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Tennyson's Lancelot and Elaine

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TENNYSON'S
LANCELOT AND ELAINE

EDITED

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

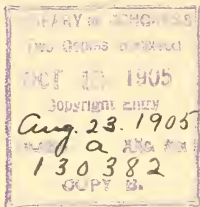
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PREFACE

The present edition of *Lancelot and Elaine* represents an endeavor to furnish a brief yet critical edition which will contain enough material to enable the student to understand adequately this special poem, its place in Arthurian literature, and in the completed cycle of the Idylls. Some acquaintance with the historical and literary development of the Arthurian stories and with the genesis of the Idylls, though deserving, it need not be said, subordinate place to the study of the Idyll itself, seems necessary, at least to fairly mature students, if Tennyson's poem is rightly to be appreciated and understood.

New features of the edition are an appendix containing illustrative extracts from the *Morte Darthur* on which the Idyll is chiefly based, surely as indispensable as the illustrations from Holinshed in the usual school editions of *Macbeth*, and the inclusion in the notes, where there seemed significance in the alteration, of earlier readings of amended passages, so often instructive as well as interesting if inquiry be made into the reason for the change. The notes are illustrative and explanatory as well as textual, and contain, throughout, frequent references to the other Idylls, from which, when studied separately, *Lancelot and Elaine* should not be disassociated. This Idyll, like the Idylls in general, has by this time been edited very often and very well; yet it is believed that some new or independent matter has been contributed, both in the introduction and in the notes.

The text of the poem is, without alteration save for the Americanization of certain spellings, that of the Globe edition of Tennyson's works, incorporating the poet's latest revisions, and reproducing the text as he probably wished it to be transmitted.

Thanks are due to my colleague, Professor F. A. Stuff of the University of Nebraska, for reading the manuscript and for valuable suggestions.

LOUISE POUND.

Lincoln, 1905.

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INTRODUCTION

I. THE ARTHURIAN STORIES

Place in Mediaeval Romance.—The Arthurian stories have been for centuries a fountain-head for European romance. The mediaeval stories of court or chivalric life fall into four main groups, according to the source of their material: (1) those dealing with the epic material of classical antiquity, as the stories of Alexander, or of Troy; (2) the Charlemagne group, to which belongs the *Song of Roland*; (3) those dealing with Byzantine materials, as *Flore and Blanche flore*, or *Aucassin and Nicolette*; (4) those dealing with British, or Breton, materials, or the Arthurian group. These romances were French in construction, but European in propagation and development. Representatives are found in the literatures of Germany, England, Italy, Holland, Spain, Portugal, and Norway. Among them the ideal of knightly chivalry and courtly society found best representation in the Arthurian romances, which strike both the secular note of the classical and Byzantine romances, and the ecclesiastical note of the Charlemagne group, and, borrowing largely from all three, became prolific and widely popular. They have found perhaps their highest development and most sympathetic treatment in the Idylls of Tennyson.

Relation to Celtic Sources.—The nucleus of the Arthurian stories is undoubtedly Celtic. The matter and the environment purport to be Celtic, and many of the place and proper names point to a Celtic source; but many difficult problems, perhaps never to be settled satisfactorily, are bound up with the history of the origin of the stories and their spread. An especially perplexed question is, from what source did the

French romancers, who seem to have been the first to give Arthurian story literary treatment, derive their Celtic material? The French were in contact not only with the insular Celts in Britain, the Welsh or Cymry, but with those in Brittany (Armorica) on the continent, descendants of the British who fled across the channel in the fifth and sixth centuries before the invading Saxons. Thus two possibilities arise. In the one, the material of the Breton romances (the *matière de Bretagne*) is insular British, and the Anglo-Normans the medium of propagation. In the other, the material is Breton or Armoric, and from Brittany reached the continental French, who became the real creators of the romances, and gave them literary impetus and currency.

For many years the trend of opinion favored the first hypothesis. Its foremost adherent, M. Gaston Paris,¹ believes that the Norman conquest reawakened Celtic national feeling, kindling Welsh patriotic legend inherited from the fifth and sixth centuries, the heroic age of the insular British, to new life. Then, through the instrumentality of the Anglo-Normans, Celtic themes crossed the channel to France. Opposed to this is a more recent view, favoring an Armorican origin, of which the pioneer advocates are Professors W. Foerster² and H. Zimmer.³ It is the view of this school that the Arthurian legend remained among the Welsh, but seems not to have been much developed by them. It was built up by the Bretons, among whom it flourished after their exodus from Britain, and through whom it reached their French neighbors. Possibly it became known in England through the Breton auxiliaries of the Normans. In any case, the indications of Celtic influence on the earliest Arthurian romances point, they maintain, not to Great Britain but to Brittany. It should be noted also, as regards Celtic origin, that some of the

¹*Histoire littéraire de la France*, etc.

²Introd. to *Erce und Enide*, 1890, etc.

³Chiefly in various articles and reviews.

legends of the Arthurian cycle, in their genesis and transmission, may be Gaelic (Irish) rather than Cymric (Welsh).¹

Arthurian Story in the Romantic Chronicles.—The kernel of the Arthurian legends is perhaps historical, but the meager testimony of the older chroniclers makes it difficult to arrive at definite conclusions. It seems probable that the Arthurian legends exhibit the gradual elevation of a person originally of minor importance to a national hero, as in the legend of Roland, perhaps also of Beowulf and of Siegfried. The British historian, Gildas, of the sixth century, mentions a battle at Mount Badon between Britons and Teutons, but is silent about Arthur, although this is traditionally his greatest battle. The same silence is preserved by Bede, in the eighth century. These were the chroniclers writing nearest the time when Arthur must have lived. He is first named in an anonymous *Historia Britonum* of the tenth century, in its original form dating perhaps from the last years of the eighth century, the supposed author of which was Nennius. By this time the glamour of great prowess and sanctity is already about him, but it is noteworthy that Nennius refers to him as a military leader (*dux bellorum*) not as king (*tunc Arthur pugnavit contra illos [Saxones] in illis diebus...sed ipse dux erat bellorum*). Arthur had twelve victories over the heathen. In the last he slew single-handed by Mons Badonis nine hundred and sixty enemies (cf. note on l.302).

The *Annales Cambriae* of the middle of the tenth century contain two brief testimonies from Welsh tradition. The next link is the chronicle of William of Malmesbury (1125). By Geoffrey of Monmouth (1135), *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the legend is in full bloom. The following is an abridgment of his version:

Arthur is the son of Uther Pendragon and Igerne of Cornwall, whom Uther takes as queen after the death of her husband, Duke

¹J. L. Weston, *Legend of Sir Gawain*, 1897, etc.

Gorlois. He becomes king at fifteen, and, after subduing the Saxons, adds to his empire, in brilliant foreign conquest, Ireland, Gothland, the Orkneys, Norway, Dacia, Aquitaine, and Gaul. During a solemn assembly at Caerleon-upon-Usk, messengers arrive from Lucius Tiberius, general of the Romans, demanding arrears of tribute. War is agreed on, and Arthur commits his kingdom and his queen, Guanhumara, to his nephew Modred. In the contest between the Romans and the Britons, Arthur's nephew, Walgan, especially distinguishes himself. The Romans flee or surrender. Meanwhile the news comes that Modred has usurped the throne and been wedded to Guanhumara. Arthur returns and defeats Modred, and Guanhumara flees to a cloister in Caerleon. In a final encounter with Modred, the latter is killed, and Arthur, wounded, transfers his kingdom to his nephew Constantine, and is carried to the island of Avalon to be healed.

Geoffrey says that Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, brought him a very old book in the British language (*librum britannici sermonis*), and this he translated into Latin as the basis of his chronicle. This passage, which has been read in many ways, probably means that he had a Breton book from Brittany, and the contents, which often exhibit a character foreign to Welsh tradition, seem to bear out this assumption. Name-forms like Modred and Walgain suggest not the Welsh but Bretonized forms; and Welsh sources are unfamiliar with the legend of Avalon. Geoffrey's book is, however, less a translation than a mosaic from various sources. His authenticity was not accepted even in his own day; nevertheless his chronicle had great popularity. Four translations were made into French, of which the most important was by the Norman Wace (1155). These translations may have helped to bring the Arthurian stories to the attention of French poets, though doubtless familiar to them already.

Wace added details concerning Arthur, and is the first to mention (*Brut* 9996) the Round Table, possibly an echo of the peerage of Charlemagne, or possibly of Celtic origin, which he drew from Bretonic French sources, and of which Geoffrey knew nothing:

fist Artus la roonde table,
dout Breton dient mainte fable.

Arthur made the Round Table,
of which Bretons tell many tales.

Wace was translated into English by Layamon at the end of the twelfth century, and the legends further increased by the prophecy of Arthur's return, and additions concerning his wars and the Round Table. It is in Layamon's poem that the glamour of magic and fairy enchantment is added, especially to the story of Arthur's coming and passing, which lends Arthurian legend much of its charm.

Arthurian Story in French Romance.—Meanwhile the Arthurian stories as current among the *conteurs* and *fableurs* of Brittany were much used in French prose romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Among the earliest representatives are the metrical romances of Crestien de Troyes, his *Erec* deserving the name of the first Arthurian poem. The legends seem to owe much to Crestien's making over. He stamped upon his Breton materials the ideals of high French society in the twelfth century, and gave them their chivalric setting—knight errantry, *amour courtois*, and brilliant feasts and tournaments. He is thought by many to have added the episode of Lancelot and Guinevere. He made use of Celtic framework, borrowing rather than inventing his materials; otherwise his romances have probably little to do with Celtic legend or antiquity. They enshrine rather the ideals and spirit of Crestien himself and his contemporaries, and of French court poetry of the period. With him, or his immediate predecessors or inspirers, begins, perhaps, the conception of Arthurian chivalry, of courtesy, loyalty, and romantic love and honor.

Development of the Tristan and the Grail Cycles.—Two important cycles of Arthurian story early developed alongside of the Merlin (Arthur) and the Lancelot cycles,

the legends of Tristan and of the Grail. Of these the former is perhaps genuinely British, brought from England to France, and, though later so closely allied, had originally nothing to do with Arthurian story. It may have been on the model of the story of Tristan and Isolt that the episode of Lancelot and Guinevere, which first appears with Crestien, was built up, unless, for the latter episode, a Celtic origin be assumed. The Grail legend has a special and problematic history, and, like the Tristan legend, was not originally connected with Arthurian story. After the *Perceval* of Crestien de Troyes, left incomplete and continued by other hands, the religious and mystic element exhibited in this legend made rapid progress. It is very strong in the prose version written toward the end of the twelfth century, *La Queste del Saint Grail*, ascribed, though with no great certainty, to the Anglo-Norman, Gautier Map. Here Perceval is relegated to second place as purest knight and chosen seeker of the Grail, being supplanted in first place by Galahad.

On the themes of these various cycles of Arthurian romance, a vast, monotonous, and overlapping literature was elaborated, finally combining all the *motifs* of mediaeval story. In the French verse romances, Arthur himself is generally represented as inactive; his court is the rendezvous from which knights go in quest of adventure. In the prose romances he is pictured somewhat differently, as the national hero. His wars with the Saxons are fully treated, and the final catastrophe depicted, neither of which is touched upon in the verse romances. With the progress of the religious element in the Grail legend, to which a tendency to unite the other cycles manifested itself, the story of the *flos regum* of the chroniclers developed into a tragedy in which Arthur, no longer the blameless king, is responsible for his own ruin. Meanwhile accretions had been made to the legends from various sources, classical antiquity, oriental tales, scriptural narra-

tives, popular history, and popular legend, transforming their character, and swelling them to vast and varied proportions.

The "Morte Darthur" of Malory.—By the middle of the thirteenth century, the various cycles of Arthurian adventure had accumulated until need was felt of a compendium or abridgment. The first attempt was made, about 1270, in French, by the Italian, Rusticien; another in German, somewhat later, by Ulrich Fürtre. The most important and complete compilation was made in England (1469-70), by Sir Thomas Malory (Malorye, or Maleore), printed in 1485 by Caxton. An extensive Arthurian literature from French sources existed in English before Malory, but his work, not rightly named the *Morte Darthur*, since it narrates much more than Arthur's death, was destined to become a fountain-head. He sought to bring the fortuitous accretion of his originals, some of which are preserved and some lost, into a sort of coherence. The work was accomplished not without diffuseness and involved arrangement, and contains many repetitions and inconsistencies. It leaves some tales incomplete, like that of Lancelot, and omits others, like that of Erec; but in the main Malory had remarkable success. He struck the right balance between the secular and the spiritual, and told the story of Arthur, from his birth to the tragic culmination lending the book its name, with a certain fateful consistency that enthralled the popular imagination, and made his work the classical version of Arthurian story. Moreover, his style, though he follows his originals closely, copying their idioms, and often wrongly translating, is characteristically quaint and simple, and, possessing strong charm, has had no little influence upon English prose.

Arthurian Story in Later Literature.—After Malory, the Arthurian legends retained strong hold, and the story of their progress forms a special chapter in the history of English literature. The greatest names before the modern period,

Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton, left motives from this source untouched, but show familiarity by occasional allusions. In 1587, the *Misfortunes of Arthur*, written by Thomas Hughes, almost the first English tragedy, had for its chief characters, Arthur, Modred, and Guenevera. Spenser gives Arthur prominent place in his allegory of the *Faerie Queene*, and makes many references to Celtic tradition. When Milton was a youth, he intended, about 1638-39, to make Arthur the hero of a great national epic, but gave up the design because unable to convince himself that the existence of the British king was not merely mythical. Sir Richard Blackmore, a physician, published two long dull epics in 1695 and 1697, entitled *Prince Arthur* and *King Arthur*. Dryden, in this same period, composed a farcical allegorical opera on the story of Arthur, and projected an epic on either Arthur or Edward III., which he did not execute. Fielding in 1730 wrote a burlesque of Round Table stories, and they remained in some disrepute until Percy's *Reliques* in 1765, containing several ballads relating to King Arthur, which brought about a revival of popular interest. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Sir Walter Scott edited a version of the story of Sir Tristram, and wrote his *Bridal of Triermain* from Arthurian inspiration. In 1849 Bulwer-Lytton composed an ambitious but unsuccessful epic, *King Arthur*, in six-line stanzas. Among minor Arthurian poems of the century may be mentioned the *Morte Arthur* by R. Heber, 1841, the *Quest of the Sangraal* by R. S. Hawker, 1863, the *Farewell of Ganore* by G. A. Simcox, 1869, and *Arthur's Knighting* and the *Eve of Morte Arthur* by S. Evans, 1875. Wordsworth refers to Arthurian story in the *Egyptian Maid* and in various minor allusions. Lastly are to be named the *Tristan and Iseult* of Matthew Arnold, 1852, the *Defence of Guenevere* by William Morris, 1858, and the *Tristram of Lyonesse*, 1882, and the *Tale of Balen*, 1896, by Swinburne. In America,

Richard Hovey composed several notable poems on Arthurian themes.

Outside of England the influence of the legends has been equally strong. In Italy, Dante, Ariosto, and Petrarch made frequent use of Arthurian material. In old German literature, in which the development of the legends was as interesting as for old French literature, the *Parzifal* of Wolfram von Eschenbach, the *Tristan* of Gottfried von Strassburg, and the *Iwein* of Hartmann von Aue, won deserved and widespread popularity. The story of Tristram was touched upon also by Hans Sachs. German Arthurian poets of the modern period are Wieland (1739-1813), K. Immermann, F. Roeber, L. Schneegans, and W. Hertz. The greatest German works of Arthurian inspiration are the operas of Richard Wagner, *Parzifal*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Lohengrin*. In France, Ronsard and La Fontaine show many traces of familiarity with Round Table legends, and in the last century poems on Arthurian themes were written by Edgar Quinet.

II. THE IDYLLS OF THE KING

Composition of the Idylls.—Tennyson's first venture in Arthurian legend was the lyric, *The Lady of Shalott*, a foreshadowing of the story of Elaine, published in 1832, in his volume entitled *Poems*. His two-volume edition, published in 1842, contained two more Arthurian lyrics, *Sir Galahad* and the fragment *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*. This same volume contained, inclosed in a poetical setting called *The Epic*, the *Morte d'Arthur*, afterwards incorporated in *The Passing of Arthur*. In 1857 six "trial copies" of *Enid and Nimue: the True and the False* were published, the latter being the original of the later *Vivien*. In 1859, under the title *The True and the False: Four Idylls of the King* were published *Enid*, *Vivien*, *Elaine*, and *Guinevere*, the names of all but the last being subsequently modified. *Vivien* became

Merlin and Vivien, and *Elaine* became *Lancelot and Elaine*. *Enid* was divided in 1888 into two parts, and given the names, *The Marriage of Geraint*, and *Geraint and Enid*. In a new edition of the Idylls in 1862, the *Dedication to the Prince* was added. In 1869, dated 1870, was published *The Holy Grail and Other Poems*, containing, beside *The Holy Grail*, the Idylls *The Coming of Arthur*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, and *The Passing of Arthur*, enlarged from the *Morte d'Arthur* of 1842. In 1872 appeared *The Last Tournament*, first printed in the *Contemporary Review* for December, 1871, and *Gareth and Lynette*. The Epilogue of the Idylls, *To the Queen*, was printed in 1873. Lines 9-28 were added to *The Passing of Arthur* in an edition of this year. The last Idyll, *Balin and Balan*, was included in *Tiresias and Other Poems* in 1885. With the division of *Enid* in 1888, the number of the Idylls was brought up to twelve. Tennyson wrote one other poem under Arthurian inspiration, the lyric *Merlin and the Gleam*, printed in 1889.

The Idylls of the King, as published in completed form, fall into the following order: *Dedication* (1862), *The Coming of Arthur* (1869), *Gareth and Lynette* (1872), *The Marriage of Geraint* (1859), *Geraint and Enid* (1859), *Balin and Balan* (1885), *Merlin and Vivien* (1857), *Lancelot and Elaine* (1859), *The Holy Grail* (1869), *Pelleas and Ettarre* (1869), *The Last Tournament* (1871), *Guinevere* (1859), *The Passing of Arthur* (*Morte d'Arthur*, 1842) (1869), *To the Queen* (1873).

Thus the composition of the Idylls covered the forty-three years from 1842 to 1885, and Tennyson's poetic interest in the Arthurian legends the fifty-seven years from 1832 to 1889. He approached his subject first with lyrics, then with an epical fragment belonging at the end of his series. He continued it with four pictures of women, belonging here and there in the completed structure, followed ten years later by

the Idyll belonging at the beginning, and by three others. Two years later came two more Idylls, and thirteen years later came the last, belonging neither at the beginning nor at the end of the sequence, but in the middle. It seems so wonderful as to be scarcely credible that a series of poems showing when completed organic unity should have been so composed.

Development of Unity of Design.—Tennyson seems early to have contemplated the Arthurian legends as poetic material. "At twenty-four I meant to write an epic or drama of King Arthur; and I thought that I should take twenty years about the work."¹ From his youth he had written out in prose various histories of Arthur.² Mention is made in a conversation in the poetical setting of the *Morte d'Arthur* (1842) of an epic on Arthur, "some twelve books," of which the *Morte d'Arthur* is the eleventh; but there may have been nothing behind this reference. Hallam Tennyson says that his father "carried a more or less perfected scheme in his head for over thirty years."³ His first work seems, however, without coherent design. He produced his poems piecemeal, without apparent thought of continuing with the same theme, or of reaching ultimate unity. The four Idylls of 1859 are simply studies of "the true and the false," allegory being yet undeveloped or in the background. In 1862 he wrote of them to the Duke of Argyll:

"As to joining these [the Idylls] with the 'Morte d'Arthur' there are two objections,—one that I could scarcely light upon a finer close than that ghostlike passing away of the King, and the other that the 'Morte' is older in style. I have thought about it and arranged the intervening Idylls, but I dare not set to work for fear of failure and time lost." (*Memoir*, I, 482.)

Clearly at this date the Idylls were not intended as parts of a whole, whatever Tennyson had vaguely in mind to at-

¹*Memoir*, II, 89-90.

²*Ib.*, II, 121.

