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THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

VOL. VII.



THE

POETICAL WORKS

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

D.C.L. P.L.

VOL. VII.

IDYLLS OF THE KING. VOL. I.

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IDYLLS OF THE KING

IN TWELVE BOOKS

'Flos Regum Arthurus.'
Joseph of Exeter.

DEDICATION.
THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

THE ROUND TABLE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.
THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT.
GERAINT AND ENID.
BALIN AND BALAN.
MERLIN AND VIVIEN.
LANCELOT AND ELAINE.
THE HOLY GRAIL.
PELLEAS AND ETTARRE.
THE LAST TOURNAMENT.
GUINEVERE.

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.
TO THE OUEEN.

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IDYLLS OF THE KING.

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 reverenced 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 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!

I

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

Leodogran, the King of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
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,

Urien, assail'd him: last a heathen horde,

Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with

blood,

And on the spike that split the mother's heart Spitting the child, brake on him, till, 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 vet 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. Then he drave The heathen: after, slew the beast, and fell'd The forest, letting 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,
Colleaguing with a score of petty kings,
Made head against him, crying, 'Who is he
That he should rule us? who hath proven him
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorloïs, 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 ve 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.'

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the tale— When Arthur reach'd a field-of-battle bright With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the world Was all so clear about him, that he saw The smallest rock far on the faintest hill, And even in high day the morning star.

So when the King had set his banner broad,
At once from either side, with trumpet-blast,
And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto blood,
The long-lanced battle let their horses run.

And now the Barons and the kings prevail'd,
And now the King, as here and there that war
Went swaying; but the Powers who walk the
world

Made lightnings and great thunders over him,
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main might,
And mightier of his hands with every blow,
And leading all his knighthood threw the kings
Carádos, Urien, Cradlemont of Wales,
Claudias, and Clariance of Northumberland,
The King Brandagoras of Latangor,
With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,
And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees

To one who sins, and deems himself alone

And all the world asleep, they swerved and

brake

Flying, and Arthur call'd to stay the brands

That hack'd among the flyers, 'Ho! they yield!'

So like a painted battle the war stood

Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,

And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.

He laugh'd upon his warrior whom he loved

And honour'd most. 'Thou dost not doubt me

King,

So well thine arm hath wrought for me to-day.'
'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle-field:
I know thee for my King!' Whereat the two,
For each had warded either in the fight,
Sware on the field of death a deathless love.
And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in man:
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death.'

Then quickly from the foughten field he sent Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.'

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
Debating—'How should I that am a king,
However much he holp 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

To one who sins, and deems himself alone

And all the world asleep, they swerved and

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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
hirth?'

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 Gorloïs,
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

τR

In all this matter—so ve care to learn— Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's time The prince and warrior Gorloïs, 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 Oueen 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 Gorloïs. So loathed the bright dishonour of his love, That Gorloïs and King Uther went to war: And overthrown was Gorloïs and slain. Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men, Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls, Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in, 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 Gorloïs. 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 Gorloïs he, Or else the child of Anton, and no king, Or else baseborn." Yet Merlin thro' his craft, And while the people clamour'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 shamefulness,
Or born the son of Gorloïs, 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. Victor his men

Report him! Yea, but ye—think ye this king—

So many those that hate him, and so strong,

So few his knights, however brave they be—

Hath body enow to hold his foemen down?'

'O King,' she cried, 'and I will tell thee: few, Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him; For I was near him when the savage yells
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 ye shall see,

And written in the speech ye speak yourself,

"Cast me away!" And sad was Arthur's face

Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,
"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 Gorloïs 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

doon.

And then the Queen made answer, 'What

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

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 Blevs, 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 old time, and said:

"Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!

A young man will be wiser by and by;

An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!

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, but the King stood out in heaven,

Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and sent Ulfius, and Brastias and Bedivere, Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

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.
Far shone the fields of May thro' open door.

The sacred altar blossom'd white with May, The Sun of May descended on their King, They gazed on all earth's beauty in their Oueen, Roll'd incense, and there past along the hymns A voice as of the waters, while the two Sware at the shrine of Christ a deathless love: And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is mine. Let chance what will, I love thee to the death!' To whom the Queen replied with drooping eyes, 'King and my lord, I love thee to the death!' And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake, 'Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world Other, and may thy Oueen be one with thee, And all this Order of thy Table Round Fulfil the boundless purpose of their King!'

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

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May; Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd away! Blowthro' the living world—"Let the King reign."

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's realm?

Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm,

Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King

reign.

'Strike for the King and live! his knights have heard

That God hath told the King a secret word.

Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

'Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust.

Blow trumpet! live the strength and die the lust! Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King

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

'Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May!

Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!

Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

'The King will follow Christ, and we the King In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing. Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.'

So sang the knighthood, moving to their hall.

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

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GARETH AND LYNETTE

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THE last tall son of Lot and Bellicent. And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted Pine Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl'd away. 'How he went down,' said Gareth, 'as a false knight Or evil king before my lance if lance Were mine to use-O senseless cataract, Bearing all down in thy precipitancy-And yet thou art but swollen with cold snows And mine is living blood: thou dost His will, The Maker's, and not knowest, and I that know, Have strength and wit, in my good mother's hall Linger with vacillating obedience,

Prison'd, and kept and coax'd and whistled to-Since the good mother holds me still a child! Good mother is bad mother unto me! A worse were better; yet no worse would I. Heaven yield her for it, but in me put force To weary her ears with one continuous prayer, Until she let me fly discaged to sweep In ever-highering eagle-circles up To the great Sun of Glory, and thence swoop Down upon all things base, and dash them dead, A knight of Arthur, working out his will, To cleanse the world. Why, Gawain, when he came

With Modred hither in the summertime,

Ask'd me to tilt with him, the proven knight.

Modred for want of worthier was the judge.

Then I so shook him in the saddle, he said,

"Thou hast half prevail'd against me," said so—
he—

Tho' Modred biting his thin lips was mute, For he is alway sullen: what care I?'

