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Sir Galahad

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TALES FROM TENNYSON

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TALES FROM TENNYSON

BY

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INTRODUCTION

THE 'Tales' in this volume are an attempt to put within the reach of younger readers the substance of the cycle of Arthurian romance which is contained in Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King,' preserving as far as possible both the letter and the spirit of the late Laureate's work, with some 'faint Homeric echoes' of the ancient chronicles that form the basis of each story. It is hoped that these 'Tales' may effect two objects dear to the writer's heart—one, that they may induce the few who look at them to read the 'Idylls of the King' for themselves, if they have not already done so, and to re-read them if they have; the other, that they may awaken some further interest in the legendary history of that mysterious King whose name, as we tramp or cycle through the British Isles in our holiday rambles, starts up before us from hill and crag, cairn and cromlech, and grassy mound, and has become a household word to most of us from the fairy-tales of the nursery.

Who was King Arthur? Was there ever a King Arthur at all? If so, when did he live, and what was he like? Let us look at these questions in the light

thrown on them by a well-known living critic.* 'Regarding Arthur,' he says, 'little of real fact has been ascertained; all that modern research can tell us with any certainty is that there was, in the sixth century, a war-leader in Britain called Artus, or Arthur, who, after the departure of the Romans, headed the tribes of Cumbria and Strath Clyde against the encroaching Saxons, Picts and Scots; and that five or six centuries later the name of King Arthur had come to stand for an ideal of royal wisdom, chivalric virtue, and knightly prowess.'

There seems no reason to doubt that the legends have a historic basis; in fact, so widely and indelibly is the name of Arthur stamped upon the map of the British Isles, from 'Arthur's Seat' by Edinburgh, to Arthur's Castle of Tintagil in Cornwall, that the question seems not so much whether there was an Arthur at all, but whether there were not more Arthurs than one. This possibility is suggested by Judge Hughes in his 'Scouring of the White Horse' (see his discussion of the probable origin of the 'Dragon's Hill'). Sir Thomas Malory, who in 1470 collected the Arthurian legends into the famous 'Morte d'Arthur,' is at pains to identify some of the place-names given in the old stories with names existing in his own day: thus, Camelot, the Royal City, is Winchester; Astolat, the home of the 'lily maid Elaine,' is Guildford in Surrey; and throughout the book the scenes of the adventures are localized over the length and breadth of the land. No historical value can, of course, be assigned to these adventures or their localities; but we may gather that in Malory's time, no less than in our own, the traveller came everywhere upon places

* Professor F. J. Rowe, Introduction to the 'Idylls of the King' (Macmillan). To the suggestive criticism of this essay the present sketch is largely indebted.

full of Arthurian memories. From Bamborough Castle in Northumberland, which claims to be Lancelot's 'Joyous Gard,' from 'merry Carlisle' and 'red Penrith's Table Round,' to Caerleon-on-Usk with its Round Table in Monmouthshire, King Arthur's name is 'in the air.' Then crossing the Severn estuary, we find ourselves in a storehouse of Arthurian myth and romance: Somersetshire, with its Cadbury Castle, rivalling the claims of Winchester to be the genuine Camelot, and Glastonbury, the traditional 'island-valley of Avilion,' and the birth-place of the Grail legend; and so on through Devonshire, the home of Geraint and Enid, down past the 'thundering shores of Bude and Bos,' to 'dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea,' and the 'utmost bounds of Lyonesse,' now sunk beneath the western wave. Roughly speaking, it is in the western or Celtic half of our island that these traditions abound; and it seems probable that the Celtic tribes, as they retreated or shifted their abodes before the advancing Saxons, took their legends and memories with them, and that these grew and clung round whatever resting-places the wanderers ultimately found. We know that some of the Britons fled across the Channel, and accordingly we are not surprised to find the scenes of some of the events laid in Brittany; Merlin's doom, for example, comes upon him in the Breton forest of Broceliande. But it must be remembered that the legends as we have them in the 'Morte d'Arthur' are anachronisms, pure and simple; the Celtic chieftain, and his warriors of Roman Britain, have been transformed into the Anglo-Norman knights-errant of the age of chivalry and the Crusades; and all the pomp and circumstance of heraldry, the tournament and feudal life with which Malory himself was familiar, are antedated by some six or seven centuries. Tennyson himself has

carried the anachronism still further; in order to suit the great purpose of his poem—half epic, half allegory—he has idealized the characters, and invested them with much of the moral and mental qualities of modern life, with thought and language wholly foreign to the medieval society in which Malory lived and moved. And in the twelve Idylls which form the poem he has achieved this great result: he has reduced to law and order and coherency the desultory and often wearisome compilations of the earlier writers, and has given the story of Arthur an epic unity, a spiritual significance, and a moral purpose. To compare it for a moment with the other great epic of our language, the story of Arthur, as told by Tennyson, is in some respects a story of 'Paradise Lost'; it is a story of a creation, fair and good in its beginning, noble in its conception and formation, ruined for the time by the insidious taint of one great sin and the corruption which spreads from it, concluding in apparent defeat and failure, but giving a presage of ultimate recovery, of the final overthrow of evil and victory of good.

A few words are added by way of preface to each of the 'Tales,' which may help to bring out their inner meaning, and to show the development of the poet's design. It will be noted, however, that it has not been found possible in all cases to treat each Idyll as a separate tale, and that some Idylls have necessarily been omitted as unsuitable for the main object with which this book has been written.

I.

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

The Coming of Arthur describes the mystery surrounding the King's birth, the founding of the Order of the Round Table, the marriage of Arthur with Guinevere, and his triumph over the heathen invaders, which enabled him to 'make a realm, and reign.'

I.

THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

IN the days when the Romans had left Britain because they needed all their strength to defend their own land against the heathen of the North, there dwelt at Cameliard, in Southern Wales, a King called Leodogran; and his one daughter Guinevere was the fairest of all maidens in the world. But all the land was without rule and governance, for though there were many petty kings, yet each spent all his force and time in waging war on others, and the hosts of the heathen came from over seas, and wild beasts grew and multiplied so that the whole fair country of Britain became a wilderness, and none might dwell in peace. Here and there some kings arose, and strove to bring the realm under one rule, such as Aurelius, surnamed Ambrosius or Emrys, and Uther Pendragon; but none could make the kingdom one until for a space ARTHUR came, and drew under himself all the lesser principalities, and beat back the heathen, and established justice and order in the land.

But it was many years ere this was accomplished, and the King Leodogran, seeing his realm falling to waste and ruin, and being assailed by his fellow-princes and by

a host of heathen, sighed for the Roman legions to come to his aid; but all in vain, for the Romans had left the land for ever.

Then he heard of the crowning of Arthur (who, some said, was Uther Pendragon's son, but others denied it), and sent word to him, saying, 'Come and help us.' So Arthur came, and with him came many a famous knight. He fought against the King's enemies, and overcame them; nor did he rest till he had slain the wild beasts also that dwelt in the forests, and had reclaimed the waste places, and made peace in all the borders of the realm. And it befell that while Arthur was fighting the King Leodogran's battles, certain of the lords and barons of his own kingdom took up arms against him, saying, 'Who is this stranger that he should rule over us? He is no son of Uther Pendragon, nor is he like to him in voice, or face, or bearing; he shall be no King of ours.' So they joined themselves to Leodogran's enemies, and fought against Arthur, and there was a great battle; and now Arthur prevailed, and now the rebels, till at the last Arthur and his knighthood, by might and skill, and being strong in the justice of their cause, broke the heathen powers and routed them. Nevertheless, he would not utterly make an end of them, but bade his men cease from slaying, since the victory was won. Then the kings, princes, and barons came and made submission to King Arthur, and he let them go in peace. Glad at heart was Arthur, and turning to his chief knight, Lancelot of the Lake, whom most he loved and honoured, he said to him, 'Right well hast thou fought for me this day; let us swear upon this field of battle a brotherhood that shall endure till death, for there is none other that I trust as thee.' So each swore to the other true faith and friendship, and said Sir Lancelot, 'My liege, the fire of God

descends upon thee in battle; there is no leader like to thee—thou art indeed the King.'

Now, Arthur had seen for the first time, at Leodogran's court, his daughter, the Princess Guinevere, and had said within himself: 'If God gives me the victory, she, and none other, shall be my wife;' and straightway from the battlefield he sent messengers to the King, saying, 'If I have done thee good service, give me thy daughter Guinevere to be my wife.' And Leodogran was glad. Nevertheless, knowing the doubt there was of Arthur's birth, and deeming it well that all the truth should be known before he gave him his daughter (for he would not yield her to any but a King and a King's son), he made question of the knights who were Arthur's messengers, saying, 'What know ye of Arthur's birth? Whose son is he?' And the chief of them, the bold Sir Bedivere, made answer and said:

'Sir King, there be many rumours, and most of them are sprung of hate and envy; but the truth is this: In Uther's time there was a prince—Gorlois by name—who dwelt with his wife Ygerne in the castle of Tintagil, by the Cornish Sea. And King Uther would fain have had Ygerne to be his wife. But because she loved her lord Gorlois, and would have none of Uther, there befell war between Gorlois and the King, till at the last Gorlois was slain. And Uther wedded Ygerne, sorely against her will. Not many moons thereafter Uther died himself, and the Queen bare a son, whom Merlin, the wise old seer that had been Uther's counsellor, took and straightway hid, for fear of those who meant him mischief. For there were many who had hated Uther, and would have slain his son. But Merlin gave the babe into the hands of Sir Anton, an old and trusty knight, to be reared with his own children till the time was ripe for

him to be shown and known. And this year Merlin brought Arthur forth, and set him before the people, saying, "Here is Uther's heir, your King," and had him crowned. But some doubted, and the barons and great lords banded together and made war, as thou hast seen.'

So Bedivere spoke; and while the King still pondered, being only half convinced, there came to Cameliard Queen Bellicent, wife of King Lot, of Orkney. He had joined the Barons in their war, but she, a daughter of Ygerne and Gorlois, had always cleaved as a loyal sister to Arthur; and now she came with her two young sons, Gawain and Modred, meaning to leave them with Arthur amongst his knights. The King told her of his doubts, and asked of her what she knew, and whether Arthur had strength to hold his own against his enemies.

'I will tell thee,' she said, 'O King, all that I know; and first I will speak of the day when he was crowned King, and made the Order of his Table Round. For I was near him as he sate on his dais-throne, and I heard him as he spake to his own warriors, who stood close about him, and bound them so straitly by vows of faith, honour, and obedience to Christ and to himself, making them lay their hands in his, and swear to reverence their King as if he were their conscience, and their conscience as their King, that they were amazed and lifted up beyond themselves, and rose from where they knelt as one by one he knighted them, as if the power of God had come upon them through his words and touch of hand. And beside him I saw three fair Queens standing in silence near the throne. I know not who they were, nor does any man know; but they are his friends who will help him at his need. And I saw there the mighty seer, the wizard Merlin, who lives but to do him service. And standing beside the seer I saw

also the Lady of the Lake, clothed in a robe of white samite, mystic, wonderful. She it is who gave Arthur his great sword Excalibur, wherewith to drive the heathen from the land. Down in the deep waters she hath her home, calm and untroubled by whatever storms shake the world above; howbeit she has power at times to walk upon the waters, as did our Lord. Also I beheld the great sword Excalibur itself, her gift, borne before him in the minster; the sword that rose out of the bosom of the lake, and Arthur rowed out to it and took it. Bright with jewels is the hilt, and the blade as bright as flame of fire, so that men are blinded by it. This sword the King took by Merlin's counsel, and with it he will conquer his enemies.'

When Leodogran heard these words he was glad; but still he doubted. Wherefore he questioned Bellicent yet more closely, as being the daughter of Ygerne, and therefore likely to know the truth of Arthur's birth. But of this she could tell him nothing certainly—only that she and Arthur had known and loved each other in childhood as sister and brother, brought together, she thought, by Merlin, who watched over Arthur's early years. And as for Merlin's part in the matter, there was another story, which Merlin's old master Bleys had told her at his hour of death.

Himself and Merlin, so he said, on the night of Uther's death in Tintagil, had gone down in the darkness to the seashore; and suddenly they were aware of a great ship, dragon-shaped, that bore a company of shining people, riding on the waves, and anon it disappeared. Then, as they watched, a great wave slowly heaved and fell plunging at their feet; and all the wave was in a flame of fire, and in the wave was a babe that fell at Merlin's feet. He caught it up, and cried: 'Here is an heir for Uther.'

'And,' said the dying magician, Merlin's master, 'this same babe is he who now reigns; and till I had told this I might not die in peace.' Such was the seer's tale, and anon thereafter he died. But, said Bellicent, 'when I asked Merlin afterward of these things, and whether Bleys's tale were truth, he laughed, and answered me in mocking wise: "Truth is this to me, and that to thee. Where is he who knows what is truth? From the great deep he came; to the great deep he goes."'

Her words left the King Leodogran but little less perplexed than before; but on the morrow, when he had mused upon the whole matter, and also had seen in the dreams of the night, when truth most often comes to men, a vision of Arthur crowned, standing out against the sky, while all his foes and cavillers melted like mists before the morning sun, then the King sent for Bedivere and his comrades, and bade them take back to Arthur his answer, 'I give my daughter to thee.'

Then Arthur sent Lancelot, his chief knight and friend, to bring his Queen to him; and in the month of May she came, and they two were wedded at Camelot by Dubric, the saintly archbishop, chief of the Church in Britain. And all the Knights of Arthur's Table stood about their King and Queen, whilst the holy Dubric gave his blessing on the marriage. Then the knights took up the strain, and as they left the minster they sang before the King: 'Blow trumpets! clang battleaxe! clash brand! Let the King reign! The King will follow Christ, and we the King, in whom high God hath breathed a secret thing. Let the King reign!'

So the procession passed on from the minster to the banquet-hall. Then came there in some lords from Rome—delegates of the Roman Emperor—to claim tribute as of old. But Arthur said, 'Nay, the old order

changeth, yielding place to new; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom. And since ye are grown too old and weak to do your part and guard this realm from heathen enemies, there shall be no more talk of tribute.'

Then these great lords departed, and for a while there was war with Rome. But Arthur and his Round Table grew mightier day by day. In twelve great battles they fought and overcame the heathen; and through the strength of their union Arthur drew in under him all the lesser Kings and Princes, and made one realm of Britain, and ruled it prudently with all his power.

II.

GARETH AND LYNETTE

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In Gareth and Lynette we see the golden age of Arthur's reign. His order of knights is as yet untainted by evil; the name of Guinevere does not occur throughout the story. His warriors are loyal to their vows and to the King, and Gareth himself is a type of chivalry in perfection; he, like Lancelot, is 'the very perfit gentil Knight.'

IN the days of King Arthur and his Round Table, the goodliest fellowship of famous knights whereof this world holds record, Bellicent, the King's sister, had married Lot, the King of Orkney. They had three sons, Gawain, Modred, and Gareth, of whom the two elder had gone to their uncle Arthur's Court, and had been made companions of the Round Table. But the youngest, Gareth, was kept at home by the Queen, though sorely against his will. His brethren came home from time to time, and with their stories of the great King's battles, his conquests over the heathen, the splendour of his Court, and the gallant deeds of the Order, who were sworn to live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King, they fired the boy's heart with longing to exchange the dull ignoble life of ease at home for the life of action, enterprise, and adventure under their great leader. To be a 'knight of Arthur, working out his will, to cleanse the world'—that, and nothing less, would content him. The good Queen-mother, who loved her youngest son even beyond his brothers, would fain have kept him to comfort her old age, since the King her husband was

now too old to rule his kingdom, and many a time she reasoned with Gareth in hope to persuade him to stay contented by her side; but all in vain. A life of comfort, tame and spiritless, following the deer, and marrying, as she suggested, 'some comfortable bride and fair'—such a life had no charm for his young adventurous spirit. 'Man am I grown, a man's work must I do. Follow the deer? Follow the Christ the King,' was his answer, and nothing that she might say could turn him from it.

