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SELECTIONS FROM

THE

IDYLLS OF THE KING

BY ALFRED TENNYSON

EDITED BY MARY F. WILLARD

OF THE JOHN MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL, LOS ANGELES



AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY  
NEW YORK · CINCINNATI · CHICAGO

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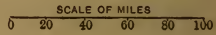






# BRITAIN

ILLUSTRATING THE  
"IDYLLS OF THE KING"



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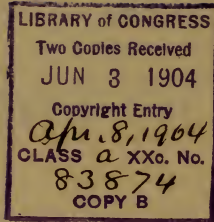
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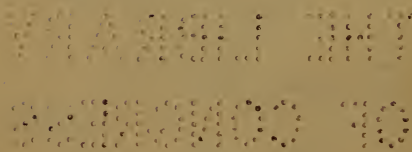


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IDYLLS

W. P. 5





## INTRODUCTION.

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THE IDYLLS OF THE KING consists of twelve poems dealing with the life of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. The collection is prefaced by a dedication to Prince Albert, who had warmly admired the four Idylls published before his death, and is appropriately closed by an address to the Queen.

The poems as a whole constitute a true English epic, or, perhaps more exactly, a true British epic, and the only one which English-speaking people can properly call their own; for not only are they written in the English language, but they deal with British personages and their scenes are laid on British soil. The tales cluster about Arthur as their central figure, and are given a spiritual unity by the intimate association of the Holy Grail with the narrative. Like most of the other great epics of the world, the tales end in darkness and desolation, but we are not left without the thought of the dawn to follow the dark, the new sun which is to bring in the new year.

Tennyson, in his "Dedication to the Queen," speaks of the poems as an allegory, for he says of them that they are

"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."

But we must not press this allegorical interpretation too closely. In many of the best of the Idylls the allegory is

lost sight of altogether, and in none is it really insisted upon throughout except in the "Passing of Arthur." Symbolism is more common, however, and adds a spiritual and imaginative touch to what was mere detail in the picture in the old legends from which Tennyson drew the subject-matter for his great poems.

The Idylls stand easily first among Tennyson's poems in grace and elaboration of language and in human interest. Though not so fruitful to the thoughtful mind as "In Memoriam," they appeal to a far wider audience. In addition to the technical perfection of the poetry in them, and the charm of an interesting story well told, there can be found in them a moral significance and insight fitted for the highest aspirations of mankind. The pictures which they present to us of society in the days of chivalry may not be historically true, but they are so magnificent that the reader is not inclined to criticise them. Stedman, in his "Victorian Poets," says of the Idylls:

"It is the epic of chivalry,—the Christian ideal of chivalry which we have deduced from a barbaric source,—our conception of what knighthood should be rather than what it really was; but so skilfully wrought of high imaginings, faery spells, fantastic legends, and mediæval splendors, that the whole work, suffused with the Tennysonian glamour of golden mist, seems like a chronicle illuminated by saintly hands, and often blazes with light like that which flashed from the holy wizard's book when the covers were unclasped."

## THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE IDYLLS.

The legends on which Tennyson founded his Idylls are of very ancient date. They were first told perhaps in Wales and Cornwall while our wild ancestors were crossing from their German homes to the greener shores of England; for it is nearly fifteen hundred years since the beginnings of these stories were chanted by the Cymric bards to please their half-savage masters at their feasts. The people of Brittany, in north France, were of the same blood as the inhabitants of Wales and Cornwall, and the stories were told south of the English Channel as well as north, and it is said were first written in Brittany, though both the book and the name of the author are now unknown to us. One Geoffrey, a monk of Monmouth in Wales, was the first to put them into a literary form which has survived to our day. In 1147 he published his "Historia Britonum" (translated into early English by Layamon about 1205), a history of England in Latin, which incorporates such of the stories about Arthur as were known to Geoffrey. He takes no credit to himself for the tales, but states that he has merely translated them from the Welsh tongue into Latin, and that he obtained them from an ancient book which his friend the Archdeacon of Oxford had brought from Brittany. After this the tales were written into Norman French, then the language of the court and the one which the story writer must perforce adopt, by several writers, the most famous of whom is Walter Map, the brilliant, witty, and accomplished churchman of the court of Henry II. It is to this clever and learned man that we really owe the stories in the form which Tennyson adopted later. He it was who christianized the tales, and gave them a spiritual unity by the introduction of the Grail legend. Last in the line before Tennyson comes Sir Thomas Malory, who, at the re-

quest of Caxton, our first printer, translated the Norman French of Map, Wace, and De Boron into the fresh, idiomatic English of the time of Henry VII. The book was published in 1485 under the title of "Morte Darthur," a name which Walter Map had used for the romance in which he told of the death of Arthur. Caxton wrote a preface for it and tells us how the book happened to be written. "After that I had accomplished and finished divers histories, . . . many noble and divers gentlemen of this realm of England came and demanded me many and oftentimes, wherefore that I have not do made and imprint the noble history of the Saint Greal, and of the most renowned Christian king, first and chief of the three best Christian, and worthy, King Arthur, which ought most to be remembered amongst us Englishmen tofore all other Christian kings. . . . The said noble gentlemen instantly required me to imprint the history of the said noble king and conqueror, King Arthur and of his knights, with the history of the Saint Greal, and of the death and ending of the said Arthur; affirming that I ought rather to imprint his acts and noble feats, than of Godfrey of Boloine, . . . considering that he was a man born within this realm, and king and emperor of the same: and that there be in French divers and many noble volumes of his acts, and also of his knights. . . . Wherefore I have after the simple conning that God has sent to me, . . . enprised to imprint a book of the noble histories of the said King Arthur, and of certain of his knights, after a copy unto me delivered, which copy Sir Thomas Malorye did take out of certain books of French, and reduced it into English."

The "Morte Darthur" was a book of unbounded popularity in its own day and is still curious and interesting to readers. As a boy Tennyson doubtless pored over its marvelous pages, and early in his literary career began to experiment with rendering fragments of the tales into poetic

form. In his second volume, 1832, was published the first version of the "Lady of Shalott," the first study of the subject which afterward had its final form in the perfect poem entitled "Lancelot and Elaine." In the volume of 1842 appeared "Sir Galahad," "Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere," and the "Morte d'Arthur, a Fragment," written as early as 1835 and afterward included in the "Passing of Arthur."

Fifteen years elapsed before the poet again touched the legends which had so fascinated his youth. At last, in July, 1859, appeared the volume in the preparation of which he had spent the preceding two years, containing the four poems "Enid" (afterward divided into two parts), "Vivien," "Elaine," and "Guinevere." From that time until 1885, when "Balin and Balan," the last of the series, appeared, Tennyson was largely occupied in the composition of the remaining poems. In 1888 the "Idylls of the King" was published as complete, the poems being arranged in the order in which the poet wished them to stand.

#### HISTORY IN THE ARTHURIAN LEGENDS.

The only references to Arthur by a writer who can be called at all contemporaneous with his own time are made by Llywarch Hên, a bard attached to the court of Geraint, a warrior-chief of Devon. Arthur is simply mentioned as the commander of the armies of the chieftains and the conductor of the war. But the fact that no early bard whose writings have survived relates the story of Arthur's great exploits is no reason for discrediting entirely the tales. Still, so much of what is manifestly myth has attached itself to the name of Arthur that it was long doubted whether there really was a King Arthur. Caxton mentions in his preface to "Morte Darthur" the fact that "divers men hold opinion that there be no such Arthur"; but naïvely

concludes that, since one may see his sepulchre at Glastonbury and his Round Table at Winchester and other relics of him and his knights elsewhere in England, "there can no man reasonably gainsay but that there was a king of this land named Arthur." With this last conclusion we must agree, for the investigations of this century have resulted in fixing the reality of a British chieftain of such a name who lived probably about the beginning of the sixth century and was a leader of the Celtic tribes in the west of England against the Saxon invaders. He is supposed to have met his death in a great battle with the Saxons at Mount Badon, near Bath, in 520 A.D. Tradition says he was buried at Glastonbury, and according to several writers of the time his remains and those of Queen Guinevere were discovered there in the reign of Henry II.

With regard to the history and allegory in the "Idylls of the King," Hallam Tennyson gives the following as Tennyson's own statement ("Life and Letters of Alfred, Lord Tennyson," Vol. I):

"How much of history we have in the story of Arthur is doubtful. Let not my readers press too hardly on details whether for history or for allegory. Some think that King 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, 'reverencing his conscience as his king.' 'There was no such perfect man since Adam,' as an old writer says, '*Major præteritis majorque futuris regibus.*'"

## CHRONOLOGY.

- 1809, August 6. Alfred Tennyson is born at the Rectory, Somersby, Lincolnshire.
1826. "Poems by Two Brothers" (Charles and Alfred Tennyson) is published at Louth.
1828. Tennyson enters Trinity College, Cambridge. Here he becomes intimate with Arthur Henry Hallam.
1829. Tennyson's poem, "Timbuctoo," takes the Chancellor's prize at Cambridge.
1830. "Poems, Chiefly Lyrical," published.
1831. Tennyson's father dies, and the poet leaves Cambridge without taking a degree.
1832. "Poems," published.
- 1833, September 13. Hallam dies.
1837. The Tennysons leave Somersby. The poet goes to live in lodgings in London.
1842. "Poems," in two volumes; a reprint of earlier work, with many new poems.
1845. A royal pension of £200 is granted Tennyson.
1847. "The Princess."
1850. On death of Wordsworth, Tennyson is appointed Poet-Laureate. Marries Emily Sellwood. "In Memoriam" appears.
1853. Tennyson removes to Farringford, Isle of Wight.
1855. "Maud, and Other Poems."
1859. Four "Idylls of the King" ("Enid," "Vivien," "Elaine," and "Guinevere").
1864. "Enoch Arden."
1867. Tennyson goes to live at Aldworth in Sussex, an estate which remains his home till his death.
1869. "The Coming of Arthur," "The Holy Grail," "Pelleas and Etarre," and "The Passing of Arthur."
1872. "Gareth and Lynette," and "The Last Tournament."

1875. "Queen Mary," a play.  
 1877. "Harold," a play, never acted.  
 1884. Tennyson becomes a peer, Baron of Aldworth and Farringford. "The Falcon," "The Cup," "Becket," plays.  
 1885. "Balin and Balan," the last "Idyll of the King."  
 1885, 1886, 1889. Latest poems are published.  
 1892. "The Foresters," a play acted at Daly's in New York. Tennyson dies, October 6. He is buried in Westminster Abbey, October 12.

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“ FOR HEREIN MAY BE SEEN NOBLE CHIVALRY, COURTESY,  
HUMANITY, FRIENDLINESS, HARDINESS, LOVE, FRIENDSHIP,  
COWARDICE, MURDER, HATE, VIRTUE, AND SIN. DO AFTER  
THE GOOD AND LEAVE THE EVIL, AND IT SHALL BRING TO  
YOU GOOD FAME AND RENOMMÉE.”

# IDYLLS OF THE KING.

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## THE COMING OF ARTHUR AS TOLD IN THE ROMANCES.

(Summarized from Malory's "Morte Darthur.")

THE old Celtic warrior Uther Pendragon lies dying. All his barons and Merlin are present, and to the surprise of the nobles Merlin asks him, "Sir, shall your son Arthur be king, after your days, of this realm with all the appurtenance?" Uther replies, "I give him God's blessing and mine, and bid him pray for my soul, and righteously and worshipfully that he claim the crown." Thus for the first time the nobles learn that Uther has a son.

But Arthur is only two years old. Merlin cannot bring forward a babe to rule the turbulent barons. So he bides his time and allows the great lords to struggle with each other, each striving to be king, while the realm stands in great jeopardy. At last young Arthur is old enough to reign, and Merlin has the Archbishop of Canterbury send for all the barons to come to London at Christmastide when they are to be shown by a miracle who is the true king of the realm. And when they are assembled "there was seen in the churchyard against the high altar a great stone, four square, like unto a marble stone, and in the midst thereof was like an anvil of steel, a foot on high, and therein stack a fair sword naked by the point, and letters there were written in gold about the sword that said thus:

*Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil is rightwise king born of all England.*" None can stir the sword save Arthur. He easily pulls it out again and again, and is therefore crowned king by Saint Dubric at the feast of Pentecost.

The disappointed barons and kings band together and refuse to take Arthur as their king. In many battles the young king by the aid of Merlin puts their forces to flight, and they are finally forced to submit. Arthur's valiant deeds cause Leodegrance, king of Cameliard, to call on him for help against his foes. These Arthur soon vanquishes. And then "Arthur had the first sight of Guenever, the king's daughter of Cameliard, and ever after he loved her."

Doubts as to his own birth now begin to assail Arthur himself. He asks Sir Hector, his foster-father, about his parents, and Sir Hector assures him he is the son of Uther Pendragon and Igraine. Still in doubt, he sends Merlin for Igraine, who then acknowledges Arthur as her son, whom she had given up to Merlin as soon as he was born, according to Uther Pendragon's command. From this time on no shadow of doubt can remain as to Arthur's being the true heir of the throne. All opposition to him as king is now at an end.

In accordance with the advice of his barons, Arthur wishes to take a wife. Merlin is therefore despatched to ask the hand of Guenever from Leodegrance. An alliance with King Arthur is an honor eagerly received, and Leodegrance sends Guenever back with Merlin, sending also the Round Table, which Uther Pendragon had given him, and one hundred knights.

# THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

<sup>1</sup> LEODOGRAN, the King of Cameliard, *← Scotland*  
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;  
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,  
<sup>4</sup> Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came 5  
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war  
Each upon other, wasted all the land;  
<sup>8</sup> And still from time to time the heathen host *← Angles Saxons*  
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was left. *Tates*  
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness, 10  
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,  
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.  
<sup>13</sup> For first Aurelius lived and fought and died, *Uther's brother*  
And after him King Uther fought and died,  
But either fail'd to make the kingdom one. 15  
And after these King Arthur for a space,  
<sup>17</sup> And thro' the puissance of his Table Round, *need not*  
Drew all their petty pryncedoms under him,  
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was waste, 20  
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,  
And none or few to scare or chase the beast;  
So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and bear  
Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,  
And wallow'd in the gardens of the King. 25

And ever and anon the wolf would steal  
 The children and devour, but now and then,  
 Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat  
 29 To human sucklings; and the children housed *note*  
 In her foul den, there at their meat would growl, 30  
 And mock their foster-mother on four feet,  
 Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-like men,  
 Worse than the wolves. And King Leodogran  
 34 Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,  
 And Cæsar's eagle: then his brother king, 35  
 36 Urien, assail'd him: last a heathen horde,  
 Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,  
 And on the spike that split the mother's heart  
 Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amaz'd,  
 He knew not whither he should turn for aid. 40

But—for he heard of Arthur newly crown'd,  
 Tho' not without an uproar made by those  
 Who cried, "He is not Uther's son"—the King  
 Sent to him, saying, "Arise, and help us thou!  
 For here between the man and beast we die." 45

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,  
 But heard the call, and came: and Guinevere  
 Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass;  
 But since he neither wore on helm or shield  
 The golden symbol of his kinglihood, 50  
 But rode a simple knight among his knights,  
 And many of these in richer arms than he,  
 She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,  
 One among many, tho' his face was bare.  
 But Arthur, looking downward as he past, 55  
 Felt the light of her eyes into his life  
 Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitch'd  
 His tents beside the forest. Then he drave

The heathen; after, slew the beast, and fell'd  
 The forest, letting in the sun, and made 60  
 Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight,  
 And so return'd.

For while he linger'd there,  
 A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts  
 Of those great Lords and Barons of his realm  
 Flash'd forth and into war: for most of these, 65  
 Colleagu'ing with a score of petty kings,  
 Made head against him, crying, "Who is he  
 That he should rule us? who hath proven him  
 King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,  
 And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice, 70  
 Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.

72 This is the son of Gorlois, not the King;

73 This is the son of Anton, not the King."

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt  
 Travail, and throes and agonies of the life, 75  
 Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere;  
 And thinking as he rode, "Her father said  
 That there between the man and beast they die.  
 Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts  
 Up to my throne, and side by side with me? 80  
 What happiness to reign a lonely king,  
 Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,  
 O earth that soundest hollow under me,  
 Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be join'd  
 To her that is the fairest under heaven, 85  
 I seem as nothing in the mighty world,  
 And cannot will my will, nor work my work  
 Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm  
 Victor and lord. But were I join'd with her,  
 Then might we live together as one life, 90

And reigning with one will in everything  
 Have power on this dark land to lighten it,  
 And power on this dead world to make it live."

94 Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the tale—  
 When Arthur reach'd a field-of-battle bright 95  
 96 With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the world  
 Was all so clear about him, that he saw  
 The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,  
 And even in high day the morning star.  
 So when the King had set his banner broad, 100  
 At once from either side, with trumpet-blast,  
 And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto blood,  
 The long-lanced battle let their horses run.  
 And now the barons and the kings prevail'd,  
 And now the King, as here and there that war 105  
 106 Went swaying; but the Powers who walk the world  
 Made lightnings and great thunders over him,  
 And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main might,  
 And mightier of his hands with every blow,  
 And leading all his knighthood threw the kings 110  
 Carádos, Urien, Cradlemon of Wales,  
 Claudias, and Clariance of Northumberland,  
 The King Brandagoras of Latangor,  
 With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,  
 And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice 115  
 As dreadful as the shout of one who sees  
 To one who sins, and deems himself alone  
 And all the world asleep, they swerved and brake  
 Flying, and Arthur call'd to stay the brands  
 That hack'd among the flyers, "Ho! they yield!" 120  
 So like a painted battle the war stood  
 Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,  
 And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.  
 He laugh'd upon his warrior whom he loved *Launcelot*



And honor'd most. "Thou dost not doubt me King, 125  
So well thine arm hath wrought for me to-day."

"Sir and my liege," he cried, "the fire of God  
Descends upon thee in the battle-field:

I know thee for my King!" Whereat the two,

130 For each had warded either in the fight,  
Sware on the field of death a deathless love.

131 And Arthur said, "Man's word is God in man:

133 Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death."

Then quickly from the foughten field he sent

Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere, 135

His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,

Saying, "If I in aught have served thee well,

Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife."

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart

Debating—"How should I that am a king, 140

However much he help me at my need, 141

Give my one daughter saving to a king,

And a king's son?"—lifted his voice, and call'd

A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom

He trusted all things, and of him required 145

His counsel: "Knowest thou aught of Arthur's birth?"

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,

"Sir King, there be but two old men that know:

And each is twice as old as I; and one

Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served 150

King Uther thro' his magic art; and one

Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bleys,

Who taught him magic; but the scholar ran

Before the master, and so far, that Bleys

Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote 155

All things and whatsoever Merlin did

In one great annal-book, where after-years  
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth."

To whom the King Leodogran replied,  
 160 " O friend, had I been holpen half as well 160  
 167 By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,  
 Then beast and man had had their share of me:  
 But summon here before us yet once more  
 Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere."

Then, when they came before him, the King said, 165  
 166 " I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,  
 And reason in the chase: but wherefore now  
 Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,  
 Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,  
 Others of Anton? Tell me, ye yourselves, 170  
 Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?"

And Ulfius and Brastias answer'd, " Ay."  
 Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights  
 Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake—  
 For bold in heart and act and word was he, 175  
 Whenever slander breathed against the King—

" Sir, there be many rumors on this head:  
 For there be those who hate him in their hearts,  
 Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,  
 And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man: 180  
 And there be those who deem him more than man,  
 And dream he dropt from heaven: but my belief  
 In all this matter—so ye care to learn—  
 Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's time  
 The prince and warrior Gorlois, he that held 185  
 186 Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,  
 187 Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne:

And daughters had she borne him, one whereof,  
 Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,  
 Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved 190  
 To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne.  
 And Uther cast upon her eyes of love:  
 But she, a stainless wife to Gorloïs,  
 So loathed the bright dishonor of his love, 194  
 That Gorloïs and King Uther went to war: 195  
 And overthrown was Gorloïs and slain.  
 Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged  
 Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,  
 Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,  
 Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in, 200  
 And there was none to call to but himself.  
 So, compass'd by the power of the King,  
 Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,  
 And with a shameful swiftness: afterward,  
 Not many moons, King Uther died himself, 205  
 Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule  
 After him, lest the realm should go to wrack.  
 And that same night, the night of the new year,  
 By reason of the bitterness and grief  
 That vext his mother, all before his time 210  
 Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born  
 Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate  
 To Merlin, to be holden far apart  
 Until his hour should come; because the lords  
 Of that fierce day were as the lords of this, 215  
 Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child  
 Piecemeal among them, had they known; for each  
 But sought to rule for his own self and hand,  
 And many hated Uther for the sake  
 Of Gorloïs. Wherefore Merlin took the child, 220  
 And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight  
 And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife

Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him with her own;  
 And no man knew. And ever since the lords  
 Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves, 225  
 So that the realm has gone to wrack: but now,  
 This year, when Merlin (for his hour had come)  
 Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the hall,  
 Proclaiming, 'Here is Uther's heir, your king,'  
 A hundred voices cried, 'Away with him! 230  
 No king of ours! A son of Gorloïs he,  
 Or else the child of Anton, and no king,  
 Or else baseborn.' Yet Merlin thro' his craft,  
 And while the people clamor'd for a king,  
 Had Arthur crown'd; but after, the great lords 235  
 Banded, and so brake out in open war."

Then while the King debated with himself  
 If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,  
 Or born the son of Gorloïs, after death,  
 Or Uther's son, and born before his time, 240  
 Or whether there were truth in anything  
 Said by these three, there came to Cameliard,  
 With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,  
 Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent;  
 Whom as he could, not as he would, the King 245  
 Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat:

7 "A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.  
 Ye come from Arthur's court. Victor his men  
 Report him! Yea, but ye—think ye this king—  
 So many those that hate him, and so strong, 250  
 So few his knights, however brave they be—  
 Hath body enow to hold his foemen down?"

"O King," she cried, "and I will tell thee: few,  
 Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him;

For I was near him when the savage yells 255  
 Of Uther's peerage died and Arthur sat  
 Crown'd on the daïs, and his warriors cried,  
 'Be thou the king, and we will work thy will  
 Who love thee.' Then the King in low deep tones,  
 And simple words of great authority, 260  
 Bound him by so strait vows to his own self, 261  
 That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some  
 Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,  
 Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes  
 Half-blinded at the coming of a light. 265

"But when he spake and cheer'd his Table Round  
 With large, divine and comfortable words,  
 Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld 268  
 From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash 269  
 A momentary likeness of the King: 270 270  
 And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross  
 And those around it and the Crucified,  
 Down from the casement over Arthur, smote  
 Flame-color, vert, and azure, in three rays,  
 One falling upon each of three fair queens, 275 275  
 Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends  
 Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright  
 Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

"And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit 279  
 And hundred winters are but as the hands 280  
 Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

"And near him stood the Lady of the Lake, 282  
 Who knows a subtler magic than his own—  
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful. 284  
 She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword, — 285  
 Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist

Of incense curl'd about her, and her face  
 Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom ;  
 But there was heard among the holy hymns  
 A voice as of the waters, for she dwells 290  
 Down in a deep ; calm, whatsoever storms  
 May shake the world, and when the surface rolls,  
 Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

294 " There likewise I beheld Excalibur  
 Before him at his crowning borne, the sword 295  
 That rose from out the bosom of the lake,  
 And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich  
 297 With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,  
 298 Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright  
 That men are blinded by it—on one side, 300  
 Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,  
 ' Take me,' but turn the blade and ye shall see,  
 And written in the speech ye speak yourself,  
 ' Cast me away ! ' And sad was Arthur's face  
 Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him, 305  
 ' Take thou and strike ! the time to cast away  
 Is yet far-off.' So this great brand the king  
 Took, and by this will beat his foemen down."