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

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes, 'Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of mine Was finer gold than any goose can lay; For this an Eagle, a royal Eagle, laid Almost beyond eye-reach, on such a palm As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours. And there was ever haunting round the palm

A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw

The splendour sparkling from aloft, and thought

"An I could climb and lay my hand upon it,

Then were I wealthier than a leash of kings."

But ever when he reach'd a hand to climb,

One, that had loved him from his childhood,

caught

And stay'd him, "Climb not lest thou break thy neck,

I charge thee by my love," and so the boy,

Sweet mother, neither clomb, nor brake his neck,

But brake his very heart in pining for it,

And past away.'

To whom the mother said,
'True love, sweet son, had risk'd himself and climb'd,

And handed down the golden treasure to him.'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes,

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

Then Bellicent bemoan'd herself and said,
'Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?

Lo, where thy father Lot beside the hearth
Lies like a log, and all but smoulder'd out!

For ever since when traitor to the King
He fought against him in the Barons' war,
And Arthur gave him back his territory,
His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies there
A yet-warm corpse, and yet unburiable,

No more; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks, nor knows.

And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall. Albeit neither loved with that full love I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love: Stay therefore thou: red berries charm the bird. And thee, mine innocent, the jousts, the wars, Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang Of wrench'd or broken limb-an often chance In those brain-stunning shocks, and tourney-falls, Frights to my heart; but stay: follow the deer By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns; So make thy manhood mightier day by day; Sweet is the chase: and I will seek thee out Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone year, Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness I know not thee, myself, nor anything. Stay, my best son! ye are yet more boy than man.'

Then Gareth, 'An ve hold me vet for child, Hear yet once more the story of the child. For, mother, there was once a King, like ours. The prince his heir, when tall and marriageable, Ask'd for a bride: and thereupon the King Set two before him. One was fair, strong, arm'd-But to be won by force-and many men Desired her: one, good lack, no man desired. And these were the conditions of the King: That save he won the first by force, he needs Must wed that other, whom no man desired, A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile. That evermore she long'd to hide herself, Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye-Yea-some she cleaved to, but they died of her. And one-they call'd her Fame; and one,-O Mother.

How can ye keep me tether'd to you—Shame. Man am I grown, a man's work must I do. Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King,

Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the

King—

Else, wherefore born?'

To whom the mother said, 'Sweet son, for there be many who deem him not, Or will not deem him, wholly proven King—
Albeit in mine own heart I knew him King,
When I was frequent with him in my youth,
And heard him Kingly speak, and doubted him
No more than he, himself; but felt him mine,
Of closest kin to me: yet—wilt thou leave
Thine easeful biding here, and risk thine all,
Life, limbs, for one that is not proven King?
Stay, till the cloud that settles round his birth
Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son.'

And Gareth answer'd quickly, 'Not an hour, So that ye yield me—I will walk thro' fire, Mother, to gain it—your full leave to go.

Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd Rome
From off the threshold of the realm, and crush'd
The Idolaters, and made the people free?

Who should be King save him who makes us free?

So when the Queen, who long had sought in vain

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

And Gareth cried,

'A hard one, or a hundred, so I go.

Nay—quick! the proof to prove me to the quick!

But slowly spake the mother looking at him, 'Prince, thou shalt go disguised to Arthur's hall, And hire thyself to serve for meats and drinks Among the scullions and the kitchen-knaves, And those that hand the dish across the bar.

Nor shalt thou tell thy name to anyone.

And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and a day.'

For so the Queen believed that when her son Beheld his only way to glory lead Low down thro' villain kitchen-vassalage, Her own true Gareth was too princely-proud To pass thereby; so should he rest with her, Closed in her castle from the sound of arms.

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied, 'The thrall in person may be free in soul,
And I shall see the jousts. Thy son am I,
And since thou art my mother, must obey.

I therefore yield me freely to thy will;

For hence will I, disguised, and hire myself

To serve with scullions and with kitchen-knaves;

Nor tell my name to any—no, not the King.'

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

The three were clad like tillers of the soil.

Southward they set their faces. The birds made

Melody on branch, and melody in mid air.

The damp hill-slopes were quicken'd into green,

And the live green had kindled into flowers, For it was past the time of Easterday.

So, when their feet were planted on the plain
That broaden'd toward the base of Camelot,
Far off they saw the silver-misty morn
Rolling her smoke about the Royal mount,
That rose between the forest and the field.
At times the summit of the high city flash'd;
At times the spires and turrets half-way down
Prick'd thro' the mist; at times the great gate
shone

Only, that open'd on the field below:

Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd.

Then those who went with Gareth were amazed,
One crying, 'Let us go no further, lord.
Here is a city of Enchanters, built
By fairy Kings.' The second echo'd him,

'Lord, we have heard from our wise man at home To Northward, that this King is not the King, But only changeling out of Fairyland, Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery And Merlin's glamour.' Then the first again, 'Lord, there is no such city anywhere, But all a vision.'

Gareth answer'd them

With laughter, swearing he had glamour enow
In his own blood, his princedom, youth and hopes,
To plunge old Merlin in the Arabian sea;
So push'd them all unwilling toward the gate.
And there was no gate like it under heaven.
For barefoot on the keystone, which was lined
And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,
The Lady of the Lake stood: all her dress
Wept from her sides as water flowing away;
But like the cross her great and goodly arms

Stretch'd under all the cornice and upheld:
And drops of water fell from either hand;
And down from one a sword was hung, from one
A censer, either worn with wind and storm;
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish;
And in the space to left of her, and right,
Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,
New things and old co-twisted, as if Time
Were nothing, so inveterately, that men
Were giddy gazing there; and over all
High on the top were those three Queens, the
friends

Of Arthur, who should help him at his need.

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

So long, that ev'n to him they seem'd to

move.

Out of the city a blast of music peal'd.

Back from the gate started the three, to whom

From out thereunder came an ancient man,

Long-bearded, saying, 'Who be ye, my sons?'