³*Ib.*, II, 125.

tempt in future. "After the first instalment of 'Enid,' 'Vivien,' 'Elaine,' and 'Guinevere,' in spite of the public applause, he did not rush headlong into the other Idylls. For one thing he did not consider that the time was ripe. In addition to this he did not find himself in the proper mood to write them...he was not sure he could keep up to the same high level throughout the remaining Idylls."¹ Sometime in the next decade, before the publication of the *Holy Grail* volume in 1869, the plan of the completed series and of the introduction of allegory seems to have formed itself definitely. In 1868 he wrote to Mr. Palgrave:

"The 'Grail' is not likely to be published for a year or two. ...I shall write three or four more of the Idylls, and link them together as well as I may." (*Memoir*, II, 62.)

With the *Coming of Arthur*, in this volume, the allegory of Sense at war with Soul was fully introduced, and reigned throughout the remaining Idylls. After this year, Tennyson's plan and the allegorical drift of his poems were recognized on all sides.

The gradual growth in design of the Idylls necessitated many modifications as new poems were written. Attention is called to significant changes in *Lancelot and Elaine* in notes on various passages. Most of these changes were made in the 1873 or 1874 editions. Similar alterations are found in the other Idylls. One passage in the *Morte d'Arthur* (ll.220-24) written before Tennyson had yet fully sketched out the character of Arthur, was allowed to remain when the poem was remodeled into *The Passing of Arthur* (ll.389-93) although not in harmony with passages elsewhere, portraying the king not as a contestant for victory in tournaments but as a champion. (So, for example, in *Lancelot and Elaine*, ll.310-11.) It was in accordance with this tendency toward

¹*Memoir*, II, 125.

unity of design that the names of the 1859 Idylls, *Enid*, *Vivien*, and *Elaine* were changed to *Geraint and Enid*, *Merlin and Vivien*, and *Lancelot and Elaine*, making them less conspicuously studies of women and more closely related to the Arthurian legends.

Sources and Treatment.—"On Malory, and later on Lady Charlotte Guest's translation [from the Welsh] of the *Mabinogion*, and on his own imagination, my father said that he chiefly founded his epic; he has made the old legends his own, restored the idealism, and infused into them a spirit of modern thought and an ethical significance, setting his characters in a rich and varied landscape; as indeed otherwise these archaic stories would not have appealed to the modern world at large."¹ Tennyson was fond of Malory's narratives from boyhood. Hallam Tennyson has still in his possession, he says, the copy of the *Morte d'Arthur* which his father loaned to Leigh Hunt, "a small book for the pocket, published in 1816, by Walker and Edwards, and much used by my father."² Tennyson's names and stories, the framework of the Idylls, come from Malory. From the *Mabinogion* he took the story of Geraint and Enid. Tennyson drew also on several sources which his son does not mention. From Geoffrey of Monmouth come the names Modred, Igerne, Gorlois, and others, and stray touches in the handling. From Nennius he borrowed the account of Arthur's twelve battles (cf. note on l.284). He also undoubtedly used Ellis' *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* (London 1805, 2d ed. 1849). From Ellis he probably derived a few passages like the interview between Lancelot and Guinevere, and the story of Lancelot's childhood. (Cf. notes on ll.605, 840, 1155, 1172, 1197, 1393.)

Tennyson has reconstructed, abridged, and altered Malory's stories. He keeps their archaic color and their humanity, but

¹*Memoir*, II, 121. *Ib.*, I, 156.

modernizes and sophisticates, changing the order and proportion of parts and the significance. He has been criticised for this,¹ especially for transforming Arthur. Tennyson's changes in Arthur were, however, less arbitrary than his changes in other characters. It is Tristram who is most altered in the Idylls. The story of Tristram and Isolt, which in the legends has equal prominence with that of Lancelot and Guinevere, is subordinated, and its nature modified. The character of Tristram is lowered. On the other hand Lancelot is elevated, till his figure almost overshadows the king's. Other changes are in the episode of Merlin and Nimue, in the outcome of *Pelleas and Ettarre* (Ettarde in Malory), and in the episode, toward the close of their story, of Guinevere's condemnation and Lancelot's rescue. Moreover, the sequence of the stories is changed, the order in Malory being: The birth of Arthur, the episode of Balin and Balan, Merlin's fate, the episode of Pelleas and Ettarre, the stories of Gareth and Tristram, the quest of the Grail, the episode of Lancelot and Elaine, the revelation of Guinevere's transgression, Arthur's death.

Use of Archaisms.—Tennyson's debt to Malory in his poetic vocabulary is made clear by a comparison of passages from *Lancelot and Elaine* with the parallel passages from the *Morte Darthur*. He makes frequent use of characteristic words from the latter, such as *jousts*, *affiance*, *devoir*, *marvel*, *hurl*, *parted*, 'departed,' *allow*, *worshipful*, *whole*, 'well,' *sore* (the adverb), *peradventure*, etc., and of archaic verb forms like *wot*, *wist*, *gat*, *brake*, etc., (cf. note on l.50). Other archaic words and expressions found in this Idyll are *yea*, *anon*, *an*, 'if,' etc. Tennyson's liking for older English words and expressions is noted by his son:

¹Cf. Swinburne, in his *Miscellanies*.

"If he differentiated his style from that of any other poet, he would remark on his use of English in preference to words derived from French and Latin. He revived many fine old words which had fallen into disuse; and I heard him regret that he had never employed the word *yarcly*." (*Memoir*, II, 133.)

The Name "Idylls."—Tennyson has been criticised for giving the name "Idylls" to his Arthurian poems. Idyll is from the Greek εἶδος, εἰδύλλιον, a 'little picture.' In strict usage it means a short poem of pastoral or sylvan life, as the Idylls of Theocritus of the third century, B. C. In his volume of 1842 Tennyson gave the title *English Idylls* to poems like *The Gardener's Daughter*, *Dora*, *Audley Court*, etc., here appropriate enough since these deal with idealized primitive or rural life, as the name Idylls suggests. The tone in the *Idylls of the King* is not idyllic, or pastoral, but heroic. Yet in a loose sense they may well be designated Idylls, since each constitutes a picture, distinct and finished, and since they blend the narrative with the descriptive. Idyll is now a recognized name for short poems of this cross species, half heroic and half descriptive.

In 1842 the *Morte d'Arthur* was included in a framework called *The Epic*, thus suggesting an epical character for it; but Tennyson did not retain this title. The name *Idylls of the King* was fixed upon sometime between 1857 and 1859, the year of the appearance of the volume entitled *The True and the False: Four Idylls of the King*. In 1870, in the *Holy Grail* volume, Tennyson seems to have called the separate poems "books," as well as poems or idylls. The title finally adopted was *Idylls of the King: In Twelve Books*. Tennyson never used the word "epic" in a title after 1842, recognizing that the poems had not sufficient unity of grasp, or sufficient narrative force to render them strictly epical. Tennyson's friend and critic, Edmund Lushington, proposed a new title as a solution of the difficulty, calling the *Idylls of the King*, *Epylls of the King*. "According to him they were little Epics

(not Idylls) woven into an epical unity, but my father disliked the sound of the word 'Epylls.'"¹

The more usual spelling of the word is 'idyl,' like 'sibyl,' 'beryl,' etc., from similar Greek originals. Tennyson uses 'idyl' in *The Princess*. In his Arthurian poems the word appears always with *-ll*, a spelling now in very common use.

The Idylls in Sequence.—The completed Idylls epitomize the whole of Malory's narrative, having necessarily discarded unserviceable episodes and details, but sketching in clear lines the growth and decline of the Round Table, Arthur's ideal order of spiritual chivalry. *The Coming of Arthur* serves as the prologue of the series. It introduces the various rumors of his "coming" and "passing," "from the great deep to the great deep," and invests him with a mysterious spiritual interest. He is shown as the institutor of peace and justice and order. The bond between him and Lancelot is formed, and the Queen mentioned, though not yet with much definiteness. In *Gareth and Lynette*, the order is in its freshest and best period, and is drawing to itself youths like the strong and joyous Gareth. Arthur is at its head, his vows respected, his knights loyal, and no germ of infection yet visible. In *The Marriage of Geraint*, and its sequel *Geraint and Enid*, comes the first hint of distrust, and the foreshadowing of lack of knightly activity among Arthur's followers. The opening note of the fateful passion of Lancelot and the Queen is sounded; and already suspicion is appearing among the knights. In *Balin and Balan*, the suspicions of the knights have become patent facts. The violence of his disillusion in those whom he had taken as his ideals, brings catastrophe to Balin, and to his brother, and loss of one of his strongest knights to Arthur. In *Merlin and Vivien*, the king suffers another loss. Lynette and Enid are succeeded by Vivien, who invades the court, spreading scandal, and sowing the seeds of corruption.

¹ *Memoir*, II, 130.

Her wiles compass the destruction of Merlin, and lose for Arthur his profoundest mind. The Idyll *Lancelot and Elaine* is in another key, and marks a turning point in the sequence. Lancelot finds her who seems fitted to be his mate, but it is too late, and she dies broken hearted. Already Gawain trifles with Arthur's orders. There is a crisis between Lancelot and the Queen. Lancelot realizes his position, but he has cast in his lot, and there will be no lasting change. After *The Holy Grail*, the turn is swiftly downward. The first enthusiasm of the knights is dead. The court and its life of action, now no longer associated with the highest good, are abandoned in the fruitless quest of the Grail. The second agent in the breaking up of the fellowship is asceticism and superstition in the guise of religion. *Pelleas and Ettarre* is the transition Idyll from *The Holy Grail* to *The Last Tournament*. Pelleas is a new made knight. He is inexperienced, like Gareth, but finds, unlike the latter, a corrupt society, and is wrecked by the shock of disillusion. The lowest point is touched in *The Last Tournament*. The infection has spread until Arthurian ideals can fall no further. The wrong doing of Lancelot and Guinevere is paralleled by Tristram and Isolt, but without their nobleness and high devotion. The greatest joust since that for the last diamond marks the death of innocence, and shows the laws of courtesy broken. In *Guinevere*, Lancelot and the Queen have begun their expiation, but the fatal consequences have been wrought out. The kingdom is in confusion and the Round Table shattered. Guinevere sees too late the real greatness of Arthur. The completing Idyll, or better, the epilogue of the series, is *The Passing of Arthur*. Here, his realm fallen, his work and his ideals broken down, the king goes to his last great battle, is given his death wound by Modred, and is borne away to the island-valley of Avilion. In the Idylls, Modred is the slayer of the king, but is not the real wrecker of the kingdom.

Anachronism in the Setting —The state of society pictured by Malory has, it is perhaps superfluous to point out, neither chronological nor historical truth. The historical Arthur, if he existed at all, existed in the sixth century. Malory's picture, exaggerated and highly colored, is a sublimation of feudal chivalry. Instead of Celtic Britain of the sixth century, it suggests the age of the Crusades, when, if there were not real knights errant, adherents of *courtoisie* and the laws of chivalry, there were at least those who wished to be. The glitter of chivalry was yet strong in the days of Edward III., recorded in Froissart's chronicles, and, in Malory's own period, has not quite waned. In the *Idylls*, the setting is even more idealized and unreal than in the *Morte Darthur*. Tennyson preserves the exteriors of the age of knight errantry, but his hero, Arthur, moves in an ethical and social atmosphere more nearly that of to-day than that of the sixth century or of the feudal era. His characters speak and think with the standards, moral attitudes, and subjective questionings of the nineteenth century. Tennyson modernized and sophisticated the material of the *Morte Darthur* in accordance with contemporary ideals.

The geography and the scenery of the Arthurian stories are hardly less impossible than the history. Theirs is an "un-British Britain," exhibiting the mystic cities, enchanted castles and woods, waste lands and marvelous wild beasts, characteristic of Celtic legend and of Old French romance.

Duration of the Action. —The time occupied by the action of the *Idylls* is said by Mr. Elsdale¹ and others to extend over a single mystic year. Tennyson has struck the progressive notes of the seasons very clearly and with purpose—

"My father made this further manuscript note on another phase of the unity of the poem. 'The Coming of Arthur is on a night of the New Year; when he is wedded the world is white with May;

¹*Studies in the Idylls* (1878).

on a summer night the vision of the Holy Grail appears; and the Last Tournament is in the yellowing autumn-tide. Guinevere flees through the mists of autumn, and Arthur's death takes place at midnight in midwinter.' " (*Memoir*, II, 133).

Beyond the sentences quoted Tennyson has left no word with regard to the duration of the Idylls. He may or may not have cared to have the time definitely fixed. Clearly he can not mean that the poems occupy a literal year, but intends rather to typify the seasons of human life, or in each case to adapt the mood of nature to his theme. Definite time-hints are given in *Lancelot and Elaine*, which is one of the "Summer Idylls." Reference is made to the heathen who seized Astolat ten years before. The diamonds were found before Arthur became king (l.34); and his first year was probably occupied by the coronation, the wars with the heathen and the Romans, and the founding of the Round Table. If the jousts were instituted in the second year of his reign, the episode of Lancelot and Elaine, which itself covers many weeks (cf. Lancelot's illness), would then take place in the tenth. The remaining four Idylls of the series belong closely together. Professor Maccallum, in a discussion of the question,¹ suggests that they may have occupied two years, thus allowing about twelve years for the whole cycle.

Allegory in the Idylls.—Tennyson himself asks his readers to accept the allegorical bent of the Idylls in *To the Queen*, ll.36-42:

" . . . accept this old imperfect tale,
New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul
Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain
peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still; or him
Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's. . . ."

¹*Tennyson's Idylls and Arthurian Story*, 423.

To Mr. J. T. Knowles he said, "By King Arthur I always meant the soul and by the Round Table the passions and capacities of men." The allegorical meaning in the *Idylls* has been treated very often.² The following, quoted from Mr. Littledale, suggests in brief space accepted interpretations that may be found by the seeker after allegorical meaning:

"The Coming of Arthur shows us the soul, typified by Arthur, borne into this world of sense. . . . The minor paraphernalia of the allegory—the great hall of Arthur, symbolical not of the body, but of the stages through which the soul must rise and the war that it must wage; the church at Camelot, with the guiding powers, Merlin, intellect, the Lady of the Lake, religion, and the three helpful Queens, Christian virtues; the sword of the spirit, the armour of the soul militant; the dragon-boughts of evil temptations that twist and twine around us; the rays of heavenly radiance, love and faith and hope, and the great symbol of the cross,—these have no need of detailed interpretation: we may ascribe as much or as little meaning to them as we please. Then in the first *Idyll* of the Round Table we have the strife of Gareth, the strong youth, against the foolish symbols of time that the 'four fools' have sucked from the holy hermit's rock-sculptured parable. . . . The fresh morning, the hot noon, the mellowing evening of life are typified; the respective periods of youthful love, and golden cares and ambitions, and the fading life of settled habits, good or bad. . . . Then in the Grail we see once more the higher life symbolized. . . . But such quests are only for the few. . . . even Arthur himself, the ordinary noble soul, can not undertake the Grail at all times. . . . The soul that Arthur typifies is the soul of every one of us—it must feel the warmth of double life, must be mated to sense, as Arthur is to Guinevere. If that union is happy and regulated, all will go well; the purpose of the soul's life will be fulfilled. But if not, if sense, the co-mate of soul be weak and foolish, the children born of their union will be 'red

¹*The Nineteenth Century*, January, 1893.

²*Contemporary Review*, January, 1870; May, 1873 (along lines Tennyson himself indicated); *The Spectator*, January, 1870. Cf. also *Studies in the Idylls*, H. Elsdale, 1878; *Essays on Tennyson's Idylls*, H. Littledale, 1893; *Tennyson's Idylls and Arthurian Story*, M. W. MacCallum, 1894; and (one of the best short discussions) *Tennyson, his Art and Relation to Modern Life*, Stopford A. Brooke, 1894 (pp. 255-370).

ruin and the breaking up of laws.' . . . Last, as the sun of human existence is sinking in the west, that battle in the winter of life must come, must end in defeat—the soul must pass away. But not to perish utterly. . . . Perchance in another life it may heal of its grievous wound. . . ."

Lancelot and Elaine was one of the earlier Idylls, and shows hardly any allegorical touches (cf. note on l.1393). In others, like *The Holy Grail*, there is little less than in *Garth and Lynette*.

Tennyson on the Meaning of the Idylls.—It seems clear nevertheless that Tennyson did not wish too great stress to be given to the allegory appearing in the Idylls. "Let not my readers press too hardly for details whether for history or for allegory," he said of the *Morte d'Arthur*. "Some think that Arthur may be taken to typify conscience. He is anyhow meant to be a man who spent himself in the cause of honor, duty, and self-sacrifice, who felt and aspired with his nobler knights, though with a stronger and clearer conscience than any of them."¹ "He considered the reviews of the inner meaning of the poem by Dean Alford in the *Contemporary*, and by J. T. Knowles in the *Spectator* the best."² "But in later years he often said, 'They have taken my hobby and ridden it too hard, and have explained some things too allegorically, although there is an allegorical or perhaps rather a parabolic drift in the poems. Of course Camelot for instance, a city of shadowy palaces, is everywhere symbolic of the gradual growth of human beliefs and institutions, and of the spiritual development of man. Yet there is no single fact or incident in the Idylls, however seemingly mystical, which can not be explained as without any mystery or allegory whatever.'"³ "I hate to be tied down to say '*This* means *that*,' because the thought within the image is much more than any one interpretation."³

¹*Memoir*, I, 194.

²*Ib.*, II, 126.

³*Ib.*, II, 127.

Perhaps the following from the same passage, said by Tennyson with regard to the many meanings of the poem, best indicates his attitude:

“Poetry is like shot silk with many glancing colors. Every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability, and according to his sympathy with the poet. The general drift of the *Idylls* is clear enough. The whole is the dream of man coming into practical life and ruined by one sin. Birth is a mystery and death is a mystery, and in the midst lies the table-land of life, and its struggles and performances. It is not the history of one man or of one generation but of a whole cycle of generations.”

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LANCELOT AND ELAINE

Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the east
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot;
Which first she placed where morning's earliest ray 5
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam;
Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it
A case of silk, and braided thereupon
All the devices blazon'd on the shield
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit, 10
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.
Nor rested thus content, but day by day,
Leaving her household and good father, climb'd
That eastern tower, and entering barr'd her door, 15
Stript off the case, and read the naked shield,
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his arms,
Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,
And every scratch a lance had made upon it, 20
Conjecturing when and where: this cut is fresh;
That ten years back; this dealt him at Caerlyle;
That at Caerleon; this at Camelot:
And ah God's mercy, what a stroke was there!
And here a thrust that might have kill'd, but God 25
Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his enemy down,
And saved him: so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good shield
Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his name?

He left it with her, when he rode to tilt 30
 For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,
 Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that name
 Had named them, since a diamond was the prize.

For Arthur, long before they crown'd him king,
 Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse, 35
 Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn.
 A horror lived about the tarn, and clave
 Like its own mists to all the mountain side:
 For here two brothers, one a king, had met
 And fought together; but their names were lost; 40
 And each had slain his brother at a blow;
 And down they fell and made the glen abhorr'd:
 And there they lay till all their bones were bleach'd,
 And lichen'd into color with the crags:
 And he, that once was king, had on a crown 45
 Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside.
 And Arthur came, and laboring up the pass,
 All in a misty moonshine, unawares
 Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and the skull
 Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown 50
 Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims
 Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn:
 And down the shingly scaur he plunged, and caught,
 And set it on his head, and in his heart
 Heard murmurs, "Lo, thou likewise shalt be king." 55

Thereafter, when a king, he had the gems
 Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them to his knights,
 Saying, "These jewels, whereupon I chanced
 Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the King's—
 For public use: henceforward let there be, 60
 Once every year, a joust for one of these:
 For so by nine years' proof we needs must learn

Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall grow
In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
The heathen, who, some say, shall rule the land 65
Hereafter, which God hinder." Thus he spoke:
And eight years past, eight jousts had been, and still
Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,
With purpose to present them to the Queen,
When all were won; but meaning all at once 70
To snare her royal fancy with a boon
Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

Now for the central diamond and the last
And largest, Arthur, holding then his court
Hard on the river nigh the place which now 75
Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
Spake (for she had been sick) to Guinevere,
"Are you so sick, my Queen, you can not move
To these fair jousts?" "Yea, lord," she said, "ye know
it." 80
"Then will ye miss," he answer'd, "the great deeds
Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
A sight ye love to look on." And the Queen
Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the King. 85
He thinking that he read her meaning there,
"Stay with me, I am sick; my love is more
Than many diamonds," yielded; and a heart,
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen
(However much he yearn'd to make complete 90
The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)
Urged him to speak against the truth, and say,
"Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole,
And lets me from the saddle;" and the King

Glanced first at him, then her, and went his way. 95
 No sooner gone than suddenly she began:

“To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame!
 Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the knights
 Are half of them our enemies, and the crowd
 Will murmur, ‘Lo, the shameless ones, who take 100
 Their pastime, now the trustful King is gone!’”
 Then Lancelot, vext at having lied in vain:
 “Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,
 My Queen, that summer, when ye loved me first.
 Then of the crowd ye took no more account 105
 Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
 When its own voice clings to each blade of grass,
 And every voice is nothing. As to knights,
 Them surely can I silence with all ease.
 But now my loyal worship is allow’d 110
 Of all men: many a bard, without offence,
 Has link’d our names together in his lay,
 Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,
 The pearl of beauty: and our knights at feast
 Have pledged us in this union, while the King 115
 Would listen smiling. How then? is there more?
 Has Arthur spoken aught? or would yourself,
 Now weary of my service and devoir,
 Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?”