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought  
 To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd, 310  
 Fixing full eyes of question on her face,  
 " The swallow and the swift are near akin,  
 But thou art closer to this noble prince,  
 Being his own dear sister ; " and she said,  
 " Daughter of Gorlois and Ygerne am I ; " 315  
 " And therefore Arthur's sister ? " ask'd the King.  
 She answer'd, " These be secret things," and sign'd  
 To those two sons to pass and let them be,  
 And Gawain went, and breaking into song

Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair 320  
 Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw:  
 But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,  
 And there half heard; the same that afterward  
 Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom. 324

And then the Queen made answer, "What know I? 325  
 For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,  
 And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark  
 Was Gorlois, yea and dark was Uther too,  
 Wellnigh to blackness; but this King is fair  
 Beyond the race of Britons and of men. 330  
 Moreover, always in my mind I hear  
 A cry from out the dawning of my life,  
 A mother weeping, and I hear her say,  
 'O that ye had some brother, pretty one, 334  
 To guard thee on the rough ways of the world.'" 335

"Ay," said the King, "and hear ye such a cry?  
 But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?"

"O King!" she cried, "and I will tell thee true:  
 He found me when yet a little maid:  
 Beaten I had been for a little fault 340  
 Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran  
 And flung myself down on a bank of heath,  
 And hated this fair world and all therein,  
 And wept and wish'd that I were dead; and he—  
 I know not whether of himself he came, 345  
 Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk 346  
 Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,  
 And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,  
 And dried my tears, being a child with me.  
 And many a time he came, and evermore 350  
 As I grew greater grew with me; and sad

At times he seem'd, and sad with him was I,  
 Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,  
 But sweet again, and then I loved him well.  
 And now of late I see him less and less, 355  
 But those first days had golden hours for me,  
 For then I surely thought he would be king.

“ But let me tell thee now another tale:  
 For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,  
 Died but of late, and sent his cry to me, 360  
 To hear him speak before he left his life.  
 Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage;  
 And when I enter'd told me that himself  
 And Merlin ever served about the King,  
 Uther, before he died; and on the night 365  
 When Uther in Tintagil past away  
 Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two  
 Left the still King, and passing forth to breathe,  
 Then from the castle gateway by the chasm  
 Descending thro' the dismal night—a night 370  
 In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost—  
 Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps  
 It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape thereof  
 A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern  
 Bright with a shining people on the decks, 375  
 And gone as soon as seen. And then the two  
 Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great sea fall,  
 Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,  
 Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep  
 And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged 380  
 Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:  
 And down the wave and in the flame was borne  
 A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,  
 Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried 'The King!  
 Here is an heir for Uther!' And the frínge 385



Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,  
 Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,  
 And all at once all round him rose in fire,  
 So that the child and he were clothed in fire. 387  
 And presently thereafter follow'd calm, 390  
 Free sky and stars: 'And this same child,' he said,  
 'Is he who reigns: nor could I part in peace  
 Till this were told.' And saying this the seer  
 Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of death,  
 Not ever to be question'd any more 395  
 Save on the further side; but when I met  
 Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were truth—  
 The shining dragon and the naked child  
 Descending in the glory of the seas—  
 He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me 400  
 In riddling triplets of old time, and said: 401

“ ‘Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky! 402-410  
 A young man will be wiser by and by;  
 An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

“ ‘Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea! 405  
 And truth is this to me, and that to thee;  
 And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

“ ‘Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom blows: 408  
 Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows? 409  
 From the great deep to the great deep he goes.’ 410

“ So Merlin riddling anger'd me; but thou  
 Fear not to give this King thine only child,  
 Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing  
 Hereafter; and dark sayings from of old  
 Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of men, 415  
 And echo'd by old folk beside their fires  
 For comfort after their wage-work is done,

Speak of the King ; and Merlin in our time  
 Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn  
 Tho' men may wound him that he will not die, 420  
 But pass, again to come ; and then or now  
 Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,  
 Till these and all men hail him for their king."

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,  
 But musing " Shall I answer yea or nay ? " 425  
 Doubted and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw,  
 Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,  
 Field after field, up to a height, the peak  
 Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,  
 Now looming, and now lost ; and on the slope 430  
 The sword rose, and hind fell, the herd was driven,  
 Fire glimpsed ; and all the land from roof and rick,  
 In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,  
 Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the haze  
 And made it thicker ; while the phantom king 435  
 Sent out at times a voice ; and here or there  
 Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest  
 Slew on and burnt, crying, " No king of ours,  
 No son of Uther, and no king of ours ; "  
 Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze 440  
 Descended, and the solid earth became  
 As nothing, but the king stood out in heaven,  
 Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and sent  
 Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere,  
 Back to the court of Arthur answering yea. 445

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved  
 And honor'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth  
 And bring the Queen ;—and watch'd him from the gates ;  
 And Lancelot past away among the flowers,  
 (For then was latter April) and return'd 450

Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.  
 To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,  
 Chief of the church in Britain, and before  
 The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the King <sup>454</sup>  
 That morn was married, while in stainless white, 455  
 The fair beginners of a nobler time,  
 And glorying in their vows and him, his knights  
 Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.  
 Far shone the fields of May thro' open door,  
 The sacred altar blossom'd white with May, ✓ 460  
 The Sun of May descended on their King,  
 They gazed on all earth's beauty in their Queen,  
 Roll'd incense, and there past along the hymns  
 A voice as of the waters, while the two  
 Sware at the shrine of Christ a deathless love: 465  
 And Arthur said, " Behold, thy doom is mine.  
 Let chance what will, I love thee to the death!" <sup>467</sup>  
 To whom the Queen replied with drooping eyes,  
 " King and my lord, I love thee to the death!"  
 And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake, 470  
 " Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world  
 Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,  
 And all this Order of thy Table Round  
 Fulfil the boundless purpose of their King!"

So Dubric said; but when they left the shrine 475  
 Great Lords from Rome before the portal stood,  
 In scornful stillness gazing as they past;  
 Then while they paced a city all on fire  
 With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets blew,  
 And Arthur's knighthood sang before the King:— 480

" Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May; <sup>481-571</sup>  
 Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd away!  
 Blow thro' the living world—' Let the King reign.'

“ Shall Rome or heathen rule in Arthur’s realm?  
Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm, 485  
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

“ Strike for the King and live! his knights have heard  
That God hath told the King a secret word.  
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

“ Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust. 490  
Blow trumpet! live the strength and die the lust!  
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

“ Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest,  
The King is King, and ever wills the highest.  
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign. 495

“ Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May!  
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!  
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

“ The King will follow Christ, and we the King  
In whom God hath breathed a secret thing. 500  
Fall battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.”

So sang the knighthood, moving to their hall.  
There at the banquet those great Lords from Rome,  
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,  
Strode in, and claim’d their tribute as of yore. 505  
But Arthur spake, “ Behold, for these have sworn  
To wage my wars, and worship me their King;  
The old order changeth, yielding place to new;  
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,  
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old 510

To drive the heathen from your Roman wall, <sup>511</sup>  
No tribute will we pay: " so those great lords  
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space  
Were all one will, and thro' that strength the King 515  
Drew in the petty pryncedoms under him,  
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame <sup>517</sup>  
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd.

## GARETH AND LYNETTE IN THE ROMANCE.

THE story of Gareth is told by Malory in the seventh book of the *Morte Darthur*. The source from which Malory obtained the tale is as yet undetermined, though several of the early romances have certain points of resemblance to the *Morte Darthur* story. The first four hundred and thirty lines of the idyll are original with Tennyson, and supply what is lacking in Malory's story, a motive for Gareth's disguise.

The poem from that point to the end follows closely the main lines of the romance; but many of the details are changed in order to carry out the general allegorical drift of the poem, the warfare of a man's soul as it fares through life with the sins ever ready to beset him. Thus in the romance Gareth defeats seven knights in his adventures before he can deliver the lady in the Castle Perilous: two at a river crossing, the Black Knight, the Green Knight, the Red Knight, Sir Persant of Inde (also called the Blue Knight), and the Red Knight of the Red Lawn. Tennyson has but four combats, and they are with knights whose names indicate their allegorical significance.

The combat between Gareth and Lancelot occurs just as Gareth is starting on his quest, according to Malory; and after the encounter is over Sir Lancelot knights Gareth, who then tells him his true name. He is made known to Arthur only after the quest is finished.

Tennyson ends the story abruptly with the freeing of the Lady Lyonors; but in the romance Gareth must still accomplish many adventures before he wins his lady, who de-

clares that she will not even allow him to enter her castle for a twelvemonth. Her brother follows him and steals from him his dwarf, who is beguiled to tell Gareth's name and lineage. Gareth returns in great wrath to recover the dwarf. Due apologies are made, and Gareth remains in the castle. Here during the night he has an encounter with a strange knight whose head he strikes off. But the damsel Linet anoints the head with an ointment, and it sticks as fast to the shoulders as ever. The next night the same knight attacks him again, and again Gareth strikes his head off, and this time cuts it into a hundred pieces. But Linet's art is equal to the task, and the pieces are fitted together successfully once more. The knights, overcome by Gareth, come to King Arthur at Carlion on the feast of the Pentecost to yield themselves as vanquished by the unknown Sir Beaumains. Arthur, still ignorant of the identity of his quondam kitchen-knave, promises to make them knights of his Table Round as soon as Sir Beaumains can be found.

At this opportune moment his sister Bellicent, the Queen of Orkney, arrives to inquire of the king what has become of her young son, Sir Gareth. She has heard a report that Arthur has made him his scullion, and in great indignation comes to investigate it. The surprise of the king and of Gareth's brother Gawaine when they discover who Sir Beaumains really is, appeases the angry queen; and at once every effort is put forth to find him. Arthur appeals to Dame Liones, and at his request she calls a tourney at her castle, where Sir Beaumains appears and distinguishes himself in many deeds of great valor, winning honor over all by the aid of a magic ring Dame Liones had given him. But after this he again rides away in search of further adventures to appease the desire of his lady love for his renown. He jousts with several more knights, and at length King Arthur intercedes in his behalf with Dame Liones, who agrees to marry him at Michaelmas. So, in the midst of great festivities,

with plenty of eating and drinking and jousting, the marriage is consummated. "Thus endeth this tale of syr Gareth of Orkenye that wedded Dame Lyones of the castel peryllous. And also syr Gaheris wedded her syster dame Lynet, that was called the damoyssel saueage."



## GARETH AND LYNETTE.

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THE last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,  
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring  
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted Pine  
Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl'd away.  
“How he went down,” said Gareth, “as a false knight  
Or evil king before my lance if lance  
Were mine to use—O senseless cataract,  
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy—  
And yet thou art but swollen with cold snows  
And mine is living blood: thou dost His will, 10  
The Maker's, and not knowest, and I that know,  
Have strength and wit, in my good mother's hall  
Linger with vacillating obedience,  
Prison'd, and kept and coax'd and whistled to—  
Since the good mother holds me still a child!  
Good mother is bad mother unto me!  
A worse were better; yet no worse would I,  
Heaven yield her for it, but in me put force 18  
To weary her ears with one continuous prayer,  
Until she let me fly discaged to sweep 20  
In ever-highering eagle-circles up 21  
To the great Sun of Glory, and thence swoop 22  
Down upon all things base, and dash them dead,  
A knight of Arthur, working out his will,  
To cleanse the world. Why, Gawain, when he came 25  
With Modred hither in the summertime, 26  
Ask'd me to tilt with him, the proven knight. 27  
Modred for want of worthier was the judge.

Then I so shook him in the saddle, he said,  
 'Thou hast half prevail'd against me,' said so—he— 30  
 Tho' Modred biting his thin lips was mute,  
 For he is alway sullen: what care I?"

And Gareth went, and hovering round her chair  
 Ask'd, "Mother, tho' ye count me still the child,  
 Sweet mother, do ye love the child?" She laugh'd,  
 "Thou art but a wild-goose to question it."  
 "Then, mother, an ye love the child," he said,  
 "Being a goose and rather tame than wild,  
 Hear the child's story." "Yea, my well-beloved,  
 An 'twere but of the goose and golden eggs." 40

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes,  
 "Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of mine  
 Was finer gold than any goose can lay;  
 For this an Eagle, a royal Eagle, laid  
 45 Almost beyond eye-reach, on such a palm  
 44 As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours.  
 And there was ever haunting round the palm  
 A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw  
 The splendour sparkling from aloft, and thought  
 'An I could climb and lay my hand upon it, 50  
 51 Then were I wealthier than a leash of kings.'  
 But ever when he reach'd a hand to climb,  
 One, that had loved him from his childhood, caught  
 And stay'd him, 'Climb not lest thou break thy neck,  
 I charge thee by my love,' and so the boy,  
 56 Sweet mother, neither clomb, nor brake his neck,  
 But brake his very heart in pining for it,  
 And past away."

To whom the mother said,  
 "True love, sweet son, had risk'd himself and climb'd,  
 — And handed down the golden treasure to him." 60

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes,  
 "Gold? said I gold?—ay then, why he, or she,  
 Or whosoe'er it was, or half the world  
 Had ventured—*had* the thing I spake of been  
 Mere gold—but this was all of that true steel,  
 Whereof they forged the brand Excalibur, 65  
 And lightnings play'd about it in the storm,  
 And all the little fowl were flurried at it,  
 And there were cries and clashings in the nest,  
 That sent him from his senses: let me go." — 70

Then Bellicent bemoan'd herself and said,  
 "Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?  
 Lo, where thy father Lot beside the hearth  
 Lies like a log, and all but smoulder'd out!  
 For ever since when traitor to the King 75-77  
 He fought against him in the Barons' war,  
 And Arthur gave him back his territory, 77  
 His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies there  
 A yet-warm corpse, and yet unburiable,  
 No more; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks, nor knows. — 80  
 And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,  
 Albeit neither loved with that full love  
 I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love:  
 Stay therefore thou; red berries charm the bird,  
 And thee, mine innocent, the jousts, the wars,  
 Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang  
 Of wrench'd or broken limb—an often chance  
 In those brain-stunning shocks, and tourney-falls,  
 Frights to my heart; but stay: follow the deer 89  
 By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns; 90  
 So make thy manhood mightier day by day;  
 Sweet is the chase: and I will seek thee out  
 Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace  
 Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone year, 94

Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness  
 I know not thee, myself, nor anything.  
 Stay, my best son! ye are yet more boy than man."

Then Gareth, " An ye hold me yet for child,  
 Hear yet once more the story of the child.  
 For, mother, there was once a King, like ours. 100  
 The prince his heir, when tall and marriageable,  
 Ask'd for a bride; and thereupon the King  
 Set two before him. One was fair, strong, arm'd—  
 But to be won by force—and many men  
 Desired her; one, good lack, no man desired.  
 And these were the conditions of the King:  
 That save he won the first by force, he needs  
 Must wed that other, whom no man desired,  
 A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile,  
 That evermore she long'd to hide herself, 110  
 Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye—  
 Yea—some she cleaved to, but they died of her.  
 And one—they call'd her Fame; and one,—O Mother,  
 How can ye keep me tether'd to you—Shame.  
 Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.  
 Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King,  
 Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King—  
 Else, wherefore born? "

To whom the mother said,  
 " Sweet son, for there be many who deem him not,  
 Or will not deem him, wholly proven King— 120  
 Albeit in mine own heart I knew him King,  
 When I was frequent with him in my youth,  
 And heard him Kingly speak, and doubted him  
 No more than he, himself; but felt him mine,  
 Of closest kin to me: yet—wilt thou leave,  
 Thine easeful bidding here, and risk thine all,

Life, limbs, for one that is not proven King?  
 Stay, till the cloud that settles round his birth  
 Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son."

And Gareth answer'd quickly, "Not an hour, 130  
 So that ye yield me—I will walk thro' fire,  
 Mother, to gain it—yöur full leave to go.  
 Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd Rome  
 From off the threshold of the realm, and crush'd  
 The Idolaters, and made the people free? 135  
 Who should be King save him who makes us free?"

So when the Queen, who long had sought in vain  
 To break him from the intent to which he grew,  
 Found her son's will unwaveringly one,  
 She answer'd craftily, "Will ye walk thro' fire? 140  
 Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the smoke.  
 Ay, go then, an ye must: only one proof,  
 Before thou ask the King to make thee knight,  
 Of thine obedience and thy love to me,  
 Thy mother,—I demand."

And Gareth cried,  
 "A hard one, or a hundred, so I go. 147  
 Nay—quick! the proof to prove me to the quick!"

But slowly spake the mother looking at him,  
 "Prince, thou shalt go disguised to Arthur's hall,  
 And hire thyself to serve for meats and drinks 150  
 Among the scullions and the kitchen-knaves, 151  
 And those that hand the dish across the bar. 152  
 Nor shalt thou tell thy name to anyone.  
 And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and a day." 154

For so the Queen believed that when her son  
 Beheld his only way to glory lead

57  
188  
Low down thro' villain kitchen-vassalage,  
Her own true Gareth was too princely-proud  
To pass thereby; so should he rest with her,  
Closed in her castle from the sound of arms.

160

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied,  
"The thrall in person may be free in soul,  
And I shall see the jousts. Thy son am I,  
And since thou art my mother, must obey.  
I therefore yield me freely to thy will;  
For hence will I, disguised, and hire myself  
To serve with scullions and with kitchen-knaves;  
Nor tell my name to any—no, not the King."

Gareth awhile linger'd. The mother's eye  
Full of the wistful fear that he would go,  
And turning toward him wheresoe'er he turn'd,  
Perplext his outward purpose, till an hour,  
When waken'd by the wind which with full voice  
Swept bellowing thro' the darkness on to dawn,  
He rose, and out of slumber calling two  
That still had tended on him from his birth,  
Before the wakeful mother heard him, went.

170

The three were clad like tillers of the soil.  
Southward they set their faces. The birds made  
Melody on branch, and melody in mid air.  
The damp hill-slopes were quicken'd into green,  
And the live green had kindled into flowers,  
For it was past the time of Easterday.

180

So, when their feet were planted on the plain  
That broaden'd toward the base of Camelot,  
Far off they saw the silver-misty morn  
Rolling her smoke about the Royal mount,

That rose between the forest and the field.  
 At times the summit of the high city flash'd ;  
 At times the spires and turrets half-way down 190  
 Prick'd thro' the mist ; at times the great gate shone  
 Only, that open'd on the field below :  
 Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd.

Then those who went with Gareth were amazed,  
 One crying, " Let us go no further, lord.  
 Here is a city of Enchanters, built  
 By fairy Kings." The second echo'd him,  
 " Lord, we have heard from our wise man at home  
 To Northward, that this King is not the King,  
 But only changeling out of Fairyland, — 200  
 Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery  
 And Merlin's glamour." Then the first again,  
 " Lord, there is no such city anywhere,  
 But all a vision."

Gareth answer'd them

With laughter, swearing he had glamour enow  
 In his own blood, his principedom, youth and hopes, 207  
 To plunge old Merlin in the Arabian sea ;  
 So push'd them all unwilling toward the gate.  
 And there was no gate like it under heaven.  
 For barefoot on the keystone, which was lined 210  
 And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,  
 The Lady of the Lake stood : all her dress 212  
 Wept from her sides as water flowing away ; 213  
 But like the cross her great and goodly arms  
 Stretch'd under all the cornice and upheld :  
 And drops of water fell from either hand ; 216  
 And down from one a sword was hung, from one  
 A censer, either worn with wind and storm ; 218  
 And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish ; 219

And in the space to left of her, and right, 220  
 Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,  
 New things and old co-twisted, as if Time  
 Were nothing, so inveterately, that men  
 Were giddy gazing there; and over all  
 High on the top were those three Queens, the friends  
 Of Arthur, who should help him at his need.

Then those with Gareth for so long a space  
 Stared at the figures, that at last seem'd  
 The dragon-boughts and elvish emblemings  
 Began to move, seethe, twine and curl: they call'd 230  
 To Gareth, "Lord, the gateway is alive."

And Gareth likewise on them fixt his eyes  
 So long, that ev'n to him they seem'd to move.  
 Out of the city a blast of music peal'd.  
 Back from the gate started the three, to whom  
 From out thereunder came an ancient man,  
 Long-bearded, saying, "Who be ye, my sons?"

Then Gareth, "We be tillers of the soil,  
 Who leaving share in furrow come to see  
 The glories of our King: but these, my men, 240  
 (Your city moved so weirdly in the mist)  
 Doubt if the King be King at all, or come  
 From Fairyland; and whether this be built  
 By magic, and by fairy Kings and Queens;  
 Or whether there be any city at all,  
 Or all a vision: and this music now  
 Hath scared them both, but tell thou these the truth."

Then that old Seer made answer playing on him  
 And saying, "Son, I have seen the good ship sail  
 Keel upward, and mast downward, in the heavens, 250



And solid turrets topsy-turvy in air :  
 And here is truth ; but an it please thee not, 252  
 Take thou the truth as thou hast told it me.  
 For truly as thou sayest, a Fairy King 254 - 259  
 And Fairy Queens have built the city, son ;  
 They came from out a sacred mountain-cleft  
 Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand,  
 And built it to the music of their harps. 258  
 And, as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son, 259  
 For there is nothing in it as it seems 260  
 Saving the King ; tho' some there be that hold  
 The King a shadow, and the city real :  
 Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou pass  
 Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become  
 A thrall to his enchantments, for the King 265  
 Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame  
 A man should not be bound by, yet the which  
 No man can keep ; but, so thou dread to swear,  
 Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide  
 Without, among the cattle of the field. 270  
 For an ye heard a music, like enow  
 They are building still, seeing the city is built  
 To music, therefore never built at all, 273  
 And therefore built for ever." 274

Gareth spake

Anger'd, " Old Master, reverence thine own beard  
 That looks as white as utter truth, and seems  
 Wellnigh as long as thou art statured tall !  
 Why mockest thou the stranger that hath been  
 To thee fair-spoken ? "

But the Seer replied,

" Know ye not then the Riddling of the Bards ? — 280  
 ' Confusion, and illusion, and relation,

Elusion, and occasion, and evasion ' ?  
 I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,  
 And all that see thee, for thou art not who  
 Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou art.  
 And now thou goest up to mock the King,  
 Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie."

Unmockingly the mocker ending here  
 Turn'd to the right, and past along the plain ;  
 Whom Gareth looking after said, " My men, 290  
 Our one white lie sits like a little ghost  
 Here on the threshold of our enterprise.  
 Let love be blamed for it, not she, nor I : 293  
 Well, we will make amends."

With all good cheer  
 He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with his twain  
 Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces  
 And stately, rich in emblem and the work  
 Of ancient kings who did their days in stone ; 298  
 Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at Arthur's court, 299  
 Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere 300  
 At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak  
 And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.  
 And ever an anon a knight would pass  
 Outward, or inward to the hall : his arms  
 Clash'd ; and the sound was good to Gareth's ear. 302  
 And out of bower and casement shyly glanced  
 Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of love ;  
 And all about a healthful people stept  
 As in the presence of a gracious king.

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard 310  
 A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld  
 Far over heads in that long-vaulted hall 314

The splendour of the presence of the King  
 Throned, and delivering doom—and look'd no more—  
 But felt his young heart hammering in his ears,  
 And thought, "For this half-shadow of a lie  
 The truthful King will doom me when I speak."  
 Yet pressing on, tho' all in fear to find 318  
 Sir Gawain or ~~Sir Modred~~, saw nor one  
 Nor other, but in all the listening eyes 320  
 Of those tall knights, that ranged about the throne,  
 Clear honour shining like the dewy star  
 Of dawn, and faith in their great King, with pure  
 Affection, and the light of victory,  
 And glory gain'd, and evermore to gain. x

Then came a widow crying to the King,  
 "A boon, Sir King! Thy father, Uther, reft  
 From my dead lord a field with violence:  
 For howsoe'er at first he proffer'd gold,  
 Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes, 330  
 We yielded not; and then he reft us of it  
 Perforce, and left us neither gold nor field."

Said Arthur, "Whether would ye? gold or field?" 333  
 To whom the woman weeping, "Nay, my lord,  
 The field was pleasant in my husband's eye."