So when she saw that she could prevail nothing, but that all her words only made him the more eager to be gone, she yielded him his wish. But before she granted it she made a certain strange condition, a proof of his obedience, and one which she hoped might have turned him from his purpose. It was this: 'My son,' she said, 'thou shalt go disguised to Arthur's Court, nor tell thy name to anyone, and for a twelvemonth and a day thou shalt serve among the scullions and the kitchen knaves, and tend the meats and drinks like any of the bondmen of the King.' But Gareth thought awhile and answered: 'The thrall in person may be free in soul, and at least I shall see the King and his knights. I take the offer, mother, and give myself to serve in bondage for a twelvemonth and a day.' So he departed, taking with him two of his own most faithful servants, and they journeyed southward till they came to Camelot. It was a bright spring morning, about Whitsuntide, and the spires and towers and pinnacles of the royal city gleamed in the sunlight through the mist. A wondrous sight it was, and as they looked they heard a blast of music, and an old man came forth and asked them: 'Who be ye, my sons?' Gareth told him: 'We be tillers of the soil, come to see the glories of the King.' But his truthful

nature made his false tale betray itself, and the old man said: 'Nay, but thou art not who thou seemest. I know thee who thou art. Beware how thou dost mock the King, who cannot brook the shadow of any lie.' He left them at the city gate. Then Gareth entered, and with his two companions made his way to Arthur's high-built hall, and entering he saw the great King throned at the furthest end, and all his knighthood ranged about him, looking upon their chief with eyes of love and faith. And as the King sate, the folk came before him with pleas for aid and justice, and he heard their causes one by one and delivered judgment, for it was the time when every morning brought a noble chance, and every chance brought out a noble knight, and none who cried for succour cried in vain. Gareth was much in fear that his brothers Gawain and Modred would see and recognise him; but as fortune would have it neither of them was there, and at last he came forward leaning on the shoulders of his two men, and made his request to Arthur as his mother had bidden him to do. 'Grant me,' he said, 'O King, to serve for meat and drink among thy kitchen knaves a twelvemonth and a day, nor let my name be known.' And the King looked at him, and wondered that so goodly a youth should ask no better boon, but called Sir Kay the seneschal, who had control of the meats and drinks, and gave the young man into his charge. Now, Sir Kay was a churlish knight, and dealt hardly with Gareth, for he was envious of the goodwill that King Arthur and Sir Lancelot bare him, and because Lancelot had noticed the fairness of Gareth's hands and countenance, and pointed to them as proof that he was nobly born, he called him 'Sir Fine-face' and 'Sir Fair-hands' in mockery. And he made him labour at all the most menial services, and was for

ever harrying and hustling him with hard words. But Gareth took it all patiently, and served with all obedience and gentleness, giving cause of offence to none, so that all loved him for his courtesy. And when there were any sports or trials of strength among the thralls, he was the best among them all in casting bar or stone; but most he loved to watch a joust of arms, to see the knights charge and meet in mid-career, and the lances splinter and the good horses reel with the shock of their encounter.

So this went on for a month or more; but then the good Queen-mother, whose thoughts were set upon her boy, touched with the grace of his obedience, repented her of the twelvemonths' task that she had set him, and sent a trusty messenger with horse and armour, and released him from his vow. Blithe was Gareth, you may guess, to hear the news, and straightway went he to the King. He told his name and the reason of his first request, and now prayed that he would make him a knight, and give him the first adventure that should come. And, lo! he found that the great King knew all his story, for the same messenger who brought arms for Gareth had borne a letter from Queen Bellicent to the King.

Then the King called Sir Lancelot, who was his most trusted knight and counsellor, and knighted Gareth in his presence. Also he told Lancelot, since Gareth was not yet proven in arms, to follow him at a little space, when he should ride on his first quest, to see that he might not be taken prisoner or slain.

Now, it chanced that on the same day there came into Arthur's hall a damsel of noble birth and fair to look upon, and she cried to the King: 'Help, my lord O King! My name is Lynette. I seek aid for my sister,

the Lady Lyonors, who is beset in her home, the Castle Perilous, by four knights, brethren. A river winds thrice about the castle, and three of the brethren defend its three passages; the fourth, the mightiest of all, would fain make her his bride, but she will none of him. Now, therefore, send Lancelot with me, for no other may be his match.' Said the King: 'Lady, thou knowest I and mine live to succour the opprest and right the wrong. Who and of what fashion are these men?' 'Rather wild beasts than men,' the maiden answered, 'and have no law nor king but their own will; and in their fantastic folly the three have named themselves the Morning Star, the Noon, and Evening Star; but the fourth, a bestial savage, hath taken the name of Night and Death. Black as night are his arms, his crest a death's-head, and his strength is as the strength of ten. Therefore I come to ask of thee Lancelot for the quest.'

All this Sir Gareth heard as he stood by, and he called aloud: 'Grant me thy quest, O King. Thou hast promised me, who am thy kitchen knave, the first quest.' And Arthur answered: 'Go; thou art worthy.' So Gareth armed himself and followed the maiden, while all his late comrades of the kitchen thronged to see him pass, and cheered him lustily, for they loved him one and all.

But the maiden Lynette was sore ill-pleased at the King's answer. 'For why,' said she, 'when I asked for Lancelot, should he send a kitchen knave? Much shame is done thereby to me and mine.' But Gareth answered her with all courtesy: 'Lady, the quest is mine. Do thou lead on; I follow, and will serve thee as best I may.' 'Follow me, then, but from afar,' said she, 'lest the foul savour of thy kitchen offend me.' So Gareth followed where she led. Now, the seneschal, Sir Kay,

had heard of Gareth's enterprise, and it vexed him mightily that one who but now had been his thrall should be made a fellow-knight—moreover, he was envious of the favour that Lancelot showed to Gareth—therefore he must needs get to horse and ride after him, 'for,' said he, 'his pride needs humbling.' Nor would he hearken to Lancelot, who told him he would do better to leave Gareth alone; but when he came up with him, he cried aloud: 'Return; we need thee by the kitchen hearth. Dost not thou know thy master?' Then he made at Gareth, who met his charge, and flung him heavily to the ground. There he was found not long afterwards by Lancelot, who, as the King had bade him, followed Gareth on his quest, and helped by Lancelot he made his way painfully back to Camelot a wiser and humbler man, nor do we hear of him again.

But the two, Lynette and Gareth, rode on till nearly sunset through a pinewood, and an adventure befell them therein, for they saw a knight fast bound, with a stone about his neck, being haled along by six stout rogues, who would have drowned him in a pool. And Gareth rode at them, and with three blows slew three of them; but the others fled. He loosed the knight from his bonds, and learnt from him that he was a friend of Arthur, who made it his business to clear the wood of robbers. As he had done to many of their fellows, so would these knaves have done to him had not Gareth helped him in his need. 'Glad am I,' said Gareth, 'to have done this service; but canst thou shelter this maiden in thy castle for the night?' 'Right willingly,' said the other, and made them both welcome in his hall, setting Gareth and the damsel on either side of him. But Lynette said: 'This is not seemly that a kitchen-knave should sit at meat with those of noble birth. No knight is he, but

some thrall whom Arthur, gone suddenly mad, methinks, sends on my quest; a villain fitter to stick swine than to ride abroad as of the Table Round.' This strange discourtesy of the maiden amazed their host, and he said to Sir Gareth: 'Friend, whether thou be gentle by birth or simple I know not, nor greatly care; but this I know, that thou art brave and strong, and thou hast saved my life.'

So the next morning he set them on their way, and for awhile they rode side by side, though Gareth still got scant courtesy from Lynette. They came ere long to the first passage of the winding river, and saw the champion, the Morning Star, waiting beside his gay pavilion. He armed himself, and Gareth too made ready; but Lynette said: 'Wilt thou not flee while there is yet time? Thou art but a knave; it will be no shame to thee.' 'Damsel,' Sir Gareth answered, 'he who fights for thee deserves at least fair words; howbeit foul words are better, for they send such anger through me that my strength is doubled, and I know that I shall conquer.' So the two laid their lances in rest, and dashed each at the other. Full in the centre of the bridge they met, and each was hurled from his horse like a stone out of a catapult, and for a space they lay as dead. Then lightly they got to their feet, and with their swords lashed fiercely at one another, till Gareth's shield was cloven in two. But so mightily did he come on that he drove the other backward down the bridge, and at last smote him to the ground. 'Slay me not,' he cried; 'I yield me.' 'That is as this damsel may say,' answered Gareth. 'So she ask thy life of me, I grant it willingly.' 'What?' said Lynette. 'I ask any favour of thee, kitchen knave? Be not so hardy as to slay a nobler man than thyself.' 'I grant his life at thy bidding,

maiden,' said Gareth. 'And thou, begone to the King, and yield thee to his grace.'

Then Gareth took his shield, his own being broken, and so they journeyed on, Sir Gareth ever following where Lynette led him, until they came to the second loop of the winding river, where the knight who called himself the Noonday Sun kept guard. 'Now,' said she, 'Sir Scullion, I fear that thou wilt meet thy match.' 'I shall do my best,' answered Gareth, and the two met in mid-stream. Mightier than the Morning Star was the Sun, and Gareth had much ado to hold his own; but at last the Sun's horse slipt on a hidden rock, and plunged him in the river. Gareth drew his enemy to land, but he could fight no more, and yielded; so Gareth sent him to the King.

But not a whit the more did Lynette give him thanks or courtesy, but set his victory down to chance or sorcery; the stream, not he, was victor in this fight. Then they two came to where the third brother, the Evening Star, was warden, and he, seeing the Morning Star on Gareth's shield, weened that it had been his brother, and he cried: 'Brother, what doest thou so far from thy ward? Hast thou slain the maiden's champion?' To whom answered Lynette: 'This is no star of thine, as thou wilt shortly find, even as both thy brethren have done.' Then the Evening Star made him ready to fight, and under his armour he was clad in hardened hides that no sword could bite on. For Gareth overthrew him when they charged, and when they fought on foot he hewed his shield and helm and armour in pieces, but could not pierce the skin garment and bring him down, so that he thought, 'My toil is all in vain.' But Lynette, watching the combat, cried aloud to him to be of good courage, for, knave though he might be, he was as noble

and brave as the best knight of Arthur's Court. And Gareth, hearing her words, struck ever harder strokes, till at last the other's sword was broken in his hand, and when he tried to close and wrestle in unknighthly fashion, Gareth, with one mighty heave, hurled him over the bridge into the river below, and made an end of him. Then said he to Lynette as before: 'Lead on, and I follow.' 'Nay, not so,' she answered. 'No more will I lead. Thou must ride beside me if thou wilt; and for my former discourtesies to thee I crave thy pardon, for never hast thou answered me ungently, and therefore surely thou art no knave but knight.' 'Well,' said Gareth, 'let not thy past words grieve thee, for he is no true man who would not suffer gladly a gentle maiden's waywardness. But now thou speakest me fair, methinks not even Lancelot might prevail against me.'

So they rode both of them together, and as the day drew towards evening, they were aware of a knight coming athwart them, who cried to Sir Gareth: 'Turn and fight me, felon; I am here to avenge my friend.' So Gareth turned, and when they encountered, even before he was aware, at one touch of the other's lance he found himself lying on the grass behind his horse. Sore bewildered and ashamed was he, and hastened to mend his fortune with his sword, but when he gat him to his feet and marked the other's cognizance on helm and shield, lo! it was none other than Lancelot himself, who had followed them from afar, as has before been said, but by another road, and so knew not of Gareth's victories, but was misled by the morning star on Gareth's shield. And they two made merry over the mistake, and clasped each other's hand in love and friendship. 'Truly,' said Gareth, 'if by any ill chance I had had the better of this encounter, I had been grieved and sad. For me it is no

shame to have gone down before the best lance in all the world.' But Lynette was ill pleased at her champion's disaster, and for a time she reviled him as before till Lancelot himself rebuked her, and she held her peace. And when Lancelot told her that her kitchen knave was in truth a knight and nobly born, being indeed a king's son, she was well satisfied, though still she wondered wherefore he had so beguiled her with the pretence of servile birth.

Then went the three to a hermit's cave hard by that the damsel knew of, whither her sister Lady Lyonors had caused bread and meat and wine to be sent for her coming champion. And as they talked of the fourth knight yet to be overcome, and how he was mightier than the rest, and had sworn to fight with none but Lancelot, and the maiden Lynette being loth that her knight Gareth should miss the full achievement of the quest, Lancelot made offer to lend his horse and shield, which bore his own cognizance, the azure lions which all men knew. So should the fourth brother deem that it was indeed Lancelot with whom he had to do, and not a lesser man. This offer Gareth gladly took, nor did he fear that he should shame the great name that went therewith. Howbeit Lynette, when she saw him so armed, and set upon the full achieving of the adventure, repented her of the bargain, and prayed Gareth to let Sir Lancelot have his shield again, and finish the quest in his stead. 'It is glory enough,' she said, 'to have conquered the three. Ye have done wonders, miracles ye cannot. The fourth is beyond thee. O Prince, let Lancelot have his shield again.' 'Not unless he fight for it,' merrily answered Gareth; and indeed, in her heart, I think Lynette would not have had him answer otherwise.

Then, as the next day dawned, they drew nigh the castle of the Lady Lyonors. A huge pavilion, black with a black banner, stood before the castle, and a great black horn hung thereby which the challenger must sound. This Gareth did thrice with small delay, and ere the echoes had died from the castle walls they saw lights twinkle at the windows, and at one casement high aloft the Lady Lyonors herself appeared, and waved her hand and made courtesy to him.

Then there was silence, and at last from the great dark pavilion came forth that which dwelt therein. On a great charger black as night it came, the monster, armed in night-black harness, tricked with the semblance of a skeleton's bones, and helmet crested with a white death's-head. Forward it came, and stayed, and there was silence. Then Gareth said: 'Why seek to frighten men with these ghostly follies? If, as folk say, thou hast the strength of ten, canst thou not trust the limbs God hath given thee?' But still no answer or motion came, and even Gareth felt a chill strike through his own blood, so that, had he waited longer, his courage might have failed. He spurred his horse and charged, and those who looked nor turned aside for fear saw as they met that Gareth was safe and the other was overthrown.

Then, as Sir Gareth's sword split skull-crest and helmet, lo! there was seen no monstrous savage, but a young boy's bright face, and he kneeled down before Sir Gareth and besought him for his life, crying: 'Slay me not, Sir Knight. My three brethren bade me do this thing to make a tale of horror that would keep the world from Lady Lyonors, for they never dreamed that any, not even Lancelot or the King, would ever force the passes of the stream.'

And then came forth the Lady Lyonors and thanked

her deliverer, and all her household made merry with dance and song, for that the dread had passed away, and the fear of Night and Death was over. So Gareth achieved the adventure, and the old chroniclers say that he wedded Lady Lyonors; but the later, and to my mind the truer, tale is that he loved and wedded the maid Lynette, his comrade of the quest.

III.

THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT

The story of Geraint and Enid gives us the first hint that moral evil is at work; it is the rumour of the Queen's and Lancelot's dishonour that causes Geraint's suspicion of his wife. This story, by the way, is not from Malory: it is found in a Welsh collection of legends, 'The Mabinogion.' Two idylls are here omitted—Balin and Balan and Merlin and Vivien.

III.

THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT.

PART I.

GERAINT, Prince of Devon, and knight of King Arthur's Order of the Round Table, had married the daughter of old Earl Yniol, Enid by name, and she was dearer to him than his own life. He had found and loved her first when the fortunes of her father's house were greatly broken, but now it was his delight to array her in all splendour of robes and jewels, and she, though caring not greatly for such display, yet was glad to make herself pleasing in her husband's eyes, for he was the one man in all the world to her. And for a season they dwelt at Arthur's Court, at Caerleon-on-Usk, and the great Queen Guinevere herself loved Enid exceedingly, nor less did Enid love the Queen, and Geraint rejoiced to see it. But there came a time when an evil rumour arose touching Guinevere's love for Lancelot, the King's chief knight and trusted friend, saying that the King no longer had her heart, but that it was given to Lancelot, and that he had given her his, breaking thereby his fealty to the King. The King knew it not, nor had anyone certainty of the matter, only they doubted greatly. The matter

troubled Geraint not a little, for he could not endure that his dear wife, through her love for the Queen, should in any degree be touched by the breath of slander. Therefore he made request to the King that he would grant him to return for a space to his principedom in Devon. 'For,' said he, 'the land hath suffered by my absence from marauders, and there be many robbers and lawless rogues abroad there that need a strong hand to put them down.' And the King allowed his request, and Geraint and Enid rode away to their own land. 'Now,' thought Geraint, 'if ever wife was true to her lord, mine shall be so to me; for in this home of ours, far from courts and courtiers' gossip, nothing can come between us two.'