She broke into a little scornful laugh: 120
 “Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King,
 That passionate perfection, my good lord—
 But who can gaze upon the sun in heaven?
 He never spake word of reproach to me,
 He never had a glimpse of mine untruth, 125
 He cares not for me: only here to-day
 There gleam’d a vague suspicion in his eyes:

Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with him—else
 Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
 And swearing men to vows impossible, 130
 To make them like himself: but, friend, to me
 He is all fault who hath no fault at all:
 For who loves me must have a touch of earth;
 The low sun makes the color: I am yours,
 Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the bond. 135
 And therefore hear my words: go to the jousts:
 The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our dream
 When sweetest; and the vermin voices here
 May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but they sting."

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights: 140
 "And with what face, after my pretext made,
 Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
 Before a King who honors his own word,
 As if it were his God's?"

"Yea," said the Queen,
 "A moral child without the craft to rule, 145
 Else had he not lost me: but listen to me,
 If I must find you wit: we hear it said
 That men go down before your spear at a touch,
 But knowing you are Lancelot; your great name,
 This conquers: hide it therefore; go unknown: 150
 Win! by this kiss you will: and our true King
 Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,
 As all for glory; for to speak him true,
 Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he seem,
 No keener hunter after glory breathes. 155
 He loves it in his knights more than himself:
 They prove to him his work: win and return."

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
 Wroth at himself. Not willing to be known,

He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare, 160
 Chose the green path that show'd the rarer foot,
 And there among the solitary downs,
 Full often lost in fancy, lost his way;
 Till as he traced a faintly-shadow'd track,
 That all in loops and links among the dales 165
 Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
 Fired from the west, far on a hill, the towers.
 Thither he made, and blew the gateway horn.
 Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkled man,
 Who let him into lodging and disarm'd. 170
 And Lancelot marvell'd at the wordless man;
 And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
 With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine,
 Moving to meet him in the castle court;
 And close behind them stept the lily maid 175
 Elaine, his daughter: mother of the house
 There was not: some light jest among them rose
 With laughter dying down as the great knight
 Approach'd them: then the Lord of Astolat:
 "Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what name 180
 Livest between the lips? for by thy state
 And presence I might guess thee chief of those,
 After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls.
 Him have I seen: the rest, his Table Round,
 Known as they are, to me they are unknown." 185

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights:
 "Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,
 What I by mere mischance have brought, my shield.
 But since I go to joust as one unknown
 At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not, 190
 Hereafter ye shall know me—and the shield—
 I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
 Blank, or at least with some device not mine."

Then said the Lord of Astolat, "Here is Torre's:
 Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre. 195
 And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough.
 His ye can have." Then added plain Sir Torre,
 "Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have it."
 Here laugh'd the father saying, "Fie, Sir Churl,
 Is that an answer for a noble knight? 200
 Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger here,
 He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,
 Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an hour,
 And set it in this damsel's golden hair,
 To make her thrice as wilful as before." 205

"Nay, father, nay, good father, shame me not
 Before this noble knight," said young Lavaine,
 "For nothing. Surely I but play'd on Torre:
 He seem'd so sullen, vext he could not go:
 A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden dreamt 210
 That some one put this diamond in her hand,
 And that it was too slippery to be held,
 And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,
 The castle-well, belike; and then I said
 That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it 215
 (But all was jest and joke among ourselves)
 Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.
 But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
 To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:
 Win shall I not, but do my best to win: 220
 Young as I am, yet would I do my best."

"So ye will grace me," answer'd Lancelot,
 Smiling a moment, "with your fellowship
 O'er these waste downs whereon I lost myself,
 Then were I glad of you as guide and friend: 225

And you shall win this diamond,—as I hear
 It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,
 And yield it to this maiden, if ye will.”
 “A fair large diamond,” added plain Sir Torre,
 “Such be for queens, and not for simple maids.” 230
 Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,
 Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
 Flush’d slightly at the slight disparagement
 Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her,
 Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return’d: 235
 “If what is fair be but for what is fair,
 And only queens are to be counted so,
 Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid
 Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
 Not violating the bond of like to like.” 240

He spoke and ceased: the lily maid Elaine,
 Won by the mellow voice before she look’d,
 Lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments.
 The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,
 In battle with the love he bare his lord, 245
 Had marr’d his face, and mark’d it ere his time.
 Another sinning on such heights with one,
 The flower of all the west and all the world,
 Had been the sleeker for it: but in him
 His mood was often like a fiend, and rose 250
 And drove him into wastes and solitudes
 For agony, who was yet a living soul.
 Marr’d as he was, he seem’d the goodliest man
 That ever among ladies ate in hall,
 And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes. 255
 However marr’d, of more than twice her years,
 Seam’d with an ancient swordcut on the cheek,
 And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes
 And loved him, with that love which was her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of the court, 260
 Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
 Stept with all grace, and not with half-disdain
 Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
 But kindly man moving among his kind:
 Whom they with meats and vintage of their best 265
 And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd.
 And much they ask'd of court and Table Round,
 And ever well and readily answer'd he:
 But Lancelot, when they glanced at Guinevere,
 Suddenly speaking of the wordless man, 270
 Heard from the Baron that, ten years before,
 The heathen caught and reft him of his tongue.
 "He learnt and warn'd me of their fierce design
 Against my house, and him they caught and maim'd;
 But I, my sons, and little daughter fled 275
 From bonds or death, and dwelt among the woods
 By the great river in a boatman's hut.
 Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke
 The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill."

"O there, great lord, doubtless," Lavaine said, rapt 280
 By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth
 Toward greatness in its elder, "you have fought.
 O tell us—for we live apart—you know
 Of Arthur's glorious wars." And Lancelot spoke
 And answer'd him at full, as having been 285
 With Arthur in the fight which all day long
 Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem;
 And in the four loud battles by the shore
 Of Duglas; that on Bassa; then the war
 That thunder'd in and out the gloomy skirts 290
 Of Celidon the forest; and again
 By castle Gurnion, where the glorious King
 Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,

Carv'd of one emerald center'd in a sun
 Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he breathed; 295
 And at Caerleon had he help'd his lord,
 When the strong neighings of the wild White Horse
 Set every gilded parapet shuddering;
 And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,
 And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit, 300
 Where many a heathen fell; "and on the mount
 Of Badon I myself beheld the King
 Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
 And all his legions crying Christ and him,
 And break them; and I saw him, after, stand 305
 High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume
 Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
 And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,
 'They are broken, they are broken!' for the King,
 However mild he seems at home, nor cares 310
 For triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts—
 For if his own knight cast him down, he laughs
 Saying his knights are better men than he—
 Yet in this heathen war the fire of God
 Fills him: I never saw his like: there lives 315
 No greater leader."

While he utter'd this,
 Low to her own heart said the lily maid,
 "Save your great self, fair lord;" and when he fell
 From talk of war to traits of pleasantry—
 Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind— 320
 She still took note that when the living smile
 Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
 Of melancholy severe, from which again,
 Whenever in her hovering to and fro
 The lily maid had striven to make him cheer, 325
 There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness

Of manners and of nature: and she thought
That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.
And all night long his face before her lived,
As when a painter, poring on a face, 330
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and color of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest; so the face before her lived, 335
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full
Of noble things, and held her from her sleep,
Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the thought
She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.
First as in fear, step after step, she stole 340
Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating:
Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,
"This shield, my friend, where is it?" and Lavaine
Past inward, as she came from out the tower.
There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd, and smooth'd 345
The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
Half-jealous of the flattering hand, she drew
Nearer and stood. He look'd, and more amazed
Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
The maiden standing in the dewy light. 350
He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
Rapt on his face as if it were a god's.
Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire, 355
That he should wear her favor at the tilt.
She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.
"Fair lord, whose name I know not—noble it is,
I well believe, the noblest—will you wear
My favor at this tourney?" "Nay," said he, 360

"Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
 Favor of any lady in the lists.
 Such is my wont, as those who know me know."
 "Yea, so," she answer'd; "then in wearing mine
 Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord, 365
 That those who know should know you." And he turn'd
 Her counsel up and down within his mind,
 And found it true, and answer'd, "True, my child.
 Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:
 What is it?" and she told him "A red sleeve 370
 Broider'd with pearls," and brought it: then he bound
 Her token on his helmet, with a smile
 Saying, "I never yet have done so much
 For any maiden living," and the blood
 Sprang to her face and fill'd her with delight; 375
 But left her all the paler, when Lavaine
 Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd shield,
 His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,
 Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:
 "Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield 380
 In keeping till I come." "A grace to me,"
 She answer'd, "twice to-day. I am your squire!"
 Whereat Lavaine said, laughing, "Lily maid,
 For fear our people call you lily maid
 In earnest, let me bring your color back; 385
 Once, twice, and thrice: now get you hence to bed;"
 So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own hand,
 And thus they moved away: she stay'd a minute,
 Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there—
 Her bright hair blown about the serious face 390
 Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss—
 Paused by the gateway, standing near the shield
 In silence, while she watch'd their arms far-off
 Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.

Then to her tower she climb'd, and took the shield, 395
There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

Meanwhile the new companions past away
Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs,
To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived a knight
Not far from Camelot, now for forty years 400
A hermit, who had pray'd, labor'd and pray'd,
And ever laboring had scoop'd himself,
In the white rock a chapel and a hall
On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,
And cells and chambers: all were fair and dry; 405
The green light from the meadows underneath
Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;
And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees
And poplars made a noise of falling showers.
And thither wending there that night they bode. 410

But when the next day broke from underground,
And shot red fire and shadows thro' the cave,
They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away:
Then Lancelot saying, "Hear, but hold my name
Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the Lake," 415
Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant reverence,
Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise,
But left him leave to stammer, "Is it indeed?"
And after muttering "The great Lancelot,"
At last he got his breath and answer'd, "One, 420
One have I seen—that other, our liege lord,
The dread Pendragon, Britain's King of kings,
Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
He will be there—then were I stricken blind
That minute, I might say that I had seen." 425

So spake Lavaine, and when they reach'd the lists
By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes

Run thro' the peopled gallery which half round
 Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,
 Until they found the clear-faced King, who sat 430
 Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
 Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,
 And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,
 And from the carven-work behind him crept
 Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make 435
 Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them
 Thro' knots and loops and folds innumerable
 Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they found
 The new design wherein they lost themselves,
 Yet with all ease, so tender was the work: 440
 And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
 Blazed the last diamond of the nameless king.

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine and said,
 "Me you call great: mine is the firmer seat,
 The truer lance: but there is many a youth 445
 Now crescent, who will come to all I am
 And overcome it; and in me there dwells
 No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
 Of greatness to know well I am not great:
 There is the man." And Lavaine gaped upon him 450
 As on a thing miraculous, and anon
 The trumpets blew; and then did either side,
 They that assail'd, and they that held the lists,
 Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,
 Meet in the midst, and there so furiously 455
 Shock, that a man far-off might well perceive,
 If any man that day were left afield,
 The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms.
 And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
 Which were the weaker; then he hurl'd into it 460
 Against the stronger: little need to speak

Of Lancelot in his glory! King, duke, earl,
Count, baron—whom he smote, he overthrew.

But in the field were Lancelot's kith and kin,
Ranged with the Table Round that held the lists, 465
Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger knight
Should do and almost overdo the deeds
Of Lancelot; and one said to the other, "Lo!
What is he? I do not mean the force alone—
The grace and versatility of the man! 470
Is it not Lancelot?" "When has Lancelot worn
Favor of any lady in the lists?
Not such his wont, as we that know him know."
"How then? who then?" a fury seized them all,
A fiery family passion for the name 475
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.
They couch'd their spears and prick'd their steeds, and
thus,
Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind they made
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North Sea, 480
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,
And him that helms it, so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear 485
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a spear
Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the head
Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt, and remain'd.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully;
He bore a knight of old repute to the earth, 499
And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet endure,

And being lustily holpen by the rest,
 His party,—tho' it seem'd half-miracle 495
 To those he fought with,—drave his kith and kin,
 And all the Table Round that held the lists,
 Back to the barrier; then the trumpets blew
 Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the sleeve
 Of scarlet, and the pearls; and all the knights, 500
 His party, cried, "Advance and take thy prize
 The diamond;" but he answer'd, "Diamond me
 No diamonds! for God's love, a little air!
 Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death!
 Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me not." 505

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from the field
 With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.
 There from his charger down he slid, and sat,
 Gasping to Sir Lavaine, "Draw the lance-head:"
 "Ah my sweet lord Sir Lancelot," said Lavaine, 510
 I dread me, if I draw it, you will die."
 But he, "I die already with it: draw—
 Draw,"—and Lavaine drew, and Sir Lancelot gave
 A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,
 And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank 515
 For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd away.
 Then came the hermit out and bare him in,
 There stanch'd his wound; and there, in daily doubt
 Whether to live or die, for many a week
 Hid from the wide world's rumor by the grove 520
 Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,
 And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay.

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,
 His party, knights of utmost North and West,
 Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate isles, 525
 Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him,

"Lo, Sire, our knight, thro' whom we won the day,
 Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize
 Untaken, crying that his prize is death."
 "Heaven hinder," said the King, "that such an one, 530
 So great a knight as we have seen to-day—
 He seem'd to me another Lancelot,
 Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot—
 He must not pass uncared for. Wherefore, rise,
 O Gawain, and ride forth and find the knight. 535
 Wounded and wearied needs must he be near.
 I charge you that you get at once to horse.
 And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of you
 Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given:
 His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him 540
 No customary honor: since the knight
 Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,
 Ourselves will send it after. Rise and take
 This diamond, and deliver it, and return,
 And bring us where he is, and how he fares, 545
 And cease not from your quest until ye find."

So saying, from the carven flower above,
 To which it made a restless heart, he took,
 And gave, the diamond: then from where he sat
 At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose, 550
 With smiling face and frowning heart, a prince
 In the mid night and flourish of his May,
 Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong,
 And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint
 And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal 555
 Sir Modred's brother, and the child of Lot,
 Nor often loyal to his word, and now
 Wroth that the King's command to sally forth
 In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave
 The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings. 560

So all in wrath he got to horse and went;
 While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,
 Past, thinking, "Is it Lancelot who hath come
 Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain
 Of glory, and hath added wound to wound, 565
 And ridd'n away to die?" So fear'd the King,
 And, after two days' tarriance there, return'd.
 Then when he saw the Queen, embracing ask'd,
 "Love, are you yet so sick?" "Nay, lord," she said.
 "And where is Lancelot?" Then the Queen amazed, 570
 "Was he not with you? won he not your prize?"
 "Nay, but one like him." "Why that like was he."
 And when the King demanded how she knew,
 Said, "Lord, no sooner had ye parted from us,
 Than Lancelot told me of a common talk 575
 That men went down before his spear at a touch,
 But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name
 Conquer'd; and therefore would he hide his name
 From all men, ev'n the King, and to this end
 Had made the pretext of a hindering wound, 580
 That he might joust unknown of all, and learn
 If his old prowess were in aught decay'd;
 And added, 'Our true Arthur, when he learns,
 Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
 Of purer glory.' "

Then replied the King: 585
 "Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
 In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,
 To have trusted me as he hath trusted thee.
 Surely his King and most familiar friend
 Might well have kept his secret. True, indeed, 590
 Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
 So fine a fear in our large Lancelot
 Must needs have moved my laughter: now remains

But little cause for laughter: his own kin—
 Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him, this!— 595
 His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon him;
 So that he went sore wounded from the field:
 Yet good news too: for goodly hopes are mine
 That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.
 He wore, against his wont, upon his helm 600
 A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great pearls,
 Some gentle maiden's gift."

"Yea, lord," she said,
 "Thy hopes are mine," and saying that, she choked,
 And sharply turn'd about to hide her face,
 Past to her chamber, and there flung herself 605
 Down on the great King's couch, and writhed upon it,
 And clench'd her fingers till they bit the palm,
 And shriek'd out "Traitor" to the unhearing wall,
 Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose again,
 And moved about her palace, proud and pale. 610

Gawain the while thro' all the region round
 Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,
 Touch'd at all points, except the poplar grove,
 And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat:
 Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the maid 615
 Glanced at, and cried, "What news from Camelot, lord?
 What of the knight with the red sleeve?" "He won."
 "I knew it," she said. "But parted from the jousts
 Hurt in the side," whereat she caught her breath;
 Thro' her own side she felt the sharp lance go; 620
 Thereon she smote her hand: well-nigh she swoon'd:
 And, while he gazed wonderingly at her, came
 The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the Prince
 Reported who he was, and on what quest
 Sent, that he bore the prize and could not find 625

The victor, but had ridd'n a random round
 To seek him, and had wearied of the search.
 To whom the Lord of Astolat, "Bide with us,
 And ride no more at random, noble Prince!
 Here was the knight, and here he left a shield; 630
 This will he send or come for: furthermore
 Our son is with him: we shall hear anon,
 Needs must we hear." To this the courteous Prince
 Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
 Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it, 635
 And stay'd; and cast his eyes on fair Elaine:
 Where could be found face daintier? then her shape
 From forehead down to foot, perfect—again
 From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd:
 "Well—if I bide, lo! this wild flower for me!" 640
 And oft they met among the garden yews,
 And there he set himself to play upon her
 With sallying wit, free flashes from a height
 Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
 Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden eloquence 645
 And amorous adulation, till the maid
 Rebell'd against it, saying to him, "Prince,
 O loyal nephew of our noble King,
 Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
 Whence you might learn his name? Why slight your
 King, 650
 And lose the quest he sent you on, and prove
 No surer than our falcon yesterday,
 Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and went
 To all the winds?" "Nay, by mine head," said he,
 I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven, 655
 O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes;
 But an ye will it let me see the shield."
 And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw

Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with gold,
 Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and mock'd: 660
 "Right was the King! our Lancelot! that true man!"
 "And right was I," she answer'd merrily, "I,
 Who dream'd my knight the greatest knight of all."
 "And if *I* dream'd," said Gawain, "that you love
 This greatest knight, your pardon! lo, ye know it! 665
 Speak therefore: shall I waste myself in vain?"
 Full simple was her answer, "What know I?
 My brethren have been all my fellowship;
 And I, when often they have talk'd of love,
 Wish'd it had been my mother, for they talk'd, 670
 Meseem'd, of what they knew not; so myself—
 I know not if I know what true love is,
 But if I know, then, if I love not him,
 I know there is none other I can love."
 "Yea, by God's death," said he, "ye love him well, 675
 But would not, knew ye what all others know,
 And whom he loves." "So be it," cried Elaine,
 And lifted her fair face and moved away:
 But he pursued her, calling, "Stay a little!
 One golden minute's grace! he wore your sleeve: 680
 Would he break faith with one I may not name?
 Must our true man change like a leaf at last?
 Nay—like enow: why then, far be it from me
 To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves!
 And, damsel, for I deem you know full well 685
 Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave
 My quest with you; the diamond also: here!
 For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;
 And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
 From your own hand; and whether he love or not, 690
 A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well
 A thousand times!—a thousand times farewell!

Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
 May meet at court hereafter: there, I think,
 So ye will learn the courtesies of the court, 695
 We two shall know each other."

Then he gave,
 And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he gave,
 The diamond, and all wearied of the quest
 Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he went
 A true-love ballad, lightly rode away. 700

Thence to the court he past; there told the King
 What the King knew, "Sir Lancelot is the knight."
 And added, "Sire, my liege, so much I learnt;
 But fail'd to find him tho' I rode all round
 The region: but I lighted on the maid 705
 Whose sleeve he wore; she loves him; and to her,
 Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,
 I gave the diamond: she will render it;
 For by mine head she knows his hiding-place."

The seldom-frowning King frown'd, and replied, 710
 "Too courteous truly! ye shall go no more
 On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget
 Obedience is the courtesy due to kings."

