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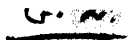
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literature



THE WORKS OF TENNYSON
IN THIRTEEN VOLUMES

VOL. IV.

THE WORKS OF



ALFRED TENNYSON

POET LAUREATE

IDYLLS OF THE KING. VOL. I.



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DEDICATION.



THESE to His Memory—since he held
them dear,
Perchance as finding there unconsciously
Some image of himself—I dedicate,
I dedicate, I consecrate with tears—
These Idylls.

And indeed He seems to me
Scarce other than my king's ideal knight,
“ Who revered his conscience as his king :

Whose glory was, redressing human wrong ;
Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd to it ;
Who loved one only and who clave to her—
Her—over all whose realms to their last isle,
Commingled with the gloom of imminent war,
The shadow of His loss drew like eclipse,
Darkening the world. We have lost him: he is gone:
We know him now: all narrow jealousies
Are silent ; and we see him as he moved,
How modest, kindly, all-accomplish'd, wise,
With what sublime repression of himself,
And in what limits, and how tenderly ;
Not swaying to this faction or to that ;
Not making his high place the lawless perch
Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage-ground
For pleasure ; but thro' all this tract of years

DEDICATION.

vii

Wearing the white flower of a blameless life,
Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
In that fierce light which beats upon a throne,
And blackens every blot : for where is he,
Who dares foreshadow for an only son
A lovelier life, a more unstain'd, than his?
Or how should England dreaming of *his* sons
Hope more for these than some inheritance
Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,
Thou noble Father of her Kings to be,
Laborious for her people and her poor—
Voice in the rich dawn of an ampler day—
Far-sighted summoner of War and Waste
To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace—
Sweet nature gilded by the gracious gleam
Of letters, dear to Science, dear to Art,

Dear to thy land and ours, a Prince indeed,
Beyond all titles, and a household name,
Hereafter, thro' all times, Albert the Good.

Break not, O woman's-heart, but still endure ;
Break not, for thou art Royal, but endure,
Remembering all the beauty of that star
Which shone so close beside Thee, that ye made
One light together, but has past and leaves
The Crown a lonely splendour.

May all love,
His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow Thee,
The love of all Thy sons encompass Thee,
The love of all Thy daughters cherish Thee,
The love of all Thy people comfort Thee,
Till God's love set Thee at his side again !



THE COMING OF ARTHUR.





THE COMING OF ARTHUR.



EODOGRAN, the King of Cameliard,

Had one fair daughter, and none other
child;

And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,

Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came

Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war

Each upon other, wasted all the land;

And still from time to time the heathen host
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was left.
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom one.
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty princedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm, and
reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was waste,
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein.

And none or few to scare or chase the beast ;
So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and bear
Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
And wallow'd in the gardens of the king.
And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and then,
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat
To human sucklings ; and the children, housed
In her foul den, there at their meat would
 growl,
And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-like men,
Worse than the wolves. And King Leodogran
Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
And Cæsar's eagle : then his brother king,
Rience, assail'd him : last a heathen horde,

Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with
blood,

And on the spike that split the mother's heart
Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,
He knew not whither he should turn for aid.

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

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,
But heard the call, and came: and Guinevere
Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass;
But since he neither wore on helm or shield

The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
But rode a simple knight among his knights,
And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,
One among many, tho' his face was bare.
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life
Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitch'd
His tents beside the forest. And he drave
The heathen, and he slew the beast, and fell'd
The forest, and let in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight ;
And so return'd.

For while he linger'd there.

A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts

Of those great Lords and Barons of his realm
Flash'd forth and into war: for most of these
Made head against him, crying, "Who is he
That he should rule us? who hath proven him,
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorlois, not the king;
This is the son of Anton, not the king."

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere;
And thinking as he rode, "Her father said
That there between the man and beast they die
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts

Up to my throne, and side by side with me?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
Victor and lord. But were I join'd with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live."

And Arthur from the field of battle sent

Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, "If I in ought have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife."

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
Debating—"How should I that am a king,
However much he help me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king's son"—lifted his voice, and call'd
A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel: "Knowest thou aught of Arthur's
birth?"

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,

“ Sir king, there be but two old men that know:
And each is twice as old as I ; and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther thro’ his magic art ; and one
Is Merlin’s master (so they call him) Bleys,
Who taught him magic ; but the scholar ran
Before the master, and so far, that Bleys
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote
All things and whatsoever Merlin did
In one great annal-book, where after-years
Will learn the secret of our Arthur’s birth.”

To whom the King Leodogran replied,
“ O friend, had I been holpen half as well
By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
Then beast and man had had their share of me :

But summon here before us yet once more
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere."

Then, when they came before him, the king
said,

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

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

Whenever slander breathed against the king—

“ Sir, there be many rumours on this head :
For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,
And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man :
And there be those who deem him more than man,
And dream he dropt from heaven : but my belief
In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
Sir, for ye know that in King Uther’s time
The prince and warrior Gorlois, he that held
Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne :
And daughters had she borne him,—one whereof,
Lot’s wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved

To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne.
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love :
But she, a stainless wife to Gorlois,
So loathed the bright dishonour of his love,
That Gorlois and King Uther went to war :
And overthrown was Gorlois and slain.
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,
Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in,
And there was none to call to but himself.
So, compass'd by the power of the king,
Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
And with a shameful swiftness : afterward,
Not many moons, King Uther died himself,
Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule

After him, lest the realm should go to wrack.
And that same night, the night of the new year,
By reason of the bitterness and grief
That vext his mother, all before his time
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hour should come ; because the lords
Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child
Piecemeal among them, had they known ; for each
But sought to rule for his own self and hand,
And many hated Uther for the sake
Of Gorlois. Wherefore Merlin took the child,
And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther ; and his wife

Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him with her
own ;

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

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

“ A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas—
Ye come from Arthur's court : think ye this king—
So few his knights, however brave they be—
Hath body enow to beat his foemen down ? ”

“O king,” she cried, “and I will tell thee : few,
Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him ;
For I was near him when the savage yells
Of Uther’s peerage died, and Arthur sat
Crown’d on the daïs, and his warriors cried,
‘ Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
Who love thee.’ Then the king in low deep
tones,

And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flush’d, and others dazed, as one who wakes
Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

“ But when he spake and cheer’d his Table Round

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

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

“ And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,
Who knows a subtler magic than his own—
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
She gave the king his huge cross-hilted sword,
Whereby to drive the heathen out : a mist
Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom ;
But there was heard among the holy hymns
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
Down in a deep, calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world, and when the surface rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

“ There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,

And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it—on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
'Take me,' but turn the blade and you shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
'Cast me away!' And sad was Arthur's face
Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,
'Take thou and strike! the time to cast away
Is yet far-off.' So this great brand the king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down."

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,

“ The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own dear sister ;” and she said,
“ Daughter of Gorlois and Ygerne am I ;”
“ And therefore Arthur’s sister,” ask’d the King.
She answer’d, “ These be secret things,” and sign’d
To those two sons to pass and let them be.
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow’d by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw :
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half heard ; the same that afterward
Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.

And then the Queen made answer, “ What
know I ?

For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I ; and dark
Was Gorloïs, yea and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness ; but this king is fair
Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
Moreover always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the dawning of my life,
A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
“ O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the rough ways of the world.”

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

“ O king ! ” she cried, “ and I will tell thee
true :

He found me first when yet a little maid :
Beaten I had been for a little fault
Whereof I was not guilty ; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of heath,
And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead ; and he—
I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk
Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,
And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,
And dried my tears, being a child with me.
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me ; and sad
At times he seem'd, and sad with him was I,
Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,
But sweet again, and then I loved him well.

And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for me,
For then I surely thought he would be king.

“ But let me tell thee now another tale :
For Bleys, our Merlin’s master, as they say,
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage,
And when I enter’d told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the king,
Uther, before he died, and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past away
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two
Left the still king, and passing forth to breathe,
Then from the castle gateway by the chasm

Descending thro' the dismal night—a night
In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost—
Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape thereof
A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern
Bright with a shining people on the decks,
And gone as soon as seen. And then the two
Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great sea fall,
Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame :
And down the wave and in the flame was borne
A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried ' The
King !

Here is an heir for Uther !' And the fringe
Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,
And all at once all round him rose in fire,
So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
Free sky and stars : ' And this same child,' he
said,

' Is he who reigns ; nor could I part in peace
Till this were told.' And saying this the seer
Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of death,
Not ever to be question'd any more
Save on the further side ; but when I met
Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were truth—
The shining dragon and the naked child
Descending in the glory of the seas—

He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me
In riddling triplets of o'd time, and said :

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

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

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

“ So Merlin riddling anger'd me ; but thou
Fear not to give this king thine only child,
Guinevere : so great bards of him will sing

Hereafter ; and dark sayings from of old
Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of men,
And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
For comfort after their wage-work is done,
Speak of the king ; and Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Tho' men may wound him that he will not die,
But pass, again to come ; and then or now
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
Till these and all men hail him for their king."

She spake and king Leodogran rejoiced,
But musing " Shall I answer yea or nay ? "
Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept, and
saw,
Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew.

Field after field, up to a height, the peak
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,
Now looming, and now lost ; and on the slope
The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was
driven,
Fire glimpsed ; and all the land from roof and
rick,
In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the haze
And made it thicker ; while the phantom king
Sent out at times a voice ; and here or there
Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest
Slew on and burnt, crying. " No king of ours,
No son of Uther, and no king of ours ;"
Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze
Descended, and the solid earth became

As nothing, and the king stood out in heaven,
Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and sent
Ulfius, and Brastias and Bedivere,
Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved
And honour'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth
And bring the Queen ;—and watch'd him from the
gates :

And Lancelot past away among the flowers,
(For then was latter April) and return'd
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.
To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,
Chief of the church in Britain, and before
The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the king
That morn was married, while in stainless white,

The fair beginners of a nobler time,
And glorying in their vows and him, his knights
Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.
And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake,
“Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world
Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,
And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their king.”

Then at the marriage feast came in from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Great lords, who claim'd the tribute as of yore.
But Arthur spake, “Behold, for these have sworn
To fight my wars, and worship me their king;
The old order changeth, yielding place to new
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,

Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,
No tribute will we pay : ” so those great lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro’ that strength the king
Drew in the petty princedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign’ d







GERAINT AND ENID





GERAINT AND ENID



HE brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's
court,

A tributary prince of Devon, one
Of that great order of the Table Round,
Had married Enid, Yniol's only child,
And loved her, as he loved the light of Heaven
And as the light of Heaven varies, now
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night
With moon and trembling stars, so loved Geraint

To make her beauty vary day by day,
In crimsons and in purples and in gems.
And Enid, but to please her husband's eye,
Who first had found and loved her in a state
Of broken fortunes, daily fronted him
In some fresh splendour ; and the Queen herself,
Grateful to Prince Geraint for service done,
Loved her, and often with her own white hands
Array'd and deck'd her, as the loveliest,
Next after her own self, in all the court.
And Enid loved the Queen, and with true heart
Adored her, as the stateliest and the best
And loveliest of all women upon earth.
And seeing them so tender and so close,
Long in their common love rejoiced Geraint.
But when a rumour rose about the Queen,

Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,
Tho' yet there lived no proof, nor yet was heard
The world's loud whisper breaking into storm,
Not less Geraint believed it ; and there fell
A horror on him, lest his gentle wife,
Thro' that great tenderness for Guinevere,
Had suffer'd, or should suffer any taint
In nature : wherefore going to the king,
He made this pretext, that his principedom lay
Close on the borders of a territory,
Wherein were bandit earls, and caitiff knights,
Assassins, and all flyers from the hand
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law :
And therefore, till the king himself should please
To cleanse this common sewer of all his realm,
He craved a fair permission to depart,

And there defend his marches ; and the king
Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,
Allowing it, the Prince and Enid rode,
And fifty knights rode with them, to the shores
Of Severn, and they past to their own land ;
Where, thinking, that if ever yet was wife
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,
He compass'd her with sweet observances
And worship, never leaving her, and grew
Forgetful of his promise to the king,
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name,
Forgetful of his pryncedom and its cares.
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her.
And by and by the people, when they met

In twos and threes, or fuller companies,
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him
As of a prince whose manhood was all gone,
And molten down in mere uxoriousness.
And, this she gather'd from the people's eyes :
This too the women who attired her head,
To please her, dwelling on his boundless love,
Told Enid, and they sadden'd her the more :
And day by day she thought to tell Geraint,
But could not out of bashful delicacy ;
While he that watch'd her sadden, was the more
Suspicious that her nature had a taint.

At last, it chanced that on a summer morn
(They sleeping each by either) the new sun
Beat thro' the blindless casement of the room,

And heated the strong warrior in his dreams ;
Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,
And bared the knotted column of his throat,
The massive square of his heroic breast,
And arms on which the standing muscle sloped,
As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it.
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,
Admiring him, and thought within herself,
Was ever man so grandly made as he ?
Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk
And accusation of uxoriousness
Across her mind, and bowing over him,
Low to her own heart piteously she said :

“ O noble breast and all-puissant arms,

Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men
Reproach you, saying all your force is gone ?
I *am* the cause because I dare not speak
And tell him what I think and what they say.
And yet I hate that he should linger here ;
I cannot love my lord and not his name.
Far liever had I gird his harness on him,
And ride with him to battle and stand by,
And watch his mightful hand striking great blows
At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world.
Far better were I laid in the dark earth,
Not hearing any more his noble voice,
Not to be folded more in these dear arms,
And darken'd from the high light in his eyes,
Than that my lord thro' me should suffer shame.
Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,

And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,
Or maybe pierced to death before mine eyes,
And yet not dare to tell him what I think,
And how men slur him, saying all his force
Is melted into mere effeminacy?
O me, I fear that I am no true wife."