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

Then that old Seer made answer playing on him And saying, 'Son, I have seen the good ship sail Keel upward, and mast downward, in the heavens, And solid turrets topsy-turvy in air: And here is truth; but an it please thee not, Take thou the truth as thou hast told it me. For truly as thou savest, a Fairy King And Fairy Queens have built the city, son; They came from out a sacred mountain-cleft Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand, And built it to the music of their harps. And, as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son, For there is nothing in it as it seems Saving the King: tho' some there be that hold The King a shadow, and the city real: Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou pass Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become rall to his enchantments, for the King To Ga. ad thee by such vows, as is a shame

A man should not be bound by, yet the which
No man can keep; but, so thou dread to swear,
Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide
Without, among the cattle of the field.
For an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is built
To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever.

Gareth spake

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

But the Seer replied,

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

Elusion, and occasion, and evasion"?

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

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

With all good cheer
He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with his twain
Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
And stately, rich in emblem and the work

Of ancient kings who did their days in stone;
Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at Arthur's court,
Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere
At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak
And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.
And ever and anon a knight would pass
Outward, or inward to the hall: his arms
Clash'd; and the sound was good to Gareth's ear.
And out of bower and casement shyly glanced
Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of love;
And all about a healthful people stept
As in the presence of a gracious king.

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld
Far over heads in that long-vaulted hall
The splendour of the presence of the King
Throned, and delivering doom—and look'd no
more—

But felt his young heart hammering in his ears,
And thought, 'For this half-shadow of a lie
The truthful King will doom me when I speak.'
Yet pressing on, tho' all in fear to find
Sir Gawain or Sir Modred, saw nor one
Nor other, but in all the listening eyes
Of those tall knights, that ranged about the throne,
Clear honour shining like the dewy star
Of dawn, and faith in their great King, with pure
Affection, and the light of victory,
And glory gain'd, and evermore to gain.

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

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

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

And while she past,
Came yet another widow crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King! Thine enemy, King, am I.
With thine own hand thou slewest my dear lord,
A knight of Uther in the Barons' war,
When Lot and many another rose and fought
Against thee, saying thou wert basely born.
I held with these, and loathe to ask thee aught.

Yet lo! my husband's brother had my son
Thrall'd in his castle, and hath starved him dead;
And standeth seized of that inheritance
Which thou that slewest the sire hast left the son.
So tho' I scarce can ask it thee for hate,
Grant me some knight to do the battle for me,
Kill the foul thief, and wreak me for my son.'

Then strode a good knight forward, crying to him,

'A boon, Sir King! I am her kinsman, I.

Give me to right her wrong, and slay the man.'

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

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

Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King
Who lived and died for men, the man shall die.'

Then came in hall the messenger of Mark,
A name of evil savour in the land,
The Cornish king. In either hand he bore
What dazzled all, and shone far-off as shines
A field of charlock in the sudden sun
Between two showers, a cloth of palest gold,
Which down he laid before the throne, and knelt,

Delivering, that his lord, the vassal king,
Was ev'n upon his way to Camelot;
For having heard that Arthur of his grace
Had made his goodly cousin, Tristram, knight,
And, for himself was of the greater state,
Being a king, he trusted his liege-lord
Would yield him this large honour all the more;
So pray'd him well to accept this cloth of gold,
In token of true heart and feälty.

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to rend
In pieces, and so cast it on the hearth.
An oak-tree smoulder'd there. 'The goodly
knight!

What! shall the shield of Mark stand among these?'

For, midway down the side of that long hall
A stately pile,—whereof along the front,
Some blazon'd, some but carven, and some blank,

F

There ran a treble range of stony shields,—
Rose, and high-arching overbrow'd the hearth.
And under every shield a knight was named:
For this was Arthur's custom in his hall;
When some good knight had done one noble deed,
His arms were carven only; but if twain
His arms were blazon'd also; but if none,
The shield was blank and bare without a sign
Saving the name beneath; and Gareth saw
The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and bright,
And Modred's blank as death; and Arthur cried
To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth.

'More like are we to reave him of his crown
Than make him knight because men call him king.
The kings we found, ye know we stay'd their
hands

From war among themselves, but left them kings; Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,

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Truth-speaking, brave, good livers, them we enroll'd

Among us, and they sit within our hall.

But Mark hath tarnish'd the great name of king,
As Mark would sully the low state of churl:

And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,
Return, and meet, and hold him from our eyes,
Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,
Silenced for ever—craven—a man of plots,
Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside ambushings—
No fault of thine: let Kay the seneschal
Look to thy wants, and send thee satisfied—
Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand be seen!

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

Last, Gareth leaning both hands heavily Down on the shoulders of the twain, his men, Approach'd between them toward the King, and ask'd,

'A boon, Sir King (his voice was all ashamed),
For see ye not how weak and hungerworn
I seem—leaning on these? grant me to serve
For meat and drink among thy kitchen-knaves
A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my name.
Hereafter I will fight.'

To him the King,

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

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

Root-bitten by white lichen,

'Lo ye now!

This fellow hath broken from some Abbey, where,

God wot, he had not beef and brewis enow,
However that might chance! but an he work,
Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,
And sleeker shall he shine than any hog.'

Then Lancelot standing near, 'Sir Seneschal, Sleuth-hound thou knowest, and gray, and all the hounds;

A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost not know:
Broad brows and fair, a fluent hair and fine,
High nose, a nostril large and fine, and hands
Large, fair and fine!—Some young lad's mystery—
But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy
Is noble-natured. Treat him with all grace,
Lest he should come to shame thy judging of him.'

Then Kay, 'What murmurest thou of mystery?

Think ye this fellow will poison the King's dish?

Nay, for he spake too fool-like: mystery!

Tut, an the lad were noble, he had ask'd

For horse and armour: fair and fine, forsooth!

Sir Fine-face, Sir Fair-hands? but see thou to it

That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some fine day

Undo thee not—and leave my man to me.'