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all in awe,
 For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word, 715
 Linger'd that other, staring after him;
 Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd abroad
 About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
 All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues were loosed:
 "The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot, 720
 Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat."
 Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and all
 Had marvel what the maid might be, but most

Pre doom'd her as unworthy. One old dame
Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news. 725
She, that had heard the noise of it before,
But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd so low,
Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tranquillity.
So ran the tale like fire about the court,
Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder flared: 730
Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or thrice
Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,
And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
Smiled at each other, while the Queen, who sat
With lips severely placid, felt the knot 735
Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen
Crush'd the wild passion out against the floor
Beneath the banquet, where the meats became
As wormwood, and she hated all who pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat, 740
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said,
"Father, you call me wilful, and the fault 745
Is yours who let me have my will, and now,
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?"
"Nay," said he, "surely." "Wherefore, let me hence,"
She answer'd, "and find out our dear Lavaine."
"Ye will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine: 750
Bide," answer'd he: "we needs must hear anon
Of him and of that other." "Ay," she said,
"And of that other, for I needs must hence
And find that other, wheresoe'er he be,
And with mine own hand give his diamond to him, 755
Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
As yon proud Prince who left the quest to me.

Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
 Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden's aid. 760
 The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,
 My father, to be sweet and serviceable
 To noble knights in sickness, as ye know,
 When these have worn their tokens: let me hence
 I pray you." Then her father nodding said, 765
 "Ay, ay, the diamond: wit ye well, my child,
 Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,
 Being our greatest: yea, and you must give it—
 And sure I think this fruit is hung too high
 For any mouth to gape for save a queen's— 770
 Nay, I mean nothing: so then, get you gone,
 Being so very wilful you must go."

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slipt away,
 And while she made her ready for her ride,
 Her father's latest word humm'd in her ear, 775
 "Being so very wilful you must go,"
 And changed itself and echo'd in her heart,
 "Being so very wilful you must die."
 But she was happy enough and shook it off,
 As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us; 780
 And in her heart she answer'd it and said,
 "What matter, so I help him back to life?"
 Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide
 Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs
 To Camelot, and before the city-gates 785
 Came on her brother with a happy face
 Making a roan horse caper and curvet
 For pleasure all about a field of flowers:
 Whom when she saw, "Lavaine," she cried, "Lavaine,
 How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?" He amazed, 790
 "Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lancelot!

How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot?"
But when the maid had told him all her tale,
Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his moods
Left them, and under the strange-statued gate, 795
Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically,
Past up the still rich city to his kin,
His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot;
And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove
Led to the caves: there first she saw the casque 800
Of Lancelot on the wall: her scarlet sleeve,
Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls away,
Stream'd from it still; and in her heart she laugh'd,
Because he had not loosed it from his helm,
But meant once more perchance to tourney in it. 805
And when they gain'd the cell wherein he slept,
His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands
Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream
Of dragging down his enemy made them move.
Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn, 810
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry.
The sound not wonted in a place so still
Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd his eyes
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying, 815
"Your prize the diamond sent you by the King:"
His eyes glisten'd: she fancied, "Is it for me?"
And when the maid had told him all the tale
Of King and Prince, the diamond sent, the quest
Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt 820
Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
And laid the diamond in his open hand.
Her face was near, and as we kiss the child
That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her face.
At once she slipt like water to the floor. 825

"Alas," he said, "your ride hath wearied you.
 Rest must you have." "No rest for me," she said;
 "Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest."
 What might she mean by that? his large black eyes,
 Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon her, 830
 Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
 In the heart's colors on her simple face;
 And Lancelot look'd and was perplext in mind,
 And being weak in body said no more,
 But did not love the color; woman's love, 835
 Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
 Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the fields,
 And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured gates
 Far up the dim rich city to her kin; 840
 There bode the night: but woke with dawn, and past
 Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
 Thence to the cave: so day by day she past
 In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
 Gliding, and every day she tended him, 845
 And likewise many a night: and Lancelot
 Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little hurt
 Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times
 Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem
 Uncourteous, even he: but the meek maid 850
 Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
 Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
 Milder than any mother to a sick child,
 And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
 Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love 855
 Upbore her; till the hermit, skill'd in all
 The simples and the science of that time,
 Told him that her fine care had saved his life.
 And the sick man forgot her simple blush,

Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine, 860
Would listen for her coming and regret
Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the love
Of man and woman when they love their best,
Closest and sweetest, and had died the death 865
In any knightly fashion for her sake.
And peradventure had he seen her first
She might have made this and that other world
Another world for the sick man; but now
The shackles of an old love straiten'd him, 870
His honor rooted in dishonor stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
These, as but born of sickness, could not live: 875
For when the blood ran lustier in him again,
Full often the bright image of one face,
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.
Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace 880
Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd not,
Or short and coldly, and she knew right well
What the rough sickness meant, but what this meant
She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd her sight,
And drave her ere her time across the fields 885
Far into the rich city, where alone
She murmur'd, "Vain, in vain: it cannot be,
He will not love me: how then? must I die?"
Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few notes, 890
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid

Went half the night repeating, "Must I die?"
 And now to right she turn'd, and now to left, 895
 And found no ease in turning or in rest;
 And "Him or death," she mutter'd, "death or him,"
 Again and like a burthen, "Him or death."

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,
 To Astolat returning rode the three. 900
 There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self
 In that wherein she deem'd she look'd her best,
 She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought
 "If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
 If not, the victim's flowers before he fall." 905
 And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid
 That she should ask some goodly gift of him
 For her own self or hers; "and do not shun
 To speak the wish most near to your true heart;
 Such service have ye done me, that I make 910
 My will of yours, and prince and lord am I
 In mine own land, and what I will I can."
 Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
 But like a ghost without the power to speak.
 And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish, 915
 And bode among them yet a little space
 Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanced
 He found her in among the garden yews,
 And said, "Delay no longer, speak your wish,
 Seeing I go to-day:" then out she brake: 920
 "Going? and we shall never see you more.
 And I must die for want of one bold word."
 "Speak: that I live to hear," he said, "is yours."
 Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:
 "I have gone mad. I love you: let me die." 925
 "Ah, sister," answer'd Lancelot, "what is this?"
 And innocently extending her white arms,

"Your love," she said, "your love—to be your wife."
And Lancelot answer'd, "Had I chosen to wed,
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine: 930
But now there never will be wife of mine."
"No, no," she cried, "I care not to be wife,
But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world."
And Lancelot answer'd, "Nay, the world, the world, 935
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
To blare its own interpretation—nay,
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
And your good father's kindness." And she said, 940
"Not to be with you, not to see your face—
Alas for me then, my good days are done."
"Nay, noble maid," he answer'd, "ten times nay!
This is not love: but love's first flash in youth,
Most common: yea, I know it of mine own self: 945
And you yourself will smile at your own self
Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age:
And then will I, for true you are and sweet
Beyond mine old belief in womanhood, 950
More specially should your good knight be poor,
Endow you with broad land and territory
Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,
So that would make you happy: furthermore,
Ev'n to the death, as tho' ye were my blood, 955
In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
And more than this I cannot."

While he spoke

She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale
Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied: 960

"Of all this will I nothing;" and so fell,
And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of yew
Their talk had pierced, her father: "Ay, a flash,
I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead. 965
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.
I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
To blunt or break her passion."

Lancelot said,

"That were against me: what I can I will;"
And there that day remain'd, and toward even 970
Sent for his shield: full meekly rose the maid,
Stript off the case, and gave the naked shield;
Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,
Unclasping flung the casement back, and look'd 975
Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.
And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound;
And she by tact of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him.
And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,
Nor bade farewell, but sadly rode away. 980
This was the one discourtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat:
His very shield was gone; only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labor, left.
But still she heard him, still his picture form'd 985
And grew between her and the pictured wall.
Then came her father, saying in low tones,
"Have comfort," whom she greeted quietly.
Then came her brethren saying, "Peace to thee,
Sweet sister," whom she answer'd with all calm. 990
But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant field

Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd; the owls
Wailing had power upon her, and she mixt
Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms 995
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little song,
And call'd her song "The Song of Love and Death,"
And sang it: sweetly could she make and sing.

"Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain; 1000
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain:
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

"Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be:
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die. 1005

"Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay,
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

"I fain would follow love, if that could be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me; 1010
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die."

High with the last line scaled her voice, and this,
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard, and thought
With shuddering, "Hark the Phantom of the house 1015
That ever shrieks before a death," and call'd
The father, and all three in hurry and fear
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light of dawn
Flared on her face, she shrilling, "Let me die!"

As when we dwell upon a word we know, 1020
Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,

So dwelt the father on her face, and thought,
 "Is this Elaine?" till back the maiden fell,
 Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay, 1025
 Speaking a still good-morrow with her eyes.
 At last she said, "Sweet brothers, yester night
 I seem'd a curious little maid again,
 As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,
 And when ye used to take me with the flood 1030
 Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
 Only ye would not pass beyond the cape
 That has the poplar on it: there ye fixt
 Your limit, oft returning with the tide.
 And yet I cried because ye would not pass 1035
 Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
 Until we found the palace of the King.
 And yet ye would not; but this night I dream'd
 That I was all alone upon the flood,
 And then I said, 'Now shall I have my will:' 1040
 And there I woke, but still the wish remain'd.
 So let me hence that I may pass at last
 Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
 Until I find the palace of the King.
 There will I enter in among them all, 1045
 And no man there will dare to mock at me;
 But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,
 And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me;
 Gawain, who bade a thousand farewells to me,
 Lancelot, who coldly went nor bade me one: 1050
 And there the King will know me and my love,
 And there the Queen herself will pity me,
 And all the gentle court will welcome me,
 And after my long voyage I shall rest!"

"Peace," said her father, "O my child, ye seem 1055
 Light-headed, for what force is yours to go

So far, being sick? and wherefore would ye look
On this proud fellow again, who scorns us all?"

Then the rough Torre began to heave and move,
And bluster into stormy sobs and say, 1060
"I never loved him: an I meet with him,
I care not howsoever great he be,
Then will I strike at him and strike him down,
Give me good fortune, I will strike him dead,
For this discomfort he hath done the house." 1065

To whom the gentle sister made reply,
"Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth,
Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault
Not to love me, than it is mine to love
Him of all men who seems to me the highest." 1070

"Highest?" the father answer'd, echoing "highest?"
(He meant to break the passion in her) "nay,
Daughter, I know not what you call the highest;
But this I know, for all the people know it,
He loves the Queen, and in an open shame: 1075
And she returns his love in open shame;
If this be high, what is it to be low?"

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat:
"Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I
For anger: these are slanders: never yet 1080
Was noble man but made ignoble talk.
He makes no friend who never made a foe.
But now it is my glory to have loved
One peerless, without stain: so let me pass,
My father, howsoe'er I seem to you, 1085
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
And greatest, tho' my love had no return:
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,

Thanks, but you work against your own desire;
 For if I could believe the things you say 1090
 I should but die the sooner; wherefore cease,
 Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
 Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and die."

So when the ghostly man had come and gone,
 She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven, 1095
 Besought Lavaine to write as she devised
 A letter, word for word: and when he ask'd
 "Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord?
 Then will I bear it gladly;" she replied,
 "For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world, 1100
 But I myself must bear it." Then he wrote
 The letter she devised; which being writ
 And folded, "O sweet father, tender and true,
 Deny me not," she said—"ye never yet
 Denied my fancies—this, however strange, 1105
 My latest: lay the letter in my hand
 A little ere I die, and close the hand
 Upon it; I shall guard it even in death.
 And when the heat is gone from out my heart,
 Then take the little bed on which I died 1110
 For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's
 For richness, and me also like the Queen
 In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.
 And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
 To take me to the river, and a barge 1115
 Be ready on the river, clothed in black.
 I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.
 There surely I shall speak for mine own self,
 And none of you can speak for me so well.
 And therefore let our dumb old man alone 1120
 Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
 Will guide me to that palace, to the doors."

She ceased: her father promised; whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood. 1125
But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh
Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground, 1130
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows,
Accompanying the sad chariot-bier,
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay. 1135
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed, 1140
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her,
"Sister, farewell for ever," and again,
"Farewell, sweet sister," parted all in tears. 1145
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood—
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold 1150
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace craved 1155
Audience of Guinevere, to give at last

The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
 Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and blow,
 With deaths of others, and almost his own,
 The nine-years-fought-for diamonds: for he saw 1160
 One of her house, and sent him to the Queen
 Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed
 With such and so unmoved a majesty
 She might have seem'd her statue, but that he,
 Low-drooping till he well nigh kiss'd her feet 1165
 For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye
 The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,
 In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls,
 And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side, 1170
 Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,
 They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd, "Queen,
 Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
 Take, what I had not won except for you,
 These jewels, and make me happy, making them 1175
 An armet for the roundest arm on earth,
 Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's
 Is tawnier than her cygnet's: these are words:
 Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
 In speaking, yet O grant my worship of it 1180
 Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin in words
 Perchance, we both can pardon: but, my Queen,
 I hear of rumors flying thro' your court.
 Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife,
 Should have in it an absoluter trust 1185
 To make up that defect: let rumors be:
 When did not rumors fly? these, as I trust
 That you trust me in your own nobleness,
 I may not well believe that you believe."

While thus he spoke, half turn'd away, the Queen 1190
 Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine
 Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,
 Till all the place whereon she stood was green;
 Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive hand
 Received at once and laid aside the gems 1195
 There on a table near her, and replied:

“It may be I am quicker of belief
 Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake.
 Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.
 This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill, 1200
 It can be broken easier. I for you
 This many a year have done despite and wrong
 To one whom ever in my heart of hearts
 I did acknowledge nobler. What are these?
 Diamonds for me! they had been thrice their worth 1205
 Being your gift, had you not lost your own.
 To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
 Must vary as the giver's. Not for me!
 For her! for your new fancy. Only this
 Grant me, I pray you: have your joys apart. 1210
 I doubt not that however changed, you keep
 So much of what is graceful: and myself
 Would shun to break those bounds of courtesy
 In which as Arthur's Queen I move and rule:
 So cannot speak my mind. An end to this! 1215
 A strange one! yet I take it with Amen.
 So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls;
 Deck her with these; tell her she shines me down:
 An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's
 Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck 1220
 O as much fairer—as a faith once fair
 Was richer than these diamonds—hers not mine—
 Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,

Or hers or mine, mine now to work my will—
She shall not have them.”

Saying which she seized, 1225

And, thro' the casement standing wide for heat,
Flung them, and down they flash'd, and smote the stream.
Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as it were,
Diamonds to meet them, and they past away.
Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disdain 1230
At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,
Close underneath his eyes, and right across
Where these had fallen, slowly past the barge
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night. 1235

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away
To weep and wail in secret; and the barge,
On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.
There two stood arm'd, and kept the door; to whom,
All up the marble stair, tier over tier, 1240
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes that ask'd,
“What is it?” but that oarsman's haggard face,
As hard and still as is the face that men
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks
On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and they said, 1245
“He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,
Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen, so fair!
Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh and blood?
Or come to take the King to Fairyland?
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die, 1250
But that he passes into Fairyland.”

While thus they babbled of the King, the King
Came girt with knights: then turn'd the tongueless man
From the half-face to the full eye, and rose

And pointed to the damsel, and the doors. 1255
 So Arthur bade the meek Sir Percivale
 And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;
 And reverently they bore her into hall.
 Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
 And Lancelot later came and mused at her, 1260
 And last the Queen herself and pitied her:
 But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
 Stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it: this was all:

“Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
 I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat, 1265
 Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
 Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
 I loved you, and my love had no return,
 And therefore my true love has been my death.
 And therefore to our Lady Guinevere, 1270
 And to all other ladies, I make moan:
 Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
 Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
 As thou art a knight peerless.”

Thus he read;

And ever in the reading, lords and dames 1275
 Wept, looking often from his face who read
 To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
 So touch'd were they, half-thinking that her lips,
 Who had devised the letter, moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all: 1280
 “My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
 Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
 Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,
 But loved me with a love beyond all love
 In women, whomsoever I have known. 1285
 Yet to be loved makes not to love again;

Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
 I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
 No cause, not willingly, for such a love:
 To this I call my friends in testimony, 1290
 Her brethren, and her father, who himself
 Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
 To break her passion, some discourtesy
 Against my nature: what I could, I did.
 I left her, and I bade her no farewell; 1295
 Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would have died,
 I might have put my wits to some rough use,
 And help'd her from herself."

Then said the Queen
 (Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm),
 "Ye might at least have done her so much grace, 1300
 Fair lord, as would have help'd her from her death."
 He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,
 He adding, "Queen, she would not be content
 Save that I wedded her, which could not be.
 Then might she follow me thro' the world, she ask'd; 1305
 It could not be. I told her that her love
 Was but the flash of youth, would darken down
 To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
 Toward one more worthy of her—then would I,
 More specially were he, she wedded, poor, 1310
 Estate them with large land and territory
 In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,
 To keep them in all joyance: more than this
 I could not; this she would not, and she died."

He pausing, Arthur answer'd, "O my knight, 1315
 It will be to thy worship, as my knight,
 And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
 To see that she be buried worshipfully."

So toward that shrine which then in all the realm
 Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went 1320
 The marshall'd Order of their Table Round,
 And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
 The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
 Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
 And mass, and rolling music, like a queen. 1325
 And, when the knights had laid her comely head
 Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
 Then Arthur spake among them, "Let her tomb
 Be costly, and her image thereupon,
 And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet 1330
 Be carven, and her lily in her hand.
 And let the story of her dolorous voyage
 For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb
 In letters gold and azure!" which was wrought
 Thereafter; but, when now the lords and dames 1335
 And people, from the high door streaming, brake
 Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
 Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved apart,
 Drew near, and sigh'd in passing, "Lancelot,
 Forgive me; mine was jealousy in love." 1340
 He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,
 "That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen, forgiven."
 But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
 Approach'd him, and with full affection said,

 "Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have 1345
 Most joy and most affiance, for I know
 What thou hast been in battle by my side,
 And many a time have watch'd thee at the tilt
 Strike down the lusty and long-practised knight,
 And let the younger and unskill'd go by 1350
 To win his honor and to make his name,
 And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man

Made to be loved; but now I would to God,
 Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
 Thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it
 seems, 1355
 By God for thee alone, and from her face,
 If one may judge the living by the dead,
 Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
 Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man,
 Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons 1360
 Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
 My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

Then answer'd Lancelot, "Fair she was, my King,
 Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.
 To doubt her fairness were to want an eye, 1365
 To doubt her pureness were to want a heart—
 Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love
 Could bind him, but free love will not be bound."

"Free love, so bound, were freest," said the King.
 "Let love be free; free love is for the best: 1370
 And, after heaven, on our dull side of death,
 What should be best, if not so pure a love
 Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
 She fail'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,
 Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know." 1375

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but he went,
 And at the inrunning of a little brook
 Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd
 The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes
 And saw the barge that brought her moving down, 1380
 Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said
 Low in himself, "Ah simple heart and sweet,
 Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
 Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul?"

Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at last— 1385
Farewell, fair lily. 'Jealousy in love?'
Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride?
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and fame
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes? 1390
Why did the King dwell on my name to me?
Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,
Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Caught from his mother's arms—the wondrous one
Who passes thro' the vision of the night— 1395
She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
Heard on the winding waters, eve and morn
She kiss'd me saying, 'Thou art fair, my child,
As a king's son,' and often in her arms
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere. 1400
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er it be!
For what am I? what profits me my name
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and have it:
Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain;
Now grown a part of me: but what use in it? 1405
To make men worse by making my sin known?
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must break
These bonds that so defame me: not without 1410
She wills it: would I, if she will'd it? nay,
Who knows? but if I would not, then may God,
I pray him, send a sudden angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere, 1415
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills."

So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man.

NOTES

1. **Elaine the fair.** Malory's Elaine le blank, i. e. *blanche* or white, the Fair Maid of Astolat. Epithets like le Blank are very common in mediaeval chivalric and romantic literature, cf. Isolt of the White Hands, Balin the Savage, Sagramour the Desirous, Ozanna of the Hardy Heart, Gawain the Courteous.

2. **Astolat.** "A towne called Astolat, that is now in Englyssh called Gylford." (Malory.) Malory identifies Astolat with Guildford in Surrey southeast of London, and situated on a tributary of the Thames above London. Tennyson's Astolat, while on the Thames, is not above but below London (ll.1036, 1147). The name is also spelled Ascolat, Ascalot, Scalot, etc., whence the Anglicized Shalott of Tennyson's early lyric on the theme of Elaine, which should be read in connection with the Idyll, *The Lady of Shalott*.

