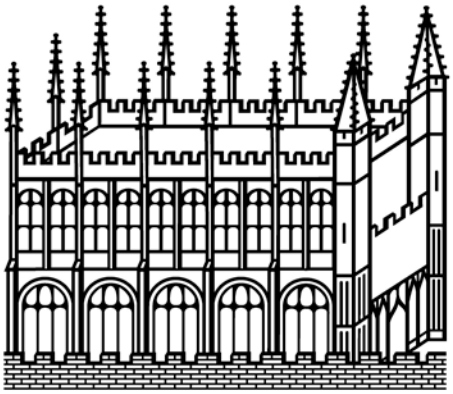
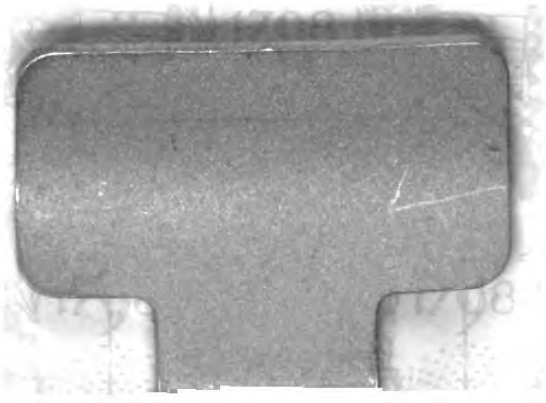




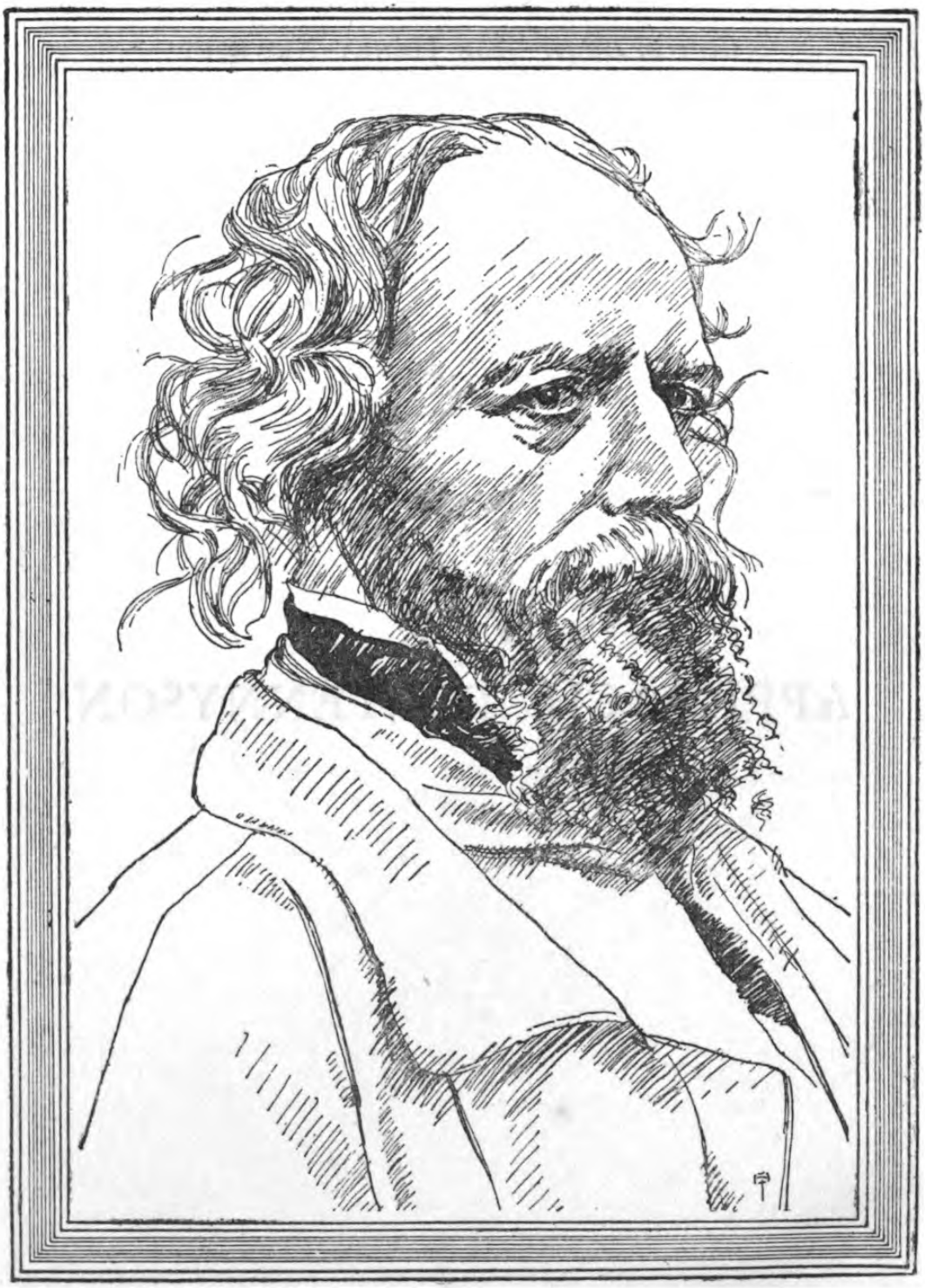
280 f. 1875

The "Teaching of English" Series

General Editor—SIR HENRY NEWBOLT

THE APPROACH TO TENNYSON

No. 10



ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

THE APPROACH TO TENNYSON

Prose Tales and Extracts
from the Poems
With Introduction by
MRS. ANDREW LANG

THOMAS NELSON & SONS, LTD.
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

First published in this Series May 1925;
formerly known as "The Gateway to Tennyson"

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT
THE PRESS OF THE PUBLISHERS

CONTENTS

(* *Poetical Extracts are marked with an Asterisk*)

ALFRED TENNYSON 7
THE COMING OF ARTHUR 26
*THE CROWN 32
HOW ARTHUR GOT HIS CROWN, HIS QUEEN, AND THE ROUND TABLE 33
*SIR LANCELOT AND QUEEN GUINEVERE. . 40
THE STORY OF GARETH AND LYNETTE . . 42
*THE LADY OF SHALOTT 56
GERAINT AND ENID 62
*THE COMBAT WITH THE SPARROW-HAWK . 85
THE STORY OF ELAINE. 99
*ELAINE IN THE CAVE 110
THE STORY OF SIR GALAHAD 120
*SIR GALAHAD 140
*MORTE D'ARTHUR 143
THE STORY OF BECKET 152
*THE BROOK 163
*RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS . 171
*THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE . . 176
EPILOGUE 179


K. HOFF

ALFRED TENNYSON

By Mrs. ANDREW LANG

In the year 1820 there was no merrier place in the world than the rectory of Somersby in Lincolnshire. Eleven children, ranging from thirteen to a baby in arms, little steps one above the other, were to be seen and heard in every corner of the house and garden. Four girls there were and seven boys—

quite enough to play at knights and giants, to build forts and to attack castles, and even to get lost in the wood of larch and sycamore which bordered one side of the lawn. Now and then the elder boys, Frederick, Charles, and Alfred, would slip into an old brick farmhouse beyond the garden, and dance about the roof and pretend that they were looking out for Danish invaders from behind the battlements—for stories of the Danes still lingered among the moors and hills. But they did not talk much about this

game at home, for they knew it would most likely be forbidden.

Dr. Tennyson, the rector of Somersby and of four other parishes, the father of all these children, came from a family which had been settled in this part of Lincolnshire for five hundred years. Like many men in those days, he had become a clergyman because it was convenient to do so, and also because a large estate which should have descended to him had been left to his younger brother. He never could put away from his mind his father's injustice in this matter, and for the rest of his life had fits of gloom which were dreaded by his household; but when he shook off these low spirits he was a delightful companion, and was welcomed throughout the countryside for his amusing stories and pleasant ways. He did his duty to his parishioners, who thought a great deal of him; but books were what he loved best in the world. Hebrew and Syriac he knew better than Greek, but when his little boys were old enough to be taught, he set to work to learn his verbs over again, and to do some Greek verses, so that his sons might be able to take their places as scholars with other young men when they grew up and went to Cambridge. It was under him, too, that they studied Latin and French and mathematics, and something of natural history; but in one thing they needed no teaching, and that was poetry.

What did it matter to them if the rain poured down, so that it was impossible for them even to play at pretending? Had they not their father's library for a playground, and all his books for companions? And while other children did not even know the names of Cervantes and Defoe and Swift, and many others, the little Tennysons had not only read their books through, but knew them by heart.

Another of the pleasures in which they shared alike was making up stories and writing poems; but they admitted, one and all, that the most thrilling story-teller and the best poet was the third boy, Alfred, who was born on the 6th of August 1809.

The Tennysons were a tall and handsome race, and very soon Alfred promised to be as tall and as handsome as any of them. At seven his father gave him the choice of being put to sea or of going to school. As during his whole life he had a passionate love of the sea, and his happiest moments were spent at Mablethorpe on the coast, where Dr. and Mrs. Tennyson took their children every summer, it seems strange that he did not wish to be a sailor. But he had formed the idea that school was a wonderful and delightful place, full of unknown joys, so he answered quickly, "Oh! to school;" and a few days after he was driven off to Louth to stay with his grandmother, who in her youth had been a famous beauty and had had twenty-five proposals of marriage! From there he went daily to the grammar school, where the room was so cold that his fingers could not hold a pen, and his brain was so frozen that he seemed unable to learn any new lessons, or even to remember his old ones. And his memory was not quickened by having his head punched by a big bully, just because he was a new boy.

How he did hate that school, and how thankful he was to leave it after four years, and to come home and do lessons with his father!

Yet even those dreadful four years had their

holiday times, when he was free to do as he liked. In the summer mornings he would get up very early, almost before the sun, and listen to the birds who were waking up too. Or he would steal off to the moors—or " wolds " as the people called them—and lie among the heather, watching the lark soaring into the sky, up and up and up. And in the spring all the buds and flowers would be swelling, and if you looked at them very closely, in the way Alfred always did look, you would see them opening a little more day by day. Then he would go home and put what he had seen into a poem ; for all the Tennyson children wrote poetry, though none of them had such beautiful thoughts and words as Alfred.

Throughout their childhood it was he who was leader of their games ; it was Alfred who divided his brothers and sisters into Greeks and Trojans, and had many a fight on the sands of Mablethorpe ; it was he who told them stories of Napoleon and Wellington, as well as tales of knights and soldiers ; and when they acted plays, Alfred was always given the principal part.

" Perhaps he will turn out an actor, like Garrick," said his parents ; but Alfred had other work to do.

So his boyhood passed away, amidst books and country sounds, and when he was eighteen he joined his brother Frederick in Cambridge. He soon made friends, and from the first was " a hero " to them, as he had been to the children at home. But though he was fond of them all, the one that was dearest by far was Arthur Hallam. From him he had no secrets —every subject was talked over between them, and it was to Hallam that Tennyson's poems were first read—and great was his delight when Hallam fell in love with his sister Emily, and in a year's time became engaged to her. Like all the Tennysons, except Frederick, she was dark, more like a Roman than an English woman—fond of music and poetry,

and a great favourite with her brothers. While Hallam was staying at Somersby, a party of the young folks would go out every afternoon after lunch for long walks over the hills and wolds, and while the talk and laughter went on about him Alfred often suddenly grew silent and dreamed dreams, which by-and-by became poems. Then he would wake up again, and challenge the others to fling a stone farther than he, or to jump a ditch or raise some heavy weight—for he was immensely strong, and could throw a crowbar better than any man in the village, while he once picked up a little pony and carried it across the lawn.

Early in 1831 old Dr. Tennyson fell ill, and Alfred was wanted at home. So he hastily bade good-bye to his friends, and left Cambridge without waiting to take his degree, but not before he had obtained a gold medal for a prize poem on Timbuctoo. Among Tennyson's friends, at Cambridge and afterwards, was Thackeray, who wrote *The Rose and the Ring* and other books. The prize poem began,—

" In Africa (a quarter of the world)
Men's skins are black, their hair is crisp and curled ;
And somewhere there, remote from public view,
A mighty city lies, called Timbuctoo."

Tennyson now set about doing what he could for his mother. She needed him badly, for his father grew daily weaker, and one morning was found in a chair in his study, having passed quietly from sleep to death.

At first it seemed likely that the family would be obliged to leave Somersby, and the thought was a bitter grief to them ; but the new rector agreed to

let them the house, and they stayed on in it till 1837. Alfred did his best to help his mother to bear her loss, and spared her all the trouble that was possible. He spent much of his time reading to her; but when Hallam came, the English poetry was often put aside for Dante, Ariosto, and other Italians; and by-and-by Alfred began to learn Spanish, so that he might read his beloved Cervantes in the original. He had picked up some idea of the language in a trip to the Pyrenees with Hallam the year before, when they made some strange acquaintances among the Spanish revolutionaries. But though he learned foreign tongues so easily, at this period of his life he seldom went abroad. Short tours to Devonshire and Tintagel — to dream about King Arthur—and once to the Rhine, varied by brief visits to London, where he roamed with Hallam about the British Museum and the Tower, and spent hours in the Zoological Gardens—these were his chief absences from Somersby. Meanwhile he had published many poems, and his fame was growing from day to day among young men. Older people could not understand his writings.

THACKERAY IN 1840

It was while he was leading this peaceful life that the blow fell which almost crushed him. In August 1833 Alfred went up to London to say good-bye to Hallam, who was starting with his father for a holiday in Austria and the Tyrol. He wrote several times, both to Alfred and to Emily, and his last letter is dated September 6, telling them of the

wonderful pictures to be found in the gallery at Vienna. To all appearance he was perfectly well and in good spirits; then, on the morning of the 15th, Mr. Hallam, who had been out for a walk, entered Arthur's room. He was lying on the sofa, asleep his father thought; but when he touched him gently, he saw it was death and not sleep that had come to him.

A fortnight passed before the news reached the Tennysons, in a letter from Hallam's uncle, Mr. Elton, at Clifton. "It was the general opinion that Arthur could not have lived long," he wrote; though he does not give any reason. On the 3rd of January 1834 he was laid to rest in the little church at Clevedon, in "the haven under the hill," mourned deeply by his many friends, who felt that he had gifts beyond any they could boast. As for Tennyson, he has left a record of his own personal feelings in his poem *In Memoriam;* while it was long before his sister Emily recovered from the shock. But she came of a strong race, and lived on for sixty-six years, till the days of her betrothal must have seemed like a dream to her.

Had it not been for the power to express something of what he was feeling in his poems, Alfred would have suffered even more than he did. As it was, the world seemed very dark around him; and the thought of the friend, who for five years may truly be said to have formed part of his life, dying in the midst of his happiness, was almost more than he could bear. Perhaps the words of an old Greek

play had come to him in his grief, telling of a death swift and unexpected as Hallam's :—

" For neither was it thunderbolt from Zeus
Nor flashing fire that slew him, nor the sound
Of whirlwind sweeping o'er the sea's dark breast ;
But either some one whom the gods had sent,
Or gentleness of mood had moved the powers
Beneath to ope the way
To earth's deep regions painlessly.
He died no death to mourn for ; did not leave
the world
Worn out with pain and sickness. But his end,
If ever any was, was wonderful."

Up to this year, 1833, Alfred had published a number of poems, the first volume called *Poems of Two Brothers*, being a collection made by Charles and himself when they were eighteen and seventeen respectively. Though young as men, they were old as poets, for Alfred tells of his " covering two sides of a slate with some verses about flowers " when he was only eight ; and of his inventing, together with Frederick and Charles, " hundreds of lines " in imitation of Pope when a little older. Of course, like other small geniuses, he would not be satisfied without writing an epic poem, and this time—he was now twelve—it was not Pope whom he took for his model, but Scott. Oh, what pleasure he took in his six thousand lines, all about battles and seas and mountains ! " Never," he says, " did I feel myself more truly inspired, and I used to go shouting about the fields in the dark."

Only a few pages of this epic still remain, but many of the poems are preserved which he wrote when he

fell under the spell of Byron, who died of fever in Greece while Alfred was a boy. "The whole world seemed to be darkened to me," he wrote later, as he went to some rocks near the rectory to look for the words he had carved there, "Byron is dead."

It was the poems that he composed this time, in the year 1824, which convinced his family that "he too was a poet." "Alfred's poetry all comes from *me*," said his grandmother proudly; while his grandfather added, "If Alfred die, one of our greatest poets will have gone."

Besides the two volumes of poetry which Tennyson brought out in 1830 and 1832, he wrote numberless other poems which he never allowed to be published, either because the rhymes were not good enough, or because he stated something about a bird or a flower or the sea which he did not feel sure was exactly true. Yet occasionally some poem would appear which is now an old and familiar friend, till Hallam's death suddenly for a while put an end to everything. Perhaps it was shortly after this sad event that he began pouring out the sorrow which seventeen years later made its appeal to the world as *In Memoriam*. He probably did; but till 1842 he published no book. Then the stream flowed on, full and swift, and only ceased with his life in 1892.

He certainly wrote the beautiful poem on Ulysses, which tells of that hero's constant and courageous endurance of evil fortune. But his first volumes had been laughed at by critics, and he was in no hurry to publish again. When he did, he corrected the mistakes which had been noticed.

But whoever thinks of Tennyson as nothing but a poet will have a very wrong idea of him. Frederick, the eldest, had gone to Italy, which thenceforward he seems to have made his home; Charles, the next, was to be ordained the following year (1835); so it

was left to Alfred to look after his mother and the rest of the family. His poetry—he was very busy copying out the *Morte d'Arthur*—only came second; at this period his household duties were always first.

In spite of the fits of gloom which the loss of his friend would still wrap round Alfred, pleasanter things began to have their place in his thoughts. Charles became engaged to Miss Louisa Sellwood, the daughter of a solicitor in Horncastle, himself brother-in-law of Franklin the explorer. The young man who later, under his uncle's will, added the name of Turner to his own, was at this time curate of Tealby, a neighbouring village, and in 1836 he was married, and set out with his wife for a tour up the Rhine.

As best man, it was, of course, Alfred's duty to escort the bridesmaid, Louisa's sister Emily. She had once before—six years earlier—called at Somersby with her parents, and Alfred had then been struck with her grace and charm. Now he found she was even more attractive than his remembrance of her, and by-and-by he tells us all about it :—

> " O happy bridesmaid, make a happy bride !
> And all at once a pleasant truth I learned."

Perhaps some of you can guess what the pleasant truth was !

But marriage was a long way off yet, and a great many things were to happen first. In 1837 the rector of Somersby thought it was time that he should live in his own house, which he had let to the Tennyson family for six years; and as Mrs. Tennyson's mother was now dead, there was nothing more to keep the

family in Lincolnshire. So inquiries were made as to houses farther south. The one fixed on at last was called High Beech, and was in Epping Forest. Here they passed the next three years, during which time Horatio, whose school days were now over, had to decide upon a profession. Horatio pined to be a soldier ; but his mother, who made sure he would be killed at once, turned a deaf ear to all his arguments. But she eventually allowed him to go off to Tasmania—in those days a very long voyage indeed.

To those who only knew Tennyson as a splendid figure in a wide beaver hat and a flowing cloak, striding over the cliffs near Farringford or the heather-covered hills of Blackdown, it seems odd to picture him in an ironmonger's shop, buying pots and pans, or making sure that the legs of sofas in an upholsterer's were firm, and that the drawers of a dressing-table would open. Perhaps his sisters, all at that time unmarried, had given him some advice ; but he insisted on examining everything, and in taking nothing for granted. Happy years they were at High Beech, when he would go up to London for the day to see his old Cambridge friends, Spedding, Edward Fitzgerald, and the rest. But he could hardly ever be persuaded to stay for the night, as his mother was a very nervous woman, and if he did not return, always imagined some accident had happened to him.

If Tennyson were not living in the depths of the country, leading the pony which drew his mother's bath chair through the Forest, skating on the pond belonging to the house, or sitting with a book on

some fallen tree, he was quite happy during a short visit to London. He would spend hours roaming about the Abbey—often passing, no doubt, the spot where one day he himself was to lie—or let the vastness of St. Paul's sink into his soul. But if utter silence did not surround him, then he liked the noise and bustle of the world outside, or an evening spent with his friends at one of the old taverns of the city; when, if he was in good spirits, he would mimic some of the great men he had seen, or recite some of his favourite passages from the poets. Not that he wanted to be the lion and to roar! Everything had an interest for him, and especially all that concerned astronomy or the new discoveries in science. There was no one who had done something or thought something whom he was not glad to meet, and all were glad to meet him. So one friend introduced another, and the circle grew.

But these visits to London became more rare when the Tennysons left High Beech and settled near Maidstone, where Cecilia, the youngest daughter, married the celebrated Greek scholar Edmund Lushington. The years flowed on with little to mark them outwardly; but Tennyson was always writing, reading, learning, publishing, till 1846 found the family now settled in Cheltenham, and a few months later there appeared the poem of *The Princess*. In the new home the poet met with a group of men who shared his tastes, if not always his ideas. When he wanted a little more noise and crowd than Cheltenham could furnish, he would go up to London

and renew his Cambridge acquaintanceship with Thackeray, and spend hours of the night walking about London, contradicting and being contradicted by Carlyle. Then, refreshed in mind, he would either go home, or else take a tour to Scotland or Cornwall, or back to Lincolnshire, but nearly always to the sea.

During the ten years that had passed since the Tennysons had quitted High Beech, Alfred's engagement to Miss Sellwood had been broken off. There did not at one time seem to be any hope that they would ever be rich enough to marry, so it appeared best that they should separate. But Alfred's poems, and especially *In Memoriam*, published in 1850, now promised him a steady income, though a small one. He felt, when he met Miss Sellwood again, he might venture to ask her for the second time to marry him. This time there was no delay, and the quietest of weddings took place one day in June in the country church of Shiplake on the Thames. Then they set out westwards to the grave of Arthur Hallam.

The next event in Tennyson's life was his appointment as Poet Laureate in November 1850, after the death of Wordsworth. He did not accept the office at once ; the pay was only £100 a year, and he had, as he said, " no passion for courts, but a great love of privacy." But after a little thought, moved by the advice of his friends, he decided not to decline the offer.

From this date the kindness shown him by Queen Victoria and the royal family ceased only with his life.

Three years after his marriage, Tennyson found that a house called Farringford, near Freshwater in the Isle of Wight, was to be sold, and after carefully counting the cost, he decided that he might buy it. So there the family moved in November 1853, with Hallam, then a baby of eighteen months ; and at Farringford, in March 1854, the second boy, Lionel, was born.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Tennyson were delighted to be back in the real country, and looked after their farmyard themselves. To see the Laureate sweeping up the leaves or laying fresh gravel on the garden walks, you would never have guessed that such a thing as poetry existed. He thought of making a dictionary of flowers, but it never got much further than the beginning; and when he was tired of stooping over the beds, he would get his telescope and watch the birds circling round the trees. Not that either he or his wife was entirely wrapped up in their own affairs: they had only to hear that one of the villagers was ill or in trouble, and at once they went to comfort and help.

Then there were the children, who soon grew big enough to be taught and played with. The days when the little boy Alfred, at eight years old, had his still smaller brothers and sisters leaning against him, listening to his stories, seemed to come back again. And when Hallam and Lionel were tired of sitting still, their father would stand with his feet wide apart, and tell them that he was the Colossus with his legs across the harbour of Rhodes, and that they were the ships that were sailing out to sea, and must see that their masts were not too tall to be caught in his hand. And with shrieks of delight they would try to run through between his legs without being touched by their father.

In their walks, when the boys were harnessed to their mother's chair, while their father pushed behind, they would hunt for wild flowers, or look for flints in the chalk pits; or if there was a nice green alley among the trees, he would fix up a mark, and tell them to bring out their bows and arrows and shoot at it. Whatever the boys' game was, it was always the merrier when their father was their playfellow.

Yet he taught them to care for other things too, which other children's fathers sometimes forget. These were the things he had begun to love long ago, and

would love always—the aisles and corners of Westminster Abbey, the walls and dungeons of the Tower, the Elgin Marbles, and the pictures in the National Gallery. Old ballads they could repeat in plenty, but his own poems they were forbidden to learn.

The Tennysons had some pleasant neighbours at Farringford, and friends from London were continually coming down, so that they had quite as much society as was good for Mrs. Tennyson, who was growing more and more of an invalid. These visitors included almost every well-known person of the day; and if each did not stay very long, there were a large number of them, so that we often wonder when Tennyson found time to do his work, and to learn all the new things he was continually investigating. But it is an old saying that it is the busiest people who have the most leisure, and many a little poem came out from Farringford which cheered the hearts of those who had never heard of its author.

There is a story told of one of the survivors of the Light Brigade who lay in hospital at Scutari, dying because no one could persuade him to take the trouble to live. Everything had been tried, but the soldier's life was slipping away through sheer listlessness. At length the chaplain brought in a copy of Tennyson's poem, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, which he had received that morning, and read it aloud. In an instant the wounded man was awake and alive, and sitting up he gave an account of that "valley of death" as he himself had seen it.

Again there was the triumph, and that not a small one, of a letter from the late Lord Dufferin, telling Tennyson how, to his mother's despair, he had all his life hated poetry, and nearly went to sleep when she read him passages from Dryden, Cowper, Pope, Young, and even Byron, who had all been so much admired when *she* was a girl. He could not bear any of them,

nor Virgil either. He felt ashamed of being the descendant of Sheridan, and his mother's son. One day he came across a volume of Tennyson's poems, which he opened and could not put down. The doors of a new world were unbarred to him, and he wrote at once to thank the magician who had worked this wonder.

