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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, CHICAGO



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II

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IDYLLS

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INTRODUCTION.

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, 1850, 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 1855, 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. 1):

"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," "Pel-leas 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.

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 stuck 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.

LEODOGRAN, the King of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
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;
And still from time to time the heathen host
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was left.
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness, 10
Wherein the beasts were more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
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,
And thro' the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty principdoms 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
 To human sucklings; and the children housed
 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
 Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
 And Cæsar's eagle: then his brother king, 35
 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.
 This is the son of Gorlois, not the King;
 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."

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the tale—
 When Arthur reach'd a field-of-battle bright 95
 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
 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

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,
 For each had warded either in the fight, 130
 Sware on the field of death a deathless love.
 And Arthur said, "Man's word is God in man:
 Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death."

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,
 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,
" O friend, had I been holpen half as well 160
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
Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere."

Then, when they came before him, the King said, 165
" 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 Ulfus 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
Tintgil castle by the Cornish sea,
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,
 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:

"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,
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
From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash
A momentary likeness of the King: 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
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
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,
Who knows a subtler magic than his own—
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
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.

“ 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
 With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
 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.

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,
 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
 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 fringe 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.
 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:

“ ‘Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!
 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:
 Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows?
 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
 Ulfius, 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
 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 ! "
 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 ;
 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,
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 princedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd.

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 Pellès. There has been a prophecy that she shall marry Lancelot; but although King Pellès 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.

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

How came the lily maid by that good shield
 Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his name?
 He left it with her, when he rode to tilt 30
 For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,
 Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that name
 Had named them, since a diamond was the prize.

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

Thereafter, when a King, he had the gems
 Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them to his knights,
 Saying, "These jewels, whereupon I chanced
 Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the King's—
 For public use: henceforward let there be, 60

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

Now for the central diamond and the last
 And largest, Arthur, holding then his court
 Hard on the river nigh the place which now 75
 Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
 At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
 Spake (for she had been sick) to Guinevere,
 "Are you so sick, my Queen, you 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. 85
 He thinking that he read her meaning there,
 "Stay with me, I am sick; my love is more
 Than many diamonds," yielded; and a heart
 Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen
 (However much he yearn'd to make complete 90
 The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)
 Urged him to speak against the truth, and say,
 "Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole,

And lets me from the saddle ;” and the King
 Glanced first at him, then her, and went his way. 95
 No sooner gone than suddenly she began :

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

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

There gleam'd a vague suspicion in his eyes :
 Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with him—else
 Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
 And swearing men to vows impossible, 130
 To make them like himself: but, friend, to me
 He is all fault who 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. 135
 And therefore hear my words: go to the jousts:
 The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our dream
 When sweetest; and the vermin voices here
 May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but they sting."

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

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

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

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights :
“ Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,
What I by mere mischance have brought, my shield.
But since I go to joust as one unknown
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not, 190
Hereafter ye shall know me—and the shield—

I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
Blank, or at least with some device not mine."

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

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

"So ye will grace me," answer'd Lancelot,
Smiling a moment, "with your fellowship

O'er these waste downs whereon I lost myself,
Then were I glad of you as guide and friend: 225
And you shall win this diamond,—as I hear,
It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will.”
“A fair large diamond,” added plain Sir Torre,
“Such be for queens, and not for simple maids.” 230
Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,
Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
Flush'd slightly at the slight disparagement
Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her,
Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return'd: 235
“If what is fair be but for what is fair,
And only queens are to be counted so,
Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid
Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
Not violating the bond of like to like.” 240

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

And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes
And loved him, with that love which was her doom.

