man ate and drank of the best.

"As he has no name," said Sir Kay, "I will give him one, and will call him Beaumains, and he shall sit in the kitchen and grow fat upon broth."

Sir Kay continued to mock at the young man in spite of the protests of Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawaine, who believing that in the youth there existed a spirit for great deeds, endeavoured to dissuade Sir Kay from his expressed intention of putting him in the kitchen. It was of no avail, however, for Sir Kay persisted

that he was to take his food among the kitchen boys, and that among them he was to sleep.

Beaumains bore this ill treatment with mildness, but when a tourney took place, he would steal out to watch the Knights, and his eyes would flash when a good blow was struck. In the games that were held from time to time, he could cast a bar or throw a stone a good two yards further than any of his fellows. The year passed by, and Whitsuntide came again, this time to be celebrated at Carlion.

WHAT BEAUMAINS ASKED OF THE KING

PART II

KING ARTHUR would again eat no meat until an adventure of some kind had befallen him.

“Sir,” cried a squire, “you may go to your meat, for here is a damsel with some strange tales.”

At this King Arthur was very glad, for he had waited long before he was able to break his fast.

The damsel was led into the hall and bowed low before the King, and begged for his help.

“Sir,” said she, “my sister is a noble lady who is besieged by a tyrant, and cannot escape from her castle. Knowing that your Knights are the noblest in the world, I come to you for aid.”

“And can you tell us the name of your sister?” said King Arthur.

“That I may not divulge, Sir King,” she answered, “but the Knight who lays siege to her castle is the Knight of the Red Lawn.”

“I know him,” said Sir Gawaine; “it is said that he has the strength of seven, and once when I crossed swords with him, I barely escaped with my life.”

“Fair damsel,” said the King, “I cannot give leave to any of my Knights to rescue your lady, unless you will tell us her name.”

“Then I must go further,” said the damsel.

“Sir King,” cried Beaumains before the damsel could continue, “I thank you for my meat and drink this past year, and the shelter of your kitchen, and now I will ask of you the two other gifts you have already promised to give me. The first is the adventure of this damsel.”

“You shall have it,” said the King.

“Then, Sir, you shall bid Sir Lancelot du

Lake make me Knight, for after his kindness to me I will receive Knighthood at the hands of no other."

"You hear what he says?" said the King to Sir Lancelot, smiling.

"Fie on you!" cried the damsel, "will you send a kitchen boy to rescue my lady?" and she walked out, mounted her horse, and rode away.

No sooner had she left the hall, than a page came to Beaumains to tell him that a horse and armour in the charge of a dwarf awaited him outside. When, in his armour, he entered to bid the King farewell, men marvelled at the splendour of his bearing. He bade Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawaine farewell also, and begged the former to follow him upon his quest.

Many watched him depart, and envied him his horse and its golden trappings, but they noticed that he bore neither shield nor spear.

"I will ride after him," laughed Sir Kay, "and watch over my kitchen boy."

"Leave him and stay at home," said Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawaine, but Sir Kay sprang upon his horse and rode away.

He came up with Beaumains just as the latter had overtaken the damsel.

“Beaumains,” he cried, “do you not know me?”

Beaumains turned to look at him, and replied, “Yes, I know you for an ill-mannered Knight, and I warn you to beware of me”.

On hearing this from his former kitchen boy, Sir Kay put his spear in rest and charged. Beaumains, drawing his sword, dashed the spear aside, and before Sir Kay could recover he had thrust him through the thigh. Beaumains then took Sir Kay’s spear and shield, and bidding the dwarf follow upon the horse that Sir Kay had ridden, hastened after the damsel.

Sir Lancelot, who had followed Sir Kay, and had been a spectator of the combat, now rode after Beaumains.

The latter, on seeing him, asked if he wished to tilt. The shock of their meeting was so great that both horses rolled over upon the ground, and the riders rose sorely bruised. Without a moment’s hesitation, however, they drew their swords, and thrust and parried until Sir Lancelot marvelled at the young man’s strength.

“We have no cause for quarrel,” at last said he, and Beaumains lowered his arms.

“You have proved yourself a worthy gentle-

man," continued Sir Lancelot, "and if you fight as you have fought to-day, I would be your warrant against any one, for I have had much ado to defend myself against your onslaughts."

"Then I pray you give me the order of Knighthood," cried Beaumains.

"First you must tell me your name, and the names of your kindred," said Lancelot.

"I know that you will not betray me," said Beaumains, "and I will tell you. My name, Sir, is Gareth, and Sir Gawaine is my brother."

"Ah," cried Lancelot, "I knew that you came of good blood, and that you did not seek King Arthur's Court for meat and drink only. Kneel then, Sir," and Sir Lancelot gave the youth the order of Knighthood.

WHAT BEAUMAINS ASKED OF THE KING

PART III

SIR GARETH again rode after the damsel, and Sir Lancelot returned to arrange for Sir Kay to be carried back to Court, there to have his wounds tended.

The damsel stopped when she saw Beau-

mains approach. "What are you doing here?" said she. "Your clothes smell of kitchen grease! Do you expect me to change my feelings towards you because you overcame yonder Knight? No, I know who you are, poor turner of spits!"

"Madam," replied Beaumains, "in spite of your words, I do not choose to quit your side until I have released the lady of the castle in accordance with my vow."

"Fie on you, Scullion," answered she. "You will meet with a welcome you little expect."

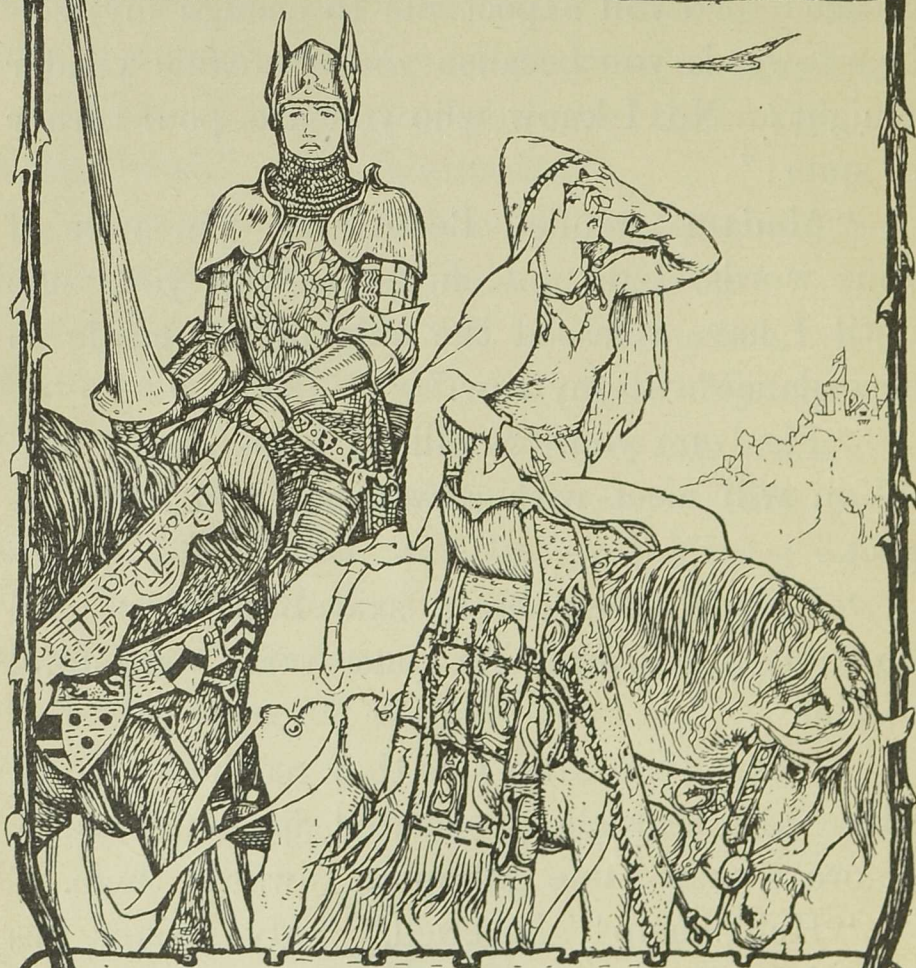
"I shall do my best," said Beaumains, and he refused to continue a controversy distasteful to him.

A short time after this they reached a wood. They had scarcely penetrated its outer edge, before a man came galloping towards them.

"Help! help!" he cried. "My master lies bound in yonder thicket, and I fear that the thieves who attacked him will slay him." Beaumains rode with the man to the thicket, and there the Knight lay bound and surrounded by six thieves.

Beaumains rode at them, and having killed

Faugh sir! You smell of ye Kitchen



Garen & Linet



three would have turned his attention to the others if they had not fled.

Having unbound the Knight, however, he pursued them, and though when brought to bay they fought for their lives, he slew them all before returning to the Knight.

The latter thanked him heartily, and Beaumains then rode back to the damsel's side.

“Do you think I set store by what you have done!” she said. “I pray that you will not come too close to me. Faugh, Sir! you smell of the kitchen.”

The rescued Knight now rode up, and begged Beaumains and the damsel to accept his hospitality for the night. This they were glad to do, and followed the strange Knight to his castle.

Early the next morning Beaumains and the damsel bade the Knight farewell, and started upon their journey through the forest. In the course of the day they arrived at the edge of a river, on the farther side of which two Knights stood ready to guard the passage.

“Well,” said the damsel, “are you going to turn back, Scullion?”

Beaumains took no notice of her question,

but spurred his horse into the water. One of the opposing Knights did the same, and with their spears in rest they met in the middle of the river.

Both spears broke, and swords were drawn. At length Beaumains struck the other Knight from his horse, and he was drowned in the river.

The second Knight awaited him on the bank, but he did not wait long, for Beaumains urged his horse till it leaped over rather than waded through the stream, and he struck the second Knight a blow that clave his helmet in two.

“Alas!” said the damsel, “that two brave Knights should be overcome by a kitchen boy; and such a kitchen boy!”

They rode together till eventide, and the damsel chid him all the way, but Beaumains discreetly kept silence, only stating his determination to free the lady according to the vow he had made.

WHAT BEAUMAINS ASKED OF THE KING

PART IV

BEAUMAINS and the damsel at length reached a stretch of turf upon which a black hawthorn tree was growing. On one side of the tree a black banner hung, and upon the other a black shield and spear. Close to the tree stood a black horse covered with silk, and tethered to a black stone. A Knight, clad in black armour, came forward to meet the damsel and said, "Is this the Knight, damsel, that you have brought from King Arthur's Court to be your champion?"

"He has come with me," answered the damsel, "and I cannot be rid of him. I pray that you will slay him or frighten him away, for he is but a base kitchen knave."

"I will be gentle with him," said the Knight, "for though he appears to be strong he is but a young man. I will content myself with throwing him to the ground, and taking his horse and armour."

When the Knight had finished speaking, Beaumains looked up and said, "Sir Knight,



LINET AND THE BLACK KNIGHT

although you dispose so lightly of my horse and armour, they are at present my property, and they will be yours only if won in fair fight. As for my birth, I am of noble birth, as I will prove upon your body."

They drew back some distance and charged one another hotly, the fight continuing for an hour and a half. In the end, however, a blow of Beaumains' beat the Knight from his horse, and he swooned and died.

Beaumains dismounted, and took the Knight's armour, as it was better than his own, before riding after the damsel.

They were riding together, he being chidden by the damsel as usual, when they saw a Knight dressed in green riding towards them.

"Is that my brother the Black Knight who rides with you?" he asked of the damsel.

"Alas, no!" she replied, "this is a kitchen knave who has slain your brother."

"You shall die for this," said the Green Knight to Beaumains, and as he said it he looked the noble Knight he was, being the renowned Sir Percard.

The Green Knight then seized a horn that hung from a tree, and no sooner had he blown

upon it than two maidens came and armed him, and gave him a green shield and spear.

Then the fight began, and it raged on until both Knights were fighting on foot and sorely wounded.

The damsel at length drew near and cried, "For shame! my lord the Green Knight, to allow a kitchen knave to stay your hand".

These words stung the Green Knight to fury, and with a mighty stroke he cleft Beaumains' shield asunder. Before he could withdraw his sword, Beaumains had struck him a blow that felled him to his knees, and leaping upon him, he dragged the Green Knight to the ground.

The Green Knight cried for mercy, but Beaumains unlaced his helm as if he were going to kill him, saying: "Your words are in vain unless the damsel begs me for your life".

"Fie upon you, false Kitchen Knave!" cried the damsel. "I will not pray for his life when it is in no danger."

"Suffer me not to die," entreated the Knight, "when a word from your lips will save me!"

"Fair Knight," he continued, "spare me my life and it will be for ever devoted to your service, and the lives of thirty Knights besides."

“Sir Knight,” said Beaumains, “your life rests upon the word of this lady,” and he lifted his sword to slay him.

“Let be, foul Knave,” cried the damsel, “do not slay him. If you do, you shall be made to repent it.”

“Damsel,” said Beaumains, “as it is your wish, I give this Knight his life.”

The Green Knight kneeled and did homage with his sword to the victor, and then he led them to his castle where they stayed the night.

The damsel still reviled Beaumains to such an extent, that the Green Knight felt called upon to rebuke her. He told her that Beaumains was the bravest Knight that ever held a spear, and he summoned the thirty Knights who served him, and bade them henceforth guard him from treachery with their lives.

In the morning Beaumains and the damsel bade the Green Knight farewell, and rode forth upon their journey.

They met on the way Sir Persant of Inde, whom Beaumains overcame, and the sixty good Knights who served him were told to serve Beaumains until his quest should be accomplished.

WHAT BEAUMAINS ASKED OF THE KING

PART V

WHEN BEAUMAINS had overcome Sir Persant, the damsel begged him to go no further in her adventure. His generous conduct and bold bearing had won her favour, and she now told him that although they were within seven miles of the besieged castle, the most dangerous part of the adventure was still to come.