So Gareth all for glory underwent The sooty voke of kitchen-vassalage: Ate with young lads his portion by the door, And couch'd at night with grimy kitchen-knaves. And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly, But Kay the seneschal, who loved him not, Would hustle and harry him, and labour him Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set To turn the broach, draw water, or hew wood, Or grosser tasks; and Gareth bow'd himself With all obedience to the King, and wrought All kind of service with a noble ease That graced the lowliest act in doing it.

And when the thralls had talk among themselves, And one would praise the love that linkt the King And Lancelot-how the King had saved his life In battle twice, and Lancelot once the King's-For Lancelot was the first in Tournament, But Arthur mightiest on the battle-field-Gareth was glad. Or if some other told, How once the wandering forester at dawn, Far over the blue tarns and hazy seas, On Caer-Eryri's highest found the King, A naked babe, of whom the Prophet spake, 'He passes to the Isle Avilion, He passes and is heal'd and cannot die '-Gareth was glad. But if their talk were foul, Then would he whistle rapid as any lark, Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud That first they mock'd, but, after, reverenced him. Or Gareth telling some prodigious tale Of knights, who sliced a red life-bubbling way

Thro' twenty folds of twisted dragon, held All in a gap-mouth'd circle his good mates Lying or sitting round him, idle hands, Charm'd: till Sir Kay, the seneschal, would come Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind Among dead leaves, and drive them all apart. Or when the thralls had sport among themselves, So there were any trial of mastery, He, by two yards in casting bar or stone Was counted best; and if there chanced a joust, So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go, Would hurry thither, and when he saw the knights Clash like the coming and retiring wave, And the spear spring, and good horse reel, the boy Was half beyond himself for ecstasy.

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

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of Lot
With whom he used to play at tourney once,
When both were children, and in lonely haunts
Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,
And each at either dash from either end—
Shame never made girl redder than Gareth joy.
He laugh'd; he sprang. 'Out of the smoke, at
once

I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee—

These news be mine, none other's—nay, the

King's—

Descend into the city:' whereon he sought

The King alone, and found, and told him all.

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

Here the King's calm eye

Fell on, and check'd, and made him flush, and
bow

Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd him,
'Son, the good mother let me know thee here,
And sent her wish that I would yield thee thine.
Make thee my knight? my knights are sworn to
yows

Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness, And, loving, utter faithfulness in love, And uttermost obedience to the King.'

Then Gareth, lightly springing from his knees, 'My King, for hardihood I can promise thee.

For uttermost obedience make demand

Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,

No mellow master of the meats and drinks!

And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,

But love I shall, God willing.'

And the King-

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

'Let Lancelot know, my King, let Lancelot know,

Thy noblest and thy truest!'

And the King-

'But wherefore would ye men should wonder at you?

Nay, rather for the sake of me, their King,
And the deed's sake my knighthood do the deed,
Than to be noised of.'

Merrily Gareth ask'd,

'Have I not earn'd my cake in baking of it?

Let be my name until I make my name!

My deeds will speak: it is but for a day.'

So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm

Smiled the great King, and half-unwillingly

Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to him.

Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,

'I have given him the first quest: he is not proven.

Look therefore when he calls for this in hall,
Thou get to horse and follow him far away.
Cover the lions on thy shield, and see
Far as thou mayest, he be nor ta'en nor slain.'

Then that same day there past into the hall A damsel of high lineage, and a brow May-blossom, and a cheek of apple-blossom, Hawk-eyes; and lightly was her slender nose

Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower;

She into hall past with her page and cried,

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

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

'My name?' she said-

'Lynette my name; noble; my need, a knight

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

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth ask'd, 'Damsel, ye know this Order lives to crush

All wrongers of the Realm. But say, these four, Who be they? What the fashion of the men?'

'They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,
The fashion of that old knight-errantry
Who ride abroad, and do but what they will;
Courteous or bestial from the moment, such
As have nor law nor king; and three of these
Proud in their fantasy call themselves the Day,
Morning-Star, and Noon-Sun, and EveningStar,

Being strong fools; and never a whit more wise
The fourth, who alway rideth arm'd in black,
A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.
He names himself the Night and oftener Death,
And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,
And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,
To show that who may slay or scape the three,
Slain by himself, shall enter endless night.

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

Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he rose,

A head with kindling eyes above the throng,

'A boon, Sir King—this quest!' then—for he
mark'd

Kay near him groaning like a wounded bull—
'Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-knave am I,
And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I,
And I can topple over a hundred such.
Thy promise, King,' and Arthur glancing at him,
Brought down a momentary brow. 'Rough,
sudden.

And pardonable, worthy to be knight—
Go therefore,' and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame, pride,

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

Now two great entries open'd from the hall,
At one end one, that gave upon a range
Of level pavement where the King would pace
At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
And down from this a lordly stairway sloped
Till lost in blowing trees and tops of towers;
And out by this main doorway past the King.
But one was counter to the hearth, and rose
High that the highest-crested helm could ride
Therethro' nor graze: and by this entry fled

The damsel in her wrath, and on to this

Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the door

King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a town,

A warhorse of the best, and near it stood

The two that out of north had follow'd him:

This bare a maiden shield, a casque; that held

The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth loosed

A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to heel,

A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,

And from it like a fuel-smother'd fire,

That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and flash'd as

those

Dull-coated things, that making slide apart
Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there burns
A jewell'd harness, ere they pass and fly.
So Gareth ere he parted flash'd in arms.
Then as he donn'd the helm, and took the shield
And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of grain
Storm-strengthen'd on a windy site, and tipt

With trenchant steel, around him slowly prest
The people, while from out of kitchen came
The thralls in throng, and seeing who had work'd
Lustier than any, and whom they could but love,
Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and cried,
'God bless the King, and all his fellowship!'
And on thro' lanes of shouting Gareth rode
Down the slope street, and past without the gate.

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

'Bound upon a quest

With horse and arms—the King hath past his

time—

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

But Lancelot said,

^{&#}x27;Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the King,

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

But by the field of tourney lingering yet

Mutter'd the damsel, 'Wherefore did the King

Scorn me? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt, at least

He might have yielded to me one of those

Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,

Rather than—O sweet heaven! O fie upon him—

His kitchen-knave.'