It was at the end of 1861 that the Prince Consort died, and Tennyson composed the Dedication to the *Idylls of the King* (about King Arthur and his knights), which, wrote the late Empress Frederick, had fallen like "drops of balm" on the hearts of the Queen and her children. Never has any poem in the English language been more widely read or more deeply loved, and as soon as she was able the Queen sent for the poet in person, and told him how much comfort both the Dedication and *In Memoriam* had given to her that long, sad winter.

Private visits, with an occasional tour either at home or abroad, were Tennyson's holidays. He would go with one friend or another, and must have been a very interesting travelling companion, as he cared for so many different kinds of things; though his spirits, however, were not always to be depended upon, and he had now and then fits of gloom. At Farringford life flowed on much as usual; the boys, after having a tutor, went to school—Hallam to Marlborough, and, in 1868, Lionel to Eton. It was in this year that the poet laid the foundation stone of the house at Aldworth, where, some twenty-four years later, he was to end his life. It stood on the high ridge of hills not far

from Haslemere, with a splendid view both to north and south. Between Aldworth and Farringford the months were thenceforth divided. But after Lionel's marriage in 1878 to the daughter of Tennyson's old friend Frederick Locker, the family went up to London from Christmas to Easter, for the poet to see his old friends more easily, and to gain the latest information on the countless subjects in which he was interested.

He was sixty-five years old when he brought out his first play, *Queen Mary*, which was produced by Irving at the Lyceum, and was followed later by *Harold* and *Becket*. To many people it seemed strange that a man who had hitherto been known for his beautiful songs and romances should turn in his old age to writing for the stage; but Tennyson was from his childhood fond of plays, and the subjects he chose were full of splendid pictures. With his usual care, he read every book or chronicle that he thought would help him to understand his subject, and not till it had soaked itself thoroughly into his brain did he begin to write.

When he heard from Mr. Gladstone in 1883 that the Queen was anxious to make him a peer, he hesitated some time before he accepted the honour. Even his son Hallam could not find out what he really thought. Tennyson merely said there were many " cons " and few " pros," but in the end the desire not to be ungracious to the Queen made the " pros " prevail over the " cons," and he wrote from Aldworth expressing his gratitude to her Majesty. Still, though he took his seat in the House of Lords, he refused to belong to any party, which he declared was made " too much of a god in these days."

Tennyson was by this time seventy-five, and many of his old friends at Cambridge had passed away, leaving the blanks that new friends can seldom fill. Three years later there came to him and to all at Aldworth a crushing grief in the death of his son Lionel, in the Red Sea, when returning with his wife from India. Yet, though " the thought of Lionel's death tore him in pieces," he threw himself into his work, and into the sorrows of others, and one of his chief pleasures at this time was to pay visits to a shepherd of ninety-two, and talk to him of the world about them, which both had studied from boyhood.

" I should like to see master again," said the old fellow a day or two before he died ; " he is a wonderful man for nature and life." And it was this very love of nature that helped the poet when life was closing for him.

Nobody can possibly understand Tennyson who does not realize how strong was his religious faith, and how it was always uppermost in his mind as well as in his writings. Like Browning, he firmly believed that " the best is yet to be," and during his illnesses would often ask for his favourite passages of the Bible to be read to him. His poem entitled *Crossing the Bar*, written when he was eighty, sums up his feeling towards death, and is, as his son told him, " the crown of his life's work." But in 1890 he seemed nearly as strong as ever, and would take long walks over the Farringford downs, watching the changes of light on the sea and the flight of the birds. People were beginning to tire him now, and he turned more than ever to his books for company. Miss Austen's novels he had always loved, and he often declared that the characters of these stories in their truth to nature came nearest to those of Shakespeare.

The summer of 1892 was a cold one, and it seemed to chill Tennyson, who was already weakened by

several attacks of influenza ; but it was not till early in September that the family felt really anxious about him. He had a sore throat and a difficulty in swallowing, and by the end of the month he told them that he would never get well. Then he grew sleepy, and beautiful dreams and visions would come to him ; but when he was awake, he liked to lie holding his Shakepeare and gazing out of the window at the hills and the trees.

" The sky and the light," he repeated one day as he lay watching the sunshine, " the sky and the light ; " and then he lay still, with his wife and son by him, in a great silence.

As the sun's rays faded, the moon rose and poured its beams into the room.

" God accept him ! Christ receive him ! " said Hallam, quoting a poem of his father's own. And with the moonbeams on him the great poet passed quietly away.

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

LONG, long ago in the island of Britain there was a great king whose name was Arthur, and whose fame went out into all the lands round about ; for he was wise and brave, and the most powerful lords of his day were proud to serve under his banner.

Now this was the story which was told of his birth. Uther, King of Britain, lay on his deathbed, and his heart was sad within him because he had no son to rule his kingdom when he should pass away. Beside him stood the wise men, Bleys and Merlin, who for many a long year had helped him to rule the realm.

Now when the king closed his eyes in death, the two wise men left the castle and went out to breathe the cool air of night. But they found a tempest raging which seemed to shake both earth and sky. And as they fought their way against the wind they saw far out on the water a vessel shaped like a winged dragon, and bright from stem to stern with shining forms. For a moment they saw it, and no more.

Then the two stepped down to the entrance of a cave by the margin of the sea and watched the angry waters fall, wave after wave, each one mightier than the last.

They counted the waves as each rose in an arch and then fell with a long line of spray creeping up to their

feet. The ninth wave, which seemed to gather half the sea, slowly rose and plunged towards them with a mighty roar, and as it were the sound of many voices. And on this wave was borne a naked child, which fell at Merlin's feet.

Stooping down, the sage lifted the babe in his arms, and cried, " The king ! Here is an heir for Uther ! " Then the great breaker sweeping up the beach seemed to wrap him and the child within a mantle of flame. And there fell a wondrous calm on sea and sky.

Then Merlin brought the babe back to the castle, and gave him into the charge of a good knight, Sir Ector, whom he trusted. And the child grew in stature and in wisdom.

He spent many long hours in roving about the country, and one day in his rambles he came to a pass in which lay a dark and gloomy mountain tarn. The place was avoided by all the country people, who used to tell, in the winter evenings, many dark tales of what had been seen there.

Long years before, two brothers, one of them a king, who hated each other, had met in this pass and fought together ; and each had slain his brother at a blow.

There they lay as they had fallen, and the winds sang a doleful song over their bones. Now he that had been a king still wore on his head a crown set with diamonds, one in front and four upon each side. And the young lad Arthur, coming up the pass when the moon was shining through a mist, trod without knowing it upon the bones of this king.

Then, with the movement, the crown parted from the head and, turning on its rim, rolled down the hillside towards the tarn. Then Arthur, with the quick step of youth, ran after it, caught it, and set it on his head ; and in his heart he heard a murmur, " Lo, thou likewise shalt be king ! "

* * * * * *

After the death of King Uther the kingdom was for

a long time in great confusion; for every great lord that had many men under him wished to make himself king of the land.

Then Merlin went to the archbishop and advised him to ask all the great lords to meet in London at Christmas; for he hoped that when they were all gathered together some sign would be granted them to show who should be the rightful king of the realm.

So the lords came together in the great church in London; and after prayers had been said they went out into the churchyard, where they beheld a wondrous sight. For there stood a great square stone, and upon it an anvil of steel, a foot in height; and through the anvil and the stone was stuck a sword, on which these words were written in letters of gold :—

WHOSO PULLETH THIS SWORD OUT OF THIS STONE AND ANVIL IS THE RIGHTFUL KING OF THIS REALM

Now when they had read these words they tried, one great lord after another, to pull out the sword. But none were able so much as to move the sword from its place. Then they agreed among themselves to call a meeting on a future day, and let any man who wished try to draw out the sword.

Upon New Year's Day the lords met together at a tournament; and among those who came were Sir Ector, who had the charge of Arthur from his childhood, and Sir Kay, the knight's own son. Now, as they rode through London towards the place of meeting, Sir Kay found that he had left his sword behind, so he asked the young lad Arthur to ride back and fetch it for him.

"That I will, and gladly," said the boy; but when

he reached their lodging he found no one in the house, for all had gone out to see the tournament.

Then Arthur said to himself, "I will ride to the churchyard and take the sword from the stone, for I am unwilling that my brother should be without a sword this day." So he came at length to the churchyard, where he alighted; and he laid his hand upon the sword and drew it out of the stone. Then mounting his horse, he brought the sword to his foster-brother, Sir Kay.

Now as soon as Sir Kay saw the sword he knew that it was the sword from the stone; so he rode up to his father and said, "Sir, here is the sword which none could draw from the stone. Surely I must be the king of the land!"

But when Sir Ector saw it he took it in his hand, and led his son and the young lad Arthur within the great church. There he commanded his son to tell him truly, as in the presence of God, how he had come by the sword.

"Sir," said Sir Kay, "my brother Arthur brought it to me."

Then Sir Ector turned to Arthur, who stood near, and asked him how he came by the sword; and Arthur replied,—

"When I reached home I found none in the house to give me my brother's sword; and I was grieved that Sir Kay should be swordless, so I came here and pulled the sword out of the stone."

"Then," said Sir Ector, "I know well that you must be king of this land."

"Wherefore should *I* be king?" asked Arthur.

"Sir," was the answer, "because it is plainly so ordained. For the man who can draw this sword out of the stone shall be king of this realm, and reign.

Now let me see whether you can put the sword back again into the stone."

"That is no hard task," said Arthur, and without delay he put the sword into the place from which he had taken it. Then Sir Ector tried to take it out again, but he could not.

"Now try to take out the sword, my son," said Sir Ector to Sir Kay. But though the young man pulled at the sword with all his might, he could not move it.

"Now you shall try again," said Sir Ector to Arthur.

"With a good will," said he, and pulled it out easily.

Then Sir Ector and Sir Kay knelt down upon the ground.

"Alas! my father and my brother," said Arthur to them, "why do you kneel to me?"

"Nay, my lord," said Sir Ector, "I am not your father. You are of higher birth than any son of mine can be." Then the good knight told the lad how Merlin had conveyed him, a tiny babe, from the seashore to be nursed and brought up till the time should come when the kingdom should be his own.

Then Arthur was sad at heart when he knew that Sir Ector was not his own father. But the good knight cheered him, and begged only for himself that when Arthur should be king he would make Sir Kay the steward of all his lands.

"That I will, and gladly," said the youth. "Never shall any other man hold the office whilst I live."

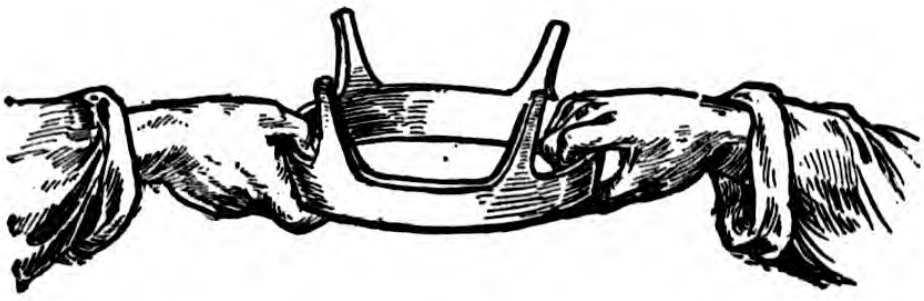
Then they all went to the archbishop, and told him how the sword had been taken from the stone. And he commanded that Arthur should once more replace it, and that the lords should be called together again for another trial with the sword.

They came at his call, but no one except Arthur

could take the sword from the stone. Then many of the lords were angry, and said that it was a great shame for the kingdom to be governed by a boy. And they all agreed to come again on the Feast of Pentecost and put the matter to the test.

THE CROWN

For Arthur, long before they crowned him king,
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonnesse,
Had found a glen, grey 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.
And each had slain his brother at a blow,
And down they fell and made the glen abhorred ;
And there they lay till all their bones were bleached,
And lichened into colour with the crags ;
And one of these, the king, had on a crown
Of diamonds, one in front and four aside.
And Arthur came, and labouring up the pass
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crowned skeleton, and the skull
Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown
Rolled 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."



HOW ARTHUR GOT HIS CROWN, HIS QUEEN, AND THE ROUND TABLE

THE Feast of Pentecost came, and there was again a great gathering of kings, nobles, and knights at London to decide who should be king of Britain.

Once more a great many competitors came forward and strove to draw out the magic sword; but pull and twist as they might, it remained immovable in the grasp of all save Arthur, who drew it forth again and again in the sight of lords and commons.

Most people were by this time weary of the long interregnum, and of the terrible evils it had brought upon the kingless land. When, therefore, Arthur once more came forth as the only successful competitor from the miraculous test, the assembly broke out into loud cries that he and none other should be king.

Thereupon, without further ado, he was first knighted by the most distinguished knight present, and then solemnly crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Forthwith he proceeded to appoint his great officers of the household, making Sir Kay his seneschal, according to his promise, Sir Lucas his butler, Sir Baldwin his constable, Sir Ulfius his chamberlain, and Sir Brastias warden of the northern frontier.

For some time after this King Arthur was busied in redressing wrongs that had been committed, and in restoring order in the country round about London; but after a while he set out for Wales, and appointed

a great feast to be held at the city of Caerleon, whereat the vassal kings and barons who had not yet given in their allegiance might acknowledge him as their overlord.

The time had not yet come, however, for Arthur to take peaceable possession of his dominions. King Leodegrance of Cameliard, who was one of the chief and most royal feudatories of King Uther Pendragon, was at this time sorely pressed by Rience, the Saxon king of North Wales, who was besieging him in his capital, Carohaise.

Merlin informed Arthur of his plight, and advised the king to go to his relief.

This advice was followed. Arthur and his companions arrived at Carohaise, and having entered the city without being observed by the besiegers, offered their services to Leodegrance, on condition that no inquiry should be made as to their name or quality.

The offer was thankfully accepted, and an opportunity was soon afforded them of proving their efficiency. Rience suddenly attacked the city at the head of a large body of his troops. Arthur and his companions armed themselves and hastened to sally out, headed by Merlin, who carried a wonderful standard—a huge dragon, with barbed tail and gaping jaws, whence there flashed actual sparks of fire. When the little troop of knights, who in all numbered only forty-two, arrived at the gate, they found it locked, and the porter refused to give them egress without an order from King Leodegrance.

There was no time for parleying, so Merlin lightly stepped forward and lifted the ponderous gate out of its place, with all its locks, bolts, and bars, calmly replacing it when the knights had passed through. He then resumed his position at their head, and they swept down on a detachment of the besiegers who were conducting a convoy to their camp, cut them to pieces, and captured the convoy.

Meanwhile Leodegrance, with the bulk of his army, was fighting gallantly in another part of the field. But his troops had not the prowess of Arthur and his companions, nor were they supported by the necromancy of Merlin ; so, being woefully outnumbered, it is not surprising that they were defeated. Leodegrance himself was taken prisoner, and was being led off to Rience's camp by an escort of five hundred knights, when Arthur and his little squadron made their appearance, dispersed the escort, and rescued the king.

The battle still continued for some hours, during which Arthur distinguished himself by cleaving in twain, with a single stroke of his sword, a giant fifteen feet high who had ventured to encounter him in single combat. Eventually Rience was utterly routed, and very few of his troops escaped extermination. The immense spoils of his camp were given up, by order of King Leodegrance, to Arthur, who forthwith divided them among the people of Carohaise, and thereby much increased his already great popularity. On his return to the city Arthur was unarmed by the fair hands of Guinevere, the king's daughter, whose beauty had already made a deep impression on his heart ; while the like honour was done to his companions by the ladies of the court.

While Arthur was thus warring on behalf of King Leodegrance, the confederate kings who had given him so much trouble were carrying on a desperate struggle with the heathen invaders who had descended in swarms upon their territories, and who also carried their ravages into the dominions of Arthur himself. Gawain, Agravaine, and Gaheris, the sons of King Lot, with Galachin, the son of King Nanters, having learned

from their mothers that Arthur was in truth their uncle, and the son of King Uther Pendragon, resolved to throw in their fortunes with his, and join his company of knights.

With this design they collected a small force and set out. They were but unproved warriors; but continually encountering on their journey great bodies of the enemy who were seeking to overrun Britain, they performed prodigies of valour, and slaughtered thousands of the Saxons.

Gawain especially distinguished himself. His strength, always greater than that of ordinary men, became doubled between the hours of nine o'clock in the morning and noon, and the same phenomenon again took place between three in the afternoon and evensong. He generally contrived to engage in battle at those times of the day when his prowess was greatest, and of course wrought terrible havoc among the heathen. He devoted his attention especially to the giants, who were numerous in their ranks, and cut many of them to pieces in a fashion which rivalled the exploits of his uncle at Carohaise.

Having at length completely dispersed and overcome all the enemies they could find, the young warriors made their way to London, and thence to Camelot. In the meantime Arthur was engaged in a final struggle with King Rience, who now had the aid of his brother, King Nero, King Lot of Orkney, and others of the confederates.

King Rience himself was taken prisoner by some of Arthur's knights while on a nocturnal expedition; and on the next day another great battle was fought, in which Nero was totally defeated, and King Lot fell by the hand of one of Arthur's most formidable knights, King Pellinore—an event which laid the foundation of a blood-feud that continued for many years.

In the realm of Britain there was now no longer any one who disputed Arthur's title or supremacy. So he

came to Camelot, and set up his court there in great splendour, and many famous knights gathered about him. But Sir Ulfius and others of his older counsellors often urged him to take a wife, so that the realm might have a queen as well as a king.

Arthur was not displeased with this counsel, for the love he had felt for Guinevere when he first saw her at the court of her father King Leodegrance had grown greater rather than less. So he sought the advice of Merlin, who said he ought to marry, and asked him if there were any lady that he loved. He answered frankly that his heart was set upon Guinevere.

"Sir," answered Merlin, "the lady is one of the fairest that lives; but if you did not love her so well, I would find you a queen of no less beauty and goodness. Since, however, your heart is set upon her, it is bootless to think of any other."

Merlin said this because he was well aware that the king's choice would not be for his happiness; and he would have given him some warning, but Arthur's passion for Guinevere was too strong to let him listen. Merlin therefore offered no further opposition, but went to Cameliard and asked Leodegrance to give Arthur his daughter to wife, letting him know, at the same time, that the great monarch who now sued for Guinevere's hand was the same unknown champion who had rescued him from the sword of King Rience.

Gratitude alone would have made Leodegrance favour the suit of one who had given such decisive proof that he possessed the qualities most esteemed in those troublous times; and he was naturally overjoyed on learning that the knight who had already won

his daughter's heart, and now sought her hand, was none other than his liege lord.

Guinevere was no less pleased; and when King Arthur's knight, Sir Lancelot, escorted her to London, where her bridegroom was awaiting her, he took with him also the famous Round Table, and as many of its knights as still remained, by way of a marriage gift from King Leodegrance. Arthur gave the princess a right royal welcome, and avowed that the Round Table and its gallant company were more welcome to him than any other dower that Leodegrance could have bestowed with his daughter.

The number of "sieges" or seats at the Round Table was a hundred and fifty, but the knights sent by the king of Cameliard only numbered a hundred. Arthur was anxious to have all the seats filled before his marriage, and urged Merlin to collect all the knights worthy of the honour whom he could find. The necromancer obeyed; but though he used his utmost diligence, there were still several vacant seats at the Table. Each seat was then solemnly consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the knights all swore the oath required of them.

To this Table none were admitted save such as were of royal or at least noble blood, and such as were distinguished for great personal strength, skill in arms, and unfaltering valour. All who were so received were obliged to swear to give aid to one another, even at the peril of life; to be ever ready to undertake dangerous adventures; to be faithful to their liege lord; and to be willing on all occasions to defend all ladies.

One day, as the king rode forth with Merlin, Arthur said to the magician, " I have no sword."

" No matter," answered Merlin ; " near by there is a sword that shall be yours if all go well."

Presently they came to a lake, and in the middle of it the king saw an arm thrust out of the water, clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in the hand.

" Yonder," said Merlin, " is the sword I spoke of." Just then they saw a damsel walking by the lake.

" What damsel is that ? " asked the king.

Merlin said she was the Lady of the Lake, and that the sword belonged to her ; but that if he spoke her fair, she would doubtless give it him. Then the king saluted the damsel, and asked what sword that was, held up above the water; and he said he would it were his, for he had none.

" Sir King," answered the lady, " that sword is mine ; and if you will give me a gift when I ask you, you shall have it."

This the king gladly promised ; and then she bade him take a boat that was there and row out to the sword and take it, and she would ask for her gift when she saw fit. The king obeyed her direction, and took the sword ; and when he held it in his hand he liked it exceedingly. Merlin told him that its name was Excalibur, which signifies " cut-steel " ; but that the scabbard was still more precious than the sword, for while he wore it he could lose no blood, no matter how sorely he was wounded. Then the king and Merlin returned to Camelot, where all the court greeted them joyfully.

SIR LANCELOT AND QUEEN GUINEVERE

LIKE souls that balance joy and pain,
With tears and smiles from heaven again
The maiden Spring upon the plain
Came in a sunlit fall of rain.
In crystal vapour everywhere
Blue isles of heaven laughed between,
And, far in forest deeps unseen,
The topmost elm tree gathered green
From draughts of balmy air.

Sometimes the linnet piped his song ;
Sometimes the throstle whistled strong ;
Sometimes the sparhawk, wheeled along,
Hushed all the groves from fear of wrong ;
By grassy capes with fuller sound
In curves the yellowing river ran,
And drooping chestnut-buds began
To spread into the perfect fan
Above the teeming ground.

Then, in the boyhood of the year,
Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere
Rode through the coverts of the deer,
With blissful treble ringing clear.
She seemed a part of joyous Spring :
A gown of grass-green silk she wore,
Buckled with golden clasps before ;
A light-green tuft of plumes she bore
Closed in a golden ring.

Now on some twisted ivy-net,
Now by some tinkling rivulet,
In mosses mixt with violet
Her cream-white mule his pastern set ;
And fleeter now she skimmed the plains
Than she whose elfin prancer springs
By night to eerie warblings,
When all the glimmering moorland rings
With jingling bridle-reins.

As she fled fast through sun and shade,
The happy winds upon her played,
Blowing the ringlet from the braid ;
She looked so lovely as she swayed
The rein with dainty finger-tips,
A man had given all other bliss
And all his worldly worth for this,
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips.

THE STORY OF GARETH AND LYNETTE

ONE day in the springtime Gareth, the young son of King Lot and Queen Bellicent, stood staring in moody silence at a rushing river. Soon he saw a tall young pine undermined by the torrent, and fall with a great splash into the water. The swiftly-flowing current dashed it away out of sight, and as Gareth watched it disappear, words of bitterness rose to his lips.

" Thus canst thou, O flood, bear all before thee," he cried, " though thou art only made of the cold snows from the hillside, which have melted to feed thee ; while I, who am filled with warm, living blood, and long to taste the battle, am kept loitering here in my father's halls."

Thus spake Gareth, who, though but a youth in years, had all a man's longing to go forth and prove his courage to the world. But being the youngest and favourite son of Queen Bellicent, she was loath to recognize that he had reached the age to leave her, and, to the young man's annoyance, still looked upon him as little more than a child.

To her Gareth came later on this same day, and kneeling by her chair, begged her once more to let him go forth and try the might of his sword in manly adventure as one of the great King Arthur's followers.

Bellicent tried to dissuade him, urging her own loneliness ; for he was the only son left in the home, and King Lot was a stricken invalid. She reminded him too that he who had never known even a finger-

ache could little realize the perils and pains of the tournament and the battle, and in conclusion she urged him to be content with the peaceful pursuits of the chase near his home, and told him that after all he was as yet more of a boy than a man.

Perhaps if she had kept to her first plea—that of her own loneliness—Queen Bellicent might have prevailed; but the last part of her speech quite undid the effect of the rest, for Gareth felt that if after that he stayed on in idleness, he would prove that he was in truth afraid of the tournament and the wounds he might receive there, and that he was still, as his mother had said, little more than a boy.

Then, finding all other arguments fail, Queen Bellicent thought of a crafty device by which, though no longer seeming to oppose her son, she might nevertheless cure his longing to leave her.

She said that he should go, as he wished, to the court of the great King Arthur, but only on condition that he should let himself out for hire among the scullions and the kitchen-knaves, and in this low disguise serve the king for a year and a day without telling any one his name.

For a minute or two Gareth remained silent at his mother's strange request; but while Bellicent thought with triumph that she had prevailed, and would indeed keep him with her, he suddenly looked up, and, much to her surprise, said slowly,—

"Even the thrall in body may be free in soul, and if I go I shall at least see the jousts. As I am thy son, I must obey thee; therefore I accept the condition, and will serve in Arthur's kitchens among the lowly-born for a year and a day."

Bellicent had no choice after this but to keep to her part of the bargain; and the next morning Gareth, calling two of his father's servants to accompany him, rode forth disguised as a farm-hand ere his mother had left her chamber.

It was a lovely spring morning, and as they rode southward towards Arthur's city of Camelot, they saw the hills fresh with the green of the young grass and the meadows gay with blossom, while the sweet morning air was filled with the melody of the birds; and at last, after much riding, they came within sight of the town and walls of Camelot half hidden in a mist.

The city was entered by a marvellous gate before which Gareth and his two companions stood in wonder. On the gate was carved a lifelike figure of the maiden known as the Lady of the Lake, holding a sword in one hand and a censer in the other; and on her right hand and her left were scenes from Arthur's wars, done in a quaint, intricate design. At the top of the gate were carven figures of three mystical queens who had promised to help Arthur in case of need. Neither Gareth nor his servants had ever seen anything at all like this strange gate, and as they stood staring at it the weird device on either side of the Lady of the Lake seemed to be actually moving, while, to add to the general effect of magic mystery, a wild strain of music now pealed from within the walls of the city. At the same moment the gate was opened, and an ancient, long-bearded man appeared and asked the travellers their names and condition.