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,
And the strong passion in her made her weep
True tears upon his broad and naked breast,
And these awoke him, and by great mischance
He heard but fragments of her later words,
And that she fear'd she was not a true wife.
And then he thought, " In spite of all my care,
For all my pains, poor man, for all my pains,
She is not faithful to me, and I see her

Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's hall."
Then tho' he loved and revered her too much
To dream she could be guilty of foul act,
Right thro' his manful breast darted the pang
That makes a man, in the sweet face of her
Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable.
At this he hurl'd his huge limbs out of bed,
And shook his drowsy squire awake and cried,
" My charger and her palfrey," then to her,
" I will ride forth into the wilderness ;
For tho' it seems my spurs are yet to win,
I have not fall'n so low as some would wish.
And you, put on your worst and meanest dress
And ride with me." And Enid ask'd, amazed,
" If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault."
But he, " I charge you, ask not but obey."

Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
A faded mantle and a faded veil,
And moving toward a cedarn cabinet,
Wherein she kept them folded reverently
With sprigs of summer laid between the folds,
She took them, and array'd herself therein,
Remembering when first he came on her
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey to her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before
Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,
Before him came a forester of Dean,

Wet from the woods, with notice of a hart
Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,
First seen that day : these things he told the king
Then the good king gave order to let blow
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn.
And when the Queen petition'd for his leave
To see the hunt, allow'd it easily.
So with the morning all the court were gone.
But Guinevere lay late into the morn,
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her love
For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt ;
But rose at last, a single maiden with her,
Took horse, and forded Usk, and gain'd the wood ;
There, on a little knoll beside it, stay'd
Waiting to hear the hounds ; but heard instead
A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince Geraint,

Late also, wearing neither hunting-dress
Nor weapon, save a golden-hilted brand,
Came quickly flashing thro' the shallow ford
Behind them, and so gallop'd up the knoll.
A purple scarf, at either end whereof
There swung an apple of the purest gold,
Sway'd round about him, as he gallop'd up
To join them, glancing like a dragon-fly
In summer suit and silks of holiday.
Low bow'd the tributary Prince, and she,
Sweetly and statelily, and with all grace
Of womanhood and queenhood, answer'd him :
“Late, late, Sir Prince,” she said, “later than we !”
“Yea, noble Queen,” he answer'd, “and so late
That I but come like you to see the hunt,
Not join it.” “Therefore wait with me,” she said .

“For on this little knoll, if anywhere,
There is good chance that we shall hear the hounds :
Here often they break covert at our feet.”

And while they listen'd for the distant hunt,
And chiefly for the baying of Cavall,
King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth, there rode
Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf ;
Whereof the dwarf lagg'd latest, and the knight
Had visor up, and show'd a youthful face,
Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments.
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face
In the king's hall, desired his name, and sent
Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf ;
Who being vicious, old and irritable,
And doubling all his master's vice of pride,

Made answer sharply that she should not know.

“Then will I ask it of himself,” she said.

“Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not,” cried the
dwarf;

“Thou art not worthy ev’n to speak of him ;”

And when she put her horse toward the knight,

Struck at her with his whip, and she return’d

Indignant to the Queen ; whereat Geraint

Exclaiming, “Surely I will learn the name,”

Made sharply to the dwarf, and ask’d it of him,

Who answer’d as before ; and when the Prince

Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,

Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek.

The Prince’s blood spirted upon the scarf,

Dyeing it ; and his quick, instinctive hand

Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him :

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

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

“Farewell, fair Prince,” answer’d the stately
Queen.

“Be prosperous in this journey, as in all ;
And may ye light on all things that ye love,
And live to wed with her whom first ye love :
But ere ye wed with any, bring your bride,
And I, were she the daughter of a king,
Yea, tho’ she were a beggar from the hedge,
Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun.”

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that he heard
The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,
A little vext at losing of the hunt,
A little at the vile occasion, rode,
By ups and downs, thro’ many a grassy glade
And valley, with fixt eye following the three

At last they issued from the world of wood,
And climb'd upon a fair and even ridge,
And show'd themselves against the sky, and sank
And thither came Geraint, and underneath
Beheld the long street of a little town
In a long valley, on one side whereof,
White from the mason's hand, a fortress rose ;
And on one side a castle in decay,
Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry ravine :
And out of town and valley came a noise
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed
Brawling, or like a clamour of the rooks
At distance, ere they settle for the night.

And onward to the fortress rode the three,
And enter'd, and were lost behind the walls.

"So," thought Geraint, "I have track'd him to
his earth."

And down the long street riding wearily,
Found every hostel full, and everywhere
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot hiss
And bustling whistle of the youth who scour'd
His master's armour; and of such a one
He ask'd, "What means the tumult in the town?"
Who told him, scouring still "The sparrow-hawk!"
Then riding close behind an ancient churl,
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
Ask'd yet once more what meant the hubbub here?
Who answer'd gruffly, "Ugh! the sparrow-hawk."
Then riding further past an armourer's,
Who, with back turn'd, and bow'd above his work,

Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,
He put the self-same query, but the man
Not turning round, nor looking at him, said :
“ Friend, he that labours for the sparrow-hawk
Has little time for idle questioners.”
Whereat Geraint flash'd into sudden spleen :
“ A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-hawk !
Tits, wrens, and all wing'd nothings peck him dead !
Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg
The murmur of the world ! What is it to me ?
O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-hawks !
Speak, if ye be not like the rest, hawk-mad,
Where can I get me harbourage for the night ?
And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy ?
Speak !”

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At this the armourer turning all amazed
And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
Came forward with the helmet yet in hand
And answer'd, " Pardon me, O stranger knight;
We hold a tourney here tomorrow morn,
And there is scanty time for half the work.
Arms ? truth ! I know not : all are wanted here.
Harbourage ? truth, good truth, I know not, save,
It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge
Yonder." He spoke and fell to work again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,
Across the bridge that spann'd the dry ravine.
There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl,
(His dress a suit of fray'd magnificence,
Dunce fit for feasts of ceremony) and said :

“Whither, fair son?” to whom Geraint replied,
“O friend, I seek a harbourage for the night.”
Then Yniol, “Enter therefore and partake
The slender entertainment of a house
Once rich, now poor, but ever open-door’d.”
“Thanks, venerable friend,” replied Geraint;
“So that ye do not serve me sparrow-hawks
For supper, I will enter, I will eat
With all the passion of a twelve hours’ fast.”
Then sigh’d and smiled the hoary-headed Earl,
And answer’d, “Graver cause than yours is mine
To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-hawk:
But in, go in; for save yourself desire it,
We will not touch upon him ev’n in jest.”

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,

His charger trampling many a prickly star
Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.
He look'd and saw that all was ruinous.
Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed with fern ;
And here had fall'n a great part of a tower,
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,
And like a crag was gay with wilding flowers :
And high above a piece of turret stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent, wound
Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems
Claspt the gray walls with hairy-fibred arms,
And suck'd the joining of the stones, and look'd
A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove.

And while he waited in the castle court,
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang

Clear thro' the open casement of the Hall,
Singing; and as the sweet voice of a bird,
Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
That sings so delicately clear, and make
Conjecture of the plumage and the form;
So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint;
And made him like a man abroad at morn
When first the liquid note beloved of men
Comes flying over many a windy wave
To Britain, and in April suddenly
Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green and red,
And he suspends his converse with a friend,
Or it may be the labour of his hands,
To think or say, "there is the nightingale;"
So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said.

“ Here, by God’s grace, is the one voice for me.’

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

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

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

“ Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands ;

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

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

“ Hark, by the bird’s song you may learn the
nest ”

Said Yniol ; “ Enter quickly.” Entering then,
Right o’er a mount of newly-fallen stones,
The dusky-rafter’d many-cobweb’d Hall,
He found an ancient dame in dim brocade ;
And near her, like a blossom vermeil-white,
That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,

Her daughter. In a moment thought Geraint,

“ Here by God’s rood is the one maid for me.”

But none spake word except the hoary Earl :

“ Enid, the good knight’s horse stands in the
court ;

Take him to stall, and give him corn, and then

Go to the town and buy us flesh and wine ;

And we will make us merry as we may.

Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.”

He spake : the Prince, as Enid past him, fain

To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught

His purple scarf, and held, and said “ Forbear!

Rest! the good house, tho’ ruin’d, O my Son,

Endures not that her guest should serve himself.

And reverencing the custom of the house

Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall;
And after went her way across the bridge,
And reach'd the town, and while the Prince and
Earl

Yet spoke together, came again with one,
A youth, that following with a costrel bore
The means of goodly welcome, flesh and wine.
And Enid brought sweet cakes to make them
cheer,

And in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.
And then, because their hall must also serve
For kitchen, boil'd the flesh, and spread the board,
And stood behind, and waited on the three.
And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,

Geraint had longing in him evermore
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,
That crost the trencher as she laid it down :
But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
For now the wine made summer in his veins,
Let his eye rove in following, or rest
On Enid at her lowly handmaid-work,
Now here, now there, about the dusky hall ;
Then suddenly address the hoary Earl :

“ Fair Host and Earl, I pray your courtesy ;
This sparrow-hawk, what is he, tell me of him.
His name ? but no, good faith, I will not have it .
For if he be the knight whom late I saw
Ride into that new fortress by your town,
White from the mason's hand, then have I sworn

From his own lips to have it—I am Geraint
Of Devon—for this morning when the Queen
Sent her own maiden to demand the name,
His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,
Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd
Indignant to the Queen ; and then I swore
That I would track this caitiff to his hold,
And fight and break his pride, and have it of him.
And all unarm'd I rode, and thought to find
Arms in your town, where all the men are mad ;
They take the rustic murmur of their bourg
For the great wave that echoes round the world ;
They would not hear me speak : but if ye know
Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
Should have them, tell me, seeing I have sworn
That I will break his pride and learn his name,

Avenging this great insult done the Queen."

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

That eat in Arthur's hall at Camelot.
Nor speak I now from foolish flattery;
For this dear child hath often heard me praise
Your feats of arms, and often when I paused
Hath ask'd again, and ever loved to hear;
So grateful is the noise of noble deeds
To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong:

O never yet had woman such a pair
Of suitors as this maiden ; first Limours,
A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
Drunk even when he woo'd ; and be he dead
I know not, but he past to the wild land.
The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,
My curse, my nephew—I will not let his name
Slip from my lips if I can help it—he,
When I that knew him fierce and turbulent
Refused her to him, then his pride awoke,
And since the proud man often is the mean,
He sow'd a slander in the common ear,
Affirming that his father left him gold,
And in my charge, which was not render'd to him ;
Bribed with large promises the men who served
About my person, the more easily

Because my means were somewhat broken into
Thro' open doors and hospitality ;
Raised my own town against me in the night
Before my Enid's birthday, sack'd my house ;
From mine own earldom foully ousted me ;
Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
For truly there are those who love me yet;
And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,
Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,
But that his pride too much despises me :
And I myself sometimes despise myself ;
For I have let men be, and have their way ;
Am much too gentle, have not used my power :
Nor know I whether I be very base
Or very manful, whether very wise
Or very foolish ; only this I know

That whatsoever evil happen to me,
I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,
But can endure it all most patiently."

" Well said, true heart," replied Geraint, " but
arms :

That if the sparrow-hawk, this nephew, fight,
In next day's tourney I may break his pride."

And Yniol answer'd " Arms, indeed, but old
And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,
Are mine, and therefore at your asking, yours.
But in this tournament can no man tilt,
Except the lady he loves best be there.
Two forks are fixt into the meadow ground,
And over these is laid a silver wand,

And over that is placed the sparrow-hawk,
The prize of beauty for the fairest there.
And this, what knight soever be in field
Lays claim to for the lady at his side,
And tilts with my good nephew thereupon,
Who being apt at arms and big of bone
Has ever won it for the lady with him,
And toppling over all antagonism
Has earn'd himself the name of sparrow-hawk.
But you, that have no lady, cannot fight."

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,
Leaning a little toward him, " Your leave!
Let *me* lay lance in rest, O noble host,
For this dear child, because I never saw,
Tho' having seen all beauties of our time,

Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.
And if I fall her name will yet remain
Untarnish'd as before; but if I live,
So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost,
As I will make her truly my true wife."

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

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and she
With frequent smile and nod departing found,
Half disarray'd as to her rest, the girl ;
Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek, and then
On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart : but never light and shade
Coursed one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale
Across the face of Enid hearing her ;
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
When weight is added only grain by grain,
Sank her sweet head upon her gentle breast ;
Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it ;

So moving without answer to her rest
She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw
The quiet night into her blood, but lay
Contemplating her own unworthiness ;
And when the pale and bloodless east began
To quicken to the sun, arose, and raised
Her mother too, and hand in hand they moved
Down to the meadow where the jousts were held,
And waited there for Yniol and Geraint.

And thither came the twain, and when Geraint
Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,
He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,
Himself beyond the rest pushing could move
The chair of Idris. Yniol's rusted arms
Were on his princely person, but thro' these

Princelike his bearing shone ; and errant knights
And ladies came, and by and by the town
Flow'd in, and settling circled all the lists.
And there they fixt the forks into the ground,
And over these they placed a silver wand
And over that a golden sparrow-hawk.
Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet blown,
Spake to the lady with him and proclaim'd,
“ Advance and take as fairest of the fair,
For I these two years past have won it for thee,
The prize of beauty.” Loudly spake the Prince,
“ Forbear : there is a worthier,” and the knight
With some surprise and thrice as much disdain
Turn'd, and beheld the four, and all his face
Glow'd like the heart of a great fire at Yule,
So burnt he was with passion, crying out,

“Do battle for it then,” no more ; and thrice
They clash’d together, and thrice they brake their
spears.

Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lash’d at each
So often and with such blows, that all the crowd
Wonder’d, and now and then from distant walls
There came a clapping as of phantom hands.
So twice they fought, and twice they breathed, and
still

The dew of their great labour, and the blood
Of their strong bodies, flowing, drain’d their force.
But either’s force was match’d till Yniol’s cry,
“Remember that great insult done the Queen,”
Increased Geraint’s, who heaved his blade aloft,
And crack’d the helmet thro’, and bit the bone,
And fell’d him, and set foot upon his breast,

And said, "Thy name?" To whom the fallen man
Made answer, groaning, "Edyrn, son of Nudd !
Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee.

My pride is broken : men have seen my fall."

"Then, Edyrn, son of Nudd," replied Geraint,
"These two things shalt thou do, or else thou
diest.

First, thou thyself, thy lady, and thy dwarf,
Shalt ride to Arthur's court, and being there,
Crave pardon for that insult done the Queen,
And shalt abide her judgment on it ; next,
Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy kin.
These two things shalt thou do, or thou shalt die."
And Edyrn answer'd, "These things will I do,
For I have never yet been overthrown,
And thou hast overthrown me, and my pride

Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall!"
And rising up, he rode to Arthur's court,
And there the Queen forgave him easily.
And being young, he changed, and came to loathe
His crime of traitor, slowly drew himself
Bright from his old dark life, and fell at last
In the great battle fighting for the king.

But when the third day from the hunting-morn
Made a low splendour in the world, and wings
Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay
With her fair head in the dim-yellow light,
Among the dancing shadows of the birds,
Woke and bethought her of her promise given
No later than last eve to Prince Geraint—
So bent he seem'd on going the third day

He would not leave her, till her promise given—
To ride with him this morning to the court,
And there be made known to the stately Queen,
And there be wedded with all ceremony
At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,
And thought it never yet had look'd so mean.
For as a leaf in mid-November is
To what it was in mid-October, seem'd
The dress that now she look'd on to the dress
She look'd on ere the coming of Geraint:
And still she look'd, and still the terror grew
Of that strange bright and dreadful thing, a court,
All staring at her in her faded silk:
And softly to her own sweet heart she said:

“ This noble prince who won our earldom back,

So splendid in his acts and his attire,
Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit him !
Would he could tarry with us here awhile !
But being so beholden to the Prince,
It were but little grace in any of us,
Bent as he seem'd on going this third day,
To seek a second favour at his hands.
Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,
Myself would work eye dim, and finger lame,
Far liefer than so much discredit him."

And Enid fell in longing for a dress
All branch'd and flower'd with gold, a costly gift
Of her good mother, given her on the night
Before her birthday, three sad years ago,
That night of fire, when Edyrn sack'd their house,

And scatter'd all they had to all the winds :
For while the mother show'd it, and the two
Were turning and admiring it, the work
To both appear'd so costly, rose a cry
That Edyrn's men were on them, and they fled
With little save the jewels they had on,
Which being sold and sold had bought them bread.
And Edyrn's men had caught them in their flight,
And placed them in this ruin ; and she wish'd
The Prince had found her in her ancient home ;
Then let her fancy flit across the past,
And roam the goodly places that she knew ;
And last bethought her how she used to watch,
Near that old home, a pool of golden carp ;
And one was patch'd and blurr'd and lustreless
Among his burnish'd brethren of the pool ;

And half asleep she made comparison
Of that and these to her own faded self
And the gay court, and fell asleep again ;
And dreamt herself was such a faded form
Among her burnish'd sisters of the pool ;
But this was in the garden of a king ;
And tho' she lay dark in the pool, she knew
That all was bright ; that all about were birds
Of sunny plume in gilded trellis-work ;
That all the turf was rich in plots that look'd
Each like a garnet or a turkis in it ;
And lords and ladies of the high court went
In silver tissue talking things of state ;
And children of the king in cloth of gold
Glanced at the doors or gambol'd down the
walks ;

And while she thought "they will not see me,"
came

A stately queen whose name was Guinevere,
And all the children in their cloth of gold
Ran to her, crying, "if we have fish at all
Let them be gold; and charge the gardeners now
To pick the faded creature from the pool,
And cast it on the mixen that it die."
And therewithal one came and seized on her,
And Enid started waking, with her heart
All overshadow'd by the foolish dream,
And lo ! it was her mother grasping her
To get her well awake; and in her hand
A suit of bright apparel, which she laid
Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly:

“See here, my child, how fresh the colours look,
How fast they hold like colours of a shell
That keeps the wear and polish of the wave.
Why not? it never yet was worn, I trow :
Look on it, child, and tell me if ye know it.”

And Enid look'd, but all confused at first,
Could scarce divide it from her foolish dream :
Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,
And answer'd, “Yea, I know it; your good gift,
So sadly lost on that unhappy night ;
Your own good gift !” “Yea, surely,” said the
dame,
“And gladly given again this happy morn.
For when the jousts were ended yesterday,
Went Yniol thro' the town, and everywhere

He found the sack and plunder of our house
All scatter'd thro' the houses of the town ;
And gave command that all which once was ours,
Should now be ours again : and yester-eve,
While you were talking sweetly with your Prince
Came one with this and laid it in my hand,
For love or fear, or seeking favour of us,
Because we have our earldom back again.
And yester-eve I would not tell you of it,
But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn.
Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise ?
For I myself unwillingly have worn
My faded suit, as you, my child, have yours,
And howsoever patient, Yniol his.
Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,
With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,

And page, and maid, and squire, and seneschal,
And pastime both of hawk and hound, and all
That appertains to noble maintenance.
Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house;
But since our fortune swerved from sun to shade,
And all thro' that young traitor, cruel need
Constrain'd us, but a better time has come;
So clothe yourself in this, that better fits
Our mended fortunes and a Prince's bride:
For tho' ye won the prize of fairest fair,
And tho' I heard him call you fairest fair,
Let never maiden think, however fair,
She is not fairer in new clothes than old.
And should some great court-lady say, the Prince
Hath pick'd a ragged-robin from the hedge,
And like a madman brought her to the court,

Then were ye shamed, and, worse, might shame
the Prince

To whom we are beholden ; but I know,
When my dear child is set forth at her best,
That neither court nor country, tho' they sought
Thro' all the provinces like those of old
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her match."

Here ceased the kindly mother out of breath ;
And Enid listen'd brightening as she lay ;
Then, as the white and glittering star of morn
Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,
And left her maiden couch, and robed herself,
Help'd by the mother's careful hand and eye,
Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown ;

Who, after, turn'd her daughter round, and said,
She never yet had seen her half so fair ;
And call'd her like that maiden in the tale,
Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of flowers,
And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun,
Flur, for whose love the Roman Cæsar first
Invaded Britain, "but we beat him back,
As this great prince invaded us, and we,
Not beat him back, but welcomed him with joy.
And I can scarcely ride with you to court,
For old am I, and rough the ways and wild ;
But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream
I see my princess as I see her now,
Clothed with my gift, and gay among the gay."

But while the women thus rejoiced, Geraint

Woke where he slept in the high hall, and call'd
For Enid, and when Yniol made report
Of that good mother making Enid gay
In such apparel as might well bescem
His princess, or indeed the stately queen,
He answer'd ; " Earl, entreat her by my love,
Albeit I give no reason but my wish,
That she ride with me in her faded silk."
Yniol with that hard message went ; it fell,
Like flaws in summer laying lusty corn :
For Enid all abash'd she knew not why,
Dared not to glance at her good mother's face,
But silently, in all obedience,
Her mother silent too, nor helping her,
Laid from her limbs the costly-broider'd gift,
And robed them in her ancient suit again,

And so descended. Never man rejoiced
More than Geraint to greet her thus attired ;
And glancing all at once as keenly at her,
As careful robins eye the delver's toil,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,
But rested with her sweet face satisfied ;
Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,
Her by both hands he caught, and sweetly said.

“ O my new mother, be not wroth or grieved
At your new son, for my petition to her.
When late I left Caerleon, our great Queen,
In words whose echo lasts, they were so sweet,
Made promise, that whatever bride I brought,
Herself would clothe her like the sun in Heaven.
Thereafter, when I reach'd this ruin'd hold,

Beholding one so bright in dark estate,
I vow'd that could I gain her, our kind Queen,
No hand but hers, should make your Enid burst
Sunlike from cloud—and likewise thought perhaps,
That service done so graciously would bind
The two together ; for I wish the two
To love each other : how should Enid find
A nobler friend ? Another thought I had ;
I came among you here so suddenly,
That tho' her gentle presence at the lists
Might well have served for proof that I was loved,
I doubted whether filial tenderness,
Or easy nature, did not let itself
Be moulded by your wishes for her weal ;
Or whether some false sense in her own self
Of my contrasting brightness, overbore

Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall ;
And such a sense might make her long for court
And all its dangerous glories : and I thought,
That could I someway prove such force in her
Link'd with such love for me, that at a word
(No reason given her) she could cast aside
A splendour dear to women, new to her,
And therefore dearer ; or if not so new,
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power
Of intermitted custom ; then I felt
That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and flows,
Fixt on her faith. Now, therefore, I do rest,
A prophet certain of my prophecy,
That never shadow of mistrust can cross
Between us. Grant me pardon for my thoughts
And for my strange petition I will make

Amends hereafter by some gaudy-day,
When your fair child shall wear your costly gift
Beside your own warm hearth, with, on her knees,
Who knows? another gift of the high God,
Which, maybe, shall have learn'd to lisp you
 thanks."

He spoke: the mother smiled, but half in tears,
Then brought a mantle down and wrapt her in it,
And claspt and kiss'd her, and they rode away

Now thrice that morning Guinevere had climb'd
The giant tower, from whose high crest, they say,
Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,
And white sails flying on the yellow sea;
But not to goodly hill or yellow sea

Look'd the fair Queen, but up the vale of Usk,
By the flat meadow, till she saw them come ;
And then descending met them at the gates,
Embraced her with all welcome as a friend,
And did her honour as the Prince's bride,
And clothed her for her bridals like the sun ;
And all that week was old Caerleon gay
For by the hands of Dubric, the high saint,
They twain were wedded with all ceremony.

And this was on the last year's Whitsuntide.
But Enid ever kept the faded silk,
Remembering how first he came on her,
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey toward her, as himself

Had told her, and their coming to the court.

And now this morning when he said to her,
“ Put on your worst and meanest dress,” she found
And took it, and array’d herself therein.

O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true ;
Here, thro’ the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other, where we see as we are seen !

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing forth
That morning, when they both had got to horse,

Perhaps because he loved her passionately,
And felt that tempest brooding round his heart,
Which, if he spoke at all, would break perforce
Upon a head so dear in thunder, said :
“ Not at my side. I charge you ride before,
Ever a good way on before ; and this
I charge you, on your duty as a wife,
Whatever happens, not to speak to me,
No, not a word ! ” and Enid was aghast ;
And forth they rode, but scarce three paces on,
When crying out “ Effeminate as I am,
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,
All shall be iron ; ” he loosed a mighty purse,
Hung at his belt, and hurl’d it toward the squire
So the last sight that Enid had of home
Was all the marble threshold flashing, strown

With gold and scatter'd coinage, and the squire
Chafing his shoulder: then he cried again,
"To the wilds!" and Enid leading down the
tracks

Thro' which he bad her lead him on, they past
The marches, and by bandit-haunted holds,
Gray swamps and pools, waste places of the hern,
And wildernesses, perilous paths, they rode:
Round was their pace at first, but slacken'd soon:
A stranger meeting them had surely thought
They rode so slowly and they look'd so pale,
That each had suffer'd some exceeding wrong.
For he was ever saying to himself
"O I that wasted time to tend upon her,
To compass her with sweet observances,
To dress her beautifully and keep her true"—

And there he broke the sentence in his heart
Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue
May break it, when his passion masters him.
And she was ever praying the sweet heavens
To save her dear lord whole from any wound.
And ever in her mind she cast about
For that unnoticed failing in herself,
Which made him look so cloudy and so cold ;
Till the great plover's human whistle amazed
Her heart, and glancing round the waste she fear'd
In every wavering brake an ambuscade.
Then thought again " if there be such in me,
I might amend it by the grace of heaven,
If he would only speak and tell me of it."

But when the fourth part of the day was gone,

Then Enid was aware of three tall knights
On horseback, wholly arm'd, behind a rock
In shadow, waiting for them, caitiffs all;
And heard one crying to his fellow, "Look,
Here comes a laggard hanging down his head,
Who seems no bolder than a beaten hound;
Come, we will slay him and will have his horse
And armour, and his damsel shall be ours."

Then Enid ponder'd in her heart, and said;
"I will go back a little to my lord,
And I will tell him all their caitiff talk;
For, be he wroth even to slaying me,
Far liever by his dear hand had I die,
Than that my lord should suffer loss or shame.'

Then she went back some paces of return,
Met his full frown timidly firm, and said :
“ My lord, I saw three bandits by the rock
Waiting to fall on you, and heard them boast
That they would slay you, and possess your horse
And armour, and your damsel should be theirs.”

He made a wrathful answer. “ Did I wish
Your warning or your silence ? one command
I laid upon you, not to speak to me,
And thus you keep it ! Well then, look—for now,
Whether you wish me victory or defeat,
Long for my life, or hunger for my death,
Yourself shall see my vigour is not lost.”

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,

And down upon him bare the bandit three.

And at the midmost charging, Prince Geraint
Drave the long spear a cubit thro' his breast
And out beyond; and then against his brace
Of comrades, each of whom had broken on him
A lance that splinter'd like an icicle,
Swung from his brand a windy buffet out
Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunn'd the
twain

Or slew them, and dismounting like a man
That skins the wild beast after slaying him,
Stript from the three dead wolves of woman born
The three gay suits of armout which they wore,
And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits
Of armour on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three

Together, and said to her, "Drive them on
Before you;" and she drove them thro' the waste.