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

And Gareth to him,

'Master no more! too well I know thee, ay— The most ungentle knight in Arthur's hall.'

'Have at thee then,' said Kay: they shock'd, and
Kay

Fell shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again, 'Lead, and I follow,' and fast away she fled.

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

'What doest thou, scullion, in my fellowship?

Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the more

Or love thee better, that by some device

Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,

Thou hast everthrown and slain thy master—

thou!—

Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon!—to me Thou smellest all of kitchen as before.'

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

'Ay, wilt thou finish it?

Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he talks!

The listening rogue hath caught the manner of it.

But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with, knave,
And then by such a one that thou for all
The kitchen brewis that was ever supt
Shalt not once dare to look him in the face.

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

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

So till the dusk that follow'd evensong Rode on the two, reviler and reviled; Then after one long slope was mounted, saw,
Bowl-shaped, thro' tops of many thousand pines
A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink
To westward—in the deeps whereof a mere,
Round as the red eye of an Eagle-owl,
Under the half-dead sunset glared; and shouts
Ascended, and there brake a servingman
Flying from out of the black wood, and crying,
'They have bound my lord to cast him in the
mere.'

Then Gareth, 'Bound am I to right the wrong'd,
But straitlier bound am I to bide with thee.'
And when the damsel spake contemptuously,
'Lead, and I follow,' Gareth cried again,
'Follow, I lead!' so down among the pines
He plunged; and there, blackshadow'd nigh the
mere,

And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and reed, Saw six tall men haling a seventh along, A stone about his neck to drown him in it.

Three with good blows he quieted, but three
Fled thro' the pines; and Gareth loosed the stone
From off his neck, then in the mere beside
Tumbled it; oilily bubbled up the mere.

Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free feet
Set him, a stalwart Baron, Arthur's friend.

'Well that ye came, or else these caitiff rogues Had wreak'd themselves on me; good cause is theirs

To hate me, for my wont hath ever been

To catch my thief, and then like vermin here

Drown him, and with a stone about his neck;

And under this wan water many of them

Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,

And rise, and flickering in a grimly light

Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have saved a

life

Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this wood.

And fain would I reward thee worshipfully.

What guerdon will ye?

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

Whereat the Baron saying, 'I well believe You be of Arthur's Table,' a light laugh Broke from Lynette, 'Ay, truly of a truth, And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-knave!—But deem not I accept thee aught the more, Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit Down on a rout of craven foresters.

A thresher with his flail had scatter'd them. Nay—for thou smellest of the kitchen still. But an this lord will yield us harbourage, Well.'

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

'Meseems, that here is much discourtesy,
Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at my side.
Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur's hall,
And pray'd the King would grant me Lancelot
To fight the brotherhood of Day and Night—
The last a monster unsubduable
Of any save of him for whom I call'd—
Suddenly bawls this frontless kitchen-knave,
"The quest is mine; thy kitchen-knave am I,
And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I."

Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,
"Go therefore," and so gives the quest to him—
Him—here—a villain fitter to stick swine
Than ride abroad redressing women's wrong,
Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman."

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

'Friend, whether thou be kitchen-knave, or not,
Or whether it be the maiden's fantasy,
And whether she be mad, or else the King,
Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,
I ask not: but thou strikest a strong stroke,
For strong thou art and goodly therewithal,
And saver of my life; and therefore now,

For here be mighty men to joust with, weigh Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel back To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King. Thy pardon; I but speak for thine avail, The saver of my life.'

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

So when, next morn, the lord whose life he saved

Had, some brief space, convey'd them on their way And left them with God-speed, Sir Gareth spake, 'Lead, and I follow.' Haughtily she replied,

'I fly no more: I allow thee for an hour.

Lion and stoat have isled together, knave,

In time of flood. Nay, furthermore, methinks

Some ruth is mine for thee. Back wilt thou, fool?

For hard by here is one will overthrow

And slay thee: then will I to court again,

And shame the King for only yielding me

My champion from the ashes of his hearth.'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd courteously, 'Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed.

Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt find

My fortunes all as fair as hers who lay

Among the ashes and wedded the King's son.'

Then to the shore of one of those long loops
Wherethro' the serpent river coil'd, they came.
Rough-thicketed were the banks and steep; the
stream

Full, narrow; this a bridge of single arc Took at a leap; and on the further side Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold In streaks and rays, and all Lent-lily in hue,
Save that the dome was purple, and above,
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering.
And therebefore the lawless warrior paced
Unarm'd, and calling, 'Damsel, is this he,
The champion thou hast brought from Arthur's
hall?

For whom we let thee pass.' 'Nay, nay,' she said,

'Sir Morning-Star. The King in utter scorn
Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee here
His kitchen-knave: and look thou to thyself:
See that he fall not on thee suddenly,
And slay thee unarm'd: he is not knight but knave.

Then at his call, 'O daughters of the Dawn, And servants of the Morning-Star, approach, Arm me,' from out the silken curtain-folds Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair girls In gilt and rosy raiment came: their feet
In dewy grasses glisten'd; and the hair
All over glanced with dewdrop or with gem
Like sparkles in the stone Avanturine.
These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave a shield
Blue also, and thereon the morning star.
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was brought,
Glorying; and in the stream beneath him, shone
Immingled with Heaven's azure waveringly,
The gay pavilion and the naked feet,
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star.

Then she that watch'd him, 'Wherefore stare ye so?

Thou shakest in thy fear: there yet is time:

Flee down the valley before he get to horse.

Who will cry shame? Thou art not knight but knave.'

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

And he that bore

The star, when mounted, cried from o'er the bridge,

'A kitchen-knave, and sent in scorn of me!
Such fight not I, but answer scorn with scorn.
For this were shame to do him further wrong
Than set him on his feet, and take his horse
And arms, and so return him to the King.
Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly, knave.
Avoid: for it beseemeth not a knave
To ride with such a lady.'