In reply, Gareth, who wished, of course, to preserve his disguise, assumed the speech of a countryman.

" We be tillers of the soil, who have come to see the glories of your king. But of a truth your city seemed so strange, and appeared and disappeared in so curious a fashion in the mist, that we be doubtful if it be a real city with a real king or altogether a fairy one."

But the old man was very shrewd, and his quick eyes and ready wit had detected at once that Gareth was not what he appeared to be. So he proceeded to make fun of him.

" It is quite true," he said mockingly, " that this is a fairy city. It was built by a fairy king and queen to the music of their harps, and is, as you suppose, enchanted. If you enter this gate, you will yourself become a thrall to the enchantments of the king. Better bide outside among the cattle."

Then Gareth, seeing that the old man was laughing at him, replied in anger,—

" Why should you mock me who have spoken fair to you ? "

" I mock you not ! " said the old man angrily. " It is you who mock, for I see that you are not what you pretend. And now you go to mock the king, who cannot brook even the shadow of a lie."

With these words he left them and went on his way, while Gareth and his companions led their horses within the gateway. They rode through the streets of the beautiful city until they came to the hall where Arthur sat in judgment. Gareth entered, and saw the great king on his throne, and heard the clear, loud tones of his voice ; and his heart beat quickly, for he thought, " I shall be discovered, and the noble king will scorn me for my deception."

He stood there unnoticed while Arthur listened to several appeals, and in every case the mild, just king gave sentence as righteousness demanded—restoring property unjustly seized in days gone by,

sending forth knights to right all discovered wrongs, and affording protection to those who needed it.

At last Gareth came forward to proffer his request, leaning heavily on his two attendants so as to appear as if weak from hunger.

"A boon, O King!" he cried. "Grant me leave to serve among thy kitchen knaves for a year and a day for food and drink, and do not ask me my name. Thereafter let me fight for thee."

The king gave what seemed merely a careless glance at him, and said,—

"You seem a goodly youth. You shall have your boon and serve under Sir Kay, my seneschal." And he passed out of the hall of judgment.

So Gareth entered the kitchen, with the sallow-faced, sharp-tongued Sir Kay for master; and a rough time he had among the kitchen servants. He was hustled and harried by Kay, who from the first took a dislike to him. But he had one friend at the court, and this was the great knight Lancelot, whose quick eyes had seen at once that the tall handsome youth was no ordinary kitchen servant, and who took every opportunity of speaking a kind word to him. This kindness often consoled Gareth for the rough work given to him by Sir Kay, who would pick out for him the most disagreeable work. But, in truth, the youth kept a brave heart throughout, listening eagerly to his fellow-servants when they talked of knightly deeds, and of Arthur's and Lancelot's glorious achievements in field or tourney; and, when the talk became low and vile, as it often did, whistling gaily or singing like a lark, so as not to let his ears be sullied. And though the others mocked at first, they soon learned to respect the new scullion.

So for a month he served; but at the end of that time Queen Bellicent sent him a suit of armour and released him from his vow. Never in all his life

had Gareth felt lighter of heart than when his mother's messenger brought him these joyful tidings. He laughed, he jumped—he was almost beside himself with delight. Then rushing off, he sought private audience of the king, and having told him all, begged him to make him his knight in secret.

The king answered that he had known Gareth's secret from the beginning, since his mother had sent word to him before Gareth arrived; but as for making him one of his knights, he asked the eager youth if he realized that the Knights of the Round Table were sworn to vows of utter hardihood, utter gentleness, utter faithfulness in love, and uttermost obedience to the king.

To which Gareth replied,—

"All these vows I can promise to keep. I pray thee make me knight in secret, letting my name not be known until I have done some deed to make it worthy."

Somewhat reluctantly Arthur consented to all the young man asked, and he promised, moreover, that the first knightly adventure he should have at his disposal should be given to him. Only one exception did he make to the promise of secrecy, and that was that his favourite knight and trusted friend Lancelot should be told, and Gareth was quite willing to consent to this.

That same day Gareth's opportunity occurred.

Into the king's presence there came a high-born maiden named Lynette, with pink-and-white complexion, bright, rather cold eyes, and a slightly turned-up nose, which gave her a somewhat mischievious expression. She was, however, in any but a mischievous mood, for she soon poured forth a breathless tale of wrongs to be righted.

It seemed that she had a sister named Lyonors, who was comely—more comely than herself, she said with a smile—and who had great possessions. This

lady, Lyonors, lived in a castle called Castle Perilous, almost cut off by three loops of a winding river; and she was now besieged in her own home by a knight who wished to force her to marry him, and each of the three bridges which led across the river to the castle was guarded by a knight who was an ally of the lady's suitor.

In foolish playfulness, so Lynette explained, these three knights called themselves Day, and the separate name of each was Morning Star, Noon Sun, and Evening Star. The fourth knight, who besieged the castle itself, called himself Night, and he rode armed in black, and was a huge man of much strength and savagery; and to end all, Lynette requested that Lancelot should be sent at once to rescue her sister, for such a task would surely require the strongest and bravest knight at the court.

But Gareth, mindful of the king's promise, and undeterred at the difficult nature of this adventure, sprang forward, crying,—

"A boon, Sir King — this quest!"

And Arthur, glancing at him, replied, "Go," to the surprise of every one, the indignation of Kay, and the intense wrath of Lynette.

Crimson with outraged feeling she cried,—

"Fie on thee, King! I asked for thy chief knight, and thou givest me a kitchen knave;" and

before any one could stop her, she ran from the hall, mounted her horse, and rode through the gates of the city. But nothing daunted, Gareth followed. Hurriedly dropping his coarse outer garments, he appeared in the dazzling suit of armour provided by his mother. Then mounting a horse which the king had prepared for his use, and taking his shield and spear, he started forth in pursuit of the maiden.

On the outskirts of the city he came upon her lingering in a meadow. Her wrath was somewhat cooled, but she was brooding, nevertheless, on the king's apparent insult.

Gareth rode straight up to her, and said briefly and coldly,—

" Maiden, thy quest is mine. Lead, and I follow."

Then Lynette, pretending to perceive the odour of the kitchen about him, held her nose with two dainty fingers, crying,—

" Hence ! away ! thou smellest of kitchen grease."

But Gareth was soon able to show that if he was merely a kitchen knave he could handle his spear, for at this moment Kay rode up and bade him return to his duties as a scullion ; and when Gareth refused, Kay attacked him, with the result that he himself was speedily overthrown.

Then once again Gareth said to the maiden, " Lead, and I follow ; " and she flew off like the wind, with Gareth riding quickly behind her.

After a time her horse grew so tired that she had to slacken speed ; but when Gareth came up to her she covered him with insults, calling him " dish-washer " and " spit-turner," and saying as before that he smelt so strongly of the kitchen that she could not bear him near her.

Gareth, too much pleased at having been given the adventure to care what she said, replied gently,—

" Say what ye will, I leave you not until I finish this quest or die."

Then they sped onward once more, the damsel leading the way into a thick wood. They rode until evening, and as the sky grew dusk they came to the top of a hill, and through the thick pines caught the rays of the setting sun reflected from a round pool in the hollow below them. As they drew near to this pool they came upon a man in distress, being led to the water by six strong ruffians, who had tied a stone round his neck, intending to drown him. When he saw them Gareth plunged into the midst of the group, and hit out with such good effect that three of the ruffians were at once disabled, and the other three fled, leaving their captive with Gareth.

He proved to be a baron who was a friend of King Arthur's ; and as his house was only a league away, he conducted Gareth and Lynette thither to stay with him for the night.

A great feast was spread on the board when they entered the hall, and Lynette was given the seat of honour with the royal dish, a roast peacock, in front of her ; but when Gareth was placed at her side she demurred, explaining to the baron that instead of a knight the king had given her only a kitchen knave. The baron looked from one to the other in perplexity ; then he solved the problem by placing Gareth at a separate board and taking his own place at his side.

The next day the youth and the maiden started forth again, but ere they had gone far a change took place in Lynette's conduct. She pretended to be just as haughty to Gareth as before, but she allowed him to ride by her side for an hour, telling him at the same time that she knew he would soon be defeated by the enemy he had come to meet. To this insult Gareth merely replied with his usual courtesy.

They came at length to the first of the three bridges, and beyond the slow river, with its steep, roughly-wooded banks, they saw a gaily-decked

pavilion, purple-roofed and surmounted with a crimson flag ; and as they looked, from out of this pavilion strode the first knight, Morning Star, calling to his attendants to arm him. In reply, three fair girls clad in gay clothing came forth, armed him in blue armour, and handed him a blue shield bearing the Morning Star as an emblem.

As the knight now approached the bridge, Gareth too advanced, and the next moment they met in the centre with so mighty a shock that each knight was unhorsed. Springing to his feet, Gareth advanced with such speed that he drove the enemy back, and then with one great stroke laid him grovelling on the ground. Instead of killing him, however, Gareth told him to go to Arthur's hall and await his return ; and taking possession of his shield, he turned again to Lynette and bade her lead the way. So on they rode once more, Lynette leading for a time ; but when Gareth caught her up she said,—

" When you fought on the bridge, knave methought the smell of the kitchen about thee was a little fainter. But the wind hath changed. I scent it twentyfold again. Take my counsel, however, and get thee gone ; the second knight will soon overcome thee."

But Gareth, nothing daunted, rode on as before, for he feared death less than dishonour.

At the second curve of the river they saw the knight who was called Noonday Sun on a huge red horse, and clad with brilliantly-polished armour.

At the sight of Gareth he plunged into mid-stream to meet him, and a hand-to-hand combat followed.

But after four sword strokes the horse of Gareth's foe slipped in the stream, and the knight himself might have been washed down the stream and drowned had not Gareth helped him to shore, where he lay much bruised by his fall, and unable to fight any more.

Again Lynette led the way for her champion, singing now as she went ; for in spite of her wrath the young man's courage, resource, and success made her heart feel very glad.

So they came to the third bridge—that guarded by the knight known as Evening Star, who stood ready to meet them, clad in a thick suit of leather. As they approached he called to an old woman, who came from a tent behind and armed him in an old suit of armour and gave him his shield. Thus equipped he rode on to the bridge, and there he and Gareth hurled together in a desperate encounter.

Over and over again Gareth bore him down, but each time he sprang up again ; and in vain Gareth struck at him, for though he knocked off great pieces of his armour, the suit of leather he wore within was so tough that Gareth's sword made no impression on it. At last victory seemed near, and as the sword of Evening Star snapped in pieces against his own, Gareth shouted, " I have thee now."

But heedless of all knightly laws, the other sprang at him and wound his arms round his body until Gareth felt as though he were suffocating. With a mighty effort he freed himself, and, as he did so, hurled his opponent headlong into the river.

Then turning to Lynette, the young man said calmly as before,—

" Lead, and I follow."

But the maiden could no longer withhold her admiration for the marvellous youth who defended her cause so valiantly.

" I lead no longer," she said slowly ; " ride thou at my side." And she added, as if in excuse of herself, " Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen knaves."

Evening now drew on, and Lynette showed Gareth the way to a cavern not far off, where she knew her sister Lyonors had arranged for meat and drink to be hidden for the refreshment of those who should come to rescue her.

As they drew near to it they were surprised by a horseman who came up softly behind them with a covered shield; and as Gareth turned, displaying the shield taken from Morning Star, this newcomer cried,—

" Stay, felon knight ; I avenge me for my friend."

For he thought it was Morning Star himself, and that Gareth was slain.

Gareth turned to close with him, but with one touch of his spear the unknown knight unhorsed him, and he fell to the earth. So cleverly and neatly was it done that Gareth could only laugh at his own discomfiture. His laughter annoyed Lynette, and in response to her reproaches he explained how that he was a prince and the son of Lot and Bellicent. Then the unknown knight, seeing his mistake, raised his visor and showed the countenance of Lancelot, and explained how he had followed Gareth at the king's bidding, to see that no ill befell him, and how he had missed him because he stopped to help Kay after his encounter, and then because Lynette had taken an unexpected course through the wood.

And Gareth felt no shame at having been overthrown by this the greatest of Arthur's knights, who had himself never been vanquished.

These explanations made, all three sought out the cavern which Lyonors had prepared for them, and supped in friendliness together; and no sooner had Gareth eaten than straightway he fell into a deep sleep, worn out by the toils of the day.

The next morning they started forth to meet the last of the four knights, called Night, and said to be by far the most formidable of them all. As they rode onward Lynette's heart smote her when she thought of the probable fate of Gareth at the hands of this enemy, and she turned to him and begged him to give up the quest, which she feared could only end in his death. Her arguments, of course, had no effect. Lancelot, on the other hand, gave Gareth many valuable hints for the fray; and though he meant to be at hand in case help were needed, he wished to leave the full glory of the adventure to Gareth himself.

So they came to the Castle Perilous, and in the distance could see the Lady Lyonors waving her hand to them from a window; and on the flat meadowland which lay between was an enormous black tent with a long black horn hanging beside it.

Gareth went boldly up to the horn and blew a great blast on it. Thereupon lights were seen moving, and hollow tramplings and muffled voices were heard from within the tent, but no one came forth. Three times Gareth blew the horn, and at the third blast the tent was slowly gathered up, and before him stood a high black horse, and on its back sat a monster in black armour painted like a skeleton in front, and wearing a death's head.

"Fool!" cried Gareth at the sight. "Thou art said to have the strength of ten. What need to deck thyself out like this with images of death?"

But the figure spake no word, and the horror seemed to grow greater with his silence.

Within the castle Lyonors wept and wrung her hands, and one of her maidens fainted.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a neigh from Lancelot's horse, and at the sound the monster's horse started, throwing its rider, who rose slowly and with difficulty from the ground. As he did so Gareth sprang at him, and with one stroke cleft the skull in twain, with another the helmet below it, and out from the helmet appeared, not the head of a fierce knight, but the bright, fresh face of a boy!

"Knight," he entreated, "slay me not, for my three brothers made me do this. They never dreamt any one would pass all three of them, and meanwhile they wished to make a horror round the castle."

So the boy was allowed to go unharmed, and the danger which was thought to be the most formidable in the adventure proved to be the least, as is often the case.

Thus Gareth won the quest, and some writers say he married the beautiful Lyonors; others, that he married Lynette of the bright eyes and turned-up nose. Which do *you* think it was? For my own part, I think it was Lynette.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

PART I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky ;
And through the field the road runs by
To many-towered Camelot ;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Through the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four grey walls, and four grey towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle embowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,
Slide the heavy barges trailed
By slow horses ; and unhailed
The shallop flitteth silken-sailed
Skimming down to Camelot :

But who hath seen her wave her hand ?
Or at the casement seen her stand ?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott ?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to towered Camelot :
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers " 'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

PART II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving through a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot :
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
Goes by to towered Camelot ;
And sometimes through the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two :
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often through the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights,
And music, went to Camelot :
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed ;—
" I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves ;
The sun came dazzling through the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot :

And from his blazoned baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot :
As often through the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed ;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode ;
From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
" Tirra lirra," by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide ;
The mirror cracked from side to side :
" The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered Camelot ;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse—
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay ;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

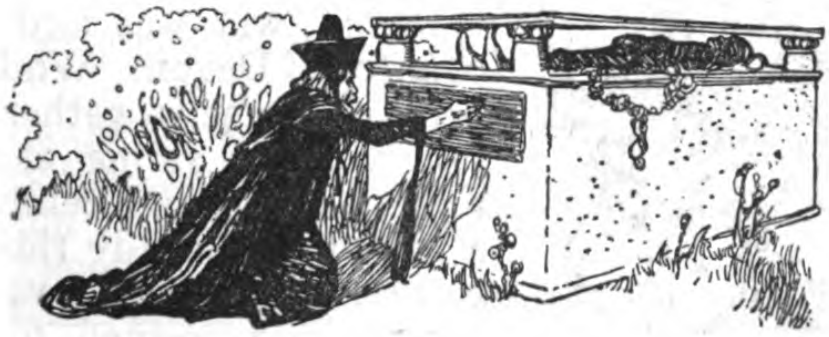
Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Through the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot ;
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott—

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly,
Turned to towered Camelot ;

For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this, and what is here ?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer ;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot :
But Lancelot mused a little space ;
He said, " She has a lovely face ;
God in His mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."



GERAINT AND ENID

ONE year at Whitsuntide King Arthur held his court at Caerleon upon Usk, and he had with him Queen Guinevere and most of his knights. While he was holding high feast in his hall, there came to him one of his foresters from the Forest of Dean, and reported to him that he had seen there a white stag of wondrous size and beauty.

King Arthur resolved to hunt that stag on the following day; and Queen Guinevere craved leave to ride with him and see the chase, which Arthur granted her with a good will. But on the morrow the king and his huntsmen rose very early, and the queen overslept herself; so when she awoke they were all gone.

She took her horse as soon as she might, and rode forth with her maidens to follow the hunt. Presently there met her a good knight of the court, Sir Geraint, the son of Erbin, who was lord of the country of Devon. While they held converse together they saw a dwarf riding along on a great horse, and behind him a knight and a lady riding together. The knight was fully armed, and seemed to be a man of much prowess.

"Sir Geraint," said the queen, "knowest thou the name of that knight?"

"I know him not," answered Geraint; "and because of his helm I cannot see his face."

Then the queen bade one of her maidens go and ask the dwarf who the knight was. She obeyed; but when she asked the dwarf he would not tell her. "Since," she said, "thou art so churlish, I will go and ask him myself."

"Thou shalt not ask him, by my faith," said he.

"Wherefore?" asked the maiden.

"Because thou art not of honour sufficient to befit thee to speak to my lord."

Then the maiden turned her horse's head towards the knight; upon which the dwarf struck her across the face with a whip that he carried in his hand, so that the blood flowed forth; and the maiden returned to Guinevere, complaining of the hurt she had received.

"Very rudely has the dwarf treated thee," said Geraint. "I will myself go to ask who the knight is." So he went to the dwarf, who, however, said and did to him as he had done to the damsel. Very wroth was Geraint, and he put his hand to his sword. But he considered that it would be no vengeance to him to slay the dwarf and be attacked unarmed by the armed knight; so he returned to the queen, who said he had acted wisely and discreetly.

"Madam," said Geraint, "I will follow them yet; and in time they will come to some inhabited place where I may get arms, and then I can encounter the knight."

To this the queen assented, but cautioned him not to attack the knight until he was armed; and she said she should be anxious concerning his welfare till she received good news of him.

"If I am alive," quoth Geraint, "by to-morrow afternoon, madam, you shall hear tidings of me." So he departed, and followed the knight, the lady, and the dwarf.

They rode past Caerleon, and over the ford of the Usk, and then went up a lofty ridge of ground till they came to the top of it. There stood a fair town, and on the other side of it a great castle. As the knight passed through the town all the people in it saluted him and the lady.

The three rode on and went into the castle, where Geraint saw many people welcome them. He himself looked into every house in the town, to see if there were any that he knew, from whom he might borrow a suit of armour; but he had never seen any of the people before. Every house he saw was full of men and arms and horses; and the people were polishing shields, and burnishing swords, and washing armour, and shoeing horses.

Geraint looked about him, to see where he should lodge, and he perceived at a little distance from the town an old palace that once had been a noble building, but now was falling into decay. He went toward it, and found that it was approached by a bridge of marble. On the bridge he saw an old man sitting, clad in poor and tattered garments. Upon him Geraint gazed steadfastly for a long time.

"Young man," said the old man, "wherefore art thou thoughtful?"

"I am thoughtful," answered Geraint, "because I know not where to go to-night."

"Wilt thou abide with me?" said the old man; "and thou shalt have of the best that I can give thee."

So he led the way into the hall, and Geraint followed him. In the hall Geraint dismounted and

left his horse, and his host took him into an upper chamber where there were two women.

One was old and decrepit, but it seemed to Geraint that when she was young she must have been exceedingly fair. The other was a young damsel, and he thought he had never seen a maiden more full of comeliness, grace, and beauty than she. But both of the women were attired in old and worn-out garments.

The old man bade the girl attend to their guest; and she disarrayed him, and then unsaddled his horse and gave it straw and corn. After that the old man bade her go to the town and bring the best she could find, both of food and liquor.

While she was away the old people conversed pleasantly with Geraint. In a while she returned, bringing with her a youth who bore a flagon of mead and the quarter of a young bullock. In her hands and in her veil she carried a quantity of bread. "I could not obtain better than this," she said, "nor with better would I have been trusted."

"Surely it is good enough," said Geraint. So the food was made ready, and Geraint and the old people sat down to the table, while the maiden waited upon them.

When they had finished eating, Geraint talked with the old man, and asked him to whom the palace belonged. "Truly," answered the other, "it was I that built it, and to me also belonged the town and the castle you have seen."

"Alas!" said Geraint, "how comes it that you have lost them?"

"I lost a great earldom as well as these," answered the other, "and it was in this wise. I had a nephew, the son of my brother, who was a suitor for my daughter's hand; and when he came to his strength

he raised my own town against me and expelled me from my earldom. Then he built that new castle to strike fear into the hearts of my friends, for, in spite of misfortune, there are many who love me yet."

" Good sir," said Geraint, " will you tell me wherefore came the knight, lady, and dwarf that I just now saw go into the castle ; and also why there is such preparation and furbishing of arms going forward in the town ? "

" The preparations," answered the old earl, whose name was Yniol, " are for a tournament that is to be held to-morrow by the young earl, my nephew. In a meadow hard by will be hung a silver sparrow-hawk on a silver rod, and that is the prize. Any man may joust for it if he have with him the lady that he loves the best. My nephew, being skilled in arms and strong of body, has always won the sparrow-hawk, and if he win it to-morrow he will thenceforth be called the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk."

Then Geraint told Earl Yniol of the quest he was on, and of the insult which the knight's dwarf had given to him and to Queen Guinevere ; and he asked what it were best for him to do.

" It is not easy to counsel thee," said the earl, " because thou hast neither dame nor maiden with thee for whom thou couldst joust. Yet have I arms here which thou mightst have."

" Ah, sir," said Geraint, " may Heaven reward you ! And if you will permit me to-morrow to challenge for this fair maiden your daughter, I will engage, if I come alive from the tournament, to love her ever after ; and if I do not escape, she will be nothing the worse."

To this the old earl gladly assented ; nor was the maiden sorry, for Geraint was a right comely and noble man, and was ever courteous to ladies. So the next morning they all went forth to the meadow. And Earl Yniol's nephew, who had previously won the sparrow-hawk, came forth with great pride, because he deemed that none would dare to encounter him. He bade his lady to take the sparrow-hawk, because she was the fairest; and if any denied her, by force would he defend it for her.

" Touch it not," said Geraint ; " for there is here a maiden who is fairer, and more noble, and more comely, and has a better claim to it than thou hast."

Then said the knight scornfully, " If thou maintainest the sparrow-hawk to be due to thy lady, come forward and do battle for it with me."

Geraint came forward accordingly. He and his horse were arrayed in the Earl Yniol's old armour, which was heavy and rusty and of uncouth shape ; so that few thought he would be likely to keep his ground against that strong knight. Then three or four times the two ran together and broke their spears on each other without doing any hurt; whereupon said the old earl to Geraint, " O Knight, since no other lance will hold, here is the good spear which I had on the day when first I was knighted, and a better never held I in my hand."

Geraint thanked him and took the spear. Then the dwarf also brought a lance to his lord, and said, " Bethink thee that no knight has ever withstood thee so long as this one."

" I vow by Our Lady," quoth Geraint, " that if I be not slain and this spear hold, he shall fare none the better for thy service."

So again they rushed together, and this time Geraint by pure might broke the other knight's shield in twain and burst his saddle-girths, so that he fell back to the ground. Then quickly Geraint dismounted and drew

his sword, and the other knight also rose and pulled out his sword ; and they fought fiercely on foot, striking each other such heavy blows that the fire flashed like stars from their armour, and their vision was obscured with blood and sweat.

After a while Yniol's nephew seemed as though he would prevail, at which all his party rejoiced ; but Earl Yniol and his wife and the maiden were heavy of heart. So Earl Yniol went near to Geraint and cried, "O Knight, bethink thee of the insult that thou and Queen Guinevere had from the dwarf." At that Geraint put forth all his might, and struck his enemy so mightily on the helm that it broke, and the sword cut through to the skull.

Then the knight fell on his knees, yielded, and craved mercy of Geraint. " I will grant thee grace," answered Geraint, " on one condition—that thou go to King Arthur's court and make amends to Queen Guinevere for the insult that was offered her by thy dwarf. As for the insult he gave to me, for that I have myself taken amends." The knight promised to obey ; and in reply to Geraint he said his name was Edyrn, the son of Nudd. So he got on his horse and rode sadly toward Caerleon, and his lady and dwarf went with him.

In the meantime the young earl came and greeted Geraint, and asked him to come to his castle ; but Geraint said he would lodge that night where he had lodged before, and so returned with Earl Yniol and his wife and daughter to the old palace. But the young earl sent thither a great many servants, who put the house in order, and brought large store of provision, and set out the feast in the great hall. Also

they brought fine garments for Yniol and the two women ; but Geraint entreated that the maiden should wear no other array than the old worn vest and veil in which he had seen her first. Then a great company sat down to the feast, and in the highest places were Geraint, the young earl, the old earl, his wife, and the maiden, who was called Enid. So they feasted, and afterwards they talked together. Geraint said plainly that if he lived Earl Yniol should not be long without his possessions.

"As to that," answered the young earl, "it is not my fault that he lost them ; and with regard to the disagreement between us, I will gladly abide by thy decision, and agree to what thou judgest right."

"I but ask thee," said Geraint, "to restore to him what was his."