The Knight who laid siege to her lady was far mightier than Sir Persant, and the latter Beaumains had found to be redoubtable enough. Beaumains however insisted upon pursuing the adventure to the end.

“What sort of man can you be?” said the damsel. “No woman could have treated you so shamefully as I have, yet you have been ever courteous and gentle to me. I beg that you will forgive me for my behaviour in the past.”

“With all my heart,” answered Beaumains. “Under your displeasure my service has been at least useful; in the future and in the light

of your favour I feel that my arm will be strong enough for any deed."

"Heaven defend you," cried Sir Persant, when he was told of the adventure upon which Beaumains was bent, "the Knight you seek is the most doughty living, having the strength of seven men.

"He has done great wrong to the lady of the castle, who is the fairest in the world, and indeed I believe that this damsel must be her sister. Is not her name Linet?"

"Yes, Sir," answered the damsel, "and my lady my sister is named the dame Lyonesse."

"The Red Knight has drawn out the siege for two years," said Sir Persant, "in order to give Sir Lancelot or Sir Tristram or Sir Gawaine time to hear of the Lady Lyonesse's predicament, and to ride to her rescue."

"I bid you knight this gentleman before he meets the Red Knight," said the damsel to Sir Persant.

"That I will gladly," he replied, "if it please him to take the order of Knighthood from so simple a man."

"Sir," said Beaumains, "I thank you for your good will, but at the beginning of this

quest I was knighted by Sir Lancelot. My name is Sir Gareth of Orkney, and Sir Gawaine, whom you mentioned just now, is my brother.

“Neither he nor King Arthur, whose sister my mother is, knows of my whereabouts, and I beg you to keep my name a secret.”

Now word was brought to the besieged lady by a dwarf, that her sister was coming to her with a Knight from King Arthur's Court, and she bade her dwarf take baked venison, capons, and wine, and put them in the hands of a hermit, in whose cell the Knight and her sister could partake of them. The dwarf did as he was bidden, and led them to the cell, where they refreshed themselves with the good things before meeting the Red Knight.

When they drew near the castle, they found full forty Knights hanging from the trees that grew on the lawn before the castle gates. They were the bodies of Knights who had already essayed the rescue, and the damsel viewed with dismay the fate she expected would overtake Beaumains.

“Truly,” said he, “it is a marvel that one of King Arthur's Knights has not before now dealt with this Knight of the Red Lawn.”

They rode up to a sycamore tree from which a horn was hanging, and Beaumains seized it in order to blow a blast.

“Sir, I pray you,” said Linet, “blow it not till noontide, for until that hour of the day this Red Knight has the strength of seven men.”

“For shame! damsel,” said Beaumains, “I will fight him how or when he likes,” and he blew a blast that rang through the castle.

WHAT BEAUMAINS ASKED OF THE KING

PART VI

THE Red Knight buckled on his armour, mounted his great charger, and rode out to meet the strange Knight. The fight began hotly, and grew so fierce that Beaumains had much ado to guard himself till noon from the attacks of the Red Knight. When noon arrived, however, the Red Knight's strength began to wane, and Beaumains eventually discovered that he held the mastery.

The lords and Knights in the castle begged him to spare the Red Knight's life. This Beaumains did, and the Knights all entered themselves into his service.

Before the fight, Beaumains had looked up to a window in Castle Perilous, and there he had seen a face that he thought the fairest in the world. When he had overcome the Red Knight, he went into the castle, and he found that the face he had seen was that of the Lady Lyonesse, who welcomed him and thanked him for her deliverance. And Beaumains and the Lady Lyonesse loved one another from that day.

Soon after this, letters came from King Arthur bidding her come to his Court, but by Sir Gareth's counsel (we will henceforth call him by his proper name) she prayed the King to let her call a tournament, the best Knight in which should take her and all her lands. She had such faith in Sir Gareth, that she believed he would prove himself the best Knight in any tournament. She had it proclaimed, however, that if the best Knight were already married, he should be given a white falcon for himself, and for his wife a crown of gold set with precious stones.

The Lady Lyonesse prepared Castle Perilous for the distinguished visitors she expected, who were coming from the most distant parts—from Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall—and to lodge



The Lady of Lyonesse
sees Sir Gareth

fitly the Kings, Dukes, and Earls who would come with King Arthur.

Queen Guenevere and the Queen of Orkney were among those who were coming, and Sir Gareth begged all at Castle Perilous not to let his name be known.

“Sir Gareth,” said Dame Lyonesse, “I will lend you a ring, and I beg by the love you bear me that you will return it to me after the tournament, for without it I have little beauty. This ring will turn its wearer green red, or blue white, and it is like no other ring, for who wears it can lose no blood, however sorely wounded he may be.”

“Truly, my own lady,” answered Sir Gareth, “this ring will serve me well, and with its help no one will need to undo my helm to tend me, and thus recognise me.”

Sir Gringamore, brother of the Lady Lyonesse, gave him a bay horse and strong armour, and on the fifteenth of August, when the Feast of the Assumption was kept, King Arthur commanded his heralds to blow the trumpets summoning all good Knights to the lists.

All marvelled at the Knight with the armour of changing hues, but this quality of his armour

helped Sir Gareth to conceal his identity, which in fact no one guessed.

“Of a truth,” cried King Arthur, “that is a good Knight,” and he bade Sir Lancelot challenge him.

But Sir Lancelot said that the Knight’s limbs must by now be weary, for he had fought as though he were under the eyes of his lady, “and for this day,” said Sir Lancelot, “he deserves the honour. Though it lay in my power to wrest it from him, I would not.” The strange Knight’s deeds were such that Sir Lancelot secretly guessed he was no other than Sir Gareth.

WHAT BEAUMAINS ASKED OF THE KING

PART VII

SIR GARETH rode hither and thither in the tournament, smiting whom he could, but it happened that he received a fierce blow which damaged his helm, and he rode off the field to mend it.

He took off the damaged helmet, and was going to a stream to drink, when his dwarf, who had been watching him eagerly, suggested that the ring had better be left with him for the

moment, for fear Sir Gareth should lose it. He handed it to the dwarf, drank, mended his helm, and returned to the field, forgetting the ring which remained in the hands of the dwarf. Sir Gareth joined again in the fray, and King Arthur from his seat saw that this strange Knight's armour was now of a golden colour. "Go," said he to his heralds, "ride near him, and see what manner of Knight he is."

One of the heralds returned to the King with the information that on his helm were written in golden letters the words: "This helm belongs to Sir Gareth of Orkney". Sir Gareth, still unaware that he had left the ring with the dwarf, and therefore the charm that had preserved his identity from all beholders, struck on boldly in the tournament, and was amazed to hear the heralds now proclaim his name. So angry was he at the discovery, that he struck down, one after another, two Knights who chanced to be near him, these two Knights proving to be Sir Sagramore, and Sir Gawaine his own brother. He then rode out of the press and met the dwarf. "Boy!" he cried, "you have played me false and kept my ring. Give it to me at once that I may hide myself," and he rode swiftly into the forest.

When he had ridden with the dwarf far from Castle Perilous, he turned to his follower and asked him what he would propose doing next.

“Sir,” answered the dwarf, “I would send the Lady Lyonesse her ring.”

“I will do so,” said Sir Gareth, “do you return with it and pray her to be as faithful to her true Knight as he will ever be to her.”

After many fights and adventures, he was standing one day in the forest, which he had not left since the tournament, when an armed Knight came riding towards them.

He sprang upon his horse, couched his spear, and charged the strange Knight. The two crashed together like thunder, and strove until they were both sorely wounded. At this point the damsel Linet rode up, and as soon as she saw what was taking place she exclaimed, “Sir Gawaine, I pray you cease fighting with Sir Gareth your brother”.

Sir Gawaine instantly threw down his shield and sword, and ran to Sir Gareth, who, surprised to see a gallant opponent yielding so easily, and having neither seen nor heard the damsel's words, contented himself with dropping his sword point.

“Do you not know me, my brother?” cried Sir Gawaine, unlacing his helm, and then Sir Gareth perceived that the Knight was indeed his brother, and they embraced, and gave thanks that they had done one another no further harm.

The Lady Linet then came up to them, and placed herbs upon their wounds. “What will you do now?” she said, “it is time that King Arthur had news of you both.”

“Ride, I pray you,” said Sir Gawaine, “to my uncle, who is but two miles away, and tell him that I have met my brother.”

The Lady Linet mounted her mule, and rode to King Arthur with her news. He immediately ordered a palfrey to be saddled, and rode with the Knights and ladies of his Court to meet the brothers.

He found them seated on a hillside, and the King dismounted and ran to meet them, and to lead them to their mother, who was nearly swooning with the joy of beholding her sons again.

WHAT BEAUMAINS ASKED OF THE KING

PART VIII

THE two Knights stayed in King Arthur's Court for eight days. Then the King said to Linet, "I wonder that your sister, the dame Lyonesse, does not come to visit us, or rather our nephew Sir Gareth, who has worked so hard to win her love".

"My lord," answered Linet, "you must, by your grace, hold my lady excused, for she does not know that Sir Gareth is here."

"I pray you bring her here as soon as may be," said Arthur.

"That I will quickly do," replied Linet, and by the next morning, her sister dame Lyonesse, with her brother Sir Gringamore, and forty Knights, had come to the Court.

Of all the ladies there she was the fairest, save Queen Guenevere. King Arthur, having welcomed them, turned to his nephew Sir Gareth, and asked him whether it was true that he wished to take the Lady Lyonesse to wife.

"My lord," replied Sir Gareth, "I love her above all ladies in the world."

“And what say you, fair lady?” asked the King.

“Most noble King,” answered the Lady Lyonesse, “I would rather Sir Gareth were my husband than any King or Prince that may be christened. If I may not have him, I promise you I will have none. He is my first love, and shall be my last. If you suffer him to make his choice, I dare to say that he will not refuse to take me.”

“I will not indeed refuse,” said Sir Gareth, feeling much pleased at the smile the Lady Lyonesse had bestowed upon him while she spoke.

It was arranged that the marriage should take place at Michaelmas, at Kin-Kenadon by the sea-shore, and this was proclaimed in all parts of the realm.

Sir Gareth presented dame Lyonesse with a beautiful ring, and she gave one to him also.

King Arthur, before she departed, presented her with a golden bee as a token of his friendship, and Sir Gareth escorted her back to Castle Perilous.

When he returned, he spent his few remaining bachelor days in the company of Sir Lancelot, whom he loved as he loved no other Knight.

The days passed quickly, and on Michaelmas Day the Bishop of Canterbury married Sir Gareth to the Lady Lyonesse with much ceremony, and on the same day Sir Gawaine was married to the damsel Linet, and Sir Agrawaine to Laurel, the niece of dame Lyonesse.

The Knights, whom Sir Gareth had vanquished, came with their followings to wish him joy, and the Green Knight asked that he might be the Chamberlain of the feast, and the Red Knight that he might be the Steward.

When the feast was ended, minstrelsy and all manner of games were participated in. Then there was a great tournament that lasted for three days, but at the prayer of dame Lyonesse it was ordained that no Knight who was wedded could fight in the tournament.

Thus Beaumains' quest became the cause of his great happiness.

THE QUEST OF THE HOLY GRAAL

THIS is a mysterious part of the adventures of King Arthur's Knights, and if while reading they appear to us to be vague, we must remember that the stories are very old. Some of them were

invented by the heathen Welsh, or the ancient Britons, from whom the Welsh were descended ; others by the pagan Irish, who spoke Gaelic, a language not unlike Welsh.

From those tongues the stories were translated into French, and Christian beliefs and chivalrous customs introduced into them. Finally, about the time of Edward IV., the French was translated into English by Sir Thomas Malory, whose translation was not a strictly literal one.

In the old Irish stories, the Holy Graal was a mysterious vessel filled with miraculous food. It has also been thought to be the holy vessel used by our Lord, and brought to Britain from the Holy Land. It is probable that these two vessels were confused in the French translations.

On account of the sins of men the relic was made invisible, appearing at intervals only, borne by angels, or floating in a light that seemed to radiate from itself.

The Knights, against King Arthur's wish, made a vow to give up their custom of redressing wrongs, and to set out in pursuit of this vision.

As King Arthur foresaw, the breaking up of the fellowship in order to pursue something

unreal, probably not to be gained by mortal men, tended to weaken the kingdom. The tales of these Knights' adventures are so confused, that they read more like mere recollections of dreams than accounts of actual deeds.

PART I

HOW THE KING DETERMINED TO GO ON A PILGRIMAGE, AND HIS SQUIRE WAS SLAIN IN A DREAM

THE King was minded to go on a pilgrimage, and having expressed his wish to the Queen, he determined to set forth in search of the holy chapel of St. Augustine. This chapel is situated in the White Forest, and may only be found by adventure.

He wished to undertake the quest alone, but the Queen would not hear of it, and to allay any fears she might entertain for his safety, he consented to take with him a youth named Chaus, who was tall and strong of limb.

The King instructed the lad to have the horses saddled at break of day. As night advanced the Knights retired, leaving Chaus alone in the hall, waiting for the night to pass,

and unwilling to sleep for fear he should not have the horses ready at the appointed hour. He sat himself down by the great fire, and in spite of his desire to keep awake, drowsiness overcame him, and sleeping heavily he dreamed a strange dream.

He dreamt that the King had ridden away upon his quest, leaving the Squire behind. In his dream he saddled his horse, and galloping out of the castle after his master, he at last entered a forest and followed the traces of the King's horse.

The marks suddenly ceased, and the youth alighted on some open ground, upon which stood a chapel surrounded by a graveyard.

He entered the chapel, expecting to find the King there before him, but he could see no one except a Knight who lay dead upon a bier. The body was covered with a pall of silk, and four tapers in gold candlesticks were burning round it.

He displaced one of the tapers, and hid the candlestick under his cloak until he should find the King.