So for a space all went well; but his care for, and observance of, his wife so wrought upon him that in time he forgot all other things, until he took no heed of ruling his province, no pleasure in hunting or tournament, no delight in the company of his peers, and thereby brought shame and derision upon himself and upon Enid. And the thing grieved Enid very sorely, for nothing was dearer to her than her lord's good name; and she longed to tell him of it, but, for very shame, could not find the way to do it.

At last, one morning in summer-time, she sate by her husband's couch, where he lay asleep, and for coolness had cast aside the coverlet from his arms and breast (for the early sun beat hotly through the casement), and she gazed upon him as he slept, and marvelled at the strength and beauty of his aspect, and, bending over him, said within herself, 'O noble breast and mighty arms, am I the cause that all your glory and your fame is gone, and that men reproach my lord, saying his manliness is no more? I am the cause, because I dare not tell my lord

the truth, and what men say of him. And yet, rather than have it so, how gladly would I gird his harness on him, and ride by his side to battle, and even see him wounded—ay, wounded perhaps to death! Have I the heart for this, and yet not heart enough to speak the truth as a true wife should? Ah me! I fear I am no true wife.' And as she spoke thus her tears fell fast upon his face and neck, and he awoke, hearing by great mischance her last words only, that she feared she was not a true wife to him. 'So, after all,' thought he, 'my pains, and love, and care have been in vain, and her thoughts are not with me, but with some gay courtier of the Royal Court.'

The fancy maddened him so that, without a word to her (when a word would have made all clear between them), he leaped up from where he lay, and called his squire. 'Make ready my horse and arms,' he said, 'and thy lady's palfrey, since it seems I must show that I am still a man. And do thou—turning to Enid—'put on thy worst and meanest dress and ride forth with me.' The saying amazed Enid, not knowing wherefore he was angry, and she said: 'If I have done ill, let me at least know my fault.' 'Ask me no questions,' he answered, 'but do my bidding.'

So she went heavily, and going, she remembered the old and faded dress in which Geraint had first seen and loved her, and she arrayed herself in it, for she thought, 'When he sees this dress, surely he will remember the old days when first he loved me, and I was pleasing to his eyes in it; then surely his heart will soften, and he will tell me if I have erred, and all will be well.'

Now, the tale must be told of how Geraint had his first sight of Enid, and wherefore she was clad in mean attire at their first meeting. It happened on this wise.

On the Whitsuntide before these things, King Arthur had held a great hunting at Caerleon, and all the Court were gone to the chase save only Guinevere. She arose late, and followed with a single maiden; and while she waited beside the wood to hear the distant horns and hounds, there came up Prince Geraint, himself late also, in holiday attire, with no weapon save a golden-hilted sword by his side. Each greeted the other kindly, and while he stayed by the Queen, there rode past them an armed knight, with a lady and a dwarf. And Guinevere, desiring to know the stranger knight's name, sent her maiden to ask it of the dwarf. But he made churlish answer that he would not tell, nor would he suffer her to ask his master, saying that she was not worthy even to speak of him, and he struck at her with his whip. So the maiden returned to the Queen, indignant, and Geraint made after the dwarf, and questioned him, but with no better success—nay, the dwarf even smote him with his whip across the face so that the blood started. The Prince was minded to have drawn his sword and made an end of him, but forbore, and returning to the Queen, said: 'Madam, I will avenge this insult that has been put upon you, for I will follow after this knight, and fight with him; and within three days, if I be not slain, I will come again. Farewell.' Then said Guinevere: 'Heaven prosper you, fair Prince, in this and in all things. And if one day you find a fair bride, as I trust you may, it shall be my part to array her in bridal raiment.'

Therewith Geraint departed, and followed the three over hill and dale, till they came to a little town in a valley, on one side whereof was a fortress newly-built, and on the other an ancient castle, half in ruin; and the three rode up to the fortress, and entered therein, and stayed.

Then Geraint sought in the town for some place where he might hire or borrow armour, but everywhere he found bustle and business, and none could spare time so much as to answer him, save only one word that came from all, 'The Sparrow-hawk!' At last Geraint lost patience, and said: 'A murrain on all your sparrow-hawks! Are ye all mad? Where can I find harbourage for the night, and arms to fight my enemy? Speak!' Then, an armourer looking at him, saw that he must be some noble knight, and, asking pardon, said: 'There is a joust here to-morrow, Sir Knight; the town is full, and scarce have we time for half the work in hand. Maybe Earl Yniol beyond the bridge will give thee shelter.' So Geraint rode on to the ancient castle across the bridge; and the Earl made him welcome as best he could. And when Geraint spoke of the Sparrow-hawk, he sighed deeply, and said: 'Ay, truly, the Sparrow-hawk is the curse of this my house; let us not speak of him—not even in jest.'

So Geraint followed the Earl into the castle, and as he entered the court he heard the voice of a maiden singing in her bower; so sweet the voice was that he said within himself as he listened to it, 'Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me!' The words were of Fortune and her wheel—brave, true words that bade defiance to the ups and downs of destiny:

'Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate;
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.'

The song ceased, and the singer came forth. It was Enid, the old Earl's daughter, and her mother came with her, an aged and gracious dame. Clad was the damsel

in faded raiment, and when Geraint had set eyes on her he said again in his heart, 'Here, by God's rood, is the one maid for me.' And Enid waited on the guest, even taking his charger to the stall, though he would fain have hindered her, and then, coming in with bread and meat and wine, she set their meal before them, and charmed Geraint with her sweet serviceableness.

Then, the meal being ended, Geraint told the Earl of his errand on the Queen's service, and asked him of his courtesy to tell him of the Sparrow-hawk, whereof all men's lips were full. 'I am Geraint of Devon,' he said, 'one of Arthur's Round Table, and if there be wrong done, I am sworn to right it.' And the old Earl was glad, and told him all. 'The Sparrow-hawk,' he answered, 'is my nephew, and some time since he was a suitor for the hand of this my child. But I refused him, knowing what he was. Then he brought a charge against me that I had robbed him of his inheritance, and with the slanderous tale he raised against me mine own people, sacked my house, and thrust me from my earldom. And every year he holds a joust, the prize being a golden sparrow-hawk; nor has he yet been overcome, being of great strength and skill in arms. But no man may enter on this tournament except the lady he love best be there.' Then said Geraint: 'Wilt thou, my friend, lend me some armour, and if it please thee, and the maid herself be not unwilling, let me lay lance in rest for her upon the morrow? For if I fall, she is unsullied still, and if I live, so help me Heaven as I will make her my wife and love her evermore!'

Then the face of the old Earl lightened, and turning to Enid's mother (for Enid herself was no longer there), he bade her go and tell the maiden all Geraint had said, and prove her heart towards him. So she went and spake to

Enid, and told her all their converse. And Enid, being amazed at the suddenness of it, spake no word, nor could she rest that night; but when the sun rose, she called her mother, and together they went down to the field of tourney, and there they waited for her father and Geraint. Nor was it long ere they came, Geraint wearing her father's arms, old and rusty, and right glad was he when he saw Enid was there. Then other knights and ladies came, and the town and country folk, and filled all the space about the lists. And the Sparrow-hawk himself was there with his lady; and he made proclamation arrogantly that the prize should be given her forthwith. 'Not so,' cried Geraint; 'there is one here worthier to claim it.' Wroth and amazed was the other, the more so when he saw the Earl his uncle, and Enid his cousin standing beside Geraint. 'Do battle for it, then,' he cried, nor would his passion suffer him to say more. And so the strife began. A great fight it was: thrice they charged, and each time brake their lances. Then they dismounted, and made at one another with their swords. So furious were their strokes that each one seemed as if it must end the battle. Twice by consent they rested, and came on again, and many a wound did either give and receive, but neither had the mastery, till at last Earl Yniol cried aloud to Geraint: 'Remember the great insult done to the Queen!' Then Geraint gathered all his force into one last blow, and so mighty was the stroke that it smote through crest and helm and bit the bone, and felled the Sparrow-hawk to the ground. 'Tell me thy name,' said the Prince. 'Edyrn, son of Nudd,' he answered. 'Then, Edyrn, son of Nudd,' said Geraint, 'these two things shalt thou do, or thou shalt die. First thou shalt go with thy lady and dwarf to the Queen, and crave her pardon; and in the next place

thou shalt give back to thine uncle his earldom.' 'These things will I do,' said Edyrn. And he arose and went straightway to King Arthur's Court, and gained the Queen's forgiveness. Also he repented him of his ill deeds, for his pride was utterly abased, and he put aside all his old life, making amends by deeds of courtesy and good fame, till at last he ended his days nobly in the great battle, fighting for the King.

But Geraint returned with Yniol to the castle, and on the next day (which was the day he had promised the Queen that he would return, having achieved the quest) he would fain take leave of the old Earl, and prayed that Enid should go with him to the Court that he might present her to the Queen, and that they two might be made man and wife. Short time was there for preparing wedding garments, and Enid was filled with shame and misgiving when she looked upon her faded raiment, and feared that she would bring dishonour upon her lord by her poor apparel. And while she mused upon it, and feared more and more the thought of coming so ill-clad before the Queen and all the splendour of the Court, her mother came to her, bringing somewhat in her hand to be a sweet surprise, she said, for her. Then Enid looked, and, lo! it was a bright and costly robe that had been stolen from her when the folk had plundered the castle; and indeed it was this very dress that had been in her mind as she pondered the matter. Full of joy was she to see it again, and marvelled how it came; and her mother told her how one had brought it back even now, on hearing that the fortunes of their house had changed.

And Enid gladly arrayed herself in the robe, and though she was fairer than any even in her poor attire, yet now in her rich apparel she seemed ten times fairer than herself; and the good mother's heart was proud as

she looked upon her daughter, truly a bride worthy of any prince.

But when Geraint heard of it, he made request earnestly that Enid should ride with him clad only in the faded gown that he had seen her in at first. Enid was grieved and perplexed, but laid aside her robe in silent obedience, and donned the faded silk, and so came down into the hall to meet Geraint. His heart was moved at her sweet submission, and, seeing her mother's brow still clouded with disappointment, he made haste and said, 'Good mother, take it not ill that I have asked this thing. Two reasons there are—one, that our Queen Guinevere, when I left Caerleon three days since, promised me that whensoever I brought my bride to her, she would herself clothe her in her bridal raiment; next, I desired to make proof of her love, for if she could at a word from me put aside a thing so dear to all women, then might I be sure that her heart was wholly mine. Now, therefore, I am well assured that never any shadow of mistrust can come between us. Some day I will make you amends for this my hard petition.'

Then the two passed away to Caerleon, and from afar Guinevere saw them coming up the vale of Usk (for she had climbed to the topmost tower to watch for Geraint's return), and she greeted both with kindly welcome, and arrayed Enid in all bridal splendour. So the two were wedded by Dubric, the saintly prelate, and all that week high festival was held in Caerleon-on-Usk.

This is the tale of Geraint's marriage, and when the year after he bade Enid in his foolish anger to put on her worst and meanest dress, and ride with him, she who had kept the faded silk in memory of those days, and of his first love for her, drew it from its place, and clad herself therein, and so went forth.

THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT.

PART II.—GERAINT AND ENID.

Now, this is the story of a man's folly, and a woman's forbearance and forgiveness; for as Geraint wrought folly through his unreasoning anger and suspicion, so did Enid surpass all wives in obedience and long-suffering, and therefore was her love rewarded in the end.

When the two had mounted their horses on this summer morning, Geraint, armed in his full harness of war, and Enid in her faded silk as he had bidden her, he turned to her and said, 'Thou shalt ride not beside me, but far in front; and whatever thou dost see or hear, I charge thee on thy duty as a wife that thou speak to me not a word.' And Enid was troubled at the saying, but obeyed and went on before. But as they fared forth, suddenly Geraint cried, 'Though I be so unmanly, yet will I have no gold about me to bribe mine enemies withal'; and therewith he flung his purse from him to his squire who stood at the castle gate.

And the road he chose was the wildest and most beset by bandits and savage beasts; but still Enid passed on far in the front, and he rode after her, and it were hard to say which of the two had the heavier heart. For his soul was torn asunder between his great love for her and his indignation at the fault that he believed her guilty of; and she was ever casting about in her mind what her

fault might be. 'For if he would only speak and tell me of it,' said she, 'then by Heaven's grace I might make amends.' Then in the forenoon, as they journeyed through the wastes, Enid beheld three bandit knights waiting for them in the shadow of a rock, and heard them say, 'Lo! here comes a laggard knight; see how he hangs his head! Let us set on him and slay him, and his horse and armour and the damsel shall be ours.' And Enid thought in her heart, 'I must needs warn my lord, or these caitiffs will slay him; yea, though he slay me, yet must I speak to him.' So she went back and told him; but he only answered in his foolish wrath, 'Did I not bid you be silent? And thus it is you keep my bidding! Well, then, whether my life or my death is your desire, with your own eyes shall you see that my manhood is not lost.' With that he spurred to meet the robbers, and drove his spear through the first of them a cubit's length; then as the other two charged upon him, their lances splintering on his mail like straws, he smote once, twice, with his good sword, and stunned or slew them both. Then he stripped them of their armour, and bound it on their horses, and bade Enid drive them on before her, and she did so. And as he followed her somewhat nearer than before, his heart smote him for his hardness to her, and he was full of pity for the task she had to drive the horses for him; yet would he not speak to her, but in his own despite he nursed his wrath. And no long time thereafter Enid was aware of three other mounted robbers at the edge of a wood, and one of them seemed to her bigger of bone than Geraint; and they spoke among themselves after the same manner as the former: 'Here cometh a goodly prize—three horses armour-laden, and but a maiden with them. A knight following? Yea, but a craven. Come, let us fall on him, and take his maiden and his goods.'

'Now,' said Enid to herself, 'I must needs disobey my lord again for his own good; for he is weary with his former fight, and his life is dearer to me than my own.' Then she waited for him, and spake and said, 'There are three bandits in the wood yonder, and one of them is of larger stature than my lord; and they lie in wait to take you unawares.'

But he made answer roughly as before, saying that he would be better pleased to meet a hundred bandits than have his bidding so set at nought; and he bade her stand aside while he dealt with them. Then the giant bandit bore down upon him fiercely; but his lance missed, while Geraint's own spear drove right through shield and corselet, and there broke short, and the huge bulk fell from horse and lay. But Geraint, shouting his battle-cry, spurred at the other two, who fled in terror; howbeit, he overtook and slew them; then, stripping their arms from the three, bound them on their horses as he had done before, and bade Enid drive them on before her. So she drove them on in patience, and the creatures themselves seemed glad to obey her voice and government, so wise and tender was she, and so firm.

Then, after mid-day, they drew out of the wood into a fair meadow with mowers mowing in it; and beyond it there rose a castle on a rock, and at its foot a little town. And Geraint, marking how Enid was looking pale and weary, called to a lad that was bringing victuals for the mowers, and bade him give her to eat. This he did very willingly, and the two alighted, and, letting the horses graze, ate together; and for payment Geraint bade the youth take a horse and arms. 'But,' said the lad, 'you overpay me fiftyfold, my lord.' 'No matter,' said Geraint, 'you will be all the wealthier; but go and hire for me in the town some lodging for the night, and stabling for

the horses, and bid the Earl, thy lord, come if he will and sup with me at even.' So the lad departed, and Geraint and Enid abode in the field; nor spoke to one another, he drowsing in the heat, and she musing on the strangeness of the adventure, till their messenger returned. Then they moved to the house he told them of, and abode there till evening-time, when the Earl came in to sup with Geraint. Now, so it was that this Earl, the Lord Limours, had been a suitor of Enid's in the days gone by, and as he greeted Geraint he was aware of Enid sitting sadly and apart. And when they had well feasted and drunk, the Earl asked Geraint's leave to speak to the damsel who sate apart from them all. 'I give it freely,' said Geraint. Then Limours went and spake to Enid, and said to her, 'Enid, who wast once my love, and art my love for evermore, now at last thou art in my power. Once methinks I found some favour in thy sight; and if, as I see it must be, yon churlish husband of thine hath lost his love for thee, thou hast but to speak the word, and he shall not cross us more. Thou shalt be happy yet, for thou art dearer to me now than even aforetime.' Then Enid considered awhile with herself, and answered craftily, 'Earl, if thy words are true, then come to-morrow morn, and carry me off by violence; leave me now, for I am weary to death.' So the Earl Limours departed well pleased with her words, and confident that she loved none but him. But Enid, though she said nothing then to Geraint, piled all his armour ready while he slept, and herself slept but little. Then ere the day dawned she roused him, and told him all the words of the Earl, and her own crafty reply, even craving his pardon for having made it. And though his mind still harped upon the words he had heard her say yester morn when he awoke, yet he could find no fault with her now

in word or deed; so he called for the host and asked the reckoning, and bade him take five horses and their armours in payment. Then to Enid, 'Remember, if you can, my charge upon you—that you speak no word to me whatever betide.' 'I would obey, my lord,' she said, 'if I could; but I cannot endure to see the danger, and not warn you of it.' 'Yet do my bidding,' he answered, 'for I, too, have eyes, to see more than perchance you think; and ears, to hear you even in my dreams.' Then they fared forward into the territory of another Earl, the Earl Doorm, whom for his strength and fierceness folk called the Bull.