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

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

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

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

The lily maid had striven to make him cheer, 325
 There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness
 Of manners and of nature: and she thought
 That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.
 And all night long his face before her lived,
 As when a painter, poring on a face, 330
 Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
 Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
 The shape and color of a mind and life,
 Lives for his children, ever at its best
 And fullest; so the face before her lived, 335
 Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full
 Of noble things, and held her from her sleep.
 Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the thought
 She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.
 First as in fear, step after step, she stole 340
 Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating:
 Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,
 "This shield, my friend, where is it?" and Lavaine
 Past inward, as she came from out the tower.
 There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd, and smooth'd 345
 The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
 Half-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, 355
 That he should wear her favor at the tilt.
 She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.
 "Fair lord, whose name I know not—noble it is,
 I well believe, the noblest—will you wear

My favor at this tourney?" "Nay," said he, 360
 "Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
 Favor of any lady in the lists.
 Such is my wont, as those who know me know."
 "Yea, so," she answer'd; "then in wearing mine
 Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord, 365
 That those who know should know you." And he turn'd
 Her counsel up and down within his mind,
 And found it true, and answer'd: "True, my child.
 Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:
 What is it?" and she told him "A red sleeve 370
 Broider'd with pearls," and brought it: then he bound
 Her token on his helmet, with a smile,
 Saying, "I never yet have done so much
 For any maiden living," and the blood
 Sprang to her face and fill'd her with delight; 375
 But left her all the paler, when Lavaine
 Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd shield,
 His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,
 Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:
 "Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield 380
 In keeping till I come." "A grace to me,"
 She answer'd, "twice to-day. I am your squire!"
 Whereat Lavaine said, laughing, "Lily maid,
 For fear our people call you lily maid
 In earnest, let me bring your color back; 385
 Once, twice, and thrice: now get you hence to bed."
 So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own hand,
 And thus they moved away: she stay'd a minute,
 Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there—
 Her bright hair blown about the serious face 390
 Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss—
 Paused by the gateway, standing near the shield
 In silence, while she watch'd their arms far-off
 Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully;
He bore a knight of old repute to the earth, 490
And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet endure,
And being lustily holpen by the rest,

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

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

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

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

So saying, from the carven flower above,
 To which it made a restless heart, he took,
 And gave, the diamond: then from where he sat
 At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose, 550
 With smiling face and frowning heart, a Prince
 In the mid 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 555
 Sir Modred's brother, and the child of Lot,
 Nor often loyal to his word, and now
 Wroth that the King's command to sally forth
 In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave
 The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings. 560

So all in wrath he got to horse and went ;
 While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,
 Past, thinking, " Is it Lancelot who hath come
 Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain
 Of glory, and hath added wound to wound, 565
 And ridd'n away to die?" So fear'd the King,
 And, after two days' tarriance there, return'd.
 Then when he saw the Queen, embracing ask'd,
 " Love, are you yet so sick?" " Nay, lord," she said.
 " And where is Lancelot?" Then the Queen amazed, 570
 " Was he not with you? won he not your prize?"
 " Nay, but one like him." " Why that like was he."
 And when the King demanded how she knew,
 Said, " Lord, no sooner had ye parted from us,
 Than Lancelot told me of a common talk 575
 That men went down before his spear at a touch,
 But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name
 Conquer'd; and therefore would he hide his name
 From all men, ev'n the King, and to this end
 Had made the pretext of a hindering wound, 580
 That he might joust unknown of all, and learn
 If his old prowess were in aught decay'd;
 And added, ' Our true Arthur, when he learns,
 Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
 Of purer glory.' " 585

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

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

Gawain the while thro' all the region round
 Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,
 Touch'd at all points, except the poplar grove,
 And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat:
 Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the maid 615
 Glanced at, and cried, "What news from Camelot, lord?
 What of the knight with the red sleeve?" "He won."
 "I knew it," she said. "But parted from the jousts
 Hurt in the side," whereat she caught her breath;
 Thro' her own side she felt the sharp lance go; 620
 Thereon she smote her hand; 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 625
 The victor, but had ridd'n a random round
 To seek him, and had wearied of the search.