'Dog, thou liest.

I spring from loftier lineage than thine own.'

He spake; and all at fiery speed the two

Shock'd on the central bridge, and either spear

Bent but not brake, and either knight at once,

Hurl'd as a stone from out of a catapult

Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,

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

And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his brand

He drave his enemy backward down the bridge,

The damsel crying, 'Well-stricken, kitchen
knave!'

Till Gareth's shield was cloven; but one stroke Laid him that clove it grovelling on the ground.

Then cried the fall'n, 'Take not my life: I yield.'

And Gareth, 'So this damsel ask it of me Good—I accord it easily as a grace.'

She reddening, 'Insolent scullion: I of thee? I bound to thee for any favour ask'd!' 'Then shall be die.' And Gareth there unlaced His helmet as to slav him, but she shrick'd. 'Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slav One nobler than thyself.' 'Damsel, thy charge Is an abounding pleasure to me. Knight, Thy life is thine at her command. Arise And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say His kitchen-knave hath sent thee. See thou crave His pardon for thy breaking of his laws. Myself, when I return, will plead for thee. Thy shield is mine—farewell; and, damsel, thou, Lead, and I follow,'

And fast away she fled.

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

Knave, when I watch'd thee striking on the

bridge

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

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

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd, laughingly, 'Parables? Hear a parable of the knave.

When I was kitchen-knave among the rest

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

'Ay, Sir Knave!

Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a knight, Being but knave, I hate thee all the more.'

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

'Ay, ay,' she said, 'but thou shalt meet thy

So when they touch'd the second river-loop,
Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail
Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday Sun
Beyond a raging shallow. As if the flower,
That blows a globe of after arrowlets,
Ten thousand-fold had grown, flash'd the fierce
shield,

All sun; and Gareth's eyes had flying blots
Before them when he turn'd from watching him.
He from beyond the roaring shallow roar'd,
'What doest thou, brother, in my marches here?'
And she athwart the shallow shrill'd again,
'Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's hall
Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath his arms.'
'Ugh!' cried the Sun, and vizoring up a red
And cipher face of rounded foolishness,
Push'd horse across the foamings of the ford,
Whom Gareth met midstream: no room was there
For lance or tourney-skill: four strokes they struck

With sword, and these were mighty; the new knight

Had fear he might be shamed; but as the Sun Heaved up a ponderous arm to strike the fifth, The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream, the

Descended, and the Sun was wash'd away.

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the ford;
So drew him home; but he that fought no more,
As being all bone-batter'd on the rock,
Yielded; and Gareth sent him to the King.
'Myself when I return will plead for thee.'

- 'Lead, and I follow.' Quietly she led.
- 'Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed again?'
- 'Nay, not a point: nor art thou victor here.

 There lies a ridge of slate across the ford;

 His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I saw it.

"O Sun" (not this strong fool whom thou, Sir Knave,

Hast overthrown thro' mere unhappiness),
"O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or pain,
O moon, that layest all to sleep again,
Shine sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me."

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

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

'What knowest thou of flowers, except, belike,
To garnish meats with? hath not our good King
Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchendom,
A foolish love for flowers? what stick ye round

The pasty? wherewithal deck the boar's head? Flowers? nay, the boar hath rosemaries and bay.

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

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

There stands the third fool of their allegory.'

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

And Gareth, 'Wherefore waits the madman there

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

Then the third brother shouted o'er the bridge,
'O brother-star, why shine ye here so low?

Thy ward is higher up: but have ye slain

The damsel's champion?' and the damsel cried,

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

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

Can throw the Evening.'

Then that other blew

A hard and deadly note upon the horn.

'Approach and arm me!' With slow steps from

An old storm-beaten, russet, many-stain'd
Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,
And arm'd him in old arms, and brought a helm
With but a drying evergreen for crest,
And gave a shield whereon the Star of Even
Half-tarnish'd and half-bright, his emblem shone.
But when it glitter'd o'er the saddle-bow,
They madly hurl'd together on the bridge;

And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,

There met him drawn, and overthrew him
again,

But up like fire he started: and as oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his knees,
So many a time he vaulted up again;
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great heart,
Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,
Labour'd within him, for he seem'd as one
That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and cry,
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us
down!'

He half despairs; so Gareth seem'd to strike
Vainly, the damsel clamouring all the while,
'Well done, knave-knight, well stricken, O good
knight-knave—

O knave, as noble as any of all the knights-

Shame me not, shame me not. I have prophesied—

Strike, thou art worthy of the Table Round—
His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd skin—
Strike—strike—the wind will never change
again.'

And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,
And hew'd great pieces of his armour off him,
But lash'd in vain against the harden'd skin,
And could not wholly bring him under, more
Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge on ridge,
The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and springs
For ever; till at length Sir Gareth's brand
Clash'd his, and brake it utterly to the hilt.
'I have thee now;' but forth that other sprang,
And, all unknightlike, writhed his wiry arms
Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,
Strangled, but straining ev'n his uttermost
Cast, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the bridge

Down to the river, sink or swim, and cried, 'Lead, and I follow.'

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

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

'Sir,—and, good faith, I fain had added— Knight,

But that I heard thee call thyself a knave,—
Shamed am I that I so rebuked, reviled,
Missaid thee; noble I am; and thought the King
Scorn'd me and mine; and now thy pardon, friend,
For thou hast ever answer'd courteously,
And wholly bold thou art, and meek withal

As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave, Hast mazed my wit: I marvel what thou art.'

'Damsel,' he said, 'you be not all to blame, Saving that you mistrusted our good King Would handle scorn, or yield you, asking, one Not fit to cope your quest. You said your say; Mine answer was my deed. Good sooth! I hold He scarce is knight, vea but half-man, nor meet To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets His heart be stirr'd with any foolish heat At any gentle damsel's waywardness. Shamed? care not! thy foul sayings fought for me: And seeing now thy words are fair, methinks There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his great self, Hath force to quell me.'