This the young earl did, and Yniol received back his town and castle and all that he had lost. Then said he to Geraint, "O knight, here is the maiden for whom thou didst challenge at the tournament. Well hast thou won her, and I gladly give her to thee."

"She shall go with me," said Geraint, "to the court of King Arthur ; and she shall wear still the raiment in which I first saw her, till for my sake Queen Guinevere arrays her in richer garments." And he looked on Enid with joy, for his heart was full of love toward her. The next day, accordingly, Geraint and Enid rode forth toward Caerleon.

In the meantime King Arthur had killed the white stag he hunted ; and at the queen's wish he agreed not to decide to whom its head should be given till Geraint returned from the quest he was on, because if he were

successful the queen wished that some mark of honour should be bestowed upon him. So the next day Guinevere caused a watch to be set on the battlements of the castle to tell when Geraint might appear. A little after midday the porter who was without came and informed the queen that at the gate was a knight who said his errand was to her ; that his armour was all broken and bloodstained, and his whole aspect pitiful.

" Knowest thou his name ? " asked the queen.

" He says," answered the porter, " that his name is Edyrn, the son of Nudd." The knight was then brought in, and Guinevere saw that it was the knight whom Geraint had followed ; and she could not but pity him, although the churlish dwarf was with him. So he told Guinevere all that had befallen him, and what Geraint had done ; and it was settled that he should be put in charge of the leeches, and, when he was recovered, should give such satisfaction to the queen as the Knights of the Round Table might judge fitting.

The next day Geraint came to Caerleon with Enid, and both of them were nobly received. Queen Guinevere attired the maiden in some of her own rich raiment, and then all said that they had never seen any one who was more beautiful. Before long she and Geraint were wedded ; and Geraint abode with her at the court, and won great honour in joustings and in the hunt.

But after three years Erbin, because he was grown old and feeble, sent for his son to take charge of his territories. King Arthur was loath to let him go, and Guinevere was sorry to part with Enid ; but inasmuch as the parting was unavoidable, they sent them away with a noble following of knights and ladies.

So Geraint went into Devon, and ruled in his father's place. He governed the country well and wisely, and at tournaments there was no knight of that country strong enough to withstand him. But after a while he grew to love Enid so much that he neglected knightly sports, and spent all his time with her in the palace; and in this way he began to lose the love of his people, and his fame was no longer great in the land. This became known to Enid, and she sorrowed greatly on account of it.

One morning in summer they were lying on the couch in their chamber, and Enid was awake, but Geraint slept. The clothing had fallen off his arms and breast, and as she gazed on him she exclaimed, "Alas! and am I the cause that these arms and this breast have lost their glory and the warlike fame which once they so richly enjoyed?"

As she spoke thus the tears dropped from her eyes and fell on her husband's breast, so that he awoke; and hearing her words imperfectly, the thought entered his mind that she loved some other man more than him, and wished for other society. So Geraint was sore troubled, and he sprang quickly from his couch, and calling his squire, bade him get ready his horse and arms.

"And do thou arise," he said sternly to Enid, "and apparel thyself in the worst riding-dress thou hast in thy possession, and cause thy horse to be got ready. Evil betide me if we return here till thou knowest whether I have lost my strength so completely as thou didst say. If that be so, then will it be easy for thee to seek the society of him whom thou desirest."

Enid arose, and clothed herself in her meanest garments; but she said, "My lord, I know nothing of your meaning."

"Neither will you know at this time," he answered roughly.

Then Geraint went to Erbin, and told him he was going on a quest, and it was uncertain when he would return. After that he rode forth with Enid, and charged her to ride before him, and whatever she might hear or see, not to turn back, or to speak to him unless he spoke first to her. And he chose a road that was wild and beset by thieves and robbers. In a while they came to a great forest; and Enid saw four armed horsemen lying in wait, of whom one said to the others, "Here is a good opportunity for us to capture this lady and the horses and armour; for we can easily master yonder knight, who hangs his head so heavily."

When Enid heard this she knew not what to do, for Geraint had charged her not to speak to him. "Yet," she said to herself, "I would rather have my death from his hand than from that of any other; and though he slay me, yet will I speak to him, lest I endure the misery of seeing him slain." So she waited for Geraint till he came near.

"My lord," she said kindly, "did you hear the words of those men concerning you?"

Then he raised his eyes and looked at her angrily.

"Did I not bid thee hold thy peace?" he said. "I only wish for silence, not for warning. And thou—thou shouldst desire to see me slain by these men; yet do I feel no dread."

Then the foremost of the robbers couched his spear and rushed at Geraint, who received the stroke on his shield, and thrust his own lance through the other's body. And so he served the other three. After that he dismounted, took the arms of the dead men, fastened

them on their saddles, and tied all the bridles of the horses together. Then he bade Enid ride before and drive the horses ; and again he forbade her to speak to him unless he first spoke to her.

In that manner they went through the forest, and then came out on a vast plain, across which Enid saw three armed knights coming towards them ; and she heard them say that it would be easy to take all that spoil from one dolorous knight. Again was she terrified for Geraint, because she thought he was wearied with his former combat ; so she warned him of the purpose of the three knights.

" I declare to Heaven," he said, " that all they can do is less grievous to me than that thou wilt not be silent as I bid thee."

" My lord," she answered meekly, " I feared lest they should surprise thee unawares."

" Hold thy peace, then," replied Geraint. " Do not I desire silence ? "

Straightway the three knights attacked Geraint, but they fared no better than the others had done before ; for he slew them all, and added their arms and horses to the other spoil which was in Enid's charge. Yet again, when they were nearly across the plain, did Enid break silence to warn her lord of five horsemen who were preparing to attack him ; and he was exceedingly wrathful, and rebuked her sorely. But he slew all the five robbers, and added their arms and horses to the others.

Then they rode toward a wood, there to pass the night, and even in his anger Geraint was troubled at heart to see so fair and tender a woman as Enid toiling

to guide so many horses. In the wood Geraint slept all night ; but he bade Enid watch, and she obeyed him.

In the morning they came to a fair city, and there Geraint hired a lodging, and had all his horses stabled. He commanded Enid to sit on the side of the chamber opposite to where he sat. Then both of them slept; and when they awoke, the earl to whom the city belonged, and who had been told of the arrival of this stranger knight with a passing fair lady and many horses and much spoil, came to visit Geraint, bringing with him twelve knights ; and his name was the Earl Doorm.

He asked Geraint the object of his journey.

" I have none," said he, " but to seek adventures and follow my own inclination." Then the earl saw Enid where she sat apart, and he thought he had never seen so comely a maiden as she. So he said to Geraint, " Have I thy permission to go and converse with yonder maiden ? "

" Thou hast it gladly," he answered.

Then the earl went to her and said, " Fair maiden, it cannot be pleasant to thee to travel thus with yonder knight."

" It is not unpleasant to me to journey with him," she answered.

" I will give thee good counsel," he said. " All my earldom shall be at thy disposal if thou wilt dwell with me."

" That will I not," she replied. " Am I to be faithless to my lord ? "

" Thou art foolish," quoth he. " If I slay thy lord, I can take thee with me in thine own despite, and turn thee away when I please. But if thou wilt go with me of thine own good will, I swear that I will remain true to thee as long as I may live."

Then Enid took counsel with herself how she might save her lord. And she said to the earl, " Then must you, to save me from any needless shame, come here

to-morrow, and take me away as though I knew nothing of the matter."

To that he assented gladly, and went away. She and Geraint retired early, but about midnight she woke him and told him all that had passed between herself and Earl Doorm, and said it would be well that they should flee. He was wroth with her for speaking, but did as she advised ; and in payment to his host gave him all the horses and armour he had taken from the robbers, asking only of the man that he should guide them out of the town by a different way from that by which they had entered. To this the man agreed readily ; but when he returned, he found Earl Doorm at his house with many knights.

The earl was wrathful to find that Geraint and Enid were gone, and rode hard after them with his knights. Enid was uneasy as she rode along, and ever she looked behind her. Some time after dawn she saw a great cloud of dust behind them, that came nearer, and in a while she perceived a knight coming through the dust. She could not refrain from warning Geraint, who was wrathful, and reproached her because she would not keep silence in obedience to his orders. However, he turned his horse, and every knight that came up he overthrew. The earl assailed him the last, and they fought long together ; but Geraint compelled him to sue for mercy, which he granted him.

So Geraint and Enid pursued their journey till they came to a passing fair valley, with a river running through it. Over the river was a bridge, and on the other side a walled town. As they rode they met a knight, and Geraint asked him to whom the valley and town belonged. He answered that they were in the

hands of a perilous knight that was called the Little King.

"Can I go by yonder bridge and the highway that runs past the town?" asked Geraint.

"You cannot go by that way," answered the knight, "unless you intend to combat with the Little King; for it is his custom to combat with every knight that comes upon his lands."

"Nevertheless," said Geraint, "I shall pursue my journey that way."

"If you do," said the knight, "you will probably meet with shame and disgrace in reward for your daring."

Then Geraint rode on over the bridge, and Enid with him. And on the other side he saw a knight, that was very small of stature, mounted on a great war-horse.

"Tell me, knight," said the stranger, "whether it is through ignorance or presumption that you seek to insult my dignity and infringe my rules. Come with me now to my court and give me satisfaction."

"That will I not," answered Geraint.

"Then will I have satisfaction, or receive my overthrow at thy hands," returned the Little King. So they fought together a long time on their horses, and it was exceedingly difficult for Geraint to strike the Little King, because he was so small of stature; but at the last he threw him headlong on the ground. Then they encountered on foot, and each gave the other painful wounds.

At length Geraint grew enraged, and struck the other so fierce a blow that it shattered his helmet and wounded him on the head, even to the bone. Then the Little King dropped his sword, and entreated for mercy; which Geraint granted on condition that the Little King should always be his ally, and engage to afford him assistance if ever it were needed. To this the Little King pledged himself; and then he begged

Geraint to come with him to his court, so that he might recover from his fatigue. But to this Geraint would not assent for all his entreaty, and insisted on continuing his journey, wounded as he was.

The heat of the sun was very great, and when Geraint and Enid had ridden a little further, his wounds began to pain him more than they had done at first, and to escape the sun's rays he went into a wood and stood under a tree. Enid followed after, and stood under another tree. Suddenly they heard a great noise, the reason of which was that King Arthur and many knights and ladies of his court were come into the wood. A foot-page of Sir Kay the seneschal saw the knight and lady standing silent under the trees. He hastened to tell his master, who took his spear and shield, and rode to where Geraint was.

"Ah, Knight," said Sir Kay, "what dost thou here?"

"I am standing under a tree, to avoid the rays of the sun."

"Wherefore is thy journey, and who art thou?"

"I seek adventures, and go where I list."

"Indeed," quoth Kay. "Then come with me to King Arthur, who is near at hand."

"That will I not," answered Geraint curtly. He knew Sir Kay well, but Sir Kay knew him not.

"Thou must needs come," said Kay; and therewith he couched his spear and attacked Geraint, who, becoming angry, smote him with the shaft of his lance, and rolled him headlong on the ground. Sir Kay got on his feet again as well as he could, and rode back to the tents, where he met Sir Gawain.

" There is yonder in the wood," said he, " a wounded knight, with battered armour. Will you go and ascertain who he is ? "

Gawain assented ; but Kay warned him to take his spear and armour, because the knight was not over courteous. This Gawain did, and then he went to Geraint and asked him who he was, and whether he would go with him to King Arthur ; but Geraint would not tell his name, and refused to go to the king. " I will not leave thee," said Gawain, " till I know who thou art." Then he charged Geraint with his spear, and it splintered on his shield, and their horses stood front to front. Gawain gazed fixedly at the other, and saw who he was.

" Ah, Geraint," he cried, " art thou here ? "

" I am not Geraint," said the knight, who, what with the pain of his wounds and the agony of his mind, divided between jealousy of Enid and sorrow and love, was well-nigh out of his wits.

" Geraint thou art, I know well," answered Gawain, " and a wretched and insane expedition is this." Then he looked round, and saw Enid, and welcomed her gladly. Again he entreated Geraint to come to the king.

" I will not," he answered, " for I am not in a fit state to see any one."

So Gawain contrived that King Arthur should be brought to the place ; and when he came, he commanded that Geraint should not be allowed to go forth till he was healed, and committed him to the charge of his physicians. A whole month they abode in that place ; and Queen Guinevere took charge of Enid, and tended her lovingly. But ever Enid was sorrowful, for still she knew not why her lord had so

utterly changed to her; and as for him, though his body was healed, he remained sad and silent.

At last Geraint went to the king, saying that he was whole, and asked leave to go forth again; which Arthur unwillingly granted. So he and Enid once more set out, and Geraint desired her to ride before him as she had formerly done. As they journeyed along the road they heard loud wailing; and there, in an open glade of the wood, they saw a lady, young and fair, standing by a dead knight.

"What hath befallen thee, lady?" asked Geraint.

"Sir," she answered, weeping, "I was journeying here with my beloved husband, when there came upon us three giants, and without any provocation they slew him."

"Which way went they hence?" said Geraint. She pointed out the way, and he bade Enid stay with the lady, and rode after the giants. Presently he overtook them. Each was as great in stature as three men, and carried in his hand a huge club. Geraint rushed upon them, and thrust his lance through the body of one, then drew it forth and slew another in the same way. But the third turned upon him, and struck him with his club so that the blow crushed his shoulder and opened all his wounds anew.

Then Geraint drew his sword, and smote the giant so fiercely on the crown of the head that it was split down to his shoulders, and he fell dead in that place. So Geraint left him thus, and returned to Enid; and as soon as he came to her he sank down at her feet as though he were dead. Then Enid uttered a cry, piercing and loud and

thrilling; and it chanced that a wild earl called Limours, with a great company, was travelling on the high road, and he heard the cry, and turned aside to see what was its cause. The earl said to Enid, "Fair lady, what hath befallen thee?"

"Alas!" she answered, "the only man I ever loved, or shall love, is slain."

Then he asked the other lady the cause of her grief.

"They have slain my dear husband also."

"Who was it that slew them?" asked the earl.

"Some giants," she answered, "slew my best beloved; and the other knight went in pursuit of them, and came back as thou seest."

The earl caused the dead knight to be buried; but it seemed to him that there was still some life left in Geraint, so he had him carried along on a shield; and the two women followed. When they came to the earl's mansion, Geraint was placed on a couch in the hall, and Enid sat by his side. The earl and his companions changed their travelling dress; and he came and asked Enid to do likewise, but she refused.

"Do not be sorrowful for this matter," said he, "and take no heed whether yonder knight live or die. Behold, a good earldom, together with myself, will I bestow upon thee. Be therefore happy and joyful."

"I shall never henceforth be happy while I live," said Enid.

"Come, then, and eat," quoth the earl.

"No, I will not," she answered.

"By Our Lady thou shalt!" he cried, and forced her to come to the table, where he many times bade her eat.

Then said Enid, "I call all here to witness that I will not eat till he that is on yonder couch eateth likewise."

"Thou canst not fulfil that pledge," said the earl, "for the man is already dead."

"Still will I abide by what I have said."

Then he offered her a goblet of wine, and bade her drink, and then, he said, she would change her mind.

" Evil betide me," she replied, " if I drink aught till he drink also."

Then the earl grew angry. " Truly," said he, " it is of no more avail for me to be gentle with thee than ungentle ; " and, unknightly, he struck her with his hand on the face. And Enid raised an exceedingly loud and bitter cry ; not so much, indeed, because of the pain of the blow, as because it reminded her more strongly of the calamity that had befallen her, since she felt that if Geraint had been alive no man dared have smitten her. But all at once, at the sound of her cry, Geraint rose up from the couch. His sword was still in his hand as it had been when he swooned, and with it he rushed to the earl, and gave him so stern a blow that it clove him in twain till the sword was stayed by the table.

Then at the sight of that terrible stroke all who were there fled away with loud outcries. Geraint was sore grieved when he looked upon Enid, for her face was pale and she wept bitterly.

" Lady," said he, " knowest thou where our horses are ? "

" I know where thy horse is, my lord," she answered, " but I know not where the other may be." She showed him where his horse was, and he mounted, and took up Enid and placed her before him, and so they rode forth. Presently something was heard like the sound of a host approaching, and Geraint put Enid on the other side of a hedge by the wayside and made him ready. Immediately a knight rode forward and couched his lance. Then Enid could not restrain herself, but sprang to her feet and cried, " O Knight !

whoever thou art, what renown wilt thou gain by slaying one that is already well-nigh dead ? "

" O Heaven ! " cried he, " is it Geraint ? "

" Yes, in truth," she answered ; " and who art thou ? "

" I am the Little King. I heard you were in trouble, and was coming to your assistance.—And if thou, Geraint, hadst followed my advice, none of these hardships would have befallen thee."

" Nothing can happen," said Geraint, " without the will of Heaven, though much good results from counsel."

So he and Enid went with the Little King to the house of a baron that was the son of his sister, and there Geraint abode till he was perfectly well. After that the Little King said to Geraint, " Now will we go to my court, to rest and amuse ourselves."

" No," said Geraint ; " I will journey first for one day more and return again."

So they set forth together, and presently came to a place where the road divided into two. There they met a man walking on foot, and the Little King asked him which was the best road to follow. " This," said he, pointing to the one by which he had come, " is the best to follow ; if you go by the other you will never return. It leads to a hedge of mist, within which are enchanted games, and no one who has gone thither has ever come back. The court of the Earl Owain is there, and he permits no one to lodge in the town except he will go to his court."

But Geraint said they would go by that road. So they travelled till they came to the town, whence the Earl Owain sent for them to his court, whither they went willingly ; and when Geraint said he wished to go to the games, the earl assented. After they had eaten, Geraint took his arms and his horse and rode forth, the earl and all the company going with him. When they came to the hedge of mist, it was so high

that no one could see the top. " Which way may I enter ? " asked Geraint.

" I know not," answered Owain, " but enter by the way that seems easiest."

Then fearlessly Geraint dashed through the mist ; and beyond it he found a fair orchard, within which was a pavilion of red satin. In front of this was a great apple tree, upon one branch of which hung a hunting-horn. Geraint dismounted and entered the tent. Within there was only a maiden, sitting in a golden chair ; and opposite to her was another similar chair that was empty. Geraint went and sat down in it.

" Ah, knight," said the maiden, " I would not counsel thee to sit in that chair."

" Wherefore," said Geraint.

" Because he to whom it belongs has never suffered another to sit in it."

" I care not," answered Geraint, " though it displeases him that I sit in the chair."

Thereupon there arose a mighty tumult about the pavilion. Geraint looked to see what was the cause of it, and he saw a great knight, fully armed, mounted on a mettlesome war-horse.

" Tell me, knight," said he, " who was it bade thee sit on that chair ? "

" Myself," quoth Geraint.

" It was wrong of thee," said the other, " to do me this shame and insolence. Arise now, and give me satisfaction."

Then Geraint went forth, mounted his horse, and encountered him. Again and again they rushed at each other and broke spears ; but at last Geraint

cast him on the ground, a whole spear's length beyond his horse's crupper. Thereupon he sued for mercy, and promised to grant all that Geraint asked.

" I only desire," he answered, " that this enchantment shall cease."

" Sound yonder horn," said the knight, " and the hedge of mist will immediately disappear; but it will not go hence unless the horn be sounded by the knight by whom I have been vanquished."

Then Geraint went and sounded the horn, and at the first blast the hedge of mist vanished; and there Geraint was visible to Enid, who had been sorrowful with anxiety concerning him, and to all the others. So on the morrow Geraint returned with his wife to his own dominions. All the distrust and grief between them had gone like the hedge of mist, because he had proved her to be faithful and loving to him beyond all women. Thenceforth he reigned prosperously, and his warlike fame and splendour lasted thereafter as long as he lived.

THE COMBAT WITH THE SPARROW-HAWK

. . . ARTHUR on the Whitsuntide before
Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,
Before him came a forester of Dean,
Wet from the woods, with notice of a hart
Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,
First seen that day : these things he told the king.
Then the good king gave order to let blow
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn.
And when the queen petitioned for his leave
To see the hunt, allowed it easily.
So with the morning all the court were gone.
But Guinevere lay late into the morn,
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her love
For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt ;
But rose at last, a single maiden with her,
Took horse, and forded Usk, and gained the wood ;
There, on a little knoll beside it, stayed
Waiting to hear the hounds ; but heard instead
A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince Geraint,
Late also, wearing neither hunting-dress
Nor weapon, save a golden-hilted brand,
Came quickly flashing thro' the shallow ford
Behind them, and so galloped up the knoll.
A purple scarf, at either end whereof
There swung an apple of the purest gold,
Swayed round about him, as he galloped up
To join them, glancing like a dragon-fly
In summer suit and silks of holiday.

Low bowed the tributary prince, and she,
Sweetly and statelily, and with all grace
Of womanhood and queenhood, answered him :
" Late, late, Sir Prince," she said, " later than we ! "
" Yea, noble Queen," he answered, " and so late
That I but come like you to see the hunt,
Not join it." " Therefore wait with me," she said ;
" For on this little knoll, if anywhere,
There is good chance that we shall hear the hounds :
Here often they break covert at our feet."

And while they listened for the distant hunt,
And chiefly for the baying of Cavall,
King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth, there rode
Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf ;
Whereof the dwarf lagged latest, and the knight
Had visor up, and showed a youthful face,
Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments.
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face
In the king's hall, desired his name, and sent
Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf ;
Who being vicious, old and irritable,
And doubling all his master's vice of pride,
Made answer sharply that she should not know.
" Then will I ask it of himself," she cried.
" Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not," cried the dwarf ;
" Thou art not worthy ev'n to speak of him ; "
And when she put her horse toward the knight,
Struck at her with his whip, and she returned
Indignant to the queen ; at which Geraint
Exclaiming, " Surely I will learn the name,"
Made sharply to the dwarf, and asked it of him,
Who answered as before ; and when the Prince
Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,
Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek.
The Prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,
Dyeing it ; and his quick, instinctive hand
Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him :

But he, from his exceeding manfulness
And pure nobility of temperament,
Wroth to be wroth at such a worm, refrained
From ev'n a word, and so returning said :

" I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,
Done in your maiden's person to yourself :
And I will track this vermin to their earths ;
For tho' I ride unarmed, I do not doubt
To find, at some place I shall come at, arms
On loan, or else for pledge ; and, being found,
Then will I fight him and will break his pride,
And on the third day will again be here,
So that I be not fall'n in fight. Farewell."

" Farewell, fair Prince," answered the stately queen.
" Be prosperous in this journey, as in all ;
And may you light on all things that you love,
And live to wed with her whom first you love :
But ere you wed with any, bring your bride,
And I, were she the daughter of a king,
Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the hedge,
Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun."

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that he heard
The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,
A little vext at losing of the hunt,
A little at the vile occasion, rode,
By ups and downs, thro' many a grassy glade
And valley, with fixt eye following the three.
At last they issued from the world of wood,
And climbed upon a fair and even ridge,
And showed themselves against the sky, and sank.
And thither came Geraint, and underneath
Beheld the long street of a little town
In a long valley, on one side of which,
White from the mason's hand, a fortress rose ;
And on one side a castle in decay,

Beyond a bridge that spanned a dry ravine :
And out of town and valley came a noise
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed
Brawling, or like a clamour of the rooks
At distance, ere they settle for the night.

And onward to the fortress rode the three,
And entered, and were lost behind the walls.
" So," thought Geraint, " I have tracked him to his earth,"
And down the long street riding wearily,
Found every hostel full, and everywhere
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot hiss
And bustling whistle of the youth who scoured
His master's armour ; and of such a one
He asked, " What means the tumult in the town ? "
Who told him, scouring still, " The sparrow-hawk ! "

Then riding close behind an ancient churl,
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
Asked yet once more what meant the hubbub here ?
Who answered gruffly, " Ugh ! the sparrow-hawk."
Then riding further past an armourer's,
Who, with back turned, and bowed above his work,
Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,
He put the self-same query ; but the man
Not turning round, nor looking at him, said :
" Friend, he that labours for the sparrow-hawk
Has little time for idle questioners."
Whereat Geraint flashed into sudden spleen :
" A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-hawk !
Tits, wrens, and all winged nothings peck him dead !
Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg

The murmur of the world ! What is it to me ?
O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-hawks !
Speak, if you be not like the rest, hawk-mad,
Where can I get me harbourage for the night ?
And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy ? Speak ! "
At this the armourer turning all amazed
And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
Came forward with the helmet yet in hand,
And answered, " Pardon me, O stranger knight ;
We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,
And there is scantly time for half the work.
Arms ? truth ! I know not : all are wanted here.
Harbourage ? truth, good truth, I know not, save,
It may be, at Earl Yniol's o'er the bridge
Yonder." He spoke and fell to work again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,
Across the bridge that spanned the dry ravine.
There musing sat the hoary-headed earl
(His dress a suit of frayed magnificence,
Once fit for feasts of ceremony),
and said :
" Whither, fair son ? " to whom
Geraint replied,
" O friend, I seek a harbourage
for the night."
Then Yniol, " Enter, therefore,
and partake
The slender entertainment of a
house
Once rich, now poor, but ever
open doored."

" Thanks, venerable friend," replied Geraint ;
" So that you do not serve me sparrow-hawks
For supper, I will enter, I will eat
With all the passion of a twelve hours' fast."
Then sighed and smiled the hoary-headed earl,

And answered, " Graver cause than yours is mine
To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-hawk.
But in, go in ; for save yourself desire it,
We will not touch upon him ev'n in jest."