To whom the Lord of Astolat, "Bide with us,
 And ride no more at random, noble Prince!
 Here was the knight, and here he left a shield; 630
 This will he send or come for: furthermore
 Our son is with him; we shall hear anon,
 Needs must we hear." To this the courteous Prince
 Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
 Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it, 635
 And stay'd; and cast his eyes on fair Elaine:
 Where could be found face daintier? then her shape,
 From forehead down to foot, perfect—again
 From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd:
 "Well—if I bide, lo! this wild flower for me!" 640
 And oft they met among the garden yews,
 And there he set himself to play upon her
 With sallying wit, free flashes from a height
 Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
 Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden eloquence 645
 And amorous adulation, till the maid
 Rebell'd against it, saying to him, "Prince,
 O loyal nephew of our noble King,
 Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
 Whence you might learn his name? Why slight your
 King 650
 And lose the quest he sent you on, and prove
 No surer than our falcon yesterday,
 Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and went
 To all the winds?" "Nay, by mine head," said he,
 "I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven, 655
 O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes;
 But an ye will it let me see the shield."
 And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw
 Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with gold,
 Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and mock'd: 660
 "Right was the King! our Lancelot! that true man!"

"And right was I," she answer'd merrily, "I,
 Who dream'd my knight the greatest knight of all."
 "And if *I* dream'd," said Gawain, "that you love
 This greatest knight, your pardon! lo, ye know it! 665
 Speak therefore: shall I waste myself in vain?"
 Full simple was her answer, "What know I?
 My brethren have been all my fellowship;
 And I, when often they have talk'd of love,
 Wish'd it had been my mother, for they talk'd, 670
 Meseem'd, of what they knew not; so myself—
 I know not if I know what true love is,
 But if I know, then, if I love not him,
 I know there is none other I can love."
 "Yea, by God's death," said he, "ye love him well, 675
 But would not, knew ye what all others know,
 And whom he loves." "So be it," cried Elaine,
 And lifted her fair face and moved away:
 But he pursued her, calling, "Stay a little!
 One golden minute's grace! he wore your sleeve: 680
 Would he break faith with one I may not name?
 Must our true man change like a leaf at last?
 Nay—like enow: why then, far be it from me
 To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves!
 And, damsel, for I deem you know full well 685
 Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave
 My quest with you; the diamond also: here!
 For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;
 And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
 From your own hand; and whether he love or not 690
 A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well
 A thousand times!—a thousand times farewell!
 Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
 May meet at court hereafter: there, I think,
 So ye will learn the courtesies of the court, 695
 We two shall know each other."

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

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

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

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all in awe,
 For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word, 715
 Linger'd that other, staring after him;
 Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd abroad
 About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
 All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues were loosed:
 "The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot, 720
 Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat."
 Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and all
 Had marvel what the maid might be, but most
 Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old dame
 Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news. 725
 She, that had heard the noise of it before,
 But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd so low,

Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tranquillity.
 So ran the tale like fire about the court,
 Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder flared: 730
 Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or thrice
 Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,
 And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
 Smiled at each other, while the Queen, who sat
 With lips severely placid, felt the knot 735
 Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen
 Crush'd the wild passion out against the floor
 Beneath the banquet, where the meats became
 As wormwood, and she hated all who pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat, 740
 Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
 The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
 Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
 Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said,
 "Father, you call me wilful, and the fault 745
 Is yours who let me have my will, and now,
 Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?"
 "Nay," said he, "surely." "Wherefore, let me hence,"
 She answer'd, "and find out our dear Lavaine."
 "Ye will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine: 750
 Bide," answer'd he: "we needs must hear anon
 Of him, and of that other." "Ay," she said,
 "And of that other, for I needs must hence
 And find that other, whereso'er he be,
 And with mine own hand give his diamond to him, 755
 Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
 As yon proud Prince who left the quest to me.
 Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
 Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden's aid. 760
 The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,

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

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slipt away,
 And while she made her ready for her ride,
 Her father's latest word humm'd in her ear, 775
 "Being so very wilful you must go,"
 And changed itself and echo'd in her heart,
 "Being so very wilful you must die."
 But she was happy enough and shook it off,
 As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us; 780
 And in her heart she answer'd it and said,
 "What matter, so I help him back to life?"
 Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide
 Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs
 To Camelot, and before the city-gates 785
 Came on her brother with a happy face
 Making a roan horse caper and curvet
 For pleasure all about a field of flowers:
 Whom when she saw, "Lavaine," she cried, "Lavaine,
 How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?" He amazed, 790
 "Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lancelot?
 How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot?"
 But when the maid had told him all her tale,
 Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his moods
 Left them, and under the strange-statued gate, 795

Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically,
 Past up the still rich city to his kin,
 His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot;
 And her Lavaine across the poplar grove
 Led to the caves: there first she saw the casque 800
 Of Lancelot on the wall: her scarlet sleeve,
 Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls away,
 Stream'd from it still; and in her heart she laugh'd,
 Because he had not loosed it from his helm,
 But meant once more perchance to tourney in it. 805
 And when they gain'd the cell wherein he slept,
 His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands
 Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream
 Of dragging down his enemy made them move.
 Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn, 810
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
 Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry.
 The sound not wonted in a place so still
 Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd his eyes
 Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying, 815
 "Your prize the diamond sent you by the King:"
 His eyes glisten'd: she fancied "Is it for me?"
 And when the maid had told him all the tale
 Of King and Prince, the diamond sent, the quest
 Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt 820
 Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
 And laid the diamond in his open hand.
 Her face was near, and as we kiss the child
 That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her face.
 At once she slipt like water to the floor. 825
 "Alas," he said, "your ride hath wearied you.
 Rest must you have." "No rest for me," she said;
 "Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest."
 What might she mean by that? his large black eyes,
 Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon her, 830

Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
 In the heart's colors on her simple face;
 And Lancelot look'd and was perplext in mind,
 And being weak in body said no more;
 But did not love the color; woman's love, 835
 Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
 Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the fields,
 And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured gates
 Far up the dim rich city to her kin; 840
 There bode the night; but woke with dawn, and past
 Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
 Thence to the cave: so day by day she past
 In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
 Gliding, and every day she tended him, 845
 And likewise many a night: and Lancelot
 Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little hurt
 Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times
 Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem
 Uncourteous, even he: but the meek maid 850
 Sweetly 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 855
 Upbore her; till the hermit, skill'd in all
 The simples and the science of that time,
 Told him that her fine care had saved his life.
 And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
 Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine, 860
 Would listen for her coming and regret
 Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
 And loved her with all love except the love
 Of man and woman when they love their best,

Closest and sweetest, and had died the death 865
 In any knightly fashion for her sake.
 And peradventure had he seen her first
 She might have made this and that other world
 Another world for the sick man; but now
 The shackles of an old love straiten'd him, 870
 His honor rooted in dishonor stood,
 And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made
 Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
 These, as but born of sickness, could not live: 875
 For when the blood ran lustier in him again,
 Full often the bright image of one face,
 Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
 Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.
 Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace 880
 Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd not,
 Or short and coldly, and she knew right well
 What the rough sickness meant, but what this meant
 She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd her sight,
 And drave her ere her time across the fields 885
 Far into the rich city, where alone
 She murmur'd, "Vain, in vain: it cannot be.
 He will not love me: how then? must I die?"
 Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
 That has but one plain passage of few notes, 890
 Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
 For all an April morning, till the ear
 Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
 Went half the night repeating. "Must I die?"
 And now to right she turn'd, and now to left, 895
 And found no ease in turning or in rest;
 And "Him or death," she mutter'd, "death or him,"
 Again and like a burthen, "Him or death."

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,
 To Astolat returning rode the three. 900
 There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self
 In that wherein she deem'd she look'd her best,
 She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought
 " If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
 If not, the victim's flowers before he fall." 905
 And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid
 That she should ask some goodly gift of him
 For her own self or hers; " and do not shun
 To speak the wish most near to your true heart;
 Such service have ye done me, that I make 910
 My will of yours, and Prince and Lord am I
 In mine own land, and what I will I can."
 Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
 But like a ghost without the power to speak.
 And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish, 915
 And bode among them yet a little space
 Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanced
 He found her in among the garden yews,
 And said, " Delay no longer, speak your wish,
 Seeing I go to-day:" then out she brake: 920
 " Going? and we shall never see you more.
 And 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." 925
 " Ah, sister," answer'd Lancelot, " what is this?"
 And innocently extending her white arms,
 " Your love," she said, " your love—to be your wife."
 And Lancelot answer'd, " Had I chosen to wed,
 I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine: 930
 But now there never will be wife of mine."
 " No, no," she cried, " I care not to be wife,
 But to be with you still, to see your face,