Nigh upon that hour When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,

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

Anon they past a narrow comb wherein

Were slabs of rock with figures, knights on horse
Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning hues.

'Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once was here,
Whose holy hand hath fashion'd on the rock
The war of Time against the soul of man.
And yon four fools have suck'd their allegory
From these damp walls, and taken but the form.
Know ye not these?' and Gareth lookt and read—
In letters like to those the vexillary
Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming Gelt—

- 'PHOSPHORUS,'then'MERIDIES'-'HESPERUS'-
- 'Nox'—'Mors,' beneath five figures, armed men,

Slab after slab, their faces forward all,
And running down the Soul, a Shape that fled
With broken wings, torn raiment and loose hair,
For help and shelter to the hermit's cave.

'Follow the faces, and we find it. Look, Who comes behind?'

For one—delay'd at first

Thro' helping back the dislocated Kay

To Camelot, then by what thereafter chanced,
The damsel's headlong error thro' the wood—
Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-loops—
His blue shield-lions cover'd—softly drew
Behind the twain, and when he saw the star
Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him, cried,
'Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my friend.'

And Gareth crying prick'd against the cry; But when they closed—in a moment—at one touch Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the world-Went sliding down so easily, and fell, That when he found the grass within his hands He laugh'd; the laughter jarr'd upon Lynette: Harshly she ask'd him, 'Shamed and overthrown, And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave. Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast in vain?' 'Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son Of old King Lot and good Queen Bellicent, And victor of the bridges and the ford, And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by whom I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness-Device and sorcery and unhappiness-Out, sword; we are thrown!' And Lancelot answer'd, 'Prince, O Gareth-thro' the mere unhappiness

Of one who came to help thee, not to harm,

Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee whole, As on the day when Arthur knighted him.'

Then Gareth, 'Thou-Lancelot!-thine the

That threw me? An some chance to mar the

Thy brethren of thee make—which could not chance—

Had sent thee down before a lesser spear, Shamed had I been, and sad—O Lancelot—thou!'

Whereat the maiden, petulant, 'Lancelot,

Why came ye not, when call'd? and wherefore

now

Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my knave, Who being still rebuked, would answer still Courteous as any knight—but now, if knight, The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd and trick'd, And only wondering wherefore play'd upon: And doubtful whether I and mine be scorn'd.

Where should be truth if not in Arthur's hall,

In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave, prince
and fool,

I hate thee and for ever.'

horse

And Lancelot said,

'Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight art thou

To the King's best wish. O damsel, be you wise

To call him shamed, who is but overthrown?

Thrown have I been, nor once, but many a time.

Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last,

And overthrower from being overthrown.

With sword we have not striven; and thy good

And thou are weary; yet not less I felt
Thy manhood thro' that wearied lance of thine.
Well hast thou done; for all the stream is freed,
And thou hast wreak'd his justice on his foes.

And when reviled, hast answer'd graciously,

And makest merry when overthrown. Prince, Knight,

Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our Table Round!

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

Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life Past into sleep; on whom the maiden gazed.

'Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to sleep hast thou.

Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to him As any mother? Av. but such a one As all day long hath rated at her child, And vext his day, but blesses him asleep-Good lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle In the hush'd night, as if the world were one Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness! O Lancelot, Lancelot'-and she clapt her hands-'Full merry am I to find my goodly knave Is knight and noble. See now, sworn have I. Else von black felon had not let me pass, To bring thee back to do the battle with him. Thus an thou goest, he will fight thee first; Who doubts thee victor? so will my knight-knave Miss the full flower of this accomplishment.'

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

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutch'd the shield:

'Ramp ye lance-splintering lions, on whom all spears

Are rotten sticks! ye seem agape to roar! Yea, ramp and roar at leaving of your lord!— Care not, good beasts, so well I care for you. O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these Streams virtue-fire-thro' one that will not shame

Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield.

Hence: let us go.'

Silent the silent field They traversed. Arthur's harp tho' summer-wan, In counter motion to the clouds, allured
The glance of Gareth dreaming on his liege.
A star shot: 'Lo,' said Gareth, 'the foe falls!'
An owl whoopt: 'Hark the victor pealing there!'
Suddenly she that rode upon his left
Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent him, crying,
'Yield, yield him this again: 'tis he must fight:
I curse the tongue that all thro' yesterday
Reviled thee, and hath wrought on Lancelot now
To lend thee horse and shield: wonders ye have
done;

Miracles ye cannot: here is glory enow

In having flung the three: I see thee main'd,

Mangled: I swear thou canst not fling the fourth.'

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

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

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

But Lancelot on him urged All the devisings of their chivalry

When one might meet a mightier than himself;

How best to manage horse, lance, sword and shield,

And so fill up the gap where force might fail
With skill and fineness. Instant were his words.

Then Gareth, 'Here be rules. I know but one—

To dash against mine enemy and to win.

Yet have I watch'd thee victor in the joust,

And seen thy way.' 'Heaven help thee,' sigh'd

Lynette.

Then for a space, and under cloud that grew To thunder-gloom palling all stars, they rode In converse till she made her palfrey halt, Lifted an arm, and softly whisper'd, 'There.' And all the three were silent seeing, pitch'd Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,

A huge pavilion like a mountain peak Sunder the glooming crimson on the marge, Black, with black banner, and a long black horn Beside it hanging: which Sir Gareth graspt. And so, before the two could hinder him, Sent all his heart and breath thro' all the horn. Echo'd the walls; a light twinkled; anon Came lights and lights, and once again he blew: Whereon were hollow tramplings up and down And muffled voices heard, and shadows past: Till high above him, circled with her maids, The Lady Lyonors at a window stood. Beautiful among lights, and waving to him White hands, and courtesy; but when the Prince Three times had blown—after long hush—at last— The huge pavilion slowly yielded up, Thro' those black foldings, that which housed

High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack arms,

therein.

With white breast-bone, and barren ribs of Death,

And crown'd with fleshless laughter—some ten

steps—

In the half-light—thro' the dim dawn—advanced

The monster, and then paused, and spake no
word.