And Arthur, "Have thy pleasant field again,  
 And thrice the gold for Uther's use thereof,  
 According to the years. No boon is here,  
 But justice, so thy say be proven true.  
 Accursed, who from the wrongs his father did 340  
 Would shape himself a right!"

And while she past,  
 Came yet another widow crying to him,  
 "A boon, Sir King! Thine enemy, King, am I.

With thine own hand thou slewest my dear lord,  
 A knight of Uther in the Barons' war,  
 When Lot and many another rose and fought  
 Against thee, saying thou wert basely born.  
 I held with these, and loathe to ask thee aught.  
 Yet lo! my husband's brother had my son  
 Thrall'd in his castle, and hath starved him dead;      350  
 And standeth seized of that inheritance  
 Which thou that slewest the sire hast left the son.  
 So tho' I scarce can ask it thee for hate,  
 Grant me some knight to do the battle for me,  
 Kill the foul thief, and wreak me for my son."

Then strode a good knight forward, crying to him,  
 "A boon, Sir King! I am her kinsman, I.  
 Give me to right her wrong, and slay the man."

359 Then came Sir Kay, the seneschal, and cried,  
 "A boon, Sir King! ev'n that thou grant her none,      360  
 This railer, that hath mock'd thee in full hall—  
 362 None; or the wholesome boon of gyve and gag."

But Arthur, "We sit King, to help the wrong'd  
 Thro' all our realm. The woman loves her lord.  
 Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and hates!  
 The kings of old had doom'd thee to the flames,  
 367 Aurelius Emrys would have scourged thee dead,  
 And Uther slit thy tongue; but get thee hence—  
 Lest that rough humour of the kings of old  
 Return upon me! Thou that art her kin,      370  
 Go likewise; lay him low and slay him not,  
 But bring him here, that I may judge the right,  
 According to the justice of the King:  
 Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King  
 Who lived and died for men, the man shall die."

Then came in hall the messenger of Mark, <sup>376</sup>  
 A name of evil savour in the land,  
 The Cornish king. In either hand he bore  
 What dazzled all, and shone far-off as shines  
 A field of charlock in the sudden sun — 380  
 Between two showers, a cloth of palest gold,  
 Which down he laid before the throne, and knelt,  
 Delivering, that his lord, the vassal king,  
 Was ev'n upon his way to Camelot ;  
 For having heard that Arthur of his grace  
 Had made his goodly cousin, Tristram, knight, <sup>386</sup>  
 And, for himself was of the greater state, <sup>387</sup>  
 Being a king, he trusted his liege-lord  
 Would yield him this large honour all the more ;  
 So pray'd him well to accept this cloth of gold, 390  
 In token of true heart and fealty.

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to rend  
 In pieces, and so cast it on the hearth.  
 An oak-tree smoulder'd there. " The goodly knight !  
 What ! shall the shield of Mark stand among these ? "  
 For, midway down the side of that long hall  
 A stately pile,—whereof along the front,  
 Some blazon'd, some but carven, and some blank, <sup>398</sup>  
 There ran a treble range of stony shields,— <sup>399</sup>  
 Rose, and high-arching overbrow'd the hearth. 400  
 And under every shield a knight was named :  
 For this was Arthur's custom in his hall ;  
 When some good knight had done one noble deed,  
 His arms were carven only ; but if twain,  
 His arms were blazon'd also ; but if none,  
 The shield was blank and bare without a sign  
 Saving the name beneath ; and Gareth saw  
 The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and bright,  
 And Modred's blank as death ; and Arthur cried  
 To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth. 410

217 " More like are we to reave him of his crown  
 Than make him knight because men call him king.  
 The kings we found, ye know we stay'd their hands  
 From war among themselves, but left them kings ;  
 Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,  
 Truth-speaking, brave, good livers, them we enroll'd  
 Among us, and they sit within our hall.  
 But Mark hath tarnish'd the great name of king,  
 As Mark would sully the low state of churl :  
 And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold, 420  
 Return, and meet, and hold him from our eyes,  
 222 Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,  
 Silenced for ever—craven—a man of plots,  
 Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside ambushings—  
 No fault of thine : let Kay the seneschal  
 Look to thy wants, and send thee satisfied—  
 Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand be seen ! "

And many another suppliant crying came  
 With noise of ravage wrought by beast and man,  
 And evermore a knight would ride away. 430

31 Last, Gareth leaning both hands heavily  
 Down on the shoulders of the twain, his men,  
 Approach'd between them toward the King, and ask'd,  
 " A boon, Sir King (his voice was all ashamed),  
 For see ye not how weak and hungerworn  
 I seem—leaning on these? grant me to serve  
 For meat and drink among thy kitchen-knaves  
 A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my name.  
 Hereafter I will fight."

To him the King,  
 " A goodly youth and worth a goodlier boon ! 440  
 But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must Kay,  
 The master of the meats and drinks, be thine."

He rose and past; then Kay, a man of mien  
 Wan-sallow as the plant that feels itself  
 Root-bitten by white lichen,

“Lo ye now!

This fellow hath broken from some Abbey, where, 247  
 God wot, he had not beef and brewis enow,  
 However that might chance! but an he work,  
 Like any pigeon while I cram his crop,  
 And sleeker shall he shine than any hog.” 450

Then Lancelot standing near, “Sir Seneschal,  
 Sleuth-hound thou knowest, and gray, and all the hounds;  
 A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost not know:  
 Broad brows and fair, a fluent hair and fine, 454  
 High nose, a nostril large and fine, and hands  
 Large, fair and fine!—Some young lad’s mystery—  
 But, or from sheepcot or king’s hall, the boy  
 Is noble-natured. Treat him with all grace,  
 Lest he should come to shame thy judging of him.”

Then Kay, “What murmurest thou of mystery? 460  
 Think ye this fellow will poison the King’s dish?  
 Nay, for he spake too fool-like: mystery!  
 Tut, an the lad were noble, he had ask’d  
 For horse and armour: fair and fine, forsooth!  
 Sir Fine-face, Sir Fair-hands? but see thou to it 465  
 That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some fine day  
 Undo thee not—and leave my man to me.”

So Gareth all for glory underwent  
 The sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage;  
 Ate with young lads his portion by the door, 470  
 And couch’d at night with grimy kitchen-knives.  
 And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,

But Kay the seneschal, who loved him not,  
 Would hustle and harry him, and labour him  
 Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set  
 To turn the broach, draw water, or hew wood,  
 Or grosser tasks; and Gareth bow'd himself  
 With all obedience to the King, and wrought  
 All kind of service with a noble ease  
 That graced the lowliest act in doing it. 480  
 And when the thralls had talk among themselves,  
 And one would praise the love that linkt the King  
 And Lancelot—how the King had saved his life  
 In battle twice, and Lancelot once the King's—  
 For Lancelot was the first in Tournament,  
 But Arthur mightiest on the battle-field—  
 Gareth was glad. Or if some other told,  
 How once the wandering forester at dawn,  
 Far over the blue tarns and hazy seas,  
 On Caer-Eryri's highest found the King, 490  
 A naked babe, of whom the Prophet spake,  
 "He passes to the Isle Avilion,  
 He passes and is heal'd and cannot die"—  
 Gareth was glad. But if their talk were foul,  
 Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,  
 Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud  
 That first they mock'd, but, after, revered him.  
 Or Gareth telling some prodigious tale  
 Of knights, who sliced a red life-bubbling way  
 Thro' twenty folds of twisted dragon, held 500  
 All in a gap-mouth'd circle his good mates  
 Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,  
 Charm'd; till Sir Kay, the seneschal, would come  
 Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind  
 Among dead leaves, and drive them all apart.  
 Or when the thralls had sport among themselves,  
 So there were any trial of mastery,



He, by two yards in casting bar or stone <sup>508-514</sup>  
 Was counted best; and if there chanced a joust, <sup>515</sup>  
 So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go, 510  
 Would hurry thither, and when he saw the knights  
 Clash like the coming and retiring wave,  
 And the spear spring, and good horse reel, the boy  
 Was half beyond himself for ecstasy.

So for a month he wrought among the thralls;  
 But in the weeks that follow'd, the good Queen,  
 Repentant of the word she made him swear,  
 And saddening in her childless castle, sent,  
 Between the in-crescent and de-crescent moon, <sup>519</sup>  
 Arms for her son, and loosed him from his vow. 520

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of Lot  
 With whom he used to play at tourney once,  
 When both were children, and in lonely haunts  
 Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand, <sup>524</sup>  
 And each at either dash from either end—  
 Shame never made girl redder than Gareth joy.  
 He laugh'd; he sprang. "Out of the smoke, at once  
 I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee— <sup>528</sup>  
 These news be mine, none other's—nay, the King's—  
 Descend into the city:" whereon he sought 530  
 The King alone, and found, and told him all.

"I have stagger'd thy strong Gawain in a tilt  
 For pastime; yea, he said it: joust can I.  
 Make me thy knight—in secret! let my name  
 Be hidd'n, and give me the first quest, I spring <sup>535</sup>  
 Like flame from ashes."

Here the King's calm eye  
 Fell on, and check'd, and made him flush, and bow

Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd him,  
 "Son, the good mother let me know thee here,  
 And sent her wish that I would yield thee thine. 540  
 Make thee my knight? my knights are sworn to vows  
 Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,  
 And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,  
 And uttermost obedience to the King."

Then Gareth, lightly springing from his knees,  
 "My King, for hardihood I can promise thee.  
 For uttermost obedience make demand  
 Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,  
 No mellow master of the meats and drinks! 549  
 And as for love, God wot, I love not yet, 550  
 But love I shall, God willing."

And the King—  
 "Make thee my knight in secret? yea, but he,  
 Our noblest brother, and our truest man,  
 And one with me in all, he needs must know."

"Let Lancelot know, my King, let Lancelot know,  
 Thy noblest and thy truest!"

And the King—  
 "But wherefore would ye men should wonder at you?  
 Nay, rather for the sake of me, their King,  
 And the deed's sake my knighthood do the deed,  
 Than to be noised of."

Merrily Gareth ask'd, 560  
 "Have I not earn'd my cake in baking of it?  
 Let be my name until I make my name!  
 My deeds will speak: it is but for a day."  
 So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm

Smiled the great King, and half-unwillingly  
 Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to him.  
 Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,  
 "I have given him the first quest: he is not proven.  
 Look therefore when he calls for this in hall,  
 Thou get to horse and follow him far away. 570  
 Cover the lions on thy shield, and see 571  
 Far as thou mayest, he be nor ta'en nor slain."

Then that same day there past into the hall  
 A damsel of high lineage, and a brow  
 May-blossom, and a cheek of apple-blossom,  
 Hawk-eyes; and lightly was her slender nose  
 Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower;  
 She into hall past with her page and cried,

"O King, for thou hast driven the foe without,  
 See to the foe within! bridge, ford, beset 580  
 By bandits, everyone that owns a tower  
 The Lord for half a league. Why sit ye there?  
 Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were king,  
 Till ev'n the lonest hold were all as free 584  
 From cursed bloodshed, as thine altar-cloth  
 From that best blood it is a sin to spill." 586

"Comfort thyself," said Arthur, "I nor mine  
 Rest: so my knighthood keep the vows they swore,  
 The wastest moorland of our realm shall be  
 Safe, damsel, as the centre of this hall. 590  
 What is thy name? thy need?"

"My name?" she said—

"Lynette my name; noble; my need, a knight  
 To combat for my sister, Lyonors,  
 A lady of high lineage, of great lands, 595

And comely, yea, and comelier than myself.  
 She lives in Castle Perilous: a river  
 Runs in three loops about her living-place;  
 And o'er it are three passings, and three knights  
 Defend the passings, brethren, and a fourth  
 And of that four the mightiest, holds her stay'd 600  
 In her own castle, and so besieges her  
 To break her will, and make her wed with him:  
 And but delays his purport till thou send  
 To do the battle with him, thy chief man  
 Sir Lancelot whom he trusts to overthrow,  
 Then wed, with glory: but she will not wed  
 Save whom she loveth, or a holy life. 607  
 Now therefore have I come for Lancelot."

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth ask'd,  
 "Damsel, ye know this Order lives to crush 610  
 All wrongers of the Realm. But say, these four,  
 Who be they? What the fashion of the men?"

"They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,  
 The fashion of that old knight-errantry  
 Who ride abroad, and do but what they will;  
 Courteous or bestial from the moment, such 616  
 As have nor law nor king; and three of these  
 Proud in their fantasy call themselves the Day,  
 Morning-Star, and Noon-Sun, and Evening-Star, 619  
 Being strong fools; and never a whit more wise 620  
 The fourth, who always rideth arm'd in black,  
 A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.  
 He names himself the Night and oftener Death,  
 And wears a helmet mounted with a skull, 624  
 And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,  
 To show that who may slay or scape the three,  
 Slain by himself, shall enter endless night.

And all these four be fools, but mighty men,  
And therefore am I come for Lancelot."

Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he rose, 630  
A head with kindling eyes above the throng,  
"A boon, Sir King—this quest!" then—for he mark'd  
Kay near him groaning like a wounded bull—  
"Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-knave am I,  
And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I,  
And I can topple over a hundred such.  
Thy promise, King," and Arthur glancing at him,  
Brought down a momentary brow. "Rough, sudden, 638  
And pardonable, worthy to be knight—  
Go therefore," and all hearers were amazed. 640

But on the damsel's forehead shame, pride, wrath  
Slew the May-white: she lifted either arm,  
"Fie on thee, King! I ask'd for thy chief knight,  
And thou hast given me but a kitchen-knave."  
Then ere a man in hall could stay her, turn'd,  
Fled down the lane of access to the King,  
Took horse, descended the slope street, and past  
The weird white gate, and paused without, beside 648  
The field of tourney, murmuring "kitchen-knave." 649

Now two great entries open'd from the hall, 650  
At one end one, that gave upon a range  
Of level pavement where the King would pace  
At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;  
And down from this a lordly stairway sloped  
Till lost in blowing trees and tops of towers; 653  
And out by this main doorway past the King.  
But one was counter to the hearth, and rose 657  
High that the highest-crested helm could ride

Therethro' nor graze: and by this entry fled  
 The damsel in her wrath, and on to this 660  
 Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the door  
 King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a town,  
 A warhorse of the best, and near it stood  
 The two that out of north had follow'd him:  
 This bare a maiden shield: a casque; that held  
 The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth loosed  
 A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to heel,  
 A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,  
 And from it like a fuel-smother'd fire,  
 That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and flash'd as those  
 Dull-coated things, that making slide apart 670  
 Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there burns 671  
 A jewell'd harness, ere they pass and fly.  
 So Gareth ere he parted flash'd in arms.  
 Then as he donn'd the helm, and took the shield  
 And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of grain  
 Storm-strengthen'd on a windy site, and tipt 677  
 With trenchant steel, around him slowly prest  
 The people, while from out of kitchen came  
 The thralls in throng, and seeing who had work'd 680  
 Lustier than any, and whom they could but love,  
 Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and cried,  
 "God bless the King, and all his fellowship!"  
 And on thro' lanes of shouting Gareth rode  
 Down the slope street, and past without the gate.

So Gareth past with joy; but as the cur  
 Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his cause  
 Be cool'd by fighting, follows, being named,  
 His owner, but remembers all, and growls  
 Remembering, so Sir Kay beside the door 690  
 Mutter'd in scorn of Gareth whom he used  
 To harry and hustle.

“ Bound upon a quest 693

With horse and arms—the King hath past his time—  
 My scullion knave! Thralls to your work again,  
 For an your fire be low ye kindle mine!  
 Will there be dawn in West and eve in East? 697  
 Begone!—my knave!—belike and like enow  
 Some old head-blow not heeded in his youth  
 So shook his wits they wander in his prime—  
 Crazed! How the villain lifted up his voice, 700  
 Nor shamed to bawl himself a kitchen-knave.  
 Tut: he was tame and meek enow with me,  
 Till peacock'd up with Lancelot's noticing.  
 Well—I will after my loud knave, and learn  
 Whether he know me for his master yet.  
 Out of the smoke he came, and so my lance  
 Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the mire—  
 Thence, if the King awaken from his craze,  
 Into the smoke again.”

But Lancelot said,

“ Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the King, 710  
 For that did never he whereon ye rail,  
 But ever meekly served the King in thee?  
 Abide: take counsel; for this lad is great  
 And lusty, and knowing both of lance and sword.”  
 “ Tut, tell not me,” said Kay, “ ye are overfine  
 To mar stout knaves with foolish courtesies: ”  
 Then mounted, on thro' silent faces rode 717  
 Down the slope city, and out beyond the gate. 718

But by the field of tourney lingering yet  
 Mutter'd the damsel, “ Wherefore did the King 720  
 Scorn me? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt, at least  
 He might have yielded to me one of those  
 Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,

Rather than—O sweet heaven! O fie upon him—  
His kitchen-knave.”

To whom Sir Gareth drew  
(And there were none but few goodlier than he)  
Shining in arms, “Damsel, the quest is mine.  
Lead, and I follow.” She thereat, as one  
That smells a foul-flesh’d agaric in the holt, 729  
And deems it carrion of some woodland thing, — 730  
Or shrew, or weasel, nipt her slender nose 731  
With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling, “Hence!  
Avoid, thou smelllest all of kitchen-grease.  
And look who comes behind,” for there was Kay.  
“Knowest thou not me? thy master? I am Kay.  
We lack thee by the hearth.”

And Gareth to him,  
“Master no more! too well I know thee, ay—  
The most ungentle knight in Arthur’s hall.”  
“Have at thee then,” said Kay: they shock’d, and Kay  
Fell shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again, — 740  
“Lead, and I follow,” and fast away she fled.

But after sod and shingle ceased to fly  
Behind her, and the heart of her good horse  
Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,  
Perforce she stay’d, and overtaken spoke. 746-763

“What doest thou, scullion, in my fellowship?  
Deem’st thou that I accept thee aught the more  
Or love thee better, that by some device  
Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness, 749  
Thou hast overthrown and slain thy master—thou!— 750  
Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon!—to me  
Thou smelllest all of kitchen as before.”



“Damsel,” Sir Gareth answer’d gently, “say  
 Whate’er ye will, but whatsoe’er ye say,  
 I leave not till I finish this fair quest,  
 Or die therefore.”

“Ay, wilt thou finish it?  
 Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he talks!  
 The listening rogue hath caught the manner of it.  
 But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with, knave,  
 And then by such a one that thou for all  
 The kitchen brewis that was ever supt  
 Shalt not once dare to look him in the face.”

760

“I shall assay,” said Gareth with a smile  
 That madden’d her, and away she flash’d again  
 Down the long avenues of a boundless wood,  
 And Gareth following was again beknaved.

“Sir Kitchen-knave, I have miss’d the only way  
 Where Arthur’s men are set along the wood;  
 The wood is nigh as full of thieves as leaves:  
 If both be slain, I am rid of thee: but yet,  
 Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit of thine?  
 Fight, an thou canst: I have miss’d the only way.”

768

770

So till the dusk that follow’d evensong  
 Rode on the two, reviler and reviled;  
 Then after one long slope was mounted, saw,  
 Bowl-shaped, thro’ tops of many thousand pines  
 A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink  
 To westward—in the deeps whereof a mere,  
 Round as the red eye of an Eagle-owl,  
 Under the half-dead sunset glared; and shouts  
 Ascended, and there brake a servingman

773

779

780

Flying from out of the black wood, and crying,  
 "They have bound my lord to cast him in the mere."  
 Then Gareth, "Bound am I to right the wrong'd,  
 But straitlier bound am I to bide with thee."  
 And when the damsel spake contemptuously,  
 "Lead, and I follow," Gareth cried again,  
 "Follow, I lead!" so down among the pines  
 He plunged; and there, blackshadow'd nigh the mere,  
 And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and reed, 790  
 Saw six tall men haling a seventh along,  
 A stone about his neck to drown him in it.  
 Three with good blows he quieted, but three  
 Fled thro' the pines; and Gareth loosed the stone  
 From off his neck, then in the mere beside  
 Tumbled it; oilily bubbled up the mere. 796  
 Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free feet  
 Set him, a stalwart Baron, Arthur's friend.

"Well that ye came, or else these caitiff rogues 799  
 Had wreak'd themselves on me; good cause is theirs -800  
 To hate me, for my wont hath ever been  
 To catch my thief, and then like vermin here  
 Drown him, and with a stone about his neck;  
 And under this wan water many of them 804  
 Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,  
 And rise, and flickering in a grimly light 806  
 Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have saved a life 807  
 Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this wood.  
 And fain would I reward thee worshipfully.  
 What guerdon will ye?"

Gareth sharply spake, 810  
 "None! for the deed's sake have I done the deed,  
 In uttermost obedience to the King.  
 But wilt thou yield this damsel harbourage?"

Whereat the Baron saying, "I well believe  
 You be of Arthur's Table," a light laugh  
 Broke from Lynette, "Ay, truly of a truth,  
 And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-knave!— 817  
 But deem not I accept thee aught the more,  
 Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit  
 Down on a rout of craven foresters. 820  
 A thresher with his flail had scatter'd them.  
 Nay—for thou smellest of the kitchen still.  
 But an this lord will yield us harbourage,  
 Well."

So she spake. A league beyond the wood,  
 All in a full-fair manor and a rich,  
 His towers where that day a feast had been  
 Held in high hall, and many a viand left, 828  
 And many a costly cate, received the three. 828  
 And there they placed a peacock in his pride 829  
 Before the damsel, and the Baron set 830  
 Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

"Meseems, that here is much discourtesy, 832  
 Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at my side.  
 Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur's hall,  
 And pray'd the King would grant me Lancelot  
 To fight the brotherhood of Day and Night—  
 The last a monster unsubduable  
 Of any save of him for whom I call'd—  
 Suddenly bawls this frontless kitchen-knave, 839  
 'The quest is mine; thy kitchen-knave am I, 840  
 And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I.'  
 Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,  
 'Go therefore,' and so gives the quest to him—  
 Him—here—a villain fitter to stick swine

Than ride abroad redressing women's wrong,  
Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman."

Then half-ashamed and part-amazed, the lord  
Now look'd at one and now at other, left  
The damsel by the peacock in his pride,  
And, seating Gareth at another board, 850  
Sat down beside him, ate and then began.

"Friend, whether thou be kitchen-knave, or not,  
Or whether it be the maiden's fantasy,  
And whether she be mad, or else the King,  
Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,  
I ask not: but thou strikest a strong stroke,  
For strong thou art and goodly therewithal,  
And saver of my life; and therefore now,  
For here be mighty men to joust with, weigh 859  
Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel back 860  
To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King.  
Thy pardon; I but speak for thine avail,  
The saver of my life."

And Gareth said,  
"Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,  
Despite of Day and Night and Death and Hell."

So when, next morn, the lord whose life he saved  
Had, some brief space, convey'd them on their way  
And left them with God-speed, Sir Gareth spake,  
"Lead, and I follow." Haughtily she replied,

"I fly no more: I allow thee for an hour. 870  
Lion and stoat have isled together, knave, 871  
In time of flood. Nay, furthermore, methinks  
Some ruth is mine for thee. Back wilt thou, fool? 873

For hard by here is one will overthrow  
 And slay thee: then will I to court again,  
 And shame the King for only yielding me  
 My champion from the ashes of his hearth."