He follow'd nearer : ruth began to work
Against his anger in him, while he watch'd
The being he loved best in all the world,
With difficulty in mild obedience
Driving them on : he fain had spoken to her,
And loosed in words of sudden fire the wrath
And smoulder'd wrong that burnt him all within ;
But evermore it seem'd an easier thing
At once without remorse to strike her dead,
Than to cry "Halt," and to her own bright face
Accuse her of the least immodesty :
And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth the more
That she *could* speak whom his own ear had heard

Call herself false : and suffering thus he made
Minutes an age : but in scarce longer time
Than at Caerleon the full-tided Usk,
Before he turn to fall seaward again,
Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold
In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,
Before a gloom of stubborn-shafted oaks,
'Three other horsemen waiting, wholly arm'd,
Whereof one seem'd far larger than her lord,
And shook her pulses, crying, "Look, a prize!
Three horses and three goodly suits of arms,
And all in charge of whom? a girl: set on."
"Nay" said the second, "yonder comes a knight."
The third, "A craven; how he hangs his head."
The giant answer'd merrily, "Yea, but one?
Wait here, and when he passes fall upon him."

And Enid ponder'd in her heart and said,
" I will abide the coming of my lord,
And I will tell him all their villainy.
My lord is weary with the fight before,
And they will fall upon him unawares.
I needs must disobey him for his good ;
How should I dare obey him to his harm ?
Needs must I speak, and tho' he kill me for it,
I save a life dearer to me than mine."

And she abode his coming, and said to him
With timid firmness, " Have I leave to speak ? "
He said, " Ye take it, speaking," and she spoke.

" There lurk three villains yonder in the wood,
And each of them is wholly arm'd, and one

Is larger-limb'd than you are, and they say
That they will fall upon you while ye pass."

To which he flung a wrathful answer back :
" And if there were an hundred in the wood,
And every man were larger-limb'd than I,
And all at once should sally out upon me,
I swear it would not ruffle me so much
As you that not obey me. Stand aside,
And if I fall, cleave to the better man."

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,
Not dare to watch the combat, only breathe
Short fits of prayer, at every stroke a breath.
And he, she dreaded most, bare down upon him.
Aim'd at the helm, his lance err'd ; but Geraint's,

A little in the late encounter strain'd,
Struck thro' the bulky bandit's corselet home,
And then brake short, and down his enemy roll'd,
And there lay still ; as he that tells the tale,
Saw once a great piece of a promontory,
That had a sapling growing on it, slip
From the long shore-cliff's windy walls to the
beach,

And there lie still, and yet the sapling grew :
So lay the man transfixt. His craven pair
Of comrades, making slower at the Prince,
When now they saw their bulwark fallen, stood ;
On whom the victor, to confound them more,
Spurr'd with his terrible war-cry ; for as one,
That listens near a torrent mountain-brook,
All thro' the crash of the near cataract hears

The drumming thunder of the huger fall
At distance, were the soldiers wont to hear
His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,
And foemen scared, like that false pair who turn'd
Flying, but, overtaken, died the death
Themselves had wrought on many an innocent.

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, pick'd the lance
That pleased him best, and drew from those dead
wolves

Their three gay suits of armour, each from each,
And bound them on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, " Drive them on
Before you," and she drove them thro' the
wood

He follow'd nearer still : the pain she had
To keep them in the wild ways of the wood,
Two sets of three laden with jingling arms.
Together, served a little to disedge
The sharpness of that pain about her heart :
And they themselves, like creatures gently born
But into bad hands fall'n, and now so long
By bandits groom'd, prick'd their light ears, and
felt
Her low firm voice and tender government.

So thro' the green gloom of the wood they past,
And issuing under open heavens beheld
A little town with towers, upon a rock,
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike chased
In the brown wild, and mowers mowing in it.

And down a rocky pathway from the place
There came a fair-hair'd youth, that in his hand
Bare victual for the mowers : and Geraint
Had ruth again on Enid looking pale :
Then, moving downward to the meadow ground,
He, when the fair-hair'd youth came by him, said,
“ Friend, let her eat ; the damsel is so faint.”
“ Yea, willingly,” replied the youth ; “ and you,
My lord, eat also, tho' the fare is coarse,
And only meet for mowers ;” then set down
His basket, and dismounting on the sward
They let the horses graze, and ate themselves.
And Enid took a little delicately,
Less having stomach for it than desire
To close with her lord's pleasure ; but Geraint
Ate all the mowers' victual unawares,

And when he found all empty, was amazed ;
And " Boy," said he, " I have eaten all, but take
A horse and arms for guerdon ; choose the best."
He, reddening in extremity of delight,
" My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold."
" Ye will be all the wealthier," cried the Prince.
" I take it as free gift, then," said the boy,
" Not guerdon ; for myself can easily,
While your good damsel rests, return, and fetch
Fresh victual for these mowers of our Earl ;
For these are his, and all the field is his,
And I myself am his ; and I will tell him
How great a man you are : he loves to know
When men of mark are in his territory :
And he will have you to his palace here,
And serve you costlier than with mowers' fare."

Then said Geraint, "I wish no better fare :
I never ate with angrier appetite
Than when I left your mowers dinnerless.
And into no Earl's palace will I go.
I know, God knows, too much of palaces !
And if he want me, let him come to me.
But hire us some fair chamber for the night,
And stalling for the horses, and return
With victual for these men, and let us know."

"Yea, my kind lord," said the glad youth, and
went,
Held his head high, and thought himself a
knight,
And up the rocky pathway disappear'd,
Leading the horse, and they were left alone.

But when the Prince had brought his errant eyes
Home from the rock, sideways he let them glance
At Enid, where she droopt : his own false doom,
That shadow of mistrust should never cross
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he sigh'd ;
Then with another humourous ruth remark'd
The lusty mowers labouring dinnerless,
And watch'd the sun blaze on the turning scythe,
And after nodded sleepily in the heat.
But she, remembering her old ruin'd hall,
And all the windy clamour of the daws
About her hollow turret, pluck'd the grass
There growing longest by the meadow's edge,
And into many a listless annulet,
Now over, now beneath her marriage ring,
Wove and unwove it, till the boy return'd

And told them of a chamber, and they went ;
Where, after saying to her, " If ye will,
Call for the woman of the house," to which
She answer'd, " Thanks, my lord ;" the two remain'd
Apart by all the chamber's width, and mute
As creatures voiceless thro' the fault of birth,
Or two wild men supporters of a shield,
Painted, who stare at open space, nor glance
The one at other, parted by the shield.

On a sudden, many a voice along the street,
And heel against the pavement echoing, burst
Their drowse ; and either started while the door,
Push'd from without, drove backward to the wall,
And midmost of a rout of roisterers,
Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,

Her suitor in old years before Geraint,
Enter'd, the wild lord of the place, Limours.
He moving up with pliant courtliness,
Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,
In the mid-warmth of welcome and graspt hand,
Found Enid with the corner of his eye,
And knew her sitting sad and solitary.
Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly cheer
To feed the sudden guest, and sumptuously
According to his fashion, bad the host
Call in what men soever were his friends,
And feast with these in honour of their earl ;
“ And care not for the cost ; the cost is mine.”

And wine and food were brought, and Earl
Limours

Drank till he jested with all ease, and told
Free tales, and took the word and play'd upon it,
And made it of two colours; for his talk,
When wine and free companions kindled him,
Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem
Of fifty facets; thus he moved the Prince
To laughter and his comrades to applause.
Then, when the Prince was merry, ask'd Limours,
"Your leave, my lord, to cross the room, and
 speak
To your good damsel there who sits apart,
And seems so lonely?" "My free leave" he said;
"Get her to speak: she does not speak to me.
Then rose Limours and looking at his feet,
Like him who tries the bridge he fears may fail.
Crost and came near, lifted adoring eyes,

Bow'd at her side and utter'd whisperingly :

“ Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,
Enid my early and my only love,
Enid the loss of whom has turn'd me wild—
What chance is this ? how is it I see you here ?
You are in my power at last, are in my power.
Yet fear me not : I call mine own self wild,
But keep a touch of sweet civility
Here in the heart of waste and wilderness.
I thought, but that your father came between,
In former days you saw me favourably.
And if it were so do not keep it back :
Make me a little happier : let me know it :
Owe you me nothing for a life half-lost ?
Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you are.

And, Enid, you and he, I see it with joy—
You sit apart, you do not speak to him,
You come with no attendance, page or maid,
To serve you—does he love you as of old?
For, call it lovers' quarrels, yet I know
Tho' men may bicker with the things they love,
They would not make them laughable in all eyes,
Not while they loved them; and your wretched
dress,

A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks
Your story, that this man loves you no more.
Your beauty is no beauty to him now:
A common chance—right well I know it—pall'd—
For I know men: nor will ye win him back,
For the man's love once gone never returns.
But here is one who loves you as of old;

With more exceeding passion than of old :
Good, speak the word : my followers ring him
round :

He sits unarm'd ; I hold a finger up ;
They understand : no ; I do not mean blood :
Nor need you look so scared at what I say :
My malice is no deeper than a moat,
No stronger than a wall : there is the keep ;
He shall not cross us more ; speak but the word :
Or speak it not ; but then by Him that made me
The one true lover which you ever had,
I will make use of all the power I have.
O pardon me ! the madness of that hour,
When first I parted from you, moves me yet."

At this the tender sound of his own voice

And sweet self-pity, or the fancy of it,
Made his eye moist ; but Enid fear'd his eyes,
Moist as they were, wine-heated from the feast ;
And answer'd with such craft as women use,
Guilty or guiltless, to stave off a chance
That breaks upon them perilously, and said :

“ Earl, if you love me as in former years,
And do not practise on me, come with morn,
And snatch me from him as by violence ;
Leave me to-night : I am weary to the death.”

Low at leave-taking, with his brandish'd plume
Brushing his instep, bow'd the all-amorous Earl,
And the stout Prince bad him a loud good-night
He moving homeward babbled to his men,

How Enid never loved a man but him,
Nor cared a broken egg-shell for her lord.

But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,
Debating his command of silence given,
And that she now perforce must violate it,
Held commune with herself, and while she held
He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart
To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly pleased
To find him yet unwounded after fight,
And hear him breathing low and equally.
Anon she rose, and stepping lightly, heap'd
The pieces of his armour in one place,
All to be there against a sudden need;
Then dozed awhile herself, but overtoil'd
By that day's grief and travel, evermore

Seem'd catching at a rootless thorn, and then
Went slipping down horrible precipices,
And strongly striking out her limbs awoke ;
Then thought she heard the wild Earl at the door,
With all his rout of random followers,
Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning her ;
Which was the red cock shouting to the light,
As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy world,
And glimmer'd on his armour in the room.
And once again she rose to look at it,
But touch'd it unawares : jangling, the casque
Fell, and he started up and stared at her.
Then breaking his command of silence given,
She told him all that Earl Limours had said,
Except the passage that he loved her not ;
Nor left untold the craft herself had used ;

But ended with apology so sweet,
Low-spoken, and of so few words, and seem'd
So justified by that necessity,
That tho' he thought "was it for him she wept
In Devon?" he but gave a wrathful groan,
Saying "your sweet faces make good fellows fools
And traitors. Call the host and bid him bring
Charger and palfrey." So she glided out
Among the heavy breathings of the house,
And like a household Spirit at the walls
Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and return'd :
Then tending her rough lord, tho' all unask'd,
In silence, did him service as a squire ;
Till issuing arm'd he found the host and cried,
"Thy reckoning, friend?" and ere he learnt it,
"Take

Five horses and their armours ;" and the host,
Suddenly honest, answer'd in amaze,
" My lord, I scarce have spent the worth of one !"
" Ye will be all the wealthier" said the Prince,
And then to Enid, " Forward ! and to-day
I charge you, Enid, more especially,
What thing soever ye may hear, or see,
Or fancy (tho' I count it of small use
To charge you) that ye speak not but obey."

And Enid answer'd, " Yea, my lord, I know
Your wish, and would obey ; but riding first,
I hear the violent threats you do not hear,
I see the danger which you cannot see :
Then not to give you warning, that seems hard ;
Almost beyond me : yet I would obey."

"Yea so," said he, "do it: be not too wise;
Seeing that ye are wedded to a man,
Not quite mismated with a yawning clown,
But one with arms to guard his head and yours,
With eyes to find you out however far,
And ears to hear you even in his dreams."

With that he turn'd and look'd as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil;
And that within her, which a wanton fool,
Or hasty judger would have call'd her guilt,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall.
And Geraint look'd and was not satisfied.

Then forward by a way which, beaten broad,
Led from the territory of false Limours

To the waste earldom of another earl,
Doorm, whom his shaking vassals call'd the Bull,
Went Enid with her sullen follower on.
Once she look'd back, and when she saw him ride
More near by many a rood than yester-morn,
It wellnigh made her cheerful ; till Geraint
Waving an angry hand as who should say
“ Ye watch me,” sadden'd all her heart again.
But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,
The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof
Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw
Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it.
Then not to disobey her lord's behest,
And yet to give him warning, for he rode
As if he heard not, moving back she held
Her finger up, and pointed to the dust.

At which the warrior in his obstinacy,
Because she kept the letter of his word
Was in a manner pleased, and turning, stood.
And in the moment after, wild Limours,
Borne on a black horse, like a thunder-cloud
Whose skirts are loosen'd by the breaking storm
Half ridden off with by the thing he rode,
And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,
Dash'd on Geraint, who closed with him, and bore
Down by the length of lance and arm beyond
The crupper, and so left him stunn'd or dead,
And overthrew the next that follow'd him,
And blindly rush'd on all the rout behind.
But at the flash and motion of the man
They vanish'd panic-stricken, like a shoal
Of darting fish, that on a summer morn

Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot
Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,
But if a man who stands upon the brink
But lift a shining hand against the sun,
There is not left the twinkle of a fin
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower,
So, scared but at the motion of the man,
Fled all the boon companions of the Earl,
And left him lying in the public way ;
So vanish friendships only made in wine.