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,
His charger trampling many a prickly star
Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.
He looked, and saw that all was ruinous.
Here stood a shattered archway plumed with fern ;
And here had fall'n a great part of a tower,
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,
And like a crag was gay with wilding flowers :
And high above a piece of turret stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent, wound
Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems
Claspt the grey walls with hairy-fibred arms,
And sucked the joining of the stones, and looked
A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove.
And while he waited in the castle court,
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang
Clear through the open casement of the hall,
Singing ; and as the sweet voice of a bird,
Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
That sings so delicately clear, and make
Conjecture of the plumage and the form,—
So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint ;
And made him like a man abroad at morn
When first the liquid note beloved of men
Comes flying over many a windy wave
To Britain, and in April suddenly
Breaks from a coppice gemmed with green and red,
And he suspends his converse with a friend,
Or it may be the labour of his hands,
To think or say, " There is the nightingale,"—
So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,
" Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me."

It chanced the song that Enid sang was one
Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid sang :

" Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud ;
Turn thy wild wheel through sunshine, storm, and cloud ;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

" Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown ;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down ;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

" Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands ;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands ;
For man is man and master of his fate.

" Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd ;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud ;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate."

" Hark, by the bird's song you may learn the nest,"
Said Yniol ; " enter quickly." Entering then,
Right o'er a mount of newly-fallen stones,
The dusky-raftered many-cobwebbed hall,
He found an ancient dame in dim brocade ;
And near her, like a blossom vermeil-white,
That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,
Her daughter. In a moment thought Geraint,

" Here, by God's rood, is the one maid for me."
But none spake word except the hoary earl :
" Enid, the good knight's horse stands in the court ;
Take him to stall, and give him corn, and then
Go to the town and buy us flesh and wine ;
And we will make us merry as we may.
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great."

He spake : the Prince, as Enid passed him, fain
To follow, strode a stride ; but Yniol caught
His purple scarf, and held, and said, " Forbear !
Rest ! the good house, tho' ruined, O my son,
Endures not that her guest should serve himself."
And reverencing the custom of the house,
Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall ;

And after went her way across the bridge,
And reached the town, and while the Prince and Earl
Yet spoke together, came again with one,
A youth, that following with a costrel bore
The means of goodly welcome, flesh and wine.
And Enid brought sweet cakes to make them cheer,
And in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.
And then, because their hall must also serve
For kitchen, boiled the flesh, and spread the board,
And stood behind and waited on the three.
And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,
Geraint had longing in him evermore
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,
That crost the trencher as she laid it down :
But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
For now the wine made summer in his veins,
Let his eye rove in following, or rest
On Enid at her lowly handmaid-work,
Now here, now there, about the dusky hall ;
Then suddenly addrest the hoary earl :

" Fair Host and Earl, I pray your courtesy ;

This sparrow-hawk, what is he, tell me of him.
His name ? but no, good faith, I will not have it :
For if he be the knight whom late I saw
Ride into that new fortress by your town,
White from the mason's hand, then have I sworn
From his own lips to have it—I am Geraint
Of Devon—for this morning when the queen
Sent her own maiden to demand the name,
His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,
Struck at her with his whip, and she returned
Indignant to the queen ; and then I swore
That I would track this caitiff to his hold,
And fight and break his pride, and have it of him.
And all unarmed I rode, and thought to find
Arms in your town, where all the men are mad ;
They take the rustic murmur of their bourg
For the great wave that echoes round the world ;
They would not hear me speak : but if you know
Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
Should have them, tell me, seeing I have sworn
That I will break his pride and learn his name,
Avenging this great insult done the queen."

Then cried Earl Yniol, " Art thou he indeed,
Geraint, a name far-sounded among men
For noble deeds ? and truly I, when first
I saw you moving by me on the bridge,
Felt you were somewhat, yea, and by your state
And presence might have guessed you one of those
That eat in Arthur's hall at Camelot.

Nor speak I now from foolish flattery ;
For this dear child hath often heard me praise
Your feats of arms, and often when I paused

Hath asked again, and ever loved to hear ;
So grateful is the noise of noble deeds
To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong :
Oh, never yet had woman such a pair
Of suitors as this maiden ; first Limours,
A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
Drunk even when he wooed : and be he dead
I know not, but he passed to the wild land.
The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,
My curse, my nephew—I will not let his name
Slip from my lips if I can help it—he,
When I that knew him fierce and turbulent
Refused her to him, then his pride awoke ;
And since the proud man often is the mean,
He sowed a slander in the common ear,
Affirming that his father left him gold,
And in my charge, which was not rendered to him ;
Bribed with large promises the men who served
About my person, the more easily
Because my means were somewhat broken into
Thro' open doors and hospitality ;
Raised my own town against me in the night
Before my Enid's birthday, sacked my house ;
From mine own earldom foully ousted me ;
Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
For truly there are those who love me yet ;
And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,
Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,
But that his pride too much despises me :
And I myself sometimes despise myself ;
For I have let men be, and have their way ;
Am much too gentle, have not used my power ;
Nor know I whether I be very base
Or very manful, whether very wise
Or very foolish ; only this I know,
That whatsoever evil happen to me,
I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,
But can endure it all most patiently."

" Well said, true heart," replied Geraint, " but arms,
That if, as I suppose, your nephew fights
In next day's tourney I may break his pride."

And Yniol answered, " Arms, indeed, but old
And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,
Are mine, and therefore at your asking, yours.
But in this tournament can no man tilt,
Except the lady he loves best be there.
Two forks are fixed into the meadow ground,
And over these is laid a silver wand,
And over that is placed the sparrow-hawk,
The prize of beauty for the fairest there.
And this, what knight soever be in field
Lays claim to for the lady at his side,
And tilts with my good nephew thereupon,
Who being apt at arms and big of bone
Has ever won it for the lady with him,
And toppling over all antagonism
Has earned himself the name of sparrow-hawk.
But you, that have no lady, cannot fight."

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,
Leaning a little toward him, " Your leave !
Let *me* lay lance in rest, O noble host,
For this dear child, because I never saw,
Tho' having seen all beauties of our time,
Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.
And if I fall her name will yet remain
Untarnished as before ; but if I live,
So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost,
As I will make her truly my true wife."

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart
Danced in his bosom, seeing better days.

And looking round he saw not Enid there
(Who hearing her own name had slipt away),
But that old dame, to whom full tenderly
And fondling all her hand in his he said,
" Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
And best by her that bore her understood.
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest
Tell her, and prove her heart toward the Prince."

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and she
With frequent smile and nod departing found,
Half disarrayed as to her rest, the girl ;
Whom first she kissed on either cheek, and then
On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart : but never light and shade
Coursed one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale
Across the face of Enid hearing her ;
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
When weight is added only grain by grain,
Sank her sweet head upon her gentle breast ;
Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it ;
So moving without answer to her rest
She found no rest, and ever failed to draw
The quiet night into her blood, but lay
Contemplating her own unworthiness ;
And when the pale and bloodless east began
To quicken to the sun, arose, and raised
Her mother too, and hand in hand they moved
Down to the meadow where the jousts were held,
And waited there for Yniol and Geraint.

And thither came the twain, and when Geraint
Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,
He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,

Himself beyond the rest pushing could move
The chair of Idris. Yniol's rusted arms
Were on his princely person, but thro' these
Princelike his bearing shone ; and errant knights
And ladies came, and by-and-by the town
Flowed in, and settling circled all the lists.
And there they fixed the forks into the ground,
And over these they placed a silver wand,
And over that a golden sparrow-hawk.
Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet blown,
Spake to the lady with him and proclaimed,
" Advance and take as fairest of the fair,
For I these two years past have won it for thee,
The prize of beauty." Loudly spake the Prince,
" Forbear ; there is a worthier," and the knight,
With some surprise and twice as much disdain,
Turned, and beheld the four, and all his face
Glowed like the heart of a great fire at Yule,
So burnt he was with passion, crying out,
" Do battle for it then," no more ; and thrice
They clashed together, and thrice they brake their spears.
Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lashed at each
So often and with such blows that all the crowd
Wondered, and now and then from distant walls
There came a clapping as of phantom hands.

So twice they fought, and twice they breathed, and still
The dew of their great labour, and the blood
Of their strong bodies, flowing, drained their force.
But either's force was matched till Yniol's cry,
" Remember that great insult done the Queen,"
Increased Geraint's, who heaved his blade aloft,

And cracked the helmet thro', and bit the bone,
And felled him, and set foot upon his breast,
And said, " Thy name ? " To whom the fallen man
Made answer, groaning, " Edyrn, son of Nudd !
Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee.
My pride is broken : men have seen my fall."
" Then, Edyrn, son of Nudd," replied Geraint,
" These two things shalt thou do, or else thou diest.
First, thou thyself, thy lady, and thy dwarf,
Shalt ride to Arthur's court, and being there,
Crave pardon for that insult done the queen,
And shalt abide her judgment on it : next,
Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy kin.
These two things shalt thou do, or thou shalt die."
And Edyrn answered, " These things will I do,
For I have never yet been overthrown,
And thou hast overthrown me, and my pride
Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall ! "
And rising up he rode to Arthur's court,
And there the Queen forgave him easily.
And being young, he changed himself, and grew
To hate the sin that seemed so like his own
Of Modred, Arthur's nephew, and fell at last
In the great battle fighting for the king.

THE STORY OF ELAINE

ONE evening, Sir Lancelot, the bravest and most courteous of King Arthur's knights, rode through a lonely part of the country on his way to Camelot. He was hastening to that city to take his part in a great tourney, and because he wished to enter the contest unknown he had chosen the less frequented paths, so that none might mark him as he went.

Now dusk was approaching, and he was uncertain of his road. Suddenly, as he turned a corner, he saw on a hill before him the strong walls and rounded towers of a castle which presented a noble appearance, bathed as it was in the crimson glow from the setting sun.

"Here," thought the weary knight, "I will seek food and shelter until morning, for of a truth the lord of so fair a building must be one who would not deny me that hospitality which by the laws of knight-errantry I may claim."

Thereupon Lancelot approached the gateway and blew a great blast on the horn which hung there. In response, the door was quickly opened by a warder whose strange, uncouth appearance and silent gestures filled the knight with surprise; but as his intentions were apparently friendly, Lancelot passed through the gateway and allowed the man to divest him of his heavy armour and to take charge of his horse, excusing his silence on the score of some probable infirmity.

This was, in fact, the case, the old man's tongue having been cut out by an enemy who had attacked the castle many years before. In obedience to his

gestures, the knight next entered the courtyard of the castle, where a pleasing sight awaited him. In front of the towers and walls of the massive pile were assembled to do him honour the lord of the castle, which was called Astolat, his two handsome young sons, and his motherless daughter Elaine, a lovely maiden, whose delicate and fair appearance had won her the name of the Lily Maid of Astolat.

Courteous greetings were at once exchanged, but when the lord of the castle, having introduced each of his family by name, requested that of the stranger in return, Lancelot begged to be excused from giving it, offering as the reason for the seeming discourtesy that he wished to enter the coming tourney unrecognized. He further asked the favour of a shield without device for his own use in the contest, since, should he enter it bearing his own, the arms emblazoned on it would be at once recognized and his purpose would be defeated.

Now of the two young sons of Astolat, Torre, the elder, had been unseated and wounded in his first joust, and for this reason his shield was blank, and it was now offered to Lancelot by his father. Torre himself consented with a rather churlish manner, for the young man would fain have used his shield himself, but was not sufficiently recovered from his wound.

After a half-smiling reproof to Torre for his ungraciousness, the father turned to his younger son, Lavaine, and placing a kindly hand on his shoulder, while an expression of amused but proud affection shone in his eyes, he explained to Lancelot that the young lad was actually fired with the ambitious wish to enter the tourney. Whereupon Lavaine, covered with confusion that the stranger should hear of his presumption, declared it had been simply in jest that he had said he would like to fight and win the prize

for his sister ; but in the end, carried away by his own eagerness, he begged for leave to ride with the knight to the tournament—for Lavaine was filled with the right spirit of all brave doing, and wished to try to win, knowing that it is always worth while to do our best even though success be beyond our reach.

While this and other conversation went on among the men, the maiden Elaine raised her eyes timidly to the face of Lancelot, and what she saw there attracted her very strangely. It was indeed a noble face on which she looked, though marked by many a fierce fight with temptation, in which the knight had not always been the victor. But Elaine saw nothing of the scars ; her pure eyes saw only the great soul within him, and forthwith her whole heart went out to him, and she loved him with a love that would never die.

But Lancelot was all unconscious of the feeling he had awakened in her ; nor, if he had known, could he have loved her in return, for long ago his heart had been given to another. So, chatting in happy unconsciousness of the feelings in Elaine's heart, he followed her father and brother to the great banqueting-hall, where a noble feast was spread ; and after he had been refreshed with meat and wine, the rest of the evening passed with song and music and the recital of stories of great deeds.

At the entreaty of the young knights, Torre and Lavaine, Lancelot told them much of King Arthur's court, and of the famous deeds done by the king himself and his knights ; of how he had defeated the heathen in great battles by the foaming waters of rushing rivers or in the dark depths of dim forests. For in battle, so he related, the gentle, courteous king became a fierce and mighty leader, slaying the heathen who worked evil in the land with his own trusty sword, and

spurring on even his most renowned knights to further deeds of prowess. And while Lancelot's voice rang with the glowing recital and his eyes flashed as he recalled the noble deeds of his king, Elaine hung on every word and gesture, thinking not of the king but of the knight who praised him, and in her heart the love for him grew stronger than before.

At last the lights in the castle were extinguished, and Elaine crept up to her own chamber high in one of the towers. And there, instead of sleeping, she recalled again every stirring word uttered by Lancelot and every noble expression of his face, until out of her fancy rose an ideal knight greater and nobler than the real Lancelot, and yet for all that not unlike to him.

Early the next morning Lancelot was to start forth bearing Torre's blank shield and accompanied by young Lavaine, who was thus granted his wish of entering the tourney, while at the same time he could serve as a guide to Lancelot on his way.

All was ready, and Lancelot stood in the courtyard caressing his horse and only waiting for Lavaine to appear with his shield, when a most unexpected sight met his gaze. The narrow staircase from Elaine's chamber led to the foot of the tower in the courtyard where he stood, and as Lancelot raised his eyes he saw Elaine herself standing there, motionless, against the grey walls, with the morning sunlight touching her sweet pale face and bright hair. For a moment the knight gazed at her without speaking, struck with admiration of her appearance, for until now he had scarcely noticed how lovely she was; and perhaps her beauty had never been so great before, for all her soul shone in her face as she raised it to him aglow with the rapture of undying love.

She had crept silently down at this early hour with the desire to say farewell to her brother as her excuse, but urged more by the hope of a parting word from the stranger ; and now that she found herself alone with him a sudden resolve seized her, and with a desperate effort to conquer her timidity she murmured a request that he would wear her favour at the tourney.

Now this was a request that Lancelot hesitated to grant, for the reason that he had never yet worn any lady's favour ; but in the end he yielded to Elaine's gentle pleading, and rode forth with her favour of a red sleeve broidered with pearls in his helmet. And he left the maiden further comforted for his departure by giving his own shield to her, bidding her hold it in her own safe keeping until he came again for it.

So Lancelot and Lavaine rode forth to the tourney ; and Elaine, after watching them out of sight, crept back to her chamber in the tower bearing the shield of the stranger knight with her.

For the whole of that day Lancelot and his companion rode together, and at nightfall they sought shelter with a hermit who lived in a cave hewn out of the rock. The next morning they saw the towers and walls of the fair city of Camelot against the distant sky before them, and soon reached the meadow on its outskirts where the king and his court were already assembled, and the lists were ready for the tourney to begin. As they drew near to the city Lancelot turned to young Lavaine, and under promise of secrecy told him who he was.

This was startling news to Lavaine, for he had heard all his life of the great Lancelot, and could hardly realize that he had actually been in his close company.

" Lancelot himself ! " he exclaimed. " Art thou indeed the *great* Lancelot ? "

His words smote Lancelot with a sharp stab of pain, for in his heart he knew that he did not deserve the title of " great " which might once have been his. He

had not been the pure and faithful knight of Arthur's ideal, and undeserved praise was like a bitter draught to his noble nature.

In reply to Lavaine he gave a heavy sigh which was almost a groan, and said,—

" Nay, nay, I am not great. In me there dwells no greatness, unless it be some far-off touch of greatness in knowing that I am not great."

But Lavaine gazed on him with amazement, for knowing nothing of Lancelot's sins and failures, but only of his noble deeds, he did not understand his meaning.

Soon they had entered the lists, and saw the stands decked with gaily-coloured drapery and filled with beautiful women and brave men, who had come to watch the fray. At one end sat King Arthur himself, conspicuous amid all the throng around him for his noble bearing, and easy to be recognized by his gold crown and his robe of red samite embroidered with a strange device of dragons in gold.

The throne on which he sat was carved with a similar design of golden dragons, and on the costly canopy above him blazed the diamond which was to be the chief trophy in the fight. It was the ninth which had been fought for, and all the others had been won by Lancelot in successive years. Now the final contest was to be fought, and whoever won the fight this day was to be awarded the complete set of precious stones;* and all, including the king, thought that Lancelot was not entering the lists, and failed to recognize him in the knight who rode up with closed vizor and with Elaine's token in his helmet.

Soon the trumpets blew; the assembled knights set their lances, and striking their spurs into their horses' sides rode forth against each other, to meet in the centre with a mighty clash of arms.

At first Lancelot took no part in the encounter. He sat his horse apart, watching to see which was the

* They were taken from the crown told of on page 32.

stronger side ; and when he had discovered this, he joined the weaker one, and attacked the other with all his might.

Now, indeed, there was an instant change in the aspect of the fight, for Lancelot's side was in a moment no longer the attacked but the attacker. Down went the leaders of the opposite side before his onslaught—princes, dukes, earls ; no matter who they were nor how valiant, down they fell before his mighty spear.

Victory was almost within his grasp when an unexpected incident occurred. There were standing apart in the lists a number of brave and hardy knights of Lancelot's own family and kindred, and when they saw this stranger—for so they thought him—about to win the glory which had hitherto been Lancelot's, their hearts grew hot within them, and the pride of kinship urged them to oppose him. With spears couched and plumes driven back by the wind, they suddenly swept down upon Lancelot, first wounding his charger and next driving a spear into the knight's own side.

The spear snapped by the force of the blow, and the head remained in the wound it had made. Thus unhorsed Lancelot lay in agony, and it would seem that the fighting was over. No so, however. Quick as lightning young Lavaine unseated one of the enemy and brought his horse to where his hero lay. With a supreme effort the wounded knight mounted, and while all around watched breathless, he charged to right and left with the spear in his side, clearing the lists, and in spite of the agony from his wound he won the honours of the tournament.

Then again the trumpets blew, and the people shouted, and all the knights on Lancelot's side cried,—

" Advance, O Knight of the Red Sleeve, and take the diamond as your prize."

But in the midst of the uproar Lancelot, leaning heavily on young Lavaine by reason of his wound, escaped from the field, and sought the hermit's cave where he had slept the night before. There for many weeks he lay hidden from the world, while his grievous wound was tended by Lavaine and the hermit.

Meanwhile King Arthur, anxious to award to the unknown knight the prize he had won in the field, sent forth another of his knights named Gawain in search of the wounded hero, who, after a day's journey, came, in his turn, to Astolat, and there sought shelter for the night.

At her casement in the high tower Elaine, the lily maid, sat watching eagerly for news ; and when she saw the knight she hastened to meet him with the breathless cry,—

" What news from Camelot, lord ? What of the Knight of the Red Sleeve ? "

" He was the victor," said Gawain.

" I knew it," cried Elaine, flushing crimson with joy.

But swiftly her joy was changed to anguish when the knight added the tidings of Lancelot's wound and disappearance, and she turned deathly white and almost swooned. Then the lord of Astolat appeared, and told Gawain how the nameless knight had been there and how he was sure to return, since he had left his shield in their care ; and in any case Lavaine, who was with him, would bring them tidings of him in time. He then ordered that the shield should be shown to Gawain, who, when he saw the arms on it of azure lions rampant crowned with gold, knew it at once for that of Lancelot, and smiting his thigh he mocked at himself for not recognizing him in the field ; while Elaine, her face aglow with pride, cried out,—

" Right was I who deemed my knight the greatest knight of all."

But Gawain, the pleasure-loving knight, did not care to dally long in the quiet of Astolat, and as the days passed and brought no news of Lancelot, he carelessly handed over the ninth diamond to Elaine, bidding her give the knight his prize when he returned, and with a gay smile and careless word he rode forth on his way back to the court.

Then Elaine went to her father, moved by a great resolve, for the agony of picturing her knight lying sick and wounded, with no tender woman's hand to minister to him, was fast becoming more than she could bear. She entreated to be allowed to start forth with the diamond to seek Lancelot and her brother, and help to nurse the hero back to health.

At first her father withheld his consent, but in the end, seeing how Elaine's heart was set on the errand, he allowed her to go, and with Torre as an escort she rode forth towards Camelot. She knew it was a bold thing that she was doing, and one which might lead people to say unkind things, but she cared not for that. Her heart was so filled with a great love for Lancelot that she could think of nothing else but him.

In a meadow sweet with flowers, near to the city of Camelot, she met Lavaine on horseback, and he led her to where Lancelot lay, still very ill and weak. Elaine knelt by his couch and handed him the diamond, and day after day for a long time she dressed his wounds with gentle fingers, soothed his fevered brow with her tender touch, and watched over him till she brought him back to life.

A day came at length when Lancelot was completely healed, and with Elaine and Lavaine he rode back to Astolat. Elaine's gentle heart was heavy within her as

they rode, for greatly though she loved Lancelot, he had given her no sign that her love was known to him or returned.

For a few days Lancelot stayed at Astolat, and before he went he asked Elaine to name any favour that he could bestow upon her in return for all her care. At these words Elaine felt she could keep her secret no longer, and told him how much she loved him, and that the one thing she cared for was to be his wife. Alas! that was the one thing Lancelot could not agree to, for he did not love her. He saw how lovely and good she was, and wished his heart were free so that he could have given it to her; but as things were it was impossible.

He sadly told her so, and offered her great possessions if she could love and wed some other knight nearer to her own age; and here Lancelot made one of the greatest mistakes of his life. Had he been true to his ideal of knighthood, he could never have offered the gentle lady who loved him so truly such consolation as this. The words which were meant to be kind were the most cruel he could have uttered, and at first Elaine could hardly grasp their meaning. Then as she did so she grew deathly pale, and moaned, "Of wealth or marriage with another I will nothing," and fell fainting to the floor.

The next morning early, Elaine, looking through her casement, saw Lancelot ride sadly away. But though she felt that he knew she was there at the window, he never once turned his head nor waved an adieu. At her father's wish he had determined to do this seeming dis-

courtesy, for thus they thought he might cure Elaine of her love. It did not do so; her love was much too strong and deep for that. It was so strong, indeed, that without the love of her knight she felt she could not live. Day after day she lay in her tower growing paler and weaker, and before long she died.

Before her death Elaine made one last request, which was a very strange one; but since it was her dying wish, her father determined to carry it out.

It was that when dead she should be placed in her little bed on a barge draped in black, and, rowed by the dumb doorkeeper, be taken to the court of Arthur bearing in her hand a letter of farewell to Lancelot.

So it was done even as she wished. One summer's afternoon certain knights and ladies of Arthur's court at Camelot who were walking near the river saw a wondrous sight. Slowly gliding over the waters, even up to the palace doorway, came a barge draped in black and rowed by the uncouth figure of a dumb old man; and in the barge, on a richly-decked bed, lay the motionless white figure of the beautiful Elaine, bearing in her dead hand a scroll on which were written the loving words of her last farewell to Lancelot.

ELAINE IN THE CAVE

BUT far away the maid in Astolat,
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
Sat on his knee, stroked his grey face and said,
" Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
Is yours who let me have my will ; and now,
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits ? "
" Nay," said he, " surely." " Wherefore let me hence,"
She answered, " and find out dear Lavaine."
" You will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine :
Bide," answered he : " we needs must hear anon
Of him, and of that other." " Ay," she said,
" And of that other, for I needs must hence
And find that other, wheresoe'er he be,
And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,
Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
As yon proud Prince who left the quest to me.
Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden's aid.
The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,
My father, to be sweet and serviceable
To noble knights in sickness, as you know,
When these have worn their tokens : let me hence,
I pray you." Then her father nodding said,
" Ay, ay, the diamond : wit you 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—
Nay, I mean nothing : so then, get you gone,
Being so very wilful you must go."

Lightly, her suit allowed, she slipped away,
And while she made her ready for her ride,
Her father's latest word hummed in her ear,
" Being so very wilful you must go,"
And changed itself and echoed 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 ;
And in her heart she answered it and said,
" What matter, so I help him back to life ? "
Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide
Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs
To Camelot, and before the city gates
Came on her brother with a happy face
Making a roan horse caper and curvet
For pleasure all about a field of flowers :
Whom when she saw, "Lavaine," she cried, "Lavaine,
How fares my lord Sir Lancelot ? " He amazed,
" Torre and Elaine ! why here ? Sir Lancelot !
How know you my lord's name is Lancelot ? "
But when the maid had told him all her tale,
Then turned Sir Torre, and being in his moods
Left them, and under the strange-statued gate,
Where Arthur's wars were rendered mystically,
Passed 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
Of Lancelot on the wall ; her scarlet sleeve,
Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls away,
Streamed from it still ; and in her heart she laughed,
Because he had not loosed it from his helm,
But meant once more perchance to tourney in it.

