

The Story of
the Grail
and the
Passing of
Arthur.

by
HOWARD PYLE.

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Foreword.



IN this volume there follows the fourth and last series of those histories relating to the life and to the kingship of Arthur, King of England. In this it shall first be told how it befell with Sir Geraint; then it shall be told how the Holy Grail was achieved by Sir Galahad, the son of Sir Launcelot; and then it shall be told how King Arthur passed from this life, and how, after doing battle right royally for his crown and having overcome his enemies, he was slain by one of them whom he had wounded to death.

Much in this is sad, but much is not sad; for all endings are sad, and the passing of any hero is a sad thing to tell of; but the events and the adventures and the achievements of such a man are not sad. Thus it is here said that much of this is sad, but much is not sad.

Now I have for seven years been writing these four books, and in them I have put the best that I have to say concerning such things. Wherefore I now hope that you may like that which I have thus written, for if you do not like it, then I have written in vain; but if you do like these narratives, and the several various incidents in them recounted, then you put the seal of your approval upon my work, and my reward is full. {viii}

Know you that it is a very glorious thing for any man to achieve the approval of others; for all men write for approval, and all would win approval of their fellows if they were able to do so; wherefore, it is my strong hope that you may set the seal of your approval upon these books.

Be it said that some things in these histories are not recounted in other histories of this momentous reign, but that most of the things that I have written are recounted in such histories, and all those things so recounted I have told to you as they have been aforetime written by other men. In this I have shaped them and adapted them from the ancient style in which they were first written so as to fit them to the taste of those who read them to-day.

And I thank God that He has spared my life to finish this work, and also I hope that He may spare me that life still further, to achieve other works which I desire to undertake. But nevertheless it would have been a great regret to me to leave these books unfinished. For I have made a study of this history and have read much concerning it; wherefore, it was my earnest wish to finish that which I had begun if God would spare me my life to do so. This He has done.

So now I take leave of you upon the threshold of this book, and bid you godspeed in reading it. And the first of these adventures that you shall read shall be "The Story of Sir Geraint," which was the first time written in the ancient Welsh, but which is here re-written for your delectation in the manner which I here set it forth.





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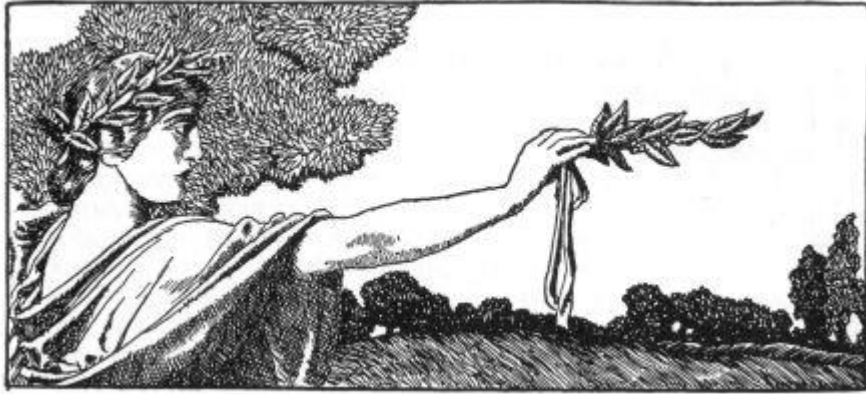
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Sir Geraint, Son of Erbin



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King Arthur proclaims a hunting.

UPON a certain time, at Michaelmas tide, King Arthur held a high hunting near to his court at Carleon-upon-Usk. Upon the morning of the day appointed for this hunting, all the attendants of the King were gathered in the courtyard of the castle ready to depart. The King cast his eyes about him, but he did not see the Queen near at hand. Quoth he, "Where is the Queen this morning, that I do not see her here?" One replied to him, "Lord, she is yet abed and asleep; shall we go wake her?" The King said, "No, if she would rather sleep than hunt, let her lie abed."