But ere they had gone far they heard the tramp of horses following, and, turning, Enid saw a cloud of dust, and without speaking, she lifted her finger and pointed. Geraint was pleased at this mark of her obedience to his foolish command, and he wheeled his horse and waited. And presently from the cloud of dust issued at a gallop the false Limours, and dashed upon Geraint, who smote him with his lance heavily to the earth, and overthrew the next who followed, and charged single-handed all the rout behind. But no heart had they for fighting, but fled this way and that as a shoal of minnows scatter in a moment at the shadow of a hand upon the stream. 'What think you of your lover?' said Geraint, smiling grimly. 'Shall we strip him of his armour, and buy therewith a dinner for ourselves?' But Enid answered him not, and so they went on their way, she before and he following.

But it chanced that in this last fight he received a wound, and, hardly knowing it himself, he bled secretly under his armour for a time, till at a turning in the road he swooned, and suddenly fell, without a word, from his horse. And Enid heard his fall, and came swiftly and

unfastened his armour till she found the wound, and bound it up with her veil of faded silk. Then her loneliness came upon her, and she sate down and wept.

And many passed her on the road, but regarded her not, so common a sight it was in that disordered earldom to see a woman weeping for husband or brother slain; and meanwhile her palfrey, scared at some noise, galloped off into the bushes, but the great war-horse stood beside his master, grieved like a man.

Then, after long waiting in the scorching sun, she saw coming up with a hundred men-at-arms the huge Earl Doorm himself; and, seeing them, he called aloud with a big voice, 'What, is he dead?' 'No, not dead,' she answered. 'I pray you, let him be borne hence a little out of the sun, for surely he is not dead.' 'Well, dead or not,' said the Earl, 'your weeping will not avail him; but, seeing you are fair to look upon, come you to our hall, and some of you take up the man and bring him, and the horse, too. If the man live, we will make him one of us.' So he rode on, but Geraint was brought to the hall, laid in the hollow of his shield, and Enid abode with him, chafing his hands and weeping over him till he awakened from his swoon, and found her tending him so faithfully; but he feigned to be still without life, that he might prove her to the uttermost.

Then in the afternoon came in the Earl with his spear-men and their plunder, and called for food and wine, and serving-men brought in whole hogs and quarter beeves, and all sate down and fed tumultuously, more like beasts than men. And when Earl Doorm had ended his meal, he cast his eyes upon Enid where she sate beside her lord. Then he went to her, and said, 'Weep no more, but eat. 'Twill bring the colour back to your cheek, and then not one among my gentlewomen would match your

comeliness. And you and none other shall be my lady; but now eat and drink.' 'Not so,' said she; 'I will not eat till yonder man arise and eat with me.' 'Drink, then,' said he; and filled a horn with wine, and held it to her. 'No,' she cried, 'by Heaven I will not drink till my dear lord arise and drink with me; and if he rise no more, I will look no more upon wine till I die.' Then the Earl was wroth, and said, 'Beware, girl; yonder man is surely dead, and you are in my power. If you will neither eat nor drink, then, to please me, put off this faded gown, and let my women robe you as suits your beauty. Do as I say.' But Enid answered, 'No, I will not do it; for in this poor gown my lord first found me, and loved me, and bade me ride with him to Court, and in this gown he bade me ride forth with him yester-morn. And this gown I will not put aside until my lord himself arise and bid me do it.' Then the Earl strode up to her, and said, 'Truly, it is of no more avail to be gentle than ungentle with you—take this salute from me'; and he smote her with his palm on the cheek. But Enid, thinking that he had not dared to do this unless he knew surely that Geraint was dead, uttered a sharp and exceeding bitter cry, like the cry of a hare just before the hounds fasten upon her.

This Geraint heard, and, grasping his sword that lay beside him, leapt up from his place, and with one sweep of the blade shore through the ruffian's neck, and tumbled his bearded head upon the floor. Then all the men and women rose and fled yelling from the hall, terrified as if they had seen a spectre, and Geraint and Enid were left alone together. Then Geraint said to Enid, 'Enid, I have used you more unkindly than that dead man: forgive me. I doubted your faith to me, for I heard you say yester-morn that you were no true wife. I knew not

your meaning; neither do I know it now, nor will I ask. Only believe this and forgive—that I believe you even against yourself, and hereafter I will die sooner than doubt your love.' And Enid would have answered, but for very happiness she could find no words; only she said, 'Hasten, let us go ere they return and slay you; the charger is close by—my palfrey is lost.' So they went forth and found the good horse, and Geraint mounted and helped her to climb up behind him, and all was peace and happiness between them. But as they set forward, they saw full in front, even in the gateway of the castle, an armed knight of Arthur's Table, and he was making ready to set on them. But she cried to him, 'Slay not a dead man!' and, lo! the knight knew her voice, and it was Edyrn, the son of Nudd, her cousin, whom Geraint had overthrown at the joust of the Sparrow-hawk. Then was she the more afraid, not knowing how Edyrn was now minded towards them; but Edyrn came frankly forward, and said, 'My lord Geraint, I greet you heartily. I owe you a debt of love and gratitude for chastening my pride, and lifting me from my past evil ways. Fear not, Enid, that I should fall upon one to whom I owe so much. I am one of the Table Round, and am come from Arthur, who is hard by, to bid Earl Doorm disband his powers, and submit to the judgment of the King.'

'His powers are scattered,' answered Geraint, 'and he himself is judged by the King of kings.' And he told Edyrn what had befallen, and how the Earl lay dead in his hall. But when Edyrn prayed him to come to the camp and tell the matter to the King, he was unwilling and ashamed, knowing all his own folly, until at last Edyrn said: 'Well, if you come not to Arthur, he will come to you.' And Geraint answered: 'Lead, and we follow.' And as they went, Edyrn told Enid, who still

feared him a little, all the tale of his life from the beginning; how he had wooed her first, and been rejected; then how in revenge he had set up the yearly jousts in the hope that some day Enid's own lover might encounter him and be overthrown; how this had turned out otherwise, and he had himself been conquered by Geraint, and his life spared; and how he had from that day forth repented of his evil deeds, and at Arthur's Court been so helped by the courtesy and kindness of all, and the wise and holy counsel of Dubric the high prelate, that he had grown to loathe his former life, and had become a changed man. So speaking, he made Enid's heart glad, and he brought them to the King, who made them welcome, and spoke for a little first with Edyrn apart. Then, Enid being gone into her tent, he turned to Geraint and said: 'Prince, when you prayed me for leave to go into your own land and there defend your marches, I felt that I myself was somewhat to blame in having delegated my own authority overmuch in the past; therefore am I now come to see with mine own eyes, and with me are Edyrn and others of the Table. But now, have you marked the change in Edyrn from his old wild nature to something new and noble? Better is he that conquereth his spirit than he that taketh a city, and Edyrn's work in conquering himself and his old life of violence is, to my thinking, even more great and wonderful than if some knight of mine went forth risking his life to make an onset single-handed against a realm of robbers—ay, though he slew each man by man, and were himself wounded nigh unto death in the achievement of it.'

And Geraint's heart pricked him as he heard the great King's words, for he felt that his own work had been neither great nor wonderful. Then he went to his tent, whither the King's own physician came to tend his

wound. Enid was ever at hand to nurse and wait upon him, and as he lay healing of his hurt she grew dearer to him day by day, and each was happy in the other's perfect love.

But the King meanwhile looked into the affairs of all that realm. He put down injustice, and set up law and order, and made all places safe, and cleansed the land.

Then when Geraint was whole of his wound, they moved with Arthur to Caerleon-on-Usk, where the great Queen made them welcome, and they abode there for a space. And afterwards they went back to their own land of Devon, and there Geraint ruled well and wisely, keeping the King's justice, till all men, seeing his good government and his might in tournament and battle, loved and revered him only less than Enid, whom their people loved to call Enid the Good. Noble children had they, and never more did shadow of doubt come between them till his honourable life was crowned with a glorious death in battle for the King against the heathen of the Northern Sea.

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IV.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

The fourth story is that of Lancelot and Elaine. In it we find that the moral taint has spread, and rumours have become certainty. Lancelot, the King's companion and familiar trusted friend, the chief of knights, is a traitor to his trust, and it is his 'faith unfaithful' which is the direct cause of the innocent maiden's death. But more than this, it is the cause of the general lowering of moral tone among the Order, and foreshadows the disruption of the kingdom.

IV.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

HARD by a town called Astolat there stood a castle, high built upon a hill, and there the lily-maid Elaine, in her bower up an eastern turret, guarded Lancelot's shield as though it were a sacred thing. But she knew not the name of the shield's owner. Most carefully she kept the shield, and made with deft fingers a broidered silken cover for it, weaving all the while in her brain a tale of wayward fancies about each dint and scratch that marked its surface.

Now, this is the tale of how the maiden came by Lancelot's shield, and of the love she bare him, and of the doom that came upon her thereby. Also it tells of Lancelot, and how his faith unfaithful kept him falsely true, and wrought the maiden's death. The shield was left with her by Lancelot when he rode to Camelot to tilt for the great diamond in the yearly tournament that Arthur had ordained and named the Diamond Jousts. Eight times had the jousts been held, and this was the ninth and last, and thereby hangs a tale. Once on a time Arthur, before he came to his kingdom, passing through a wild and trackless region in Lyonesse, had

found a gloomy tarn amid the hills, beside which lay the bleaching skeletons of two men. They had been brothers, one of them had been a king, and they had fought together, and each had slain the other. Where they had fallen there they lay, and folk were feared to go near the place. And on the brows of him that had been a king was a crown set with nine great diamonds, which Arthur, coming up the pass by dim moonlight, had trodden upon by chance, and as it rolled away had caught and set upon his own head, foreboding the time when he should himself be king.

And in after-years he appointed the diamonds as prizes for a nine years' contest in tournament, one for each year, to prove the manhood of his knights. And for eight years had Lancelot won the prize, meaning when all were won to give them to the Queen in token of his love and loyalty. The ninth and last tournament was nigh at hand, when Arthur said to Guinevere, who had been lying sick: 'My Queen, think you that your health will keep you from these jousts?' 'I fear it must, my lord,' she answered. 'Then will you miss the sight of Lancelot's prowess,' said the King, 'and that were pity.' Howbeit she made no answer, and Lancelot, whose love for her was ever in conflict with his worship and love of the King, thought within himself, 'She needs my presence here;' and so he said, though it grieved him sore to forego the winning of the last jewel for her: 'My Lord King, I am as yet scarce whole of my former wound, and may not ride.' Half-hearted were his words, and the King, who ever loved and spake the truth, doubted for a moment; but then dismissed the doubt, and went his way.

Then said the Queen: 'Ye are greatly to blame, Sir Lancelot. Wherefore go you not to this tourney?

What, think you, your enemies and mine will say and deem? Shameless will they call us thus to plot and betray King Arthur's trust.' And Lancelot, vexed that his falsehood had been to no purpose, said: 'My Queen, you are overlate in your wisdom; ye were not so wise when ye loved me first. As for men's talk, let them say what they will; but, indeed, my loyal worship is allowed by all, and no offence is thought. But is there more? Hath the King spoken, or does my service weary you?' To which she answered: 'Oh, the King, the King! Nay, he hath not spoken; he cares not for me. All he cares for is his Table Round, and those impossible vows to which he binds his knights. But you must go, and you must win the prize.' And Lancelot said: 'The King himself is utter truth, and honours his own word as if it were his God's. How can I show my face at Camelot, after my lying pretext of a wound?' The Queen thought a moment, and then said: 'Thus shall you do it. You shall disguise yourself, and go unknown; and with this pretext, that you desire to prove your might, seeing that men go down before your spear at a touch, only through knowing you are Lancelot. This, for I know his love for glory, will please the King full well.'

So Lancelot did according to the Queen's counsel, and took horse and made his way by unfrequented roads towards Camelot. And as he journeyed, it chanced that he missed the way, and towards evening drew near to the castle of Astolat, which shone from afar in the westering sun. He rode up to it, and in the gateway found a horn and blew it, till there came out an old servitor of the house, and he was dumb and spake not. But he brought Lancelot in, and showed him a chamber, and helped him to disarm. Then Lancelot, coming forth, was met by the lord of the castle with his two stalwart

sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine, and close behind them was Elaine, their sister, whom folk called for her fairness the Lily-maid. The mother of the house was not, for God had taken her.

One might see there had been some jest among them ere they came, for the mirth was just dying out of their faces. Then the Lord of Astolat greeted Lancelot, and asked of him his name, 'for,' said he, 'I guess thee by thy state and presence to be of Arthur's great fellowship of knights.' Then Lancelot answered that it was true he was of the Round Table, and was on his way to joust at Camelot, but desired for the present to remain unknown. And to further that end he prayed the Lord of Astolat to suffer him to leave his shield, which by its device would reveal him at the jousts, and to lend him another in its stead. 'Gladly will I do so,' said the other. 'Here is Torre's, my son's; he was hurt of late in his first tilt, so for the present time he needs it not.' And Torre, who was somewhat rough and blunt of speech, added: 'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have it.' 'Forgive him, my guest,' said the father; 'but Lavaine here, my younger son, he too is going to the Diamond Jousts, and forsooth he is so hopeful and so lusty that he will do nothing less than tilt and win, and all in an hour; and so please you bring back the diamond, and set it in this wilful damsel's golden hair.'

'Nay, good father,' said Lavaine, 'thou knowest it was all a jest, for Torre was vexed he could not go, and my sister here told us of a dream she had, that someone put the diamond in her hand, and that she let it slip into the stream. And so, Sir Knight, I said that *if* I went, and *if* I won the prize, then she must keep it better. But all was jest and joke among ourselves. But with your leave, dear father, I fain would ride to Camelot

with this noble knight, if he will have my company. Win, of course, I shall not, yet will I *do my best*.' 'Indeed,' said Lancelot, 'I shall be right glad to have your company and guidance, and to see you win the diamond and bring it home to your fair sister. A fair diamond it is, too, as I hear; and if the proverb of "*like to like*" is true, as I hold it is, then would it grace this fair maiden well, and she would grace it in the wearing of it.'

And the fair maid Elaine heard his words, and lifted her eyes and looked upon him, and in her heart she said: 'This is the goodliest knight among them all,' and therewith she loved him once and for all with that love which was her doom. Yet he was no young lover to snare a maiden's fancy, but more than twice her age; scarred, too, with marks of battle, and his face bronzed and worn with care. For, indeed, for many years past his love for Guinevere, in conflict with his faith and fealty to the King, had torn his soul with agony, and made him at times distraught, and all this inward strife had left its mark upon his lineaments. But marred as he was, he nevertheless was one to look upon and to love, and in the Baron's hall as they sate at meat that evening he charmed them all with talk of court and camp, and with his words of gracious courtesy. Only when the Queen's name was spoken he suddenly broke off, and asked the Baron of the old dumb servitor who kept the castle gate, how came he thus? And the Lord of Astolat told him how, ten years before, the heathen had caught him, and cut out his tongue for having warned his lord of their coming. 'Those were evil times,' he said, 'before our noble King broke their power in the last great fight on Badon Hill.' Then said Lavaine: 'Oh, tell us, my lord, for we live apart, and know so little, tell us of those famous wars of Arthur.'