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled Geraint,
Who saw the chargers of the two that fell
Start from their fallen lords, and wildly fly,
Mixt with the flyers. " Horse and man," he said,
" All of one mind and all right-honest friends !

Not a hoof left : and I methinks till now
Was honest—paid with horses and with arms ;
I cannot steal or plunder, no nor beg :
And so what say ye, shall we strip him there
Your lover ? has your palfrey heart enough
To bear his armour ? shall we fast, or dine ?
No ?—then do you, being right honest, pray
That we may meet the horsemen of Earl Doorm,
I too would still be honest.” Thus he said :
And sadly gazing on her bridle-reins,
And answering not one word, she led the way.

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,
But coming back he learns it, and the loss
So pains him that he sickens nigh to death ;

So fared it with Geraint, who being prick'd
In combat with the follower of Limours,
Bled underneath his armour secretly,
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife
What ail'd him, hardly knowing it himself,
Till his eye darken'd and his helmet wagg'd;
And at a sudden swerving of the road,
Tho' happily down on a bank of grass,
The Prince, without a word, from his horse fell.

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his arms,
Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
And tearing off her veil of faded silk

Had bared her forehead to the blistering sun,
And swathed the hurt that drain'd her dear lord's life.
Then after all was done that hand could do,
She rested, and her desolation came
Upon her, and she wept beside the way.

And many past, but none regarded her,
For in that realm of lawless turbulence,
A woman weeping for her murder'd mate
Was cared as much for as a summer shower :
One took him for a victim of Earl Doorm,
Nor dared to waste a perilous pity on him :
Another hurrying past, a man-at-arms,
Rode on a mission to the bardit Earl ;
Half whistling and half singing a coarse song,
He drove the dust against her veilless eyes.

Another, flying from the wrath of Doorm
Before an ever-fancied arrow, made
The long way smoke beneath him in his fear ;
At which her palfrey whinnying lifted heel,
And scour'd into the coppices and was lost,
While the great charger stood, grieved like a man.

But at the point of noon the huge Earl Doorm,
Broad-faced with under-fringe of russet beard,
Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,
Came riding with a hundred lances up ;
But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,
Cried out with a big voice, " What, is he dead ?"
" No, no, not dead !" she answer'd in all haste.
" Would some of your kind people take him up,
And bear him hence out of this cruel sun :

Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead."

Then said Earl Doorm; "Well, if he be not
dead,

Why wail ye for him thus? ye seem a child.

And be he dead, I count you for a fool;

Your wailing will not quicken him: dead or not,

Ye mar a comely face with idiot tears.

Yet, since the face *is* comely—some of you,

Here, take him up, and bear him to our hall:

An if he live, we will have him of our band;

And if he die, why earth has earth enough

To hide him. See ye take the charger too,

A noble one."

He spake, and past away,

But left two brawny spearmen, who advanced.

Each growling like a dog, when his good bone
Seems to be pluck'd at by the village boys
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,
Gnawing and growling: so the ruffians growl'd
Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,
Their chance of booty from the morning's raid;
Yet raised and laid him on a litter-bier,
Such as they brought upon their forays out
For those that might be wounded; laid him on it
All in the hollow of his shield, and took
And bore him to the naked hall of Doorm,
(His gentle charger following him unled)
And cast him and the bier in which he lay
Down on an oaken settle in the hall,
And then departed, hot in haste to join

Their luckier mates, but growling as before,
And cursing their lost time, and the dead man,
And their own Earl, and their own souls, and her
They might as well have blest her : she was deaf
To blessing or to cursing save from one.

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord,
There in the naked hall, propping his head,
And chafing his pale hands, and calling to him.
And at the last he waken'd from his swoon,
And found his own dear bride propping his head,
And chafing his faint hands, and calling to him ;
And felt the warm tears falling on his face ;
And said to his own heart, " she weeps for me : "
And yet lay still, and feign'd himself as dead,
That he might prove her to the uttermost,

And say to his own heart " she weeps for me."

But in the falling afternoon return'd
The huge Earl Doorm with plunder to the hall.
His lusty spearmen follow'd him with noise :
Each hurling down a heap of things that rang
Against the pavement, cast his lance aside,
And doff'd his helm : and then there flutter'd in,
Half-bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,
A tribe of women, dress'd in many hues,
And mingled with the spearmen : and Earl Doorm
Struck with a knife's haft hard against the board,
And call'd for flesh and wine to feed his spears.
And men brought in whole hogs and quarter
beeves,
And all the hall was dim with steam of flesh :

And none spake word, but all sat down at once,
And ate with tumult in the naked hall,
Feeding like horses when you hear them feed ;
Till Enid shrank far back into herself,
To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe.
But when Earl Doorm had eaten all he would,
He roll'd his eyes about the hall, and found
A damsel drooping in a corner of it.
Then he remember'd her, and how she wept ;
And out of her there came a power upon him ;
And rising on the sudden he said, " Eat !
I never yet beheld a thing so pale.
God's curse, it makes me mad to see you weep.
Eat ! Look yourself. Good luck had your good
man,
For were I dead who is it would weep for me ?

Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath,
Have I beheld a lily like yourself.
And so there lived some colour in your cheek,
There is not one among my gentlewomen
Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove.
But listen to me, and by me be ruled,
And I will do the thing I have not done,
For you shall share my earldom with me, girl,
And we will live like two birds in one nest,
And I will fetch you forage from all fields,
For I compel all creatures to my will."

He spoke: the brawny spearman let his cheek
Bulge with the unswallow'd piece, and turning
stared ;
While some, whose souls the old serpent long had
drawn

Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd leaf
And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's ear
What shall not be recorded—women they,
Women, or what had been those gracious things,
But now desired the humbling of their best,
Yea, would have helped him to it: and all at once
They hated her, who took no thought of them,
But answer'd in low voice, her meek head yet
Drooping, "I pray you of your courtesy,
He being as he is, to let me be."

She spake so low he hardly heard her speak,
But like a mighty patron, satisfied
With what himself had done so graciously,
Assumed that she had thanked him, adding, "yea,
Eat and be glad, for I account you mine."

She answer'd meekly, "How should I be glad
Henceforth in all the world at anything,
Until my lord arise and look upon me?"

Here the huge Earl cried out upon her talk,
As all but empty heart and weariness
And sickly nothing; suddenly seized on her,
And bare her by main violence to the board,
And thrust the dish before her, crying, "Eat."

"No, no," said Enid, vext, "I will not eat,
Till yonder man upon the bier arise,
And eat with me." "Drink, then," he answer'd.

"Here!"

(And fill'd a horn with wine and held it to her,)
"Lo! I, myself, when flush'd with fight, or hot,

God's curse, with anger—often I myself,
Before I well have drunken, scarce can eat :
Drink therefore and the wine will change your
will."

"Not so," she cried, "by Heaven, I will not
drink,
Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,
And drink with me ; and if he rise no more,
I will not look at wine until I die."

At this he turn'd all red and paced his hall,
Now gnaw'd his under, now his upper lip,
And coming up close to her, said at last ;
"Girl, for I see ye scorn my courtesies,
Take warning : yonder man is surely dead ;

And I compel all creatures to my will.
Not eat nor drink ? And wherefore wail for one,
Who put your beauty to this flout and scorn
By dressing it in rags ? Amazed am I,
Beholding how ye butt against my wish,
That I forbear you thus : cross me no more.
At least put off to please me this poor gown,
This silken rag, this beggar-woman's weed :
I love that beauty should go beautifully :
For see ye not my gentlewomen here,
How gay, how suited to the house of one,
Who loves that beauty should go beautifully !
Rise therefore ; robe yourself in this : obey."

He spoke, and one among his gentlewomen
Display'd a splendid silk of foreign loom,

Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue
Play'd into green, and thicker down the front
With jewels than the sward with drops of dew,
When all night long a cloud clings to the hill,
And with the dawn ascending lets the day
Strike where it clung : so thickly shone the gems.

But Enid answer'd, harder to be moved
Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,
With life-long injuries burning unavenged,
And now their hour has come ; and Enid said :

“ In this poor gown my dear lord found me first,
And loved me serving in my father's hall :
In this poor gown I rode with him to court,
And there the Queen array'd me like the sun :

In this poor gown he bade me clothe myself,
When now we rode upon this fatal quest
Of honour, where no honour can be gain'd :
And this poor gown I will not cast aside
Until himself arise a living man,
And bid me cast it. I have griefs enough :
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be :
I never loved, can never love but him :
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,
He being as he is, to let me be."

Then strode the brute Earl up and down his hall,
And took his russet beard between his teeth ;
Last, coming up quite close, and in his mood
Crying, " I count it of no more avail,
Dame, to be gentle than ungentle with you ;

Take my salute," unknightly with flat hand,
However lightly, smote her on the cheek.

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,
And since she thought, "he had not dared to
do it,

Except he surely knew my lord was dead,"
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,
Which sees the trapper coming thro' the wood.

This heard Geraint, and grasping at his sword,
(It lay beside him in the hollow shield),
Made but a single bound, and with a sweep of it
Shore thro' the swarthy neck, and like a ball
The russet-bearded head roll'd on the floor.
So died Earl Doorm by him he counted dead.

And all the men and women in the hall
Rose when they saw the dead man rise, and fled
Yelling as from a spectre, and the two
Were left alone together, and he said :

“ Enid, I have used you worse than that dead man ;
Done you more wrong : we both have undergone
That trouble which has left me thrice your own :
Henceforward I will rather die than doubt.
And here I lay this penance on myself,
Not, tho’ mine own ears heard you yester-morn-
You thought me sleeping, but I heard you say,
I heard you say, that you were no true wife :
I swear I will not ask your meaning in it :
I do believe yourself against yourself,
And will henceforward rather die than doubt.”

And Enid could not say one tender word,
She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart :
She only prayed him, " Fly, they will return
And slay you ; fly, your charger is without,
My palfrey lost." " Then, Enid, shall you ride
Behind me." " Yea," said Enid, " let us go."
And moving out they found the stately horse,
Who now no more a vassal to the thief,
But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,
Neigh'd with all gladness as they came, and
 stoop'd
With a low whinny toward the pair : and she
Kiss'd the white star upon his noble front,
Glad also ; then Geraint upon the horse
Mounted, and reach'd a hand, and on his foot
She set her own and climb'd ; he turn'd his face

And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast her arms
About him, and at once they rode away.

And never yet, since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew, .
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
Than lived thro' her, who in that perilous hour
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
And felt him hers again : she did not weep,
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
Before the useful trouble of the rain :
Yet not so misty were her meek blue eyes
As not to see before them on the path,
Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,
A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his lance

In rest, and made as if to fall upon him.
Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of blood,
She, with her mind all full of what had chanced,
Shriek'd to the stranger, "Slay not a dead man!"
"The voice of Enid," said the knight; but she,
Beholding it was Edyrn son of Nudd,
Was moved so much the more, and shriek'd again,
"O cousin, slay not him who gave you life."
And Edyrn moving frankly forward spake:
"My lord Geraint, I greet you with all love;
I took you for a bandit knight of Doorm;
And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon him,
Who love you, Prince, with something of the love
Wherewith we love the Heaven that chastens us.
For once, when I was up so high in pride
That I was halfway down the slope to Hell,

By overthrowing me you threw me higher.
Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table Round,
And since I knew this Earl, when I myself
Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,
I come the mouthpiece of our King to Doorm
(The King is close behind me) bidding him
Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,
Submit, and hear the judgment of the King."

"He hears the judgment of the King of Kings,"
Cried the wan Prince; "and lo the powers of

Doorm

Are scatter'd," and he pointed to the field,
Where, huddled here and there on mound and
knoll,

Were men and women staring and aghast,

While some yet fled ; and then he plainlier told
How the huge Earl lay slain within his hall.
But when the knight besought him, " Follow me,
Prince, to the camp, and in the King's own ear
Speak what has chanced ; ye surely have endured
Strange chances here alone ;" that other flush'd,
And hung his head, and halted in reply,
Fearing the mild face of the blameless King,
And after madness acted question ask'd :
Till Edyrn crying, " If ye will not go
To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,"
" Enough," he said, " I follow," and they went.
But Enid in their going had two fears,
One from the bandit scatter'd in the field,
And one from Edyrn. Every now and then,
When Edyrn rein'd his charger at her side,

She shrank a little. In a hollow land,
From which old fires have broken, men may fear
Fresh fire and ruin. He, perceiving, said :

“ Fair and dear cousin, you that most had cause
To fear me, fear no longer, I am changed.
Yourself were first the blameless cause to make
My nature's prideful sparkle in the blood
Break into furious flame ; being repulsed
By Yniol and yourself, I schemed and wrought
Until I overturn'd him ; then set up
With one main purpose ever at my heart)
My haughty jousts, and took a paramour ;
Did her mock-honour as the fairest fair,
And, toppling over all antagonism,
So wax'd in pride, that I believed myself

Unconquerable, for I was well-nigh mad :
And, but for my main purpose in these jousts,
I should have slain your father, seized yourself.
I lived in hope that sometime you would come
To these my lists with him whom best you loved ;
And there, poor cousin, with your meek blue eyes,
The truest eyes that ever answer'd heaven,
Behold me overturn and trample on him.
Then, had you cried, or knelt, or pray'd to me,
I should not less have kill'd him. And you came,—
But once you came,—and with your own true eyes
Beheld the man you loved (I speak as one
Speaks of a service done him) overthrow
My proud self, and my purpose three years old,
And set his foot upon me, and give me life.
There was I broken down ; there was I saved :

Tho' thence I rode all-shamed, hating the life

He gave me, meaning to be rid of it.