Riding back through the forest he met an ill-favoured man dressed in black, who accosted

him, and threatened him with a heavy knife he held in his hand.

“Ho! you who stand there,” cried the youth, “have you seen King Arthur pass this way?”

“No,” the man replied, “but I have met you, and if you do not give up to me the gold candlestick now beneath your cloak, placed in yonder chapel in honour of the dead Knight who lies there, I will take it from you.”

“By my faith,” cried the Squire, “I have taken that for my lord, King Arthur, and I shall not yield it to you.” He spurred his horse in order to dash by the man, but the latter drove the knife deep into his body. “Help! help!” cried the Squire, in his dream, and the King and Queen woke from their sleep.

“Sir,” said the Chamberlain, “you must be moving, for it is dawn;” and the King rose and dressed himself.

He had put on his shoes, when the cry rang out again, “Fetch me a priest, for I die!” and the King ran into the hall, followed by the Queen and the Chamberlain bearing torches.

“What ails you?” asked the King of his Squire, and the Squire told him of his dream.

When he had finished, he held up his arm and

said, "Alas! my lord, though but a dream I feel the knife in my body," and the King saw the haft standing out from the lad's side, and the candlestick in the folds of his cloak. A priest was sent for, and when the Squire had confessed his sins, the King drew the knife out, and the lad expired.

The King caused the candlestick to be sent to the Church of Saint Paul in London, in memory of the Squire who had lost his life in this strange fashion.

King Arthur, after this, would allow no one to accompany him upon his quest, and having met with many adventures he at last reached the chapel of St. Augustine.

There he alighted, but an unseen power prevented him from crossing the threshold, and he returned to Court after having heard from without such wonderful singing, and having seen so beautiful a vision, that he was strengthened in his determination to bring peace and order to his kingdom.

PART II

THE COMING OF THE HOLY GRAAL

It was on the eve of Pentecost that the Knights of the Round Table met together at Camelot.

A great feast had been prepared, and they were seated at supper, when a noise burst upon their ears like a thunder clap.

From the centre of the heavy clouds that hung above, a sunbeam shot forth into the room, and illumined it with a vivid light.

Each man looked at his neighbour, and every countenance there shone fair and calm.

While they sat dumb, the Holy Graal floated into the hall, its lustre subdued by a veil of white samite. Sweet odours filled the place, and each Knight had the dish he most desired placed before him. The silence continued in the room, till the Holy Vessel vanished as mysteriously as it had come, and men's tongues were loosened. The King then gave thanks for the wonder they had been permitted to see, and when he had finished Sir Gawaine stood up, and vowed to set out the next morning in search of the Holy Graal. Many of the other Knights present made a similar vow.

The King was much vexed when he heard Gawaine's vow, anticipating that the Round Table fellowship would in this way be dissolved for ever.

"Comfort yourself," said Lancelot, "for die we must, and it is surely best to die in a holy cause in which we shall gain great honour."

The next day the King and Queen went to the Minster, followed by the Knights armed except for their shields and helmets. When the service was over, King Arthur counted the Knights who had undertaken the quest, and they numbered one hundred and fifty. They bade farewell to the King and Queen, and mounting their horses, rode through the streets of Camelot as the sun was rising.

PART III

THE ADVENTURE OF SIR GALAHAD

WHEN the Knights had ridden out of the town, they dispersed and were soon out of touch with one another.

Among those who had taken the vow was Sir Galahad, the son of Sir Lancelot, and he rode for four days without an adventure. On

the fifth day he reached a White Abbey, where he dismounted and asked to be allowed to stay the night. The brethren received him with reverence, and led him to a chamber. He took off his armour and found that he was in the presence of two other Knights.

“Sirs,” said he, “what adventure has brought you hither?”

“Sir,” they replied, “we heard that in this Abbey there is a shield that no man may hang round his neck, without being dead within three days, and if we fail in the adventure, we shall be happy for you to undertake it.”

“I will willingly undertake it,” said Galahad, “for as yet I have no shield.”

After Mass the next morning, the monk led them behind an altar where a shield hung, and it was as white as snow, with a red cross in the middle.

“This shield,” said the monk, “can only be hung round the neck of the worthiest Knight in the world.”

“Well,” said one of the Knights, whose name was King Bagdemagus, “I know I am not the best Knight in the world, yet I shall try to bear it,” and he rode away with it, followed by his

Squire. He had only ridden two miles, when in a fair valley he encountered a Knight in white armour, mounted upon a white horse. They met with their spears, and King Bagdemagus was borne to the ground, for the shield he bore was no protection to him.

The strange Knight dismounted, and taking the white shield, he handed it to the Squire, saying, "Bear this with my greetings to the good Knight Sir Galahad, whom you have left in the Abbey. I cannot give him my name."

The Squire then helped Sir Bagdemagus, who was sorely wounded, to mount his horse. Then he led him to a monastery that lay in the valley, where after many weeks he recovered from his wounds.

Having done this, the Squire rode to the Abbey, and alighting before Sir Galahad, he said, "Sir, the Knight who wounded Sir Bagdemagus sends his greeting, and bids you bear this shield, which will bring you many adventures".

"This is indeed a day of fortune," said Sir Galahad, and he hung the shield round his neck, mounted his horse, and rode off followed by the Squire.

They rode straight to the hermitage, where



SIR GAWAIN OPENS THE TOMB

they met the White Knight, and having saluted the Knight and heard the story of the shield from his lips, Sir Galahad and his Squire returned to the Abbey.

THE ADVENTURE OF SIR GALAHAD—(*continued*).

The monks joyfully greeted Sir Galahad on his return, for they had not expected to see him again, and when he had alighted from his horse, they led him to a tomb in the churchyard.

Day and night a deafening noise rumbled in this tomb, and the monks said that they thought it was caused by a fiend that dwelt within.

Sir Galahad, completely armed except for his helmet, lifted the stone, and a voice cried, "Come not nigh me, Sir Galahad; make me not return whence I have come".

Galahad raised the stone still higher, and, from the middle of a column of black smoke that issued from the tomb, leaped a foul figure in the shape of a man.

Galahad stooped, and looking into the tomb, saw a body, armed cap-à-pie, lying there.

"Fair brother," said Galahad to the monk, "let us remove this body, for it must be the

body of a false Christian, and therefore unworthy of burial in this churchyard.”

The body was removed, and they returned to the Abbey, where Sir Galahad knighted Melias his Squire, and the next morning the two Knights departed, taking different ways, in search of the Holy Graal.

Sir Galahad rode until he came to the Castle of Maidens, into which no man stained by sin could enter. He chased away the Knights who had beleaguered it for seven years, and restored it to the Duke's daughter to whom it rightly belonged. He then called together the Knights who had held lands under the Duke, and bade them pay homage to his daughter.

In the morning, the news was brought to him that Sir Gawaine, Sir Gareth, and Sir Lewaine had met the Knights whom he had driven from the castle, and had slain seven of them.

Sir Galahad rode away, and the same day met Sir Lancelot and Sir Percivale. These Knights being disguised, and Galahad bearing a white shield, they failed to recognise one another and gave battle.

Sir Galahad threw the two Knights to the

ground. "God be with thee, Sir Galahad, thou best Knight in the world," cried a nun who was passing by, and she spoke so loudly that the two Knights heard, and mounting their horses, they rode after Sir Galahad. He had, however, ridden deep into the wood, and being unable to trace him, Sir Percivale returned to seek the advice of the nun, while Sir Lancelot pressed forward.

PART IV

HOW SIR LANCELOT SAW A VISION

SIR LANCELOT halted when he reached a stone cross, which lay by the side of his path, and close to a block of marble. A chapel stood a few paces away, and Sir Lancelot, tethering his horse, and hanging his shield on a branch, walked to the porch and looked inside.

In the chapel he saw an altar covered with a silken cloth, and a candlestick stood near it, with six branches of shining silver from which a bright light illumined every corner.

Sir Lancelot would fain have entered, but some unseen force prevented him, and he turned back and disarmed himself before lying down to sleep on his shield at the foot of the cross.

While he lay there but half asleep, he saw two white palfreys pass by, drawing a litter in which a sick Knight reclined.

They paused when they reached the cross, and Sir Lancelot heard the Knight say, "O sweet Lord, when shall my sorrow cease in the discovery of the Holy Vessel. Long have I endured misery though few were my ill deeds."

He had scarcely finished speaking than the great candlestick appeared before the cross. A silver table stood by its side, and upon this Sir Lancelot saw the Holy Vessel of the Graal.

The Knight rose from his litter, and painfully approaching the table, prayed to be cured of his sickness. When he rose to return to his litter, he found that his prayer had been answered, and he gave thanks for his recovery.

The Graal then vanished into the chapel, and with it the table and the candlestick. Sir Lancelot would fain have risen and followed it, but his sins clogged him, and he could not move.

The Knight saw Sir Lancelot lying on his shield, and rode away, marvelling that any man's sins could be so great as to cause him to remain asleep in the presence of the Holy Graal.

The Knight took Sir Lancelot's sword and helm with him, also his horse. When Lancelot awoke, he heard a voice say, "Sir Lancelot, harder than the stone, and more barren than the leaf of the fig tree, withdraw thee from this holy place," and he cursed the day that he was born. His horse and arms were gone; he smote himself and cried, "My sin and wickedness are the cause of my dishonour, my worldly desires I have obtained, and in worldly quarrels, whether right or wrong, I have always prevailed, but in a holy quest I am discomfited".

He sorrowed until daybreak woke the birds, and their singing comforted him. His horse being gone, he then departed through the wood on foot.

PART V

THE ADVENTURE OF SIR PERCIVALE

SIR PERCIVALE, after parting with Sir Lancelot, had pursued adventures of his own, and being attacked and almost overcome by the numbers of his opponents, he was grateful to a Knight bearing a red shield for riding to his rescue. This Knight was no other than Sir Galahad, who had changed his shield, and as he rode quickly

away Sir Percivale recognised him. Unfortunately, his horse had been killed, and he could not follow.

A Knight on a black horse rode by while Sir Percivale was sitting beneath the tree, near which the fight had taken place. A yeoman soon after galloped up, and asked Sir Percivale if he had seen a Knight on a black horse pass by. The horse he said was his property.

“If I had a horse of my own,” said Sir Percivale, “I would soon overtake him.”

“Ride this hackney!” said the yeoman, “and I will follow on foot to see how you fare.”

Sir Percivale mounted the yeoman’s horse, and soon overtook the strange Knight.

The Knight turned, and rode at Sir Percivale. His spear struck the hackney in the breast, and the animal fell dead, carrying Sir Percivale with him in his fall.

Sir Percivale cried to the Knight to stop and fight him on foot, but the latter rode away without turning his head, and Sir Percivale was left with nothing upon which to vent his rage. Being faint and weary, he lay down to sleep, but at midnight he woke and saw before him a woman, who said fiercely, “Sir Percivale, wan-

ton Knight, why do you linger here? If you will promise to do me a service, I will lend you my own horse, which will bear you wherever you want to go."

Sir Percivale promised to do her bidding, and she returned with a large black horse, splendidly appointed.

He mounted the horse, and driving in the spurs, within an hour he had ridden a four days' journey. He pulled up on the banks of a roaring torrent to choose the easiest crossing. Selecting a smoothly running portion of the stream, he made the sign of the cross upon his forehead, and spurred his horse. At that the fiend, which had taken the shape of a horse, shook Sir Percivale from his back and rushed into the foaming torrent.

Sir Percivale gave thanks that he had been saved from perdition on the back of the fiend, and spent the remainder of the night in prayer.

In the morning he looked round him, and perceived that he was in a wild country, teeming with beasts of all kinds. He wandered down a valley, and there witnessed a lion fiercely attacking a serpent which had stolen its cub.

The lion being the more natural beast of the



SIR PERCIVALE SLAYS THE SERPENT

two, Sir Percivale determined to help it, and drawing his sword he slew the serpent. The lion then leaped round him, and fawned upon him like a spaniel. About noon it carried off its whelp, but returned at eventide, and couched at his feet, and that night he and the lion slept side by side.

PART VI

THE ADVENTURE OF SIR LANCELOT

SIR LANCELOT went his way through the forest, and met and vanquished the Knight who had taken his arms. Feeling subdued in spirit through his experience at the stone cross, he sought out a hermit, and abode with him for a time, wearing next his skin a hair shirt, which pricked and irritated him; but he bore this meekly until he bade the hermit farewell, and rode further upon the quest. That day he came to a wide plain upon which a castle stood, surrounded with tents of many colours.

Fully five hundred Knights were riding on the plain, and they appeared to be divided into two parties, those near the castle being mounted on black horses, and the others on white horses.

Sir Lancelot looked on, while the two parties

fought together. The Black Knights seemed to him to be losing the day, so he rode to their help, and wrought marvellous deeds of arms. The White Knights surrounded him, hoping to tire him out, and at last he grew so exhausted that his arms refused to perform their duty. He was taken prisoner, and led into the forest to rest himself. There he had the mortification of seeing the Black Knights, deprived of his help, resign the battle, thus allowing the White Knights to win the day.

“Never before have I been overcome in a joust,” said Sir Lancelot, when the Knights had left him, “I must be more sinful than ever to be shamed in this way.”

He rode on until he passed a chapel, and he told the nun, who stood there, of the quest upon which he was bent, and of what had befallen him at the tournament.

“Ah, Lancelot,” said she, “it was no wonder you were worsted at the tournament, if you joined the ranks of the Black Knights. The tournament was a sign, the Black Knights being those who were not yet purged of earthly sin, the White Knights being those who were pure in spirit. Be not vainglorious, but endeavour to

lead a pure and simple existence in this world, and thus gain everlasting life. I am truly sorry for you, peerless as you are among earthly Knights."

PART VII

THE ADVENTURE OF SIR BORS

WHEN Sir Bors left Camelot, he met a holy man riding upon an ass, and the holy man knew him to be one of the Knights in quest of the Holy Graal.