And when they gained the cell in which 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,
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Uttered a little tender dolorous cry.
The sound not wonted in a place so still
Woke the sick knight, and while he rolled his eyes
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying,
" Your prize the diamond sent you by the King : "
His eyes glistened : 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

Assigned to her not worthy of it, she knelt
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 assigned, he kissed her face.
At once she slipped like water to the floor.
" Alas," he said, " your ride has 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,
Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
In the heart's colours on her simple face ;
And Lancelot looked, and was perplexed in mind,
And being weak in body said no more ;
But did not love the colour ; woman's love,
Save one, he not regarded, and so turned
Sighing, and feigned a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the fields,
And passed beneath the wildly-sculptured gates
Far up the dim rich city to her kin ;
There bode the night ; but woke with dawn, and passed
Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
Thence to the cave : so day by day she passed
In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
Gliding, and every day she tended him,
And likewise many a night : and Lancelot
Would, tho' he called 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
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
Milder than any mother to a sick child,
And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love
Upbore her ; till the hermit, skilled 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,
Would listen for her coming and regret
Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the love
Of man and woman when they love their best,
Closest and sweetest, and had died the death
In any knightly fashion for her sake.
And peradventure had he seen her first
She might have made this and that other world
Another world for the sick man ; but now
The shackles of an old love straitened him,
His honour rooted in dishonour 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 :
For when the blood ran lustier in him again,
Full often the sweet 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
Beamed on his fancy, spoke, he answered 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 dimmed her sight,
And drave her ere her time across the fields
Far into the rich city, where alone
She murmured, " Vain, in vain : it cannot be.
He will not love me : how then ? must I die ? "
Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few notes,
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
Went half the night repeating, " Must I die ? "
And now to right she turned, and now to left,
And found no ease in turning or in rest ;
And " Him or death," she muttered, " death or him,"
Again and like a burden, " Him or death."

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,
To Astolat returning rode the three.
There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self
In that wherein she deemed she looked her best,
She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought,
" If I be loved, these are my festal robes ;
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall."
And Lancelot ever pressed 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 you done me, that I make
My will of yours, and prince and lord am I
In mine own land, and what I will I can."
Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
But like a ghost without the power to speak.
And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish,
And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should learn it ; and one morn it chanced
He found her in among the garden yews,
And said, " Delay no longer, speak your wish,
Seeing I go to-day : " then out she brake :
" Going ? and we shall never see you more.
And I must die for want of one bold word."
" Speak : that I live to hear," he said, " is yours."

Then suddenly and passionately she spoke :
" I have gone mad. I love you : let me die."
" Ah, sister," answered Lancelot, " what is this ? "
And innocently extending her white arms,
" Your love," she said, " your love—to be your wife."
And Lancelot answered, " Had I chosen to wed,
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine :
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 answered, " Nay, the world, the world,
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
To blare its own interpretation—nay,
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
And your good father's kindness." And she said,

" Not to be with you, not to see your face—
Alas for me then, my good days are done."
" Nay, noble maid," he answered, " ten times nay!
This is not love : but love's first flash in youth,
Most common : yea, I know it of mine own self :
And you yourself will smile at your own self
Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age :
And then will I, for true you are and sweet
Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,
More specially should your 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' you were my blood,
In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
And more than this I cannot."
While he spoke
She neither blushed nor shook, but deathly-pale
Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied ;
" Of all this will I nothing ; " and so fell,
And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of yew
Their talk had pierced, her father : " Ay, a flash,
I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.
Too courteous are you, 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 remained, and toward even
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 looked
Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.

And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound ;
And she by tact of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him.
And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,
Nor bade farewell, but sadly rode away.
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
labour, left.
But still she heard him, still
his picture formed
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 say-
ing, " Peace to thee,

Sweet sister," whom she answered with all calm.
But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant field
Approaching thro' the darkness, called ; the owls
Wailing had power upon her, and she mixed
Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little song,
And called 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 ;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain :
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

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

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

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

High with the last line scaled her voice, and this,
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard, and thought
With shuddering, " Hark the Phantom of the house
That ever shrieks before a death," and called
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,
Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder and we know not why,
So dwelt the father on her face and thought,
" Is this Elaine ? " till back the maiden fell,
Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay,
Speaking a still good morrow with her eyes.
At last she said, " Sweet brothers, yesternight
I seemed a curious little maid again,
As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,
And when you used to take me with the flood
Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
Only you would not pass beyond the cape
That has the poplar on it : there you fixed
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.
And yet I cried because you would not pass
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the King.

And yet you would not ; but this night I dreamed
That I was all alone upon the flood,
And then I said, ' Now shall I have my will : '
And there I woke, but still the wish remained.
So let me hence that I may pass at last
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
Until I find the palace of the king.
There will I enter in among them all,
And no man there will dare to mock at me ;
But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,
And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me—
Gawain, who bade a thousand farewells to me,
Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bade me one :
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 ! "

THE STORY OF SIR GALAHAD

As Arthur and the knights sat at their feast on Whitsunday, there suddenly appeared in the hall an aged knight clad in white, and with him a fair youth named Galahad, of a bright and noble countenance. No one knew who they were or whence they came; but Arthur, always the most chivalrous and courteous of knights, at once bade the strangers welcome.

Then the aged knight turned to Galahad and told the youth to follow him. He led him straight to the Siege Perilous, the seat at the Round Table in which no knight had yet dared to sit, for it was said that any one who sat on it would do so at great risk and peril; and, to the amazement of all, Galahad sat down in the seat without a moment's hesitation and with no evil result. So the king and all the knights knew from this sign that, in spite of his tender age, Galahad was the knight destined to fill the empty place at the Round Table, and they welcomed him gladly as one of themselves. The old man who had brought him there, having now fulfilled his mission, kissed Galahad and went on his way alone.

And now another proof was to be given that Galahad was no ordinary knight. Earlier in that same day a wonderful thing had happened. Just as the king and the court were returning to the palace after hearing morning service in the minster, a squire had come to the king with a marvellous story. He said that he had seen floating on the river near by a great red stone, and fixed into it a wondrous sword set with precious stones and ornamented with letters

of gold. Thereupon the king said he would himself go at once to see this wonderful thing, so he and all his knights went down to the riverside. There indeed were the stone and the sword, as described by the squire ; and when the inscription on the sword was read it was found to be this :—

" *Never shall man take me hence except he by whose side I ought to hang ; and he shall be the best knight in the world.*"

When the king heard this he turned to Lancelot, his most famous and best-beloved knight, and said that surely the sword must belong to him. But Lancelot replied sadly that this was not so, for he knew in his heart that he was not the true and perfect knight that the king judged him to be. He said, moreover, that grievous harm would come to any one who, not being the perfect knight, should attempt to draw the sword from the stone. He also gave this warning to two other of the knights named Gawain and Percivale, who were brave enough to try to take the sword, but neither of them could move it.

And now to return to Galahad. After he had taken his place in the Siege Perilous, and had partaken of food, the king raised a cloth which he had ordered to be placed over the writing on the back of the seat ; and there, to the surprise of all, was found the name of Galahad. So now there was no possibility of doubt that Galahad was the knight destined to occupy the vacant seat ; and the king next thought he would show him the stone with the sword that no one could move.

Leaving the hall, therefore, accompanied by his knights, Queen Guinevere, and her ladies, he conducted Galahad to the riverside. But when the king pointed out the sword to him and told him that no knight of his company could move it, Galahad showed no surprise.

"Sir," he said to the king, "it is no marvel that the other knights could not move the sword, for the adventure was intended for me alone. For this reason, as you see, I have brought no sword;" and hereupon he pointed to the empty scabbard by his side. Then taking the hilt of the sword in his hand, he drew the blade out of the stone with ease.

So now Galahad was armed with a sword; but even yet he was not fully equipped for fight, for he had no shield. The king noticed this, and he told the young knight that a shield would be sent him in due time and in a mysterious manner; and so indeed it proved, as we shall see.

Some little time afterwards Galahad was riding in the country outside Camelot, and at eventide he came to a beautiful abbey, where he decided to rest for the night. He was made welcome by the monks, and to his surprise he found two other knights of the Round Table staying at the abbey also. So they all went to supper together.

As they sat at this meal Galahad asked his companions what had brought them to the place; and one of them, named Bagdemagus, replied that they had come to make trial of a great shield which was reported to be there, and of which it was said that any man, other than a certain chosen knight, who fastened it round his neck would suffer grievous injury or meet with his death within three days.

"And," said Bagdemagus, "I mean to try it myself to-morrow, and prove whether this be true or not. If I suffer injury or meet with death," he continued, "then you, Galahad, may try, for I feel sure that to you, if not to me, it will be given to succeed in this adventure."

"Sir," replied Galahad, "I agree thereto most readily, for I have no shield."

Next morning the two knights heard prayers together in the great abbey church, after which one

of the monks led them to where the great shield hung behind the high altar. It was a beautiful shield of the purest white with a red cross upon it, and as the monk showed it to them he gave them a word of warning.

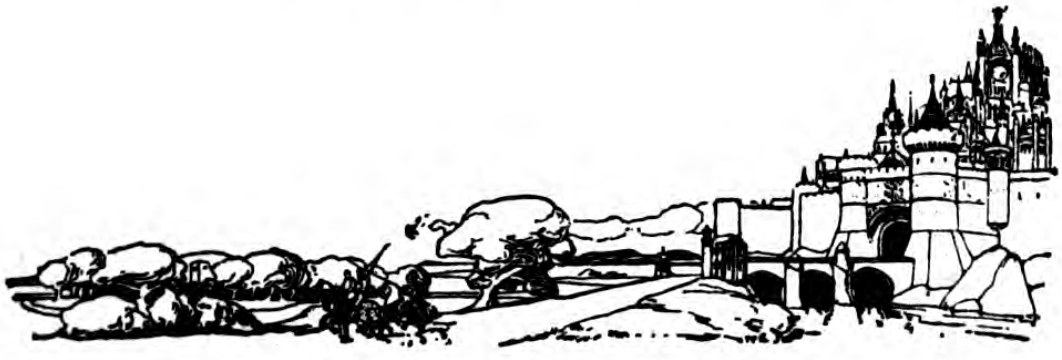
" Know ye," said he, " that this shield should only be hung round the neck of the worthiest knight in the world. Therefore I counsel both of you to consider well before you attempt to take it."

" Well," said Bagdemagus, " full well I know that I am not the worthiest knight in the world. Nevertheless I intend to try for the shield." And with this he took it down from where it hung.

When they came outside he bade Galahad await his return or tidings of him ; and taking with him a squire, he rode forth in search of adventure in which to prove his new possession.

When he had gone about two miles he spied another knight approaching clad in white armour and mounted on a goodly horse, who, when he saw Bagdemagus, rode at him full tilt with his spear. Bagdemagus thrust at him in return, and broke his own spear against his enemy's armour ; but the spear of the other smote Bagdemagus right through his breastplate, and the shield failed to protect him, so that he was sorely wounded in the shoulder. Then the knight in white armour, after lifting his wounded enemy from his horse, took the shield from him.

" Sir," said he, " you have committed great folly



against yourself, for this shield should only be borne by the worthiest knight in the world." He then handed it to the squire in attendance on Bagdemagus, and said, "Take it, I pray, to the good knight Galahad who awaits you in the abbey, and greet him well from me."

"Sir," said Bagdemagus, as the squire took the shield, "I pray you tell me your name."

But this the stranger would not do, since his name, he said, was not to be revealed to any earthly man.

"Then, sir," entreated the squire in his turn, "tell me, I pray, the reason why the shield does harm to any that bear it."

And the knight replied that the reason for this was that the shield was intended for Galahad alone, and that therefore evil would befall any one else who bore it.

So the squire returned to Galahad bearing the white shield, and bringing with him the wounded knight Bagdemagus, who was laid in bed at the abbey and tended by the monks till he recovered.

Then Galahad hung the white shield round his neck, and mounting his horse he rode forth praising God, and vowing to use his sword only in the cause of right. Thus Galahad became the Knight of the White Shield.

And now the story of the most wonderful of all Galahad's adventures must be told. I have already said that, though he was the youngest and least tried of Arthur's twelve knights, for him was reserved honour above all the rest; and in the story of the Holy Grail will be seen how he succeeded when all others failed.

But you must first hear the legend of the Holy Grail before you read of the part it played in the lives of Sir Galahad and the other knights of the Round Table. The Holy Grail was said to be the actual cup out of which Christ drank at the Last Supper; and, according to the legend believed by Arthur's knights, it was brought to England by St. Joseph of Arimathea and placed in the abbey he founded at Glastonbury.

There for a time it remained as a source of blessing, held in great veneration by all, and the healer of any ill suffered by those who touched it. But when evil times befell, and heathen hordes overran the land, this sacred treasure was borne away by unseen hands and caught up to heaven. And now that Arthur had trodden down the evil in the land, and steadily promoted peace and justice, it was hoped by his knights that the Holy Grail would be restored to them; and each one cherished the secret ambition that he should be found worthy to behold it.

But as time went on and no sign of the sacred vessel was vouchsafed, many of the knights ceased to think much about it; and the record of the Holy Grail might have faded from the minds of men, had it not been at this time given newness of life by the vision of a certain holy nun.

Among the Knights of the Round Table there was one named Percivale, a youth of a sweet and noble nature which endeared him to all. Percivale had a sister who was a nun in a convent not far from Camelot; and one day a message came to him bidding him pay her a visit because she had something important to tell him.

Sir Percivale did so without delay, for, though he could not often see his sister, he loved her dearly,

both for her own sake and because of the sweet and holy life which she led, and for which she was famed even outside the convent. He had not seen her for some time, and when they met he was struck by the wonderful change in her appearance; for her eyes glowed with a deeper and more spiritual light than before, and her frail, fair body seemed to float before him as though she was no longer bound down to earth. But she greeted Percivale with the same sisterly affection as of old, and then, with a bright glow of rapture on her face, she told him her wonderful news.

"Brother, sweet brother," she said, holding his hand in hers, "I have seen the Holy Grail!"

Then she told him how one night, when the moonlight flooded her cell, she was awakened by a sound as of silver horns on the distant hillside, which, as it drew nearer, became sweeter than any earthly music she had ever heard. Then into her cell there streamed a wonderful beam of light, and in the midst of the beam she saw the rose-red Grail throbbing as if alive, and casting a ruddy glow on the whitewashed wall.

Percivale was deeply impressed by his sister's story, and he hoped that, if he fasted and prayed as she had done, to him also the blessed vision would be granted. He told his brother knights about it, and amongst them, of course, he told Galahad; and in the eyes of the youthful knight he saw shining the same wonderful light he had seen in those of his sister. Then Percivale took Galahad to see the maiden, and when she saw him the nun also recognized something in his eyes which told her that this young knight was ready for the holy vision.

Then she cut off her long hair, which fell almost to her feet, and of this she plaited a wonderful belt interwoven with a device representing the Holy Grail in crimson and silver thread. This she bound round the waist of Galahad; and she told him that

if he always followed the right the vision he craved would be granted to him, and he would be crowned as king in a far-off spiritual city.

One sweet summer evening not long after this had occurred, Arthur's knights were assembled in the hall at Camelot. The evening light was shining on them through the twelve great windows of the hall as they sat at the board; but suddenly all grew dark, a crash of thunder echoed above them, and with it came a mighty blast which seemed to rend the roof.

Then, as the knights sat awestruck and motionless, a beam of light, seven times brighter and more dazzling than that of the sun, streamed into the hall; and amidst this light appeared the Holy Grail, borne by an invisible hand, but veiled in white samite so that none might see it; and then the holy vessel departed suddenly. In the wonderful light each knight beheld the face of his fellow illumined as it were in a glory; then the radiance faded, and all was as before; but each knew that the Grail had passed, and that he had only seen it veiled.

Then in the silence which followed Percivale found voice. Springing to his feet he made a vow that, because he had not seen the Grail uncovered, he would spend a twelvemonth and a day in quest of it until he should see it unveiled, even as his sister the holy nun had seen it. Galahad too sprang to his feet and took the same solemn oath; and nearly all the other knights, fired with a similar burning wish, took the vow which Percivale and Galahad had taken.

King Arthur himself was not present with his knights that evening. He had been called away from the castle by a report of the distress of a beautiful lady who had escaped from some robbers, and who had come to his palace gate to throw herself on his protection. Arthur had placed the lady in safety, and had then, according to his custom, ridden

forth to punish the robbers, and prevent them from molesting innocent ladies any more.

As he rode home in the soft light of the summer evening with his task accomplished, the good king saw his city of Camelot before him, its high-pitched roofs, its watch-towers and spires, making a fair sight beneath the light of the setting sun as they clustered on the hillside. At the very summit was the great castle with the hall where the knights were assembled, surrounded by walls covered with wonderful sculptured devices; and at the entrance to the city stood a mighty statue in the semblance of Arthur himself wearing a golden crown, and with great gold wings pointing to the heavens. The statue faced to the east, so that at dawn it seemed clothed with living fire; and the early labourers in fields some miles away could see it, and so were reminded continually that a great and good king ruled the land.

As Arthur rode home on this summer evening with his eyes turned towards his royal city, he saw a sudden cloud as of smoke cover the roof of the hall; and seized with a fear that it had been struck by lightning, he put spurs to his horse, and did not draw rein until he had entered the hall itself. There he found a strange confusion and excitement prevailing. The knights had all risen from the board, and their eager faces and shining eyes still spoke of some unusual event, while even the entrance of the king did not stop the tumult of talk with which they discussed what had happened. Some were still eagerly repeating their

vows to start on the quest of the Grail, while others as eagerly protested and opposed such a mad course.

Then the king turned to Percivale, who happened to be near him, and asked him the cause of the commotion; and Percivale, with eager utterance, told him all the wonderful tale, beginning with the story of his sister's vision, and ending with an account of what had just happened.

The king sat motionless on his horse, calm and dignified amidst the excited crowd around him; and as he listened to the young knight's words, a dark cloud gathered on his countenance. He had thought that all his chosen knights were faithful to himself and devoted to the cause of protecting his realm from the many evils which threatened it; and now that he had left them but for a day, he found them all filled with a burning desire to leave him and go in search of visionary adventures far away.

"Alas, my knights!" he said, turning from one to the other, "had I been here you had not sworn the vow."

Then Percivale, fired with the courage of enthusiasm, made answer,—

"Not so, my king. Had you been here you would yourself have sworn it."

Upon this the king turned kindly to the youth, and asked him whether he had seen the Grail; and Percivale replied that he only heard the sound and saw the light, and that therefore he had vowed to follow till he saw the Grail unveiled.

Then the king asked the other knights one by one if they had seen it, and one and all made the same reply as Percivale. But Galahad was not asked, and of a sudden his voice rang out clearly through the hall and reached even to the place where Arthur stood.

"But I saw the Holy Grail, my king," he said. "I saw the Holy Grail, and heard a voice say, 'Galahad, O Galahad, follow me.'"

"O Galahad," said the king, "for such as thee, and for the holy nun, and for Percivale, these spiritual visions are intended; but for the rest of you," he said, turning sadly to the knights, "who have fought great battles and helped to secure this realm from the heathen hordes, are you not forsaking your duty to follow wandering fires? Lancelot is the bravest and strongest of our knights, and every unproved squire thinks he may some day be a Lancelot. And so it is with you: Galahad has seen, and the holy nun has seen, and you all think to see in your turn. Alas! while you are wandering through the land in quest of adventure, the chance of doing noble deeds will come and will be lost, and I shall be left alone with an empty board to protect my realm unaided. Yet your vow must be held sacred, and you must go."

Then Arthur turned sadly and left the hall, for well he knew that if once his knights dispersed the old Order of the Round Table could never be as before.

The next day a great tourney was held in the open field near the castle, for the king wished once more to see the strength and skill of his knights displayed before him ere they started on their quest.

All the knights came out and closed in combat with each other, and the king and queen and all the court watched the joust. Many lances were broken that day; but the two youngest knights, Galahad and Percivale, overthrew the most, for their enthusiasm was so great that it gave them an unwonted strength. Knight after knight went down before their spears, till all the air re-echoed with the cry of the onlookers, "Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!" and the people nearly broke down the barriers in their attempts to get near the two victorious knights.

But the following day a great sadness fell on Camelot as the bravest knights of the king's Round Table sallied forth from the gates of the city. Down the steep streets, from which the overhanging roofs on either side almost shut out the summer sky, they rode in quick succession, and from roofs and windows the citizens beheld them pass; and as each knight went by his name was shouted from one to another down the street, and a hearty God-speed sent after him.

There rode Sir Lancelot, the king's trusted friend, and the favourite of all for his strength and bravery. There rode too Sir Bors, his cousin, who, with none of the courtly bearing and manner of Sir Lancelot, had a brave, stout heart—a square-set, honest man, whose eyes and lips smiled together when he spoke. Sir Gawain followed—a careless, easy-going knight, riding his horse with loose rein, and exchanging jests even now with those he greeted, as though he were merely sallying forth for a day's pleasure.

Last came the two young knights Percivale and Galahad, and when they passed the shouts of the people grew louder than before as they hailed the victors in the jousts of the previous day. Sir Percivale's face flushed with eager pleasure in response, and a proud smile played on his lips; but Sir Galahad heard the shouts unmoved, for his thoughts were far away from his own triumphs, and his eyes glowed with the same deep spiritual light which Percivale had seen in those of his sister.

But if the people from the roofs and windows shouted and acclaimed as the little band of knights rode forth, at the gateway where the king and queen and all the court were assembled sights and sounds of grief prevailed. Brave knights and fair ladies wept to see the heroes depart, and the poor who had flocked there wept with the rich. Even the king could hardly speak, and Queen Guinevere shed many bitter tears.

So out from Camelot that summer's day rode the little band of knights, leaving the Round Table deserted and the good king's heart filled with gloom and misgiving.

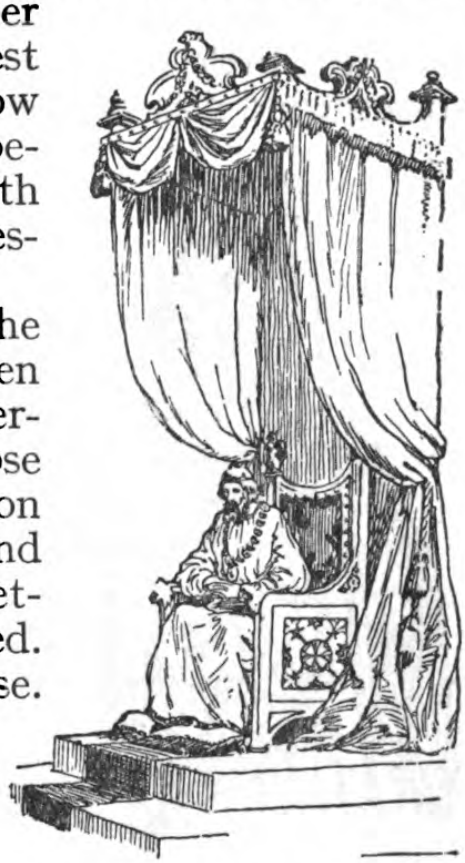
He knew only too well that all the strength and bravery of his noble followers was sorely needed in the work of righting the many abuses which had crept into the kingdom during the reigns of former kings. And in spite of his knightly sympathy with the holy quest on which his comrades had now departed, he felt that still it would have been better for them to spend their energies in righting those wrongs and averting those dangers which required no long quest to discover. But the word of his knights had been pledged, and now he could only await their return in such patience as he could command.

* * * * * *

The year of the quest had passed, and on his throne in the great hall at Camelot Arthur sat and awaited the return of his knights. And now, slowly and sorrowfully, a little band of men with worn and wasted appearance entered the gateway of the city which they had left so proudly. All who had gone forth were not there, but among the company could be seen Percivale, and Lancelot, and honest Bors, and light-hearted Gawain.

As they approached the hall a scene of devastation awaited them. A mighty gale had arisen, and had thrown down broken pieces of stone carving from the buildings upon the roadway before them ; it had also

rent one of the golden wings from the giant statue of Arthur, and caused even the hall itself to rock to its foundations, so that those who felt it had whispered in awestruck tones to each other that surely this great tempest was of evil omen. And now the knights stood once more before their great king, while with eager interest he began to question them as to their fortune.



Many and strange were the adventures which had befallen them during that year of wandering; but to only two of those who came back had the vision of the Grail been granted, and to those not more than a fleeting glimpse had been vouchsafed. Good Sir Bors was one of these. The blunt, simple knight had seen the vision, which had been denied even to the heroic Lancelot, although the latter desired it greatly; while Bors cared little for it himself, if only Lancelot might behold it. Perhaps in this lay the secret of his success, for those who crave a blessing for another achieve the truest blessedness, while those who seek a good thing for themselves alone are rarely blessed even if they obtain it.

How Sir Bors came to see the vision was in this wise. He came in his wanderings to a wild, remote region, where some of the original inhabitants of the country still lived. These people practised heathen rites, and believed in magic and many things which Christianity had shown to be false. When Bors told them of his quest and what it was he sought, they mocked at him as a foolish person, and this led to a dispute between the knight and their priest. Then the people grew very

angry, and seizing the knight, bound him fast in a dungeon.

As he lay there in total darkness, one of the stones which formed his dungeon wall fell to the ground. This was little less than a miracle, because, though a strong wind was raging at the time, the stone was too heavy to be blown from its place. Through the gap in his prison wall Bors could now catch a glimpse of the dark sky and of the stars, for it was night. Then across the gap he saw the Holy Grail itself glide slowly, while a sound as of thunder struck upon his ears. Bors could hardly believe that he had been so favoured, for he deemed himself unworthy of the vision; but this, as I have said, was in truth the very reason why he deserved to see the Grail. Soon after this he was secretly released from his dungeon by a maiden of that country who, unknown to her friends, had become a follower of Christ.

Now, when the knights stood before the king, the good Sir Bors had seized the hand of Lancelot in his, and had placed himself somewhat behind him; for it gave him small pleasure that he had succeeded in his quest, since he knew that Lancelot had failed and could not share his joy. But Arthur saw him in his hiding-place, and called to him across the hall.

"Hail, Bors!" he said, "hast thou beheld the Grail? Surely, if ever loyal knight and true were worthy to do so, thou art the man."