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd courteously,  
 "Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed.  
 Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt find 880  
 My fortunes all as fair as hers who lay 881  
 Among the ashes and wedded the King's son." 882

Then to the shore of one of those long loops  
 Wherethro' the serpent river coil'd, they came.  
 Rough-thicketed were the banks and steep; the stream  
 Full, narrow; this a bridge of single arc  
 Took at a leap; and on the further side  
 Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold  
 In streaks and rays, and all Lent-lily in hue, 889  
 Save that the dome was purple, and above, 890  
 Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering.  
 And therefore the lawless warrior paced  
 Unarm'd and calling, "Damsel, is this he,  
 The champion thou hast brought from Arthur's hall?  
 For whom we let thee pass." "Nay, nay," she said,  
 "Sir Morning-Star. The King in utter scorn  
 Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee here  
 His kitchen-knave: and look thou to thyself:  
 See that he fall not on thee suddenly, 899  
 And slay thee unarm'd: he is not knight but knave." 900

Then at his call, "O daughters of the Dawn,  
 And servants of the Morning-Star, approach,  
 Arm me," from out the silken curtain-folds  
 Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair girls

In gilt and rosy raiment came : their feet  
 In dewy grasses glisten'd ; and the hair  
 All over glanced with dewdrop or with gem  
 Like sparkles in the stone Avanturine. 908  
 These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave a shield  
 Blue also, and thereon the morning star. 910  
 And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,  
 Who stood a moment, ere his horse was brought,  
 Glorying ; and in the stream beneath him, shone  
 Immingled with Heaven's azure waveringly,  
 The gay pavilion and the naked feet, 915  
 His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star. 916

Then she that watch'd him, " Wherefore stare ye so?  
 Thou shakest in thy fear : there yet is time :  
 Flee down the valley before he get to horse.  
 Who will cry shame ? Thou art not knight but knave."

Said Gareth, " Damsel, whether knave or knight, 920  
 Far liefer had I fight a score of times  
 Than hear thee so missay me and revile.  
 Fair words were best for him who fights for thee ;  
 But truly foul are better, for they send  
 That strength of anger thro' mine arms, I know  
 That I shall overthrow him."

And he that bore  
 The star, when mounted, cried from o'er the bridge,  
 " A kitchen-knave, and sent in scorn of me !  
 Such fight not I, but answer scorn with scorn. 930  
 For this were shame to do him further wrong  
 Than set him on his feet, and take his horse  
 And arms, and so return him to the King.  
 Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly, knave. 934  
 Avoid : for it beseemeth not a knave  
 To ride with such a lady." 936

“ Dog, thou liest. 937

I spring from loftier lineage than thine own.”

He spake; and all at fiery speed the two

Shock'd on the central bridge, and either spear

Bent but not brake, and either knight at once,

940

Hurl'd as a stone from out of a catapult

Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,

Fell, as if dead; but quickly rose and drew,

And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his brand

He drave his enemy backward down the bridge,

The damsel crying, “ Well-stricken, kitchen-knave!”

Till Gareth's shield was cloven; but one stroke

Laid him that clove it grovelling on the ground.

Then cried the fall'n, “ Take not my life: I yield.” 949-950

And Gareth, “ So this damsel ask it of me

95c

Good—I accord it easily as a grace.” 951

She reddening, “ Insolent scullion: I of thee?

I bound to thee for any favour ask'd!”

“ Then shall he die.” And Gareth then unlaced

His helmet as to slay him, but she shriek'd,

“ Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay

One nobler than thyself.” “ Damsel, thy charge

Is an abounding pleasure to me. Knight,

Thy life is thine at her command. Arise

And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say

960

His kitchen-knave hath sent thee. See thou crave

His pardon for thy breaking of his laws.

Myself, when I return, will plead for thee.

Thy shield is mine—farewell; and, damsel, thou,

Lead, and I follow.” 964

And fast away she fled.

Then when he came upon her, spake, “ Methought,

Knave, when I watch'd thee striking on the bridge

The savour of thy kitchen came upon me  
 A little faintlier: but the wind hath changed:  
 I scent it twenty-fold." And then she sang,  
 "' O morning star ' (not that tall felon there 971  
 Whom thou by sorcery or unhappiness  
 Or some device, hast foully overthrown),  
 ' O morning star that smilest in the blue,  
 O star, my morning dream hath proven true,  
 Smile sweetly, thou! my love hath smiled on me.'

970

" But thou begone, take counsel, and away,  
 For hard by here is one that guards a ford—  
 The second brother in their fool's parable—  
 Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot.  
 Care not for shame: thou art not knight but knave."

979

980

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd, laughingly,  
 " Parables? Hear a parable of the knave.  
 When I was kitchen-knave among the rest  
 Fierce was the hearth, and one of my co-mates  
 Own'd a rough dog, to whom he cast his coat,  
 ' Guard it,' and there was none to meddle with it.  
 And such a coat art thou, and thee the King  
 Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,  
 To worry, and not to flee—and—knight or knave—  
 The knave that doth thee service as full knight  
 Is all as good, meseems, as any knight  
 Toward thy sister's freeing."

990

" Ay, Sir Knave!  
 Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a knight,  
 Being but knave, I hate thee all the more."

" Fair damsel, you should worship me the more,  
 That, being but knave, I throw thine enemies."



“Ay, ay,” she said, “but thou shalt meet thy match.”

So when they touch'd the second river-loop,

Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail 1000

Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday Sun

Beyond a raging shallow. As if the flower, 1002

That blows a globe of after arrowlets, 1003

Ten thousand-fold had grown, flash'd the fierce shield,

All sun; and Gareth's eyes had flying blots

Before them when he turn'd from watching him.

He from beyond the roaring shallow roar'd,

“What doest thou, brother, in my marches here?” 1008

And she athwart the shallow shrill'd again,

“Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's hall 1010

Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath his arms.”

“Ugh!” cried the Sun, and vizoring up a red 1012

And cipher face of rounded foolishness, 1013

Push'd horse across the foamings of the ford,

Whom Gareth met midstream: no room was there 1015-112

For lance or tourney-skill: four strokes they struck

With sword, and these were mighty; the new knight

Had fear he might be shamed; but as the Sun

Heaved up a ponderous arm to strike the fifth,

The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream, the stream 1020

Descended, and the Sun was wash'd away.

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the ford;

So drew him home; but he that fought no more,

As being all bone-batter'd on the rock,

Yielded; and Gareth sent him to the King.

“Myself when I return will plead for thee.”

“Lead, and I follow.” Quietly she led.

“Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed again?”

“Nay, not a point: nor art thou victor here.

There lies a ridge of slate across the ford; 1030  
 His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I saw it.

1032—“ ‘ O Sun ’ (not this strong fool whom thou, Sir Knave,  
 Hast overthrown thro’ mere unhappiness),  
 ‘ O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or pain,  
 O moon, that layest all to sleep again,  
 Shine sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me.’

“ What knowest thou of lovesong or of love?  
 Nay, nay, God wot, so thou wert nobly born,  
 Thou hast a pleasant presence. Yea, perchance,—

“ ‘ O dewy flowers that open to the sun, 1040  
 O dewy flowers that close when day is done,  
 Blow sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me.’

“ What knowest thou of flowers, except, belike,  
 To garnish meats with? hath not our good King  
 Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchendom,  
 A foolish love for flowers? what stick ye round  
 The pasty? wherewithal deck the boar’s head?  
 Flowers? nay, the boar hath rosemaries and bay. 1045

“ ‘ O birds, that warble to the morning sky,  
 O birds that warble as the day goes by, 1050  
 Sing sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me.’

1052—“ What knowest thou of birds, lark, mavis, merle,  
 Linnet? what dream ye when they utter forth  
 May-music growing with the growing light,  
 Their sweet sun-worship? these be for the snare,  
 (So runs thy fancy) these be for the spit,  
 1057 Larding and basting. See thou have not now

Larded thy last, except thou turn and fly.  
There stands the third fool of their allegory."

For there beyond a bridge of treble bow, 1060  
All in a rose-red from the west, and all  
Naked it seem'd, and glowing in the broad  
Deep-dimpled current underneath, the knight,  
That named himself the Star of Evening, stood.

And Gareth, "Wherefore waits the madman there  
Naked in open dayshine?" "Nay," she cried,  
"Not naked, only wrapt in harden'd skins  
That fit him like his own; and so ye cleave  
His armour off him, these will turn the blade."

Then the third brother shouted o'er the bridge, 1070  
"O brother-star, why shine ye here so low?  
Thy ward is higher up: but have ye slain  
The damsel's champion?" and the damsel cried,

"No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's heaven  
With all disaster unto thine and thee!  
For both thy younger brethren have gone down  
Before this youth; and so wilt thou, Sir Star;  
Art thou not old?"

"Old, damsel, old and hard,  
Old, with the might and breath of twenty boys."  
Said Gareth, "Old, and over-bold in brag! 1080  
But that same strength which threw the Morning-Star  
Can throw the Evening."

Then that other blew  
A hard and deadly note upon the horn.  
"Approach and arm me!" With slow steps from out

An old storm-beaten, russet, many-stain'd  
 Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,  
 And arm'd him in old arms, and brought a helm  
 With but a drying evergreen for crest,  
 And gave a shield whereon the Star of Even  
 Half-tarnish'd and half-bright, his emblem, shone. 1090

But when it glitter'd o'er the saddle-bow  
 They madly hurl'd together on the bridge;  
 And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,  
 There met him drawn, and overthrew him again,  
 But up like fire he started: and as oft  
 As Gareth brought him grovelling on his knees,  
 So many a time he vaulted up again;  
 Till Gareth panted hard, and his great heart,  
 Foredooming all his trouble was in vain, 1099  
 Labour'd within him, for he seem'd as one 1100  
 That all in later, sadder age begins

To war again ill uses of a life,  
 But these from all his life arise, and cry,  
 "Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us down!"  
 He half despairs; so Gareth seem'd to strike  
 Vainly, the damsel clamouring all the while,  
 "Well done, knave-knight, well stricken, O good knight-  
 knave—

O knave, as noble as any of all the knights,  
 Shame me not, shame me not. I have prophesied—  
 Strike, thou art worthy of the Table Round— 1110  
 His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd skin—  
 Strike—strike—the wind will never change again."  
 And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,  
 And hew'd great pieces of his armour off him,  
 But lash'd in vain against the harden'd skin,  
 And could not wholly bring him under, more  
 Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge on ridge,  
 The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and springs

For ever ; till at length Sir Gareth's brand  
 Clash'd his, and brake it utterly to the hilt. 1120  
 " I have thee now ; " but forth that other sprang,  
 And, all unknightlike, writhed his wiry arms 1122  
 Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,  
 Strangled, but straining ev'n his uttermost  
 Cast, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the bridge 1125  
 Down to the river, sink or swim, and cried,  
 " Lead, and I follow."

But the damsel said,  
 " I lead no longer ; ride thou at my side ;  
 Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-knaves.

" ' O trefoil, sparkling on the rainy plain, — 1130  
 O rainbow with three colours after rain,  
 Shine sweetly : thrice my love hath smiled on me.' "

" Sir—and, good faith, I fain had added—Knight,  
 But that I heard thee call thyself a knave,—  
 Shamed am I that I so rebuked, reviled,  
 Missaid thee ; noble I am ; and thought the King  
 Scorn'd me and mine ; and now thy pardon, friend,  
 For thou hast ever answer'd courteously,  
 And wholly bold thou art, and meek withal  
 As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave, 1140  
 Hast mazed my wit : I marvel what thou art."

" Damsel," he said, " you be not all to blame,  
 Saving that you mistrusted our good King 1143  
 Would handle scorn, or yield you, asking, one  
 Not fit to cope your quest. You said your say ;  
 Mine answer was my deed. Good sooth ! I hold  
 He scarce is knight, yea but half-man, nor meet 1147  
 To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets  
 His heart be stirr'd with any foolish heat

At any gentle damsel's waywardness. 1150  
 Shamed? care not! thy foul sayings fought for me:  
 And seeing now thy words are fair, methinks  
 There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his great self,  
 Hath force to quell me."

Nigh upon that hour  
 When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,  
 Lets down his other leg, and stretching, dreams  
 Of goodly supper in the distant pool,  
 Then turn'd the noble damsel smiling at him,  
 And told him of a cavern hard at hand,  
 Where bread and baken meats and good red wine 1160  
 Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors  
 Had sent her coming champion, waited him.

Anon they past a narrow comb wherein 1163  
 Were slabs of rock with figures, knights on horse  
 Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning hues. 1165  
 "Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once was here,  
 Whose holy hand hath fashion'd on the rock  
 The war of Time against the soul of man.  
 And yon four fools have suck'd their allegory  
 From these damp walls, and taken but the form. 1170  
 Know ye not these?" and Gareth lookt and read—  
 In letters like to those the vexillary 1172  
 Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming Gelt— 1173  
 "PHOSPHORUS," then "MERIDIES"—"HESPERUS" 474  
 "NOX"—"MORS," beneath five figures, armed men,  
 Slab after slab, their faces forward all,  
 And running down the Soul, a Shape that fled  
 With broken wings, torn raiment and loose hair,  
 For help and shelter to the hermit's cave.  
 "Follow the faces, and we find it. Look, 1180  
 Who comes behind?"

For one—delay'd at first  
 Thro' helping back the dislocated Kay  
 To Camelot, then by what thereafter chanced,  
 The damsel's headlong error thro' the wood—  
 Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-loops—  
 His blue shield-lions cover'd—softly drew  
 Behind the twain, and when he saw the star  
 Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him, cried,  
 "Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my friend."  
 And Gareth crying prick'd against the cry; 1190  
 But when they closed—in a moment—at one touch  
 Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the world—  
 Went sliding down so easily, and fell,  
 That when he found the grass within his hands  
 He laugh'd; the laughter jarr'd upon Lynette:  
 Harshly she ask'd him, "Shamed and overthrown,  
 And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,  
 Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast in vain?"  
 "Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son  
 Of old King Lot and good Queen Bellicent, 1200  
 And victor of the bridges and the ford,  
 And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by whom  
 I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness—  
 Device and sorcery and unhappiness—  
 Out, sword; we are thrown!" And Lancelot answer'd.  
 "Prince,  
 O Gareth—thro' the mere unhappiness  
 Of one who came to help thee, not to harm,  
 Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee whole,  
 As on the day when Arthur knighted him."

Then Gareth, "Thou—Lancelot!—thine the hand 1210  
 That threw me? An some chance to mar the boast  
 Thy brethren of thee make—which could not chance—  
 Had sent thee down before a lesser spear,  
 Shamed had I been, and sad—O Lancelot—thou!"

Whereat the maiden, petulant, "Lancelot,  
 Why came ye not, when call'd? and wherefore now  
 Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my knave,  
 Who being still rebuked, would answer still  
 Courteous as any knight—but now, if knight,  
 The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd and trick'd, 1220  
 And only wondering wherefore play'd upon:  
 And doubtful whether I and mine be scorn'd.  
 Where should be truth if not in Arthur's hall,  
 In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave, prince and fool,  
 I hate thee and for ever."

And Lancelot said,  
 "Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight art thou  
 To the King's best wish. O damsel, be you wise  
 To call him shamed, who is but overthrown?  
 Thrown have I been, nor once, but many a time.  
 Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last, 1230  
 And overthrower from being overthrown.  
 With sword we have not striven; and thy good horse  
 And thou are weary; yet not less I felt  
 Thy manhood thro' that wearied lance of thine.  
 Well hast thou done; for all the stream is freed,  
 And thou hast wreak'd his justice on his foes, 1236  
 And when reviled, hast answer'd graciously,  
 And makest merry when overthrown. Prince, Knight,  
 Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our Table Round!"

And then when turning to Lynette he told 1240  
 The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said,  
 "Ay well—ay well—for worse than being fool'd  
 Of others, is to fool one's self. A cave,  
 Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and drinks  
 And forage for the horse, and flint for fire.  
 But all about it flies a honeysuckle.  
 Seek, till we find." And when they sought and found,



Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life  
 Past into sleep; on whom the maiden gazed.  
 "Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to sleep hast thou.  
 Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to him 1250  
 As any mother? Ay, but such a one  
 As all day long hath rated at her child,  
 And vext his day, but blesses him asleep—  
 Good lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle  
 In the hush'd night, as if the world were one 1255-1257  
 Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!  
 O Lancelot, Lancelot"—and she clapt her hands—  
 "Full merry am I to find my goodly knave  
 Is knight and noble. See now, sworn have I, 1260  
 Else yon black felon had not let me pass,  
 To bring thee back to do the battle with him.  
 Thus an thou goest, he will fight thee first;  
 Who doubts thee victor? so will my knight-knave  
 Miss the full flower of this accomplishment."

Said Lancelot, "Peradventure he, you name,  
 May know my shield. Let Gareth, an he will,  
 Change his for mine, and take my charger, fresh,  
 Not to be spurr'd, loving the battle as well  
 As he that rides him." "Lancelot-like," she said, 1270  
 "Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in all."

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutch'd the shield;  
 "Ramp ye lance-splintering lions, on whom all spears 1273  
 Are rotten sticks! ye seem agape to roar!  
 Yea, ramp and roar at leaving of your lord!—  
 Care not, good beasts, so well I care for you.  
 O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these  
 Streams virtue—fire—thro' one that will not shame  
 Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield.  
 Hence: let us go."

Silent the silent field

They traversed. Arthur's harp tho' summer-wan, 1280  
 In counter motion to the clouds, allured 1281  
 The glance of Gareth dreaming on his liege.  
 A star shot: "Lo," said Gareth, "the foe falls!"  
 An owl whoopt: "Hark the victor pealing there!"  
 Suddenly she that rode upon his left  
 Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent him, crying,  
 "Yield, yield him this again: 'tis he must fight:  
 I curse the tongue that all thro' yesterday  
 Reviled thee, and hath wrought on Lancelot now 1290  
 To lend thee horse and shield: wonders ye have done;  
 Miracles ye cannot: here is glory enow  
 In having flung the three: I see thee maim'd,  
 Mangled: I swear thou canst not fling the fourth."

"And wherefore, damsel? tell me all ye know.  
 You cannot scare me; nor rough face, or voice,  
 Brute bulk of limb, or boundless savagery  
 Appal me from the quest."

"Nay, Prince," she cried,  
 "God wot, I never look'd upon the face,  
 Seeing he never rides abroad by day; 1300  
 But watch'd him have I like a phantom pass  
 Chilling the night: nor have I heard the voice.  
 Always he made his mouthpiece of a page  
 Who came and went, and still reported him  
 As closing in himself the strength of ten,  
 And when his anger tare him, massacring  
 Man, woman, lad and girl—yea, the soft babe!  
 Some hold that he hath swallow'd infant flesh,  
 Monster! O Prince, I went for Lancelot first,  
 The quest is Lancelot's: give him back the shield." 1310

Said Gareth laughing, " An he fight for this,  
Belike he wins it as the better man:  
Thus—and not else!"

But Lancelot on him urged 1314  
All the devisings of their chivalry  
When one might meet a mightier than himself;  
How best to manage horse, lance, sword and shield,  
And so fill up the gap where force might fail / 318  
With skill and fineness. Instant were his words.

Then Gareth, " Here be rules. I know but one—  
To dash against mine enemy and to win. 1320  
Yet have I watch'd thee victor in the joust,  
And seen thy way." " Heaven help thee," sigh'd Lynette.

Then for a space, and under cloud that grew  
To thunder-gloom palling all stars, they rode  
In converse till she made her palfrey halt,  
Lifted an arm, and softly whisper'd, " There."  
And all the three were silent seeing, pitch'd  
Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,  
A huge pavilion like a mountain peak  
Sunder the gloomy crimson on the marge, 1330  
Black, with black banner, and a long black horn  
Beside it hanging; which Sir Gareth graspt,  
And so, before the two could hinder him,  
Sent all his heart and breath thro' all the horn.  
Echo'd the walls; a light twinkled; anon  
Came lights and lights, and once again he blew;  
Whereon were hollow tramlings up and down  
And muffled voices heard, and shadows past;  
Till high above him, circled with her maids,  
The Lady Lyonors at a window stood, 1340  
Beautiful among lights, and waving to him

343) White hands, and courtesy; but when the Prince  
 35) Three times had blown—after long hush—at last—  
 The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,  
 Thro' those black foldings, that which housed therein.  
 High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack arms,  
 With white breast-bone, and barren ribs of Death,  
 And crown'd with fleshless laughter—some ten steps—  
 In the half-light—thro' the dim dawn—advanced  
 The monster, and then paused, and spake no word. 1350

But Gareth spake and all indignantly,  
 “ Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength of ten,  
 Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God hath given,  
 But must, to make the terror of thee more,  
 Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries  
 Of that which Life hath done with, and the clod,  
 Less dull than thou, will hide with mantling flowers  
 As if for pity? ” But he spake no word;  
 Which set the horror higher: a maiden swoon'd;  
 The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and wept, 1360  
 As doom'd to be the bride of Night and Death;  
 Sir Gareth's head prickled beneath his helm; 1362  
 And ev'n Sir Lancelot thro' his warm blood felt 1363  
 Ice strike, and all that mark'd him were aghast. 1364

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely neigh'd,  
 And Death's dark war-horse bounded forward with him.  
 Then those that did not blink with terror, saw  
 That Death was cast to ground, and slowly rose.  
 But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the skull.  
 Half fell to right and half to left and lay. 1370  
 Then with a stronger buffet he clove the helm  
 As thoroughly as the skull; and out from this  
 Issued the bright face of a blooming boy- 1373  
 Fresh as a flower new-born, and crying, “ Knight,

Slay me not: my three brethren bad me do it,  
 To make a horror all about the house,  
 And stay the world from Lady Lyonors.  
 They never dream'd the passes would be past."  
 Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one  
 Not many a moon his younger, " My fair child, 1380  
 What madness made thee challenge the chief knight  
 Of Arthur's hall?" " Fair Sir, they bad me do it.  
 They hate the King, and Lancelot, the King's friend,  
 They hoped to slay him somewhere on the stream,  
 They never dream'd the passes could be past."

Then sprang the happier day from underground; 1386  
 And Lady Lyonors and her house, with dance  
 And revel and song, made merry over Death,  
 As being after all their foolish fears 1389  
 And horrors only proven a blooming boy. — 1390  
 So large mirth lived and Gareth won the quest.

And he that told the tale in older times 1392  
 Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,  
 But he, that told it later, says Lynette.

## LANCELOT AND ELAINE IN THE ROMANCES.

THE name Lancelot du Lac is distinctively French, and it is to the genius of Walter Map that we probably owe the creation of this knight, generous and brave, whose passions are made more human by contrast with the almost divine character of Arthur. He is the embodiment of the twelfth-century ideal of knighthood.

According to Map, whose version Malory has followed closely, Lancelot is the son of Ban, King of Brittany, who, being attacked by enemies, is obliged to flee from his castle with his wife and infant son Lancelot. In the flight, he dies, and the queen, leaving for a moment her infant while she cares for her dying husband, returns to find the child in the arms of the fairy Vivien, who on the approach of the queen suddenly springs with it into a deep lake and disappears. Hence the child is called Lancelot du Lac. When Lancelot is grown to manhood, Vivien takes him to Arthur's court that he may be made a knight. Here Lancelot meets Guinevere, whose beauty fascinates him, while she is at once impressed with his manly strength and chivalrous courtesy. Thus begins that fatal love which was destined to blight their own happiness and draw into common ruin with them the noble and confiding king.

Malory tells us of two different Elaines. The first is the daughter of King Pelles. There has been a prophecy that she shall marry Lancelot; but although King Pelles urges it strongly, Lancelot refuses the marriage, and in order to accomplish it magic is resorted to, and Lancelot, unknowing, marries Elaine. Their son is the famous Sir Galahad the pure, to whom alone of Arthur's knights is it

granted to see the Holy Grail unveiled. This Elaine dies soon, and Lancelot is released from the enchantment. This episode Tennyson does not mention at all in his "Idylls."

The second Elaine is Elaine la Blanche, the lily maid of Astolat, as Tennyson calls her. To tell her story according to the romance would be merely to give a condensed prose form of Tennyson's exquisite poem, for the poet has reproduced the romance with most exact fidelity, even using the precise words oftentimes. In only three trifling points does he vary from it. Malory has Sir Tirre (Torre) write the letter for Elaine, Sir Lavaine having gone with Lancelot as squire. He has the letter placed in her right hand instead of in the left, and he has Guinevere, not Arthur, first discover the letter.

The story of the diamonds offered as prizes at the jousts, and the scene where Queen Guinevere in jealous anger throws the diamonds from the window, are not to be found in the romance. The old dumb servitor does not appear in Malory.

## LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

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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  
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,  
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  
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,  
 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  
 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."

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  
 Hereafter, which God hinder." Thus he spoke:  
 And eight years past, eight jousts had been, and still  
 Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,  
 With purpose to present them to the Queen,  
 When all were won; but meaning all at once  
 To snare her royal fancy with a boon  
 Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

70

Now for the central diamond and the last  
 And largest, Arthur, holding then his court  
 Hard on the river nigh the place which now  
 Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust  
 At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh  
 Spake (for she had been sick) to Guinevere,  
 "Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move  
 To these fair jousts?" "Yea, lord," she said, "ye know  
 it."

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.  
 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  
 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,

90

And lets me from the saddle ;” and the King  
 Glanced first at him, then her, and went his way.  
 No sooner gone than suddenly she began :

“ To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame !  
 Why go ye not to these fair jousts ? the knights  
 Are half of them our enemies, and the crowd  
 Will murmur, ‘ Lo the shameless ones, who take 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  
 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  
 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,  
 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 has 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.  
 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,  
 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 so'er he seem,  
 No keener hunter after glory breathes.  
 He loves it in his knights more than himself:  
 They prove to him his work: win and return."

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,  
 Wroth at himself. Not willing to be known,  
 He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare, 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  
 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  
 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 the chief of those,  
 After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls.  
 Him have I seen : the rest, his Table Round,  
 Known as they are, to me they are unknown."

Then 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;  
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?  
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."

200

"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  
That some one put this diamond in her hand,  
And that it was too slippery to be held,  
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,  
The castle-well, belike; and then I said  
That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it  
(But all was jest and joke among ourselves)  
Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.  
But, father, give me leave, an if he will,  
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:  
Win shall I not, but do my best to win:  
Young as I am, yet would I do my best."

210

220

"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:  
 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:

“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,  
 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  
 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.  
 However marr'd, of more than twice her years,  
 Seam'd with an ancient swordcut on the cheek,

250

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  
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  
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  
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,  
 Carved of one emerald center'd in a sun  
 Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he breathed;  
 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  
 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  
 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,  
 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,  
 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  
 The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.  
 Half-envious 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,  
 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,  
 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;  
 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;  
 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,  
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;  
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,"  
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."

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  
 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  
 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  
 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,  
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  
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,  
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all  
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,  
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,  
And him that helms it, so they overbore  
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear  
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a spear  
Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the head  
Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt, and remain'd.

480

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

490

His party,—tho' it seem'd half-miracle  
 To those he fought with,—drave his kith and kin,  
 And all the Table Round that held the lists,  
 Back to the barrier; then the trumpets blew  
 Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the sleeve  
 Of scarlet, and the pearls; and all the knights, 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."

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  
 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,  
 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.  
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,  
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 might and flourish of his May,  
Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong,  
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint  
And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal  
Sir Modred’s brother, and the child of Lot,  
Nor often loyal to his word, and now  
Wroth that the King’s command to sally forth  
In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave  
The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings. 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,  
 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  
 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 :  
 " 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  
 Much needs have moved my laughter : now remains  
 But little cause for laughter : his own kin—

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

600

"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  
 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  
 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;  
 Thereon she smote her hand; wellnigh 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  
 The victor, but had ridd'n a random round  
 To seek him, and had wearied of the search.

620

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 comè 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,  
 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  
 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,  
 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!  
 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,  
 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  
 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,  
 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  
 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,  
 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  
 Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old dame  
 Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news.  
 She, that had heard the noise of it before,  
 But sorrowing Lancelot should have 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:  
 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  
 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.

730

But far away the maid in Astolat,  
 Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept  
 The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,  
 Crept to her father, while he mused alone,  
 Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said,  
 "Father, you call me wilful, and the fault  
 Is yours who let me have my will, and now,  
 Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?"  
 "Nay," said he, "surely." "Wherefore, let me hence,"  
 She answer'd, "and find out our dear Lavaine."  
 "Ye will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine:  
 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, whereso'er he be,  
 And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,  
 Lest I be found as faithless in the quest  
 As yon proud Prince who left the quest to me.  
 Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams  
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,  
 Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden's aid.  
 The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,

740

750

760

My father, to be sweet and serviceable  
 To noble knights in sickness, as ye know,  
 When these have worn their tokens: let me hence  
 I pray you." Then her father nodding said,  
 "Ay, ay, the diamond: wit ye well, my child,  
 Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,  
 Being our greatest: yea, and you must give it—  
 And sure I think this fruit is hung too high  
 For any mouth to gape for save a queen's— 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,  
 "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  
 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,

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.  
 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,  
 "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.  
 "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 perplex't in mind,  
 And being weak in body said no more;  
 But did not love the color; woman's love,  
 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,  
 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 forebore him ever, being to him  
 Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,  
 Milder than any mother to a sick child,  
 And never woman yet, since man's first fall,  
 Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love  
 Upbore her; till the hermit, 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  
 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,  
 His honor rooted in dishonor stood,  
 And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

870

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made  
 Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.  
 These, as but born of sickness, could not live:  
 For when the blood ran lustier in him again,  
 Full often the bright image of one face,  
 Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,  
 Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.  
 Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace  
 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  
 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,  
 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,  
 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."

880

890

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."

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,  
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 must I die for want of one bold word."

"Speak: that I live to hear," he said, "is yours."

Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:

"I have gone mad. I love you: let me die."

"Ah, sister," 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,  
 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:  
 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,  
 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.  
 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  
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  
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  
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.

"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  
 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,  
 Speaking a still good-morrow with her eyes.  
 At last she said, "Sweet brothers, yesternight  
 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 had the poplar on it: there ye fixt  
 Your limit, oft returning with the tide.  
 And yet I cried because ye would not pass  
 Beyond it, and far up the shining flood  
 Until we found the palace of the King.  
 And yet ye would not; but this night I 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,  
 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  
 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."

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:  
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. 108  
He makes no friend who never made a foe.  
But now it is my glory to have loved  
One peerless, without stain: so let me pass,  
My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,  
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best  
And greatest, 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,  
 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,  
 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  
 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.  
 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.  
 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 forever," and again  
 "Farewell, sweet sister," parted all in tears.  
 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  
 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 wellnigh kiss'd her feet  
 For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye  
 The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,  
 In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls,  
 And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on' the summer side, 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  
 An armlet 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  
 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  
 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  
 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!  
 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,  
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.

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,  
“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.  
 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,  
 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  
 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.  
 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;  
 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;  
 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,  
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.  
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  
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  
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,  
 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,  
 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."

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—  
 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—  
 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?  
 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,  
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills.”

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

## GUINEVERE IN THE ROMANCE.

It is through the scandalous tale-bearing of Sir Modred that the love which Lancelot bears the queen is finally brought to King Arthur's notice. Reluctantly he allows a trap to be set for the lovers by Modred; but when with eleven knights Modred comes to summon Lancelot to come before King Arthur to answer for his treachery, he takes vengeance upon them, and Modred is the only one left to run away to the king with the tale.

Now, in truth, the rage of the king at this confirmation of his suspicions is uncontrollable. His queen, he insists, shall be burned to death; but Lancelot with many noble knights comes to rescue her, and carries her off to his castle of Joyous Gard. War ensues, and the king lays siege to the castle. In vain Lancelot humbles himself, sends Guinevere back to England, and offers what reparation he can to the outraged king. News from England of the treachery of Modred, whom he had left in charge of the kingdom, finally compels Arthur to raise the siege and return to England. Modred had not only usurped Arthur's throne, but had even insolently proposed marriage to Guinevere and attempted to carry her away by force. But the Tower of London, where she had fled for safety, proves too strong for him, and he is compelled to leave her there while he goes to meet Arthur in that "last sad battle of the west," in which both meet their fate. The queen takes refuge in Almesbury Convent.

It is to be noticed that in the romance Guinevere does not enter the convent until after Arthur's death, hence Arthur is not represented as seeing his queen after her con-

vent life begins. This episode, which forms the chief feature in the *Idyll*, was added by Tennyson.

As soon as Lancelot hears of Arthur's great peril, he hurries to England to assist his lord. But it is too late. The ruin he himself had begun is completed, and Arthur is dead. Leaving his followers, he attempts to seek out the queen. But Guinevere's heart is now broken and penitent. Arthur's death had touched her as his noble life never could. In the presence of her nuns she bids Lancelot farewell, and begs him to pray for her. And so they part.

Lancelot now retires to a monastery, and for six years remains there. One night there comes a vision to him, in which he is bidden to haste to Almesbury to Guinevere. He starts at once, but before he can reach her, Guinevere is dead. So her constant prayer that she might never again see Sir Lancelot with her mortal eyes is fulfilled. Lancelot leads her funeral to Glastonbury, where she is buried beside King Arthur. For six weeks Lancelot prays continually at their tomb. But release comes at last to the penitent soul. He is found one morning lying dead in his cell. The romance ends with the words—"And hee lay as hee had smiled."

## GUINEVERE.

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QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court, and sat  
There in the holy house at Almesbury  
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,  
A novice: one low light betwixt them burn'd  
Blurr'd by the creeping mist, for all abroad,  
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,  
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,  
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight  
Sir Modred; he that like a subtle beast  
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,  
Ready to spring, waiting a chance: for this  
He chill'd the popular praises of the King  
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;  
And tampered with the Lords of the White Horse,  
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left: and sought  
To make disruption in the Table Round  
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds  
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims  
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot.

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For thus it chanced one morn when all the court,  
Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd the may,  
Had been, their wont, a-Maying and return'd,  
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,  
Climb'd to the high top of the garden-wall

To spy some secret scandal if he might,  
 And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best  
 Enid, and lissome Vivien, of her court  
 The wiliest and the worst; and more than this  
 He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by 30  
 Spied where he couch'd, and as the gardener's hand  
 Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,  
 So from the high wall and the flowering grove  
 Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the heel,  
 And cast him as a worm upon the way;  
 But when he knew the Prince tho' marr'd with dust,  
 He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,  
 Made such excuses as he might, and these  
 Full knightly without scorn; for in those days  
 No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn; 40  
 But, if a man were halt or hunch'd, in him  
 By those whom God had made full-limb'd and tall,  
 Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,  
 And he was answer'd softly by the King  
 And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot help  
 To raise the Prince, who rising twice or thrice  
 Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled, and went:  
 But, ever after, the small violence done  
 Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,  
 As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long 50  
 A little bitter pool about a stone  
 On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told  
 This matter to the Queen, at first she laugh'd  
 Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,  
 Then shudder'd, as the village wife who cries  
 "I shudder, some one steps across my grave;"  
 Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed  
 She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,

Would track her guilt until he found, and hers  
 Would be for evermore a name of scorn. 60  
 Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,  
 Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,  
 Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye:  
 Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,  
 To help it from the death it cannot die,  
 And save it even in extremes, began  
 To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,  
 Beside the placid breathings of the King,  
 In the dead night, grim faces came and went  
 Before her, or a vague spiritual fear— 70  
 Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,  
 Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,  
 That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—  
 Held her awake: or if she slept, she dream'd  
 An awful dream; for then she seem'd to stand  
 On some vast plain before a setting sun,  
 And from the sun there swiftly made at her  
 A ghastly something, and its shadow flew  
 Before it, till it touch'd her, and she turn'd—  
 When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet, 80  
 And blackening, swallow'd all the land, and in it  
 Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.  
 And all this trouble did not pass but grew;  
 Till ev'n the clear face of the guileless King,  
 And trustful courtesies of household life,  
 Became her bane; and at the last she said,  
 "O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,  
 For if thou tarry we shall meet again,  
 And if we meet again, some evil chance  
 Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze 90  
 Before the people, and our lord the King."  
 And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd,  
 And still they met and met. Again she said,



"O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence."  
 And then they were agreed upon a night  
 (When the good King should not be there) to meet  
 And part forever. Passion-pale they met  
 And greeted: hands in hands, and eye to eye,  
 Low on the border of her couch they sat  
 Stammering and staring: it was their last hour, 100  
 A madness of farewells. And Modred brought  
 His creatures to the basement of the tower  
 For testimony; and crying with full voice  
 "Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last," aroused  
 Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike  
 Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong, and he fell  
 Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bare him off,  
 And all was still: then she, "The end is come,  
 And I am shamed forever;" and he said:  
 "Mine be the shame; mine was the sin: but rise, 110  
 And fly to my strong castle overseas:  
 There will I hide thee till my life shall end,  
 There hold thee with my life against the world."  
 She answer'd: "Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?  
 Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.  
 Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself!  
 Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou  
 Unwedded: yet rise now, and let us fly,  
 For I will draw me into sanctuary,  
 And bide my doom." So Lancelot got her horse, 120  
 Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,  
 And then they rode to the divided way,  
 There kiss'd, and parted weeping: for he past,  
 Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,  
 Back to his land; but she to Almesbury  
 Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,  
 And heard the spirits of the waste and weald  
 Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan:

And in herself she moan'd " Too late, too late !"  
 Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn, 130  
 A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,  
 Croak'd, and she thought, " He spies a field of death ;  
 For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,  
 Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court,  
 Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land."

And when she came to Almesbury she spake  
 There to the nuns, and said, " Mine enemies  
 Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,  
 Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask  
 Her name to whom ye yield it, till her time 140  
 To tell you : " and her beauty, grace and power,  
 Wrought as a charm upon them, and they spared  
 To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode  
 For many a week, unknown, among the nuns ;  
 Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name, nor sought,  
 Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for shrift,  
 But communed only with the little maid,  
 Who pleased her with a babbling heedlessness  
 Which often lured her from herself ; but now,  
 This night, a rumor wildly blown about 150  
 Came, that Sir Modred had usurp'd the realm,  
 And leagued him with the heathen, while the King  
 Was waging war on Lancelot : then she thought,  
 " With what a hate the people and the King  
 Must hate me," and bow'd down upon her hands  
 Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd  
 No silence, brake it, uttering " Late ! so late !  
 What hour, I wonder, now ? " and when she drew  
 No answer, by and by began to hum  
 An air the nuns had taught her ; " Late, so late ! " 160

Which when she heard, the Queen look'd up, and said,  
 "O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,  
 Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep."  
 Whereat full willingly sang the little maid:

"Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!  
 Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.  
 Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"No light had we: for that we do repent;  
 And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.  
 Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

170

"No light: so late! and dark and chill the night!  
 O let us in, that we may find the light!  
 Too late, too late: ye cannot enter now.

"Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?  
 O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!  
 No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now."

So sang the novice, while full passionately,  
 Her head upon her hands, remembering  
 Her thought when first she came, wept the sad Queen.  
 Then said the little novice prattling to her:

180

"O pray you, noble lady, weep no more;  
 But let my words, the words of one so small,  
 Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,  
 And if I do not there is penance given—  
 Comfort your sorrows; for they do not flow  
 From evil done; right sure am I of that,  
 Who see your tender grace and stateliness.  
 But weigh your sorrows with our lord the King's,  
 And weighing find them less; for gone is he

To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot there, 190  
 Round that strong castle where he holds the Queen;  
 And Modred whom he left in charge of all,  
 The traitor— Ah sweet lady, the King's grief  
 For his own self, and his own Queen, and realm,  
 Must needs be thrice as great as any of ours.  
 For me, I thank the saints, I am not great;  
 For if there ever come a grief to me  
 I cry my cry in silence, and have done.  
 None knows it, and my tears have brought me good:  
 But even were the griefs of little ones 200  
 As great as those of great ones, yet this grief  
 Is added to the griefs the great must bear,  
 That howsoever much they may desire  
 Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud:  
 As even here they talk at Almesbury  
 About the good King and his wicked Queen,  
 And were I such a King with such a Queen,  
 Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,  
 But were I such a King, it could not be."

Then to her own sad heart mutter'd the Queen, 210  
 "Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?"  
 But openly she answer'd, "Must not I,  
 If this false traitor have displaced his lord,  
 Grieve with the common grief of all the realm?"

"Yea," said the maid, "this is all woman's grief,  
 That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life  
 Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round  
 Which good King Arthur founded, years ago,  
 With signs and miracles and wonders, there  
 At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen." 220

Then thought the Queen within herself again,  
 "Will the child kill me with her foolish prate?"

But openly she spake and said to her,  
 " O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,  
 What canst thou know of Kings and Tables Round,  
 Or what of signs and wonders, but the signs  
 And simple miracles of thy nunnery? "

To whom the little novice garrulously,  
 " Yea, but I know: the land was full of signs  
 And wonders ere the coming of the Queen. 230  
 So said my father, and himself was knight  
 Of the great Table—at the founding of it;  
 And rode thereto from Lyonesse, and he said  
 That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain  
 After the sunset, down the coast, he heard  
 Strange music, and he paused, and turning—there,  
 All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,  
 Each with a beacon-star upon his head,  
 And with a wild sea-light about his feet,  
 He saw them—headland after headland flame 240  
 Far on into the rich heart of the west:  
 And in the light the white mermaiden swam,  
 And strong man-breasted things stood from the sea,  
 And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the land,  
 To which the little elves of chasm and cleft  
 Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.  
 So said my father—yea, and furthermore,  
 Next morning, while he past the dim-lit woods,  
 Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy  
 Come dashing down on a tall wayside flower, 250  
 That shook beneath them, as the thistle shakes  
 When three gray linnets wrangle for the seed:  
 And still at evenings on before his horse  
 The flickering fairy-circle wheel'd and broke  
 Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and broke  
 Flying, for all the land was full of life.

And when at last he came to Camelot,  
 A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand  
 Swung round the lighted lantern of the hall;  
 And in the hall itself was such a feast 260  
 As never man had dream'd; for every knight  
 Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served  
 By hands unseen; and even as he said  
 Down in the cellars merry bloated things  
 Shoulder'd the spigot, straddling on the butts  
 While the wine ran: so glad were spirits and men  
 Before the coming of the sinful Queen."

Then spake the Queen and somewhat bitterly,  
 "Were they so glad? ill prophets were they all,  
 Spirits and men: could none of them foresee, 270  
 Not even thy wise father with his signs  
 And wonders, what has fall'n upon the realm?"

To whom the novice garrulously again,  
 "Yea, one, a bard; of whom my father said,  
 Full many a noble war-song had he sung,  
 Ev'n in the presence of an enemy's fleet,  
 Between the steep cliff and the coming wave;  
 And many a mystic lay of life and death  
 Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops, 280  
 When round him bent the spirits of the hills  
 With all their dewy hair blown back like flame:  
 So said my father—and that night the bard  
 Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the King  
 As well-nigh more than man, and rail'd at those  
 Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois:  
 For there was no man knew from whence he came;  
 But after tempest, when the long wave broke  
 All down the thundering shores of Bude and Bos,  
 There came a day as still as heaven, and then

They found a naked child upon the sands  
 Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea;  
 And that was Arthur; and they foster'd him  
 Till he by miracle was approven King:  
 And that his grave should be a mystery  
 From all men, like his birth; and could he find  
 A woman in her womanhood as great  
 As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,  
 The twain together well might change the world.  
 But even in the middle of his song  
 He falter'd, and his hand fell from the harp, 300  
 And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would have fall'n,  
 But that they stay'd him up; nor would he tell  
 His vision; but what doubt that he foresaw  
 This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?"

Then thought the Queen, "Lo! they have set her on  
 Our simple-seeming Abbess and her nuns,  
 To play upon me," and bow'd her head nor spake.  
 Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd hands,  
 Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,  
 Said the good nuns would check her gadding tongue 310  
 Full often, "and, sweet lady, if I seem  
 To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,  
 Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales  
 Which my good father told me, check me too,  
 Nor let me shame my father's memory, one  
 Of noblest manners, tho' himself would say  
 Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he died,  
 Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers back,  
 And left me; but of others who remain,  
 And of the two first-famed for courtesy— 320  
 And pray you check me if I ask amiss—  
 But pray you, which had noblest, while you moved  
 Among them, Lancelot, or our lord the King?"

Then the pale Queen look'd up and answer'd her,  
 " Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,  
 Was gracious to all ladies, and the same  
 In open battle or the tilting-field  
 Forbore his own advantage, and the King  
 In open battle or the tilting-field  
 Forbore his own advantage, and these two 330  
 Were the most nobly-manner'd men of all ;  
 For manners are not idle, but the fruit  
 Of loyal nature, and of noble mind."

" Yea," said the maid, " be manners such fair fruit?  
 Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousand-fold  
 Less noble, being, as all rumor runs,  
 The most disloyal friend in all the world."

To which a mournful answer made the Queen :  
 " O closed about by narrowing nunnery-walls,  
 What knowest thou of the world, and all its lights 340  
 And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe?  
 If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,  
 Were for one hour less noble than himself,  
 Pray for him that he scape the doom of fire,  
 And weep for her who drew him to his doom."

" Yea," said the little novice, " I pray for both ;  
 But I should all as soon believe that his,  
 Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,  
 As I could think, sweet lady, yours would be  
 Such as they are, were you the sinful Queen." 350

So she, like many another babbler, hurt  
 Whom she would soothe, and harm'd where she would heal ;  
 For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat  
 Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who cried,  
 " Such as thou art be never maiden more



Forever! thou their tool, set on to plague  
 And play upon, and harry me, petty spy  
 And traitress." When that storm of anger brake  
 From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,  
 White as her veil, and stood before the Queen 360  
 As tremulously as foam upon the beach  
 Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,  
 And when the Queen had added, "Get thee hence,"  
 Fled frightened. Then that other left alone  
 Sigh'd, and began to gather heart again,  
 Saying in herself, "The simple, fearful child  
 Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful guilt,  
 Simpler than any child, betrays itself.  
 But help me, heaven, for surely I repent.  
 For what is true repentance but in thought— 370  
 Not ev'n in inmost thought to think again  
 The sins that made the past so pleasant to us:  
 And I have sworn never to see him more,  
 To see him more."

And ev'n in saying this,  
 Her memory from old habit of the mind  
 Went slipping back upon the golden days  
 In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,  
 Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,  
 Ambassador, to lead her to his lord  
 Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead 380  
 Of his and her retinue moving, they,  
 Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love  
 And sport and tilts and pleasure (for the time  
 Was Maytime, and as yet no sin was dream'd),  
 Rode under groves that look'd a paradise  
 Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth  
 That seem'd the heavens upbreking thro' the earth,  
 And on from hill to hill, and every day

Beheld at noon in some delicious dale  
 The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised 390  
 For brief repast or afternoon repose  
 By couriers gone before; and on again,  
 Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw  
 The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,  
 That crown'd the state pavilion of the King,  
 Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such a trance,  
 And moving thro' the past unconsciously,  
 Came to that point where first she saw the King  
 Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to find 400  
 Her journey done, glanced at him, thought him cold,  
 High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not like him,  
 "Not like my Lancelot"—while she brooded thus  
 And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,  
 There rode an armed warrior to the doors.  
 A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery ran,  
 Then on a sudden a cry, "The King!" She sat  
 Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed feet  
 Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors  
 Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell, 410  
 And grovell'd with her face against the floor:  
 There with her milk-white arms and shadowy hair  
 She made her face a darkness from the King:  
 And in the darkness heard his armed feet  
 Pause by her; then came silence, then a voice,  
 Monotonous and hollow like a Ghost's  
 Denouncing judgment, but, tho' changed, the King's:

"Liest thou here so low, the child of one  
 I honor'd, happy, dead before thy shame?  
 Well is it that no child is born of thee. 420  
 The children born of thee are sword and fire,

Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,  
 The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts  
 Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea;  
 Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,  
 The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,  
 Have everywhere about this land of Christ  
 In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.  
 And knowest thou now from whence I come—from him.  
 From waging bitter war with him: and he, 430  
 That did not shun to smite me in worse way,  
 Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,  
 He spared to lift his hand against the King  
 Who made him knight: but many a knight was slain;  
 And many more, and all his kith and kin  
 Clave to him, and abode in his own land.  
 And many more when Modred raised revolt,  
 Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave  
 To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.  
 And of this remnant will I leave a part, 440  
 True men who love me still, for whom I live,  
 To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,  
 Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.  
 Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my death.  
 Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies  
 Have err'd not, that I march to meet my doom.  
 Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,  
 That I the King should greatly care to live;  
 For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.  
 Bear with me for the last time while I show, 450  
 Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast sinn'd.  
 For when the Roman left us, and their law  
 Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways  
 Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a deed  
 Of prowess done redress'd a random wrong.  
 But I was first of all the kings who drew

The knighthood-errant of this realm and all  
 The realms together under me, their Head,  
 In that fair Order of my Table Round,  
 A glorious company, the flower of men, 460  
 To serve as model for the mighty world,  
 And be the fair beginning of a time.