And all the penance the Queen laid upon me

Was but to rest awhile within her court ;

Where first as sullen as a beast new-caged,

And waiting to be treated like a wolf,

Because I knew my deeds were known, I found,

Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,

Such fine reserve and noble reticence,

Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace

Of tenderest courtesy, that I began

To glance behind me at my former life,

And find that it had been the wolf's indeed :

And oft I talk'd with Dubric, the high saint,

Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,

Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness,

Which, when it weds with manhood, makes a
man.

And you were often there about the Queen,
But saw me not, or mark'd not if you saw ;
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you,
But kept myself aloof till I was changed ;
And fear not, cousin ; I am changed indeed."

He spoke, and Enid easily believed,
Like simple noble natures, credulous
Of what they long for, good in friend or foe,
There most in those who most have done them ill.
And when they reach'd the camp the King himself
Advanced to greet them, and beholding her
Tho' pale, yet happy, ask'd her not a word,
But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held

After a life of violence, seems to me
A thousand-fold more great and wonderful
Than if some knight of mine, risking his life,
My subject with my subjects under him,
Should make an onslaught single on a realm
Of robbers, tho' he slew them one by one,
And were himself nigh wounded to the death."

So spake the King ; low bow'd the Prince, and
felt

His work was neither great nor wonderful,
And past to Enid's tent ; and thither came
The King's own leech to look into his hurt ;
And Enid tended on him there ; and there
Her constant motion round him, and the breath
Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,

Fill'd all the genial courses of his blood
With deeper and with ever deeper love,
As the south-west that blowing Bala lake
Fills all the sacred Dee. So past the days.

But while Geraint lay healing of his hurt,
The blameless King went forth and cast his eyes
On each of all whom Uther left in charge
Long since, to guard the justice of the King :
He look'd and found them wanting ; and as
now
Men weed the white horse on the Berkshire
hills
To keep him bright and clean as heretofore,
He rooted out the slothful officer
Or guilty, which for bribe had wink'd at wrong,

And in their chairs set up a stronger race
With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men
To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
Clear'd the dark places and let in the law,
And broke the bandit holds and cleansed the
land.

Then, when Geraint was whole again, they
past

With Arthur to Caerleon upon Usk.

There the great Queen once more embraced her
friend.

And clothed her in apparel like the day.

And tho' Geraint could never take again

That comfort from their converse which he took

Before the Queen's fair name was breathed upon,

He rested well content that all was well.
Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,
And fifty knights rode with them to the shores
Of Severn, and they past to their own land.
And there he kept the justice of the King
So vigorously yet mildly, that all hearts
Applauded, and the spiteful whisper died :
And being ever foremost in the chase,
And victor at the tilt and tournament,
They call'd him the great Prince and man of
men.

But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call
Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
Enid the Good ; and in their halls arose
The cry of children, Enids and Geraints
Of times to be ; nor did he doubt her more

But rested in her féalty, till he crown'd
A happy life with a fair death, and fell
Against the heathen of the Northern Sea
In battle, fighting for the blameless King.





MERLIN AND VIVIEN.





MERLIN AND VIVIEN.



STORM was coming, but the winds
were still,

And in the wild woods of Broceliande,
Before an oak, so hollow huge and old
It look'd a tower of ruin'd masonwork,
At Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay.

Whence came she? One that bare in bitter
grudge

The scorn of Arthur and his Table, Mark

The Cornish King, had heard a wandering voice,
A minstrel of Caerleon by strong storm
Blown into shelter at Tintagil, say
That out of naked knightlike purity
Sir Lancelot worshipt no unmarried girl
But the great Queen herself, fought in her
name,
Sware by her—vows like theirs, that high in
heaven
Love most, but neither marry, nor are given
In marriage, angels of our Lord's report.

He ceased, and then—for Vivien sweetly said
(She sat beside the banquet nearest Mark),
'And is the fair example follow'd, Sir,
In Arthur's household?'—answer'd innocently:

‘ Ay, by some few—ay, truly—youths that hold
It more beseems the perfect virgin knight
To worship woman as true wife beyond
All hopes of gaining, than as maiden girl.
They place their pride in Lancelot and the Queen.
So passionate for an utter purity
Beyond the limit of their bond, are these,
For Arthur bound them not to singleness.
Brave hearts and clean ! and yet—God guide
 them—young.’

Then Mark was half in heart to hurl his cup
Straight at the speaker, but forbore : he rose
To leave the hall, and, Vivien following him,
Turn’d to her : ‘ Here are snakes within the grass;
And you methinks, O Vivien, save ye fear

The monkish manhood, and the mask of pure
Worn by this court, can stir them till they sting.'

And Vivien answer'd, smiling scornfully,
'Why fear? because that foster'd at *thy* court
I savour of thy—virtues? fear them? no.
As Love, if Love be perfect, casts out fear,
So Hate, if Hate be perfect, casts out fear.
My father died in battle against the King,
My mother on his corpse in open field;
She bore me there, for born from death was I
Among the dead and sown upon the wind—
And then on thee! and shown the truth betimes,
That old true filth, and bottom of the well,
Where Truth is hidden. Gracious lessons thine
And maxims of the mud! "This Arthur pure!

Great Nature thro' the flesh herself hath made
Gives him the lie ! There is no being pure,
My cherub ; saith not Holy Writ the same ?"—
If I were Arthur, I would have thy blood.
Thy blessing, stainless King ! I bring thee back,
When I have ferreted out their burrowings,
The hearts of all this Order in mine hand—
Ay—so that fate and craft and folly close,
Perchance, one curl of Arthur's golden beard
To me this narrow grizzled fork of thine
Is cleaner-fashion'd—Well, I loved thee first,
That warps the wit.'

Loud laugh'd the graceless Mark
But Vivien, into Camelot stealing, lodged
Low in the city, and on a festal day

When Guinevere was crossing the great hall
Cast herself down, knelt to the Queen, and wail'd.

‘Why kneel ye there? What evil have ye
wrought?

Rise!’ and the damsel bidden rise arose
And stood with folded hands and downward eyes
Of glancing corner, and all meekly said,
‘None wrought, but suffer’d much, an orphan
maid!

My father died in battle for thy King,
My mother on his corpse—in open field,
The sad sea-sounding wastes of Lyonesse—
Poor wretch—no friend!—and now by Mark the
King

For that small charm of feature mine, pursued—

If any such be mine—I fly to thee.

Save, save me thou—Woman of women—thine

The wreath of beauty, thine the crown of power,

Be thine the balm of pity, O Heaven's own white

Earth-angel, stainless bride of stainless King—

Help, for he follows ! take me to thyself !

O yield me shelter for mine innocence

Among thy maidens !'

Here her slow sweet eyes

Fear-tremulous, but humbly hopeful, rose

Fixt on her hearer's while the Queen who stood

All glittering like May sunshine on May leaves

In green and gold, and plumed with green replied,

'Peace, child ! of overpraise and overblame

We choose the last. Our noble Arthur, him

Ye scarce can overpraise, will hear and know.

Nay—we believe all evil of thy Mark—

Well, we shall test thee farther ; but this hour

We ride a-hawking with Sir Lancelot.

He hath given us a fair falcon which he train'd ,

We go to prove it. Bide ye here the while.'

She past ; and Vivien murmur'd after ' Go !
I bide the while.' Then thro' the portal-arch
Peering askance, and muttering brokenwise,
As one that labours with an evil dream,
Beheld the Queen and Lancelot get to horse.

' Is that the Lancelot ? goodly—ay, but gaunt :
Courteous—amends for gauntness—takes her
hand—

That glance of theirs, but for the street, had been

A clinging kiss—how hand lingers in hand !
Let go at last !—they ride away—to hawk
For waterfowl. Royaller game is mine.
For such a supersensual sensual bond
As that gray cricket chirpt of at our hearth—
Touch flax with flame—a glance will serve—the
liars !

Ah little rat that borest in the dyke
Thy hole by night to let the boundless deep
Down upon far-off cities while they dance—
Or dream—of thee they dream'd not—nor of me
These—ay, but each of either : ride, and dream
The mortal dream that never yet was mine—
Ride, ride and dream until ye wake—to me !
Then, narrow court and lubber King, farewell !
For Lancelot will be gracious to the rat,

And our wise Queen, if knowing that I know,
Will hate, loathe, fear—but honour me the more.'

Yet while they rode together down the plain,
Their talk was all of training, terms of art,
Diet and seeling, jesses, leash and lure.
'She is too noble' he said 'to check at pies,
Nor will she rake : there is no baseness in her.'
Here when the Queen demanded as by chance
'Know ye the stranger woman ?' 'Let her be,'
Said Lancelot and unhooded casting off
The goodly falcon free ; she tower'd ; her bells,
Tone under tone, shrill'd ; and they lifted up
Their eager faces, wondering at the strength,
Boldness and royal knighthood of the bird
Who pounced her quarry and slew it. Many a time
As once—of old—among the flowers—they rode.

But Vivien half-forgotten of the Queen
Among her damsels broidering sat, heard, watch'd
And whisper'd : thro' the peaceful court she crept
And whisper'd : then as Arthur in the highest
Leaven'd the world, so Vivien in the lowest,
Arriving at a time of golden rest,
And sowing one ill hint from ear to ear,
While all the heathen lay at Arthur's feet,
And no quest came, but all was joust and play,
Leaven'd his hall. They heard and let her be.

Thereafter as an enemy that has left
Death in the living waters, and withdrawn,
The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court.

She hated all the knights, and heard in thought

Their lavish comment when her name was named.

For once, when Arthur walking all alone,

Vext at a rumour rife about the Queen,

Had met her, Vivien, being greeted fair,

Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy mood

With reverent eyes mock-loyal, shaken voice,

And flutter'd adoration, and at last

With dark sweet hints of some who prized him
more

Than who should prize him most; at which the
King

Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by:

But one had watch'd, and had not held his peace:

It made the laughter of an afternoon

That Vivien should attempt the blameless King.

And after that, she set herself to gain

Him, the most famous man of all those times,
Merlin, who knew the range of all their arts,
Had built the King his havens, ships, and halls,
Was also Bard, and knew the starry heavens ;
The people call'd him Wizard ; whom at first
She play'd about with slight and sprightly talk,
And vivid smiles, and faintly-venom'd points
Of slander, glancing here and grazing there ;
And yielding to his kindlier moods, the Seer
Would watch her at her petulance, and play,
Ev'n when they seem'd unloveable, and laugh
As those that watch a kitten ; thus he grew
Tolerant of what he half disdain'd, and she,
Perceiving that she was but half disdain'd,
Began to break her sports with graver fits,
Turn red or pale, would often when they met

Sigh fully, or all-silent gaze upon him
With such a fixt devotion, that the old man,
Tho' doubtful, felt the flattery, and at times
Would flatter his own wish in age for love,
And half believe her true: for thus at times
He waver'd; but that other clung to him,
Fixt in her will, and so the seasons went.
Then fell upon him a great melancholy;
And leaving Arthur's court he gain'd the beach;
There found a little boat, and stept into it;
And Vivien follow'd, but he mark'd her not.
She took the helm and he the sail; the boat
Drave with a sudden wind across the deeps,
And touching Breton sands, they disembark'd.
And then she follow'd Merlin all the way,
Ev'n to the wild woods of Broceliande.

For Merlin once had told her of a charm,
The which if any wrought on any one
With woven paces and with waving arms,
The man so wrought on ever seem'd to lie
Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower,
From which was no escape for evermore ;
And none could find that man for evermore,
Nor could he see but him who wrought the charm
Coming and going, and he lay as dead
And lost to life and use and name and fame.
And Vivien ever sought to work the charm
Upon the great Enchanter of the Time,
As fancying that her glory would be great
According to his greatness whom she quench'd.

There lay she all her length and kiss'd his feet,

As if in deepest reverence and in love.
A twist of gold was round her hair ; a robe
Of samite without price, that more exprest
Than hid her, clung about her lissome limbs,
In colour like the satin-shining palm
On shallows in the windy gleams of March :
And while she kiss'd them, crying, "Trample me,
Dear feet, that I have follow'd thro' the world,
And I will pay you worship ; tread me down
And I will kiss you for it ;" he was mute :
So dark a forethought roll'd about his brain,
As on a dull day in an Ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
In silence : wherefore, when she lifted up
A face of sad appeal, and spake and said,
" O Merlin, do ye love me ?" and again,

“ O Merlin, do ye love me ? ” and once more,
“ Great Master, do ye love me ? ” he was mute.
And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
Writhed toward him, slided up his knee and sat,
Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet
Together, curved an arm about his neck,
Clung like a snake ; and letting her left hand
Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,
Made with her right a comb of pearl to part
The lists of such a beard as youth gone out
Had left in ashes : then he spoke and said,
Not looking at her, “ who are wise in love
Love most, say least,” and Vivien answer’d quick,
“ I saw the little elf-god eyeless once
In Arthur’s arras hall at Camelot :
But neither eyes nor tongue—O stupid child !

Yet you are wise who say it ; let me think
Silence is wisdom : I am silent then
And ask no kiss ;" then adding all at once,
" And lo, I clothe myself with wisdom," drew
The vast and shaggy mantle of his beard
Across her neck and bosom to her knee,
And call'd herself a gilded summer fly
Caught in a great old tyrant spider's web,
Who meant to eat her up in that wild wood
Without one word. So Vivien call'd herself,
But rather seem'd a lovely baleful star
Veil'd in gray vapour ; till he sadly smiled :
" To what request for what strange boon," he said,
" Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,
O Vivien, the preamble ? yet my thanks,
For these have broken up my melancholy."