Then another said, "Lord, Sir Geraint is not here either. Shall we call him?" King Arthur laughed. "Nay," quoth he, "let him also lie abed if he be drowsy." Therewith they took horse and rode away into the dewy sweetness of the early morning; the birds chaunting their roundelays and the sun bathing the entire earth as in a great bath of golden radiance.

Anon and after they had thus all departed, Queen Guinevere bestirred herself and awoke, and she said to her attendants, "Where is the King?" They say to her, "Lady, he hath ridden into the forest with his court." At that the Queen was vexed, and she said, "Why was I not awakened?" They say to her, "Lady, the King forbade that you should be disturbed." "Well," said she, "let that be as it may, but I shall yet go to view the hunting." So she arose and clad herself in a robe of sea-green taffeta, and she belted herself with a belt of gold, and she had her lady to enmesh⁴ her hair in a net of gold. And after she had broken her fast, she and her court took horse, and rode forth to the woodlands to find the King and his court.

Queen Guinevere and her attendants ride into the forest.

They meet Sir Geraint.

Now as the Queen and her ladies and their attendants wended onward in a sedate and quiet fashion, they were presently aware of one who came riding after them at a hand gallop. Then the Queen drew rein, and said to her attendant ladies, "Who is yonder gentleman who follows us at a hand gallop?" One of her attendants said, "Methinks, Lady, yonder is Sir Geraint." The Queen said, "Yea, it is indeed Sir Geraint," so they all drew rein and waited until Sir Geraint overtook them. Then the Queen said to him, "Sir Geraint, I am glad that thou too art a sluggard, for now, as a penance, we shall hold thee in attendance upon us." "Lady," quoth Sir Geraint, "that is no penance but a pleasure, for what pleasure could be greater than to wait upon you and your court upon so fair and sweet a morning as this?"

"Sir," said the Queen, "that is very well said. Now I bid you to ride beside me, and so together we will seek the King."

So Sir Geraint rode with the Lady Guinevere in that wise, and as they rode they discoursed together concerning many things of interest.

Now as they ambled thus through the forest they presently perceived a small company of riders who came the other way through the checkered lights of the woodland.

The first of these riders was a very strong, powerful and lordly knight in armor. Beside him rode a fair lady clad all in scarlet, and following after these two there came a deformed and crooked dwarf clad in green. And the dwarf sat perched upon a great tall horse like a toad upon a mountain.

Then the Lady Guinevere said, "What company is yonder?" But no one could answer her question. Then the Queen said to one of her damsels, "Go, maiden, and ask the dwarf who is the knight whom he follows."

The maiden bespeaks the dwarf.

So the maiden to whom the Queen spake made forward to meet that party, and she accosted the dwarf, saying, "Sirrah, I pray you tell me, who is the lordly knight whom you follow?" The dwarf said, "I will not tell you, for it is not needful that you should know." The maiden said, "Then, since you are so ungentle to me, I will e'en go and ask the knight his own name. For I do not think he will be so discourteous as not to tell me his name and his degree." The dwarf said, "I forbid you to do that, and I will not permit you to ride forward, for my lord is of such quality that the likes of you are not fit to speak with him." And when he saw that the Queen's maiden was of a{5} mind to follow the knight, he caught the horse by the bridle rein and forced it backward so that the maiden was in danger of falling.

Then the maiden said, "Let go thy hold upon my horse!" and when the dwarf had released her she drew rein and returned to the Queen complaining of the discourtesy of the dwarf, and saying, "Lady, yonder is a most rude and uncivil atomy, for he forbade me to speak to his master, and when I would have done so in spite of him he caught my horse by the bridle rein and forced him backward so that I well-nigh had a fall."

The Queen frowned and was very much displeased, and she said, "Sir Geraint, go you and find for me who is yonder knight." And Sir Geraint said, "I will do so."

Sir Geraint bespeaks the dwarf.