And Lancelot answered and told them much, for he had himself been a great part of all the tale. He spoke of the twelve battles wherein the King had rolled back the tide of heathen hosts, the fight in the forest of Céli-don, and that by Castle Gurnion, and again at Caerleon and Trath-Treroit, and in the last battle on the mount of Badon, when the King charged at the head of his array of knights and broke the enemy's ranks and sent them flying. 'There at the end,' he said, 'I saw him stand high on a mound of slain men, red from spur to plume with heathen blood, and looking more than mortal in the flush of that great victory. For the King, mild and gentle as he seems at home, nor caring greatly for triumph in our jousts and mimicry of war, yet in his wars against the pagan is filled as with the fire of God. There is none like him, none; there lives no greater leader.' 'Saving your own great self,' thought the lily-maid, and the memory of his words and the sound of his voice and courteous pleasantry of manner haunted her through the night, and mingled with her dreams.

Then next morning, knowing they would be early in the saddle, she rose at dawn, and found them in the castle court, Lancelot calling to Lavaine for the shield that he would borrow. And Lancelot turned and saw the lily-maid standing in the dewy light, herself as beautiful as the dawn. No word she spake, till suddenly the thought came upon her to ask him to wear a token of hers upon his helmet. For it was the custom in those days for knights to wear in their helms at tournaments some glove or scarf of the lady whom they chose to serve. But Lancelot answered: 'Fair lady, it has never been my wont to wear any maiden's favour in the lists.' 'Then,' answered she, 'in wearing mine you are the less likely to be known, my lord.' And turning her counsel



*The Castle, York, built for
Arthur that is now in English which belonged to the Archbishop of York, 1773*

over in his mind, he thought it good, and answered: 'You say well, my child; I will wear your favour.' So she brought it out, and bound it on his helmet. A scarlet sleeve it was, broidered with pearls, and Sir Lancelot took it, saying: 'Never before have I done this for any maiden living.' Then came Lavaine bearing his brother's shield, and Lancelot gave Elaine his own, saying to her: 'Do me the grace, my child, to keep this shield for me until I come again.' 'The grace is mine,' she said, and so took the shield and bade the two farewell, watching them from the castle gateway as far as she might see. Then she returned to her tower with Lancelot's shield.

But the two, Lancelot and Lavaine, rode on together, and came the first night to a hermitage by a poplar grove not far from Camelot. Sir Lancelot knew the hermit, who had been a knight in former days, and he made them welcome for the night; and the next morning they heard mass and broke their fast, and with the hermit's blessing rode away. Then Lancelot told Lavaine, saying: 'I am Lancelot of the Lake; but tell my name to no man.' And Lavaine held his breath in awe, but then said: 'Now have I seen one, the great Lancelot; if I might see the other, our liege lord the King, then were my heart's desire fulfilled.'

So they reached the meadow by Camelot where the jousts were held, and there Lavaine had the other half of his wish, for, as he gazed upon the throng of people in the seats, he saw on the high throne, carved with the golden dragon of the great Pendragonship, the King himself, robed in red samite, crowned with the dragon; and in the canopy over him shone the diamond of the jousts. And Lancelot, seeing Lavaine's eyes dwell on the King, said: 'Just now you called me great, perhaps because I

have some skill in war and tourney, such as many another will attain and overpass; but greatness is not in me, unless there be some far-off touch of greatness in knowledge that I have it not. If you would see a great man, look there—the King.'

Then the jousts began, and the knights, divided into two companies, met in the mid-field with a shock of thunder, so that the earth quaked under them. And for a time Lancelot withheld his hand, waiting to see which was the weaker side. Then he hurled into the press against the stronger; and what need to tell of his prowess? None could stand against him—King, duke, earl, all went down before his spear, and Lavaine helped him well and worthily. But there were many of his own kinsmen against him in the field, and they were wroth that a stranger should almost out-do the deeds of Lancelot; and they said one to another, 'Surely it is Lancelot;' but others, 'Nay; for when has Lancelot ever worn a lady's favour? None of our Lancelot is this. Let us bear down upon him all together and overthrow him.' And this they did, charging down upon Sir Lancelot like some great surging wave in the Northern Sea when it sweeps down upon a fishing vessel and overbears it and its helmsman. So did they by weight of men and horses bear down Sir Lancelot and his charger, and one of their spears pierced through his shield and mail and snapped short, leaving the lance-head in his side. Then Lavaine did a great deed, for he charged and overthrew a mighty warrior, and took his horse and brought it to where Lancelot lay. And Lancelot, with his help, mounted, notwithstanding the wound that he had got, and thought to do what he might as long as he might endure; and being stoutly helped by the other knights of his side, he drove his kinsmen and

all their party back to the barriers, and they owned themselves beaten. Then the trumpets blew, and the heralds proclaimed that the prize of the tourney was his who wore the scarlet sleeve with pearls, and bade him advance and take the diamond. But he gasped: 'No prize; no diamond for me. My prize is death. For God's love give me a little air!' and so departed suddenly with Lavaine, suffering no one else to follow. And they came to the little hermitage, and no longer could Lancelot keep his saddle, but slid to earth, and cried to Lavaine, 'Draw out the spear-head.' And Lavaine drew, though fearing lest his lord might die in the drawing of it. And Lancelot gave a great shriek and ghastrly groan, and with the pain and loss of blood he swooned away. Then the hermit came forth and tended him, and there he lay for many weeks between life and death.

But the King was sore grieved that a knight who had shown such prowess and been so grievously wounded should be lost and leave no trace; moreover, the King was half convinced in his own mind that it must be Lancelot, and no other. Therefore he called Gawain, and charged him to ride forth with the diamond and find the knight, and give the diamond into his own hand, then to come again and bring word of him. And Gawain took the diamond, and went forth, ill-pleased at being chosen for this quest and made to leave the feasting and gay cheer; howbeit he showed not his thoughts to the King. He was a fair and courteous knight, Arthur's nephew, brother of Gareth and of Modred, and mighty of his hands and brave; but there was in him a touch of traitorous temper, and he revered not his word as the King would have all men do.

But Arthur, when he returned from Camelot, went to

Guinevere and asked her how she fared, and where was Lancelot. 'What!' said the Queen; 'was he not with you, and did he not win the prize?' For she thought that after the jousts Lancelot would have disclosed himself; and she knew nothing of his wound. But when the King told her all, then she said: 'That unknown knight was Lancelot himself; and he hid his name from all men to prove his might, because of the saying that men were conquered not by himself, but by his name, therefore would he hide his name and joust unknown.' To which Arthur answered: 'I would that he had trusted me, his friend, as he hath trusted thee. But there is other news, which gives me hope that Lancelot has found at last a love; for he wore upon his helm a token of some lady—a scarlet sleeve, broided with pearls; and never before has he done this.' Then said the Queen: 'Thy hopes are mine, sire;' and could say no more, but fled to her chamber, well-nigh distraught to think that Lancelot had forgotten her and turned him to another love.

In the meanwhile Sir Gawain rode throughout the countryside with the diamond, but found not Lancelot. And he came at last to Astolat, and was there made welcome. And Elaine asked him of the knight who wore the red sleeve. So he told them of the jousts and of his quest for the victor. And when Elaine heard that her knight had won, she was glad, but came nigh to swooning when he told her of the lance-wound in his side. Then said her father to Gawain: 'Abide here with us till the knight returns to claim the shield he left; then can you give him the diamond.' So Gawain stayed, well content to spend his wit in mock courtship of the lily-maid Elaine, till she grew weary of it and him, and one day brought down the shield (he had never

yet asked to see it) that he might learn the owner's name from its device. And when he saw the azure lions, he ~~sh~~note his hands together and cried: 'Lancelot it is! no other. The King was right. But is he your love, fair maiden?' 'Truly,' she said, 'I know not. Perhaps I know not what love is; but if I love not him, there is no other man that I can ever love.'

'Well,' said Gawain, 'I doubt not that ye love him well, but would not if ye knew what all others know of him and who it is that he loves, if still he loves her. But yet he wore your favour at the tourney. Can he have changed his worship? It well may be. 'Tis no concern of mine. But, damsel, if, as I doubt not, you know his hiding-place, suffer me to leave the diamond and the quest with you; and you shall give the diamond into his hand. So farewell—a thousand times farewell. In times to come I trust that at the Court we two may meet again.' Then he gave her the diamond, and departed, well pleased to be rid of the quest. And when he came to the King and made his report, he told him how he had left the diamond, not with Lancelot, but with the maid whose sleeve he wore. 'For,' said he, 'she knows his hiding-place and will give him the diamond. To her I gave it as obeying, methought, our law of courtesy.' But Arthur was displeased that he had not done as he had bidden him, and said: 'No more do you go on quest of mine, since you forget that obedience is the courtesy due to kings.' Gawain was abashed for the moment, but lightly shook his thoughts from him, and went about the Court buzzing the tale of the maid of Astolat and her love for Lancelot. And the gossip spread, and made a nine days' wonder, till even at the banquet the knights forgot to drink to the Queen and Lancelot, but pledged instead Lancelot and the lily-

maid, while the Queen's heart was bitter with jealous anguish, but she sate still and made no sign.

But the lily-maid herself, keeping ever in her innocent heart the memory of Lancelot, whom she had seen but for a day, came to her father where he sate alone, and prayed him that he would give her leave to go forth and find Lavaine and the stranger knight, and with her own hand give Lancelot the diamond. 'For,' she said, 'in my dreams I have seen him lying pale and gaunt with wasting sickness, all for lack of the care that I might give him.' And her father mused awhile, and gave her leave to go, and Sir Torre, her brother, with her.

So together they rode, the brother and sister, over the downs to Camelot, and there came suddenly on Lavaine, to whom she cried: 'Lavaine, how fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' And Lavaine was amazed to see them, and to hear how Lancelot's name was known. Then, as Torre parted from them, going into the city to his kinsfolk who dwelt there, Lavaine led her to the hermit's cave, where Lancelot lay, and the first thing she beheld was the helmet with her scarlet sleeve, or what was left of it, still bound thereon; and seeing it, her heart was glad. But when she passed into the inner cell, and saw Lancelot lying asleep so gaunt and pale and wasted, she uttered a little cry of pity, and with the sound of it he awoke. Then she gave the diamond into his hand, and told him all the tale of Gawain's quest; and while Lancelot gazed upon her, he saw all her heart's secret love and sorrow written upon her face, and his own heart smote him, for he could care for no one save Guinevere only. So day by day Elaine tended the sick man there with love and care, ever patient with him, though often the fever of his wound made him impatient with her, till one day the hermit told her that her careful watching

had saved his life. And Lancelot himself could not but love her with all a brother's love, and if he had seen her earlier in his life, before that other fatal bond had made him prisoner, perchance she might have made his life to run a different course, and this world would have been another world to him. But now it could not be; it was too late to change, and he must needs keep his false truth, and abide by the faith unfaithful that he had sworn. And Elaine, though she loved him none the less, felt within her heart that he could never love her in return, and nothing but death could ease her of her pain.

Then, when Lancelot's wound was whole, the three returned to Astolat; and Lancelot, while he tarried there, often begged her to name some goodly gift that he might give her in return for all her care of him. But she dared not say that which was in her heart, until one morning, when he said to her, 'Delay no longer; speak your wish, for to-day I go.' 'Then shall I never see you again,' she said. 'And for want of one bold word I must die. Nay, I will say it: I love you. Will you love me, my lord? I have gone mad, methinks. Leave me alone to die.' And Lancelot answered: 'Sweet Elaine, there never will be wife of mine; for had I chosen to wed, I had been wedded earlier.' 'Nay,' said she, 'but only to be with you, to serve you, and to hear your voice.' 'That would be an ill requital to your father and brother for their goodness,' said Lancelot, 'if I hearken to you. And bethink you, dear maiden, this is only a first fancy, a first flash of youth, not love at all. You yourself will smile at it hereafter, when you are mated happily with one of your own years, not twice your age. And this will I do, for you are true and sweet beyond all I ever thought of: I will endow you with land

and goods out of my realm beyond the sea, and in all your quarrels I will be your knight. But more than this I cannot.' 'Of all this,' she said, 'will I nothing,' and so fell swooning, and they bore her to her tower.

But her father had overheard their talk, and said: 'A first flash of youth, alas! yea, a flash that I fear will strike my fair flower dead. Your courtesy, Lord Lancelot, is too great. Perchance if you could use some roughness ere you go to blunt her passion or break it, all might yet be well.' And Lancelot was averse, but said he would do what he could. So he tarried till towards evening, and then sent for his shield; and Elaine stripped off the covering and sent it to him, and looked from her casement to see him pass. She saw him ride below; her sleeve was no longer on his helmet; and Lancelot heard her move the casement latch, and she saw that he heard it. Yet did he not look up or wave farewell, but rode away without a sign. This was the one discourtesy which he used in accordance with her father's prayer.

So Elaine, the lily-maid, was left alone, and ever she pined in her loneliness, calling upon death to come and give her ease; and because she was skilled in making and singing of verses, she made a little song, and called it 'Love and Death,' and the words were on this wise:

'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.

* 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.'

Then came in her father and her brethren, and she told them of a dream she had had, how that she seemed to herself to be in a boat alone upon the river, and that she

had passed in it up towards the palace of the King, but ere she reached it she awoke. 'But still,' she said, 'the desire to go thither abides with me (for, as ye know, I never yet have seen it); and having come thither, I shall have the King's and the Queen's pity, and all the kindly court will give me welcome, and I shall find my lord Sir Lancelot once more, and my spirit will be at rest.'

But her father and her brethren would fain dissuade her, and Torre, with angry tears, said that if ever he met with Lancelot, he would, by God's grace, strike him down for the evil he had done to the house. Moreover, her father told her, thinking to break her passion, of the slanderous rumours about the love of Lancelot for the Queen, and that it was folly to call him the highest who was sunk so low in shame.

Nevertheless, out of the greatness of her love and faith, she would not hearken, but reminded her father that there never yet was noble man but made ignoble talk, and that the old proverb was true, that 'he makes no friend who never made a foe.' And, moreover, she said that if she were able to believe that what he said was the truth, she would but die the sooner. 'Wherefore,' she added, 'since I may not in any case live much longer, send for the priest, that he may shrive me of my sins before I die.' So the priest came, and after she had made her confession, and he was gone, her face grew bright and happy, and she besought Lavaine to write a letter for her to Lancelot, wording it as she devised, and he did so. Then she said to her father: 'When the breath is out of my body, take me up and place me in a little barge upon the river, and let me be decked in raiment rich and fair, that I may go in state to Court to meet the Queen. And let no one guide the barge save our old dumb servant; he can steer and row. But ere I

die lay the letter in my hand, that I may bear it with me.' And her father promised that all should be done; and she lived for ten days more, and then she passed away. And all was done as she had desired. Her father laid the letter in her hand, and her two brothers, weeping, bore their dear sister to the barge, and laid her tenderly therein, lapped in cloth of gold. In her other hand they set a lily, the emblem of the lily-maid, and over her head they hung the silken cover she had wrought for Lancelot's shield. Then they kissed her pale brow, and with 'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears. So the dead, oared by the dumb, passed up the river to the King's palace.

And it chanced that on that very day Sir Lancelot craved an audience of the Queen to present to her the diamonds of the nine-years' jousts. And she received him in her chamber, which looked upon the river that flowed beneath. But so wrathful was she at his supposed treachery to her in daring, as she thought, and as rumour said, to love another, that she broke into bitter upbraiding; and saying that she cared not now for diamonds, nor any other gifts, when the giver proved untrue, took the diamonds and flung them through the oriel casement into the stream; then she fled away to weep in secret. But Sir Lancelot remained, leaning by the window, half sick of life and love and all things. And while he mused there, lo! there came slowly up the barge bearing the lily-maid, and passed underneath the window, and stayed before the gateway of the palace. And word was brought to Arthur; and while men wondered at the sight, doubting whether it were the Fairy Queen herself come (as ancient prophecies had told) to bear away the King to Fairyland, Arthur bade two of his knights—Percivale the meek and Galahad the pure—to uplift the

maid and bring her into hall. And they did so, and Gawain and Lancelot beheld her, and the Queen came and pitied her; but Arthur, spying the letter, took it gently from the cold, white hand, broke the seal, and thus he read:

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake, I, whom folk called the Maid of Astolat, am come to bid farewell to you, since you left taking no farewell of me. I loved you, and you loved not me, and therefore my love has been my death. And therefore to our Queen and to all ladies I make moan, that ye will pray for my soul and give me burial. Pray for my soul, thou, too, Sir Lancelot, as thou art a knight peerless.'