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily,
"What, O my Master, have ye found your voice?
I bid the stranger welcome. Thanks at last !
But yesterday you never open'd lip,
Except indeed to drink : no cup had we :
In mine own lady palms I cull'd the spring
That gather'd trickling dropwise from the cleft,
And made a pretty cup of both my hands
And offer'd you it kneeling : then ye drank
And knew no more, nor gave me one poor word ;
O no more thanks than might a goat have given
With no more sign of reverence than a beard.
And when we halted at that other well,
And I was faint to swooning, and ye lay
Foot-gilt with all the blossom-dust of those
Deep meadows we had traversed, did you know

That Vivien bathed your feet before her own?
And yet no thanks : and all thro' this wild wood
And all this morning when I fondled you :
Boon, yes, there was a boon, one not so strange—
How had I wrong'd you ? surely you are wise,
But such a silence is more wise than kind."

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and said ;
" O did you never lie upon the shore,
And watch the curl'd white of the coming wave
Glass'd in the slippery sand before it breaks?
Ev'n such a wave, but not so pleasurable,
Dark in the glass of some presageful mood,
Had I for three days seen, ready to fall.
And then I rose and fled from Arthur's court
To break the mood. You follow'd me unask'd ;

And when I look'd, and saw you following still,
My mind involved yourself the nearest thing
In that mind-mist: for shall I tell you truth?
You seem'd that wave about to break upon me
And sweep me from my hold upon the world,
My use and name and fame. Your pardon, child,
Your pretty sports have brighten'd all again.
And ask your boon, for boon I owe you thrice,
Once for wrong done you by confusion, next
For thanks it seems till now neglected, last
For these your dainty gambols: wherefore ask;
And take this boon so strange and not so strange.

And Vivien answer'd smiling mournfully;
“O not so strange as my long asking it,
Nor yet so strange as you yourself are strange,

Nor half so strange as that dark mood of yours.
I ever fear'd ye were not wholly mine ;
And see, yourself have own'd ye did me wrong.
'The people call you prophet: let it be :
But not of those that can expound themselves.
Take Vivien for expounder ; she will call
That three-days-long presageful gloom of yours
No presage, but the same mistrustful mood
That makes you seem less noble than yourself,
Whenever I have ask'd this very boon,
Now ask'd again : for see you not, dear love,
That such a mood as that, which lately gloom'd
Your fancy when you saw me following you,
Must make me fear still more you are not mine,
Must make me years still more to prove you mine,
And make me wish still more to learn this charm

Of woven paces and of waving hands,
As proof of trust. O, Merlin, teach it me.
The charm so taught will charm us both to rest.
For, grant me some slight power upon your fate,
I, feeling that you felt me worthy trust,
Should rest and let you rest, knowing you mine.
And therefore be as great as you are named,
Not muffled round with selfish reticence.
How hard you look and how denyingly !
O, if you think this wickedness in me,
That I should prove it on you unawares,
To make you lose your use and name and fame,
That makes me most indignant ; then our bond
Had best be loosed for ever : but think or not,
By Heaven that hears I tell you the clean truth,
As clean as blood of babes, as white as milk :

O Merlin, may this earth, if ever I,
If these unwitty wandering wits of mine,
Ev'n in the jumbled rubbish of a dream,
Have tript on such conjectural treachery—
May this hard earth cleave to the Nadir hell
Down, down, and close again, and nip me flat,
If I be such a traitress. Yield my boon,
Till which I scarce can yield you all I am ;
And grant my re-reiterated wish,
The great proof of your love : because I think,
However wise, ye hardly know me yet."

And Merlin loosed his hand from hers and said,
"I never was less wise, however wise,
Too curious Vivien, tho' you talk of trust,
Then when I told you first of such a charm.

Yea, if ye talk of trust I tell you this,
Too much I trusted, when I told you that,
And stirr'd this vice in you which ruin'd man
Thro' woman the first hour; for howsoe'er
In children a great curiousness be well,
Who have to learn themselves and all the world,
In you, that are no child, for still I find
Your face is practised, when I spell the lines,
I call it,—well, I will not call it vice:
But since you name yourself the summer fly,
I well could wish a cobweb for the gnat,
That settles, beaten back, and beaten back
Settles, till one could yield for weariness:
But since I will not yield to give you power
Upon my life and use and name and fame,
Why will you never ask some other boon?

Yea, by God's rood, I trusted you too much."

And Vivien, like the tenderest-hearted maid
That ever bided tryst at village stile,
Made answer, either eyelid wet with tears.
"Nay, master, be not wrathful with your maid;
Caress her: let her feel herself forgiven
Who feels no heart to ask another boon.
I think you hardly know the tender rhyme
Of 'trust me not at all or all in all.'
I heard the great Sir Lancelot sing it once,
And it shall answer for me. Listen to it.

'In Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers :
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

‘ It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

‘ The little rift within the lover’s lute
Or little pitted speck in garner’d fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

‘ It is not worth the keeping: let it go :
But shall it? answer, darling, answer, no.
And trust me not at all or all in all.’

‘O, master, do ye love my tender rhyme?’

And Merlin look’d and half believed her true,
So tender was her voice, so fair her face,

So sweetly gleam'd her eyes behind her tears
Like sunlight on the plain behind a shower :
And yet he answer'd half indignantly.

“ Far other was the song that once I heard
By this huge oak, sung nearly where we sit :
For here we met, some ten or twelve of us,
To chase a creature that was current then
In these wild woods, the hart with golden horns
It was the time when first the question rose
About the founding of a Table Round,
That was to be, for love of God and men
And noble deeds, the flower of all the world.
And each incited each to noble deeds.
And while we waited, one, the youngest of us,
We could not keep him silent, out he flash'd,

And into such a song, such fire for fame,
Such trumpet-blowings in it, coming down
To such a stern and iron-clashing close,
That when he stopt we long'd to hurl together,
And should have done it; but the beauteous beast
Scared by the noise upstarted at our feet,
And like a silver shadow slipt away
Thro' the dim land; and all day long we rode
Thro' the dim land against a rushing wind,
That glorious roundel echoing in our ears,
And chased the flashes of his golden horns
Until they vanish'd by the fairy well
That laughs at iron—as our warriors did—
Where children cast their pins and nails, and cry,
“ Laugh, little well,” but touch it with a sword,
It buzzes wildly round the point; and there

We lost him : such a noble song was that.
But, Vivien, when you sang me that sweet rhyme,
I felt as tho' you knew this cursed charm,
Were proving it on me, and that I lay
And felt them slowly ebbing, name and fame."

And Vivien answer'd smiling mournfully,
" O mine have ebb'd away for evermore,
And all thro' following you to this wild wood,
Because I saw you sad, to comfort you.
Lo now, what hearts have men ! they never mount
As high as woman in her selfless mood.
And touching fame, howe'er ye scorn my song,
Take one verse more—the lady speaks it—this :

" " My name, once mine, now thine, is closelier
mine,

For fame, could fame be mine, that fame were
thine,

And shame, could shame be thine, that shame
were mine.

So trust me not at all or all in all.'

" Says she not well? and there is more—this
rhyme

Is like the fair pearl-necklace of the Queen,
That burst in dancing, and the pearls were spilt;
Some lost, some stolen, some as relics kept.
But nevermore the same two sister pearls
Ran down the silken thread to kiss each other
On her white neck—so is it with this rhyme:
It lives dispersedly in many hands,
And every minstrel sings it differently;

Yet is there one true line, the pearl of pearls ;
' Man dreams of Fame while woman wakes to
love.'

True : Love, tho' Love were of the grossest, carves
A portion from the solid present, eats
And uses, careless of the rest ; but Fame,
The Fame that follows death is nothing to us ;
And what is Fame in life but half-disfame,
And counterchanged with darkness ? you yourself
Know well that Envy calls you Devil's son,
And since you seem the Master of all Art,
They fain would make you Master of all Vice "

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and said,
" I once was looking for a magic weed,
And found a fair young squire who sat alone,

Had carved himself a knightly shield of wood,
And then was painting on it fancied arms,
Azure, an Eagle rising or, the Sun
In dexter chief; the scroll "I follow fame."
And speaking not, but leaning over him,
I took his brush and blotted out the bird,
And made a Gardener putting in a graff,
With this for motto, 'Rather use than fame.'
You should have seen him blush; but afterwards
He made a stalwart knight. O Vivien,
For you, methinks you think you love me well;
For me, I love you somewhat; rest: and Love
Should have some rest and pleasure in himself,
Not ever be too curious for a boon,
Too prurient for a proof against the grain
Of him you say you love: but Fame with men,

Being but ampler means to serve mankind,
Should have small rest or pleasure in herself,
But work as vassal to the larger love,
That dwarfs the petty love of one to one.
Use gave me Fame at first, and Fame again
Increasing gave me use. Lo, there my boon!
What other? for men sought to prove me vile,
Because I wish'd to give them greater minds:
And then did Envy call me Devil's son:
The sick weak beast seeking to help herself
By striking at her better, miss'd, and brought
Her own claw back, and wounded her own heart.
Sweet were the days when I was all unknown,
But when my name was lifted up, the storm
Broke on the mountain and I cared not for it.
Right well know I that Fame is half-disfame

Yet needs must work my work. That other fame,
To one at least, who hath not children, vague,
The cackle of the unborn about the grave,
I cared not for it : a single misty star,
Which is the second in a line of stars
That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,
I never gazed upon it but I dreamt
Of some vast charm concluded in that star
To make fame nothing. Wherefore, if I fear,
Giving you power upon me thro' this charm,
That you might play me falsely, having power,
However well you think you love me now
(As sons of kings loving in pupillage
Have turn'd to tyrants when they came to power)
I rather dread the loss of use than fame ;
If you—and not so much from wickedness,

As some wild turn of anger, or a mood
Of overstrain'd affection, it may be,
'To keep me all to your own self, or else
A sudden spurt of woman's jealousy,—
Should try this charm on whom you say you love."

And Vivien answer'd smiling as in wrath.
"Have I not sworn? I am not trusted. Good!
Well, hide it, hide it; I shall find it out;
And being found take heed of Vivien.
A woman and not trusted, doubtless I
Might feel some sudden turn of anger born
Of your misfaith; and your fine epithet
Is accurate too, for this full love of mine
Without the full heart back may merit well
Your term of overstrain'd. So used as I,

My daily wonder is, I love at all.
And as to woman's jealousy, O why not?
O to what end, except a jealous one,
And one to make me jealous if I love,
Was this fair charm invented by yourself?
I well believe that all about this world
Ye cage a buxom captive here and there,
Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower
From which is no escape for evermore."

Then the great Master merrily answer'd her.
"Full many a love in loving youth was mine,
I needed then no charm to keep them mine
But youth and love; and that full heart of yours
Whereof you prattle, may now assure you mine;
So live uncharm'd. For those who wrought it first,

The wrist is parted from the hand that waved,
The feet unmortised from their ankle-bones
Who paced it, ages back : but will ye hear
The legend as in guerdon for your rhyme ?

“ There lived a king in the most Eastern East,
Less old than I, yet older, for my blood
Hath earnest in it of far springs to be.
A tawny pirate anchor'd in his port,
Whose bark had plunder'd twenty nameless isles ;
And passing one, at the high peep of dawn,
He saw two cities in a thousand boats
All fighting for a woman on the sea.
And pushing his black craft among them all,
He lightly scatter'd theirs and brought her off,
With loss of half his people arrow-slain ;

A maid so smooth, so white, so wonderful,
They said a light came from her when she moved :
And since the pirate would not yield her up,
The King impaled him for his piracy ;
Then made her Queen : but those isle-nurtur'd eyes
Waged such unwilling tho' successful war
On all the youth, they sicken'd ; councils thinn'd,
And armies waned, for magnet-like she drew
The rustiest iron of old fighters' hearts ;
And beasts themselves would worship ; camels
knelt

Unbidden, and the brutes of mountain back
That carry kings in castles, bow'd black knees
Of homage, ringing with their serpent hands,
To make her smile, her golden ankle-bells.
What wonder, being jealous, that he sent

His horns of proclamation out thro' all
The hundred under-kingdoms that he sway'd
To find a wizard who might teach the King
Some charm, which being wrought upon the Queen
Might keep her all his own : to such a one
He promised more than ever king has given,
A league of mountain full of golden mines,
A province with a hundred miles of coast,
A palace and a princess, all for him :
But on all those who tried and fail'd, the King
Pronounced a dismal sentence, meaning by it
To keep the list low and pretenders back,
Or like a king, not to be trifled with—
Their heads should moulder on the city gates.
And many tried and fail'd, because the charm
Of nature in her overbore their own :

And many a wizard brow bleach'd on the walls :
And many weeks a troop of carrion crows
Hung like a cloud above the gateway towers."

And Vivien breaking in upon him, said :
" I sit and gather honey ; yet, methinks,
Your tongue has tript a little : ask yourself.
The lady never made *unwilling* war
With those fine eyes : she had her pleasure in it,
And made her good man jealous with good cause.
And lived there neither dame nor damsel then
Wroth at a lover's loss ? were all as tame,
I mean, as noble, as their Queen was fair ?
Not one to flirt a venom at her eyes,
Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,
Or make her paler with a poison'd rose ?

Well, those were not our days : but did they find
A wizard ? Tell me, was he like to thee ?”