4. **Lancelot.** For his place in Arthurian legend, cf. Introd. Tennyson tells the story of his childhood, ll.1393-1400, cf. note on this passage. Malory's spelling of the name is Launcelot, which is that followed in the poems of William Morris and of Richard Hovey. Tennyson used it in his early lyric, *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, 1842, and in the 1857 *Enid and Nimue*. Later he modified the latter cases to Lancelot. The latter is the standard form, Launcelot the Anglo-Norman, *-an* in Anglo-Norman often passing into *-aun*, as *Fraunce*, *graunt*, etc.

7. **soilure.** Poetical. Cf. Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, IV, i, 56.

8. **case.** The suggestion of the case for Lancelot's shield came perhaps from Malory, XVIII, 14, "Soo whan the sheld was comen Sir Gawayn took of the caas."

braided. Here—*broided*, i. e. *broidered* or *embroidered*, words with which *braided* was confused, though etymologically distinct, because of the similarity of sound.

10. **tinct.** Obsolete or poetic. Cf. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III, iv, 91; Thomson, *Castle of Indolence*, I, xlv, etc.

of her wit. The usual modern meaning of *wit* is late, cf. the etymology of the word. Expressions like 'out of your wits,' 'keep your wits about you' better show the older meaning.

11. **fantasy.** An older form of *fancy*, with similar meaning.

12. **yellow-throated nestling.** For an account of Tennyson's minute and accurate observation of plant, bird, and animal life, his walks, etc., cf. *Memoir*, I, 18; II, 413.

16. **Stript.** Cf. *tost*, 1.232, *perplcwt*, 1.833, etc. For Tennyson's rule for writing participles in *-cd*, cf. *Memoir*, II, 496.

17. **arms.** Armorial bearings, as in the expression *coat-of-arms*.

19. **dint.** The original meaning was 'blow,' 'stroke,' not 'mark made by a blow.' The usual present English form is *dent*.

22. **Caerlyle.** Carlisle in Cumberland. The Roman name was Luguvallum. This, it is thought, was contracted, and the Celtic *Caer*, 'city,' prefixed, giving Caer-Luell, Carliol, etc., finally Carlisle. According to the *Morte Darthur*, King Arthur's court was sometimes held in Carlisle.

23. **Caerleon.** Caerleon-upon-Usk, situated in Monmouthshire, the Roman Isca Silurum. One of Arthur's twelve great battles was fought here (1.296). The town was important in the Roman period, the Roman Second Legion having its station there, hence was known as *Castra Legionis*, Camp of the Legions, a name afterwards shortened and changed by confusion with the prefix *Caer-*, to Caerleon. Nennius wrote *in urbe Leogis quae Britannia Cair Leon dicitur*. Existing Roman remains in Caerleon are fragments of the city walls and an amphitheater overgrown with grass among the hills, the latter called traditionally "King Arthur's Round Table." Caerleon, in Malory, is not the seat of Arthur's court, though it came to be according to later tradition.

Tennyson visited Caerleon in 1850 (*Memoir*, I, 416) and wrote, September 16:

"The Usk murmurs by the windows, and I sit like King Arthur in Caerleon. This is a most quiet half-ruined little village of about 1500 inhabitants with a little museum of Roman tombstones and other things."

Camelot. "to the Cyte of Camelot, that is in Englysshe Winchester." (Malory.) Winchester is a town in Hampshire sixty-six miles southwest of London. In the sixth century it became the capital of Wessex, and remained of importance in the Old English period. Caxton (Preface of the *Morte Darthur*) writes, "And yet of record remayne in wytnesse of hym in Wales in the toune of Camelot the grete stones and meruaylous werkys of yron lyeng vnder the grounde." "Camelot is neither situated in Wales, as Caxton states, nor is the English Winchester identical with it. Camel, near South Cadbury, Somersets, is the place where the

remains of the old city of Camelot are to be found." (Sommer, *Morte Darthur*, II, 157.) Traditions of Arthur linger in the neighborhood of the village of Camel, or Queen's Camel, in names like "Arthur's Spring" and "Arthur's Bridge."

In the *Morte Darthur* Camelot is Arthur's capital and most important city, the site of feasts and tournaments. Perhaps he identifies it with Winchester because of the earlier importance of the latter as a seat of royalty. With Tennyson, as with Malory, Camelot is Arthur's capital. Tennyson's Camelot in the *Idylls* is a dim mysterious city of undetermined locality. For references to its wonderful gate, its richness, etc., cf. notes on ll.795, 797. In *The Lady of Shalott*, the boat "floats down" to Camelot, as though the city were below Astolat.

24. **God's Mercy.** Cf. "God's death," and other interjectional phrases popular in the middle ages, note on 1.675. Probably the origin of the expression is to be found in the Old French *Deu mereit*, or *la mercit Deu*, where *Deu* is an old genitive. (*Chanson de Roland*, 1259, 2183, 2505.)

28. Tennyson breaks off, at this point, to supply the explanation of his opening scene. Other *Idylls* which open *in medias res* are *The Marriage of Geraint*, *Merlin and Vivien*, *The Last Tournament*, and *Guinevere*. Such beginnings are very common in modern novels and short stories.

31. **jousts.** In *jousts* the only weapon used was the lance. Malory generally uses the plural of the word as a singular, "at a grete justs," etc. (a use of the word not noted by Baldwin, *Inflection and Syntax of the Morte Darthur*, or by the dictionaries). Tennyson imitates this use in *The Last Tournament*, 1.51.

34. **For Arthur**, etc. In the 1859 *Elaine* this passage read:

"For Arthur *when none knew from whence he came,*
Long ere the people chose him for their king,
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse"—

35. **Lyonesse.** Read the beautiful lines in *The Passing of Arthur*, ll.81-87. Lyonesse is a legendary land supposed to lie southwest of Cornwall, an extension of the mainland of which all but the Scilly Isles is now covered by water. Lyonesse is the home of Sir Tristram, cf. note on 1.554.

37. **clave.** Archaic preterite of *cleave* 'adhere,' originally a "weak" verb. Cf. the history of *cleave* 'adhere' and *cleave* 'split,' which have exchanged preterites.

41. **had slain his brother**, etc. The story told in this paragraph of the brothers and Arthur's finding of the diamonds is not from the *Morte Darthur* but is Tennyson's own.

45. The original reading of this line was:

"And *one of these, the king*, had on a crown"—

50. **Brake**. Tennyson is fond of archaic verb forms, cf. *clave*, l.37, *spake*, l.78, *bode*, l.410, *holpen*, l.494, *drave*, l.496, *writ*, l.1102, etc.

53. **shlagly scaur**. A cliff or rocky slope covered with loose pebbles. A more common form of *scaur* is *scar*, used by Tennyson in the bugle song in the *Princess*, by Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, *Marmion*, etc., and preserved in many place-names, like Scarborough, Scarsdale. *Shingle*, from which the adjective *shingly*, is coarse gravel found on beaches. Both words have interesting etymologies.

65. **The heathen**. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, ll.8-9. Also *Guinevere and Enid*, 1968, *The Last Tournament*, ll.92-98, *Guinevere*, ll.134-36, 425-29. The heathen are the Saxon vikings from the continent. It was against these that the historic Arthur may have fought. Perhaps Tennyson had also vaguely in mind the incursions of the Danes.

67. **still**. 'always,' as in Shakespeare.

75. **Hard on the river**. An idiomatic use of *hard*, cf. 'hard by.' The river is the Thames.

76. **the place . . . this world's hugest**. London is mentioned only eight times by Malory, never as Arthur's chief city.

let proclaim a joust. Caused to be proclaimed. The construction is obsolete or poetic. Compare here the passage in Malory, XVIII, 8. There is one "diamond joust," in the *Morte Darthur*, but it in no way corresponds to Tennyson's. It occurs after the Elaine episode, and is won by Sir Lavaine. "And thenne every day there was justes for a dyamond, who that justed best shold have a dyamond."

78. **Guinevere** Cf. the first four lines of *The Coming of Arthur*. In the *Mabinogion* the name is Gwenhwyvar; in Geoffrey of Monmouth, Guanhumara. The latter says she was "descended from a noble family of Romans . . . and in beauty surpassed all the women of the island." It is said of her in the *Morte Darthur*, "She is the fairest lady I know living." "She is one of the fairest

that live." Malory's spelling of the name is Guenever, and this, with final *-e*, is followed by William Morris and Richard Hovey. There are many other forms of the name, *e. g.* C. de Troyes has Genievre, Ariosto and Petrarch Ginevra, Hughes Guenevera, Heber Ganora, etc. Tennyson's spelling seems to be an arbitrary modification of Malory's Guenever. His sources for the proper names in the Idylls are Malory, Ellis, Geoffrey of Monmouth, or the *Mabinogion*, and this case is one of his few departures. Cf. *Modern Language Notes*, XIX, 2.

80. *ye*. The pronoun is *you* in 1.79, but in 11.81, 83, *ye*. For Tennyson's many alterations of *you* to *ye* and *vice versa*, from the original to the last edition of this Idyll, cf. Jones, *Growth of the Idylls*, 122.

89. **Love-loyal**. This line occurs also in *Guinevere* (1.125). Similar alliterative compounds in the Idyll are, *tiny-trumpeting*, 1.137, *barren-beaten*, 1.160, *green-glimmering*, 1.481, *strange-statued*, 1.795.

91. **taie**. 'Number.' Archaic or poetic.

93. **Sir King** Sir King and Sir Knight are common forms of address in the *Morte Darthur*. *Sir* is a weakened form of *sire* (cf. 1.763).

whole. 'healed,' 'made well.' *Whole* (OE. *hal*) has an unoriginal initial *w* added about the beginning of the sixteenth century. Cf. *heal*, *health*, etc.

94. **lets**. 'Hinders.' A causative or factitive verb made from the adjective *late*. Obsolete or archaic.

101. **trustful King**. For Arthur's trust of Lancelot, and the bond between them, cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 11.129-33:

"Whereat the two,
For each had warded either in the fight,
Sware on the field of death a deathless love.
And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in man:
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death.'"

Also *Gareth and Lynette*, 11.482-86.

103. **Are ye so wise**, etc. Cf. Malory, XVIII, 9.

106. **myriad cricket**. Cf. *Enoch Arden*, 1.579. The meaning is, "than of the crickets of the mead of which there are so many that each blade of grass seems to have its own voice, yet no voice merits attention."

The relation of *mead* to *meadow* is like that of *shade* to *shadow*. *Mead* occurs in many place-names, as Fairmead, Longmead.

110. **allow'd.** Recognized, or approved. Fr. *allower*, Lat. *ad-laudare*.

111. **many a bard,** etc. Cf. *Merlin and Vivien*, ll.8-16.

118. **devoir.** 'Duty,' or 'service.' Fr. *devoir*, Lat. *debere*.

122. **That passionate perfection.** That man passionately zealous for perfection.

129. **Table Round.** Cf. *Guinevere*, ll.457-63. The knights of the Round Table mentioned in the Idylls are Lancelot, Gawain, Percivale, Galahad, Tristram, Bors, Balin, Geraint, Gareth, Modred, Kay, Bedivere, Pelleas, Ulfius, Brastias, Valence, and Sagramour.

130. **vows impossible.** The vows of the knights are described in *Gareth and Lynette*, ll.541-44, and in *Guinevere*, ll.464 ff. The suggestion of the impossibility of keeping the vows occurs also in *Gareth and Lynette*, ll.266-68, and in *The Last Tournament*, ll.683 ff.

132-33. In this connection should be read the Queen's monologue concerning Arthur in the Idyll *Guinevere* (ll.633-45), beginning:

"Ah great and gentle lord,
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint. . . .
I thought I could not breathe in that fine air
That pure severity of perfect light—"

Cf. also the thought in Tennyson's *Maud*, I, il, 6-7.

134. **The low sun,** etc. Cf. l.123, and the passage in *Guinevere* indicated *supra* (especially ll.642-43).

140. **chief of knights.** Cf. ll.182, 186, etc. *Chief* was originally only a substantive. *Choic* is another substantive which developed adjective function.

143. **who ho ors,** etc. Cf. *Guinevere* l.470. *Gareth and Lynette*, ll.286-87, 316-17.

145. **crait.** Used here in the old sense of 'strength,' 'vigor.'

148. **at a touch.** Cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, l.1191.

152. **ailow.** Cf. note on l.110.

157. **prove to him,** etc. *Prove* is used here not in the sense of 'demonstrate' but in the old sense of 'test,' as in "the exception proves the rule."

163. **lost in fancy, lost his way** Other instances of this word play or iteration, characteristic of Tennyson's style, are ll.233, 236, 264, 1158, 1316-18, and the cases mentioned, note on l.446.

168. **blew the gateway horn.** The original edition has, "cound the gateway horn."

171. **marvell'd at the wordless man.** Cf. 1.723 *infra*. *Marvel* and *marvellous* are favorite words in the *Morte Darthur*. For *wordless*, cf. Shakespeare, *Lucrece*, 1.112.

172-73. Cf. the *Morte Darthur*, where the Lord of Astolat "hyght Sir Bernard of Astolat." Tennyson has changed the name of his son Tirre to Torre. Malory mentions a Sir Tor, King Pellinore's son (III, 3, etc.).

180-81. According to convention, the inquiry after name and lineage came first, in the formality of welcoming strangers, from Old English times downward. Cf. *Beowulf*, ll.251-52, 332, etc.

Livest between the lips. An expression suggesting Vergil, *Æneid* XII, 234-35. Cf. also *The Gardener's Daughter*, ll.49-50.

183. **who eat in Arthur's halls.** Tennyson uses the same expression in 1.254; *The Marriage of Geraint*, 1.432; *The Holy Grail*, 1.24. Cf. also Malory's "the mekest man and the jentylllest that ever ete in halle emonge ladyes." (Cf. note on 1.1418.)

187-88. **and known . . . my shield.** Cf. 1.659. References to the well-known azure lions of Lancelot's shield are found also in *Garth and Lynette*, ll.571, 1186, 1272-76. Tennyson assigned Lancelot a different device in *The Lady of Shalott*, III.

196. **wot.** 2d sg. of the archaic *wit* 'know.' Sometimes analogically extended to *wotteth*.

199. **Charl.** Rude, surly fellow, the antithesis of knight. *Churl*, now a word of reprobation, was formerly the name given to the lowest class of freemen.

201. **Allow him.** Tolerate or suffer him. Not a common use of the word.

202. **lustihood.** Archaic.

210. Elaine's premonitory vision is not found in the *Morte Darthur*.

214. **belike.** 'Probably.' Now chiefly poetic.

217. **safeier.** Now archaic, as the comparative of the adverb.

218. **an if.** A reduced form of *and if*, with the meaning of *if*; sometimes *and* (so in Malory) or *an* alone is used. Common in Shakespeare, but now archaic or dialectal. When found in present imitations of dialect speech, it is generally written *an'*. Cf. Sheridan, *Rivals*, III, iv.

230. **Such be.** *Be* for *use* is another intentional substitution.

248. **The flower,** etc. Cf. note on l.78.

250-51. Cf. Mark, v, 2-5, Luke, viii, 29. Tennyson probably drew the suggestion of these lines from the *Morte Darthur*, whence the account of Lancelot's madness and flight into solitude is given, XI, 8-12. Cf. also *The Holy Grail*, II.784-85.

252. **who was yet,** etc. Whose conscience or soul yet lived.

253. **the goodliest man.** A phrase very common in the *Morte Darthur*.

257. **Seam'd,** etc. Cf. "Thenne the heremyte advysed hym myghter, and sawe by a wound on his cheke that he was Syr Launçelot." Mal. XVIII, 13.

263. **a smaller time.** A time, like the present, less knightly and courteous.

264. Cf. note on l.163.

265. **meats.** *Meat* meant originally food or nourishment of any kind, not flesh merely, till the modern period. The older meaning seems better here.

271. **ten years before.** For the time of this Idyll, cf. Introd.

279. **Badon hill.** Cf. note on l.302.

281. **Arthur's . . . wars.** Tennyson refers to the twelve battles in which Arthur overthrew the heathen in *The Coming of Arthur*, l.517, *Balin and Balan*, l.85, *The Holy Grail*, II.248, 311-12, and *Guinevere*, l.429.

The twelve battles named in the following passage are found in Nennius (cf. Introd.), from whom Tennyson takes his account. They are not given elsewhere in this order, or with the same names. The places referred to have been variously identified. The legendary Arthur lived in Wales and Armoric Cornwall, and many, led by Dr. Guest (*Origines Celticae*) have identified the place-names in Nennius and Geoffrey of Monmouth with localities in the south and west of Britain. At present the preference is for the theory that the historic Arthur was a king, not of the south but in Cumbria and South Scotland; and for localization of his battles in the north. So Mr. Skene (*Four Ancient Books of Wales*) and Mr. Stuart Glennie (*Arthurian Localities*). It need hardly be said that Tennyson did not mean the place names mentioned in the Idylls always to be identified with places in the real world. Whatever interest the solution of these topographical

problems may have for the antiquarian, the student of Tennyson's poetry need trouble himself about them very little.

287. **Glem** *Primum bellum fuit in ostium fluminis quod dicitur Glem.* (Nennius.) Earlier identified with the Glem in Lincolnshire, or the Glen in the northern part of Northumberland; now with the Glen in Ayrshire, or the Glevi in Devonshire.

288. **four loud battles.** The original reading was, "four *wild* battles."

289. **Duglas** *Super aliud flumen quod dicitur Dubglas.* (Nennius.) This has been identified with the Dunglas south of Lothian; the river Douglas in Lancashire; or with the Douglas in Lennox, a stream flowing into Loch Lomond.

Bassa. *Scxtum bellum super flumen quod vocatur Bassa.* (Nennius.) Thought to be a rock called "The Bass," in the Frith of Forth, near North Berwick; or the river Lusas in Hampshire; or perhaps Bashall Brook, near Clithero.

291. **Celidon the forest.** *Septimum fuit bellum in silva Cellidonis, id est, Cat Coit Celidon.* (Nennius.) The Calidonian forest, or that of Englewood, extending from Penrith to Carlisle; or perhaps a wood on the banks of the Carron in upper Tweeddale.

292. **Castle Gurnion.** *Octavum fuit bellum in castello Guinnion, in quo Arthur portavit imaginem Sanctae Mariae perpetuae virginis super humeros suos.* (Nennius.) Other spellings are Gunnion, Gwennion. Variousy localized: in Cornwall; in Durham; as the Roman station of Garionum in Norfolk; and as Caer Gwen in Wedale.

293. **our Lady's Head.** The image of the Virgin Mary. According to Nennius the image was borne by Arthur over his shoulders, cf. *supra*. Geoffrey of Monmouth (IX, iv) says that the head was painted on Arthur's shield:

"Also Arthur himself, having put on a coat of mail sutable to the grandeur of so powerful a king, placed a golden helmet upon his head, on which was engraven the figure of a dragon; and on his shoulders his shield called Priwen; upon which the picture of the blessed Mary, mother of God, was painted in order to put him frequently in mind of her."

Compare also Wordsworth, *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, I, 10. Mr. Littledale (*Essays on the Idylls*) thinks that Tennyson took the detail of the head on the cuirass from *The Faerie Queene*, vii, 29-30; and that in "Carv'd of one emerald, center'd in a sun" he was thinking of the famous "Russian emerald" said to have been

sent originally by Pilate to Tiberius, which was supposed to have the head of Christ upon it.

296. **Caerleon** *Nonum bellum gestum est in urbe Leogis.* (Nennius.) Tennyson means Caerleon-upon-Usk, cf. note on 1.23. The Leogis of Nennius has also been identified with Exeter, or with Dumbarton upon the Leven.

297. **w Id White Horse.** Cf. *The Holy Grail*, ll.311-12, *Guinevere*, ll.15-16, 570-71. In the Idylls, the white horse is the emblem of the Saxons, as the dragon of the British. Hengist and Horsa are often said to have had a white horse for their standard, but the historical truth of this has been questioned.

298. **gilded parapet.** Cf. *Pellcas and Ettarre*, ll.158.

299. **Agned-Cathregonion.** *Undecimum factum est bellum in monte qui dicitur Agned* (i. e. *Agned-Cathregonion*). (Nennius.) Cadbury in Somerset; or a name for Edinburgh.