"Can you give me any help in my quest?" asked Sir Bors. "I am full of hope that I shall fulfil it, and so win the honour that will be my due."

"The Knight who finds the Holy Graal," said the good man, "will be he who pursues the quest in a spirit of humility, and in the hope of no earthly reward for the service he is rendering his fellow-men."

He led Sir Bors to his chapel, and the Knight confessed his sins, and they ate bread and drank water together.

"Now," said the hermit, "I pray you to eat no more holy bread till you sit at the table of the Holy Graal, for I know you will succeed

so far, and that few others will be there with you."

Sir Bors promised to obey the hermit's injunc-



tion. "Also," said the holy man, "you shall wear this garment instead of your shirt until you are successful in the quest," and he handed Sir Bors a scarlet coat.

The good man then questioned him, and marvelled to find him so pure in life.

Sir Bors rode through manylands, and met with many adventures. Once by mischance he almost slew his brother, but a voice cried, "Flee, Bors, and stay your hand," and he hearkened to the voice. A fiery cloud fell between them, which burned up their shields, and they fell swooning to the earth.

When they recovered consciousness, they found that they had fortunately not hurt one another, and Bors obeyed the voice that again spoke and bade him part from his brother.

He made his way to the sea-shore, always cheered by the words of the holy man who had met him early in his quest, and there stepped on board a vessel covered with white samite. The vessel sailed quickly over the waters, and Bors slept upon its deck.

When he awoke, he found a Knight lying in the waist of the ship, completely armed except for his helm, and this Knight proved to be no other than Sir Percivale. They gladly welcomed one another, and told the tale of their temptations and adventures. "We only lack one thing," said Sir Percivale, "the presence of the good Knight, Sir Galahad."

PART VIII

THE ADVENTURE OF SIR GALAHAD

SIR GALAHAD was sleeping one night at a hermitage, when a gentlewoman asked to be allowed to speak to him. The hermit woke Sir Galahad, and he rose and offered the lady his services.

“Sir Galahad,” she said, “mount your horse, and follow me to as high an adventure as any Knight could meet with.”

They journeyed together until they reached the ship in which Sir Bors and Sir Percivale had embarked, and there they left their horses on the shore, and took the saddles and bridles with them on the vessel.

The two Knights received them with great joy, the sails were spread to the breeze, and the vessel flew before it to the land of Logris. The entrance to the chief harbour of this land consists of a channel between two rocks, and a whirlpool seethes in its middle. Their own ship could not pass safely through, so they transferred themselves to another ship that rode at anchor there. Upon this ship the following words were written, “Thou who wouldst enter this ship must be of steadfast belief”.

The gentlewoman turned to Sir Percivale, and asked him if he knew who she was.

“No,” said he, “I do not.”

“I am your sister,” she replied, “and I warn you not to enter the ship, if you have been guilty of any hidden sin.”

In the ship there was a fair bed, and Sir Galahad saw that a crown of silk lay upon it, and a sword, drawn from its sheath half a foot or more. The pommel of the sword was of coloured stone, and the handle was made of the ribs of two beasts. By virtue of this sword, the arm of the Knight who wielded it could not grow weary, neither could the Knight allow his thoughts to dwell upon past happiness, always feeling instead exhilaration in the prospect of joys to come.

Sir Percivale first attempted to draw the sword, but he could not grasp the handle. Sir Bors tried, but failed also. Sir Galahad, when he beheld the sword, saw written upon it in words of blood, that he who failed to draw it should never have cause to be ashamed of his prowess, or be wounded to the death.

He gripped the sword, and drew it from its sheath, and the gentlewoman girt it about his waist.

They then went into yet another ship, which carried them safely to the land.

There the Knights wrought many brave deeds, before taking different ways. They heard while on these adventures of the death of Sir Percivale's sister. She had allowed herself to bleed to death in order to save another lady, and she sent a prayer to them to lay her in a boat, which should be allowed to go whither the wind and waves decreed. Sir Percivale wrote a letter, and placed it in her hand, and they put her into a barge covered with silk, and the wind rose and drove it from their sight.

PART IX

SIR LANCELOT MEETS SIR GALAHAD AND THEY PART FOR EVER

WE will now return to Sir Lancelot. After his fight in the ranks of the Black Knights, and his encounter with the nun who explained to him that the Black Knights represented worldliness, he rode until he reached a lake named Morteise.

There he fell asleep, and dreamed that he was bidden to take his armour, and enter the first ship he should see.

He woke up, and walked to the strand upon which a ship was lying without sail or oar. He stepped on the vessel, and went below.

He was no sooner in the ship, than he felt a content, overpowering in its sweetness, that caused him to fall asleep.

He awoke from this sleep to find himself near a fair bed. A dead lady lay upon it, and he knew her to be Sir Percivale's sister. A letter was in her hand, telling the tale of her adventures, which Sir Lancelot read.

For a month he drifted, the corpse his sole companion; and on the twenty-ninth day, when the ship was near the shore, he heard the sound of horse's hoofs, and a Knight rode up.

"You are welcome," said Sir Lancelot to the Knight, who stepped up the ship's side carrying his saddle and bridle in his hand.

"Sir," said the new Knight, "my name is Galahad; may I ask yours?"

"I am your father, Sir Lancelot," said that Knight, and Galahad kneeled and asked his blessing.

After they had related their adventures, Sir Galahad saw the dead lady upon the bed, and he told Sir Lancelot how good a maid she



GVENEVERE & SIR BORS

had been, and described the manner of her death.

They stayed on the ship for half a year, and at the end of that time they chanced to drift near the edge of a forest, and there they saw a Knight sitting astride of one horse, and holding another by the bridle.

He rode to the ship, and saluting the two Knights, he said, "Galahad, you have been long enough with your father, so ride upon this horse in pursuit of the Holy Graal".

Galahad bade his father farewell, and kissed him, saying, "Father, I fear I shall not see you again until I have found the Holy Graal". Then they heard a voice arise from around them, and it said, "Thou wilt not meet again until the day of doom".

Then Galahad left his father, and rode upon the quest, and the next day Sir Lancelot rode to Camelot. There he found King Arthur and Queen Guenevere; but only half the Knights were there, many having been slain in the quest of the Holy Graal.

All the Court welcomed Sir Lancelot, and many and anxious were the inquiries after his son, Sir Galahad.

PART X

HOW SIR GALAHAD FOUND THE GRAAL

SIR GALAHAD went on until he met Sir Percivale and Sir Bors, with whom he rode to the castle of Carbonek. After being welcomed there by King Pelles, they continued the quest, accompanied by three Knights of Gaul. Before leaving the castle, Galahad anointed the King, who was maimed, with the blood in the Holy Sword, and cured him of his trouble.

Galahad also prayed the other Knights, if they returned to King Arthur's Court, to carry his greetings to Sir Lancelot, and to the Knights of the Round Table.

The Knights then rode away, and after several days the Knights of Gaul took a different road, leaving Sir Galahad, Sir Percivale, and Sir Bors to ride to the shore where the ship awaited them.

The table of silver stood in the ship, and upon it they found the Holy Graal covered with red samite. Their hearts were filled with delight and reverence at once more beholding the object of their quest. Galahad kneeled and prayed long to be allowed to depart from the world when he should desire to do so, and he heard a

voice reply, "Galahad, thou shalt have thy desire, and having asked for the death of the body, thou shalt find the life of the soul".

Sir Percivale heard the voice also, and marvelled to hear so wonderful a prayer promised fulfilment. The three Knights remained in the ship until they reached the city of Serras. There they disembarked, carrying the silver table with them to the gates of the city.

Outside the city gates they met an old cripple, whom Galahad healed. The news of this miracle was carried to the ears of the King, and he sent for the three Knights and questioned them.

They told him the truth, and of the Holy Graal, but the King was sceptical, and believing their powers to be supernatural, he ordered them to be put in a hole.

There they remained for a year, sustained by a vision of the Graal, until the King fell sick. Believing that his death was near, he called the three Knights, and asked their forgiveness, which was readily given to him.

The King died, and the people knew not what to do, till at last a voice bade them make the youngest of the three Knights their King.

They obeyed the voice, and proclaimed

Galahad King, and he thereupon had a coffer of gold made and set with precious stones, and in this he placed the silver table. Each day the three Knights met and prayed before it.

At the end of a year, and upon the same day that the people had proclaimed Galahad their King, he walked with the two Knights to the palace. There they beheld a human form clad in the vestments of a Bishop, and surrounded by Angels, kneeling before the Holy Vessel.

Sir Galahad trembled violently at the apparition, and raising his hands to Heaven, he cried, "Dear Lord, now I would no longer live, if it may please Thee to release me". He then kissed Sir Percivale and Sir Bors, and commended them to God, and begging them to bid Sir Lancelot his father to beware the snares of an unstable world, he knelt, and his soul was borne by Angels into Heaven.

From Heaven they saw a hand stretch forth, which took also the Sword and the Vessel.

Sir Percivale and Sir Bors were overcome with grief. The people of the country sorrowed also, and buried Sir Galahad with the honours befitting a King. Sir Percivale sought a hermitage, and spent the remainder of his life there in

sackcloth. Sir Bors stayed some time with him, still wearing the scarlet coat given him by the good man, but when Sir Percivale died a year and two months afterwards, Sir Bors returned to Camelot, after burying him by the side of Sir Galahad.

Few Knights had returned from the quest, and much joy was felt by the Knights when Sir Bors was received among them. The King ordered clerks to attend him, and in this way the story of the finding of the Holy Graal came to be written.

Sir Lancelot's adventures were also written at this time, and the records deposited in the town of Salisbury.

THE FIGHT FOR THE QUEEN

PART I

WHEN the quest of the Holy Graal had been fulfilled, Queen Guenevere gave a dinner to those Knights who had returned, and among the four and twenty Knights present were Sir Patrise of Ireland and Sir Gawaine.

It was Sir Gawaine's custom to eat at dinner the fruit that might be in season, and Queen

Guenevere, knowing this, had placed before him a dish of pears and apples. Among the company was Sir Pinel le Savage, who bore Sir Gawaine a grudge, and into the apples upon the dish he put some poison.

Now it chanced that the good Knight Sir Patrise took from the dish a poisoned apple intended for Sir Gawaine, and in a few minutes he fell back dead.

All the Knights leapt to their feet.

“My lady, the Queen,” said Sir Gawaine, “this fruit was placed upon the table for me to partake of, and the shame of this ill deed is yours.”

The Queen stood still, pale and abashed, for all the Knights thought that it was she who had poisoned the fruit, and seeing how strong the evidence was in favour of such a supposition, she was obliged to keep silence.

It was Sir Mador de la Porte who next spoke.

“This shall not be ended so,” said he, “for I will be avenged on the person who has wrought this evil.”

The Knights remained silent, and the Queen fell to weeping bitterly. Presently the King

came to the Queen's side, and asked the cause of her distress.



“Fair lords,” he said, when it had been told him, “I grieve for this ill deed, but I cannot meddle in the matter, or do battle for the Queen,

for it is my duty to do justice. Sure I am that this is not her deed, and that many a good Knight will stand her champion, and save her from being unjustly burnt to death."

"My gracious lord," said Sir Mador, "I beg your forgiveness if I say that no Knight present will fight that battle. What say you, my lords?"

Then the Knights replied that they could not hold the Queen guiltless.

"Alas!" said the Queen, "no evil was in my mind when I prepared the feast, and I ask you to believe that I could not be guilty of such wickedness."

"My lord the King," cried Sir Mador, "I require of you, as you are a just King, to fix a day for the fight."

"Let it be on the fifteenth day from this," said King Arthur, "in the meadow by Westminster. If there should be a Knight there to fight with you, strike, and God will speed the right. If there be no Knight there, my Queen must be burned."

Then Sir Mador and the other Knights departed from the feast.

THE FIGHT FOR THE QUEEN

PART II

“WHAT ails you,” asked the King of Queen Guenevere, “that you cannot keep Sir Lancelot by your side, for if he were here he would not hesitate to do battle for you? Go to Sir Bors, and command him to do battle for you for Sir Lancelot’s sake.”

“Madam,” said Sir Bors to the Queen, “if I fight for you I shall be held in suspicion by the other Knights, for I was with them at the feast. You have driven Sir Lancelot away, and now ask me, his friend, to do battle for you. I wonder that you can do this knowing how I love and honour him. He would have fought for you, right or wrong.”

The Queen threw herself before Sir Bors, but he raised her saying, “Madam! you do me great dishonour”.

“Ah, gentle Knight,” cried the Queen, “have mercy upon me, for I am innocent of the deed they charge me with.”

Then Sir Bors promised that he would fight if no better Knight came to take his place.

The days passed quickly by, and the evening before the appointed day, the Queen called Sir Bors to her and asked him if he were ready to keep his promise.

“Truly, Madam,” he said, “I am ready to fight and prove your innocence, unless a better Knight than I should come to do battle for you.”

The next day Sir Bors and Sir Mador faced one another, and Sir Bors tarried as long as he could in order to give the Knight he expected time to arrive.

“Bid your champion come forth if he dare,” cried Sir Mador boastfully to the King, and Sir Bors, feeling ashamed, was about to couch his lance when a Knight came galloping out of the wood.

So Sir Bors told King Arthur that a Knight had come, who wished to do battle for the Queen. “And he is a better Knight than I,” said Sir Bors, “therefore if he fights, my promise is discharged.”

And the strange Knight said to the Knights around the King, “I would have you know that it is a dishonour to all the Knights of the Round Table, that they should allow so noble a lady and courteous a Queen to be shamed amongst them”.

The Knights looked at one another, and wondered who this strange Knight could be, for none knew save Sir Bors.

The two Knights took their places at the end of the lists, and at the word they couched their lances, and darted towards one another. Sir Mador's lance was broken in pieces with the force of their impact, but the strange Knight's spear held firm, and Sir Mador was thrown from his horse.