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

And ev'n Sir Lancelot thro' his warm blood felt Ice strike, and all that mark'd him were aghast.

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely neigh'd,

And Death's dark war-horse bounded forward

with him.

Then those that did not blink the terror, saw That Death was cast to ground, and slowly rose. But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the skull. Half fell to right and half to left and lay. Then with a stronger buffet he clove the helm As throughly as the skull; and out from this Issued the bright face of a blooming boy Fresh as a flower new-born, and crying, 'Knight, Slay me not: my three brethren bad me do it, To make a horror all about the house, And stay the world from Lady Lyonors. They never dream'd the passes would be past.' Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one

Not many a moon his younger, 'My fair child,

What madness made thee challenge the chief
knight

Of Arthur's hall?' 'Fair Sir, they bad me do it.

They hate the King, and Lancelot, the King's friend,

They hoped to slay him somewhere on the stream, They never dream'd the passes could be past.'

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

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

III

THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT



THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT.

THE 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 Oueen, 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 princedom 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 princedom 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 134

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 liefer 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 reverenced 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 thou, put on thy 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 thee, 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 vizor 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,

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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 Oueen: 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 you light on all things that you love,
And live to wed with her whom first you love:
But ere you wed with any, bring your bride,
And I, were she the daughter of a king,
Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the hedge,
Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun.'

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

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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 we 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!' Whereat 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 to-morrow morn,

And there is scantly time for half the work.

Arms? truth! I know not: all are wanted here.

Harbourage? truth, good truth, I know not, save,

It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge

Yonder.' He spoke and fell to work again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful vet, Across the bridge that spann'd the dry ravine. There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl. (His dress a suit of fray'd magnificence, Once fit for feasts of ceremony) and said: 'Whither, fair son?' to whom Geraint replied, 'O friend, I seek a harbourage for the night.' Then Yniol, 'Enter therefore and partake The slender entertainment of a house Once rich, now poor, but ever open-door'd.' 'Thanks, venerable friend,' replied Geraint; 'So that ye do not serve me sparrow-hawks For supper, I will enter, I will eat VOL. VII. L

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.

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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 ve 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;

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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 addrest the hoary Earl:

^{&#}x27;Fair Host and Earl, I pray your courtesy;

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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 Oueen 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 ye 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 thine asking, thine. 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 placed a silver wand, And over that a golden 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 thou, that hast no lady, canst not fight.'

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,

Leaning a little toward him, 'Thy 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.'

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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 eve 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 the silver wand,
And over that the golden sparrow-hawk.

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Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet blown. Spake to the lady with him and proclaim'd, 'Advance and take, as fairest of the fair. What I these two years past have won 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 Oueen,' 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, with damsel and with dwarf, Shalt ride to Arthur's court, and coming there, Crave pardon for that insult done the Queen, And shalt abide her judgment on it; next,

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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 See 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 Edvrn'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 vesterday, 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 vester-eve, While we 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 vester-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 ve 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 beseem 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:

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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 eve 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 thy 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 hall, Beholding one so bright in dark estate, I vow'd that could I gain her, our fair Oueen, 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: fain I would the two Should love each other: how can Enid find A nobler friend? Another thought was mine; 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 daughter's tenderness, Or easy nature, might 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

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Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall; And such a sense might make her long for court And all its perilous 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 usage; 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;

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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.

IV

GERAINT AND ENID



GERAINT AND ENID.

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 thee ride before. Ever a good way on before; and this I charge thee, on thy 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 liefer 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 ye keep it! Well then, look—for now,
Whether ye 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 armour 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, slide

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 slowlier 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 thou,
 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
 - He, reddening in extremity of delight, 'My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold.'
- 'Ye will be all the wealthier,' cried the Prince.

A horse and arms for guerdon; choose the best.'

- '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 thou art: he loves to know
When men of mark are in his territory:
And he will have thee to his palace here,
And serve thee 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 eves 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 humorous 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, VOL. VII. 0

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, drave 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 doth 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 hath turn'd me wild—
What chance is this? how is it I see you here?
Ye 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 with joy, Ye sit apart, you do not speak to him. You come with no attendance, page or maid, To serve you—doth 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: nay; I do not mean blood:
Nor need ye 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 whom you ever own'd,
I will make use of all the power I have.
O pardon me! the madness of that hour,
When first I parted from thee, 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 all 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 vestermorn, 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 thou, 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 bandit 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 lavs 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.
Till 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 ye 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

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 help'd 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 thank'd 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: vonder 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 bad 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 yestermorn—

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 pray'd 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 eves 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 'Slav 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 vet 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; ve 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 Edvrn. 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. Vourself 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 wellnigh 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 eves 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 Oueen laid upon me Was but to rest awhile within her court: Where first as sullen as a beast new-caged. VOL. VII. Q 2

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 In converse for a little, and return'd. And, gravely smiling, lifted her from horse, And kiss'd her with all pureness, brother-like, And show'd an empty tent allotted her, And glancing for a minute, till he saw her Pass into it, turn'd to the Prince, and said:

'Prince, when of late ye pray'd me for my leave To move to your own land, and there defend Your marches, I was prick'd with some reproof, As one that let foul wrong stagnate and be, By having look'd too much thro' alien eyes, And wrought too long with delegated hands, Not used mine own: but now behold me come To cleanse this common sewer of all my realm, With Edyrn and with others: have ye look'd At Edyrn? have ye seen how nobly changed? This work of his is great and wonderful. His very face with change of heart is changed. The world will not believe a man repents: And this wise world of ours is mainly right. Full seldom doth a man repent, or use Both grace and will to pick the vicious quitch Of blood and custom wholly out of him, And make all clean, and plant himself afresh. Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart As I will weed this land before I go. I, therefore, made him of our Table Round, Not rashly, but have proved him everyway One of our noblest, our most valorous, Sanest and most obedient: and indeed

This work of Edyrn wrought upon himself
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 the' 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 fealty, 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.

END OF VOL. VII.