So Sir Geraint rode down to where the others were, and he followed after the three until he had overtaken them. Then he rode up to the dwarf and he said, "Sirrah, tell me the name of yonder knight." The dwarf said, "I will not do so, for it is not befitting that I should speak his name to you."

Sir Geraint said, "Then I will ask for myself." Therewith he set spurs to his horse and drove forward toward the knight. But the dwarf, seeing his intent, spurred his horse across the way, so that Sir Geraint could not pass. And he cried out, "Sir Knight, forbear, for you know not what you do."

The dwarf strikes Sir Geraint.

Sir Geraint said, "Sirrah, bear back!" and therewith would have over-ridden the dwarf. Then the dwarf, in a rage, rose in his stirrups and smote Sir Geraint in the face with a whip which he held in his hand. And the whip struck Sir Geraint across the cheek and the eyelid, so that a great red line immediately started out across his face.

Then when Sir Geraint felt the smart of that blow he was filled with rage and he turned upon the dwarf, clapping hand upon his sword. But he straightway withdrew his hand, saying, "Sirrah, this shall be a sad day for your knight!" Therewith he turned his horse and rode back to where Queen Guinevere was waiting for him. Then he said to her, "Lady, I could not learn the knight his name, but if I have your leave I will follow after him, and when I come to some inhabited place I will purvey me armor, and then I will compel him to return to you and to tell you his name, and to ask pardon for the insult which his dwarf offered your maiden."

Then the Lady Guinevere beheld Sir Geraint's face, and the weal where the dwarf had struck him, and she cried out, "Sir Geraint, what ails your face?" Sir Geraint said, "The dwarf smote me with a whip." The Queen said, "What did you do to him for that blow?" Sir Geraint replied, "I did{6} nothing to him, for I will deal with the knight who is his

master, and not with him." "Sir," said the Lady Guinevere, "you did right in that matter. So I pray you to follow after those people and to do as you are able with the knight who is the master of the dwarf."

Sir Geraint said very proudly, "I need no revenge for the blow of such a mannikin, but I would fain compel this knight to come to you, to disclose to you his name, and to ask pardon of this maiden for the discourtesy of his attendant." The Queen said, "Go; follow him."

Sir Geraint departs after the knight.

So Sir Geraint departed after the knight, and the lady, and the dwarf, as the Queen bade him to do.

So begins the Adventure of Sir Geraint, concerning which you will learn much more if you will read this narrative to its conclusion.



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PART I

The Story of Sir Geraint

HERE beginneth the story of Sir Geraint, which same hath been noted in many ancient histories of the reign of King Arthur, and which is here inserted because it belongeth to the story of King Arthur at this place, as follows:—{8}

Enid and Geraint in the garden:



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Chapter First

How Sir Geraint followed the knight and the lady to whom the dwarf belongeth. How he lodged in a ruined castle, and how he found armor to wear.

SO Sir Geraint followed after that knight and the lady and the dwarf, and they led him at first toward Camelot. Then they turned aside and led him in another direction. For, by and by, they came to a cross-road and they turned into it, and later they came to a high ridge of land that overlooked a valley. And the valley was spread out beneath them, meadow and dale, woodland and fallow, as though it had been carved very minutely in ivory or in some sort of wood, very hard and fine, and so exquisitely and wonderfully modelled that it was as though a man might have covered it with the palm of his hand.

Then, after awhile, they quitted this open ridge of land and entered a woodland. Here they beheld no other thing than trees and green leaves, for all else was shut from sight. And no other sound disturbed the ear saving only the sweet song of the woodland birds, chaunting their pretty roundelay. Anon they descended from these places, and so at last came to a high-road that led beside a wide and brightly shining river, where{10} slow-moving barges and quick wherries drew silvery threads across the smoothly mirroring surface.

Thus, by highland and lowland, by farm and woodland and waterway, the knight, the lady and the dwarf travelled for all that day; and for all that day Sir Geraint followed patiently after them.