To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world."
 And Lancelot answer'd, " Nay, the world, the world, 935
 All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
 To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
 To blare its own interpretation—nay,
 Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
 And your good father's kindness." And she said, 940
 " Not to be with you, not to see your face—
 Alas for me then, my good days are done."
 " Nay, noble maid," he answer'd, " ten times nay!
 This is not love: but love's first flash in youth,
 Most common: yea, I know it of mine own self: 945
 And you yourself will smile at your own self
 Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
 To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age:
 And then will I, for true you are and sweet,
 Beyond mine old belief in womanhood, 950
 More specially should your good knight be poor,
 Endow you with broad land and territory
 Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,
 So that would make you happy: furthermore,
 Ev'n to the death, as tho' ye were my blood, 955
 In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
 This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
 And more than this I cannot."

While he spoke

She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale
 Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied: 960
 " Of all this will I nothing;" and so fell,
 And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of yew
 Their talk had pierced, her father: " Ay, a flash,
 I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead. 965
 Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.

I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
To blunt or break her passion."

Lancelot said,

"That were against me: what I can I will;"

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

So in her tower alone the maiden sat:
His very shield was gone; only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labor, left.
But still she heard him, still his picture form'd 985
And grew between her and the pictured wall.
Then came her father, saying in low tones,
"Have comfort," whom she greeted quietly.
Then came her brethren saying, "Peace to thee,
Sweet sister," whom she answer'd with all calm. 990
But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant field
Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd; the owls
Wailing had power upon her, and she mixt
Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms 995
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She ceased: her father promised; whereupon
 She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
 Was rather in the fantasy than the blood. 1125

But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh
 Her father laid the letter in her hand,
 And closed the hand upon it, and she died.
 So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground, 1130
 Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
 Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
 Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone
 Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
 Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay. 1135

There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
 Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
 Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
 So those two brethren from the chariot took
 And on the black decks laid her in her bed, 1140

Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
 The silken case with braided blazonings,
 And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her
 "Sister, farewell forever," and again
 "Farewell, sweet sister," parted all in tears. 1145

Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
 Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood—
 In her right hand the lily, in her left
 The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
 And all the coverlid was cloth of gold 1150

Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
 All but her face, and that clear-featured face
 Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
 But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

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

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

All in an oriel on the summer side, 1170
 Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,
 They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd, "Queen,
 Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
 Take, what I had not won except for you,
 These jewels, and make me happy, making them 1175
 An 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 1185
 To make up that defect: let rumors be:
 When did not rumors fly? these, as I trust
 That you trust me in your own nobleness,
 I may not well believe that you believe."

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

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

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

1225

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. 1235

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

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

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

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

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

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all: 1280
 "My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
 Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
 Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,
 But loved me with a love beyond all love

In women, whomsoever I have known. 1285
 Yet to be loved makes not to love again ;
 Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
 I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
 No cause, not willingly, for such a love :
 To this I call my friends in testimony, 1290
 Her brethren, and her father, who himself
 Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
 To break her passion, some discourtesy
 Against my nature: what I could, I did.
 I left her and I bade her no farewell ; 1295
 Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would have died,
 I might have put my wits to some rough use,
 And help'd her from herself."

Then said the Queen

(Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm)
 "Ye might at least have done her so much grace, 1300
 Fair lord, as would have help'd her from her death."
 He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,
 He adding:

"Queen, she would not be content
 Save that I wedded her, which could not be.
 Then might she follow me thro' the world, she ask'd ; 1305
 It could not be. I told her that her love
 Was but the flash of youth, would darken down
 To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
 Toward one more worthy of her—then would I,
 More specially were he she wedded poor, 1310
 Estate them with large land and territory
 In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,
 To keep them in all joyance: more than this
 I could not; this she would not, and she died."