This was all the letter, and while Arthur read, those who heard it wept for pity. And Sir Lancelot spake, and said, 'My lord King Arthur, know that I am right heavy for this gentle maiden's death, for good she was and true, but loved me with a love passing all love in women. God knows I gave no cause willingly for such love, and to that I may call her father and brethren to witness. Nay, more, at her father's request, to break or blunt her love, I used some discourtesy towards her against my will, for, as her letter saith, I took no farewell of her when I departed.' Then said the Queen, 'Ye might have shown her so much grace, Sir Knight, as would have saved her from her death.' 'Queen,' he answered, 'she would not be content save to be my wife or my love, and neither of these two could be. But I made offer to her that when she should have put aside her thought of me, and wedded someone of her own youth and worthier of her, then I would endow them with land and goods in my own realm. More than this I could

not, and this she would not, and she died.' Then King Arthur said, 'It will be to thy worship, O friend, and to mine, to see that she be buried worshipfully.' So on the morrow the lily-maid was buried with all honour in the great minster amongst the tombs of kings, and Arthur said, 'Let a tomb be made with her image thereon, and let Lancelot's shield be carven at her feet, and the story of her death be inscribed for all true hearts to read hereafter.'

But when the folk were streaming homeward from the minster doors, the Queen passed Sir Lancelot, who stood a little apart from the rest, and prayed him to forgive her causeless anger and jealousy, and he forgave her willingly. And afterward the King approached him, and spoke to him in all love, and said, 'I would to God, dear friend, seeing thy sorrow and loneliness, that thou couldest have loved this maiden so fair and pure, who might, if one may judge the living by the dead, have made for thee a happy home, and given thee sons to inherit the name and fame of Lancelot of the Lake.' And Lancelot answered, 'Fair and pure indeed she was, my King, and deserved a good man's love; but love cometh not by constraint.' 'Love so constrained,' said the King, 'were freest; there is nothing on this side of heaven better than pure and true love in bond of marriage, and that she failed to win thee to this bond, true and gentle as thou art, is sore pity.' And Lancelot could not answer; but he went alone, and sate beside the river and communed with himself. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the little barge that had brought the lily-maid pass down the stream again to Astolat. And he cried in grief, and said, 'Ah, simple heart and sweet! surely your love was tenderer and truer than my Queen's. Farewell, fair lily; yea, I will indeed pray ever for thy soul, as thou desiredst

me. And the King—why did he thus speak to me: the King, whose trust in Lancelot is so absolute? Alas for Arthur's greatest knight—a man not after Arthur's heart! What avails my greatness if it only makes men worse, and sin seem less by my example? I will break these bonds of shame asunder; and yet how can I if she wills it not? I know not what to do. Better it were if God should send His angel, and seize me up and fling me far away into that lake wherefrom they say I came, brought hither by the Lady of the Lake, there to lie low with name, and fame, and shame alike forgotten for evermore!

So Lancelot groaned in his agony and remorse, for he knew not then that repentance would one day come upon him, and his sins be forgiven, and that he should at the last die a holy man.

V.

THE HOLY GRAIL

The fifth story, the quest of The Holy Grail, is in some degree a relief from the downward progress of the epic. It introduces an entirely fresh element, and seems at first as if a new spiritual force were coming to the rescue. It certainly brings a new power to bear upon the characters of the heroes, and if it had come earlier in the history, it might have strengthened Arthur's hands, and been a power for good amongst his knights. But it comes too late; they find that, save for four only—Sir Galahad, who alone achieves complete success, Sir Percivale, Sir Bors, and Sir Lancelot—the quest is not for them; and Arthur's sad foreboding is fulfilled that many of them would 'follow wandering fires, lost in the quagmire' of mystic dreams and unpractical enthusiasm, and 'that his fair fellowship of knights would be broken up thereby, and would never again meet together in this world.'

The Idylls of Pelleas and Ettarre, and the Last Tournament, are here omitted.

V.

THE HOLY GRAIL.

Now, this is the tale told by Sir Percivale, whom Arthur and his knights called the Pure, to the monk Ambrosius, his friend in the abbey whereto he had betaken himself far away from Camelot, for he was one of the few to whom it had been granted to achieve the Quest of the Holy Grail; and, having achieved it, he cared no more for war or tournament, but gave himself wholly to prayer, and fasting, and alms, and became a monk. And his fellow-monk Ambrosius loved him exceedingly, and was ever in his company as much as he might be suffered; and it fell upon a certain day, as they sate beneath a yew-tree by the abbey walls, that Ambrosius asked Percivale to tell him of the cause that made him change the life of war and chivalry for the life of the cowl and cloister. And Percivale answered, 'It was the vision of the Holy Grail; this drew me from all earthly thoughts and vanities, of jousting and rivalries for ladies' favour, wherein men waste the spiritual strength that is better offered to the service of God.' 'Ay,' said the monk, 'the Holy Grail; we were told something of it by one of your own Order of the Round Table a while ago. He spoke

of it in our refectory, but in so sad and low a voice, we heard scarce half his words. But what is it?—the phantom of some cup that comes and goes? But Percivale answered, 'Nay, monk, it is no phantom. It is nothing else than the sacred cup itself from which our Lord drank at the Last Supper with His Apostles. This cup the good saint Joseph of Arimathæa, the same who took Christ's body from the cross, brought with him in his journeying from the Holy Land to Glastonbury here in England, where also he planted the sacred thorn that blossoms at Christmas. And for awhile the cup, the Holy Grail, abode at Glastonbury, and the sight or touch of it, if a man had faith, healed him at once of all diseases and all sins. But afterwards the times waxed so evil that the Grail might no longer abide on earth, but was carried up to heaven, and was seen no more.' Said Ambrosius, 'Yea, I know from our old books that Joseph came to Glastonbury in the time of Arviragus the King, and that he, being converted, granted Joseph a piece of land whereon to build his church amid the marshes; but nothing have I read in our chronicles of this miraculous cup. Tell me: who was the first to see the holy thing in our own day?' 'A woman,' answered Percivale; 'none other than my own sister—a pure and holy maid if ever there was one, who from early youth had given herself wholly to the life of prayer and fasting, and kept herself unspotted from the world. Nevertheless, the evil rumours of the Court had reached her ears even in her cloister, and she prayed and fasted the more, and often talked with the aged and holy man, her ghostly father, of the Holy Grail, and its power to cleanse the sins of men. For when Arthur made his Table Round, and lives grew purer for it, men had thought the Holy Grail would then return; but now that sin had broken

out again, might not one by fast and prayer bring back the vision of it, and so cleanse the world? And the old man said, "The vision might perchance be given to thee; I know not, save that thy heart is pure as snow." And ever she fasted and prayed more and more, till one might deem the sun shone through her. And one day she sent for me, and I saw by the light in her pure eyes, beautiful in the light of holiness, that she had seen the vision of the Grail. And she told me how at dead of night she had been awaked by the sound as of the distant blowing of a silver horn, and it grew nearer and louder; and then; down a long beam of pale clear light which streamed into her cell, there stole the Holy Grail, rose-red and quivering with living rays, and after a little space the vision faded into night. "So," she said, "now the holy thing is among us once more, do thou, my brother, fast and pray, and tell thy brethren to do likewise, that ye, too, may see the vision, and your sins be healed." And I fasted and prayed as she bade me, and so did many another.

'Now, the youngest of all our Order was named Galahad, and he was of a most fair countenance, and his armour was white as silver or as snow. Whence he came from none knew, though some said he was a son of Lancelot, and that by enchantment had his mother borne him;—mere babble of empty chatters. This Galahad, when he heard my sister's vision, caught in his eyes the likeness of her own—his very look was transformed into her likeness, so that he seemed her brother more than I; and when on a certain day he, being with me, saw my sister, behold! she had plaited of her own long hair that she had shorn away a broad, strong sword-belt, woven with the device of the Holy Grail in silver and gold thread, and this she bound on Galahad the boy-knight,

saying, "Go forth and find the vision even as I have found it; thou shalt prevail, and be crowned king in the spiritual city;" and her faith kindled his faith, and he believed in her belief.

'Now, after this there befell a year of miracles; for you must know, my brother, that in our great hall at Camelot there stood a vacant chair, which Merlin, the great wizard, had made before he passed away. The "Seat Perilous" it was called, for Merlin had set a spell upon it that if any man sate therein, he should lose himself; therefore it was always vacant. But once by misadventure Merlin sate in his own chair, and thereby he lost his own mastery of himself, and became the slave of an evil woman, who by unholy enchantment charmed away his life. But Galahad, when he heard of it, cried, "He that will lose himself, the same shall save himself," and on a summer night, when we were at the banquet, Galahad sate down in Merlin's chair.

'Then there came a peal of thunder, and a sound of rending in the roof, and of a rushing mighty wind, and therewith a beam of sevenfold brightness shone down the hall, bearing within it the Holy Grail veiled in a luminous cloud. And each one of us saw his neighbour's face as in a halo of glory, but we were stricken dumb and might not speak. Then at last I found a voice and vowed a vow, and this it was that I swore, that I would ride for a twelvemonth and a day in quest of the Grail until I saw it clearly and without a veil, and so also did Galahad, and Bors, Lancelot's cousin, and Lancelot, and many others—yea, and Gawain also, louder than the rest of us.'

Then the monk Ambrosius asked: 'Where was the King? Did not he make the vow?' 'No,' said Percivale 'the King was not with us, for he had that day

ridden forth early with some of his knights to storm the fastness of a horde of robbers. Howbeit, he saw somewhat of the marvel as he returned across the plain, for he looked up and saw the great hall from afar wrapped in the thunder-cloud, and he prayed that it might not be smitten by the levin-bolt.'

Then Percivale told Ambrosius of the wondrous skill with which Merlin had built the hall, and of its mystic sculptures on the walls, and the statue of Arthur himself over all, crowned, and fashioned with golden wings pointing to the Northern Star, round which the heavens roll. He told him also of its twelve great windows blazoned with the story of Arthur's wars, and his twelve great battles against the heathen, and in the eastern window the finding of the brand Excalibur. It was in this hall that Arthur was wont to sit delivering judgment, as on the day when Gareth came and made his petition, and again when the maid Lynette demanded of Arthur a champion for her sister Lyonors.

'Then,' said Percivale, continuing his tale, 'while the hall was yet full of clamour and tumult, the King rode in with some of those who had been with him through the day, and he asked me, being nearest to him, what it all meant. And when I told him what we had seen, and what we had vowed, he was greatly grieved, and said: "Had I been here, ye had not sworn this vow." "Nay, my lord," I answered, "but hadst thou been here thou wouldst thyself have sworn." Then he asked us, man by man, whether we had seen the Grail itself, and man by man we answered: "Nay, but we saw it veiled, and therefore have we sworn our vows." Then Galahad cried from his place: "But I, my King, both saw the Grail and heard a voice: 'O Galahad, follow me!'"

"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the King, "for such

as thou art is the vision; not for these other of my knights. Not Galahads are ye," said the King, turning to the others; "no, nor Percivales" (so he was pleased to say), "not men of holiness and stainless life, but rather warriors stout, good men and true, to right the wronged, to beat down violence and lawlessness, and to drive the heathen from the land. But now, ye who follow like sheep the leader's bell, one hath seen the vision and all the rest, blind though ye be, think ye will see it too. Well, since your vows are made, they are sacred; ye must go. Howbeit, I know full well that many will return no more, lost while ye follow wandering fires, and who will do your work when ye are gone? Ye think I am too gloomy a prophet; we shall see. But ere we part, and this fair Order which I made be scattered, let us meet once more in joyous tournament to-morrow, that I may count your ranks for the last time unbroken."

'So the next day the jousts were held. None like it had there ever been before, so full was the gathering of knights, and so well they fought. And I myself and Galahad felt such strength within us from the vision that we overthrew more knights than any others, and all the people shouted: "Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!"

'Then the next day we passed forth from Camelot to the Quest, and all the windows and long galleries and balconies of the town, and all the house-tops, were crowded with folk, old and young, who cheered and cried after us: "God-speed!" But apart from these, knights and ladies wept, and Arthur himself could scarce speak for grief, and the Queen wailed aloud: "This madness has come on us for our sins!"

'So we rode out through Arthur's mystic gate, and thence departed, each on his own way.

'Now will I speak first of my own Quest, and how I

fared in it, for I rode forth at the first high in spirit and glad at heart at my prowess in the lists, and I was sure that I should win the Quest. But after no long while my mind misgave me, and every evil thought and deed of aforetime seemed to rise up in judgment against me and say: "This Quest is not for thee." And I looked, and behold I was alone in a land of sand and thorns, and I was sore athirst. And all my mind was filled with mocking visions, for I seemed first in the madness of my thirst to see a stream of water, clear and cool, and goodly apples on trees hard by; but when I drew nigh and was fain to drink and eat, all fell into dust and vanished.

'Then, as I rode on, methought a great warrior in golden armour, with a golden crown, riding on a war-horse also trapped in gold and jewels, came to meet me and embrace me in his arms; but as I moved towards him, ere we touched, he also fell into dust and vanished, and I was left alone and weary.

'And yet again I had a vision of a city set high upon a hill, and I heard a voice of a great multitude crying from it: "Welcome, Percivale, mightiest and purest among men!" and gladly I climbed up, but found at the top no man or voice that answered; only the crumbling ruin of a city where men once had dwelt. And I cried in the bitterness of my soul: "Lo, if I find and touch the Holy Grail itself, it, too, will crumble into dust!"

'After these things I came into a vale where dwelt a holy hermit, and to him I told my phantoms, and he made answer: "My son, one thing thou lackest—true humility. Thou hast been full of pride and thoughts of self, of thine own prowess. Thou must needs have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself that all should follow His example. Thou must, like Galahad, lose thyself to save thyself." And even as he

spake, suddenly Galahad in shining arms entered the chapel, and we knelt in prayer. And while the hermit hallowed the bread and wine of sacrament, I saw the elements alone; but Galahad said: "Saw you no more? I saw the Holy Grail descend; I saw the face as of a child that smote itself into the bread and went; and not now alone, but always is the Vision with me day and night. And in the strength of the Vision I have conquered the heathen everywhere, and broken their evil customs, and made their kingdoms mine. But my end draws near when I shall be crowned King in the spiritual city; wherefore come thou with me, for thou, too, shalt see the Vision when I pass away."

'So I went with him, drawn by his power of faith, and together we climbed a hill girdled about and crowned with storm and tempest, and beyond it a great black swamp, whitened here and there with dead men's bones, and impassable save where in ancient times a king had built a causeway of piers and arches running out into the great Sea. And Galahad sped along this mighty bridge, and I would fain have followed; but every arch, as soon as he had crossed it, leapt into fire and vanished, and thrice above him I heard a thunderous sound, the voice as of all the sons of God shouting for joy. And then far away on the great sea I saw him shining in his silver armour like a star, and over his head there hung the Holy Vessel, veiled in luminous cloud. And to my eyes he seemed to be in a boat speeding swiftly like a shooting star to the spiritual city, and the city itself I saw, with all her spires and gateways. Then darkness fell, and I saw no more. And how I returned to the hermitage I know not, but from thence I rode back to Camelot's mystic gate.'

With that Percivale ceased speaking, and there was

silence for a while. Then said the monk Ambrosius: 'How wide apart have been your life and mine! Yours with its mysteries and visions, mine with its homely village talk, and reading of breviary and monkish books. But tell me this, brother—saving this Galahad, saw you none but phantoms in your Quest?' And Percivale sighed, and said: 'Ah, yes; one indeed I saw that was no phantom. Must I tell how far I faltered from my vow? After long fasting and waiting in vain for the Vision, I came to a goodly town built around a stately palace, where dwelt a Princess rich and beautiful, and I was brought before her, when lo! she was one whom in boyhood I had loved, seeing her in her father's hall. And none but she had ever stirred my heart, and now I came upon her once more, finding her the heiress of a dead man's wealth. And all my heart went out to her again, and hers to me, as in old times, and so one day, she being rich and I poor, she made offer of herself and all her lands to me if I would wed her. And she was near and dear, and my vow and the Quest seemed far off; also her folk besought me to wed her and be their Prince, and how near I was to yielding God knoweth; but suddenly the memory of my vow flamed up in me, so that I rose and fled from temptation, and yet hated myself and the Holy Quest and all the world save her. Then I met with Galahad, and thereafter cared no more for her nor anything on earth.'