I made them lay their hands in mine and swear  
 To reverence the King, as if he were  
 Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,  
 To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,  
 To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,  
 To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,  
 To honor his own word as if his God's,  
 To lead sweet lives in purest chastity, 470

To love one maiden only, cleave to her,  
 And worship her by years of noble deeds,  
 Until they won her; for indeed I knew  
 Of no more subtle master under heaven  
 Than is the maiden passion for a maid,  
 Not only to keep down the base in man,  
 But teach high thought, and amiable words  
 And courtliness, and the desire of fame,  
 And love of truth, and all that makes a man.

And all this throve before I wedded thee, 480  
 Believing, 'Lo mine helpmate, one to feel  
 My purpose and rejoicing in my joy.'

Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;  
 Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;  
 Then others, following these my mightiest knights,  
 And drawing foul ensample from fair names,  
 Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite  
 Of all my heart had destined did obtain,  
 And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine  
 I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong, 490  
 Not greatly care to lose; but rather think

How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,  
 To sit once more within his lonely hall,  
 And miss the wonted number of my knights,  
 And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds  
 As in the golden days before thy sin.  
 For which of us, who might be left, could speak  
 Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?  
 And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk  
 Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,      500  
 And I should evermore be vext with thee  
 In hanging robe or vacant ornament,  
 Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.  
 For think not, tho' thou wouldst not love thy lord,  
 Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.  
 I am not made of so slight elements.  
 Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.  
 I hold that man the worst of public foes  
 Who either for his own or children's sake,  
 To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife      510  
 Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house:  
 For being thro' his cowardice allow'd  
 Her station, taken everywhere for pure,  
 She like a new disease, unknown to men,  
 Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,  
 Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps  
 The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse  
 With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.  
 Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!  
 Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart      520  
 Than thou reseated in thy place of light,  
 The mockery of my people, and their bane."

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch  
 Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.  
 Far off a solitary trumpet blew.

Then waiting by the doors the warhorse neigh'd  
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

“ Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes;  
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,  
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die 530  
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,  
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.  
The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,  
The doom of treason and the flaming death,  
(When first I learnt thee hidden here) is past.  
The pang—which while I weigh'd thy heart with one  
Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,  
Made my tears burn—is also past, in part.  
And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,  
Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God 540  
Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.  
But how to take last leave of all I loved?  
O golden hair, with which I used to play  
Not knowing. O imperial-moulded form,  
And beauty such as never woman wore,  
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—  
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,  
But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's.  
I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,  
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine own flesh, 550  
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries  
' I loathe thee: ' yet not less, O Guinevere,  
For I was ever virgin save for thee,  
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life  
So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.  
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.  
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,  
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,  
Hereafter in that world where all are pure

We two may meet before high God, and thou 560  
 Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know  
 I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,  
 Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,  
 I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.  
 Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow :  
 They summon me their King to lead mine hosts  
 Far down to that great battle in the west,  
 Where I must strike against the man they call  
 My sister's son—no kin of mine, who leagues  
 With Lords of the White Horse, heathen, and knights, 570  
 Traitors—and strike him dead, and meet myself  
 Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.  
 And thou remaining here wilt learn the event ;  
 But hither shall I never come again,  
 Never lie by thy side ; see thee no more—  
 Farewell ! ”

And while she grovell'd at his feet,  
 She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,  
 And in the darkness o'er her fallen head,  
 Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone, 580  
 Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found  
 The casement : “ peradventure,” so she thought,  
 “ If I might see his face, and not be seen.”  
 And lo, he sat on horseback at the door !  
 And near him the sad nuns with each a light  
 Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,  
 To guard and foster her for evermore.  
 And while he spake to these his helm was lower'd,  
 To which for crest the golden dragon clung  
 Of Britain ; so she did not see the face, 590  
 Which then was an angel's, but she saw,  
 Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,

The Dragon of the great Pendragonship  
 Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.  
 And even then he turn'd; and more and more  
 The moony vapor rolling round the King,  
 Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,  
 Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray  
 And grayer, till himself became as mist  
 Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

600

Then she stretch'd out her arms and cried aloud  
 "O Arthur!" there her voice brake suddenly,  
 Then—as a stream that spouting from a cliff  
 Fails in mid-air, but gathering at the base  
 Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale—  
 Went on in passionate utterance:

"Gone—my lord!

Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain!  
 And he forgave me, and I could not speak.  
 Farewell? I should have answer'd his farewell.  
 His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,  
 My own true lord! how dare I call him mine?  
 The shadow of another cleaves to me,  
 And makes me one pollution: he, the King,  
 Call'd me polluted: shall I kill myself?  
 What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,  
 If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;  
 No, nor by living can I live it down.

610

The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,  
 The months will add themselves and make the years,  
 The years will roll into the centuries,  
 And mine will ever be a name of scorn.  
 I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.

620

Let the world be; that is but of the world—  
 What else? what hope? I think there was a hope,  
 Except he mock'd me when he spake of hope;



His hope he call'd it; but he never mocks,  
 For mockery is the fume of little hearts.  
 And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven  
 My wickedness to him, and let me hope  
 That in mine own heart I can live down sin 630  
 And be his mate hereafter in the heavens  
 Before high God. Ah great and gentle lord,  
 Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint  
 Among his warring senses, to thy knights—  
 To whom my false voluptuous pride, that took  
 Full easily all impressions from below,  
 Would not look up, or half-despised the height  
 To which I would not or I could not climb—  
 I thought I could not breathe in that fine air,  
 That pure severity of perfect light— 640  
 I yearned for warmth and color which I found  
 In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou art,  
 Thou art the highest and most human too,  
 Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none  
 Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?  
 Now—ere he goes to the great Battle? none:  
 Myself must tell him in that purer life,  
 But now it were too daring. Ah my God,  
 What might I not have made of thy fair world,  
 Had I but loved thy highest creature here? 650  
 It was my duty to have loved the highest:  
 It surely was my profit had I known:  
 It would have been my pleasure had I seen.  
 We needs must love the highest when we see it,  
 Not Lancelot, nor another."

Here her hand  
 Grasp'd, made her vail her eyes: she look'd and saw  
 The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to her,  
 " Yea, little maid, for am I not forgiven? "

Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns  
 All round her, weeping; and her heart was loosed 660  
 Within her, and she wept with these and said,

“Ye know me then, that wicked one who broke  
 The vast design and purpose of the King.  
 O shut me round with narrowing nunnery-walls,  
 Meek maidens, from the voices crying ‘shame.’  
 I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.  
 Let no one dream but that he loves me still.  
 So let me, if you do not shudder at me,  
 Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;  
 Wear black and white, and be a nun like you, 670  
 Fast with your fasts, not feasting with your feasts;  
 Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at your joys,  
 But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;  
 Pray and be pray’d for; lie before your shrines;  
 Do each low office of your holy house;  
 Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole  
 To poor sick people, richer in His eyes  
 Who ransom’d us, and haler too than I;  
 And treat their loathsome hurts and heal mine own;  
 And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer 680  
 The sombre close of that voluptuous day,  
 Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King.”

She said: they took her to themselves: and she,  
 Still hoping, fearing, “is it yet too late?”  
 Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess died.  
 Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,  
 And for the power of ministration in her,  
 And likewise for the high rank she had borne,  
 Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess, lived  
 For three brief years, and there, an Abbess, past 690  
 To where beyond these voices there is péace.

## THE PASSING OF ARTHUR IN THE ROMANCE.

WHEN Arthur goes to besiege Lancelot in his castle of Joyous Gard, he leaves his nephew Modred in charge of the kingdom in his absence. Modred forges letters telling of the death of Arthur in battle, and has himself crowned king in his place. His attempt to force Guinevere to marry him is frustrated by her flight to the Tower of London, which she fortifies against him. Upon news of this, Arthur returns to England and is met at Dover by Modred with a large army of Arthur's knights and barons, whom he has attached to himself by lavish promises. A battle is fought in which the rebels are driven back. Arthur drives Modred from city to city, until he finally forces him to meet him in open battle at Camlan in Lyonesse. From this point the incidents of the poem are almost identical with those of the romance, Tennyson having adopted Malory's very words at times.

It is interesting to compare the character of the Arthur of the romance with that of the Arthur of the "Idylls." The romance makes him principally the king and warrior. It is the royal and warlike traits which are especially emphasized. He is haughty, imperious, kingly in every word and deed. His life as king begins with a proud defiance to Rome, and his last words are an imperious command to Sir Bedivere. But on the other hand, he is the ideal knight of that chivalrous age, so that his kingliness never verges into tyranny. He is a chivalrous king, stanch in his fidelity to lady and friend, generous to friend and foe, unyielding in his hatred of sin and wrong. Yet he has the faults of the age of chivalry as well as its virtues. He is, in short, the true representative of his time, a human being with the honest failings and noble aspirations of other sinning mortals.

## THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

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THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,  
First made and latest left of all the knights,  
Told, when the man was no more than a voice  
In the white winter of his age, to those  
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other minds.

For on their march to westward, Bedivere,  
Who slowly paced among the slumbering host,  
Heard in his tent the moanings of the King:

“ I found Him in the shining of the stars,  
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His fields,  
But in His ways with men I find Him not. 10  
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.  
O me! for why is all around us here  
As if some lesser god had made the world,  
But had not force to shape it as he would,  
Till the High God behold it from beyond,  
And enter it, and make it beautiful?  
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,  
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,  
And have not power to see it as it is: 20  
Perchance, because we see not to the close;—  
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,  
And have but stricken with the sword in vain;  
And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend  
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm

Reels back into the beast, and is no more.  
 My God, thou hast forgotten me in my death:  
 Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall not die.”

Then, ere that last weird battle in the west,  
 There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain kill'd 30  
 In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown  
 Along a wandering wind, and past his ear  
 Went shrilling, “Hollow, hollow all delight!  
 Hail, King! to-morrow thou shalt pass away.  
 Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee.  
 And I am blown along a wandering wind,  
 And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight.”  
 And fainter onward, like wild birds that change  
 Their season in the night and wail their way  
 From cloud to cloud, down the long wind the dream 40  
 Shrill'd; but in going mingled with dim cries  
 Far in the moonlit haze among the hills,  
 As of some lonely city sack'd by night,  
 When all is lost, and wife and child with wail  
 Pass to new lords; and Arthur woke and call'd,  
 “Who spake? A dream. O light upon the wind,  
 Thine, Gawain, was the voice—are these dim cries  
 Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste and wild  
 Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?”

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and spake: 50  
 “O me, my King, let pass whatever will,  
 Elves, and the harmless glamour of the field;  
 But in their stead thy name and glory cling  
 To all high places like a golden cloud  
 Forever: but as yet thou shalt not pass.  
 Light was Gawain in life, and light in death  
 Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man;  
 And care not thou for dreams from him, but rise—

I hear the steps of Modred in the west,  
 And with him many of thy people, and knights 60  
 Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but grosser grown  
 Than heathen, spitting at their vows and thee.  
 Right well in heart they know thee for the King.  
 Arise, go forth and conquer as of old."

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:  
 "Far other is this battle in the west  
 Whereto we move, than where we strove in youth,  
 And brake the petty kings, and fought with Rome,  
 Or thrust the heathen from the Roman wall,  
 And shook him thro' the north. Ill doom is mine 70  
 To war against my people and my knights.  
 The king who fights his people fights himself.  
 And they my knights, who loved me once, the stroke  
 That strikes them dead is as my death to me.  
 Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way  
 Thro' this blind haze, which ever since I saw  
 One lying in the dust at Almesbury,  
 Hath folded in the passes of the world."

Then rose the King and moved his host by night,  
 And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by league, 80  
 Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse—  
 A land of old upheaven from the abyss  
 By fire, to sink into the abyss again;  
 Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,  
 And the long mountains ended in a coast  
 Of ever-shifting sand, and far away  
 The phantom circle of a moaning sea.  
 There the pursuer could pursue no more,  
 And he that fled no further fly the King;  
 And there, that day when the great light of heaven 90  
 Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,

On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed.  
 Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight  
 Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west.  
 A death-white mist slept over sand and sea:  
 Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew  
 Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold  
 With formless fear; and ev'n on Arthur fell  
 Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought,  
 For friend and foe were shadows in the mist, 100  
 And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew;  
 And some had visions out of golden youth,  
 And some beheld the faces of old ghosts  
 Look in upon the battle; and in the mist  
 Was many a noble deed, many a base,  
 And chance and craft and strength in single fights,  
 And ever and anon with host to host  
 Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,  
 Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash  
 Of battle-axes on shatter'd helms, and shrieks 110  
 After the Christ, of those who falling down  
 Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the mist;  
 And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,  
 Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blasphemies,  
 Sweat, writhings, anguish, laboring of the lungs  
 In that close mist, and cryings for the light,  
 Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.

Last, as by some one deathbed after wail  
 Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death  
 Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore, 120  
 Save for some whisper of the seething seas,  
 A dead hush fell; but when the dolorous day  
 Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came  
 A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew  
 The mist aside, and with that wind the tide

Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field  
 Of battle: but no man was moving there;  
 Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,  
 Nor yet of heathen; only the wan wave  
 Brake in among dead faces, to and fro 130  
 Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down  
 Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,  
 And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,  
 And rolling far along the gloomy shores  
 The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,  
 And whiter than the mist that all day long  
 Had held the field of battle was the King:

“Hearest thou this voice that shakes the world  
 And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move, 140  
 And beats upon the faces of the dead,  
 My dead, as tho' they had not died for me?—  
 O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fall'n  
 Confusion, till I know not what I am,  
 Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King.  
 Behold, I seem but King among the dead.”

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere: “My King,  
 King everywhere! and so the dead have kings,  
 There also will I worship thee as King.  
 Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live 150  
 Who love thee; but who hates thee, he that brought  
 The heathen back among us, yonder stands,  
 Modred, unharm'd, the traitor of thine house.”

Then spake the King: “My house hath been my doom,  
 But call not thou this traitor of my house  
 Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.



My house are rather those who sware my vows,  
 Yea, even while they brake them, own'd me King.  
 And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,  
 When all the purport of my throne hath fail'd, 160  
 That quick or dead thou holdest me for King.  
 King am I, whatsoever be their cry ;  
 And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see  
 Yet, ere I pass." And uttering this the King  
 Made at the man: then Modred smote his liege  
 Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword  
 Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one blow,  
 Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,  
 Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd 170  
 Among the mountains by the winter sea ;  
 Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,  
 Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their lord,  
 King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,  
 The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,  
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,  
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,  
 That stood on a dark strait of barren land :  
 On one side lay the Ocean, and on one  
 Lay a great water, and the moon was full. 180

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :  
 " The sequel of to-day unsolders all  
 The goodliest fellowship of famous knights  
 Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep  
 They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we  
 Shall never more, at any future time,  
 Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,  
 Walking about the gardens and the halls  
 Of Camelot, as in the days that were.

I perish by this people which I made,—  
 Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again  
 To rule once more; but, let what will be, be,  
 I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm  
 That without help I cannot last till morn.  
 Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,  
 Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how  
 In those old days, one summer noon, an arm  
 Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,  
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
 Holding the sword—and how I row'd across  
 And took it, and have worn it, like a king;  
 And, wheresoever I am sung or told  
 In aftertime, this also shall be known:  
 But now delay not, take Excalibur,  
 And fling him far into the middle mere:  
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.

190

200

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:  
 "It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,  
 Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm—  
 A little thing may harm a wounded man:  
 Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,  
 Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

210

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept,  
 And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,  
 Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,  
 Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang  
 Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down  
 By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,  
 Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,  
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,

220

Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth  
 And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:  
 For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,  
 Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work  
 Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long  
 That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,  
 This way and that dividing the swift mind,  
 In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd  
 Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd  
 There in the many-knotted waterflags,  
 That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.  
 So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

230

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:  
 "Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?  
 What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
 "I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,  
 And the wild water lapping on the crag."

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:  
 "Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,  
 Not rendering true answer, as beseen'd  
 Thy fæalty, nor like a noble knight:  
 For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,  
 Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.  
 This is a shameful thing for men to lie.  
 Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,  
 As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing  
 I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

240

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time  
 Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,  
 Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;  
 But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,

250

How curiously and strangely chased, he smote  
His palms together, and he cried aloud :

“ And if indeed I cast the brand away,  
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,  
Should thus be lost forever from the earth,  
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.  
What good should follow this, if this were done? 260  
What harm, undone? Deep harm to disobey,  
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.  
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand  
An act unprofitable, against himself?  
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.  
What record, or what relic of my lord  
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath  
And rumors of a doubt? But were this kept,  
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,  
Some one might show it at a joust of arms, 270  
Saying, ‘ King Arthur’s sword, Excalibur,  
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.  
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps  
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.’  
So might some old man speak in the aftertime  
To all the people, winning reverence.  
But now much honor and much fame were lost.”

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,  
And hid Excalibur the second time,  
And so strode back slow to the wounded King. 280

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:  
“ What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?”

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
“ I heard the water lapping on the crag,  
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.”

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:

“ Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,  
 Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!  
 Authority forgets a dying king,  
 Laid widow'd of the power in his eye 290  
 That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,  
 For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,  
 In whom should meet the offices of all,  
 Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;  
 Either from lust of gold, or like a girl  
 Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.  
 Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,  
 And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:  
 But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,  
 I will arise and slay thee with my hands.” 300

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,  
 And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged  
 Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the sword,  
 And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand  
 Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,  
 And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,  
 Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,  
 Seen where the moving isles of winter shock  
 By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.  
 So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur: 310  
 But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm  
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
 And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him  
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere.  
 And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:

“ Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.  
 Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen? ”

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
 "Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems 320  
 Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,  
 Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,  
 Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,  
 So great a miracle as yonder hilt.  
 Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;  
 But when I look'd again, behold an arm,  
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
 That caught him by the hilt and brandish'd him  
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere."

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard: 330  
 "My end draws nigh; 't is time that I were gone.  
 Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,  
 And bear me to the margin; yet I fear  
 My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,  
 Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,  
 And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes  
 As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere  
 Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,  
 And would have spoken, but he found not words; 340  
 Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,  
 O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,  
 And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,  
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed  
 When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,  
 Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick, quick!  
 I fear it is too late, and I shall die."  
 But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,  
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd, 350

Larger than human on the frozen hills.  
 He heard the deep behind him, and a cry  
 Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.  
 Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves  
 And barren chasms, and all to left and right  
 The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based  
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang  
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—  
 And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,  
 And the long glories of the winter moon. 360

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,  
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,  
 Beneath them; and descending they were ware  
 That all the decks were dense with stately forms,  
 Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these  
 Three Queens with crowns of gold: and from them rose  
 A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,  
 And, as it were one voice, an agony  
 Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills  
 All night in a waste land, where no one comes, 370  
 Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, "Place me in the barge."  
 So to the barge they came. There those three Queens  
 Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.  
 But she, that rose the tallest of them all  
 And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,  
 And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,  
 And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,  
 And dropping bitter tears against a brow  
 Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white 380  
 And colorless, and like the wither'd moon  
 Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;  
 And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops

Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—  
 That made his forehead like a rising sun  
 High from the daïs-throne—were parch'd with dust;  
 Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,  
 Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.  
 So like a shatter'd column lay the King;  
 Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest, 390  
 From spur to plume a star of tournament,  
 Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged  
 Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:  
 " Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?  
 Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?  
 For now I see the true old times are dead,  
 When every morning brought a noble chance,  
 And every chance brought out a noble knight.  
 Such times have been not since the light that led 400  
 The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.  
 But now the whole Round Table is dissolved  
 Which was an image of the mighty world  
 And I, the last, go forth companionless,  
 And the days darken round me, and the years,  
 Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge:  
 " The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
 And God fulfils himself in many ways,  
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world. 410  
 Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?  
 I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
 May He within himself make pure! but thou,  
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer  
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice



Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
 For what are men better than sheep or goats  
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer 420  
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
 For so the whole round earth is every way  
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.  
 But now farewell. ~~X~~I am going a long way  
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go  
 (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)—  
 To the island-valley of Avilion;  
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
 Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies  
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns 430  
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,  
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail  
 Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan  
 That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,  
 Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood  
 With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere  
 Revolving many memories, till the hull  
 Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,  
 And on the mere the wailing died away. 440

But when that moan had past for evermore,  
 The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn  
 Amazed him, and he groan'd, "The King is gone."  
 And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,  
 "From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly clomb  
 The last hard footstep of that iron crag;  
 Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet, and cried,

“ He passes to be King among the dead,  
And after healing of his grievous wound 450  
He comes again; but—if he come no more—  
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black boat,  
Who shriek’d and wail’d, the three whereat we gazed  
On that high day, when, clothed with living light,  
They stood before his throne in silence, friends  
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need? ”

Then from the dawn it seem’d there came, but faint,  
As from beyond the limit of the world,  
Like the last echo born of a great cry,  
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice 460  
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb  
Ev’n to the highest he could climb, and saw,  
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,  
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,  
Down that long water opening on the deep  
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go  
From less to less and vanish into light.  
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

# NOTES.

## THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

Line 1. Cameliard is supposed to be Scotland.

4. The name Guinevere appears in many forms. Welsh bards call her Gwenhwyvar; Geoffrey of Monmouth calls her Guanhumara.

5. Brut (Brutus), Lear, and Cassibelan are the best known of the petty kings of Britain.

8. The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, who invaded Britain at this time, were the heathen host here referred to.

13. Aurelius is said to have been Uther's brother.

15. The use of "either" in this line is a common archaism. Note the large number used in this poem.

17. There were one hundred and fifty seats at the Round Table. One of these was called the Siege Perilous, because it swallowed up anyone daring to sit in it who was not pure in word, thought, and deed. Sir Galahad was the only one of the knights who could sit in it. In this line the expression "Table Round" is used to denote King Arthur's knights.

29. Popular traditions, whether true or not, relate that wolves have sometimes stolen children and cared for them as for their own young. Children thus reared, however, have never been known to arrive at maturity. Perhaps in this is the foundation for the old belief in the were-wolf. Compare the story of Romulus and Remus, or of Mowgli in the "Jungle Book."

34. Little-dale suggests this is probably a reference to Gildas, who says that the Britons wrote to the Roman senate: "The barbarians drive us into the sea; the sea throws us back on the barbarians; thus two modes of death await us—we are either slain or drowned."

36. Urien is called Rience in the first edition of the poem and in Malory. He was a king of North Wales. Malory tells us that he sent to Arthur insolently demanding his beard, to complete the mantle edged with kings' beards which he was making.

72. Gorlois was the first husband of Arthur's mother, Ygerne, and was Duke of Tintagil in Cornwall.

73. Anton is the Sir Hector of the romance. Merlin had given the baby Arthur to him to be brought up.

94-133 are not in the first edition. What are the particular reasons for their introduction?

99. Is this a possibility?

106. The "Powers" here referred to probably typify the magical aid that was constantly used by Merlin to help Arthur.

130. Each had guarded.

132. Littledale thus explains this expression: A man's promise is a divine thing; therefore it must be regarded as especially sacred.

124-133. Remember this first mention of Lancelot, and see if the promises made by him and Arthur were kept.

141. Compare "holp" with "clomb" in the "Lotus Eaters." It is rather a pity we have lost these strong preterits from our modern speech.

160-162. That is, not at all.

166. The cuckoo steals its nest. Since Arthur is said to be the son of Uther, the application is plain.

186. Tintagil is a small town on the Bristol Channel in Cornwall, near Camelford. There are the ruins of a castle there. The following are extracts from Tennyson's journal of a tour in Cornwall in 1848, when he was preparing the "Idylls":

"Sunday.—Went and sat in Tintagil ruins, cliff all black and red and yellow, weird-looking thing.