300. **Trath Treroit.** Or Ribroit. *Decimum bellum gessit in littora fluminis quod vocatur Tribut* (i. e. *Trath Triuroit*). (Nennius.) Variouslly identified: as the Brue in Somersetshire; the Ribble in Lancashire; a place on the banks of the Forth near Stirling; and a stream in Anglesea.

302. **mount of Badon.** *Duodecimum fuit bellum in monte Badonis, in quo corruerunt in uno die nonaginti sexaginta viri de uno impetu Arthur et nemo prostravit eos nisi ipse solus.* (Nennius.) This battle seems to have been historical. (Cf. *Introd.*) Badon has been identified with Bath; with Badbury Hill in Dorsetshire; and with Bowden Hill in Linlithgow, on the Scottish Avon.

304. **Christ and him.** Cf. the war-cries in Froissart's chronicles, Shakespeare's "Cry God for Harry, England and Saint George!", *Henry V.*, III, i, 34; Scott's "St. Mary for the young Buccleuch," *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, etc.

310-11. **nor cares for triumph, etc.** Cf. *Introd.* p. xvi. Also *Balin and Balan*, ll.35-37, *Gareth and Lynette*, ll.485-86.

314. **the fire of God.** Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, ll.127-29.

318. **fair lord.** A conventional mode of address, cf. 1.358, and elsewhere. *Fair King, fair knight, etc.*, are common in Malory.

319. **traits f pleasantry.** Pleasant or jesting talk.

325. **to make him cheer** To entertain him.

330. **As when a painter, etc.** The Rt. Hon. W. E. H. Lecky (in *Reminiscences* supplied to Tennyson's son, *Memoir*, II) writes:

"... He once asked Mr. Watts [G. F. Watts] the distinguished painter, to describe his ideal of what a true portrait painter should be, and he embalmed the substance of Mr. Watts's answer in some of the noblest lines in the 'Idylls'..."

The simile, ll.330 ff. in this Idyll is then quoted.

336. **Dark-splendid**. Cf. "large black eyes," l.829. Teunyson speaks of Lancelot's "night-black hair," *Balin and Balan*, l.503, and of his "coal-black curls," *The Lady of Shalott*, iii, 4. The suggestion of Lancelot's darkness is not from Malory. In certain old romances his hair is "like yellow gold." Cf. *Poet Lore*, IV, 411.

338. **rathe**. 'Early.' Obsolete or archaic. The adjective is *rath*, cf. *In Memoriam*, ex; *Shepherd's Calendar*, xii, 98; *Lycidas*, 142. The comparative survives in *rather*.

342. **Anon**. 'Straightway,' 'forthwith.' Archaic.

347. **flatterin_g**. From the ON. *flator*, to soothe, stroke gently, or caress. Here preserving the older meaning.

349. **seven men**. *Seven* is a favorite number in indefinite expressions, among older English writers, especially in marking time. Cf. *Child Horn*, 736, "fulle seue yere," *Morte Darthur*, VI, 15, "this seven yere."

356. **favor**. In knight errantry a souvenir or gift to be worn in the joust, or habitually, as a token of friendship or love.

360. **tourney**. A variant of *tournament*. The words refer usually to the contest of a number of knights on each side, rather than to single combat.

362. **lists**. A *list* is one of the barriers enclosing the field of combat; sometimes the field so enclosed. Usually found in the plural.

370. **A red sleeve**. The reference is to the long pendent sleeve, called a "hanging sleeve," worn in the Middle Ages; or more probably, to the band or strip of stuff, single or double, often hung from the arm, independent of the natural sleeve. (Cf. Viollet le Duc. *Dict. de Mobilier Francais*.) The favor was usually some article of feminine adornment, a scarf, glove, sleeve, or knot of ribbon. Cf. *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* (E. E. T. S. 61, 81) where Blanchardyn is given a black sleeve to wear on his helm, later a crimson one.

392. This line read in the 1859 edition:

"Paused in the gateway standing by the shield"

396. **and so lived**, etc. This line recalls *the leader* l. 127, where the same expression occurs.

401. **hermit**. In the *Morte Darthur*, Lancelot and Lavaine do not visit the hermit before the tournament, but find lodging in Camelot. Tennyson elaborates his picture of the hermit's dwelling from Malory's "that hermytage the whiche was under a wood, and a grete clyf on the other syde, and a fayre water rennyng under it." (XVIII, 12.)

409. **noise**. A Shakespearean sense of this word was pleasant noise or music. Tennyson uses the word here in the former sense; in *Sir Galahad*, 23, "a noise of hymns," in the latter.

411. **broke from underground**. Cf. l. 1130 and "So when the sun broke next from underground." *The Holy Grail*, l. 328.

415. **Lancelot of the Lake**. Cf. note on l. 1393.

422. **Pendragon**. The name Pendragon was, according to legend, the title given to Arthur's father, Uther, and later to Arthur. The story in Geoffrey of Monmouth, VIII, xiv-xvii, is that Uther saw a comet "darting forth a ray, at the end of which was a globe of fire in the form of a dragon." When he became king,

"...remembering the explanation which Merlin had made... he commanded two dragons to be made of gold, in likeness of the dragon which he had seen at the ray of the star... He made a present of one to the cathedral church at Winchester, but reserved the other for himself, to be carried along with him to his wars. From this time therefore he was called Uther Pendragon, which in the British tongue signifies the dragon's head; the occasion... being Merlin's predicting from the appearance of a dragon, that he should be king."

The dragon was the emblem of the British, as the white horse of the Saxons. The habit of calling a king or leader a dragon is very common in Welsh poetry. For the possible origin of the use of the dragon as an emblem, among the British, cf. Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, 133.

423. **talk mysteriously**. For the rumors about Arthur's coming, cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 177. Also note on l. 1247 below.

430. **clear-faced King**. This may refer to Arthur's 'openness of expression,' reflecting his clear nature, or to his fairness of complexion. Tennyson describes Arthur as "fair Beyond the race of Britons and of men," *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 329-30. He speaks of his "golden head," *Balin and Balun*, l. 505, and of "the light and lustrous curls That made his forehead like a rising sun," *The Passing of Arthur*, ll. 384-85. Cf. also *The Last Tournament*, ll. 661-63.

431. **samite.** A heavy silk material of great richness. Originally each thread was supposed to be twisted of six fibers, hence the name, from the Gk. *hex* 'six' and *mitos* 'thread.' Beside red samite Tennyson mentions white samite, *The Coming of Arthur*, 1.284, *The Passing of Arthur*, 1.312, etc.; crimson samite, *The Holy Grail*, 1.844; and blackest samite, 1.1135 below.

432. **golden dragon.** Cf. note on 1.422. Similar references to the characteristic use of the dragon in ornamentation are, *The Last Tournament*, 1.144, 666-67, *Guinevere*, ll.395-96, 589-91.

440. **tender.** Delicately fashioned.

446. **crescent.** Cf. 1.1389 below. Tennyson uses *in-crescent* and *de-crescent*, *Garth and Lynette*, 1.519.

come . . . and overcome. Cf. note on 1.163; also *do and overdo*, 1.467; *bears . . . and overbears*, ll.481-83; *noble . . . and ignoble*, 1.1081.

464. **Lancelot's kith and kin.** *Kith* is obsolete except in this expression. In the *Morte Darthur*, it is Gawain and Arthur who first discuss Lancelot's identity.

473. Cf. 1.366.

474. The original reading of this line was:

"'How then? who then?' a fury seized *on them*."

475. **family passion for the name.** Cf. *The Holy Grail*, ll.648-49:

"For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him
That ill to him is ill to them. . . ."

477. **couch'd their spears.** Lowered them for attack. Lancelot and Lavaine are set upon in somewhat similar fashion by King Arthur and nine knights (Mal. XVIII, 23-24) in a later joust in which they take part, again disguised. Lancelot once more wins the prize.

482. **smoke.** Cf. the fine spray blown from the white crests of the waves. With regard to this passage Tennyson wrote (*Memoir*, I, 257) in 1882, in a letter to Mr. S. E. Dawson, author of *A Study of the Princess*:

"There was a period in my life when, as an artist, Turner for instance, takes rough sketches of landscape, etc., in order to work them eventually into some great picture, so I was in the habit of chronicling, in four or five words or more, whatever might strike me as picturesque in Nature. I never put these down, and many and many a line has gone away on the north wind, but some remain, e. g. . . ."

with all

Its stormy crests that smote against the skies.

Suggestion: a storm which came upon us in the middle of the North Sea."

494. **holpen.** The old pp. instead of *helped*, as *molten* beside *melted*. Tennyson uses *foughten* in many of the Idylls. Cf. also note on l.50.

498. The original reading was:

"Back to the barrier; then the *heralds* blew"—

502. **Diamond me**, etc. For similar expressions cf. *Richard II.*, II. iii, 87; *Romco and Juliet*, III, v, 153; "clerk me no clerks," *Ivanhoe*, XX; "But me no buts." Fielding, etc.

511. **I dread me.** The use of reflexive datives with intransitive verbs is very common in imitations of archaic constructions. Cf. "Sat him down," *The Coming of Arthur*, l.155. Shakespeare writes, "I doubt me," "get thee away," "hie you home," etc.

513. The original reading of this line was:

"Draw,"—and Lavaine drew, and *that other* gave"—

517. **Then came the hermit**, etc. Malory says (XVIII, 13), "For there were none heremytes in tho dayes but that they had ben men of worshyp and of prowesse, and tho heremytes helde grete housholde and refresshyd peple that were in distresse."

524. **utmost North and West.** According to Malory, among those who fought against the Round Table were the King of North Galis (North Wales), the King of Northumberland, etc.

525. **marches.** Border lands, frontiers.

528. **sore wounded.** As an adverb *sore* is now archaic or provincial.

543. **Ourselves.** Here the 'plural of royalty'; so *us*, probably, l.545. In the 1859 edition, ll.543-45 read:

"Ourselves will send it after. *Wherefore* take
This diamond, and deliver it and return.
And bring us *what* he is, and how he fares."

547. **carven flower.** Cf. ll.441-42.

551. **prince.** Gawain is King Lot's son.

553. **Gawain . . . The Courteous** In the *Morte Darthur* Arthur's nephew, and one of his strongest and best known knights. Tennyson's Gawain is not Malory's, and Malory's is not the Ga-

wain of older tradition. Gwalchmai (Gawain) in the *Mabinogion* is of high and noble character. In Geoffrey of Monmouth, Walgan (Gawain) is Arthur's nephew and most distinguished knight; his deeds almost eclipse the king's. The French verse romances often have Gawain for their hero, and exhibit him as the flower of knighthood, zealous to redress grievances, and almost invincible in battle. So in the early English *Gawayn and the Grene Knight*. Malory lowers the character and the high position of Gawain, but in the *Morte Darthur* he is still a knight of dignity and loyalty. He suffers most in the French prose romances, becoming there cruel and perfidious.

Tennyson keeps for Gawain his old title *le courtois*, "The Courteous" (cf. Chaucer's "Gawayn with his old curteisye," *The Squire's Tale*), but develops his character unfavorably in the Idylls. His Gawain is worldly and unstable, "light-of-love" (*Pelleas and Ettarre*, l.353); his courtesy has a "touch of traitor in it" (*Lancelot and Elaine*, l.635); he is "reckless and irreverent" (*Holy Grail*, l.853); "light in life and light in death" (*Passing of Arthur*, l.56). For Gawain as a boy, cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, ll.319-21.

554. **Tristram.** Arthur's leading knight, after Lancelot, and almost Lancelot's equal. For Tristram in the Idylls, cf. *The Last Tournament*. Tennyson follows Malory's spelling; Matthew Arnold and others the French spelling, *Tristan*.

Geraint. A knight made conspicuous by Tennyson in his Idyll *The Marriage of Geraint*, and its sequel *Geraint and Enid*, both based on the *Mabinogion*. Geraint is not mentioned in the *Morte Darthur*.

555. **Gareth** The hero of the Idyll *Gareth and Lynette*. In the *Morte Darthur* he is the youngest son of King Lot of Orkney. His brothers are Gawain, Agravaine, Gaheris, and Modred. In the Idylls, Gareth is the only son of King Lot who remains faithful to Arthur. LL.555-56 read in the 1859 edition of the Idyll:

"And *Lamorack* a good knight, but therewithal
Sir Modred's brother, *of a crafty house*"—

According to Malory, Lamorack (Lamorak de Galys, i. e. Wales) is not the brother of Modred but of Percivale. His place in the Round Table narratives is high. Cf. VII, 9, where he is ranked with Lancelot and Tristram.

556. **Modred.** Tennyson follows Geoffrey of Monmouth's spelling, instead of Malory's, which is Mordred. Modred is Arthur's

nephew, both in Geoffrey's account and in the *Morte Darthur*, and through his hatred for Arthur, and his ambition for the throne, becomes the chief agent in the king's downfall. In the Idylls he plays a slighter and more ignoble part. The Round Table is wrecked without his agency, although it is he who, leagued with the Saxons, fights against Arthur in his last battle, and gives him his death wound. Tennyson makes Modred, as in the romance of Merlin (cf. Ellis, *Early English Metrical Romances*) the son of Lot and Bellicent.

558. **Wroth**, etc. Gawain volunteers the quest of the stranger knight, in the *Morte Darthur*.

567. **tarriance**. Poetic and infrequent.

572. **like**. Counterpart, person resembling him. Often used as a substantive, cf. 'his like,' 'like cures like,' etc.

584. **allow**. Cf. note on l.110.

591. **Albeit** Used in concessive clauses. ME. *al be it*, 'although.'

fantastical. Full of romantic whims.

592. **So fine a fear**. 'Fine' here means 'superfine.' The king thinks Lancelot overpunctilious or sensitive.

605. Tennyson seems here to have taken his suggestion from Ellis (cf. *Introd.* p. xvii): "She retired to her chamber and abandoned herself to the most violent transports of jealousy." (p. 159.) It does not come from the *Morte Darthur*.

In the 1859 edition, this line read, "*Moved* to her chamber."

611. After narrating Arthur's return to Camelot and his meeting with the queen, Tennyson reverts to Gawain. In Malory it is Sir Bors, Lancelot's kinsman, not Arthur, who talks with Guinevere of Lancelot's wearing the red sleeve. The interview takes place after Gawain has found Elaine and returned with his news. The queen accuses Lancelot to Bors, who defends him, and finally undertakes his quest.

614. In the *Morte Darthur*, Gawain's coming to Astolat takes place after his fruitless search for Lancelot. He does not proffer love to Elaine, but is loyal to Lancelot. Possibly Tennyson followed the version in the French prose romance of *Lancelot*, where Gawain's attitude is much as in the Idyll; or he may have assigned the role independently.

618. **parted**. 'Departed.' Fr. *partir*. *Depart* formerly meant 'separate.' *Part* and *depart* have exchanged meanings.

626. **ridd'n a random round.** In 1859 this line read, "but had ridden *wildly* round," etc.

628. **us.** Probably the plural of rank or authority, like *our*, l.632.

629. Originally,

"And ride no *longer wildly*, noble Prince"—

642. **play upon her.** Cf. l.208, and *Hamlet*, III, ii, "You would play upon me. . . Do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe?"

652. **falcon.** A hawk used in falconry. Strictly the female; the male is called *tercel* or *tiercel*. Falconry was a favorite amusement of kings and nobles in mediaeval Europe. Falcons have strong beaks and claws, and were trained to hunt other birds. The owner rode with the hooded falcon on his wrist. When game was discovered, the hood was removed and the falcon rose above its destined prey, swooped down on it, seized it, and bore it back to the owner. Cf. *Merlin and Vivien*, ll.93-134, for an account of a falcon hunt.

653. **hern.** A contraction of *heron*, with the same meaning.

659. Cf. note on l.187-88.

660. **Ramp.** Generally an adverb. The usual adjective is *ram-pant*. The other positions in heraldry are *saltant*, 'leaping,' *couchant*, 'lying,' and *dormant*, 'sleeping.'

field. In heraldry the surface of the shield on which the armorial bearings are depicted.

smote his thigh. An action generally expressing surprise or amusement. In Homer it expressed grief or dismay. So *Ez.* 21-12, *Jer.* 31-19.

671. **Meseem'd.** Archaic. Cf. Rossetti's *herseem'd*, *The Blessed Damosel*.

671-74. Note the repetition of *know*, here, cf. note on l.163.

674. Originally, "*Methinks* there is none other," etc.

675. **God's death.** Often abbreviated to '*sdcath*.' So God's blood ('*sblood*'), God's wounds ('*swoons*'), etc. Cf. note on l.24.

682. The association of changing leaf with changing love is found also in Tristram's song in *The Last Tournament*, ll.275-81.

683. **enow** An old variant of *enough*. Frequent in Shakespeare. An older reading has *enough*. Originally the line read:

"*May it be so? Why then, far be it from me*"—

700. **lightly**. Here, 'in a light hearted manner.' A word frequently used by Malory, "ye will not repent so lightly," "lightly he smote," etc.

707. **our courtesy**. The courtesy which you teach us to strive for.

715. **For twenty strokes of the blood**. For twenty pulse-beats.

724. **Predoom'd**. Passed sentence on her beforehand.

728. Originally, "Marr'd her friend's *point*," etc.

730. **a nine-days' wonder**. A wonder lasted proverbially nine days. Cf. *As You Like It*, III, ii, 184; *Henry VI.*, III, ii, 113-14.

739. **wormwood**. A plant or woody herb proverbial for its bitterness. The word was transformed by folk-etymology from OE. *wermod*, and had originally nothing to do with *worm* or *wood*. Cf. Ger. *wermoth*, Fr. *vermouth*.

748. **let me hence**. The infinitive of a verb of 'going' omitted, as often in Old and later English.

766. **wit ye well**. Very common in Malory. "Now wit ye well," "he wist well," etc.

767. **Right fain**. *Fain*, 'glad,' is now archaic or poetic. *Right* was earlier in very common use as an intensive adverb. It remains in the standard speech in a few expressions like "right reverend," "right honorable," etc.

773. **Lightly**. Cf. note on 1.700.

784. Cf. 1.398.

788. **field of flowers**. Cf. II.1134, 1170, 1226. Also *Intro.* p. xxiii.

795. **strange statued gate** Cf. 1.839. Called the Gate of the Three Queens, *The Holy Grail*, II.358-59. Read the passage in *Garth and Lynette*, II.209-26, describing it in detail.

797. **still rich city**. Cf. II.840-42, and note on 1.23. Camelot is similarly described in *Garth and Lynette*, II.296-302, and in *The Holy Grail*, II.227-29, and 339 ff.

806. In 1859, "the cell *in which* he slept."

812. **colorous**. Frequently used by Malory, "dolorous stroke," "damsel dolorous," etc.

836. **he not regarded**. For similar archaic or inverted word order cf. "As you that not obey me," *Gaiant and Enid*, 1.151; "Why ye not wear," *The Last Tournament*, 1.36.

840. **to her kin.** Cf. Malory. Tennyson, with what Mr. Churton Collins and Mr. Littledale call perhaps needless concessions to the conventionalities, makes Elaine go every night to the house of her kinsfolk and return in the morning to the hermitage. In the account in Ellis (p. 156), Lancelot lodges at Winchester before the tournament at the house of Lavaine's aunt, in Malory with a "ryche burgeis." Possibly the suggestion of the kinsfolk at Camelot came to Tennyson from Ellis.

849. **=feverous.** Poetic for *feverish*.

855. **Did kinder unto men** Malory's expression.

857. **simples.** Medicinal herbs, so called because each herb was supposed to possess its own particular virtue, and hence to constitute a simple remedy. *Simples* in this usage is a substantivated adjective, like *noble, news, goods, ills*, etc. It is found commonly in the plural.

862. **held her tenderly.** *Hold* in the sense of 'think' or 'consider' is very common in Malory, "thou holdest me for thy servant." etc.

867. **peradventure.** 'Perchance,' 'perhaps.' OF. *par aventure*. Common in Malory. "Peradventure, said Balin," "peradventure, though he hate you," etc.

870. **straiten'd him.** Confined him.

872. **faith unfaithful**, etc. Faith to Guinevere involving falsehood to Arthur. Ll. 871-72 are among the most widely quoted in the Idylls, and well illustrate Tennyson's command of oxymoron and epigram. They recall what Samuel Butler (in his *Cat and Pass*) said of Lothario:

"At once his passion was both false and true,
And the more false, the more in earnest grew."

877. Originally, "the *sweet* image," etc.

898. **burthen**, Refrain. Strictly the 'burthen' (burden) is the undersong, or accompaniment, i. e., is sung throughout, not at regular intervals like a refrain.