The strange Knight leapt to the ground, and a fight with swords began.

At last the strange Knight struck Sir Mador to his knees; but in a moment Sir Mador rose on his hand and smote the Knight upon the thigh.

At the sight of this blood, the Knight allowed Sir Mador to rise to his feet, and then he dealt him a buffet that stretched him upon the earth.

"I will only grant you your life," said the Knight, "if you will proclaim publicly that you have foully slandered the Queen."

This Sir Mador promised to do, and the Knight went to the steps beneath King Arthur's seat, and the King and Queen kissed one another before all the people. The King and Queen then



H. FORD

ARTHUR AND GUINEVERE
KISS BEFORE ALL THE PEOPLE



thanked the strange Knight for the service he had so gallantly rendered them, and no sooner had he taken off his helmet than they knew him to be Sir Lancelot.

The Queen wept tears of joy on beholding him, and bowed with sorrow at the thought of the unkind words with which she had driven him away. And in this way the Queen's Knight came back to court.

THE FAIR MAID OF ASTOLAT

PART I

It happened soon after the fight for the Queen had taken place, that the damsel of the lake, sometimes called Nimue, and sometimes Vivien, was married to Sir Pelleas, and she came to the Court of King Arthur.

She heard there of the death of Sir Patrise, and by means of her magic she discovered and proclaimed that Sir Pinel had poisoned the apple, and that the Queen was innocent.

Sir Pinel thereupon fled to his country for safety, and this action confirmed his guilt in the minds of the people.

Sir Mador prayed for the Queen's favour

once more, and by Sir Lancelot's request he was forgiven.

The summer had now half gone, and King Arthur announced that another tournament would take place fifteen days hence at Camelot (Winchester), and many Kings and Knights prepared to go there.

The Queen said that she would stay behind, feeling too unwell to meet the noise and bustle of a tourney. Sir Lancelot also declared that his wounds would not allow of his attendance, and as a consequence the King departed in high dudgeon towards Astolat (Guildford), where he proposed to break the journey to Camelot.

When the King had set out, the Queen sent for Sir Lancelot and reproached him for staying behind when the King set such store upon his company.

Sir Lancelot, feeling piqued at her words, declared that the Queen's wishes were his law, that he would follow the King, and would fight in the tournament, but that he would enter the lists in opposition to the King's Knights.

"You must do as you please," said the Queen, "but if you will be ruled by my counsel, you will not oppose the King."

“Madam,” answered Sir Lancelot, “I will take the adventure as it comes,” and early the next morning he set out for Camelot.

He reached Astolat the same evening, and rode through the town to the house of an aged Baron, Sir Bernard of Astolat, and there he dismounted.

The King, from the gardens of the castle, saw him dismount, and turning to the Knights attending him, he said, “I see one man at least who will do marvels in these jousts”.

Sir Lancelot, meanwhile, had entered the Baron’s house, and Sir Bernard made him welcome, although he did not know that his guest was famous over the whole country.

“Fair Sir,” said Sir Lancelot, “I pray you lend me, if you can, a shield bearing a device which nobody knows.”

“Sir,” answered Sir Bernard, “you shall have the shield of my son, Sir Tirre, who was wounded on the day of his Knighthood, and my other son, Sir Lavaine, with your consent, will accompany you to the jousts. Both my sons have been but recently Knighted.”

Sir Bernard, besides his two sons, had a daughter who was known as the Fair Maid of

Astolat, her real name being Elaine le Blanc. This maiden, when she saw Sir Lancelot, fell deeply in love with him, and this love was eventually the cause of the maiden's death.

When she heard that Sir Lancelot was bound for the tourney, she begged him to wear her token on the day.

Sir Lancelot, partly to please the maiden, and partly to assist his disguise, consented to wear the token, although he had never worn the token of any damsel before.

“And what may your token be, fair damsel?” he asked.

“Sir,” she said, “it is a red sleeve, embroidered with pearls,” and she brought it and placed it upon his helmet. Sir Lancelot then took her brother's shield, and handed his own into her keeping.

THE FAIR MAID OF ASTOLAT

PART II

KING ARTHUR had awaited some Knights in Astolat, and when they had arrived he set out for Camelot, followed by Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavaine bearing white shields, and the former



bearing also the fair Elaine's token upon his helmet.

They found Camelot filled with Kings and Knights, but Sir Lavaine discovered lodgings for Sir Lancelot and himself in the house of a rich burgess, who would keep their names a secret.

The trumpets blew at dawn of the next day, and King Arthur took his seat upon a high platform, keeping Sir Gawaine by his side.

The Knights formed themselves into two parties. Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavaine rode to a small wood that lay behind the Knights who would oppose those of the Round Table.

The fight began, and after some time had elapsed, King Arthur's Knights began to drive the others back.

"Now," said Sir Lancelot to Sir Lavaine, "if you will help me you will see King Arthur's side, which is winning, driven back to the other end of the lists."

"Spare not, Sir," replied Sir Lavaine, "for I will do all I can to help you."

They rode into the thickest of the press, and with spear and sword they smote so hard that the Knights of the Round Table fell back.



ELAINE TIES HER SLEEVE ROVND
SIR LANCELOT'S HELMET



“Mercy,” cried Sir Gawaine, “what Knight is that yonder who does these marvellous deeds.”

“I well know who it is,” replied King Arthur.

“I should say it was Sir Lancelot,” said Sir Gawaine, “but this Knight carries a red sleeve upon his helm, and Sir Lancelot has never borne a lady’s token.”

The Knights who were opposed to the King’s party took heart at Sir Lancelot’s brave deeds, but Sir Bors was equal to the occasion, and rallying the Knights of the Round Table, they made a great charge.

Sir Lancelot’s horse was thrown to the ground, and by misfortune the head of Sir Bors’ spear broke short off and was left in Sir Lancelot’s side. Seeing this, Sir Lavaine dashed up, unhorsed the King of Scots, helped Sir Lancelot to mount upon his horse, which had not been injured in the fray, and gave him a spear in place of the one he had lost.

Sir Lancelot then smote Sir Bors and Sir Ector de Maris, the foster father of King Arthur, to the earth, and dealt heavy blows upon the Knights who thronged around them. He hurled himself into the thickest mêlées, and performed deeds of incredible valour. “Mercy,” said Sir

Gawaine again, "I marvel at the deeds of the Knight with the red sleeve. Who can he be?"

"That you shall know presently," said King Arthur; and he commanded that the trumpets should be blown, and declared the Knight with the red sleeve to be the winner of the prize, that Knight having unhorsed more than thirty Knights.

The Kings and Knights of the party that had received Sir Lancelot's and Sir Lavaine's assistance, gathered round and thanked them; for Sir Lavaine had done well also, having unhorsed two Knights of the Round Table, and helped Sir Lancelot at a critical juncture in the tournament. "Fair lords," said Sir Lancelot, "if I have deserved your thanks, I have also paid for them, for my hurt is grievous. I pray you let me depart." He groaned even as he spoke, and galloped into the wood, followed by Sir Lavaine.

When they were in the wood, Sir Lancelot told Sir Lavaine to draw the spear head from his side. Sir Lavaine drew it out, and with a shriek and a groan, Sir Lancelot swooned with the pain.

It was half an hour before he recovered, and then Sir Lavaine helped him upon his horse, and

led him to a hermit who lived some two miles away. The hermit saw him coming, leaning over his saddle bow, and because of the paleness of his face he did not recognise him, until he was so near that he could see the scar upon his face.

He then called to his servants, who took off Sir Lancelot's armour, and laid him in bed. He dressed his wound, and gave him wine to drink, and Sir Lancelot fell asleep. "You are known to me," said the hermit to the wounded Knight when he awoke, "as the knight who bears the noblest name in the world."

THE FAIR MAID OF ASTOLAT

PART III

It was the custom of those days to hold a feast on the evening of the tournament, at which both parties should be present. The Knight of the Red Sleeve not being there, the King made inquiries after him, and received the intelligence that the Knight had left the town sorely wounded.

The King, knowing that the Knight was Sir Lancelot, was much perturbed at this news and exclaimed, "These tidings are the worst I have

had for many a year ; I would give all my lands to know of this Knight's recovery”.

“Do you know him?” asked the other Knights.

“May Heaven send good news of him,” said the King.

“Amen,” answered they.

The prize was kept until the Knight of the Red Sleeve should return for it, and Sir Gawaine and many other Knights scoured the country round in search of him, but no success attending them, they returned without news of the wounded Knight.

Two days after, the King and all his company set out for London, and staying a night at Astolat, Sir Gawaine happened to be lodged at the house of Sir Bernard.

Sir Bernard, and Elaine his daughter, after having given him refreshments, asked him for tidings of the tourney. Sir Gawaine described the deeds of the Knight with the Red Sleeve, and of his companion, and old Sir Bernard's eyes lit up with pleasure to hear his son commended.

“Blessed be God,” said the Maid of Astolat, “that my Knight has sped so well, for I love him with all my heart.”

“And that Knight is your love then,” said Sir Gawaine. “May I ask his name?”

The maiden replied by telling Sir Gawaine the whole story, and ended by saying that the Knight’s own shield was still in her chamber.

“Fair damsel,” said Sir Gawaine, “I beg you to show me the shield.”

Sir Bernard sent his Squire for the shield, and when Sir Gawaine beheld it, he knew it to be Sir Lancelot’s. “And the Knight to whom this shield belongs is your love?” asked Sir Gawaine.

“He is indeed,” the damsel answered, “I would that I were his.”

“You would be thrice happy to be loved by such a man,” said Sir Gawaine, “for your Knight is the most honourable in the world. During the four and twenty years that I have known him, he has never worn a lady’s token, and from this you may know, damsel, the honour he has paid you. I grieve to tell you that your Knight is sorely wounded.”

“Alas! alas!” cried the damsel. “Where is he, and what is the nature of his hurt?”

“He was wounded by the man who loved him best,” said Sir Gawaine, “and if that man knew

it was Sir Lancelot he had wounded, his grief would be as great as yours and mine."

"Dear father," said Elaine, "I pray you give me leave to search for Sir Lancelot, for I cannot stay here at my ease while my Knight lies wounded and perhaps unattended."

In the morning Sir Gawaine told the King that he had found Sir Lancelot's shield in the keeping of the Maid of Astolat, and that the maid loved him so well that she had ridden to seek him.

The King and his Court came to London, and all knew that it was Sir Lancelot who had jousted the best, and that he had worn the token of the Maid of Astolat. When Sir Bors heard that it was Sir Lancelot whom he had wounded, he grew very sad; and the Queen, when she was told that Sir Lancelot had borne the Maid of Astolat's token, became nearly mad with wrath.

She summoned Sir Bors to her, and exclaimed, "Tell me, has not Sir Lancelot been false, when, after swearing that for right or wrong he would be my Knight only, he wears the token of another lady? Fie on him!" she cried, "I myself heard Sir Gawaine tell my lord Arthur of the great love existing between Sir Lancelot and the maid."

“Madam,” said Sir Bors, “the love, I fear, is all on one side, for Sir Lancelot loves no lady better than his Queen. I am now going to set out in search of him.”

THE FAIR MAID OF ASTOLAT

PART IV

MEANWHILE the fair Elaine had ridden to Camelot to find her Knight, and while she was riding hither and thither in the hope of gaining tidings of him, she chanced to meet her brother Sir Lavaine, exercising his horse.

“Lead me to Sir Lancelot,” she said, after greeting her brother.

He was surprised to hear that the strange Knight was Sir Lancelot, although he knew that a Knight who could perform such deeds must bear an illustrious name. He led his sister to the hermit’s dwelling in which Sir Lancelot lay in peril of his life.

When the maid, worn out with fatigue, and with feelings wrought with anxiety, perceived Sir Lancelot lying upon his couch, pale and motionless, she fell in a swoon upon the floor.

The good hermit attended her, and when she

had recovered, Sir Lancelot begged her to be of good cheer, and told her that if she had come to comfort him, she by her presence had already done him good.

The maiden told him that Sir Gawaine had seen his shield in her keeping, and Sir Lancelot could scarcely conceal his vexation, for he knew that the Queen would hear of it, and that there would be trouble in consequence.

Elaine stayed by his side and tended him, and Lancelot asked Sir Lavaine to ride to Camelot and meet Sir Bors there, for he knew that good Sir Bors would seek him when he learnt that it was his lance that had done the mischief.

Sir Lavaine met Sir Bors in the town, and brought him to the hermitage. He was overcome with grief to find Sir Lancelot in so bad a plight, and standing by the bedside he wept and said, "Oh, my lord, God send you a speedy recovery. Great is my shame at having wounded you thus, and I have come to ask your forgiveness."

"Fair cousin," said Sir Lancelot, "I, in my pride, would have overcome you all, and have received but my deserts. I pray you forget that you had aught to do with my ill fortune. Let

us rather look forward to the time when I shall be recovered."

Sir Bors then told Sir Lancelot that the Queen was filled with wrath, when she heard that he had worn the token of another lady.

"I am dismayed to hear that," said Sir Lancelot, "but I wore the token partly at this young lady's request, and partly that my disguise might be more complete."

"And is this damsel the Fair Maid of Astolat?" asked Sir Bors.

"She it is," replied Sir Lancelot, "and she has searched for me to tend my wounds, and will not return to her home."

"And can you not care for her?" asked Sir Bors. "She is gentle and fair, and she loves you truly, I can plainly see."

"Your words grieve me," said Sir Lancelot, "and I would that I were able to love the maid as she deserves."

Sir Lancelot's strength gradually returned to him, and when he was able to walk, Sir Bors left him with the Fair Maid of Astolat, and rode to the Court of King Arthur, carrying with him the news of the wounded Knight. There, at the All Hallows tournament, he won a prize

for unhorsing twenty Knights. Sir Gareth also performed great deeds, but to the surprise of the Court, he vanished suddenly from the field, and no one could discover the direction he had taken.