So toward eventide they came to a town set on a hill. And overlooking the town was a high grey castle, and there was a wall drawn all about the castle and the town. And over against the town and the castle and set up on a hill opposite to them was another castle, very ruinous and neglected.

The knight enters the town.

The knight, the lady, and the dwarf entered the town, and Sir Geraint followed after them. And he followed them through the streets, and everywhere he beheld great crowds of people, and his ears were confused by the constant and continuous sound of laughing and chatting and calling of voice to voice. For all these people cheered and applauded the knight with his lady and the dwarf, when they entered the town—crowding after them and about them, seeking to touch the knight or his horse. And everywhere the lights of forge fires were burning, and the bellows were blowing, and the anvils were ringing with the continual beating of hammers upon armor. For all the town was in a bustle and uproar, as though preparing an army for battle.

Meantime the knight, the lady and the dwarf made their way through the throng and the turmoil, which every moment became greater and greater about them. For the street was presently full of people, and other people appeared at the windows and looked out and down upon them as they went forward upon their way. And some waved scarves and others cheered, and everywhere there was an uproar around about that place.

Sir Geraint inquires concerning the knight.

Then Sir Geraint said to one who was near to him, "I prithee, friend, what is all this bustle and noise and what does it all portend?" Quoth he to whom Sir Geraint spoke, "The Sparrow-Hawk! The Sparrow-Hawk!" and hurried away.

Then Sir Geraint queried of another, "What is all this to do?" Quoth he, "The Sparrow-Hawk, good friend, the Sparrow-Hawk!" and he also hurried away.

Then there came by a stout red-faced man, and of him Sir Geraint asked, "What is all this noise and bustle? I prithee tell me." Quoth the fat man, "The Sparrow-Hawk, good sir, the Sparrow-Hawk."

Then Sir Geraint was angry, and he reached down from his horse and caught the fat man by his collar, and held him fast. And he said, "Sirrah,{11} I will not let you go until you tell me what is the meaning of all this tumult. Who is yonder knight, and whither goeth he?"

"Hah! Sir! Do you not know?" said the fat man. "Yonder knight is the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk, and he goeth to the castle where he shall lodge until the battle of to-morrow."

Sir Geraint inquires concerning lodging.

"Well," said Sir Geraint, "that is something to know. Now I bid you tell me where I may find lodgings in this town and where I may find arms wherewith a knight may arm himself."

Quoth the fat man, "There is no lodging to be had in this town at such a time as this, nor are there any arms to be found at any place. But if, fair sir, you will cross the valley, to yonder ruined castle, you will doubtless find lodgings for the night, and maybe you may find arms, and to-morrow you may behold the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk overthrow in the lists all who come against him."

Then Sir Geraint, seeing that the three whom he followed were now at the ending of their day's journey, let go the man, who immediately ran away into the crowd that still followed after the knight, the lady, and the dwarf.

So Sir Geraint drew rein and he turned his horse and he quitted that town and crossed over the valley to the ruined castle upon the other side as he had been advised to do.

Sir Geraint approaches the ruined castle.

He bespeaks the old man.

As Sir Geraint drew near to the castle, he was aware of an old man who walked along upon the parapet of the wall. When this old and reverend man beheld Sir Geraint, that he approached, he descended from the wall and he came down to the gate and there met Sir Geraint. And Sir Geraint beheld that the old man was tall and lordly in his appearance and that he had a noble and stately countenance. But Sir Geraint beheld that he was clad in poor and simple garments, grey in color, and patched in places, and worn and threadbare at the seams. Sir Geraint said to him, "Sir, I pray you tell me—shall I find lodgings at this castle for to-night? And I pray you also tell me if you know where I may procure a suit of armor fit for me to wear?"

Quoth the old man, "Fair Sir Knight, it hath been long since any of your quality hath been to this place. For this is a poor and ruined house of a poor and ruined man. Ne'ertheless, such as it is, you are welcome hither. I pray you come in. As for armor, I have every belief that I shall be able to supply you with the same, provided you will accept that which is old and out of date."