She ceased, and made her lithe arm round his
neck

Tighten, and then drew back, and let her eyes
Speak for her, glowing on him, like a bride's
On her new lord, her own, the first of men,

He answer'd laughing, “ Nay, not like to me.
At last they found—his foragers for charms—
A little glassy-headed hairless man,
Who lived alone in a great wild on grass ;
Read but one book, and ever reading grew
So grated down and filed away with thought,
So lean his eyes were monstrous ; while the skin

Clung but to crate and basket, ribs and spine.
And since he kept his mind on one sole aim,
Nor ever touch'd fierce wine, nor tasted flesh,
Nor own'd a sensual wish, to him the wall
That sunders ghosts and shadow-casting men
Became a crystal, and he saw them thro' it,
And heard their voices talk behind the wall,
And learnt their elemental secrets, powers
And forces; often o'er the sun's bright eye
Drew the vast eyelid of an inky cloud,
And lash'd it at the base with slanting storm;
Or in the noon of mist and driving rain,
When the lake whiten'd and the pinewood roar'd,
And the cairn'd mountain was a shadow, sunn'd
The world to peace again : here was the man.
And so by force they dragg'd him to the King.

And then he taught the King to charm the Queen
In such-wise, that no man could see her more,
Nor saw she save the King, who wrought the
charm,
Coming and going, and she lay as dead,
And lost all use of life: but when the King
Made proffer of the league of golden mines.
The province with a hundred miles of coast,
The palace and the princess, that old man
Went back to his old wild, and lived on grass,
And vanish'd, and his book came down to me."

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily ;
" You have the book : the charm is written in it :
Good : take my counsel : let me know it at once :
For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest.

With each chest lock'd and padlock'd thirty-fold,
And whelm all this beneath as vast a mound
As after furious battle turfs the slain
On some wild down above the windy deep,
I yet should strike upon a sudden means
To dig, pick, open, find and read the charm :
Then, if I tried it, who should blame me then ?”

And smiling as a Master smiles at one
That is not of his school, nor any school
But that where blind and naked Ignorance
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,
On all things all day long ; he answer'd her.

“ *You* read the book, my pretty Vivien !

O ay, it is but twenty pages long,

But every page having an ample marge,
And every marge enclosing in the midst
A square of text that looks a little blot,
The text no larger than the limbs of fleas ;
And every square of text an awful charm,
Writ in a language that has long gone by.
So long, that mountains have arisen since
With cities on their flanks—*you* read the book !
And every margin scribbled, crost, and cramm'd
With comment, densest condensation, hard
To mind and eye ; but the long sleepless nights
Of my long life have made it easy to me.
And none can read the text, not even I ;
And none can read the comment but myself ;
And in the comment did I find the charm.
O, the results are simple ; a mere child

Might use it to the harm of any one,
And never could undo it : ask no more :
For tho' you should not prove it upon me.
But keep that oath you swore, you might, per-
chance,
Assay it on some one of the Table Round,
And all because you dream they babble of you."

And Vivien, frowning in true anger, said :
" What dare the full-fed liars say of me ?
They ride abroad redressing human wrongs !
They sit with knife in meat and wine in horn.
They bound to holy vows of chastity !
Were I not woman, I could tell a tale.
But you are man, you well can understand
The shame that cannot be explain'd for shame.

Not one of all the drove should touch me : swine !

Then answer'd Merlin careless of her words.

“ Ye breathe but accusation vast and vague,
Spleen-born, I think, and proofless. If ye know,
Set up the charge ye know, to stand or fall !”

And Vivien answer'd frowning wrathfully.

“ O ay, what say ye to Sir Valence, him
Whose kinsman left him watcher o'er his wife
And two fair babes, and went to distant lands ;
Was one year gone, and on returning found
Not two but three : there lay the reckling, one
But one hour old ! What said the happy sire ?
A seven months' babe had been a truer gift.
Those twelve sweet moons confused his father-
hand.”

Then answer'd Merlin " Nay, I know the tale.
Sir Valence wedded with an outland dame :
Some cause had kept him sunder'd from his wife :
One child they had : it lived with her : she died :
His kinsman travelling on his own affair
Was charged by Valence to bring home the child.
He brought, not found it therefore : take the
truth."

" O ay," said Vivien, " overtrue a tale.
What say ye then to sweet Sir Sagramore,
That ardent man? 'to pluck the flower in
season ;'
So says the song, ' I trow it is no treason '
O Master, shall we call him overquick
To crop his own sweet rose before the hour ? "

And Merlin answer'd "Overquick are you
To catch a lothly plume fall'n from the wing
Of that foul bird of rapine whose whole prey
Is man's good name : he never wrong'd his bride.
I know the tale. An angry gust of wind
Puff'd out his torch among the myriad-room'd
And many-corridor'd complexities
Of Arthur's palace : then he found a door
And darkling felt the sculptured ornament
That wreathen round it made it seem his own ;
And wearied out made for the couch and slept,
A stainless man beside a stainless maid ;
And either slept, nor knew of other there ;
Till the high dawn piercing the royal rose
In Arthur's casement glimmer'd chastely down,
Blushing upon them blushing, and at once

He rose without a word and parted from her :
But when the thing was blazed about the court,
The brute world howling forced them into bonds,
And as it chanced they are happy, being pure."

" O ay," said Vivien, " that were likely too.
What say ye then to fair Sir Percivale
And of the horrid foulness that he wrought,
The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of Christ,
Or some black wether of St. Satan's fold.
What, in the precincts of the chapel-yard,
Among the knightly brasses of the graves,
And by the cold Hic Jacets of the dead !"

And Merlin answer'd careless of her charge,
" A sober man is Percivale and pure ;

But once in life was fluster'd with new wine,
Then paced for coolness in the chapel-yard;
Where one of Satan's shepherdesses caught
And meant to stamp him with her master's mark;
And that he sinn'd, is not believable;
For, look upon his face!—but if he sinn'd,
The sin that practice burns into the blood,
And not the one dark hour which brings remorse,
Will brand us, after, of whose fold we be:
Or else were he, the holy king, whose hymns
Are chanted in the minster, worse than all.
But is your spleen froth'd out, or have ye more?"

And Vivien answer'd frowning yet in wrath;
"O ay; what say ye to Sir Lancelot, friend?
Traitor or true? that commerce with the Queen,

I ask you, is it clamour'd by the child,
Or whisper'd in the corner? do you know it?"

To which he answer'd sadly, "Yea, I know it
Sir Lancelot went ambassador, at first,
To fetch her, and she took him for the King;
So fixt her fancy on him: let him be.
But have you no one word of loyal praise
For Arthur, blameless King and stainless man?"

She answer'd with a low and chuckling laugh;
"Him? is he man at all, who knows and winks?
Sees what his fair bride is and does, and winks?
By which the good king means to blind himself,
And blinds himself and all the Table Round
To all the foulness that they work. Myself

Could call him (were it not for womanhood)
The pretty, popular name such manhood earns,
Could call him the main cause of all their crime ;
Yea, were he not crown'd king, coward, and
fool."

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing, said ;
"O true and tender ! O my liege and king !
O selfless man and stainless gentleman,
Who would'st against thine own eye-witness fain
Have all men true and leal, all women pure ;
How, in the mouths of base interpreters,
From over-fineness not intelligible
To things with every sense as false and foul
As the poach'd filth that floods the middle street,
Is thy white blamelessness accounted blame !"

But Vivien deeming Merlin overborne
By instance, recommenced, and let her tongue
Rage like a fire among the noblest names,
Polluting, and imputing her whole self,
Defaming and defacing, till she left
Not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad clean.

Her words had issue other than she will'd.
He dragg'd his eyebrow bushes down, and made
A snowy penthouse for his hollow eyes,
And mutter'd in himself, "tell *her* the charm !
So, if she had it, would she rail on me .
To snare the next, and if she have it not,
So will she rail. What did the wanton say ?
'Not mount as high ;' we scarce can sink as low :
For men at most differ as Heaven and earth,

But women, worst and best, as Heaven and Hell
I know the Table Round, my friends of old ;
All brave, and many generous, and some chaste.
I think she cloaks the wounds of loss with lies ;
I do believe she tempted them and fail'd,
She is so bitter : for fine plots may fail,
Tho' harlots paint their talk as well as face
With colours of the heart that are not theirs.
I will not let her know : nine tithes of times
Face-flatterers and backbiters are the same.
And they, sweet soul, that most impute a crime
Are pronest to it, and impute themselves,
Wanting the mental range ; or low desire
Not to feel lowest makes them level all ;
Yea, they would pare the mountain to the plain,
To leave an equal baseness ; and in this

Are harlots like the crowd, that if they find
Some stain or blemish in a name of note,
Not grieving that their greatest are so small,
Inflate themselves with some insane delight,
And judge all nature from her feet of clay,
Without the will to lift their eyes, and see
Her godlike head crown'd with spiritual fire,
And touching other worlds. I am weary of her."

He spoke in words part heard, in whispers part,
Half-suffocated in the hoary fell
And many-winter'd fleece of throat and chin.
But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his mood,
And hearing "harlot" mutter'd twice or thrice,
Leapt from her session on his lap, and stood
Stiff as a viper frozen; loathsome sight,

How from the rosy lips of life and love,
Flash'd the bare-grinning skeleton of death!
White was her cheek; sharp breaths of anger
puff'd

Her fairy nostril out; her hand half-clench'd
Went faltering sideways downward to her belt,
And feeling; had she found a dagger there
(For in a wink the false love turns to hate)
She would have stabb'd him; but she found it not:
His eye was calm, and suddenly she took
To bitter weeping like a beaten child,
A long, long weeping, not consolable.
Then her false voice made way broken with sobs.

“O crueller than was ever told in tale,
Or sung in song! O vainly lavish'd love!

O cruel, there was nothing wild or strange,
 Or seeming shameful, for what shame in love,
 So love be true, and not as yours is—nothing
 Poor Vivien had not done to win his trust
 Who call'd her what he call'd her—all her crime,
 All—all—the wish to prove him wholly hers."

She mused a little, and then clapt her hands
 Together with a wailing shriek, and said :
 "Stabb'd through the heart's affections to the heart !
 Seethed like the kid in its own mother's milk !
 Kill'd with a word worse than a life of blows !
 I thought that he was gentle, being great :
 O God, that I had loved a smaller man !
 I should have found in him a greater heart.
 O, I, that flattering my true passion, saw

The knights, the court, the king, dark in your light,
Who loved to make men darker than they are,
Because of that high pleasure which I had
To seat you sole upon my pedestal
Of worship—I am answer'd, and henceforth
The course of life that seem'd so flowery to me
With you for guide and master, only you,
Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken short,
And ending in a ruin—nothing left,
But into some low cave to crawl, and there,
If the wolf spare me, weep my life away,
Kill'd with inutterable unkindliness."

She paused, she turn'd away, she hung her head,
The snake of gold slid from her hair, the braid
Slipt and uncoil'd itself, she wept afresh,

And the dark wood grew darker toward the storm
In silence, while his anger slowly died
Within him, till he let his wisdom go
For ease of heart, and half believed her true :
Call'd her to shelter in the hollow oak,
“Come from the storm” and having no reply,
Gazed at the heaving shoulder, and the face
Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or shame ;
Then thrice essay'd, by tenderest-touching terms
To sleek her ruffled peace of mind, in vain.
At last she let herself be conquer'd by him,
And as the cageling newly flown returns,
The seeming-injured simple-hearted thing
Came to her old perch back, and settled there.
There while she sat, half-falling from his knees,
Half-nestled at his heart, and since he saw

The slow tear creep from her closed eyelid yet,
About her, more in kindness than in love,
The gentle wizard cast a shielding arm.
But she dislink'd herself at once and rose,
Her arms upon her breast across, and stood
A virtuous gentlewoman deeply wrong'd,
Upright and flush'd before him : then she said :

“ There must be now no passages of love
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore.
Since, if I be what I am grossly call'd,
What should be granted which your own gross heart
Would reckon worth the taking ? I will go.
In truth, but one thing now—better have died
Thrice than have ask'd it once—could make me
stay—

That proof of trust—so often asked in vain !
How justly, after that vile term of yours,
I find with grief ! I might believe you then,
Who knows? once more. O, what was once to me
Mere matter of the fancy, now has grown
The vast necessity of heart and life.
Farewell ; think kindly of me, for I fear
My fate or fault, omitting gayer youth
For one so old, must be to love you still.
But ere I leave you let me swear once more
That if I schemed against your peace in this,
May yon just heaven, that darkens o'er me, send
One flash, that, missing all things else, may make
My scheming brain a cinder, if I lie."

Scarce had she ceased, when out of heaven a Light

(For now the storm was close above them) struck,
Furrowing a giant oak, and javelining
With darted spikes and splinters of the wood
The dark earth round. He raised his eyes and saw
The tree that shone white-listed thro' the gloom.
But Vivien, fearing heaven had heard her oath,
And dazzled by the livid-flickering fork,
And deafen'd with the stammering cracks and claps
That follow'd, flying back and crying out,
"O Merlin, tho' you do not love me, save,
Yet save me!" clung to him and hugg'd him close;
And call'd him dear protector in her fright,
Nor yet forgot her practice in her fright,
But wrought upon his mood and hugg'd him close.
The pale blood of the wizard at her touch
Took gayer colours, like an opal warm'd.

She blamed herself for telling hearsay tales :
She shook from fear, and for her fault she wept
Of petulancy ; she call'd him lord and liege,
Her seer, her bard, her silver star of eve,
Her God, her Merlin, the one passionate love
Of her whole life ; and ever overhead
Bellow'd the tempest, and the rotten branch
Snapt in the rushing of the river rain
Above them ; and in change of glare and gloom
Her eyes and neck glittering went and came ;
Till now the storm, its burst of passion spent,
Moaning and calling out of other lands,
Had left the ravaged woodland yet once more
To peace ; and what should not have been had
 been,
For Merlin, overtalk'd and overworn,

Had yielded, told her all the charm, and slept.

Then, in one moment, she put forth the charm
Of woven paces and of waving hands,
And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
And lost to life and use and name and fame.

Then crying "I have made his glory mine,"
And shrieking out "O fool!" the harlot leapt
Adown the forest, and the thicket closed
Behind her, and the forest echo'd "fool."



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