When the tourney was over, Sir Bors returned to Sir Lancelot, and the next morning they bade the hermit farewell, and rode with the maid to Astolat.

In the morning, when Sir Lancelot and Sir Bors were about to depart from Sir Bernard's house, Elaine called her father, and her two brothers, Sir Tirre and Sir Lavaine, together, and before them all she entreated Sir Lancelot to stay and be her husband.

"My lord, Sir Lancelot, fair Knight," she cried, "leave me not to die of love for you. I pray you, do not break the heart of a maiden whose greatest virtue in her eyes is the love she bears for you."

"Damsel," said Sir Lancelot, "believe me when I tell you truly that I can never have a wife. In virtue of the goodwill you bear me, I will do all in my power to help your happiness if you can set your heart upon another Knight, but I cannot do what you ask."

At these words the damsel swooned, and her maids bore her to her chamber.

Sir Lancelot thought that it would be kinder to depart before the maiden recovered her senses.

“My daughter will die, I fear,” said Sir Bernard, “if you cannot make her your wife.”

“Her sorrow nearly breaks my heart,” said Sir Lancelot, “so pure and gentle a maid is she, but, Sir, I cannot do what she asks of me.”

“Father,” said Sir Lavaine, “she is indeed as pure and good as Sir Lancelot has said, and in one respect I resemble her, for leave Sir Lancelot I cannot.” So when Sir Lancelot and Sir Bors bade the old man farewell and departed, they were accompanied by Sir Lavaine.

When they reached Camelot, the King and the Knights of the Round Table, save only Sir Agrawaine and Sir Mordred, expressed their delight at Sir Lancelot’s safe return, but the Queen was still so angry that she would not see him.

THE FAIR MAID OF ASTOLAT

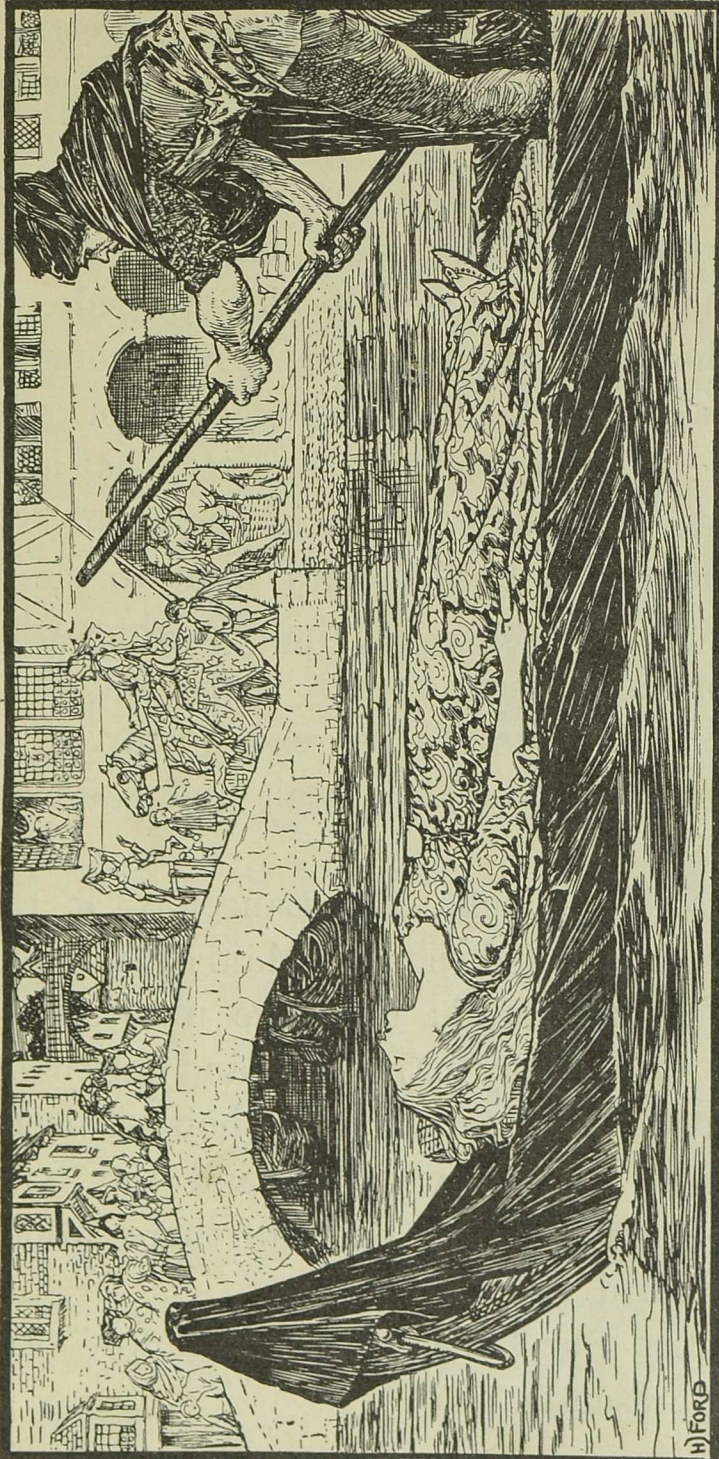
PART V

WHEN the damsel came to her senses and found that Sir Lancelot had ridden away, she refused to eat or sleep, and gave way all day to vain lamentations.

In ten days she had become so weak, that the priest came to her, and exhorted her to keep her mind from earthly things. She would not listen, but cried after Sir Lancelot continually, and called her father and her brother Sir Tirre to her bedside. There she begged her brother to write a letter, which she dictated to him.

“When I am dead,” she said, “and before my body is cold, let this letter be put in my right hand, and let me be dressed in my richest clothes, laid upon a fair bed, and driven in a chariot to the Thames. There place me upon a barge covered with black samite, and let a dumb boatman steer me. Let all this be done, father, I beseech you.”

The maiden died the next day, and her wishes were carried out, the dumb boatman steering the boat down the stream towards London.



THE BLACK BARGET

H. FORG

When it had arrived opposite Westminster, King Arthur and Queen Guenevere, who had withdrawn into a window, spied it floating down the river. The King summoned Sir Kay, and bade him bring the black barge to the shore, and he led the Queen to the riverside.

They saw in the barge a fair woman lying on a rich bed, her clothing of cloth of gold, and they took from her hand the letter that lay there.

Leaving a trusty man in charge of the boat with its pitiful burden, they went to the King's chamber, followed by the Knights who had accompanied them to the shore, for the King wished the letter to be read openly.

He then broke the seal, and bade a clerk read it.

“Noble Knight, Sir Lancelot,” it ran, “I whom men called the Fair Maid of Astolat, loved thee beyond recall: therefore unto all ladies I make moan; pray for my soul, and bury me. Pray for my soul, Sir Lancelot, as thou art peerless.”

Here the letter ended, and the King and Queen, and all the Knights there wept when they heard it.

“Let Sir Lancelot be sent for,” said the King presently.

“My lord Arthur,” said Sir Lancelot, when the letter was read to him, “I grieve for this poor child, for she loved me beyond all measure, and tended me through my sickness. I deemed it kinder to leave her, hoping that she would forget me, for if I married her and loved her not, I knew how great her unhappiness would be.”

“You might have been a little gentle with her,” said the Queen, “and have found some way of saving her life.”

“Madam,” Sir Lancelot answered, “she would have nothing but my love, and that I could not give her.”

And thus perished this poor maid, whose love, so great as to be beyond her control, and worthy of a great reward, was the means of piteously ending her life.

LANCELOT AND GUENEVERE

PART I

GUENEVERE was the daughter of Leodegrance, King of Cornwall, a fair and slender damsel, for whom all the Knights smote their hardest in the jousts.

King Arthur saw her, and loved her, but unlike the other Knights, who had to be content with worshipping from afar, he, being a King, was able to raise his eyes even to Guenevere. She, obeying her father in all things, submitted to his judgment in the matter of her marriage. When he desired her to clothe herself as be-seemed a Princess, in order to go to King Arthur's Court, her heart beat with joy at the sight of the rich stuffs and jewels, and she made all ready for her wedding.

One day, a band of horsemen rode up to King Leodegrance's castle, and at the head of them was Sir Lancelot du Lake, King Arthur's friend, who had been sent to escort her to King Arthur's Court.

They rode together day after day, and Sir Lancelot told Guenevere stories of gallant deeds and of love. They passed beneath trees green with the spring, and over blue hyacinths, until they drew rein at sunset before the silken pavilion of Uther Pendragon. One evening, far across a plain, they saw the towers of a city shining in the sun.

A band of horsemen rode to meet them, and among them was Arthur, who leaped from

his horse to welcome Guenevere and lead her home. Coming straight from her own home, and having been constantly in Sir Lancelot's company while on the journey, Arthur was to her in her loneliness a stranger, and while by his side her thoughts turned to Sir Lancelot.

From these early days the friendship between Sir Lancelot and the Queen grew stronger, until Guenevere was fain at last to admit to herself that it was Sir Lancelot she loved, although she honoured and loved King Arthur also.

It befell one spring, that Queen Guenevere thought she would go a-maying in the woods that lay around the city of Westminster. She bade her Knights be ready the next morning dressed in green, and she would bring a lady for each Knight, and each should be attended by a Squire and Yeomen.

The next morning, they rode in the early dawn, and plucked flowers which they stuck in their girdles and doublets. The Queen was as happy as the youngest maiden, but having promised the King to return at the hour of ten, she gave the signal when that hour arrived for the homeward journey.

The Knights were mounting their horses,



GUINEVERE SENDS HER PAGE TO LANCELOT FOR HELP.

when out of the forest rode Sir Meliagraunce, who for many years had loved the Queen, and sought an opportunity to carry her off. With him rode two score Knights, and a hundred archers marched behind. He surrounded the Queen, and, overpowering her Knights, all of whom were unarmed, he bore her off to his castle.

Now when Queen Guenevere found that she could not escape, she sent a page with a ring to Sir Lancelot asking for his help.

And presently Sir Lancelot came riding to the rescue through the wood that lay close to Lambeth. In this wood some archers from Sir Meliagraunce's castle were hiding, and jumping from their ambush they bade him go no farther along the path on peril of his life.

Sir Lancelot did not stop, and the archers shot his horse with many arrows, but he jumped from its back and ran past them deeper into the wood.

Sir Lancelot after many adventures rescued Queen Guenevere, and it was arranged in consequence of this affair, that he should fight the Knight Sir Meliagraunce in the field near Westminster. It chanced, however, that Sir Lancelot



THE ARCHERS THREATEN LANCELOT

fell into a trap that Sir Meliagraunce had laid for him on the day fixed for the combat, and if a lady who loved him well had not chanced to hear him, and freed him from his imprisonment, he would not have been on the field to meet his foe.

Just in time Sir Lancelot dashed up, mounted upon his white horse, and explained to the King the trick by which Sir Meliagraunce had hoped to make his appearance in the lists impossible.

LANCELOT AND GUENEVERE

PART II

WHEN the King and Queen and all the lords heard Sir Lancelot's tale, their hearts stirred within them with anger, and the Queen took her seat by the King's side to watch the combat.

The two Knights then prepared themselves for battle, and putting their spears in rest, came together with a noise like thunder, and Sir Lancelot bore Sir Meliagraunce right over his horse. Then Sir Lancelot jumped down, and they fought on foot, till in the end Sir Meliagraunce was smitten to the ground by a blow on the head from his enemy.

“Most noble Knight, give me my life,” cried he, “for I yield to you, and put myself into the King’s hands and yours.”

Sir Lancelot did not know what to answer, for he longed above anything in the world to deal out justice to the rascal; so he looked at the Queen to see whether she would give him any sign of what she would have done. The Queen shook her head in answer, and Sir Lancelot knew by that token that she considered he deserved death, and he bade Sir Meliagraunce get up, and continue the fight.

“Nay,” said Sir Meliagraunce, “I will never rise till you accept my surrender.”

“Listen,” answered Sir Lancelot. “I will leave my head and left side bare, and my left arm shall be bound behind me, and in this guise I will fight with you.”

At this Sir Meliagraunce started to his feet, and cried, “My lord Arthur, take heed to this offer, for I will accept it, therefore let him be bound and unarmed as he has said”.

The Knights disarmed Sir Lancelot, first his head and then his side, his left hand being bound behind his back in such a manner that he could not use his shield, and many a Knight and lady

marvelled that Sir Lancelot would risk himself so. When the fight was renewed, Sir Meliagraunce lifted his sword and would have struck Sir Lancelot on his bare head, had he not leapt lightly to one side. Before Sir Meliagraunce could recover himself, Sir Lancelot struck him heavily on the helm and split his skull in two.

After this further proof of loyalty, Sir Lancelot was more honoured by the King and Queen than he had ever been before.

Among the Knights at Arthur's Court at that time were Sir Mordred and Sir Agrawaine, brothers of Sir Gawaine, Sir Gaheris, and Sir Gareth. Now Sir Agrawaine and Sir Mordred had evil natures, and at this time they were full of envy of the noble deeds performed by Sir Lancelot, so they cast about to discover how they might ruin him. They resolved to accomplish this by rousing jealous thoughts in the mind of the King.

It has been told in the tale of the marriage of Arthur, that Queen Guenevere's heart had been given to Lancelot on the journey to the Court, and she loved to have him with her. This was known well to Sir Mordred, who watched eagerly for a chance to work her ill.

It came one day when Arthur proclaimed a hunt, and Sir Mordred guessed that Sir Lancelot, who did not care for hunting, would stay behind and spend the time in attendance on the Queen. So Sir Mordred went to the King and began to speak evil of the Queen and Sir Lancelot. At first King Arthur would not listen to it, but slowly his jealousy was aroused, and he allowed the ill words to dwell in his mind until he began to think that the Queen did indeed love Sir Lancelot. He told Sir Mordred and Sir Agrawaine that they might do what they liked in the matter, and he would not meddle with them. But they let so many into the secret of their plot, that it at last came to the ears of Sir Bors.