And Bors simply replied that he had indeed seen it, but begged that he should not be questioned on the

matter; and then, brave knight though he was, he turned his face aside, for the tears were in his eyes.

The king now turned with anxious affection to Lancelot.

"And thou, Lancelot my friend, the mightiest of our knights," he said, "hath the quest availed for thee?"

Then a groan burst from Lancelot, for though he had sinned much, he was still so noble in mind that the king's unmerited praise caused him the severest agony; and it was with bitter pain that he told the king how the quest was not for him, because his sin was too great. The king heard this confession with grief and surprise, and he was greatly puzzled as to what the faults of Lancelot could be which prevented him from seeing the Holy Grail. For a few moments he pondered deeply over the matter. Then he came to the generous conclusion that, like many modest men whose ideals are lofty, his favourite knight was judging himself too harshly.

Lancelot told the king how he had sought to free himself from his faults, and how, mad with the pain and the conflict in his soul, he had come to a wild country inhabited by a race of men smaller and weaker than himself. At one time he could easily have frightened them by the mere waving of his spear, but now, weakened by his remorse, he had been beaten down and put to shame by them.

Soon after this he came to the coast, where he found an empty boat, in which he embarked. After seven days out on the open waters he saw before him the great castle of Carbouch, built on a solid rock, and approached by steps which came down to the edge of the sea. There were no sentinels to guard the entrance, but instead, Lancelot saw by

the light of the full moon a lion on either side. Out sprang the knight from his boat, and as he stepped on shore both the great beasts stood up on their hind legs like gigantic men, and each seized him by one of his shoulders.

Lancelot was about to draw his sword and slay them when he heard a voice which told him to doubt not but go forward, and that if he doubted the beasts would tear him to pieces. As the voice ceased, the sword was dashed with violence from his hand by some unseen force. So Lancelot pressed forward into the castle, and found himself in a large, empty hall, through the great oriel window of which he saw the quiet moon shining on the sea below ; and in the stillness there broke on his ear the sound of a sweet voice, clear as a lark, singing in the topmost tower of the castle.

Up a great flight of steps sped Lancelot towards the place whence the sound proceeded, and at last he reached the door from within which came the singing. " Glory and joy and honour to our Lord, and to the holy vessel of the Grail," sang the voice as Lancelot pushed against the door, which gave way before him. In the blinding glare and heat within he thought to see the Holy Grail guarded by great angels ; but the sacred vessel was closely veiled, and Lancelot sank to the ground in a swoon, for by this token he knew that the quest was not for him.

When he had finished this strange story Lancelot passed out of the hall with downcast glance ; and the king watched him go in sorrow, but spoke no word.

Arthur turned next to Gawain ; but the tale of the light-hearted, pleasure-loving knight was quickly told, for he had soon grown weary of the

quest, and made up his mind it was not for him. Then he found a gay pavilion filled with merry girls; and there, feasting and laughing with them, he had passed his time. He wound up by saying that henceforth he intended to be deaf to all stories of holy nuns; but to this the king replied reproachfully,—

"O Gawain, think not to become more blind and deaf than you are now, since you are already too blind to what is highest and noblest even to wish to see it."

So now there remained only Percivale to tell his tale. He too had met with strange adventures, but the most interesting part of what he had to tell was what had befallen the missing Galahad; for Percivale alone knew all the story.

At first Percivale had not succeeded in the quest, for he had not started forth with the singleness of aim and the forgetfulness of self which was required of him and of all the rest. He was too much puffed up by the thought of his victories in the tourney on the day before he left Camelot, and the consequence was that his moral power was weakened, and he fell an easy prey to temptation.

At one time it seemed as if he would surely fail in the quest, for he met a beautiful lady whom he had once loved. She had married some one else, and now her husband was dead, and she was left with great possessions. And when Percivale came to the place where she dwelt with many fair maidens, she made him welcome and feasted him more and more sumptuously each day; and Percivale became lost in thoughts of pleasure, and for a time his sacred vow was almost forgotten. But one night he woke with a burning recollection of his promise and filled with an overwhelming sense of shame, whereupon he rose and fled from the castle.

In the course of his wanderings Percivale came to a hermitage where dwelt a holy man, to whom he confessed everything; and the holy man told him that

what he lacked was humility, and that he had not lost all thought of himself as Galahad had done.

Even as the hermit spoke Galahad himself appeared at the door of the hermitage clad in shining silver armour, and when he saw Percivale within he laid aside his spear and entered. Then the two young knights went to prayers with the hermit, and when the service was over Galahad said that he had plainly seen the Holy Grail. But Percivale had seen nothing unusual.

"I," said Galahad again, "saw it descend on the altar and disappear. But never yet since your sister taught me to see the vision have I failed to do so. The Holy Grail is ever with me as I journey—fainter by day and blood-red in the night. In the strength of it I have prevailed everywhere with my spear, shattering evil, destroying the heathen, and proclaiming the right. But now, brother, my time is well-nigh at hand, and I go to a spiritual city which awaits me. Come thou with me, for thou too shalt see the vision when I go."

So the two young knights started forth together, but it was not long before they were to part. Soon they came to a high hill surrounded by a dark and evil swamp, across which an ancient king had built a pathway linked with many a bridge. Along this pathway rode Galahad, and each bridge as the hoofs of his charger touched it caught fire behind him and vanished in flame, so that, much as Percivale longed to follow him, he could not do so. He could only rein in his horse at the edge of the swamp and watch Galahad's silver armour gleam fainter and fainter as he went on his wondrous way. But when Galahad reached the great sea on the farther boundary of the swamp there

was a wonderful sound as of angels singing, and for one moment Percivale saw him stand out clear as a star, while above his head there hovered the Holy Grail, redder than any rose.

For that one moment the veil was withdrawn for Percivale, and in the glory around him he saw in a brief vision the pearl gateways and golden walls of the spiritual city where Galahad, the spotless Knight of the White Shield, was to reign as king.

So the youngest and bravest knight had succeeded where all others had failed, and to Galahad of the White Shield alone came the full and perfect vision of the Holy Grail. And the reason for this is true now as then : to the pure of heart all things are possible, and those who would wear the victor's crown in the battle of life must seek it even as Galahad did, with no thought of self.

SIR GALAHAD

My good blade carves the casques of men,
  My tough lance thrusteth sure,
My strength is as the strength of ten,
  Because my heart is pure.
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
  The hard brands shiver on the steel,
The splintered spear-shafts crack and fly,
  The horse and rider reel :
They reel, they roll in clanging lists ;
  And when the tide of combat stands,
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
  That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
  On whom their favours fall !
For them I battle till the end,
  To save from shame and thrall :
But all my heart is drawn above,
  My knees are bowed in crypt and shrine :
I never felt the kiss of love,
  Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
  Me mightier transports move and thrill ;
So keep I fair through faith and prayer
  A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes,
  A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,
  I hear a noise of hymns :

Then by some secret shrine I ride ;
I hear a voice, but none are there ;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair,
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between.

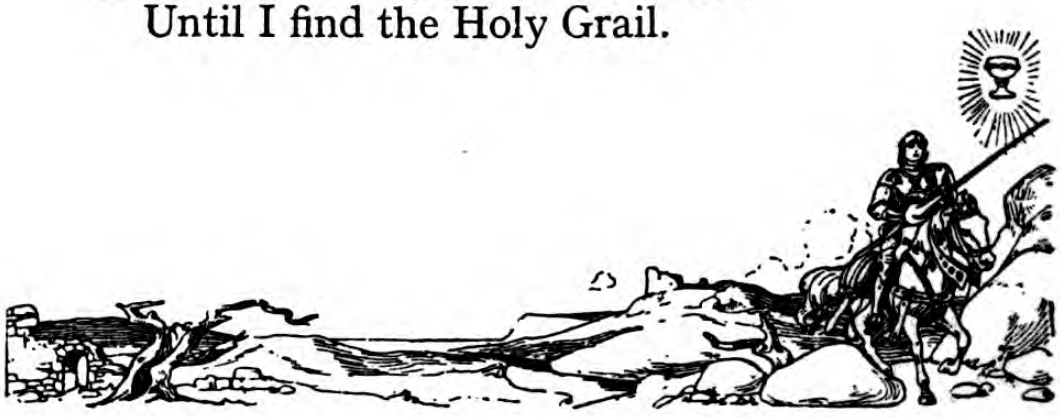
Sometimes on lonely mountain meres
I find a magic bark ;
I leap on board : no helmsman steers :
I float till all is dark.
A gentle sound, an awful light !
Three angels bear the Holy Grail :
With folded feet, in stoles of white,
On sleeping wings they sail.
Ah, blessed vision ! blood of God !
My spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides the glory glides,
And starlike mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne
Through dreaming towns I go,
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,
The streets are dumb with snow.
The tempest crackles on the leads,
And, ringing, spins from brand and mail ;
But o'er the dark a glory spreads,
And gilds the driving hail.
I leave the plain, I climb the height ;
No branchy thicket shelter yields ;
But blessed forms in whistling storms
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight—to me is given
Such hope, I know not fear

I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
That often meet me here.
I muse on joy that will not cease,
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
Whose odours haunt my dreams ;
And, stricken by an angel's hand,
This mortal armour that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
Are touched, are turned to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
And through the mountain walls
A rolling organ-harmony
Swells up, and shakes and falls.
Then move the trees, the copses nod,
Wings flutter, voices hover clear :
" O just and faithful knight of God !
Ride on ! the prize is near."
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange ;
By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
All-armed I ride, whate'er betide,
Until I find the Holy Grail.



MORTE D'ARTHUR

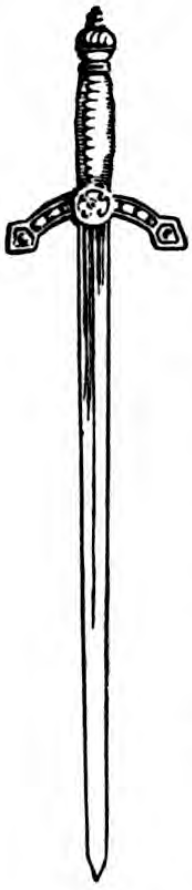
[In his last battle King Arthur fought against the traitor Modred, who had discovered the treacherous love of Queen Guinevere and Lancelot, the most honoured knight of King Arthur's company of the Round Table. While the king marched to attack Lancelot in the north, Modred raised a revolt in the west of Britain.]

So all day long the noise of battle rolled
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonnesse * about their lord,
King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
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.

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

* Lyonnesse, according to tradition, was a region between Cornwall and the Scilly Isles now submerged.

I perish by this people which I made,—
Though Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be ;
I am so deeply smitten through the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite,* mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I rowed across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king :
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known :
But now delay not : take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seëst, 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 through the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruined shrine he stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He stepping down

* Samite was a fabric of fine silk interwoven with gold or silver thread.

By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.
There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt :
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw : but at the last it seemed
Better to leave Excalibur concealed
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 performed my mission which I gave ?
What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ? "
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
" I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."
To whom King Arthur, faint and pale :
" Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseemed
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight :
For surer sign had followed, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."
Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixed in thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,

Lief, beloved.

How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud.
" And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done ?
What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself ?
The king is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours 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,
Saying, ' King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour 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.
Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily :
" What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ? "
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
" I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds."
To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :
" Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widowed of the power in his eye
That bowed the will. I see thee what thou art,

For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt ;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasures 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."
Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutched the sword,
And strongly wheeled and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirled 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 flashed and fell the brand Excalibur :
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the king.
Then spake King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :
" Now I see 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
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not though I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I looked again, behold an arm,

Northern morn, a literal translation of the name of the heavenly phenomenon known as the aurora borealis.

Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."
And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :
" My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."
So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded through his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising, bore him through the place of tombs.
But as he walked, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sighed 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 walked
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 clashed his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armèd heels—
And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.
Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them ; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms

Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shivered 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,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.
Then murmured Arthur, " Place me in the barge,"
And to the barge they came. There those three queens
Put forth their hands, and took the king, and wept ;
But she that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his hands,
And called him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood : for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the withered moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;
And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with drops
Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne—were parched with dust ;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mixed with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shattered column lay the king ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot through the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.
Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere :
" Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.

Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world ;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."
And slowly answered 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.
Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure ! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
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 seëst—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion ;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."
So said he, and the barge with oar and sail

Island-valley, a valley almost ringed round by a curving river.

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

THE STORY OF BECKET

In a certain castle of Normandy two men were seated playing a game of chess together. It was a friendly game, and the two who played had up to this time been close companions in spite of their difference in rank; but though they knew it not, this was to be the last time they should meet in perfect amity. The two men were King Henry the Second of England and his chancellor, Thomas à Becket.

As they played, the king allowed his attention to wander from the board in front of him while he discoursed of other things; and when by a skilful move of a bishop Becket was able to cry "Checkmate," the fiery-tempered monarch, in a sudden fit of wrath at being beaten, suddenly kicked over the board, sending the chessmen rolling along the floor.

Thus the game ended; and the king now claimed his chancellor's attention for other matters than play, for he had a very important request to make of him.

There was a beautiful lady, named Rosamund de Clifford, lodged in the same town of Normandy, and brought thither by the king. Henry was now very anxious to have her conveyed to a place of safety in

England, and for this purpose he required the help of Becket.

Henry had behaved very cruelly to the beautiful Rosamund. He had won her heart, and made her love him very dearly, and then he had pretended to marry her, and allowed her to think she was his wife, though for state reasons he had married the proud, vindictive Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, who had brought him large possessions in France.

Henry was not only anxious to prevent Rosamund from hearing anything of his marriage with this lady; he was also very anxious that Eleanor should not know anything about Rosamund. He knew the queen's cruel, hard nature, and he feared that if she should discover Rosamund's whereabouts she might do her some dreadful injury.

Nor were his fears unfounded, as we shall see later. The king's plan, as he explained to Becket, was that Rosamund should travel under the chancellor's care to England, and there be hidden in a remote place out of Queen Eleanor's reach. He placed a chart on the table, and showed Becket exactly where the Bower, as he called this hiding-place, was situated, and how to reach it, for it was indeed almost impossible for any one to find it without the help of the chart.

First, as the chart showed, there was a wood with a number of winding paths, and after the wood there was a brook crossed by a bridge. Beyond the bridge was a labyrinth of brickwork, and beyond that another wood; in the heart of this second wood there was a garden, and in the garden stood the dwelling-place for Rosamund. On the chart there was marked a bright red line, which showed the way by the winding paths and through the labyrinth.

Becket promised to do as the king wished, and to place Rosamund in this safe place; but unfortunately, before he had time to move the chart from the table, in came Queen Eleanor herself, the last person

whom the king wished to see. Her eyes fell on the chart at once, and she noticed the red line leading to the heart of the wood ; but when, in reply to her question, the king said that the parchment belonged to Becket, she pretended to be satisfied with this answer, and spoke in careless tones about the game of chess, and the chessmen still lying on the floor witnessing to the king's outburst of temper. But, all the same, she had guessed that the chart had to do with a hiding-place for Rosamund, and savage thoughts of hatred and revenge against that lady came surging into her heart.

While she talked and jested to conceal these dark thoughts, a sudden interruption occurred: a messenger from England named Herbert of Bosham entered post-haste with important news. The aged Archbishop of Canterbury, Theobald, had died, so he announced, and to this piece of intelligence he added the news that the old man's dying wish had been that he should be succeeded in his high office by his former pupil, Thomas à Becket.

Henry himself had determined before the news came that on the death of Theobald he would certainly appoint his dearly-loved chancellor in his place ; and though Becket at first demurred, it was in the end decided, and the chancellor became Archbishop of Canterbury.

With the assumption of his new office Becket became a changed man in many ways. As chancellor his aims and the king's had been much the same, as he served the monarch alone, and the closest confidence and affection thus existed between them. But now Becket had another master in the Pope, and served not the monarch but the Church ; and this soon brought him into conflict with the king,

who liked to be supreme in everything, and who was terribly angry when Becket would not depart from what he felt to be right even to please his royal master.

Queen Eleanor was already a bitter enemy of Becket's, because she suspected that he was protecting Rosamund, for whom she had such strong feelings of hatred ; and she enlisted on her side against him two of the knights of the king's household named De Tracy and Fitzurse. These men she bribed to follow Becket to England, and to spy on him and Rosamund.

Becket had hardly reached his London house, after leaving the king in Normandy, when he had reason to suspect that he was being followed.

He was talking to Herbert of Bosham, who, now that Becket was archbishop, had become his secretary, when they were both startled by the tapestry of the chamber being suddenly thrust aside to admit a woman, who dropped her veil and disclosed the lovely countenance of Rosamund.

Becket was filled with consternation at seeing her, for he hoped to have lodged her in safety at a house not far away until she could be taken to the secret bower ; and now here she was, distressed and breathless, before him. He was at a loss to understand what could have happened, but she soon gave him sufficient reason for her presence.

It seemed she had done an unwise thing, but, tempted by the sweet evening air, which recalled sweet thoughts of peaceful country scenes to her mind, she had ventured out to take a little exercise, and had been perceived by Fitzurse, who had

followed her. Rosamund had a great dread of this man, though she knew nothing of his being sent to spy on her; but long before he had wanted her to marry him, and because she refused he had vowed vengeance. So when she saw him she had been filled with fear, and fled as fast as she could to the archbishop's protection.

Becket sent her back to her own lodging with an escort as soon as he felt it safe to do so; but both Fitzurse and De Tracy had seen her enter the house, and they followed her there. And though Becket denied having seen her, they knew that he had sheltered her, and this made them and the queen, when they told her, more bitter against him than ever.

Rosamund was taken down to her hiding-place in the country the next day, disguised as a monk, and there for a time was left in peace. But Eleanor had not forgotten the king's chart, and her scheme of vengeance only slumbered.

Meanwhile Becket was playing a difficult part in his battle for the Church against the king. Henry had recently returned to England, and Becket was sent for to meet the king at Northampton, where he and the other bishops were called upon to sign a document which gave power to the king on many points which Becket thought the Church should decide. At first he refused to sign, but at last, under much pressure, he was persuaded to do so. After having signed, however, he found that there were other clauses than he had realized in the document, and he refused to ratify his signature with his seal.

When the king heard this he was in a great rage with Becket for defying him. He sent for him, and was still more furious when the archbishop entered bearing a great silver cross as a sign of his holy office; and when Becket again refused to seal the document, he showed his wrath by demanding the

payment from him of large sums of money, which he made out that Becket owed to him, and which he knew quite well were more than the archbishop could afford to pay.

The old days of friendship between king and chancellor were indeed over now, and another game than that of chess was being played in deadly earnest between them. Henry was the winner this time, and Becket was obliged to flee to France in danger of his life. He might, indeed, not have escaped at all, had it not been for a party of beggars who came to his aid in a curious fashion.

When Becket left the council chamber of Northampton Castle in deep disgrace with the king, he went to the monastery where he was staying, and where a great feast had been prepared for him and the guests whom he had invited. But now, with the king's displeasure hanging over him, none of the guests cared to come to the feast, and the good fare would have been wasted if Becket had not summoned to it a crowd of beggars who waited outside. In they trooped in their filthy rags, and soon set to work with good will at the venison and poultry, the old red wine, and other good cheer provided. Never since they had taken to begging had such an excellent repast fallen to their lot.

When Becket and Herbert, who was with him, had seen to their wants, they quietly escaped, for, as Becket whispered to the faithful secretary, if they wished to save their lives, they must start for France that night. In fact, no sooner had they left the feast than four knights, including Fitzurse and De Tracy, came to seek the archbishop.

The beggars now had an opportunity to show their gratitude for the excellent meal they had enjoyed, and guessing that it was necessary for Becket's safety that he should not be followed, they crowded round the knights in their filthy rags, telling them

horrid stories of the plague and other infectious diseases they had been near, until the knights, to avoid them, made off by another door from the one by which Becket had retired.

So Becket escaped from the king's wrath to France, and there he stayed in exile for some time; but in the end he and the king met, and Henry forgave him, and he was allowed to return to England in safety.

There were many reasons why he was anxious to do so. The leading one was to take up again his sacred office. He wished also to punish his enemies, especially the Archbishop of York; for while he had been abroad in disgrace the northern prelate had performed the ceremony of crowning the king's eldest son, little Prince Henry, as for state reasons, and because he himself had so much to do in attending to his large French possessions, the king wished his son to be crowned in his own lifetime. Becket was so angry with the Archbishop of York for performing this ceremony instead of himself, that he excommunicated him and all who had taken part in the coronation.

But there was another reason why he wished to hasten back: he was filled with fear for the safety of Rosamund. She was still in her secret bower, and there the king had been once or twice to see her, and made her very happy by doing so; for Rosamund still thought she was married to King Henry, and that he loved her better than any one else in the world.

But tidings had been brought to Becket that Queen Eleanor and her knights had been seen hovering about in the neighbourhood of the bower, and the archbishop was filled with grave alarm lest she should do Rosamund some grievous harm. This was, indeed, the queen's intention, as we shall see. She had found her way to the wood and even to

the labyrinth which enclosed Rosamund's hiding-place; but she could not discover how to get any nearer, as she had not the chart which indicated the way. But in spite of this she did not give up hope, and at last one day she discovered the clue.

She was wandering on the outskirts of the labyrinth, hoping for some chance by which she might find her way through it, when her eyes fell on something yellow lying on the ground. At first she did not think much of this, but on stooping nearer to it she discovered that it was a silken thread, and it occurred to her that it was not very likely for a silken thread to be lying there by accident.

She therefore began to follow it, and she soon found that it led her into the labyrinth, and that it went on out of sight. Keeping the thread carefully in view, the queen followed where it led, and was thus able to find her way through the labyrinth; for this was, in fact, the clue to the maze which had been placed there for the guidance of Rosamund's own servants and protectors.

In this way the queen was able to find the bower itself, and soon stood on its threshold. Rosamund herself confronted her; and seeing at once from the queen's manner that she had come as an enemy, she demanded angrily how she had dared to force her way into her private bower.

In reply the queen told her that she was Henry's wife and queen of England, and that the king had only pretended to marry her; and the angry woman added many bitter, cruel words which increased the pain that poor Rosamund naturally felt at learning how wickedly the king had treated her. While she stood almost stupefied by this blow, the queen showed her that the real object of her visit was not

only to wound her with cruel words, but to take her life as well. She had come provided with a poisonous draught which she intended to force Rosamund to drink, and in case she could not do this she had also armed herself with a dagger. She now gave the terrified lady the choice of taking the poison or of being struck dead with the dagger.

In vain poor Rosamund shrieked for help, for in reply to her cries none appeared save the queen's own knight Fitzurse, who would, of course, do nothing to help her; in vain the poor lady knelt to the queen, imploring her to save her life. The queen's heart was hardened against any appeal, and as Rosamund would not drink the poison, she raised the dagger ready to plunge it in her heart. But just at that moment Rosamund was saved: the queen's arm was caught from behind when in the very act of striking, while a stern voice in her ear cried, "Murderess!"

The dagger dropped from her hand, and turning, Eleanor found herself face to face with Becket himself.

Thus the Lady Rosamund was saved; but Eleanor and Fitzurse, to whom the archbishop addressed burning words of wrath, left his presence filled with greater hatred towards him than ever.

Queen Eleanor now only waited her opportunity to be avenged on Becket. She joined the king in France, and excited his wrath by telling him that Becket had placed Rosamund in a convent, which he had indeed done for safety after the queen's attempt on that lady's life, of which we may be sure the former made no mention. The king in one of his outbursts of temper spoke hotly of Becket in consequence, and gladly seizing on his thoughtless words, Eleanor urged the knights of her household to follow Becket to Canterbury and kill him, persuading them that this was the king's wish, and that

they would gain his favour by the deed. The knights were Fitzurse and De Tracy, and with them two others named De Brito and De Morville. They set off post haste for Canterbury, where they forced their way into the presence of Becket.

The archbishop received them with calm dignity, refusing in spite of their threats to give up one point that he thought right as regarded his position towards the coronation of the young prince, which was the subject on which the knights specially attacked him. They then rushed from his presence crying, " To arms ! to arms ! "

Becket at once proceeded to the cathedral, where evensong had just commenced, though he was well aware of the risk he ran, and insisted on the service being continued. But as the sound of music and voices echoed to the roof of the grand cathedral, they were interrupted by a tremendous battering at the door by which the archbishop had entered. The music ceased, and the frightened monks implored Becket to escape, while they themselves crowded round him in terror. Amongst them, Becket, who alone had cause for fear, alone was calm and brave. He ordered them to continue the service, and when they refused to obey, he went himself to the transept door and flung it open. In rushed a body of monks from outside seeking the shelter of the cathedral.

" To the choir, to the choir ! " they cried. " There are twenty knights all armed with swords and axes behind."

At these words panic seized the monks, and they fled up the steps which led on either side to the high altar, leaving Becket to face the enemy alone.

The next moment the four knights rushed into the cathedral crying out for " that traitor Becket."

In reply, Becket himself advanced to meet them.

" I am he whom ye seek. What would ye of me ? " he said calmly.

" Your life, traitor," was the savage reply as they flung themselves upon him.

With a mighty effort Becket thrust them from him, but the next minute they were upon him again, tearing his robes, striking the mitre, that sacred symbol of his office, from his head, and flinging him severely wounded to the ground.

Only one of the crowd of monks came to his assistance, and he, in spite of a valiant effort, was speedily disabled by a sword-thrust in his arm. But though no other man came to his aid, a woman who had been present taking part in the service rushed to his side, and the voice of Rosamund rose in piercing cries for aid, as she bent over the form of her beloved friend and brave protector.

Her appeal was useless. On the very steps of the cathedral choir the great archbishop was ruthlessly slain.