900. **To Astolat . . . rode**, etc. Tennyson has much condensed Malory's narrative of Lancelot's stay at the hermitage, and omitted many incidents, such as the coming of Sir Bors, their conversation concerning the Queen's wrath and concerning Elaine, the breaking out afresh of Lancelot's wound, etc.

905. **the victim's flowers, etc.** The garland wreathed on the head of the victim led to sacrifice. Cf. passages in Homer.

910-11. **I make My will of yours.** Your wishes shall be mine.

912. **what I will I can.** Can do.

920. In the 1859 edition, "Seeing I *loust* go to-day," etc. In the account in Malory, there is no sign of the struggle between Elaine's wish to speak and the sensitive modesty forbidding her. Nevertheless the parallel between the passages is close.

939. **quit.** Repay.

953. **beyond the seas.** Iauveloc is the son of King Ban, whose realm, Berwick, Malory mentions as across the sea. "And so they shippyed at Cardyf and sayled vnto Berwyk somme men call Bayen, [i. e., Bayonne] and somme men calle it Beaume where the wyn of Beaume is," XX, 18. The French romance of Merlin says that Benoye [i. e., Benwick], the realm of King Ban, is in Lesser Brittany.

964. **a flash.** Cf. 1.944.

965. **I fear me.** Cf. note on 1.511.

977. **by tact of love.** By love's intuition.

985. **still.** Cf. note on 1.67.

986. **pictured wall.** Wall covered with figured tapestry.

995. **sallow-rifted glooms.** Dusk of evening broken by streaks of yellow.

1000. Each of the Idylls, with the exception of *Geraint and Enid*, *The Holy Grail*, and *The Passing of Arthur*, contains a little troubadour-like song, like Elaine's "Song of Love and Death." The lines are of the same length as the other lines of the poem, and show a repetition and weaving in and out of words and thoughts suggesting the rondels and triolets of French troubadour poetry, although there is no conformity with these in the rhyme scheme and the meter. Most of the lyrics in the Idylls are in three-line stanzas in this regard resembling the tercet rhymes of the Welsh bardic poems, or of Breton song (see Merlin's "riddling triplets," *The Coming of Arthur*, 1.402). Cf. "Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May!" *The Coming of Arthur*, 1.481; "O morning star that smilest in the blue," *Gareth and Lynette*, 1.974; "Turn Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud," *Marriage of Geraint*, 1.347; "In love, if love be love, if love be ours," *Merlin and Vivien*, 1.385; "Late, late, so late!" *Guinevere*, 1.166. These are in three-line stanzas the first two

rhyning, and the third lines either ending in the same word or rhyning with one another. The form is still further varied in "The fire of heaven has kill'd the barren cold," *Balin and Balan*, l.434; "A rose, but one, no other rose had I," *Pelleas and Ettarre*, l.391; and Tristram's song, "Ay, ay, O, ay—the winds that bend the brier," in *The Last Tournament*, l.735.

1012. **scaled her voice.** Mounted the scale, rose in pitch.

1015. **phantom of the house.** Belief in the apparition of a tall woman in white, who shrieks about the house, giving warning of a coming death, is still common, especially in Ireland, where the apparition is called the "Panshee."

1019. **shrilling.** Tennyson often uses *shrill* as a verb, cf. *The Passing of Arthur*, ll.33, 41.

1036. **far up the shining flood.** Cf. note on Camelot, l.23.

1049. Cf. l.692.

1061. **an.** Cf. note on l.218.

1066. Originally, "To *which* the gentle sister made reply"—

1077. Cf. note on l.872.

1084. **pass.** Pass away.

1093. **shrive me clean.** Confess myself and receive absolution.

1096. **Besought Lavaine**, etc. In the *Morte Darthur* it is Torre who writes the letter. Otherwise the passages are much the same.

1102. **writ.** Common in the eighteenth century in the preterite singular, instead of *wrote*. Here it replaces *written* in the participle.

1115. **a barge.** Cf. the request of Percivale's sister (*Morte Darthur*, XVII, 11), "as soone as I am dede put me in a bote at the next haven, and lete me goo as adventure will lede me." The custom of burial by boat was very old, cf. *Beowulf*, ll.26-37.

1129. **dole.** Archaic and poetic. Common in Malory, "King Lot made great dole," "All the court made great dole," etc.

1130. Cf. l.411.

1134. **shone Full-summer.** Shone in the sunlight of midsummer.

1136. **creature.** Servitor. Now commonly used in a depreciatory or pejorative sense, 'tool,' 'cat's-paw.'

1141-42. **a lily . . . The silken case.** Tennyson varies from Malory in the addition of the lily and the case. Cf. also Elaine's directions, ll.1106-16.

1146. **dumb old servitor.** In Malory (XVIII, 20) the servitor *would* not speak.

1147. **Oar'd by the dumb.** *Oar* is used as a verb in *The Princess* also. In the 1859 edition the line read, "*Steer'd* by the dumb," etc.

1148-49. **in her left,** etc. In Malory the letter is in her right hand. Cf. also "Thenne Syr Percyuale made a letter of all that she had holpen hem as in straunge aduentures, and put hit in her ryght hand and soo leyd her in a barge, and couerd it with blak sylke." Mal. XVII, 11.

1155. **That day Sir Lancelot,** etc. Elaine died on the eleventh day after Lancelot's departure for the court, cf. l.1126. Tennyson probably ordained Lancelot's delay, if he thought of the point at all, in order that the appearance of the barge might be at the effective moment indicated in ll.1230-35. In the account in Ellis, Lancelot has no opportunity to seek the Queen for several days, because unable to free himself from the company of friends.

1167. In 1859 this line read, "The shadow of a piece," etc.

1170. **oriel.** A projecting window in old buildings.

1172. **They met,** etc. Tennyson followed Ellis here. Cf. note on l.1197. In Malory there is no interview between Lancelot and the Queen before the coming of the barge. Beside the two interviews in this Idyll another is sketched, *Balin and Balan*, ll.239-75.

1178. **cygnet.** Young swan. The down of the cygnet is dusky. The meaning here is, "a neck so white that in comparison the white neck of the swan seems even darker than the dusky neck of its young."

1185. **absoluter.** Comparatives in *-er* and *-est* are often used in poetry where ordinary prose usage would prefer comparatives with *more* and *most*. Cf. Swinburne's *wretcheder, patienter, splendider*, etc.

1197. There is nothing corresponding to this scene in Malory. For the suggestion of Guinevere's speech, cf. Ellis, p. 159:

"Guenever . . . thought herself fully justified in reproaching him for his passion for the maid of Ascalot: which she observed, however justified by that lady's superior charms, unfortunately tended to lessen his reputation by giving him a disgust for those nobler pursuits in which his eminence over all the knights of the world was hitherto so well established. She, however, trusted to his honour, and hoped that his new passion would never induce him to betray . . . one who however inferior to her rival in beauty, had at least proved the sincerity and constancy of her affection."

1224. **Or hers or mine.** *Or... or*, for *either... or*, *whether... or*, is archaic or poetic.

1227. **Flung them**, etc. In *The Last Tournament*, ll.35-45, Guinevere thus explains their loss:

“...but, O my Queen, I muse
Why ye not wear on arm, or neck, or zone
Those diamonds that I rescued from the tarn,
And Lancelot won, methought, for thee to wear.”

“Would rather you had let them fall,” she
cried,
“Plunge and be lost—ill-fated as they were,
A bitterness to me!—ye look amazed,
Not knowing they were lost as soon as given—
Slid from my hands, when I was leaning out
Above the river—that unhappy child
Past in her barge...”

1230. In 1859 this line read:

“Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half *disgust*”

1247. **Fairy Queen**, etc. Cf. 1.423. *The Coming of Arthur* tells the various rumors of Arthur's coming and going. Compare also Merlin's saying “From the great deep to the great deep he goes,” *ib.* l.410. In *The Passing of Arthur*, ll.361-440, is described the coming of the three queens who bear him away to Avillion. Cf. also *Gareth and Lynette*, ll.198-200:

“Lord, we have heard from our wise man at
home
To Northward, that this King is not the King,
But only changeling out of Fairyland...”

1250. **For some do hold**, etc. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, ll.418-21:

“...and Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Tho' men may wound him that he will not die
But pass, again to come;...”

Also Arthur's words in *The Passing of Arthur*, l.28. “I pass but shall not die.” William of Malmesbury, about 1125, is apparently the first to express belief in Arthur's second coming. Malory writes (XXI, 7):

“Yet somme men say in many partyes of Englonde that kyng Arthur is not deed, but had by the wylle of our Lord Jhesu in to another place; and men say that he shal come ageyn, and he shal wynne the holy crosse. I wyl not say that it shal be so, but rather I wyl say here in this world he chaunged his lyf. But many men say that there is wryton upon his tombe this vers: *Hic jacet Arthurus Rex quondam Rerque futurus.*”

Similar belief in the return at a critical time of a king or warrior to lead his people to victory is recorded among many races. Notable instances are the legends of Charlemagne in Odenburg, Kaiser Friedrich II. in the castle of Kyffhauser, Holger the Dane in Elsinore, etc.

1256. **Percivale.** Cf. the first lines of the Idyll *The Holy Grail*. For Percivale's part in the Grail legend, cf. Introd. In Malory he is called Sir Percival de Galis [Galys, Walys, or Wales]. The corresponding name in the *Mabinogion* is Peredur. Since the *Conte del Graal* of Crestien de Troyes, the legend of Percivale has had wide popularity. It is now best known, perhaps, through Wagner's opera *Parzifal*.

1257. **Sir Galahad.** Galahad is the type of the spotless and saint-like in the *Morte Darthur*, and is the only one of Arthur's knights who achieves the quest of the Grail. Tennyson (*The Holy Grail*, II.134-35) has him always wear white armor. Compare the poet's early lyric *Sir Galahad*, published in 1842. In the *Morte Darthur* Arthur sends Sir Brandiles and Sir Agravaine, instead of Sir Percivale and Sir Galahad.

1262. **Arthur spied**, etc. In the *Morte Darthur*, it is the Queen who first sees the letter.

1264. Compare the letter in the *Morte Darthur*.

1299. **Sea was her wrath**, etc. Her wrath yet worked, like the sea, which remains rough after the storm has passed.

1313. **joyance.** Poetic. Cf. *joyaunce*, Mrs. Browning's *Rhyme of the Duchess May*, etc.

1315. **Arthur answer'd.** Cf. his words in Malory. For Elaine's burial cf. also Ellis. 162, "The King immediately gave orders for the interment of the lady with all the honours suited to her rank."

1319. **that shrine**, etc. The "shrine" is Westminster.

1327. **half-forgotten kings.** The tombs of Edward the Confessor, Henry III., Edward I., etc., are in Westminster. The abbey stands on the site of an ancient Saxon church, built by Sebert, a king of the West Saxons, in the seventh century. According to tradition, there was a still more ancient church on the site, dating from the second century A.D.

1345. There is little or no correspondence between the remaining lines of the poem and the *Morte Darthur*.

1343-46. These lines read in 1859 :

“But Arthur who beheld his cloudy brows
Approach'd him, and with full affection *flung*
One arm about his neck, and spake and said,
'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
Most *love* and most *affiance*' ”—

affiance. Trust. Cf. Malory, I, 3, “He made *affiance* to the king.” Used by Shakespeare.

1353-54. These lines read originally :

“ . . . but now I would to God,
For the wild people say wild things of thee”—

By the change (as pointed out by Dr. Jones, *Growth of the Idylls*) Arthur is represented not as closing his ears to testimony, but as attributing the trouble in Lancelot's eyes to “homelessness.”

1368. Cf. Tristram's song in *The Last Tournament*.

1389. **crescent.** Cf. note on 1.446.

1393-96. These lines read originally :

“Lancelot, whom the Lady of the lake
Stole from his mother—as the story runs—
She chanted snatches of mysterious *song*”—

Lancelot is introduced very abruptly in the *Morte Darthur*, and the story of his early life and coming to Arthur's court omitted. He is called Launcelot du Lake, however, (II, 8). Tennyson introduced from another source the legend of his carrying off by the Dame du Lac, whence his surname. It is first told in the German *Lanzelet* of the twelfth century by Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, and in the French prose romance of the thirteenth century. Tennyson probably derived his version from Ellis, pp. 143-44, or else from Dunlop's *History of Fiction* (1814), I, vii.

When Tennyson introduced allegory into the Idylls, he gave this Lady of the Lake, whom he now made symbolical of religion, a more spiritual character. Hence probably his changes in this passage, in 1869, of *stole* to *caught*, and *song* to *hymns*. Tennyson's Lady of the Lake is not to be identified with any of the various ladies of the lake in Malory, assuredly not with Nimue, modified to Vivien, of Tennyson's *Merlin and Vivien*.

1410. **not without.** *Without* is not very correctly used in the sense of *unless* or *except*, unless in poetry. Cf. “Marry . . . not without the prince be willing,” *Much Ado*, etc., III, iii.

1418. **die a holy man.** After Guinevere went to the nunnery at Almesbury, Lancelot entered a monastery. Cf. the *Morte Darthur*, XXI, 10.

And atte last he [Sir Launcelot] was ware of an ermytage and a chappel stode betwyxte two clyffes, and than he herde a lytel belle ryng to masse . . . And he that sange masse was the bysshop of Caunterburye. Bothe the bysshop and Sir Bedwer knewe Syr Launcelot, and they spake to gyders after masse, but whan Syr Bedwere had tolde his tale al hole, Syr Launcelottes hert almost braste for sorowe, and Sir Launcelot threwe his armes abrode, and sayd, "Alas! who may truste thys world?" And than, he knelyd down on his knee, and prayed the bysshop to shryve hym and assoyle hym; and than he besought the bysshop that he myght be hys brother. Than the bysshop sayd, "I wyll gladly," and there he put an habyte upon Syr Launcelot, and there he servyd God day and nyght with prayers and fastynges.

At Lancelot's death, Sir Ector de Marys speaks this eulogy (XXI, 13):

"A, Launcelot, thou were hede of al Crysten knyghtes. And now I dare say thou Sir Launcelot, there thou lyst, that thou were never matched of erthely knyghtes hande, and thou were the curtest knyght that ever bare shelde, and thou were the truest frende to thy lovar that ever bestrade hors, and thou were the trewest lover of a synful man that ever loved woman, and thou were the kyndest man that ever strake with swerde, and thou were the goodelyest persone that ever cam emonge prees of knyghtes, and thou was the mekest man and the jentyllest that ever ete in halle emonge ladyes, and thou were the sternest knyght to thy mortal foo that ever put spere in the breste."

APPENDIX

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE "MORTE DARTHUR"

Book XVIII, Chapter viii. Thus it passed on tyl Oure Lady Daye, Assumpcyon. Within a xv dayes of that feest the kynge lete crye a grete justes and a turnement that shold be at that daye att Camelot, that is Wynchester. And the kynge lete crye that he and the kynge of Scottes wold juste ageynst alle that wold come ageynst hem. . . . Soo kynge Arthur made hym redy to departe to these justys and wold have had the quene with hym; but at that tyme she wold not, she said, for she was seke and myghte not ride at that tyme. "That me repenteth," sayd the kynge, "for this seven yere ye sawe not suche a noble felaushyp to gyders, excepte at Wytsonyde whan Galahad departed from the courte." "Truly," sayd the quene to the kynge, "ye must holde me excused. I maye not be there, and that me repenteth." And many demed the quene wold not be there by cause of Sir Launcelot du Lake, for Sire Launcelot wold not ryde with the kynge; for he said that he was not hole of the wound the whiche Sire Mador had gyven hym. . . . Soo whan the kynge was departed, the quene called Sir Launcelot to her, and said thus, "Sire Launcelot, ye are gretely to blame thus to holde yow behynde my lord. What trowe ye, what will youre enemyes and myne saye and deme? nought els but, 'See how Sire Launcelot holdeth hym ever behynde the kyng, and soo doth the quene, for that they wold have their pleasyr to gyders'; and thus wylle they saye," sayd the quene to Syr Launcelot, "have ye noo doubte thereof."

ix. "Madame," said Syr Launcelot, "I allowe your wytte, it is of late come syn ye were wyse, and therefor, madame, at this tyme I wille be rulyd by your counceylle, and thys nyghte I wylle take my rest, and to morowe by tyme I wyll take my waye toward Wynchestre. But wete yow wel," sayd Sir Launcelot to the quene, "that at that justes I wille be ageynst the kynge and ageynst al his felaushyp." "Ye may there doo as ye lyst," sayd the quene, "but by my counceylle ye shalle not be ageynst youre kyng and youre felaushyp, for therin ben ful many hard knyghtes of youre blood, as ye wote wel ynough, hit nedeth not to reherce them." "Madame," said Syre Launcelot, "I praye yow that ye be not displeasyd with me, for I wille take the adventure that God wylle sende me."

And soo upon the morne erly Syre Launcelot departed. And thenne he rode soo moche untyl he came to Astolat, that is. Gylford, and there hit happed hym in the eventyde he cam to an old barons place, that hyght Sir Bernard of Astolat. . . . Soo whan Sire Launcelot was in his lodgyng, and unarmed hym in his chamber, the olde baron and heremyte came to hym makyng his reverence, and welcomed hym in the best maner, but the olde knyght knewe not Sire Launcelot. "Fair sir," said Sir Launcelot, "I wold praye yow to lene me a shelde that were not openly knowen, for myn is wel knowen." "Sir," said his hoost, "ye shalle have your desyre. . . . Sire wete yow wel I have two sones that were but late made knyghtes, and the eldest hyghte Sir Tirre, and he was hurt that same day he was made knyghte that he may not ryde, and his shelde ye shalle have. . . . And my yongest sone hyght Lavayne, and yf hit please yow he shalle ryde with yow unto that justes; for moche my herte gyveth unto yow that ye shold be a noble knyghte, therfor I praye yow telle me your name," said Sir Bernard. "As for that," sayd Sire Launcelot, "ye must holde me excused as at this tyme." . . .

This old baron had a doughter that tyme that was called that tyme the fayre mayden of Astolat. And ever she beheld Sir Launcelot wonderfully. And as the book sayth, she cast suche a love unto Sir Launcelot that she coude never withdrawe her love; wherfore she dyed, and her name was Elayne le Blank. Soo thus as she cam to and fro, she was soo hote in her love that she besoughte Syr Launcelot to were upon hym at the justes a token of hers. "Faire damoyssel," said Sir Launcelot, "and yf I graunte yow that, ye may saye I doo more for your love than ever I dyd for lady or damoyssel." Thenne he remembryd hym that he wold goo to the justes disguised; and by cause he had never fore that tyme borne noo manere of token of no damoyssel, thenne he said, "Faire mayden, I wylle graunte yow to were a token of yours upon myn helmet, and therfor what it is shewe it me." "Sir," she said, "it is a reed sleve of myn, of scarlet wel enbrouded with grete perlys"; and soo she brought it hym. Soo Syre Launcelot receyved it and sayd, "Never dyd I erst soo moche for no damoyssel." And thenne Sir Launcelot bitoke the fair mayden his shelde in kepyng, and praid her to kepe that untyl that he came ageyne. . . .

x. . . . And soo . . . Sir Launcelot and Sire Lavayne made hem redy to ryde, and eyther of hem had whyte sheldes, and the reed sleve, Sir Launcelot lete cary with hym. And soo they

tooke their leve at Syr Bernard the old baron, and att his daughter the faire mayden of Astolat. And thenne they rode soo long til that they came to Camelot. . . . But there Sir Launcelot was lodged pryvely, by the meanes of Sir Lavayne, with a ryche burgeis, that no man in that toune was ware what they were, and soo they reposed them there tiloure Lady Day, Assumpcyon, as the grete feest sholde be.