He warned Sir Lancelot not to go near the Queen that day, or harm would come of it; but Sir Lancelot persisted in obeying the summons of his liege lady.

By ill fortune, he carried with him that day no arms except his sword, which was hidden beneath his mantle. He had no sooner entered the Queen's reception-room than Sir Agrawaine, Sir Mordred, and twelve other Knights of the Round Table, hammered at the door and cried loudly for him.

“Madam,” said Sir Lancelot, “if you have any armour with which to arm me I would soon drive these people away.”

“Alas!” said the Queen, “I have neither spear nor armour, so that you cannot resist them, and you will be slain and I shall be burnt.”

“Traitor Knight,” cried Sir Mordred, “come out and fight, for escape you cannot.”

“I will indeed,” said Sir Lancelot, and taking the Queen in his arms he kissed her. “Most noble Queen,” he said, “if I die I pray you seek Sir Bors, my nephew, who will protect you and take you to my lands, where you can live in safety.”

“Nay, Lancelot,” answered the Queen, “if you die, I will gladly die also.”

LANCELOT AND GUENEVERE

PART III

SIR LANCELOT wrapped his cloak about his arm, and stood beside the door which the Knights were trying to break open. With his left hand he opened the door far enough to allow of one man passing through at a time.

Sir Colgrevice of Gore, a strong Knight,

came forward, and with his sword struck a heavy blow at Sir Lancelot. Sir Lancelot quickly stepped aside, causing the blow to fall harmlessly, and with his arm he gave Sir Colgrevice such a buffet that he fell dead. He then hastily withdrew into the chamber and barred the door.

He quickly divested the dead Knight of his armour, and the Queen and her ladies helped him to buckle it on himself, the Knights without still calling, "Traitor Knight, come out!"

As soon as he was armed, Sir Lancelot flung open the chamber door and strode out brandishing his sword. He killed Sir Agrawaine with his first blow, and in a few minutes twelve dead bodies lay around him. He wounded Sir Mordred, who ran away before he could come to further harm. When all his assailants had fled Sir Lancelot returned to the Queen and said, "Alas, dear Madam, the Knights who have escaped will make King Arthur my foe, and your foe also, but if you will come with me to my castle, I will there defend you against the world".

"I will not go with you now," said the Queen, "but if as a punishment they decide to burn me, you may deliver me as you think best."

“While I live I will deliver you,” said Sir



LANCELOT COMES OUT OF GUENEVERE'S ROOM

Lancelot, and he left the Queen to return to his own lodgings.

He met on the way Sir Bors and many of his friends fully armed and on their way to his assistance. So he told them what had happened, and exhorted them to be of good courage and in readiness, for the need of their services would arise before many hours were past.

And they all answered that they had hitherto won nothing but fame with him, and they were now ready to stand by him in ill fortune, if ill fortune there should be.

Sir Lancelot thanked them for their encouragement, and bade Sir Bors discover who were friends and who were foes.

By seven o'clock many noble Knights had gathered round Sir Lancelot, and were sworn into his cause.

“My lords,” said he, “while I was waiting yesterday on our lady, the Queen, certain Knights collected round the door and cried ‘Treason,’ and much ado I had to escape with my life.

“In consequence of the tales these Knights will carry to King Arthur, I am sure of mortal war, and the Queen will be sentenced to death at the stake. It is for this reason that I have asked you to meet together.”

Sir Bors said that it was truly Sir Lancelot's

part to rescue the Queen, and they all took counsel as to the best way in which this could be effected.

Sir Bors considered that the wisest course would be to carry the Queen to the Castle of Joyous Guard, there to be kept until the King's anger had in some part subsided. To this the other Knights agreed, and they concealed themselves in a wood by the town, waiting to hear what Arthur would do.

LANCELOT AND GUENEVERE

PART IV

SIR MORDRED, meanwhile, had ridden to King Arthur, and had told a tale implicating Sir Lancelot and the Queen.

The King was much grieved at the tale, for he loved Sir Lancelot. "It is a bitter blow," he said, "and this will shatter the fellowship of the Round Table. As I am judge, the Queen must die, for she is the cause of the death of these Knights."

"My lord," said Gawaine, "do not be hasty in your judgment. This Sir Mordred, with his foul tongue, is venting his spite upon Sir Lance-

lot, whom we all know to be the Queen's especial Knight, ready to do battle for her, and to truly serve the King. Sir Lancelot will prove who is right on the body of any Knight living, whether for himself or the Lady Guenevere."

"That I can well believe," replied King Arthur, "for he trusts in his own strength and fears no man. Never again shall he fight the Queen's battles, for she must die by the law. Put on, therefore, your armour, and go with your brothers, Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, to bring the Queen to the fire, there to have judgment delivered upon her and to suffer the penalty of her crime."

"No, my lord, that I will never do," cried Sir Gawaine; "I will not stand by and see so noble a lady suffer so shameful a death."

"Then let your brothers obey my commands," said the King.

"Sir," said those two Knights, "if you command, we obey, though sorely against our will. And if we go, it will be dressed as men of peace, and not in armour."

So the Queen was led outside the gates, and her rich dress was taken off. Her ladies wrung their hands in grief, and few men wore armour,

for in those days the presence of mail-clad Knights made such a death more shameful.

Among those present was one of Sir Lancelot's Knights, and when he saw the Queen's dress unclasped, and the priest step forward to hear her confession, he rode to warn Sir Lancelot that the hour had come.

They were leading the Queen to the stake, when suddenly the thunder of horses' hoofs was heard, and Sir Lancelot dashed up to the fire, slaying the Knights who stood around without armour to protect them. He did not look before he struck, and afterwards the bodies of Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth were found among the slain.

He reached the Queen, and throwing a mantle over her, he lifted her on his saddle, and rode away to the Castle of Joyous Guard, followed by many noble Knights.

The news was brought to King Arthur of the rescue of the Queen by Sir Lancelot, and of the death of the two brothers of Sir Gawaine.

"I charge you," he cried to his Knights, "not to divulge to Sir Gawaine that his brother Gareth has been slain by Sir Lancelot, whom

he loved above all other men. I fear it would drive Sir Gawaine out of his mind."

"It is true," answered some of the Knights, "yet Sir Lancelot does not know even now whom he has slain."

"Nevertheless," replied King Arthur, "I believe that this affair will be the cause of a feud to the death between Sir Gawaine and Sir Lancelot, and I fear it will break up the fellowship of the Round Table. My heart is heavy at the loss of my Knights. Queens I might have in plenty, and the loss of one does but grieve me deeply. Knights such as those who have followed Sir Lancelot I can never replace, and war with him will end my happiness for ever."

Some one told Sir Gawaine that Sir Lancelot had rescued the Queen. "I well knew he would rescue her," said he, "and he has acted as a noble Knight should, but where, I pray you, are my brethren?"

"Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth," said the man, "I grieve to say are slain."

"And by whom?"

"Sir Lancelot slew them," said the man.

"He cannot have slain Sir Gareth," replied

Sir Gawaine, "for my brother loved him more than he loved Gaheris or myself. I cannot believe that Lancelot slew my brother."

Sir Gawaine then ran to King Arthur, and learned that his brothers had been slain in the press unknown to Sir Lancelot, and that they had been buried at once in order that the sight of their bodies should not aggravate his sorrow.

"I swear to you, my lord," cried Sir Gawaine, "that from this day I will never rest until Sir Lancelot or I be slain. And I will journey to the world's end, if need be, to find him."

LANCELOT AND GUENEVERE

PART V

"I AM told," said the King to Sir Gawaine, "that Sir Lancelot awaits us in the Castle of Joyous Guard, and that many people are flocking to him there. Call your friends together, and I will summon my Knights and vassals, to the siege of Joyous Guard."

The King, with a great host, laid siege to the castle, and at the end of fifteen weeks, no breach had been made in the walls. It was then harvest time, and Sir Lancelot called a truce,

and the King, urged by Sir Gawaine, took this opportunity to challenge him to battle.

“No,” answered Sir Lancelot, “with yourself and Sir Gawaine I will never fight. I am deeply grieved to have caused the death of your Knights, and I slew them, my lord, to save Queen Guenevere, whom you sentenced to death in the heat of your passion. Many times, my lord, you have thanked me when I have saved your Queen from the fire. I pray you do the like again, and take back your Queen into your grace.”

On hearing these brave words, King Arthur would fain have made peace with Sir Lancelot, but Sir Gawaine would not hear of it. He bitterly reproached Sir Lancelot with causing his brothers' deaths, and called him craven for refusing to fight King Arthur.

At last Sir Lancelot's patience and courtesy failed him, and he answered that next morning he would give them battle.

Sir Gawaine's heart leaped with joy when he heard this, and he privately instructed his Knights to watch Sir Lancelot and to slay him if the chance offered itself. Sir Lancelot, on the other hand, bade his Knights on no account to hurt King Arthur or Sir Gawaine.

At dawn of day, a great host marched forth from the gates of the Castle of Joyous Guard. Sir Lancelot rode at the head, and on either side rode Sir Bors and Sir Lionel. All day long the battle waged, sometimes one side gaining the advantage, and sometimes the other. Many were the times that King Arthur strove to draw near enough to slay Sir Lancelot, each time to be deftly avoided. At last the King was unhorsed by Sir Bors, who would have slain him had not Sir Lancelot held his hand. "My lord Arthur," he said, "I pray you for the love of God to stay this strife. Remember my services in many places. I cannot strike you, and no fame can be yours if the fight continues on those conditions."

When King Arthur had mounted his horse again, he looked at Sir Lancelot, and tears were in his eyes as he thought of that Knight's great courtesy.

"Alas! that this strife should ever have begun," he sighed, and rode away to a different part of the field, and there the battle ended for that day, and the dead were buried.

Sir Gawaine, however, would not allow the King to make peace. A message from the Pope was received, asking the King to end the strife

and take back Queen Guenevere, but Sir Gawaine urged him not to be persuaded, and the King followed Sir Gawaine's advice, although in his heart he wished for peace.

As to the Queen Sir Gawaine said nothing; and King Arthur promised that he would take back the Queen as the Pope desired, and that if Sir Lancelot brought her, he should come and go safely.

Sir Lancelot sent a messenger to the King to say that it was never his intention to keep the Queen, unless she was in such danger as to warrant his doing so. He therefore would himself bring Queen Guenevere to the King in eight days.

Eight days later a company of Knights, one hundred strong, rode from the Castle of Joyous Guard. Each was clothed in green velvet, and bestrode a horse with trappings reaching to the ground, and each held in his hand an olive branch.

Behind the Queen rode four and twenty gentlewomen, also clothed in green, and twelve Esquires attended upon Sir Lancelot. He and the Queen wore dresses of white and gold tissue, while their horses' housings were set with precious

stones. No man had ever gazed upon so noble a pair as they who rode from Joyous Guard to Carlisle, attended by their escort clothed in green.

Sir Lancelot sprang from his horse when they reached Carlisle, and helping the Queen from hers, led her to King Arthur, who sat surrounded by his Knights and with Sir Gawaine at his side.

He kneeled down, and the Queen kneeled also, but the King remained silent.

Sir Gawaine would not let King Arthur listen to anything that Sir Lancelot said, but told him roughly that while one of them lived peace could not be made, and on behalf of the King bade him leave the country in fifteen days.

Sir Lancelot sadly took farewell of the Queen, and rode from the Court to sail to his lands across the sea.

THE END OF IT ALL

PART I

THE Queen having returned to King Arthur, he was willing that peace should be permanent, to enable the country to recover its prosperity; but Sir Gawaine would give him no rest until he had

consented to raise a host and make war upon Sir Lancelot.

Before he marched away he ordered his nephew Sir Mordred to govern the kingdom in his absence.

No sooner was his uncle at a safe distance, than Sir Mordred gave it out that King Arthur had been slain in battle, and he caused himself to be crowned King at Canterbury.

Then he summoned Queen Guenevere, and ordered her to be ready to marry him on a certain day. The Queen hurried at once to London, and rode to the Tower, in which she stored food, and with her men-at-arms around her, she determined to defend it against Sir Mordred until King Arthur should return.

Sir Mordred laid close siege to the Tower for many months, until at last word was brought to him that King Arthur was hurrying home across the seas to punish the nephew who had betrayed him. Sir Mordred then retired with a great host to Dover, there to await the King's arrival.

King Arthur and his men landed on the sea-shore, and though Sir Mordred's host fell upon them while they were in the surf, they won their

way through, and Sir Mordred's men flew into the country.

When the fight was over, a man came to the King with the news that he had found Sir Gawaine lying sorely wounded in a boat. The King ordered the man to lead him there, and he found that Sir Gawaine's chance of recovery was very small, for an old wound had broken out afresh, and was bleeding profusely.

"King Arthur, my uncle," said Sir Gawaine, "my death day has come, and through my own fault; for had Sir Lancelot been here this unhappy war would not have been begun, and it is I who am the cause of his absence."

Then Sir Gawaine asked for paper, pen and ink. Resting in King Arthur's arms he wrote to Sir Lancelot, saying that he was dying of an old wound given to him by Sir Lancelot in the siege of a city across the sea, and thus showing that Merlin's prophecy was fulfilled.

Sir Gawaine in his letter also begged Sir Lancelot to come to the help of King Arthur, who was sore bested with Sir Mordred. "Pray for my soul, I beseech you," he wrote, "and visit my tomb." Then Sir Gawaine died, and was buried by King Arthur in the chapel of Dover Castle.

The next day, news was brought to King Arthur that Sir Mordred had pitched his camp on Barham Down, and the King rode thither with his host, and a great battle ensued, many on both sides being slain.

In the end Sir Mordred again withdrew, and King Arthur moved westwards towards Salisbury.