Thus saying, the old man took the horse of Sir Geraint by the bridle and{12} he led it into the courtyard of the castle, and when he was come there he set his fingers to his lips and whistled very loud and shrilly. Anon a side door of the castle opened and there came forth a maiden both young and graceful, very tall and slender. And she was clad in a plain blue garment, straight and slim, and girdled with a girdle of blue leather. Her hair was plaited and twisted, and was without any net or ornament of any sort. But Sir Geraint looked at her very searchingly, because it appeared to him that this was the most beautiful young maiden whom he had ever beheld in all of the world.

When the maiden had come to them the old man bade her to take the horse of Sir Geraint to the stable and to see that it was fittingly groomed and cared for.

Then Sir Geraint would have protested at this service, but the old man said, "Sir, I pray you to let be, for we have no servants in this house, and we deem it a shame for a

guest to do himself his own service. Wherefore my daughter shall find it a pleasure for to serve our guest.”

The maiden stables the horse of Sir Geraint.

So Sir Geraint dismounted from his horse and the maiden led it away to the stable. Then the old lord took Sir Geraint into the castle and he conducted him to an upper room wherein he was to lodge. And he prepared a tepid bath for Sir Geraint, and he brought him a loose garment, faded in color but trimmed with fur that had once been handsome and of rich texture, and the garment was very soft and comfortable.

Then the old man called to his wife and he gave some money into her hand, and he said to her, “Go down into the town and procure the best that you are able with this money, for it hath been many days since we have had a guest of so much worth and nobility as this gentleman appears to possess.”

So the old gentlewoman went down into the town, and after a little she returned again with a porter bearing a great hamper of food.

Meanwhile, whilst this food was preparing for supper, Sir Geraint and the old lord of the castle walked in the garden talking together.

Sir Geraint inquires concerning the knight of the Sparrow-Hawk.

Quoth Sir Geraint, “Sir, I pray you tell me several matters. First, I pray you tell me of this Sparrow-Hawk concerning whom yonder place appears to have gone mad?”

“Messire,” said the old lord, “I will tell you. Some years ago I was the earl and overlord of yonder town. But my younger brother undermined me with the inhabitants, and lately he hath gathered all of my power into his hands. Wherefore he is there, lodged in all splendor, and I am here, as thou seest.”{13}

“Now you are to know that my brother hath a mind to assemble a court of very worthy knights about him. Wherefore he hath had made a sparrow-hawk of pure silver which same is mounted at the top of a silver staff. For this sparrow-hawk many knights have come jousting; for what knight soever gaineth it and keepeth it for three years in succession, that knight shall be known as the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk. Wherefore many have contested for it.

“For two years now a knight, hight Sir Gaudeamus of the Moors, hath overcome all who have come against him, and if he overcome all the knights contestant again for this year, he shall be acknowledged as the true Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk.”

Sir Geraint asks for armor.

Thus spake the old lord of the ruined castle, and when he had done Sir Geraint said, “Sir, with that armor which you say you have, I think that I myself will contend with that knight to-morrow day. So I pray you to let that armor be sent to my room, where I may have it to hand when I want it.”

Quoth the old lord, “Messire, I have, as I told you, such a suit of armor, but it is of a sort that I know not whether you will wear it or not, for it is old and beaten; but if so be you are not ashamed to wear such ancient armor, I shall be glad to purvey it for you.”

“Sir,” said Sir Geraint, “I give you high thanks. And now come I to another matter. A short while ago I saw a maiden whom I thought was the most beautiful that ever mine eyes beheld. Now if that damsel hath no knight to serve her, I pray you tell me if I may fight for her sake to-morrow in the field of the Sparrow-Hawk?”

Said the old man, “Sir, that maiden is my daughter and my only child. Her name is Enid. If so be she shall accept you for her knight, then shall I be more than glad for her to do so. But I will send her to you, and you may break that matter to her yourself.”