"7th. Camelford, Slaughter Bridge, clear brook among alders. Sought for King Arthur's stone, found it at last by a rock under two or three sycamores."

187. Other forms are Igraine, Igrayne, Igerina.

194. She loathed "the guilty splendor of King Uther's love."—*Littledale*.

233. Alludes to the episode of the sword in the anvil. See introduction.

244. Bellicent was Arthur's half-sister. See line 189, above.

247. That is, will soon melt away.

261. The vows are given thus in another one of the *Idylls*:

" My knights are sworn to vows  
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,  
And loving utter gentleness in love,  
And uttermost obedience to the king."

See also "Guinevere," lines 463-473.

268, 269, 270. Why?

275. These queens (who appear again in "The Passing of Arthur") symbolize Faith, Hope, and Charity (Love).

279. Mage Merlin symbolizes the intellect of man.

282. The Lady of the Lake symbolizes the church. Notice the appropriateness of all the details of this description, and explain the peculiar force of each of them.

284. Samite was a cloth made of silk interwoven with gold or silver thread. It is a favorite word with Tennyson. This line occurs elsewhere in the "Idylls."

285. "And as they rode, Arthur said, I have no sword. No force, said Merlin, hereby is a sword that shall be yours and I may. So they rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo, said Merlin, yonder is that sword that I spake of. With that they saw a damsel going upon the lake. What damsel is that? said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin. Anon withal came the damsel unto Arthur and saluted him, and he her

again. Damsel, said Arthur, what sword is that, that yonder the arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword. Sir Arthur king, said the damsel, that sword is mine, and if ye will give me a gift when I ask it you, ye shall have it. By my faith, said Arthur, I will give you what gift ye will ask. Well, said the damsel, go ye into yonder barge and row yourself to the sword and take it and the scabbard with you, and I will ask my gift when I see my time."—*Malory*.

290. "A voice as of the waters." See Rev. i. 15. "And his [Christ's] voice as the voice of many waters."

294. "There." Where?

294. "The name of it, said the lady, is Excalibur, that is as much to say as Cut-steel."—*Malory*.

According to the old romance of Merlin, the inscription on the sword was as follows:

"Ich am yhote Escaliboure,  
Unto a kinge fair tresore.  
(On Englis is this writing,  
Kerve steel, and yron, and all thing.)"

In early times it was customary for a warrior to have a name for his favorite sword. Excalibur is the most famous of all.

297. The sword is described in "The Passing of Arthur," lines 224–226.

298. The expression "elfin Urim" has reference to the mystic appearance of jewels on the breast-plate of the Jewish high-priest. See Exodus xxviii. 15–30. The word "Urim" means Lights, and it is said to be elfin because the jewels had a magic or fairy signification.

301. Hebrew.

319–324. The bent of the youths is thus early shown.

334, 335. What would this indicate?

346. The power of a witch or wizard to walk unseen was a matter of general belief. Even ordinary mortals, it was said, could walk unseen if they would scatter fernseed in their shoes.

362. "One injury of a very serious nature was supposed to be constantly practised by the fairies against the human mortals, that of carrying off their children and breeding them as beings of their race. Unchristened infants were chiefly exposed to this calamity."—*Scott's "Demonology and Witchcraft."* Changelings were supposed to be recognized by their shrivelled and pinched faces.

367. Compare with the story as told in the romance.

379. The Romans used to say the tenth wave was the largest. What do we say now?

389. Why?

401. Most of the early Welsh and Breton poetry is in this form. See "Gareth and Lynette," 280:

"Know ye not then the Riddling of the Bards,  
'Confusion, and illusion, and relation,  
Elusion, and occasion, and evasion?'"

402–410. This song should be carefully interpreted. Stopford Brooke says of it, "The graciousness of the rivulet-music and sott

play of nature is in the lines of this delicate song, and the gayety of youth; and mingled with these the deep and favorite thought of Tennyson of the pre-existence of the soul."

408, 409.

"Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is."

420. Compare with Malory: "Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu in another place. And men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life. But many men say there is written upon his tomb this verse, 'Hic jacet Arthurus Rex quondam Rexque futurus.'"

The Britons, even at a late date, used to cry aloud at their feasts, "Non le roi Arthur n'est pas mort."

There are similar legends about many other leaders of ancient times, for instance Barbarossa and Wilhelm Tell.

429. Compare with these lines in the "Dedication to the Queen":

"That gray king, whose name, a ghost,  
Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak."

431. The farm servant dies in the fight, and the cattle are driven off as plunder.

425-443. The dreams in the "Idylls" should be carefully noted and interpreted.

446-451. Read Tennyson's earlier poem, "Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere."

454. "The king was wedded at Camelot unto Dame Guinever in the church of St. Stephen's, with great solemnity."—*Malory*.

460. Hawthorn blooms are here called May.

467. Compare with lines 131-133, above.

481-501. Notice "the very rattle and shattering of the vowels in the words."—*Brooke*.

488. "There's such divinity doth hedge a king."—*Shakespeare*.

504. Rome had been obliged before this time to withdraw her soldiers from Britain. She needed all her legions at home to protect her against the barbarian hordes who were pouring in upon her from the north.

508. This line should be remembered. It is often quoted.

511. Several walls were built by the Romans across north England and fortified to keep out raids of the Picts and Scots. Remains are still to be seen. The one built by the Emperor Hadrian was the strongest.

517. Compare with "Lancelot and Elaine," 286-309.

"In the curt answer to the Roman envoys, and the words 'Arthur strove with Rome,' the poet in a few lines disposes of an amount of pseudo-history that occupies nearly half of Geoffrey's entire narrative. But even Tennyson's brief allusion to Arthur's

Roman war has no foundation in history. The Britons were too weak to drive the heathen, the Picts and Scots, from the Roman wall themselves, and hence they called in the Saxons to help them after the Romans had finally declined to afford further aid. This tribute even is a myth.—*Littledale*.

## TOPICS FOR A WRITTEN REVIEW OF THE POEM.

- a. Comparison of Tennyson's version of the story with that of the romance.
- b. Diction of the poem.
  1. Archaisms.
  2. Fine lines—musical, forceful, expressive.
  3. Songs.
- c. Symbolism of the poem.

## GARETH AND LYNETTE.

1. Bellicent. Tennyson calls her thus, adopting the name from one of the old romances; but in Malory she is called Morgause. She was the eldest daughter of Gorlois and Ygerne. See "The Coming of Arthur," 189.

2. "In a showerful spring." The idylls are planned to follow the changing round of a year, from the birth of Arthur, "the night of the new year," through the "showerful spring" of the adventures of the youth Gareth, the "full summer" of Elaine, and the "yellowing autumn-tide" of the Last Tournament, to "that day when the great light of heaven burned at his lowest in the rolling year," when Arthur's last battle is fought.

3. "Spate." An Irish and Scotch word meaning a river-flood. As Lot's house was in Orkney, there is a special fitness in the use of this old Gaelic word.

18. "Yield." This word is derived from the Old High German *geltan*, to pay or restore. Hence it came to mean to pay up or give up, and we usually understand it in this sense now. But to Chaucer or Shakespeare it also meant to pay in the sense of rewarding. Tennyson uses it with the latter meaning.

21. "Ever-highering." Why not a verb higher as well as the verb lower? But it is not used elsewhere.

22. "Sun of Glory." Arthur.

25, 26. Gawain and Modred were his elder brothers. See "The Coming of Arthur," 243. The name Gawain is usually accented on the first syllable; rarely on the last, as in line 553, "Lancelot and Elaine."

27. "Proven knight." One who "had done one noble deed" (line 403).

45. "Palm." The tree, the symbol of victory.

46. "Book of Hours." A prayer book with illuminated margins and initials, so called because it contained the prayers for the seven

canonical hours of the day, matins, prime, tierce, sext, nones, vespers, and compline.

51. "Leash." Three hounds were fastened together with a thong, called a leash. So the word came to mean a group of three persons or things. Used as an indefinite number here.

56. "Clomb." See note on line 141, "The Coming of Arthur."

59, 60. This means, if the "one that had loved him from his childhood" had truly loved, he would have risked his own safety to obtain the treasure for the boy he was guarding.

65. "This," symbolizing the sword he hoped worthily to carry.

70. "Him." What is the antecedent?

75-77. According to Malory, Lot had been killed before this time in the battle he ventured against Arthur.

80. "No more" than a corpse.

89. "Frights." In apposition with shocks and falls.

94. "Prone." Declining years.

122. "Frequent." An adjective here.

135. "Idolaters." The Angles and Saxons.

147. "Quick." Quick means living, as in the words in the Prayer Book, "the quick and the dead." Hence it means anything living or sensitive, and we speak of cutting the nail to the quick. "To prove to the quick" is to prove in some way which should touch him in a sensitive part.

151. "Kitchen-knaves." A knave meant originally merely a boy, as its modern German form *Knabe* still does. Many words which in early English had perfectly reputable meanings have degenerated sadly now. A villain was once merely a villager or serf, and a churl was a man.

152. "Bar." The bar separating the pantry or buttery from the dining-hall. Across it the "kitchen-boys" passed the dishes.

154. "A twelvemonth and a day." A common expression for a full year, the day being added to offset any mistake in the count.

157. "Villain." See note on line 151.

158. "Princely-proud." Tennyson is fond of making alliterative compound adjectives. Some of the best in this poem are "deep-dimpled," "crag-carven," "storm-strengthened," "gloomy-gladed."

185-193. Another description of Camelot is given in "The Holy Grail," lines 227-245:

"For all the sacred mount of Camelot,  
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,  
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,  
By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing brook,  
Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.  
And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt  
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:  
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,  
And in the second men are slaying beasts,  
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,  
And on the fourth are men with growing wings,  
And over all one statue in the mould'  
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,



And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern Star.  
 And eastward fronts the statue, and the crown  
 And both the wings are made of gold, and flame  
 At sunrise till the people in far fields,  
 Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,  
 Behold it, crying, "We have still a king."

185. Camelot. For its situation, see note on "Lancelot and Elaine," line 23, and map.

200. "Changeling." See note on line 362, "The Coming of Arthur."

207. "Arabian sea." It was a mediæval belief that plunging a magician into the Red Sea destroyed his magic powers.

212. "The Lady of the Lake." See note on line 282, "The Coming of Arthur." In the old romances there are several water-fairies or "ladies of the lake," one of whom brought up Lancelot. (See introduction to "Lancelot and Elaine.") Tennyson's Lady of the Lake is a far more spiritual and mystical being than these, personifying the deepest truths of the Christian religion.

212, 213. "All her dress wept from her sides." The dress symbolizes the outward forms of religion which are constantly changing and are "unstable as water."

"The old order changeth, giving place to new,  
 And God fulfils himself in many ways."

216. "Drops of water." Possibly symbolizing the baptismal water.

218. "Either worn with wind and storm." Both defaced by the weather.

219. "Sacred fish." The fish was a symbol of Christianity in early times, often used as a watchword among the persecuted Christians. The Greek word for fish is *ἰχθύς*, and the letters of the word form the initials of the phrase, *Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ* "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour."

223. "Inveterately." From the Latin word *inveteratus*, which is used of habits which have existed so long that they are too deep-seated to be shaken off. Here inveterately practically means completely (co-twisted). Wordsworth uses it in the same sense.

225. "Three Queens." See note on line 275. "The Coming of Arthur."

229. "Dragon-boughts." Coils. Bought is the word which Spenser uses in the same connection. It is an old Scandinavian word coming from the same root as the word *bow*, to bend.

"Elvish." Usually spelled elfish.

230. "Seethe." Move as if boiling.

236. "An ancient man." Merlin.

248. "Playing on him." Making sport of him.

249. Referring to the phenomena of mirage.

252. "Here is truth:" *i. e.*, the city is a real city.

254-259. The old seer is jokingly humoring the youthful fancy of the lad.

258. As the walls of Troy and Thebes rose.

265. "Thrall." An old Norse word meaning originally a runner or messenger, hence a slave.

273, 274. The old man follows out the fanciful explanation of the city which rose magically and was "therefore never built at all," and is "therefore built forever"; *i.e.*, the enchantment continues forever.

280. See note on "The Coming of Arthur," line 401. The bards were the early Celtic or British poets, to whom were ascribed even prophetic gifts; and as prophecies in every language have always had, necessarily, an ambiguity of expression, the verses of the bards are well called "riddling." The next two lines are a good example of a tangle of words which may mean nothing or a great deal, as after events may require. They are given merely as a mocking specimen of the "Riddling of the Bards."

293. "She." His mother.

298. "Who did their days." Had the record of their reigns carved in stone.

299. "Mage." Magician. The Magi were originally the priests of the Medes and Persians.

302. "Spire." Raise many spires. The word is a verb here.

306. "Bower." Obsolete word for a chamber. It was applied especially to women's apartments.

314. "Delivering doom." Pronouncing judgment.

318. "In fear." Of recognition.

333. "Whether." Which of the two.

351. "Seized of." Possessed of. Still used in this sense in law.

355. "Wreak me." Avenge me.

359. Sir Kay, the seneschal. A seneschal was a steward. The word is connected with the Latin *senatus*, and meant at first an old servant, the last syllable coming from the old German word for slave.

Sir Kay was the son of Sir Hector, who had been foster-father to Arthur. As the king's foster-brother, he became steward of his household and manager of his lands. Both in the romances and in Tennyson, he appears always as a bad-tempered, brusque, and generally discourteous knight, the "Thersites of the old romance writers."

362. "Gyve and gag." A scolding woman might be punished by fetters which should fasten her to a ducking-stool, or by a kind of hood which included a gag.

367. "Aurelius Emrys." See note on line 13, "The Coming of Arthur."

376. Mark, King of Cornwall, was a character almost as cowardly and treacherous as Modred. He was the husband of Isolt of Ireland, whose love through a magic potion had been given to Tristram while she was the affianced bride of Mark. Mark at length treacherously murders Tristram. The story is partly told in "The Last Tournament."

380. "Charlock." Wild mustard.

386. "Cousin." Tristram was his nephew, but cousin was formerly used to signify any such blood relationship.

387. Greater state than Tristram.

398. "Blazon'd." With heraldic colors on them.

"Blank." A term in heraldry for a shield which bears no arms and is white in color.

411. "Reave." Rob or deprive.

419. "Churl." See note on line 151.

422. "Lap him up in cloth of lead." An allusion to the old custom of wrapping a corpse in sheet lead. "All thy friends are lapt in lead."—Burnfield, in *Passionate Pilgrim*.

431. At this point, the story as told by Malory begins. "Right so came into the hall two men well beseen and richly, and upon their shoulders there leaned the goodliest young man and the fairest that ever they all saw, and he was large and long and broad in the shoulders, and well visaged, and the fairest and the largest handed that ever man saw, but he fared as though he might not go nor bear himself, but if he leaned upon their shoulders."—*Morte Darthur*.

447. "Brewis." Broth.

454. "Fluent." Flowing.

465. "Sir Fair-hands." In the "Morte Darthur," Sir Kay names him in mockery "Beaumains, that is Fair-hands"; and from that point on he is always called Beaumains.

470. "And so Sir Kay bad get him a place and sit down to meat, so Beaumains went to the hall door, and set him down among boys and lads, and there he eat sadly."—*Morte Darthur*.

476. "Broach." Spit.

488-490. Still another legend of Arthur's coming.

490. "Caer-Eryri." Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales.

491. "The Prophet." Merlin. See "The Coming of Arthur," 418-421.

492. "The Isle Avilion." See note on line 427, "The Passing of Arthur." It was the Paradise of the Celts.

495. Note the birdlike lilt of the last part of the line.

508-514. "But ever when that he saw any justing of knights, that would he see and he might. . . . And where were any masteries done thereat would he be, and there might none cast bar nor stone to him by two yards."—*Morte Darthur*.

515. In the "Morte Darthur" he serves the full twelve months.

519. "Between the in-crescent and de-crescent moon." Between the waxing and the waning of the moon, *i.e.*, at the time of the full moon.

524. The lists in a tournament were oval.

528. "Peter's knee." Peter held the keys of heaven.

535. "Quest." The search of a knight for an adventure.

549. "Mellow." Sweet-tempered.

571. See line 659, "Lancelot and Elaine."

584. "Hold." The loneliest castle.

586. "Best blood." The wine of the sacrament.

595. A bit of naïve vanity on Lynette's part, quite in keeping with her character.

607. "Wed . . . a holy life." A nun is said to become the bride of Christ.

616. Behaving like a knight or like a beast, as momentary impulse prompts.

619. The three names are in apposition with the Day.

624. "Mounted." Surmounted.

638. The king frowned for a moment.

648. "Weird white gate." See lines 209-226.

649. "The field of tourney." It is mentioned in "Lancelot and Elaine" as "The lists by Camelot, in the meadow."

655. "Blowing." Covered with blossoms in this early spring-time.

657. "Counter." Opposite.

671. "Dull-coated things." Some kinds of beetles with heavy black wings disclose on flight iridescent hues beneath.

677. "Storm-strengthen'd." The wood of trees growing in a place exposed to wind and weather becomes the tougher for that reason.

693. "The King hath past his time." The king must have entered his dotage.

697. "Begone!" Said to the thralls.

717, 718. Contrast with lines 684, 685.

729. "A foul-fleshed agaric in the holt." An ill-smelling fungus in the wood.

730. "Carrion." The putrefying body.

731. Some species of shrews and weasels emit a disagreeable odor at times.

740. "Shoulder-slipt." With shoulder dislocated.

746-763. "When he had overtaken the damsel anon she said, What doest thou here? thou stinkest all of the kitchen, thy clothes be foul of the grease and tallow that thou gainedst in king Arthur's kitchen; weenest thou, said she, that I allow thee for yonder knight that thou killedst? Nay truly, for thou slewest him unhappily and cowardly, therefore turn again foul kitchen page. I know thee well, for Sir Kay named thee Beaumains; what art thou but a lubber and a turner of spits, and a ladle washer? Damsel, said Beaumains, say to me what ye will, I will not go from you whatsoever ye say, for I have undertaken to king Arthur for to achieve your adventure, and so shall I finish it to the end, or I shall die therefore. Fie on thee, kitchen knave, wilt thou finish mine adventure? thou shalt anon be met withall, that thou wouldest not for all the broth that ever thou suppedst once look him in the face. I shall assay, said Beaumains."—*Morte Darthur*.

749. "Unhappiness." Accident, bad hap, or luck.

768. The king's highway was the one safe road through the wood.

770. "Both," *i.e.*, of us.

773. "Evensong." The vesper service.

779. "Eagle-owl." A name given to various large species of the owl family. The simile is especially felicitous, including as it does in one line the shape and color of the mere, and also a hint of its mysterious and gloomy character.

796. "Oilily bubbled up the mere." Note the use of onomatopoeia.

799. "Caitiff." Originally a captive, hence a miserable wretch.

800. "Wreaked." See note to line 355.

804. "Wan" is a favorite word with Tennyson. See line 129, "The Passing of Arthur."

806, 807. Alluding to the will-o'-the-wisp, or ignis fatuus, which flickers over the surface of stagnant water.

806. "Grimly." An adjective having perhaps a slightly different meaning from grim. It signifies ghastly or horrible.

817. "In a sort." "Yes, truly, he is of Arthur's table in a sort of way, since he is Arthur's scullion," biting remarks Lynette.

828. "Cate." Provisions.

829. A peacock in his pride is very appropriately set before Lynette. It was a culinary triumph to serve the bird with all his brilliant plumage at banquets. The peacock was a bird especially honored by the knights; when it appeared on the table "all the guests, male and female, took a solemn vow; the knights vowing bravery, and the ladies engaging to be loving and faithful."—Stanley, *History of Birds*.

832. "Fie, fie, said she, sir knight, ye are uncourteous to set a kitchen page afore me, him beseemeth better to stick a swine than to sit afore a damsel of high parentage."—*Morte Darthur*.

839. "Frontless." Shameless.

859. "For here be mighty men to joust with." Since these knights you must meet are so formidable.

871. "Isled together." Taken refuge on the same island in a time of flood.

873. "Ruth." Pity.

881, 882. Referring to the old folk-tale of Cinderella, found in some form in all Aryan languages.

889. "Lent-lily." The yellow daffodil. Note that the pavilion shows all the hues of the sunrise.

899, 900. A cruel taunt, for no knight would attack another unless that one also were fully armed.

908. "The stone Avanturine." A kind of quartz with bits of yellow mica in it. It takes a polish, and is sometimes called gold-stone.

915, 916. All the points in the picture are cleverly impressed on the imagination by their repetition in the stream.

934. "Lightly." Quickly.

936, 937. "Said the black knight, now yield thy lady from thee, for it beseemeth never a kitchen page to ride with such a lady. Thou liest, said Beaumains, I am a gentleman born, and of more high lineage than thou, and that will I prove on thy body."—*Morte Darthur*.

942, 943. Both were hurled backward off their horses. It was the custom to fight on foot then with swords. If the lances were broken in the meeting on horseback, but the knights were not unhorsed, they fought on horseback with swords.

949-959. "And then the green knight cried him mercy, and yielded him unto Sir Beaumains and prayed him to slay him not. All is in vain, said Beaumains, for thou shalt die, but if this damsel that came with me pray me to save thy life. And therewithal he unlaced his helm, like as he would slay him. Fie upon thee, false kitchen page, I will never pray thee to save his life, for I never will

be so much in thy danger [power]. Then shall he die, said Beaumains. Not so hardy thou foul knave, said the damsel, that thou slay him. . . . Let be, said the damsel, thou foul knave, slay him not for and thou do thou shall repent it. Damsel, said Beaumains, your charge is to me a pleasure, and at your commandment his life shall be saved, and else not."—*Morte Darthur*.

951. "Grace." Favor.

964. "Thy shield is mine." The victorious knight always took the shield of the vanquished one, and might also claim his armor and horse.

971. "Lynette has now seen that he is a gentleman and no knave, and admiration of his valor awakens a different feeling in her heart. Her songs conceal rather than reveal this dawning love; maiden modesty will not permit her to abate one jot of her missayings and revilings."—*Littledale*.

979. "Fool's parable." See lines 618-620.

1002, 1003. "The flower," etc. The dandelion.

1008. "Marches." Borders. As Gareth bore the shield of the knight Morning-Star, his brother, the knight mistook him for his brother.

"And then he cried aloud, Brother what do ye in these marches? Nay, nay, said the damsel, it is not he; this is but a kitchen knave, that was brought up for alms in king Arthur's court. Nevertheless, said the red knight, I will speak with him or he depart. Ah, said the damsel, this knave hath killed thy brother."—*Morte Darthur*.

1012. "Vizoring." Drawing down the vizor of his helmet to cover his face.

1013. "Cipher face," because it was so destitute of intelligence.

1015-1021. Note the rhythm of the lines, imitative of the struggle.

1032-1060. Lynette interrupts her song with comments to Gareth lest he should imagine by any chance that she is alluding to him. But "the lady doth protest too much, methinks."

1048. It was the custom to decorate a boar's head with rosemary stuck in the nose, mouth, and ears.

"The boar's head in hande bring I,  
With garlands gay and rosemary."

1052. "Mavis, merle." Thrush and blackbird.

1057. "Larding and basting." To lard is to cover meat with thin slices of fat before cooking; to baste is to pour the melted fat over the meat while it is roasting.

1071. "Brother-star." He too supposes Gareth to be his brother, from the shield he bears.

1099. "Foredooming." Anticipating.

1101-1104. This and the simile in lines 1117 and 1118 are remarkably fine. They exhibit in brief the two points in which Tennyson is pre-eminently great among poets, his insight into man's moral nature and his vivid perception of detail in nature.

1122. "Unknightlike." When his sword was broken the laws of knighthood required that the knight should acknowledge himself vanquished.

1125. "Cast." That is, threw him.