Then, filled with horror at their own evil and sacrilegious deed, now that it was accomplished, the knights fled from the sacred spot, and in the dim twilight the Lady Rosamund knelt alone by the dead.

Thus, more than seven hundred years ago, perished Thomas Becket, and those who to-day visit the spot where he fell may still see the stones worn away by the pilgrim feet of those who afterwards came to worship at the shrine of the great archbishop.

THE BROOK

AN IDYL

" HERE, by this brook, we parted ; I to the East
And he for Italy—too late—too late :
One whom the strong sons of the world despise ;
For lucky rhymes to him were scrip and share,
And mellow metres more than cent for cent ;
Nor could he understand how money breeds,
Thought it a dead thing ; yet himself could make
The thing that is not as the thing that is.
Oh had he lived ! In our schoolbooks we say,
Of those that held their heads above the crowd,
They flourished then or then ; but life in him
Could scarce be said to flourish, only touched
On such a time as goes before the leaf,
When all the wood stands in a mist of green,
And nothing perfect : yet the brook he loved,
For which, in branding summers of Bengal,
Or even the sweet half-English Neilgherry air,
I panted, seems, as I re-listen to it,
Prattling the primrose fancies of the boy,
To me that loved him ; for ' O brook,' he says,
' O babbling brook,' says Edmund in his rhyme,

'Whence come you?' and the brook, why not? replies.

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river:
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

"Poor lad, he died at Florence, quite worn out,
Travelling to Naples. There is Darnley bridge,
It has more ivy; there the river; and there
Stands Philip's farm where brook and river meet.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river:
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

"But Philip chattered more than brook or bird;
Old Philip; all about the fields you caught

His weary daylong chirping, like the dry
High-elbowed grigs that leap in summer grass.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling.

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river :
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

" O darling Katie Willows, his one child !
A maiden of our century, yet most meek ;
A daughter of our meadows, yet not coarse ;
Straight, but as lissome as a hazel wand ;
Her eyes a bashful azure, and her hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell
Divides threefold to show the fruit within.

" Sweet Katie, once I did her a good turn,
Her and her far-off cousin and betrothed,
James Willows, of one name and heart with her.
For here I came, twenty years back—the week
Before I parted with poor Edmund ; crossed
By that old bridge which, half in ruins then,
Still makes a hoary eyebrow for the gleam
Beyond it, where the waters marry—crossed,
Whistling a random bar of Bonnie Doon,
And pushed at Philip's garden-gate. The gate,
Half-parted from a weak and scolding hinge,
Stuck ; and he clamoured from a casement, ' Run,'
To Katie somewhere in the walks below—
' Run, Katie ! ' Katie never ran : she moved

To meet me, winding under woodbine bowers,
A little fluttered, with her eyelids down,
Fresh apple-blossom, blushing for a boon.

" What was it ? less of sentiment than sense
Had Katie ; not illiterate ; nor of those
Who dabbling in the fount of fictive tears,
And nursed by mealy-mouthed philanthropies,
Divorce the Feeling from her mate the Deed.

" She told me. She and James had quarrelled. Why ?
What cause of quarrel ? None, she said, no cause ;
James had no cause : but when I pressed the cause,
I learnt that James had flickering jealousies
Which angered her. Who angered James ? I said ;
But Katie snatched her eyes at once from mine,
And sketching with her slender pointed foot
Some figure like a wizard's pentagram
On garden gravel, let my query pass
Unclaimed, in flushing silence, till I asked
If James were coming. ' Coming every day,'
She answered, ' ever longing to explain,
But evermore her father came across
With some long-winded tale, and broke him short ;
And James departed vext with him and her.'
How could I help her ? ' Would I—was it wrong ? '
(Clasped hands and that petitionary grace
Of sweet seventeen subdued me ere she spoke)
' O would I take her father for one hour,
For one half-hour, and let him talk to me ! '
And even while she spoke, I saw where James
Made toward us, like a wader in the surf,
Beyond the brook, waist-deep in meadow-sweet.

" O Katie, what I suffered for your sake !
For in I went, and called old Philip out
To show the farm : full willingly he rose :
He led me through the short sweet-smelling lanes

Of his wheat-suburb, babbling as he went.
He praised his land, his horses, his machines ;
He praised his ploughs, his cows, his hogs, his dogs ;
He praised his hens, his geese, his guinea-hens ;
His pigeons, who in session on their roofs
Approved him, bowing at their own deserts :
Then from the plaintive mother's teat he took
Her blind and shuddering puppies, naming each,
And naming those, his friends, for whom they were :
Then crossed the common into Darnley chase
To show Sir Arthur's deer. In copse and fern
Twinkled the innumerable ear and tail.
Then, seated on a serpent-rooted beech,
He pointed out a pasturing colt, and said,
' That was the four-year-old I sold the squire.'
And there he told a long long-winded tale
Of how the squire had seen the colt at grass,
And how it was the thing his daughter wished,
And how he sent the bailiff to the farm
To learn the price, and what the price he asked,
And how the bailiff swore that he was mad,
But he stood firm ; and so the matter hung ;
He gave them line : and five days after that
He met the bailiff at the Golden Fleece,
Who then and there had offered something more,
But he stood firm ; and so the matter hung ;
He knew the man ; the colt would fetch its price ;
He gave them line : and how by chance at last
(It might be May or April, he forgot,
The last of April or the first of May)
He found the bailiff riding by the farm,

And, talking from the point, he drew him in,
And there he mellowed all his heart with ale,
Until they closed a bargain, hand in hand.

" Then, while I breathed in sight of haven, he—
Poor fellow, could he help it ?—recommenced,
And ran through all the coltish chronicle,
Wild Will, Black Bess, Tantivy, Tallyho,
Reform, White Rose, Bellerophon, the Jilt,
Arbaces, and Phenomenon, and the rest,
Till, not to die a listener, I arose,
And with me Philip, talking still ; and so
We turned our foreheads from the falling sun,
And following our own shadows thrice as long
As when they followed us from Philip's door,
Arrived, and found the sun of sweet content
Re-risen in Katie's eyes, and all things well.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers ;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows ;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses ;

I linger by my shingly bars ;
I loiter round my cresses :

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river :
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

Yes, men may come and go ; and these are gone,
All gone. My dearest brother, Edmund, sleeps,
Not by the well-known stream and rustic spire,
But unfamiliar Arno, and the dome
Of Brunelleschi ; sleeps in peace : and he,
Poor Philip, of all his lavish waste of words
Remains the lean P. W. on his tomb :
I scraped the lichen from it : Katie walks
By the long wash of Australasian seas
Far off, and holds her head to other stars,
And breathes in converse seasons. All are gone."

So Lawrence Aylmer, seated on a stile
In the long hedge, and rolling in his mind
Old waifs of rhyme, and bowing o'er the brook
A tonsured head in middle age forlorn,
Mused, and was mute. On a sudden a low breath
Of tender air made tremble in the hedge
The fragile bindweed-bells and briony rings ;
And he looked up. There stood a maiden near,
Waiting to pass. In much amaze he stared

On eyes a bashful azure, and on hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell
Divides threefold to show the fruit within :
Then, wondering, asked her, " Are you from the farm ? "
" Yes," answered she. " Pray stay a little : pardon me ;
What do they call you ? " " Katie." " That were strange.
What surname ? " " Willows." " No ! " " That is my name."
" Indeed ! " and here he looked so self-perplexed
That Katie laughed, and laughing blushed, till he
Laughed also, but as one before he wakes,
Who feels a glimmering strangeness in his dream.
Then looking at her ; " Too happy, fresh and fair,
Too fresh and fair in our sad world's best bloom,
To be the ghost of one who bore your name
About these meadows, twenty years ago."
" Have you not heard ? " said Katie, " we came back.
We bought the farm we tenanted before.
Am I so like her ? so they said on board.
Sir, if you knew her in her English days,
My mother, as it seems you did, the days
The most she loves to talk of, come with me.
My brother James is in the harvest field :
But she—you will be welcome—O, come in ! "

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

[The caliph Haroun Alraschid, or Aaron the Just, ruled in Bagdat from 765 to 809, and made the city a centre of Mussulman culture. Many of the tales of the *Arabian Nights* are placed in his caliphate.]

WHEN the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free,
In the silken sail of infancy,
The tide of time flowed back with me,
The forward-flowing tide of time;
And many a sheeny summer morn,
Adown the Tigris I was borne,
By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Anight my shallop, rustling through
The low and bloomèd foliage, drove
The fragrant, glistening deeps, and clove
The citron-shadows in the blue:
By garden porches on the brim,
The costly doors flung open wide,
Gold glittering through lamplight dim,
And broidered sofas on each side:
In sooth it was a goodly time,

For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Often, where clear-stemmed platans guard
The outlet, did I turn away
The boat-head down a broad canal
From the main river sluiced, where all
The sloping of the moonlit sward
Was damask-work, and deep inlay
Of braided blooms unmown, which crept
Adown to where the water slept.
A goodly place, a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

A motion from the river won
Ridged the smooth level, bearing on
My shallop through the star-strown calm.
Until another night in night
I entered, from the clearer light,
Imbowered vaults of pillared palm,
Imprisoning sweets, which, as they clomb
Heavenward, were stayed beneath the dome
Of hollow boughs.—A goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Still onward ; and the clear canal
Is rounded to as clear a lake.
From the green rivage many a fall
Of diamond rillets musical,
Through little crystal arches low
Down from the central fountain's flow
Fallen silver-chiming, seemed to shake
The sparkling flints beneath the prow.
A goodly place, a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Above through many a bowery turn
A walk with vary-coloured shells
Wandered engrained. On either side
All round about the fragrant marge
From fluted vase, and brazen urn
In order, eastern flowers large,
Some dropping low their crimson bells
Half-closed, and others studded wide
With disks and tiars, fed the time
With odour in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Far off, and where the lemon-grove
In closest coverture unsprung,
The living airs of middle night
Died round the bulbul as he sung ;
Not he : but something which possessed
The darkness of the world, delight,
Life, anguish, death, immortal love,
Ceasing not, mingled, unrepressed,
Apart from place, withholding time,
But flattering the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Black the garden-bowers and grots
Slumbered : the solemn palms were ranged
Above, unwooed of summer wind :
A sudden splendour from behind
Flushed all the leaves with rich gold-green
And, flowing rapidly between
Their interspaces, counterchanged
The level lake with diamond-plots
Of dark and bright. A lovely time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Dark-blue the deep sphere overhead,
Distinct with vivid stars inlaid,

Grew darker from that under-flame :
So, leaping lightly from the boat,
With silver anchor left afloat,
In marvel whence that glory came
Upon me, as in sleep I sank
In cool soft turf upon the bank,
  Entrancèd with that place and time,
  So worthy of the golden time
    Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Thence through the garden I was drawn—
A realm of pleasance, many a mound,
And many a shadow-chequered lawn
Full of the city's stilly sound,
And deep myrrh-thickets blowing round
The stately cedar, tamarisks,
Thick rosaries of scented thorn,
Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks
  Graven with emblems of the time,
  In honour of the golden prime
    Of good Haroun Alraschid.

With dazèd vision unawares
From the long alley's latticed shade
Emerged, I came upon the great
Pavilion of the Caliphat.
Right to the carven cedarn doors,
Flung inward over spangled floors,
Broad-basèd flights of marble stairs
Ran up with golden balustrade,
  After the fashion of the time,
  And humour of the golden prime
    Of good Haroun Alraschid.

The fourscore windows all alight
As with the quintessence of flame,
A million tapers flaring bright
From twisted silvers looked to shame

The hollow-vaulted dark, and streamed
Upon the moonèd domes aloof
In inmost Bagdat, till there seemed
Hundreds of crescents on the roof
Of night new-risen, that marvellous time,
To celebrate the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Then stole I up, and trancedly
Gazed on the Persian girl alone,
Serene with argent-lidded eyes
Amorous, and lashes like to rays
Of darkness, and a brow of pearl
Tressed with redolent ebony,
In many a dark delicious curl,
Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone;
The sweetest lady of the time,
Well worthy of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Six columns, three on either side,
Pure silver, underpropt a rich
Throne of the massive ore, from which
Down-drooped, in many a floating fold,
Engarlanded and diapered
With inwrought flowers, a cloth of gold.
Thereon, his deep eye laughter-stirred
With merriment of kingly pride,
Sole star of all that place and time,
I saw him—in his golden prime,
THE GOOD HAROUN ALRASCHID!

The Persian girl. The heroine of the story, "Nur-al-Din," in Burton's *Arabian Nights.*

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

HALF a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
" Forward, the Light Brigade !
Charge for the guns ! " he said :
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

" Forward, the Light Brigade ! "
Was there a man dismayed ?
Not though the soldier knew
Some one had blundered :
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die :
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered ;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air,
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
  All the world wondered :
Plunged in the battery-smoke,
Right through the line they broke ;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre-stroke
  Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back—but not,
  Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
  Volleyed and thundered ;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
  Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade ?
Oh the wild charge they made !
  All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made !
Honour the Light Brigade,
  Noble six hundred !

EPILOGUE

(To be used during a second or later reading of this book)

ALFRED TENNYSON (page 7)

1. Find out Lincolnshire on the map and note which sea was nearest to Somersby.
2. Do you know anything of Cervantes, Defoe, and Swift ?
3. Find out from your history book what was happening in the year of the poet Tennyson's birth.
4. How old was the poet when the Battle of Waterloo was fought ?
5. What do you know of Franklin the explorer ?
6. Make a sketch-map, marking the places where Tennyson lived.
7. How would he move from place to place ?
8. Do you know anything of the Elgin Marbles ?
9. Where is Tennyson buried ? How old was he when he died ?

THE COMING OF ARTHUR (page 26)

10. Find out what is written about King Arthur in your history books.
11. The scene of the wonderful "coming" of Arthur is pointed out to visitors to Tintagel on the coast of North Cornwall—a little rock-bound bay with deep water of crystal clearness and of a peculiar

green colour, and above a great towering rock crowned with the ruins of a mighty castle. Tennyson had often visited this spot and had wandered down

> " the thundering shores of Bude and Bos,
> And dark Tintagel by the Cornish sea."

12. Tennyson's own story of " The Coming of Arthur " forms one of his group of King Arthur poems known as *The Idylls of the King*.

13. Find out how far the language of the prose story on page 27 is drawn from the poetry on page 32.

14. How do you explain Arthur's fixed belief that he could draw the sword from the stone ?

15. What indications of Arthur's character can be drawn from this story ?

THE CROWN (page 32)

16. Examine the style of these lines. All Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* are written in this way. Are there any rhymes to the lines ? Count the number of syllables in each line. Are they arranged according to any system ? Read the following line, stressing the syllables marked thus (′)—

" For Árthur lóng befóre they crówned him kíng."

Why is the following line so arranged ?

" And dówn | they féll | and máde | the glén | abhórred."

Try to arrange other lines in the same way.

17. What is the most striking picture in this story ?

18. Find two similes or likenesses.

19. Try to put a small portion of the prose story of " The Coming of Arthur " into lines like those on page 32.

HOW ARTHUR GOT HIS CROWN, ETC. (page 33)

20. What is the Feast of Pentecost ?

21. Who were the " kings " who came to the feast ? (See line 2, page 34.)

22. What is an interregnum ? Would Tennyson use such a word in his lines ? Give a reason for your answer.

23. Would he use an expression like " the only successful competitor " ? Where would you expect to find such a phrase ?

24. Mark other phrases, as you read this prose story, which would not be used in poetry.

25. Can you suggest a simpler way of saying " refused to give them egress."

26. What glimpses of true history are given in this story ?

27. Find on page 37 one of the central points of the Arthur legend ; something which seems to speak of coming trouble.

28. Compare the Scout Law with the rules of knightly conduct given near the foot of page 38.

29. Can you find any difference between the manner of the telling of the story on pages 38 and 39 ?

SIR LANCELOT AND QUEEN GUINEVERE (page 40)

30. Consider the picture of spring-time in the first four lines of this poem. To what are joy and pain compared ?

31. What is meant by

> " In crystal vapour everywhere
> Blue isles of heaven laughed between " ?

32. Study the " sound-pictures " in the first four lines of the second stanza.

33. Why " yellowing " river ? What is the " perfect fan " ? Can you draw it ?

34. What is the comparison or simile in

" Then in the boyhood of the year " ?

35. Why did Guinevere seem " a part of joyous Spring " ?

36. Who is " she whose elfin prancer springs " ?

THE STORY OF GARETH AND LYNETTE
(page 42)

37. Why is it fitting that this story should begin in the spring-time ?

38. Who has your sympathy in the conversation recorded on pages 42, 43 ?

39. Compare the spring picture near the top of page 44 with that of the poem on page 40.

40. Why did the sculptured figure of the Lady of the Lake hold a sword and a censer ?

41. Why did the long-bearded man ask the travellers their " condition " ?

42. What insight into Arthur's character is given somewhere on page 45 ?

43. Was Arthur " deceived " by Gareth ?

44. How did Gareth prove his knightliness during the journey with Lynette ?

45. Read, if you can get it, Tennyson's own tale of Gareth and Lynette,* and find out how far the writer of this prose story has used the poet's own language.

* Extracts cannot, unfortunately, be given in this book because of the Copyright Act.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT (page 56)

46. Make a rough sketch of the landscape of the opening stanza.

47. What is meant by

" Willows whiten, aspens quiver " ?

48. Find a picture on an earlier page which might illustrate the latter part of the second stanza.

49. Show how the sound suits the sense in the first part of the third stanza.

50. Why " bearded " barley ?

51. What is the refrain of this poem ?

52. When and why did the lady say " I am half sick of shadows " ?

53. Why could the first stanza of Part III be fitly described as a " bright " stanza ?

54. What is the " golden Galaxy " ? Is " golden " a good adjective for this description ?

55. What is the simile or likeness in the stanza which begins

" All in the blue unclouded weather " ?

56. Why did the curse " come upon " the lady ?

57. How does the sound suit the sense in the first and fourth stanzas of Part IV ?

GERAINT AND ENID (page 62)

58. Is there any difference between comeliness and beauty ?

59. Indicate on page 68 where the first part of the story ends.

60. Why do you think Geraint made his request about Enid's clothing ?

61. Who were the queen's leeches and why do you think they were so called ?

62. Up to page 71 what opinions have you formed as to the character of Geraint and Enid respectively ?

63. What is your opinion on the fight described on page 76 ?

64. Of what previous incident in another story does the fate of Sir Kay (page 77) remind you ?

65. What is your opinion of the conclusion of this story ?

THE COMBAT WITH THE SPARROW-HAWK (page 85)

66. Is this verse of the same kind as that on page 32 ?

67. Which expressions would be altered if the following lines were put into simple prose :—

> " these things he told the king.
> Then the good king gave order to let blow
> His horns for hunting on the morrow morn."

68. What is the " shadow " in the lines on page 85, and how does it connect with the poem on page 30.

69. Why is the description of Geraint's dress on page 85 of some importance in the story ?

70. Would it be fair to call Geraint " a mere fop " ?

71. Which line on page 87 is very important in the later building up of the story ?

72. Find two good similes on page 88 ; and on the same page certain lines of which the sound matches the sense.

73. What difference is there between the prose and verse story in the description of Geraint's first meeting with Earl Yniol ?

74. There are two beautiful similes of considerable length on page 90.

75. Study particularly the last lines of the verses of Enid's song.

76. In telling the story of the dwarf (page 93), which portion does Geraint omit? And why?

77. What was Modred's sin? (See page 143.)

THE STORY OF ELAINE (page 99)

78. What was the method of summoning the warder before a castle?

79. To whom had Lancelot's love been given?

80. Who were "the heathen" whom Arthur had defeated?

81. What is your estimate of Elaine's character?

82. Is there any blame to be awarded to Sir Lancelot for the part he played in this story?

83. What feeling is the story meant to create in the reader's mind?

ELAINE IN THE CAVE (page 110)

84. The extract is taken from that part of Tennyson's idyll *Lancelot and Elaine* where the queen hears the false story put about in Camelot by Gawain that Lancelot loved the maid of Astolat, and she is filled with anger.

85. What did the lord of Astolat mean when he said,

> "And sure I think this fruit is hung too high
> For any mouth to gape for save a queen's"?

86. Why did Elaine change her father's words to

> "Being so very wilful, you must die"?

87. What does her answer to these words prove ?
88. What line on page 110 is repeated on page 112 ?
89. Find other examples of repetition.
90. Choose a beautiful simile from page 114.
91. Discuss whether Elaine was bold and unmaidenly in her last interview with Lancelot.
92. Find a simile on page 117.
93. What parallel is there between the end of the story of Elaine and that of the Lady of Shalott ?
94. Find two or three clear word-pictures in this part of Tennyson's story.

THE STORY OF SIR GALAHAD (page 120)

95. What do you think the Knights expected to happen if any one sat in the Siege Perilous ?
96. What would the squire's "marvellous story" recall to the minds of Arthur and his Knights ?
97. What is your opinion of Bagdemagus ?
98. Why was King Arthur not enthusiastic over the story of the Holy Grail ?
99. What did he mean by "following wandering fires" ?
100. Why was Lancelot beaten by men weaker than himself ?
101. How did Galahad reconcile the pursuit of "wandering fires" with Arthur's desires for his kingdom ?
102. What was Galahad's "spiritual city" ?

SIR GALAHAD (page 140)

103. Which do you consider the two finest lines in the first stanza ?

104. Show how the sound suits the sense in the middle portion of this first stanza.

105. Did Galahad ever wear a lady's favour ?

106. What is meant by " the stormy crescent " ?

107. Which do you consider the finest pen-picture in this poem ?

108. What was Galahad's " mortal armour " ?

109. Choose a few single lines from this poem which sound sweetest in your ears.

110. Is the stanza of this poem built up like that of any other Tennysonian poem you have already read ?

111. Study the composition of the stanza—number of lines, length of lines, accents, and rhymes.

MORTE D'ARTHUR (page 143)

112. How is the sound of the first line made to suit the sense ?

113. Find a short but vivid word-picture on page 143.

114. Render into simple prose :—

" The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record."

115. Find examples of repetition in this poem.

116. Show how the sound suits the sense in the lines—

" He stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake."

" So strode he back slow to the wounded king."

117. Put into simple prose—

" This way and that dividing the swift mind
In act to throw."

118. Can you find any excuses for Sir Bedivere ?

119. Are there any memorials of King Arthur ?

120. Put into simple prose—

> " Authority forgets a dying king
> Laid widowed of the power in his eye
> That bowed the will."

121. In what respect was the king not quite fair to Sir Bedivere ?—and to girls ?

122. Show how the sound suits the sense in the passage beginning :—

> " Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran."

123. What are the " moving isles of winter " ?

124. Find a fine word-picture on page 148.

125. Show how well the sound suits the sense in the lower part of page 148.

126. Find a beautiful simile on page 149 and another on page 151.

127. In what respect did Tennyson's Arthur resemble the poet himself ? (See portrait frontispiece.)

128. When do people wish to " hide their forehead and their eyes " ?

129. What was

> " the light that led
> The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh " ?

130. Find a beautiful metaphor on page 150.

131. What do you think the king meant when he said,

> " The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world " ?

132. Did King Arthur die ?

THE STORY OF BECKET (page 152)

133. Why was King Henry beaten in the game of chess ?

134. What is a labyrinth ? In which old story is a labyrinth mentioned ?

135. What insight into Becket's character is given at the foot of page 154 ?

136. Why did Tennyson open his story with a game of chess between Henry and Becket, and why did he make the latter win by the skilful move of a bishop ?

137. What are the high points of this story, and which is the highest of all ?

138. Does Tennyson tell the story of Becket's murder in the same way as your history books ?

139. Who are the leading characters in this story ?

THE BROOK (page 163)

140. Investigate, in a dictionary, the meaning of the word " idyl." (It may be spelt with two l's.)

141. Which later line explains " too late—too late " ?

142. What things are contrasted in the first few lines on page 163 ?

143. Find a definition of the word " poet " on this page.

144. Find a beautiful likeness or simile on page 163.

145. What is implied by " why not ? " in the top line on page 164 ?

146. Show how the sound suits the sense in the six short verses on page 164.

147. What is the usual name for a " high-elbowed grig " ?

148. What is the refrain in the verses on the brook?

149. Deduce from one word in the line

" A maiden of our century, yet most meek,"

what the speaker thought of the girls of his time.

150. Find two beautiful comparisons on page 165.

151. Who are the people who " dabble in the fount of fictive tears " ?

152. What was it that the speaker suffered for Katie's sake ?

153. How does the sound suit the sense in the twelfth line on page 167 ?

154. What is the metaphor in "he gave them line" ?

155. Dwell on the vowels in the short stanzas on pages 168, 169.

156. What is the sharp contrast about Philip on page 169 ?

157. Show how sound suits sense in

" By the long wash of Australasian seas."

158. For " converse seasons " the poet afterwards wrote " April autumns." What does each expression mean, and which do you prefer ?

159. What instance of repetition have you found in this poem ?

160. What is the high point or crisis in this simple story ?

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS
(page 171)

161. What is the metaphor in the first few lines ?

162. What is the refrain of this poem ? What purpose does it serve ?

163. Is the stanza of this poem built up like any other stanza in this book?

164. Is this a poem of repose or motion?

165. How could the shallop go through a "star-strown calm"?

166. What is the high point of this poem?

167. Is it a story poem or a poem of description?

168. What are "argent-lidded" eyes?

169. Study the rhymes of this poem.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE
(page 176)

170. Read the account of the Battle of Balaklava in your history books.

171. Is this stanza constructed like any others in this book?

172. Find examples of expression of sense by sound.

173. Show how effective a use the poet makes of repetition.

174. Study the variation of subjects in the poems of this book.

175. What is Tennyson's chief subject? How is it connected with the picture on page 6?

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT
THE PRESS OF THE PUBLISHERS