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

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

"Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have 1345
 Most joy and most affiancè, for I know
 What thou hast been in battle by my side,

And many a time have watch'd thee at the tilt
 Strike down the lusty and long-practised knight,
 And let the younger and unskill'd go by 1350
 To win his honor and to make his name,
 And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
 Made to be loved; but now I would to God,
 Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
 Thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it seems, 1355
 By God for thee alone, and from her face,
 If one may judge the living by the dead,
 Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
 Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man
 Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons 1360
 Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
 My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

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

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

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but he went,
 And at the inrunning of a little brook
 Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd

The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes
 And saw the barge that brought her moving down, 1380
 Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said
 Low in himself, " Ah simple heart and sweet,
 Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
 Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul?
 Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at last— 1385
 Farewell, fair lily. ' Jealousy in love? '
 Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride?
 Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
 May not your crescent fear for name and fame,
 Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes? 1390
 Why did the King dwell on my name to me?
 Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,
 Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
 Caught from his mother's arms—the wondrous one
 Who passes thro' the vision of the night— 1395
 She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
 Heard on the winding waters, eve and morn.
 She kiss'd me saying, ' Thou art fair, my child,
 As a king's son,' and often in her arms
 She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere. 1400
 Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er it be!
 For what am I? what profits me my name
 Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and have it:
 Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain;
 Now grown a part of me: but what use in it? 1405
 To make men worse by making my sin known?
 Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
 Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
 Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must break
 These bonds that so defame me: not without 1410
 She wills it: would I, if she will'd it? nay,
 Who knows? but if I would not, then may God,
 I pray him, send a sudden Angel down

To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills."

1415

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.

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, 5
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 10
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, 15
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. 20

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 25

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; 35
 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 holp 45
 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 55
 "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, 65
 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 75
 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, 85
 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 95
 (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 105
 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. 115
 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 125
 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 ! " 130
 Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn,
 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." 135

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, 145
 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 155
 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! 165
 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! 175
 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 185
 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. 195
 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 205
 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, 215
 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, 225
 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 235
 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 245
 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 255
 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 265
 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, 275
 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,
 When round him bent the spirits of the hills 280
 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 : 285
 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 290
 Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea ;
 And that was Arthur ; and they foster'd him
 Till he by miracle was approv'n King :
 And that his grave should be a mystery
 From all men, like his birth ; and could he find 295
 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, 305
 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 315
 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, 325
 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 335
 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." 345

" 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 355

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, 365
 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 375
 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 385
 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, 395
 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. 405
 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, 415
 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, 425
 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 435
 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 445
 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. 455
 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, 465
 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, 475
 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, 485
 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 495
 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. 505
 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, 515
 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. 525

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. 535
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, 545
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. 555
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 : 565
 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— 575
 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 585
 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 595
 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— 605
 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, 610
 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, 615
 If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;
 No, nor by living can I live it down.
 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, 620
 And mine will ever be a name of scorn.
 I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
 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; 625

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 635
 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? 645
 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." 655

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.’ 665
 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; 675
 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. 685
 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 peace.

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.

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. 5

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, 10
But in His ways with men I find Him not.
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, 15
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 25

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. 35
 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
 Shril'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, 45
 “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. 55
 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: 65
 "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 75
 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 85
 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: 95
 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, 105
 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 helmets, 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 115
 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 125

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. 135

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. 145
 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 155
 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 165
 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, 175
 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 185
 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,— 190
 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, 195
 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 200
 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: 205
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word."

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: 210
 Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
 Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

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, 215
 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, 220
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,

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 225
 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 230
 There in the many-knotted waterflags,
 That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
 So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
 "Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave? 235
 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: 240
 "Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
 Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
 Thy fēalty, nor like a noble knight:
 For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
 Or voice, or else a motion of the mere. 245
 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."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time 250
 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,

How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud: 255

“ 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. 265
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 275
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.” 285

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 295
 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, 305
 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. 315

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; 325
 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, 335
 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 345
 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 355
 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 365
 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 375
 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 385
 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? 395
 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, 405
 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 415
 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. I am going a long way
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go 425
 (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, 435
 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." 445

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 455
 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, 465
 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 "help" 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, Igera.

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 soft

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.

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, boulder, 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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