Soo thenne trumpets blewe unto the felde, and kynge Arthur was sette on hyghe upon a skafhold to beholde who dyd best. . . . But these kynges and this duke were passyng weyke to holde ageynst kyng Arthurs party, for with hym were the noblest knyghtes of the world. . . . Soo there began a stronge assalle upon bothe parties. . . .

xi. "Now," sayd Syre Launcelot, "and ye wille helpe me a lytel, ye shalle see yonder felaushyp that chaseth now these men in oure syde, that they shal go as fast bakward as they wente forward." "Sir, spare not," said Sire Lavayne, "for I shall doo what I maye." Thenne Sire Launcelot and Sire Lavayne cam in at the thyckest of the prees. . . . Thenne the party that was ayenst kynge Arthur were wel comforted, and thenne they helde hem to gyders that before hand were sore rebuked. Thenne Sir Bors, Sir Ector de Marys, and Sir Lyonel called unto them the knyghtes of their blood. . . . Soo these nyne knyghtes of Sir Launcelots kin threste in myghtely, for they were al noble knyghtes; and they of grete hate and despyte that they had unto hym, thoughte to rebuke that noble knyght Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavayne, for they knewe hem not. And soo they cam hurlynge to gyders and smote doune many knyghtes of Northgalys and of Northumberland. And whanne Sire Launcelot sawe them fare soo, he gat a spere in his hand, and there encountered with hym al attones Syr Bors, Sir Ector, and Sire Lyonel, and alle they thre smote Sir Launcelots hors to the erthe, and by misfortune Sir Bors smote Syre Launcelot thurgh the shelde into the syde, and the spere brake and the hede lefte stytle in his syde. Whan Sir Lavayne sawe his maister lye on the ground, he raune to the kynge of Scottes and smote hym to the erthe, and by grete force he took his hors and brought hym to Syr Launcelot, and maulgre of them al he made hym to mounte upon that hors; and thenne Launcelot gat a spere in his hand, and there he smote Syre Bors hors and man to the erthe. In the same wyse he served Syre Ector and Syre Lyonel, and Syre Lavayne smote doune Sir Blamore de Ganys. And thenne Sir Launcelot drewe his suerd, for he felte hym self so sore y-hurte

that he wende there to have had his dethe. . . And thenne afterward he hurled in to the thyckest prees of them alle, and dyd ther the merveylost dedes of armes that ever man sawe or herde speke of; and ever Sire Lavayne the good knyghte with hym. And there Sire Launcelot with his suerd smote doune and pulled doune, as the Frensshe book maketh mencyon, moo than thyrty knyghtes, and the moost party were of the Table Round. . .

xii. "Mercy, Jhesu," said Syr Gawayne to Arthur, "I merveil what knyghte that he is with the reed sleve." "Syr," saide kynge Arthur, "he wille be knowen or he departe." And thenne the kynge blewe unto lodgynge, and the pryce was gyven by herowdes unto the knyghte with the whyte shelde, that bare the reed sleve. Thenne came the kynge with the honderd knyghtes, the kynge of Northgalys, and Sir Galahaut the haute prince, and sayd unto Sire Launcelot, "Faire knyght, God the blesse, for moche have ye done this day for us, therfor we praye yow that ye wille come with us, that ye may receyve the honour and the pryce as ye have worshipfully deserved it." "My faire lordes," saide Syre Launcelot," wete yow wel yf I have deserved thanke, I have sore bought hit, and that me repenteth, for I am lyke never to escape with my lyf: therfor, faire lordes, I pray yow that ye wille suffer me to departe where me lyketh, for I am sore hurte. I take none force of none honour, for I had lever to repose me than all the world." And ther with al he groned pytously, and rode a grete wallop away ward fro them, untyl he came under a woodes syde. And whan he sawe that he was from the felde nyghe a myle, that he was sure he myghte not be sene, thenne he sayd with an hygh voys, "O gentyl knyght Sir Lavayne, helpe me that this truncheon were oute of my syde, for it stycketh so sore that it nybe sleeth me." "O myn owne lord," said Sir Lavayne, "I wold fayn do that myght please yow, but I drede me sore, and I pull oute the truncheon, that ye shalle be in perylle of dethe." "I charge you," said Sir Launcelot, "as ye love me drawe hit oute." And there with alle he descended from his hors and ryght soo dyd Sir Lavayn, and forth with al Sir Lavayn drewe the truncheon out of his syde; and he gaf a grete shryche and a merveillous grysely grone, and the blood braste oute nyghe a pint at ones, that at the last he sanke down, and so swounde pale and dedely. "Allas," sayd Sire Lavayne, "what shalle I do?" And thenne he torned Sir Launcelot in to the wynde, but soo he laye there nyghe half an houre as he had ben dede. And so at the laste Syre Launcelot caste up his eye, and sayd, "O Lavayn, helpe me that I were on my hors, for

here is fast by within this two myle a gentyll heremyte, that somtyme was a fulle noble knyghte and a grete lord of possessions." . . . And thenne with grete payne Sir Lavayne halpe hym upon his hors; and thenne they rode a grete wallop to gyders, and ever Syr Launcelot bledde that it ranne doune to the erthe. And so by fortune they came to that hermytage. . . .

xiii. . . . Now torne we unto kynge Arthur, and leve we Sir Launcelot in the hermytage. Soo whan the kynges were comen to gyders on bothe partyes, and the grete feeste shold be holden, kynge Arthur asked the kynge of Northgalys and theyr felaushyp where was that knyghte that bare the reed sleve. "Brynge hym afore me, that he may have his lawde and honour and the pryce, as it is ryght." Thenne spake Sir Galahad the haute prynce, and the kynge with the honderd knyghtes, "We suppose that knight is mescheved, and that he is never lyke to see yow nor none of us alle, and that is the grettest pyte that ever we wyste of ony knyghte." . . . "As for that," sayd Arthur, "whether I knowe hym or knowe hym not, ye shal not knowe for me what man he is, but Almighty Jhesu sende me good tydynges of hym," and soo said they alle. "By my hede," said Sire Gawayn, "yf it soo be that the good knyghte be so sore hurte, hit is grete dommage and pyte to alle this land, for he is one of the noblest knyghtes that ever I sawe in a felde handle a spere or a suerd. And yf he may be founde, I shalle fynde hym, for I am sure he nys not fer fro this towne." . . . Ryght soo Syre Gawayne took a squyer with hym, upon hakneis, and rode al aboute Camelot within vj or seven myle. But soo he came ageyne, and coude here no word of hym.

Thenne within two dayes kynge Arthur and alle the felaushyp returned unto London ageyne. And soo as they rode by the waye hit happed Sir Gawayne at Astolat to lodge with Syr Bernard, there as was Syr Launcelot lodged. And soo as Sire Gawayn was in his chamber to repose hym, Syr Barnard the olde baron came unto hym, and hys doughter Elayne, to chere hym and to aske hym what tydynges and who dyd best at that turnement of Wynchester. "Soo God me help," said Syre Gawayne, "there were two knyghtes that bare two whyte sheldes; but the one of hem bare a reed sleve upon his hede, and certaynly he was one of the best knyghtes that ever I sawe juste in felde. For I dare say," said Sire Gawayne, "that one knyght with the reed sleve smote doune fourty knyghtes of the Table Round, and his felawe dyd ryght wel and worshypfully." "Now blessid be God," said the fayre

mayden of Astolat, "that that knyght sped soo wel, for he is the man in the world that I fyrst loved and truly he shalle be laste that ever I shalle love." "Now, fayre mayde," sayd Sir Gawayne, "is that good knyght your love?" "Certaynly, sir," sayd she, "wete ye wel he is my love." "Thenne knowe ye his name," sayd Sire Gawayne. "Nay, truly," said the damoyssel, "I knowe not his name nor from whens he cometh, but to say that I love hym, I promyse you and God that I love hym." "How had ye kouleche of hym fyrst?" said Sire Gawayne.

xiv. Thenne she told hym as ye have herd tofore, and hou her fader lente hym her broders Syr Tyrreis shelde, "And here with me he lefte his owne sheld." "For what cause dyd he so?" sayd Sir Gawayne. "For this cause," sayd the damoyssel, "for his sheld was too wel knowne amonge many noble knyghtes." "A, fayr damoyssel," sayd Gawayne, "please hit yow lete me have a syghte of that sheld." . . . Soo whan the sheld was comen, Sir Gawayne took of the caas; and whanne he beheld that shelde he knewe anone that hit was Sir Launcelots shelde and his owne armes. "A, Jhesu mercy," sayd Syr Gawayne, "now is my herte more hevyer than ever it was tofore." "Why?" sayd Elayne. "For I have grete cause," sayd Sire Gawayne. "Is that knyght that oweth this shelde your love?" "Ye, truly," said she, "my love he is: God wold I were his love." "Soo God me spede," sayd Sire Gawayne, "fair damoyssel, ye have ryght, for, and he be your love, ye love the moost honourable knyghte of the world, and the man of moost worshyp." "So me thoughte ever," said the damoyssel, "for never or that tyme, for no knyghte that ever I sawe loved I never none erst." "God graunte," sayd Sire Gawayne, "that eyther of yow maye rejoyse other, but that is in a grete adventure." . . . "But I drede me," sayd Sire Gawayne, "that ye shalle never see hym in thys world, and that is grete pyte that ever was of erthely knyghte." "Allas," sayd she, "how may this be? is he slayne?" "I say not soo," said Sire Gawayne, "but wete ye wel, he is grevously wounded by alle maner of sygnes, and by mens syghte more lykelyer to be dede than to be on lyve; and wete ye wel he is the noble knyghte Sire Launcelot, for by this sheld I knowe hym." . . . "Truly," said Sire Gawayne, "the man in the world that loved hym best hurte hym soo." . . . "Now, fair fader," said thenne Elayne, "I requyre yow gyve me leve to ryde and to seke hym, or els I wote wel I shalle go oute of my mynde, for I shalle never stynte tyl that I fynde hym and my broder Syre Lavayne." "Doo as it lyketh yow," sayd her fader, "for me sore repenteth of the hurte of that noble knyghte."

Ryghte soo the mayde made her redy, and before Syre Gawayne makynge grete dole. Thenne on the morne Syr Gawayne came to kyng Arthur, and tolde hym how he had fonde Sire Launcelots shelde in the keynunge of the fayre mayden of Astolat. . . "By my hede," said Sir Gawayne, "the fayre mayden of Astolat loveth hym merveyllously wel; what it meaneth I can not saye; and she is ryden after to seke hym." Soo the kyng and alle cam to London, and there Sire Gawayne openly disclosed to alle the courte that it was Sire Launcelot that justed best.

xv. Soo as fayr Elayn cam to Wynchestre she soughte there al aboute, and by fortune Syr Lavayne was ryden to playe hym to enchauffe his hors. And anone as Elayne sawe hym she knewe hym, and thenne she cryed on loude untyl hym. And whan he herd her, anone he came to her, and thenne she asked her broder, "How dyd my lord Sire Launcelot?" "Who told yow, syster, that my lordes name was Sir Launcelot?" Thenne she told hym how Sire Gawayne by his sheld knewe hym. Soo they rode to gyders tyl they cam to the hermytage, and anone she alyghte. So Sir Lavayne broughte her in to Sire Launcelot. And whanne she sawe hym lye so seke and pale in his bedde, she myght not speke, but sodenly she felle to the erthe doune sodenly in a swoun, and there she lay a grete whyle. And whanne she was relevyd she shryked and saide, "My lord, Sire Launcelot, allas, why be ye in this plyte?" and thenne she swouned ageyne. And whan she cam to her self, Sire Launcelot kyst her, and said, "Fair mayden, why fare ye thus? Ye put me to payne; wherfor make ye nomore suche chere, for, and ye be come to comforte me, ye be ryght welcome; and of this lytel hurte that I have I shal be ryghte hastely hole by the grace of God. But I merveylle," sayd Sir Launcelot, "who told yow my name." Thenne the fayre mayden told hym alle how Sire Gawayne was lodged with her fader: "And there by your sheld he discoverd your name." "Allas," sayd Sir Launcelot, "that me repenteth that my name is knowen, for I am sure it will torne unto angre." And thenne Sir Launcelot compast in his mynde that Syre Gawayne wold telle quene Guenever how he bare the reed sleve, and for whome, that he wyst wel wold torne unto grete angre. Soo this mayden Elayne never wente from Sir Launcelot, but watched hym day and nyght, and dyd suche artendaunce to hym that the Frensshe book saith there was never woman dyd more kyndelyer for man than she. . .

xvii. . . . Thenne were they there nygh a moneth to gyders, and ever this mayden Elayn dyd ever her dylygente labour nyghte

and daye unto Syr Launcelot, that ther was never child nor wyf more meker to her fader and husband than was that fayre mayden of Astolat. . . .

xviii. . . . Soo thenne they made hem redy to departe from the heremyte, and so upon a morne they took their horses and Elayne le Blank with them. And whan they came to Astolat, there were they wel lodged, and had grete chere of Syre Bernard the old baron and of Sir Tyrre his sone, and so upon the morne, whan Syr Launcelot shold departe, fayre Elayne brought her fader with her and Sir Lavayne and Sir Tyrre, and thus she said :

xix. "My lord Syr Launcelot, now I see ye wyll departe. Now fayre knyghte, and curtois knyghte, have mercy upon me and suffer me not to dye for thy love." "What wold ye that I dyd?" said Syr Launcelot. "I wold have yow to my husband," said Elayne. "Fair damoyse, I thanke yow," said Syr Launcelot, "but truly," said he, "I cast me never to be wedded man." . . . "Allas," said she, "thenne must I dye for your love." "Ye shal not so," said Syre Launcelot, "for wete ye wel, fayr mayden, I myght have ben maryed and I had wolde, but I never applyed me to be maryed yet; but by cause, fair damoyse, that ye love me as ye saye ye doo, I wille, for your good wille and kyndenes, shewe yow somme goodenes, and that is this, that were somever ye wille beset youre herte upon somme goode knyghte that wyll wedde yow, I shalle gyve yow to gyders a thousand pound yerely, to yow and to your heyres; thus moche will I gyve yow, faire madame, for your kyndenes, and alweyes whyle I lyve to be your owne knyghte." "Of alle this," saide the mayden, "I wille none, for, but yf ye wille wedde me . . . , wete yow wel, Sir Launcelot, my good dayes are done." "Fair damoyse," said Sir Launcelot, "of these thynges ye must pardonne me." Thenne she shryked shyrly and felle doune in a swoone; and thenne wymmen bare her in to her chamber, and there she made over moche sorowe. And thenne Sir Launcelot wold departe, and there he asked Sir Lavayn what he wold doo. "What shold I doo," said Syre Lavayne, "but folowe yow, but yf ye dryve me from yow, or commaunde me to goo from yow?" . . . Thenne Sir Launcelot took his leve, and soo they departed, and came unto Wynchestre. And whan Arthur wyste that Syr Launcelot was come hole and sound, the kynge maade grete joye of hym, and soo dyd Sir Gawayn and all the knyghtes of the Round Table excepte Sir Agravayn and Sire Mordred. Also quene Guenever was woode wrothe with Sir Launcelot, and wold by no meanes speke with hym, but estraunged her self

from hym, and Sir Launcelot made alle the meanes that he myght for to speke with the quene, but hit wolde not be.

Now speke we of the fayre mayden of Astolat that made suche sorowe daye and nyght that she never slepte, etc, nor drank, and ever she made her complaynt unto Sir Launcelot. So when she had thus endured a ten dayes, that she febled so that she must nedes passe out of thys world, thenne she shryved her clene, and receyved her Creatoure. And ever she complayned styлле upon Sire Launcelot. Thenne her ghostly fader bad her leve suche thoughtes. Thenne she sayd, "Why shold I leve suche thoughtes? am I not an erthely woman? And alle the whyle the brethe is in my body I may complayne me, for my byleve is I doo none offence though I love an erthely man, and I take God to my record I loved none but Sir Launcelot du Lake, nor never shall, and a clene mayden I am for hym and for alle other. . . For, swete Lord Jhesu," sayd the fayre mayden, "I take the to record, on the was I never grete offenser ageynst thy lawes, but that I loved this noble knyght Sire Launcelot out of mesure, and of my self, good Lord, I myght not withstande the fervent love wherfor I have my dethe." And thenne she called her fader Sire Bernard and her broder Sir Tyrre, and hertely she praid her fader that her broder myght wryte a letter lyke as she did endyte hit; and so her fader graunted her. And whan the letter was wryten word by word lyke as she devysed, thenne she prayd her fader that she myght be watched untyl she were dede. "And whyle my body is hote, lete this letter be putt in my ryght hand, and my hande bounde fast with the letter untyl that I be cold, and lete me be putte in a fayre bedde with alle the rychest clothes that I have aboute me, and so lete my bedde and alle my rychest clothes be laide with me in a charyot unto the next place where the Temse is, and there lete me be putte within a barget, and but one man with me, suche as ye trust to stere me thyder, and that my barget be coverd with blak samyte over and over. Thus, fader, I by-seche yow lete hit be done." So her fader graunted hit her feythfully, alle thynge shold be done lyke as she had devysed. Thenne her fader and her broder made grete dole, for when this was done, anone she dyed. And soo whan she was dede, the corps, and the bedde, alle was ledde the next way unto Temse, and there a man, and the corps, and alle, were put in to Temse, and soo the man styred the barget unto Westmynster, and there he rowed a grete whyle to and fro or ony aspyed hit.

xx. Soo by fortune kynge Arthur and the quene Guenever were spekyng to gyders at a wyndowe; and soo as they lokyd in to

Temse, they aspyed this blak barget, and hadde merveylle what it mente. . . . Thenne the kyng made the barget to be holden fast, and thenne the kyng and the quene entred with certayn knyghtes wyth them, and there he sawe the fayrest woman lye in a ryche bedde coverd unto her myddel with many ryche clothes, and alle was of clothe of gold, and she lay as though she had smyled. Thenne the quene aspyed a letter in her ryght hand, and told it to the kyng. Thenne the kyng took it and sayd, "Now am I sure this letter wille telle what she was, and why she is come hydder." Soo thenne the kyng and the quene wente oute of the barget, and soo commaunded a certayne wayte upon the barget.

And soo whan the kyng was come within his chamber, he called many knyghtes aboute hym, and saide that he wold wete openly what was wryten within that letter. Thenne the kyng brake it, and made a clerke to rede hit, and this was the entente of the letter: "Moost noble knyghte Sir Launcelot, now hath dethe made us two at debate for your love. I was your lover that men called the fayre mayden of Astolat: therfor unto alle ladyes I make my mone. Yet praye for my soule, and bery me atte leest, and offre ye my masse peny; this is my last request. And a clene mayden I dyed, I take God to wytnes. Pray for my soule, Sir Launcelot, as thou art pierles." This was alle the substance in the letter. And whan it was redde, the kyng, the quene, and alle the knyghtes wepte for pyte of the doleful complayntes.

Thenne was Sire Launcelot sente for. And whan he was come, kyng Arthur made the letter to be redde to hym. And whanne Sire Launcelot herd hit word by word, he sayd, "My lord Arthur, wete ye wel I am ryghte hevy of the dethe of this fair damoyssel. God knoweth I was never causer of her dethe by my wyllynge. and that wille I reporte me to her own broder,—here he is, Sir Lavayne. I wille not saye nay," sayd Syre Launcelot, "but that she was bothe fayre and good, and moche I was beholden unto her, but she loved me out of mesure." "Ye myght have shewed her," sayd the quene, "somme bounte and gentilnes that myghte have preserved her lyf." "Madame," sayd Sir Launcelot, "she wold none other wayes be ansuerd, but that she wold be my wyf, and of [this] I wold not graunte her, but I proferd her, for her good love that she shewed me, a thousand pound yerly to her and to her heyres, and to wedde ony manere knyght that she coude fynde best to love in her herte. For, madame," said Sir Launcelot, "I love not to be constrayned to love; for love muste aryse of

the herte, and not by no constraynte." "That is trouth," sayd the kynge, "and many knyghtes love is free in hym selfe, and never wille be bounden, for where he is bounden he looseth hym self." Thenne sayd the kynge unto Sire Launcelot, "Hit wyl be your worshyp that ye over see that she be entered worshypfully." "Sire," sayd Sire Launcelot, "that shalle be done as I can best devyse."

And soo many knyghtes yede thyder to behold that fayr mayden. And soo upon the morne she was entered rychely, and Sir Launcelot offryd her masse peny, and all the knyghtes of the Table Round that were there at that tyme offryd with Syr Launcelot. And thenne the poure man wente ageyne with the barget. Thenne the quene sente for Syr Launcelot, and prayd hym of mercy, for why that she had ben wrothe with hym causeles. "This is not the fyrste tyme," said Sir Launcelot, "that ye have ben displeasyd with me causeles; but, madame, ever I must suffre yow, but what sorowe I endure I take no force." Soo this paste on alle that wynter with alle manere of huntynge and haukyng, and justes and torneyes were many betwixe many grete lordes, and ever in al places Sir Lavayne gate grete worshyp, soo that he was nobly renommed amonge many knyghtes of the Table Round.

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