In order to end the war, the King offered to give him Cornwall and Kent, with the understanding that he should become King of all England on King Arthur's death.

This Sir Mordred agreed to, if King Arthur and fourteen Knights would meet him, similarly attended, between the two armies.

King Arthur, suspecting treachery, warned his army to rush forward if they saw a sword drawn, and with his fourteen Knights rode out to meet Sir Mordred. The meeting took place, and they agreed on the truce, but while they were drinking wine together an adder stung one of the Knights, and he drew his sword to kill it.

The men of both armies saw the sword drawn, and they closed upon one another, to begin the fiercest fight that up to that time had ever taken place in a Christian land.

All day long they rode and speared, until in the evening a hundred thousand men lay dead upon the down. Only two of King Arthur's Knights were still alive, Sir Lucan and his brother, Sir Bedivere.

"Alas, that I should see this day," cried the King aloud; and looking round he saw Sir Mordred leaning on his sword, and a heap of dead men lay around him.

THE END OF IT ALL

PART II

"GIVE me my spear," cried King Arthur to Sir Lucan.

"Sir, let him be," answered Sir Lucan. "Blessed be God, you have won the field, for we three remain alive, while of the others none are alive except Sir Mordred."

"Tide me life or tide me death," said the King, "he shall not escape me now, for so fair an opportunity may not occur again." He lifted his spear with both hands, and ran towards Sir Mordred, crying, "Traitor! your death day has come," and struck him under the shield

THE LAST
BATTLE

HJFORD



SIR MORDRED

so fiercely that the spear ran right through his body.

Sir Mordred knew that he had received his death wound. Raising himself from the ground he struck the King a blow that cut his helmet in two, and then fell back dead.

Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere carried the King to a little chapel that happened to be standing close by.

The walls of the chapel were green with moss. "Would that I could leave this place," said King Arthur, and the two Knights tried to lift him outside again; but Sir Lucan had been wounded in the fight, and the wound breaking out afresh with the strain, he fell and died at King Arthur's feet.

"Alas!" said the King, "he has died for my sake, and he had more need of help than I. The time is flying fast, and therefore, Sir Bedivere, cease your moaning and weeping. Take my sword Excalibur to yonder water side. When you reach the water's edge, throw my sword into the water, and come and tell me what you see."

"My lord," answered Sir Bedivere, "your command shall be obeyed," and he departed for the water, bearing the sword in his hand.

When he examined that noble sword, and saw the jewels in the pommel and hilt, he said to himself, "If I throw this sword into the water, no good can come of it," so he hid Excalibur under a tree, and returned to the King.

"What have you seen?" asked the King.

"Sir," answered Sir Bedivere, "I saw nothing but the waves upon the water."

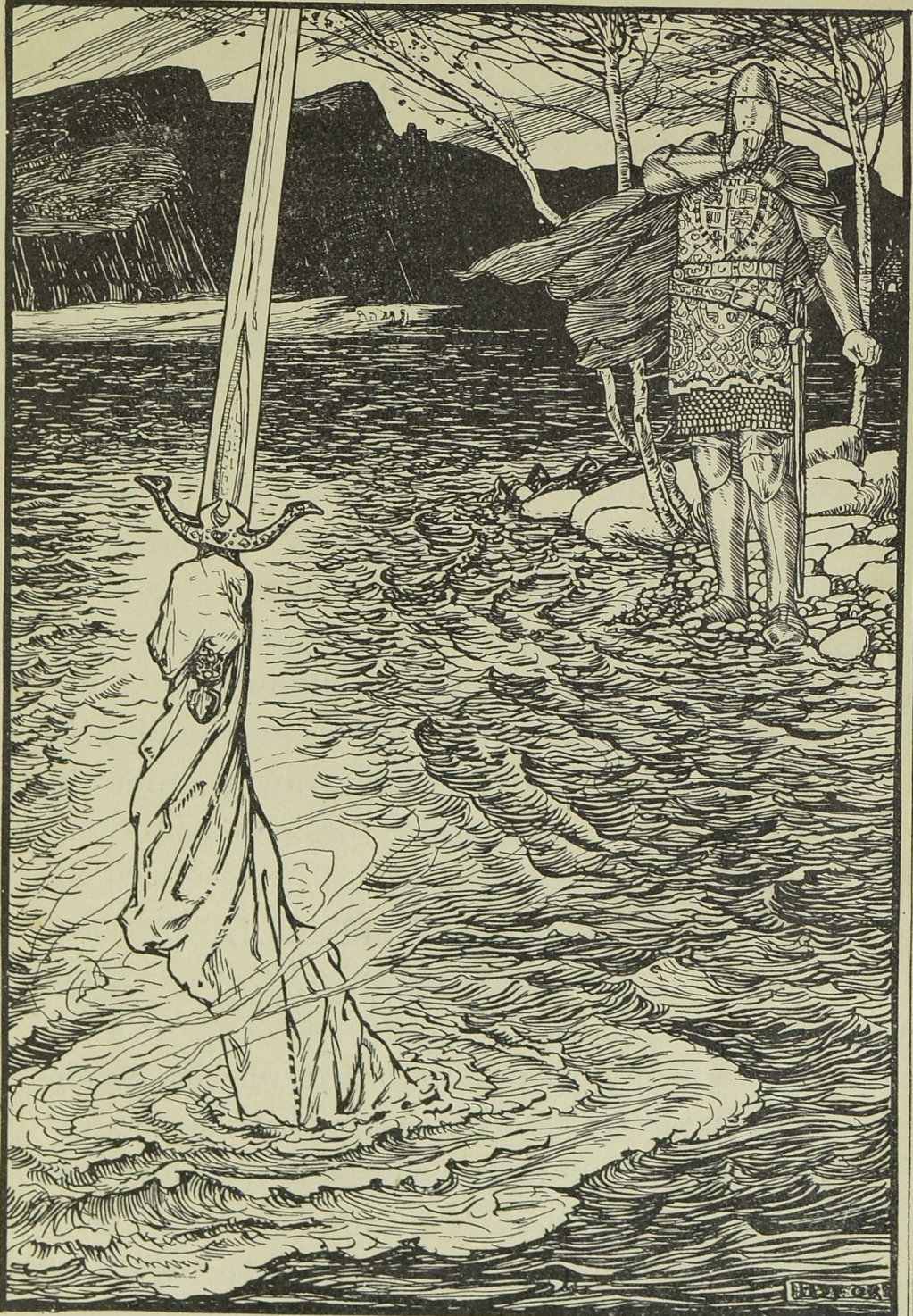
"You are not dealing truthfully with me," said the King. "Go back and do my command. Throw the sword, and spare not."

But again Sir Bedivere could not bring himself to throw the sword away. Instead, he again hid the sword, and returned to the King to tell him he had seen nothing but the waves and the gloom.

"Traitor!" cried the King, "twice you have deceived me. If you do not my bidding this time, I will slay you, wounded as I am."

Then Sir Bedivere was ashamed, and taking the sword, he swung it back and fore, and, with the impulse thus gathered, it cut its way through the gloom to the middle of the water.

As it flew through the air, a hand and arm rose from the waves, and caught it by the hilt.



EXCALIBUR RETURNS TO THE MERE

The sword was then brandished thrice before disappearing for ever beneath the surface.

Then Sir Bedivere returned to the King, and told him of what he had seen.

“Help me hence,” said the King, “for I have already tarried over long,” and Sir Bedivere bore him upon his back to the water side. And when they stood upon the bank, a little barge drew near, containing a Queen and many fair ladies, all in black hoods. When they beheld King Arthur, they shrieked and wept.

“Now place me in the barge,” said King Arthur, and Sir Bedivere put him softly down, and the ladies moaned and wept round him, while the barge moved slowly away from the shore.

THE END OF IT ALL

PART III

WHEN Queen Guenevere heard of the battle, and of the death of King Arthur, she stole away with five of her ladies to Almesbury, and became a nun.

Meanwhile Sir Lancelot, who had received Sir Gawaine's letter, and heard that Sir Mordred

had taken the crown, rose in wrath, and calling Sir Bors, they together collected a host and sailed for Dover to avenge themselves on that false Knight.

When they arrived, they were told that the King was slain, and that Sir Gawaine had been buried by the King in the chapel at Dover Castle. And there Sir Lancelot wept and prayed for two days.

Then Sir Lancelot set out to find the lady Guenevere, and at last he came to a nunnery, where Queen Guenevere was looking out of her lattice. She was aware of his presence as soon as he walked in the cloister, and when she saw him she swooned away.

When she had recovered she said to those around her, "You will marvel, fair ladies, to see me swoon. Yonder Knight is the cause, and I pray you to bring him to me."

When Sir Lancelot had been led to her, she said to her ladies, "Through me and this Knight has this dreadful war been wrought, and night and day I do penance for it. Sir Lancelot, I pray you to steel your heart against me, and to make up your mind never to see my face again. Go back to your own land, I pray

you, to govern and protect it. Take to yourself a wife, love wisely, and pray for the soul of Guenevere."

"No, Madam," said Lancelot, "that I shall never do. Instead, I shall enter upon a life similar to the one that you have chosen."

"I can never believe," said the Queen, "that you will forsake the vanities of the world altogether."

"Madam," answered he, "you speak as your heart prompts you, yet you have never known me to break my word. If in the quest of the Holy Graal I had forsaken the vanities of the world with all my heart, with the exception of Galahad, my son, I should have passed all other Knights. And, lady, since you have chosen a spiritual life, I will choose as you have done, and will seek a hermit with whom I will spend my days in penance and prayer. Madam, I beseech you to kiss me once again."

"No," said the Queen, "I may not do that," and Sir Lancelot mounted his horse, and departed in great sorrow.

THE END OF IT ALL

PART IV

SIR LANCELOT rode through the forest for two days, and then he came upon a hermitage and a chapel between two high cliffs, and he heard a little bell ring for Mass.

He entered, and found the Bishop of Canterbury within, and with him Sir Bedivere. After Mass, Sir Bedivere told Sir Lancelot of the throwing of the sword into the lake, and of the passing of Arthur in the barge to the valley of Avilion, and Sir Lancelot's grief at the tidings of the King's death was very great. He kneeled down and besought the Bishop to take him into the Church, and the Bishop put a robe upon him.

When fifteen days had passed, and Lancelot had not returned, Sir Bors sent the great host back, and set out with some faithful friends to search over England after him.

They rode different ways, and by chance it was Sir Bors who came to the chapel in which Sir Lancelot was staying.

He prayed Sir Bors to stay also, and become one of their fellowship, and in six months six

other Knights joined them, spending their days in fasting and prayer, and keeping no riches for themselves.

Six years had passed in this way, when Sir Lancelot one night had a vision, causing him to hasten to Almesbury. He learned from the vision that he should find Queen Guenevere dead, and that he was to take her body and bury it by the side of King Arthur.

Sir Lancelot, therefore, set out on foot with seven other Knights from Glastonbury to Almesbury, and being weak with fasting, they took some days to cover the distance. When they reached the nunnery, they found that Queen Guenevere had been dead but half an hour, and that before she had died she had told her ladies that Sir Lancelot was on his way to her, and that he was going to bury her body beside that of her dead lord, King Arthur.

Sir Lancelot looked upon her face, but wept little. The Queen was laid upon a bier which was drawn by horses to Glastonbury, surrounded by a hundred torches. Sir Lancelot and his fellows walked behind.

At Glastonbury, the Bishop of Canterbury sang a Requiem Mass over the Queen, and she

was placed in a marble coffin, and buried by the side of the King. As the body was lowered into the grave, Sir Lancelot fell in a swoon.

From that day Sir Lancelot ate little food, and for the most part was found kneeling by the grave of King Arthur and Queen Guenevere. None could comfort him, and in six weeks he was too weak to rise from his bed. He sent for the hermit and his fellows, and asked them to administer to him the last rites of the Church ; and he begged that his body might be taken to Joyous Guard.

That night the hermit had a vision. He saw Sir Lancelot being carried up to Heaven by Angels, and he waked Sir Bors and bade him go and see if anything ailed him. So Sir Bors went to Sir Lancelot, and found him dead, a smile lingering upon his face.

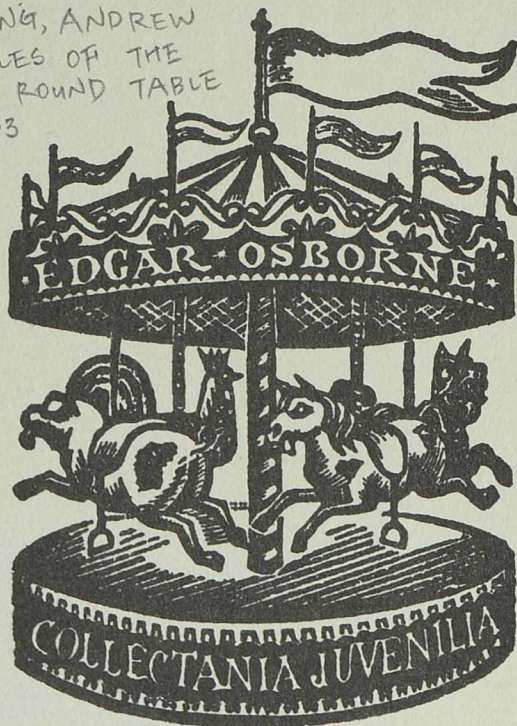
Then there was much weeping and wringing of hands, and he was placed on the bier that had carried Queen Guenevere, and taken to Joyous Guard. There he was laid in the choir, and while prayers were being said over him, Sir Ector de Maris, who had sought Sir Lancelot through the land for seven long years, came in and stood beside his body.

“Ah, Lancelot,” he said, “thou wert the best of Christian Knights, the courtliest gentleman that ever drew sword, the most faithful friend that ever breathed. Thou wert the goodliest Knight and the truest man that ever loved a woman.”

(M)

LANG, ANDREW
TALES OF THE
ROUND TABLE

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