'Ah me, the pity of it!' said Ambrosius. 'Though I speak of what I know not, for what is earthly love to me? Still, I would fain hope thou carest even for me a little, and that I can feel thou art a friend, and thank God for it. But saw ye none of your own fellowship of knights beside?'

'Yes,' answered Percivale; 'one night I met Sir Bors,

the cousin of Lancelot. I saw the pelican on his helm shine in the moonlight, and glad were we at meeting. Then I asked him, had he seen Lancelot? "Ay," he said, "once, and would I had not, for his madness had returned upon him, and he rode as one distraught, crying, 'Stay me not!' and it grieves me sorely that Heaven hath plagued him thus." For Bors ever loved Sir Lancelot, and would have been well content not to have seen the Holy Cup if only Lancelot might have seen it in his stead. But he told me how, in his wanderings, he fell into the hands of a pagan folk, those who still in corners of the land kept the ancient worship of sun and moon and stars, and when he told them of the Christ and of his Quest, they mocked at him and set upon him and bound him prisoner. And there he lay dungeoned beneath the earth till by miracle, as it seemed, a great stone slipped and let in the air and sky, and as he gazed out on the starlit night he saw the Vision of the Grail pass before him, and a peal of thunder followed it. Afterwards he was loosed from his bonds by a maiden who kept the faith of Christ among her heathen kinsfolk, and so was he free.' And Ambrosius made answer: 'Now I remember that pelican crest upon the helmet. Ay, sure, it was Sir Bors who came to us and told us of the Grail. A reverent, honest, kindly man he was, but was sad at heart when with us. Sir Bors it was; none else. Now tell me this, when ye came back to Camelot, had the other knights all returned, or was Arthur's foreboding true that all the Order would be broken up? What said each knight? What said the King?' Said Percivale: 'I found Arthur sitting in his hall upon the daïs throne, and before him there stood of those that had gone forth upon the Quest no more than a tithe, and they were worn and wasted. And the King

saw and hailed me, as glad to behold me safe and sound, for there had been of late a mighty tempest, which had wrought great havoc in the town, and some returning had been slain or maimed in it, and he asked me: "Hast thou found thy Quest, and seen the Holy Cup?" And I told the King all that thou hast heard, and of my resolve to pass into the silent life of prayer. He answered me not, but turning sharply to Gawain, said: "Gawain, was this Quest for thee?" And Gawain answered that it was not for such as he, and that a holy man had told him so. Wherefore he had given himself to making merry with joyous company, and had spent his twelvemonth and a day full pleasantly.

'Then did the King call Sir Bors by name where he stood by Lancelot, and said to him: "Hail, Bors! Thou, I know, hast seen the Grail if ever loyal man and true might see it." And Bors, with tears in his eyes of sorrow for Lancelot, his dear friend and kinsman, answered: "Yea, my King, I saw it; but I cannot speak of it. Ask me no more."

'And the rest spoke each as Arthur asked him, but only of perils by flood and field, till Lancelot alone remained. To him said the King: "O Lancelot, my friend, our mightiest, hast thou achieved the Quest?" "O my King," answered Lancelot sadly, "my friend, if indeed I be a friend of thine, and mightiest, happier are those, methinks, whose nature is wholly evil, sunk so low in sin that they cannot see their own shame, for in me evil and good strove together for the mastery, and the good that was in me was, as it were, the very stock round which the evil twined and grew, till either could scarce be discerned apart; and when the vow was sworn, I also swore, only in the hope that if I might touch or see the Holy Grail I might pluck the two asunder, and

uproot the evil. And I went to a holy saint, and he told me that, unless I could pluck the two asunder, the Quest itself was vain for me. So I strove and prayed as he directed me, and even while I strove my madness came again upon me, and drove me forth into the wilderness, and I became the sport of little men who once had fled at the mere shadow of my sword. Then I came down to the sea-shore, and there I found a boat tossing, anchored to the beach, and I cried aloud: 'Perchance, if I embark, I may lose myself, and so save my soul alive, and wash away my sin in the great Sea.' So I cast the boat loose, and drifted in it seven days along the deep, until on the seventh night I was borne to the foot of the crags where stands the enchanted castle of Carbonek. Steps from the sea led up to the great gate of it, and on either side the entry stood a lion, guarding it, and the moon shone clear. Then I leapt out of the boat, and passed up the stairway and drew sword upon the lions, which reared themselves upright and gripped me by the shoulders as I stood between them. And as I made ready to smite them, a voice said: 'Doubt not, but go forward, else will the beasts rend thee in pieces.' Then my sword was dashed violently from my hand, and fell on the ground, but I passed on into the castle hall, and found it empty, and I saw only the moonlight streaming in through the high window that looked upon the sea. But from a tower high aloft I heard a clear voice singing that seemed to draw me after it, and half in a dream I climbed up many steps that seemed to have no end. At last I reached a door, and through the chinks in it I saw a light, and heard a chant: 'Glory to God on high, and to the Holy Vessel of the Grail.' Madly I tried to force the door, and it yielded; but therewith came there upon me such a blast of scorching

light and heat, as from a seventimes-heated furnace, that it smote me senseless and blinded. Howbeit, ere I swooned away, methought I saw the Holy Grail, palled in crimson samite, and around it a vision of angel-shapes, and wings and eyes, such as we read of in Holy Writ. And indeed, but for my madness which was upon me, and my sin, and my swooning away, I would have sworn that I saw it in very truth; but I saw not the Grail, save under a covering, and so this Quest was not for me."

'He ended, and there was silence in the hall for a space, till Gawain spake after his reckless and irreverent fashion. "Truly this mad Quest of thine, friend Percivale, and of thy holy nun's, hath driven men mad, even our mightiest most of all. No laggard have I been, my King, in any quest of thine; but now I swear to be deaf and blind as blue-eyed cat or noonday owl to quests and visions of all holy maidens from this time forward and for ever." "Gawain," said the King, rebuking him, "thou art already too blind to have desire to see; no need to make thy blindness greater by an idle vow. But if a sign from heaven came indeed, then blessed are Bors, Percivale, and Lancelot, for they have seen according as it was granted to each of them to see. But Lancelot, my friend, thou art wrong in saying that the good and evil had so grown together in thy heart they could not be dissevered; nay, rather, be sure that apart from this there grows some root of noble life. See to it, my friend, that the plant may bear its flower.

"And, O my knights, was not my foreboding all too true, when I warned those that went forth upon the Quest that most of them would follow wandering fires, and be lost in the quagmire of doubt and empty dreams? And was it not a true forecast that your fellowship would

be disbanded? Scarce a tithe returned of those that went. And of those to whom the Vision came, Lancelot my greatest hardly will believe that he saw it; and Percivale hath seen it afar off, and now he cares not for his life's work in the world, but yearns only for the life of silent prayer; and Galahad, who has seen the vision face to face, his chair is empty, and he comes no more, though doubtless he is crowned victor in that other life.

“Some of you there were who thought that if I, the King, had seen the Vision, I should myself have sworn the vow. That may scarcely be, for the King's quest is to do the duty set before him in the land he rules. He is like the ploughman to whom is allotted a portion of field to plough, nor must he leave it till his work be done. Howbeit, I say not that no visions ever come to me; nay, many a time they come, until the King himself knows not whether this earth he treads upon be earth at all, or the air he breathes be air, when all seems vision, saving only himself, his purpose, and his God and Saviour, and then he feels he cannot die, but live. I have my visions, you have had yours. What you have seen you have seen.”

‘So the King spake to us,’ said Percivale, ‘but all that he meant I know not, only methinks he would have us learn that the truest servant of God is he who, like the King, and perchance, too, like thee, Ambrosius, my brother, goes not on any Quest or Vision, but abides and ploughs the field where God has set him.’

VI.

THE END OF THE ROUND TABLE, AND
THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

The two concluding idylls, Guinevere and the Passing of Arthur, show the completion of the catastrophe. The treachery of Modred, the King's nephew, has revealed the love of Lancelot and the Queen. Guinevere takes sanctuary in the nunnery at Almesbury, and while Arthur goes northward to wage war on Lancelot, Modred raises a revolt and usurps the throne. The King returns to the south and marches against Modred, who retreats westward. The sublime picture of Arthur's farewell to Guinevere at Almesbury, her repentance, and his forgiveness, is wholly Tennyson's own; there is no hint of anything of the kind in Malory, or in any of the old chroniclers. Then the King continues his pursuit of Modred, and in Lyonesse is fought the last great battle of his life, a battle, as it were, between the powers of good and evil. Modred is slain, and Arthur, sorely wounded, passes away in the mystic barge, to rest from his labours in the Island Valley of Avilion.

His life's work has seemed to end in failure, but it is not so in reality, for he has created an ideal which will live for ever more.

VI.

THE END OF THE ROUND TABLE, AND THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

HERE is the tale told of how the goodly fellowship of knighthood called the Round Table fell asunder and came to its end, and how the King himself fared in the last great battle, and passed to his mysterious home of rest. For after the Quest of the Holy Grail, which had drawn away many knights, who returned not again, the King made new knights to fill up the number of the Order, and for a time it seemed as if all were well as at the beginning. They held joust and tourney as of old, they hawked and hunted, and ever and again would ride forth to assail the heathen who still troubled the utmost border; but though mighty deeds were still done, and brave hearts still worshipped and honoured the King, there was the old evil yet at work, and spreading like a poisonous growth throughout the land. The madness of Sir Lancelot and his wrestlings with himself when he strove to obey the hermit's bidding and uproot his sin had passed away. He had given up the struggle, he had forgotten the King's words spoken to him when he returned from the Quest of the Holy Grail, and he had

become once more the Queen's willing slave. All men knew of it, save only the King, for no man dared tell him of the treachery, and he loved and trusted Lancelot as his own soul. But there came a day when the thing might no longer be hid, because Modred, the meanest of the knights, who hated Lancelot and the Queen and Arthur his lord, laid a trap whereby the falsehood of the Queen was proved. Thereafter there was war between Lancelot and Arthur, but Queen Guinevere fled from the Court, and took sanctuary at Almesbury, where she abode many weeks unknown. But while Arthur and Lancelot waged their war far in the North, Modred, who coveted the throne for himself, had won over by bribes the heathen from oversea, the Lords of the White Horse, and had perverted also many of Arthur's own folk, and now he raised a standard of revolt, and made proclamation, saying, 'Modred is King!'

Arthur, therefore, made speedy end of the war with Lancelot, and marched southward against Modred, whose courage failed him as the King drew near, and the King followed him as he fled ever toward the West country. And on his way the King passed by Almesbury, where the Queen was in sanctuary, and there he stayed his march to take his last farewell of her, for he knew that he was going to his last battle on earth, and that the Queen would never see his face again.

Now, the tale of their meeting, and of the Queen's repentance for the wrong she had done against the King, and of the King's forgiveness of her, is not to be told here, but it is written in the book called 'Guinevere,' one of the 'Idylls of the King.' And the same book tells how Guinevere became a nun in the Abbey of Almesbury, and gave herself wholly to the life of prayer and fasting and good deeds, till on the death of the Abbess,

she, for her good deeds and for the purity of her life of penitence, and also for the high place she had held as Queen, was chosen Abbess. There she lived as Abbess for three years, ruling her house with wisdom and gentleness, and then her sorrows had an end, for the holy sisters, going to her cell one morning, found their Abbess lying dead, with a smile upon her face, that showed them she had found eternal peace.

But now we must speak of King Arthur, when he parted from the Queen and marched westward. It was the time of winter, and the mist of winter hung day and night over the land, so that they scarce could find or feel their way through it. There were but few of Arthur's oldest knights left with him, but of these one was Bedivere, a bold and trusty warrior, the same whom at the beginning of his reign the King had sent to ask Leodogran for his daughter's hand in marriage. He was the first knight whom Arthur made, and he abode with him to the end. And it was Bedivere who in after years told the tale of the last battle, and of Arthur's passing from the world.

He never lost his faith and trust in the King, though he said it seemed at times as if the King had almost lost faith in himself. For one night, on their westward march, he heard the King lamenting in his tent over the failure of his life's work and purpose, saying to himself that God had surely forsaken him, if indeed God cared for the world of men at all, for he, the King, had wrought and fought for God's cause all his life, and now wife and friend and people had betrayed him, and there was no sign that Heaven took any heed. So the King's sorrow was very bitter, but at last his faith seemed to revive in him, remembering the words of the Psalmist when he was in heaviness, and the sorrows of death compassed

him about, how he said: 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.'

Moreover, the King spoke to Sir Bedivere of a dream in which he had seen the ghost of Gawain, who had been slain in Lancelot's war, and the ghost had prophesied, saying: 'Hail, King! there is an isle of rest awaiting thee, whereto after the battle thou shalt pass.' But Bedivere answered the King in words of good comfort not to doubt or be dismayed, or hearken to dreams and visions of the night, but to be up and doing, for Modred and his men were hard at hand, and the King should go forth even against this foe of his own household, and conquer as of old.

'This is not a battle like those of old,' answered Arthur, 'seeing it is against mine own people. Howbeit, as thou sayest, let us move hence and overtake the foe.'

So on they marched, and Modred ever fell back before the King till they reached the utmost bound of Lyonesse in the West country. A wild coast it was, mountainous, with a spread of barren sandy shore. Now it is seen no longer, for the sea has swallowed it. There Modred turned to bay, and on the last day of the year, while still the thick mist lay upon land and sea, they closed in battle. Many fights ere this had Arthur fought, but none like to it for confusion and horror, for the death-white fog chilled all men's hearts, nor might Arthur or anyone discern whom he fought with, so that friend slew friend unwittingly, both friend and foe being like shadows in the mist. And many a brave deed was done, and also many a base one, and all the air was filled with the crash of splintering spears and the shattering of helm and harness under the blows of sword and battleaxe, and the shouts of those who prevailed mingled

with the shrieks and curses of the wounded, prayers for the light, and groans of dying men.

All day long the battle endured, wrapped in the dense mist, till toward evening a wind arose, blowing clear from the north, and rolled the mist away, and then the moon rose full and shone clearly. King Arthur looked over the battle-field, and all was still. No man was moving, nor was any voice to be heard either of Christian or heathen. All lay dead, save only the King with Sir Bedivere, and at a little distance apart there stood Sir Modred the traitor, leaning upon his sword among a great heap of slain men. 'Ah, woe is me!' cried King Arthur to Sir Bedivere, 'that ever I should see this dolorous day. Now do I seem to be King only among the dead, nor do I rightly know within myself whether I be a King at all.' 'Nay, my lord,' answered Sir Bedivere, 'King thou art, and King thou shalt be everywhere for me; yea, even among the dead. And thy life is yet whole in thee, and I who love thee still live; but behold yonder where stands unwounded he who hath wrought all this woe, and hates thee—Modred, the traitor of thy house.' 'Call not him one of my house,' answered Arthur. 'No kin of mine is he who hath lifted up his hand against me in treachery. But thou sayest well in this dark hour of mine that for thee I still am King. Yea, I am the King, no matter what they say, and thou shalt see one more deed done worthy of a King before I go hence and am no more seen.' With those words the King made at Sir Modred, and Modred smote his liege lord deep through crest and helmet to the bone; and Arthur, uplifting the good sword Excalibur for the last great stroke, slew Modred at one blow, and then himself fell stricken well-nigh to death.

So the great battle ended; every man, save only Bedi-

vere the bold and faithful knight, had fallen dead or dying in Lyonesse beside the sea. Then, seeing that King Arthur's wound was deep and grievous, Sir Bedivere took him in his arms and bore him to a little ruined chapel near the field of battle. It stood on a narrow strait of waste land, the ocean being on the one side of it, and on the other side a great mere, on which the moon shone brightly. 'Now,' said the King, 'the Round Table is come to an end, which was the goodliest fellowship of knights this world has ever known. All, all are dead, the men I loved. Never more shall we meet in joyous converse in Camelot's halls and gardens as of old. I made this realm and people, and they have been my death, though yet I hold by Merlin's prophecy that I shall come again to rule once more. But heed not thou the future. Urgent is the present need, for my wound is so deep that except some aid come I cannot live till morning. Do this, therefore: take my good sword, which long ago was given me by the Lady of the Lake (for thou rememberest how the mystic arm rose up from the surface of the water, and gave the sword into my hand)—take Excalibur, I say, and haste thee to the brink of the mere, fling him therein as far as thou mayest, watch what befalls, and quickly bring me word again.'