1130. "Trefoil." The three-leaved clover.

"The songs of Lynette have a single, double, and triple reference, corresponding to the number of Gareth's victories: first victory, the morning-star, onefold; second victory, the sun and moon, flowers open and shut, birds' song at morn and eve, twofold; third victory, trefoil (a Druidical sacred symbol), the three primitive colors of the rainbow, threefold."—*Littledale*.

1143. "Mistrusted." Suspected.

1147-1150. "Damsel, said Beaumains, a knight may little do that may not suffer a damsel."—*Morte Darthur*.

1163. "Comb." A Celtic word meaning a hollow in a hillside, the head of a valley.

1165. "Slowly-waning." Gradually fading, from the wind and weather.

1172, 1173. "In letters," etc. Near the Gelt, a small stream in Cumberland, are the remains of Roman quarries, and here are some inscriptions cut in the limestone rock. The one referred to is the following:

VEXL. LEG. II. AVG. ON. AP. APRO E. MAXIMO CON-  
SVLIBVS SVB. AGRICOLA OP. OFICINA MERCATI.

A vexillary was a standard-bearer, and we gather from the inscription that the words were carved by the standard-bearer of the second legion in the year 207 A.D.

The place was doubtless familiar to Tennyson but is not one of general knowledge.

1174. The Latin words mean Morning *Star*, Midday, Evening *Star*, Night, Death.

1230. "Issues." Comes. That is, by being vanquished we at last learn how to be victors.

1236. "His." The king's.

1255-1257. Extract from Lady Tennyson's diary, "Sept. 24, 1872. His lines on the honeysuckle in Gareth were made on the lawn about the honeysuckle that climbs up the house at Aldworth."

Stopford Brooke says of the lines, they "might have been said by Jessica in the night scene in Portia's garden."

1273. "Ramp." See lines 659, 660, "Lancelot and Elaine," and note on same. Here ramp is used as the imperative of the verb.

1281. "Arthur's harp." Probably the bright star in the constellation of the Lyre. Only Tennyson calls it Arthur's harp.

1314. "Devisings." Devices.

1318. "Fineness." Finesse.

"Instant." Urgent.

1330. It is just before daylight, and the sky is beginning to show a red streak on the horizon.

1343-1350. Note the broken lines, indicating the suspense and breathless waiting. The periodic form of the sentence also helps on the feeling of suspense.

1362. His hair stood on end with horror.

1364. "Him." The knight Death.

1373, 1374. The allegorical meaning of this is too plain to require explanation.

1386. See line 411, "Lancelot and Elaine."

1389, 1390. "It is a modest creed, and yet  
Pleasant if one considers it,  
To own that Death itself must be  
Like all the rest, a mockery."

—Shelley, *The Sensitive Plant*.

1392. Malory has Gareth marry Lyonors, and he describes with great minuteness the wedding festivities, "the great royalty, and what officers were made at the feast of the wedding, and of the justs at the feast." But "he that told it later," *i.e.*, Tennyson, evidently prefers to have him marry Lynette. "No doubt she becomes a good wife to the hero of this Tennysonian *Taming of the Shrew*, but we are not given any glimpse of their after-history."—*Littledale*.

## LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

2. Malory tells us that Astolat is the same as Guilford, in Surrey. Astolat is also called Ascolot in an old romance, from which comes the form Shalott. "The Lady of Shalott" is founded on this same story, but in that poem the lady is used as the type of the poet, who must not contaminate himself by contact with the world, on pain of losing the poetic inspiration.

9. Blazonry must be in colors.

23. Caerleon was Arthur's capital. It is supposed to have been the same as Monmouth in Wales. Camelot was a city where Arthur held court, said to be the present town of Queen's Camel in Somersetshire.

28. Notice that Tennyson begins with the middle of the story and goes back to its beginning. Why?

35. Lyonesse was the name of a district of Cornwall which was supposed to stretch between what is now Land's End and the Scilly Isles, but is now buried under the sea.

36. Notice the use of primitive northern words in this passage—glen, bowlder, tarn, crag, shingly scaur.

59. "Divinely" here means guided by Providence.

65. The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes are again referred to as "the heathen."

67. The word "still" has here the Shakespearean meaning—constantly, ever.

76. London.

94. The word "lets" has here its primitive meaning—hinders. Compare with "Hamlet":

"I'll make a ghost of him that lets me."

106. Notice the vigor of the condensed form, "myriad cricket."

108. That is, all together make only a confused murmur amounting to nothing.

118. "Devoir," duty of a knight to a lady.

121. Notice the low plane of this speech. It gives the keynote to the failure of the married life of Arthur and Guinevere.



132. A famous line which should be remembered.
134. Alluding to the colors of sunrise and sunset.
135. The "bond" of marriage is here meant.
145. The word "craft" has here its original meaning of skill. An instance of the degeneration of words. It now usually carries a suggestion of underhandedness.
154. Notice the covert sneer.
168. It was customary to hang a horn at the gateway of a castle so that the wayfarer might summon the gatekeeper.
170. A knight could not remove his own armor. Hence the necessity for squires.
199. A churl was the exact antithesis of a knight.
201. "Allow him," that is, pardon him.
230. How well Tennyson gives us a distinct idea of a man by a few words.
236. Compare with "Sweets to the sweet."—*Hamlet*, v. 1.
246. The nobility of his nature is shown by the marks of struggle on his face. He is not a hardened sinner.
259. Notice the short Saxon words. Why forceful here?
269. "Glanced at," that is, referred to lightly.
279. This was a battle of actual occurrence. The Britons in the year 520 here checked the progress of the West Saxons. The battle is said to have occurred on Badbury Hill in Dorsetshire. Legend says Arthur alone killed 940 in it. All the other battles here mentioned are mythical.
297. The White Horse was the national emblem of the Saxon chiefs. On a chalk hill in Berkshire is cut a figure of a white horse to commemorate a victory of Alfred over the Danes in 871. It is 374 feet long, and can be seen at a distance of fifteen miles.
314. "The fire of God." See "The Coming of Arthur," 127.
325. Had striven to entertain him.
338. The word "rathe" was formerly used to mean early. Our word rather is its comparative form.
338. Half cheating herself.
347. To flatter was originally to pet, to stroke.
356. Any trifle worn by a knight as a token from his lady was known as a favor. A sleeve, a cuff, a ribbon, or a glove was a common favor.
377. Why was the shield "yet-unblazon'd"?
381. "It is a favor to me, the second to-day." The squire bore the shield of his knight.
396. This line brings us to the beginning of the poem.
409. Remember how leaves rustle in the rain. Noise is used in the archaic sense of pleasant sound.
422. Arthur is called Pendragon because he is the son of Uther Pendragon. The name is said to have originated from the following occurrence. In a battle between Uther and the Saxons a terrible dragon appeared in the air, breathing out smoke and flame. The Saxons were dismayed, and Merlin told Uther to attack the enemy boldly and said, "All the island shall submit to thee, for thou art the fiery dragon." Uther is called Pendragon, or Dragon's Head, from this.
431. See "The Coming of Arthur," 284.

444-450. Generous and noble and modest reply. The last part is from the famous saying of Socrates when informed that the Delphic oracle had pronounced him the wisest of the Greeks. He merely remarked that he might be the wisest since he knew that he knew nothing while the others knew not even so much.

457. If anyone had failed to come to the joust.

465. The knights of the Round Table held the lists, that is, awaited the attack.

473. Elaine's suggestion proves true.

482. Alluding to the spray.

484. That is, him that steers it.

489. Malory says, "And Sir Lavaine did full well that day, for he smote down ten knights of the Table Round."

502. Such phrases as "diamond me no diamonds" are used as a form of indignant denial by Shakespeare.

514. Malory's words are, "Gave a great shriek and a marvellous grisly groan."

525. The marches were the boundary lands. Mark is another form of the same word. Such a lord was called a marquis.

534. "Pass," die.

545. "Bring us" word.

557. It is hard to forgive Tennyson the change he makes in the character of this knight. In the romance he is second only to Lancelot in knightly courtesy and noble deeds, and is the dear and trusted friend of both Arthur and Lancelot.

583. Who had said this?

592. "So fine" means here over-sensitive. It is perhaps said sarcastically.

635. Why this remark?

660. "Ramp," that is rampant; a term used in heraldry, meaning standing upright on hind legs. The other common positions are dormant (sleeping), couchant (lying), saltant (leaping).

661. Notice the irony in this line.

675-678. "Honi soit qui mal y pense."

684. Elaine does not even understand his innuendoes.

685-700. Gawaine judges others by himself.

707. Why "our"?

728. Took the news so calmly as to disappoint the old busybody.

769, 770. Alluding to what?

794. Being cross with them, as we should say.

798. His own distant kindred.

836. The position of the "not" is archaic.

871, 872. These are famous lines which should be remembered. Faith to the queen makes him unfaithful to the king.

875. "The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be;

The devil was well, the devil a monk was he."—*Rabelais*.

885. "Ere her time," that is, before evening.

889-893. Notice how many of Tennyson's similes are derived from a close acquaintance with birds.

905. Animals for sacrifice were adorned with flowers.

923. That is, that I am alive is due to your care.

939. "Quit," requite.

953. Brittany.

995. "Sallow-rifted glooms," that is, the darkening sky with the pale yellow light of sunset still lingering.

1012. "Scaled," rose.

1015. Such a phantom was called a banshee. Many tales of them are told. Compare with the story of the White Lady of the Hohenzollerns.

1041. Compare with her previous dream, line 210, above.

1048. Compare with these lines from "The Lady of Shalott":

"But Lancelot mused a little space;  
He said, 'She hath a lovely face;  
God in his mercy lend her grace,  
The Lady of Shalott.'"

1080. "Never yet was noble man but made ignoble talk." This should be remembered.

1092. "Ghostly man," the usual expression for a priest in Malory.

1109. Malory has her say, "And while my body is hot let this letter be put in my right hand, and my hand bound fast with the letter until that I be cold."

1117. Notice the regularity of the meter in this line.

1128, 1129. Notice the extreme brevity and simplicity of these lines.

1129. "Dole," grief.

1146-1154. Favorite subject in art. Rosenthal's picture is the best known, and good copies of it can be obtained.

1170. "Summer side," south.

1178. The cygnet or young swan has dark, sooty-brown plumage.

1183. What rumors were these?

1207, 1208. Remember this expression.

1219-1221. This is a cutting paraphrase of his own words.

1233. See lines 211-218.

1243. Like the Old Man of the Mountain in the White Mountains.

1250. See "The Coming of Arthur," line 420.

1316. "Worship," honor.

1319. Malory says that the "shrine" here mentioned was Westminster.

1334. Malory says, "And so upon the morn she was interred richly, and Sir Lancelot offered her mass-penny, and all the knights of the Round Table that were there at the time offered with Sir Lancelot."

1346. "Affiance," trust, confidence.

1385. "Farewell too—now at last," see line 980, above.

1418. See introduction on "The Passing of Arthur."

## TOPICS FOR A WRITTEN REVIEW OF THE POEM.

- a. (See "The Coming of Arthur," page 29.)
- b. (See "The Coming of Arthur," page 29.)
- c. The dreams.
- d. Character sketches of
  1. Elaine.
  2. Guinevere.
  3. Lancelot.
- e. Is the fate of Elaine pathetic, tragic, or merely sentimental? Why?

## GUINEVERE.

2. Almesbury is in Wiltshire. The ruins of the abbey church are still standing. The nunnery is of very ancient foundation, and was one of the richest in England. It was broken up in the time of Henry VIII.

15. "Lords of the White Horse." See "Lancelot and Elaine," 297.

16. Hengist and Horsa were the Saxon chiefs who came to England first, 450 A.D.

22. See "The Coming of Arthur," 460. Of what color were the plumes?

36. "Prince" because son of Lot and Bellicent of Orkney.

56. An old superstition.

64. "The Powers that tend the soul," the pangs of conscience. The death that cannot die is perhaps the everlasting punishment after death. See Mark ix. 48.

73. Alluding to the superstition that blood spilt in a murder can never be washed away from the floor or walls of a house.

75. Interpret the dream.

119. Sanctuary was a sacred place which afforded protection from arrest. The peculiar atrocity of the murder of Becket was that it was committed in a church, a place where even a criminal was supposed to be safe.

126. "Weald," wold, wood.

129. "Too late" for what?

132. The raven was the favorite bird of Odin, the Norse god of war. It was supposed to scent coming death.

146. "For housel or for shrift," taking the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and receiving absolution from the priest.

147. "Communed" is accented on the first syllable, as in Shakespeare.

165. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins is in Matthew xxv.

179. "Her thought"—what thought?

243. The "strong man-breasted things" were perhaps mermen.

249. "Spirits," elves or fairies.

254. The fairies were supposed to dance in circles. Where their light feet touched the earth, the grass became fresher and greener,

forming fairy-rings. These were really due to the growth of an underground fungus which spread in a circle.

288. Bude and Bos were districts in Cornwall. The following is an extract from Tennyson's journal, written during a tour in Cornwall:

"Tuesday, May 30.—Arrived at Bude in the dark. Asked girl the way to the sea; she opens the back door. I go out, and in a moment go sheer down, upward of six feet, over wall on fangled cobbles."

Before Tennyson went to Cornwall, he had wished to make a lonely sojourn at Bude. "I hear," he said, "that there are larger waves there than on any other part of the British coast; and must go thither and be alone with God."

332, 333. Remember these lines.

337 "Disloyal" may be contrasted with "loyal" in 333.

343. That is, failed to live up to his noble intentions.

347-350. The novice could as soon believe that the Queen could have manners like the lady she speaks to, as believe Lancelot's as noble as the King's.

355. That is, "Never again pretend to be an innocent maiden."

366. "Fearful," full of fear.

381. Accent "retinue" on the second syllable, as in Shakespeare.

396. "Well," spring.

423. "The craft of kindred" refers to the treachery of his nephew Modred.

428. See "Lancelot and Elaine," 286-300.

457. "Errant," so called because they vowed to wander for a certain period in search of adventures.

484. Tristram was married to Isolt of Brittany (of the White Hands), but fell in love with Isolt la Belle, wife of Mark, King of Cornwall. He carries her away, but Mark finally kills him. The story is told in "The Last Tournament," the Idyll preceding "Guinevere."

499. "Camelot." See "Lancelot and Elaine," 23. "Usk" is the same as Caerleon.

In September, 1856, Tennyson was at Caerleon during a tour in Wales and writes, "The Usk murmurs by the windows, and I sit like King Arthur in Caerleon. This is a most quiet, half-ruined village of about 1,500 inhabitants, with a little museum of Roman tomb-stones and other things."

525, 526. Notice the art of Tennyson in inserting these lines at this point.

533, 534. Alluding to what? See introduction to the Idyll.

572. Alluding to the prophecies that he should "not die, but pass, again to come."

578, 579. Ruskin admired these lines especially. He also says, "I am not sure but I feel the art and finish in these poems a little more than I like to feel it."

584-594. Here is an exceedingly pictorial passage.

603. Is the inserted simile natural?

610. A critic has remarked that it was the kind of mercy to choke.

618-620. Observe the dreary desolation in these lines.

641. She had said, "The low sun makes the color."

654. This is a good line to remember.  
 658. Answering her unspoken prayer for forgiveness.  
 676. "Dole," alms.  
 678. "Haler," sounder, in spirit.  
 681. "Voluptuous day," a time of careless pleasure.  
 684. The keynote is struck once again.  
 691. "The pathetic gentleness of the cadence in the last line is as exquisite as that in Milton's finest verse:  
 'And I shall shortly be with them that rest.'"—*Littledale*.

## THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

2. Bedivere was "the first of all his knights knighted by Arthur." All through this poem, its symmetry with "The Coming of Arthur" should be carefully noted.

13. "For why," archaism for wherefore. This poem is the most archaic in diction of all the *Idylls*.

31, 32. The fickleness and instability in Gawain's character are indicated well by having his ghost blown on the wind.

35. "The island-valley of Avilion."

41. What effect does the break so early in the line have?

53, 54. Many high places in Great Britain are named in honor of him; for instance Arthur's Seat, near Edinburgh, and Arthur's Stone on a hill in Wales.

72. This line should be remembered.

81. "Lyonnesse," see "Lancelot and Elaine," 35. This battle is sometimes located in Brittany.

87. The faint and misty horizon line where sky and sea meet.

90. Midwinter.

92. Why have the battle in this exact location?

96. Compare the description of this battle with the one in "The Coming of Arthur," 95-99.

108-110. Onomatopoeic lines.

114-117. We have here a wild and confused picture, like some of Doré's battle scenes.

118-135. Note the weird, ghostly quality of all this description, seen even in the figures of speech used. Tennyson has succeeded excellently in imparting to the poem the effect of weirdness which is so striking a characteristic of Celtic literature.

130, 131. The tide is coming in. Note the swaying of the lines.

135. The ocean is here used as the symbol of eternity.

147-153. Here speaks the loyal stanch English heart, faithful not only unto death, but beyond it. Sir Bedivere is an admirable character, well portrayed in our minds from his actions and words without any distinct description of him. He is the solid, distinct figure in the poem; all the rest is misty, doubtful, uncertain.

154. "My house," my kindred, referring to his nephew Modred.

170-440. These lines were published in 1842 under the title of "Morte d'Arthur."

180. Note the artistic effect of this vagueness of expression. Why used? Would it have been more effective to have no moon?

- 197-201. See note on "The Coming of Arthur," 285.
205. Excalibur is Arthur's comrade in battle, hence here personified.
206. "Lightly," quickly.
- 216, 217. Notice the musical quality of these lines.
228. See Virgil's "Æneid," iv. 285. "Atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc."
233. Observe how this line suggests the slow, heavy tread of Sir Bedivere.
- 238, 239. "Lines so steeped in the loneliness of mountain tarns that I never stand in solitude beside their waters but I hear the verses in my heart."—*Brooke*.
248. "Lief," loved.
252. "Fix'd in thought." The first time he had merely felt; now he reasons out to himself why he does not throw it, a natural advance. He is now justifying himself to himself.
300. Malory says, "I shall slay thee with mine own hands."
- 301-304. No reflection this time.
307. The aurora borealis. Tennyson has literally translated the words.
308. "Moving isles of winter," icebergs.
310. "And never yet in poetry did any sword flung in the air flash so superbly."—*Brooke*.
338. The eyes in a picture seem sometimes to follow one in their gaze.
340. Silence was more pathetic than words could have been for his blunt and simple nature.
345. Is the simile appropriate here?
350. The mist of his breath surrounds him like a garment.
353. "His own thought drove him like a goad." Why?
- 354-360. "We hear all the changes on the vowel a—every sound of it used to give the impression—and then in a moment the verse runs into breadth, smoothness, and vastness; for Bedivere comes to the shore and sees the great water:
- 'And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,  
And the long glories of the winter moon,'
- in which the vowel o in its changes is used as the vowel a has been used before."—*Brooke*.
- 370, 371. Utter loneliness from all time to all time. Or would it have been more impressive to have had one man there, as in Tennyson's "Palace of Art," 63?
383. Cuisses are parts of the harness or armor for the thighs.
388. An instance of Tennyson's occasional over-elaboration of language.
401. Or three Wise Men from the East.
403. The world was then supposed to be a flat disc.
- 409, 410. "Goodness, growing to a pleurisy, dies in his own too-much."—*Hamlet*, iv. 7.
427. Malory has Arthur say, "For I will into the vale of Avilion, to heal me of my grievous wound." The place is not localized at all. Elsewhere he speaks of the island of Avilion, meaning the peninsula made by the river Brue, on which Glastonbury was situ-

ated. That place was anciently called the Isle of Avilion or of Apples.

434-436. It is a very ancient superstition, frequently alluded to in literature, that just before its death the swan sings a song of most ravishing sweetness.

440. The earlier version called "Morte d'Arthur" ends with this line.

Stedman says: "The poem weakens at the close. The epic properly ends with the line 440. The poet's sense of proportion here works injuriously, urging him to bring out fully the moral of his allegory, albeit the effect really is harmed by this addition of the sequel." What is your own opinion regarding this?

445. Here again, with enough dimness not to jar on us, the allegory steals back.





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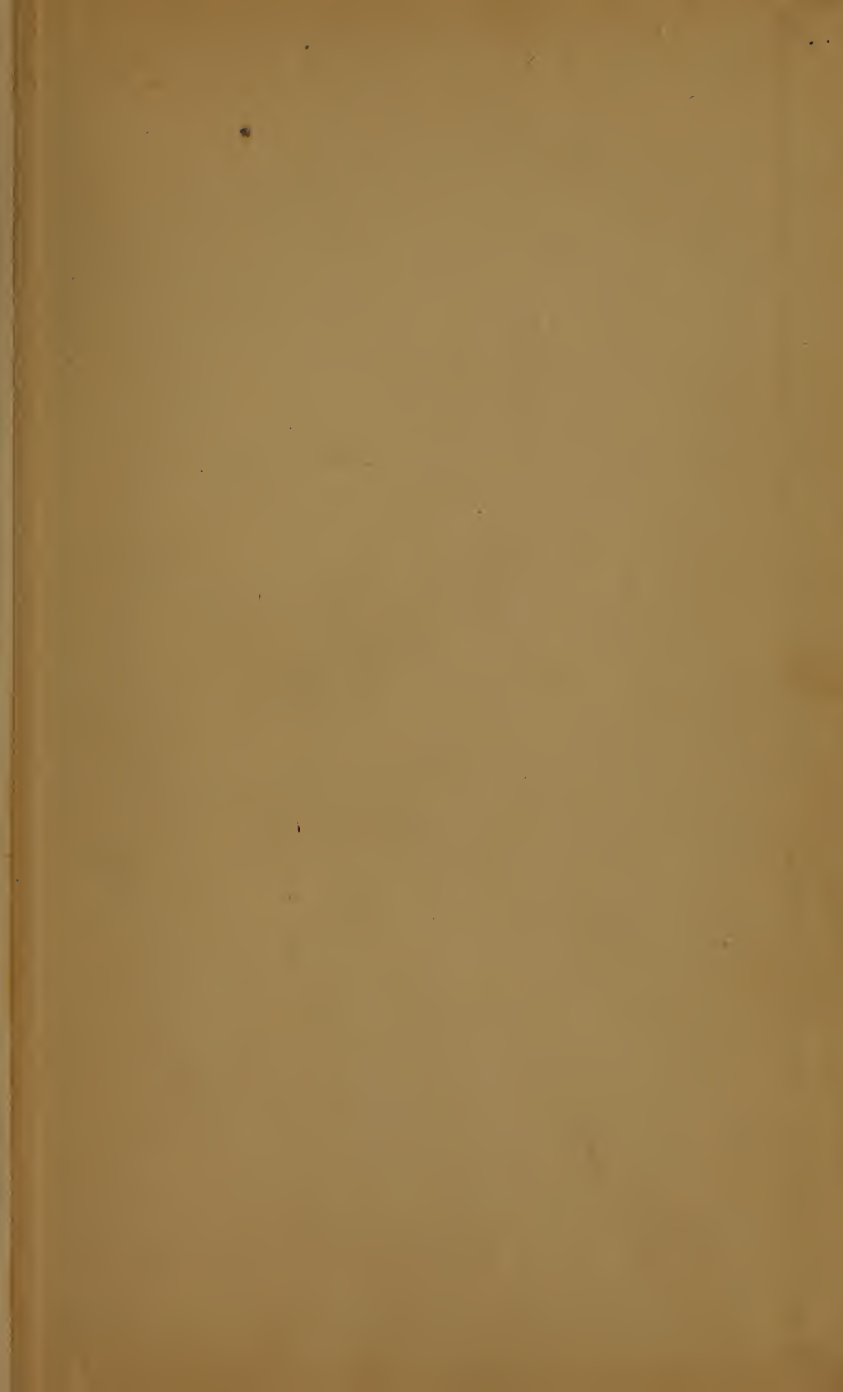
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