'My lord,' answered Sir Bedivere, 'it is against my will to leave thee thus, alone and wounded; yet thy command shall be done, and lightly I will bring thee word again.' And so Sir Bedivere went forth from the ruined shrine, passing among the tombs that stood around it, where the bones of many mighty men lay mouldering, and climbing by a rugged, zigzag path down the crags, he reached the level water of the mere. He drew forth Excalibur, and as he drew it, the moon came out from

behind a cloud and sparkled in the keen frosty air upon the hilt, for the hilt was all encrusted with gems, sapphire, topaz, diamond, and jacinth, a miracle of jewel-work. And as Bedivere gazed, his eyes were dazzled, and his purpose wavered, for he could not bring himself to cast away a thing so precious. Therefore he determined to leave Excalibur hidden among the bulrushes beside the water's edge, and slowly he strode back to the wounded King. 'Hast thou done my bidding?' said Arthur. 'What hast thou seen or heard?' And Bedivere answered: 'I heard the water lapping on the rocks, and washing among the reeds.' 'That is untruly spoken, and unlike thy nature,' said the King. 'It is unworthy a noble knight to speak falsely. Hadst thou done as I bade thee, there had been some sign, either hand or voice or motion of the water. But now I charge thee, as thou art lief and dear to me, go again lightly, and spare not to fling the sword. Watch what thou seest, and bring me word again.' So Sir Bedivere went the second time, and took Excalibur up from among the reeds, and as he gazed upon it, it seemed again to him to be a sin and a shame to cast away so noble a sword. 'What good can follow, if I do this thing?' he said. 'What harm if I do it not? Much harm in disobedience, doubtless; but how if the King demand what is unprofitable? Were it well to obey then? Surely the King is sick with his wound, and knows not what he says. And if the sword be lost, what relic or record of my lord is left to after ages? Whereas, if Excalibur is kept stored in a King's treasure-house, it will be much to King Arthur's worship and honour.' Therefore he left Excalibur hidden the second time, and strode slowly back to the King.

And Arthur asked him again: 'What is it thou hast

seen or heard?' And Bedivere made answer as he had done before: 'I heard the water washing in the reeds and lapping on the rocks.' 'Ah, traitor, unkind, untrue!' said King Arthur. 'Woe is me that my authority forsakes me in my dying hour! Thou, the last of all my knights left to me, who shouldst unite the love and loyal obedience of all, thou wouldst betray me for the sake of the precious hilt, either for the lust of the eyes or lust of gold. But now, get thee hence once more, for though a man has failed twice in his duty, yet he may prosper the third time. Begone; only if now thou fling not Excalibur, I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then Bedivere made haste, and leaped down the craggy path to the water, and caught the sword up from the bulrushes, and wheeled and flung it with all the might he had. Round and round flashed and whirled the great brand in the brightness of the moon, gleaming and glancing like the quivering fires of the Northern Lights among the icebergs of the Polar Sea.

But ere the sword might reach the water, an arm rose up from out of the lake, clothed in white samite, and caught the hilt, and so brandished Excalibur three times, and then vanished with the sword beneath the mere.

And lightly went Sir Bedivere to the King.

'Now,' said the King, 'I see by thine eyes that thou hast done it. Tell me, what hast thou seen or heard?' And Bedivere told the King how he had flung the sword, and how the arm clothed in white samite had caught and waved it thrice, and drawn it down under the wave. 'Ah,' said Arthur, 'help me from hence, for my end draws nigh, and I fear my wound has taken cold, for I have tarried over-long.'

So Bedivere, with tears, knelt down and lifted up the

King, and with all care and heedfulness he bore him through the place of tombs and down the rocks to the water-side, with bitterness in his heart for that by his delay he had put his lord's life in jeopardy. Then, as they came to the great water that shone under the moon, they were aware of a dusky barge that moved toward them, and as it drew near they saw that all the decks were thronged with forms clothed in black raiment, and with black hoods that hid their faces. And among them were three queens with crowns of gold upon their heads, who, seeing Arthur, raised a great cry of lamentation that spread itself and echoed mournfully among the rocky caves and chasms, and seemed to go up into the vault of heaven and die among the stars.

'Now,' murmured the King, 'place me in the barge,' and Bedivere did so as softly and gently as he might. And the three queens put forth their hands and took the King, and ever they wept and wailed; but the tallest and fairest of these queens took his head upon her lap, and called him by his name and spoke to him, while her tears dropped on his face, for the sight of him was very piteous, so pale and blood-stained was he, as he lay there like a shattered column. How changed from that Arthur of old days who rode in shining armour like a star, leading his knights to the charge in war or tournament!

Thus Sir Bedivere was left upon the shore, and he cried aloud: 'Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me now thou art gone from me? Whither shall I go now I am left alone? for the old days are dead when knighthood was in its glory, and the Round Table was an image of the mighty world. There have been no such times as those since the Star that led the three Wise Men to Bethlehem. But now all are gone, and I

go forth alone to live my life with those who know me not.'

Then answered Arthur: 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new; and God has many ways of accomplishing His purposes, often changing them lest usage unchanged, however good it be, should make men's hearts grow slothful and corrupt. Comfort thyself, for in me there is no comfort for thee to trust in. My life's work is done, and I pray God to accept and purify it for Himself. Do thou, too, pray; pray for my soul if thou seest me no more. There is more force in prayer than most men dream of; it is the golden chain that links this earth to Heaven and the throne of God. But now farewell. Far hence am I going. If I go—for my mind is dim with doubt—I go to the island-valley of Avilion, where never comes hail or snow or storm-wind, nor sun's heat burns, but all things rest and thrive amid wooded meadows ringed round with summer sea. And there will I heal me of my grievous wound.'

When King Arthur ceased from speaking, the barge moved from the shore with oarage and sails, and Sir Bedivere stood and gazed upon it as it slowly grew less and less, and the voices of those lamenting grew fainter in the distance. But when the sound of their wailing had wholly died away, he turned and slowly climbed the path up the crags, pondering in his mind the King's last words, and the weird rhyme that Merlin had made: 'From the great deep to the great deep he goes.' And as he thought on these things, he marvelled whether the King were destined to come again to rule once more, and whether the three dark queens in the dark barge were not the same with those three who at Arthur's enthronement stood beside him clothed in light, friends of Arthur, to help him at his need.

Then, looking once more far as his eye could see, he saw, or thought he saw still, the barge bearing the King, a mere speck on the verge of dawn, and as he looked, there was borne to his ears from afar the jubilant sound of a triumphant welcome, the voice, as it were, of the people of a great city, who rejoiced with one accord with music and singing around their King returning from his wars.

Then the new sun rose, bringing the new year

NOTES

ASTOLAT.—The home of the 'lily-maid' Elaine is identified by Malory with Guildford. His words are: 'And then he (Lancelot) rode so much until he came to Astolat—that is, Guildford—and there it happened him in the eventide he came to an old baron's place that hight Sir Bernard of Astolat.' In Malory's account the dead maiden is borne in a litter to the Thames at its nearest point to Astolat, and thence rowed by the old servitor down to Westminster, where Arthur's Court was being held. Malory's Camelot is Winchester, and to one journeying from London to Winchester, Guildford would be a natural half-way resting-place. Tennyson's geography is vague. The Court is certainly in London or Westminster,

'Hard on the river, nigh the place which now
Is this world's hugest';

but Astolat is somewhere below London, as the barge, 'oared by the dumb, went *upward with the flood*.' His Camelot, therefore, can scarcely be Winchester, and still less the Cadbury Castle of Somerset, which perhaps has the best traditional right to the name. It is probably better, on the whole, to leave the Laureate's geography to the latitude and longitude of Romance—and Wonderland.

BATTLES, THE TWELVE.—The 'twelve great battles' of the King are mentioned in several of the Idylls, viz.: 'The Coming of Arthur,' line 517; 'Lancelot and Elaine,' lines 285 *sqq.*, 'The Holy Grail,' line 250.

In 'Lancelot and Elaine,' Lancelot gives his host at Astolat what purports to be a complete list of the battles,

'As having been
With Arthur in the fight which all day long
Rang by the white mouth of the violent *Glem*;
And in the four loud battles by the shore
Of *Duglas*; that on *Bassa*; then the war
That thundered in and out the gloomy skirts
Of *Celidon* the forest; and again
By Castle *Gurnion*. . .

And at *Caerleon* had he helped his lord . . .
And up in *Agned-Cathregonian* too,
And down the waste sand-shores of *Trath-Trevoit*,
Where many a heathen fell: "and on the Mount
Of *Badon* I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round."

These names all occur in the old chronicle of Nennius, who lived in the seventh century; but, except in the case of the last and greatest, the battles can scarcely be regarded as historical. 'It is in the battle of Badon Hill,' says Professor Church in his 'Early Britain,' 'that the great British champion Arthur seems to come for an instant out of the darkness with which he is surrounded. The fight at Badon Hill is the one event in his long struggle with the invaders which seems historical.' The best authorities agree in fixing the date of the battle at 520; but as regards the locality, there is considerable difference of opinion. Judge Hughes ('Tom Brown' Hughes) in his 'Scouring of the White Horse,' says: 'Now, in the year A.D. 520, according to Gildas and Bede, Arthur gained his twelfth victory at Mons Badonicus, which might very well be Baydon Hill which you see over there' (some four or five miles from White Horse Hill in West Berks). Professor Church places it near Bath, where a suitable open space called Banner Down has been selected. A third conjecture, however, is in favour of Badbury Rings, near Wimborne, in Dorsetshire, concerning which I venture to insert a memorandum very kindly compiled for me by R. Coward, Esq., of Bath, who is a well-known authority on the archaeology of Wilts and Dorset. He says: 'In an article in the "Handbook of Bath," published in 1888, for the meeting of the British Association, Professor Earle, of Oxford, writes: "The memorable siege of Mons Badonicus, where the Walas dealt a severe blow upon the Saxons, has been fixed by the help of data in the book of Gildas to the year 520. Dr. Guest identified Mons Badonicus with Badbury Rings, near Wimborne, and that identification is now generally accepted. Previously it had been identified with Bath, and Banner Down was the spot fixed on for the battlefield, because it seemed to offer a sort of translation of Mons Badonicus, as well as a vague echo in similarity of sound. But it was upon Bath that the word fastened itself etymologically, as if Badonicus were equal to Bathonicus, which might pass for an adjective of Bathonia. It did not trouble the old antiquaries that they were elucidating a word of the sixth

century by the help of another word which had no existence until the tenth."

Thus far Professor Earle. Mr. Coward continues: 'In the above Professor Earle appears to give his entire assent to the place and time fixed by Dr. Guest. And the way Dr. Guest would appear to have reached his conclusion would be this: In the twenty-sixth section of Gildas's History we find him saying: "After this, sometimes our countrymen, sometimes the enemy, won the field, to the end that our Lord might in this land try, after His accustomed manner, these His Israelites, whether they loved Him or not, until the year of the siege of Bath Hill (Mons Badonicus); when took place also the last almost, though not the least, slaughter of our cruel foes, forty-four years (as I am sure) and one month after the landing of the Saxons, and also the time of my own nativity." The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle states that in A.D. 449 Hengist and Horsa brought the *Angles*, and that in A.D. 477 Ælla and his three sons came to the land of Britain with three ships. . . . Now, the Saxons are always coupled with Ælla and his sons, so that he would have reckoned the forty-four years from the landing of Ælla in A.D. 477, which would bring the date of the battle to A.D. 521, which I have somewhere else seen as the date which Dr. Guest fixed. If the Doctor is right, Arthur could scarcely have "passed" (as is suggested by some) in 516. I see Bede, in his History, chapter xvi., agrees with Gildas in the interval of forty-four years; but in both cases the starting-point is left somewhat obscure.

'Badbury Rings is a remarkably strong old British camp, with a double or treble row of entrenchments which might well have held the Saxons in check, and would better accord with the idea of a siege. The arrival of the Saxons here (Bath) would appear to have been much later. The Battle of Deorham, when Bath fell into their power, was fought A.D. 577. So I fear we at Bath must give up the honour of our city or its neighbourhood being the scene of Arthur's great victory.'

CAERLEON-UPON-USK.—The *Isca Silurum* of the Romans, seven miles west from its companion city Caerwent. Very extensive Roman remains have been found here, amongst them some fine tessellated pavements. Giraldus Cambrensis describes ruins existing in his day (twelfth century) of temples, theatres, high walls and towers; so that, bearing in mind the civilization which Rome had

implanted in Britain, the splendours of Arthur's Court and of Merlin's architecture may, after all, not be greatly overdrawn.

EXCALIBUR.—Enchanted swords play an important part in old myths and romances of many nations. They bear appropriate names, as, for instance, Morglay, 'Blade of Death,' Sir Bevis of Hamtoun's weapon; Gram, 'the Wrath,' of Sigurd the Volsung. Readers of Kingsley's 'Hereward the Wake' will remember 'Brain-biter,' and Eric Brighteyes' 'Whitefire' has many prototypes in Norse Sagas. The name Excalibur means, according to Malory, 'Cut-steel.' It is said in the French romance of Merlin to be a Hebrew word, meaning 'cut steel and iron' (*trancher acier et fer*). See Professor Rowe's note on the 'Coming of Arthur'. The comparison of the sword flashing in the air to the Aurora Borealis (Tale VI.) may be suggested by Malory's description that 'it was so bright in his enemies' eyes that it gave light like thirty torches.'

THE HOLY GRAIL.—The word Grail is also spelt graal, greal, and greall, and in Malory is always a compound word—Sangreal or Sanggreal—of which Tennyson's expression is a translation. According to Malory, who follows the old legends, it is the vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea received some of the sacred blood from our Lord's wounds at His crucifixion. In Tennyson's version, it is the cup used for the wine at the institution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

An emerald dish of hexagonal shape, preserved in the cathedral at Genoa, is said to be the original Holy Grail. The word Grail is probably derived from the Low Latin *crastella*, diminutive of *crater*, a mixing-bowl.

SAMITE.—A kind of rich silk woven with threads of gold or silver; derivation, *ἄξ*, six, and *ματός*, thread; literally, therefore, 'woven with six threads.' Malory's description of the arm that upheld the sword above the lake 'clothed in white samite' is adapted by Tennyson as a 'fixed epithet' of the arm. In 'Lancelot and Elaine' the King sits as arbiter of the lists 'robed in red samite,' and Elaine's barge is 'palled in blackest samite.' In the Holy Grail, the Grail itself is seen by Percivale 'clothed in white samite,' and by Lancelot 'palled in crimson samite.'

TABLE, THE ROUND.—Malory's account of the Round Table is that it was a marriage present sent by Leodogran with Guinevere

to Arthur. Leodogran himself had received it as a gift from Uther Pendragon, Arthur's supposed father. It contained seats for 150 knights. 'It was made round,' says Malory, 'by Merlin in token of the roundness of the world, for by the Round Table is the world signified by right.' Compare in 'Guinevere':

'My Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world';

and in the 'Passing of Arthur':

'But now the whole Round Table is dissolved,
Which was an image of the mighty world.'

It was to be a presentment of the world in shape (the earth being regarded as a flat surface), and its fellowship of knights an ideal of character for the world to follow. Edward III. founded the Order of the Garter in imitation of Arthur's Round Table. Froissart, in his 'Chronicles,' says: 'At this time (1344) Edward, King of England, resolved to rebuild the great castle of Windsor, formerly built and founded by King Arthur, and where was first set up and established the noble Round Table, from whence so many valliant men and knights have issued forth to perform feats of arms and prowess through the world.'

The great keep or Round Tower at Windsor was built to contain the Round Table, which appears from the descriptions to have been shaped more like a horseshoe than a circle. It was made out of fifty-two oaks brought from Reading.

There is a huge oaken table still preserved at Winchester, which is popularly called King Arthur's Table. There are also grassy amphitheatres in various parts of the country which are called 'Round Tables,' as at Penrith and Caerleon. They are probably of Roman origin, and may have been used for tournaments in the Middle Ages.