Sir Geraint bespeaks Enid the Fair.

With this, the old lord took his departure; anon came Enid the Fair into the garden where Sir Geraint awaited her, and when he beheld her coming, his heart was very glad. So she came to him, and he took her very gently by the hand, and he said to her, “Lady, here am I, a knight of King Arthur’s Round Table and of his Court. I am of good repute and I believe am not altogether unworthy of my belt and my spurs. You, I think, are not more than twenty years of age, and I have nearly twice those years, yet I find that I have great pleasure in gazing upon you. Now I pray you, tell me if your heart may incline unto me sufficiently to suffer me to be your knight in the tournament to-morrow day. For I purpose then to endeavor for this Sparrow-{14}Hawk, and I have no lady whom I might consider as the lady of my heart upon such an occasion.”

At this address Enid was very much astonished and abashed. She uplifted her eyes and looked at Sir Geraint very steadily for a little. And she beheld that he was tall and powerful of frame and that he possessed a strong and very noble face. Wherefore her heart went out to him and she said, “Noble Lord, it will give me great pleasure to accept you for my knight champion, if it so be that one of your high nobility and splendid distinction shall regard my poor estate. For my father hath not money to buy him clothes for us all, nor hath he any honor or estate saving only this ruined castle wherein we dwell. Wherefore it is not meet for me to lift mine eyes to one of your high estate and exalted quality.”

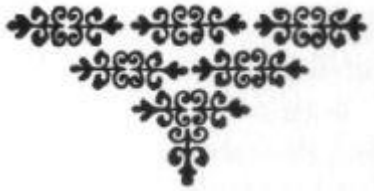
Then Sir Geraint regarded her very earnestly, and he found her to be still more beautiful than he had at first thought her to be; and he said, “Enid, it may be that thy present estate and quality is not very great, yet thy face is more beautiful than that of any woman whom I ever yet beheld, wherefore I would fain have thee to consign thyself for my true and only lady. If thou wilt do this, it may be that I shall be able to be of great help and assistance both to thee and to thy father.”

She said to him, “Lord, I will accept thee for my true and faithful knight.”

Enid gives Sir Geraint her belt.

Then Sir Geraint said, “Now I have no favor of thine to wear. I pray thee give me that belt thou wearest about thy waist, for I myself will wear it twisted about mine arm to-morrow.” So Enid gave him her belt of leather and he buckled it about his arm.

Then he gave her his hand and she gave her hand to him. So, hand in hand, they departed from that place and entered the castle.



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{16}

Sir Geraint and the Knight of the Sparrow-hawk ¶ ¶ ¶



{17}



Chapter Second

How Sir Geraint fought with the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk; how he set right the wrongs of the earldom and how he returned to the Court of the King.

NOW tell we of that notable battle betwixt Sir Geraint and the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk.

Of the place of battle.

In the level field below the town there was a fine field of green grass, such as was well fitted for knights to tilt upon. Here there was a high seat arranged for the earl of that town, and for his court, and that seat was hung and draped with crimson cloth embroidered with silver gryphons (which same was the emblazonment of the earl). Below the place of tilting and hard by that place was the silver sparrow-hawk under guard of six esquires clad all in crimson embroidered with silver gryphons. The sparrow-hawk was of pure silver, shining very brightly in the glorious sunlight. And it was set upon a cross-bar of pure silver, and the cross-bar of silver was supported by a rod of silver thrust into the earth.

Already the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk had fought with several opponents that morning and had overthrown them all, the one after the other. So now, as none came against him, he waited in his pavilion till noon, against which time the silver sparrow-hawk should be assigned to him; and as to the people who were gathered to view the sport, they were grown restless and moved about and conversed together, for it seemed to them that no one would come to contest again with Sir Gaudeamus.

How Sir Geraint and his companions arrive at the place of battle.

But of a sudden, a little group of four figures suddenly appeared coming across the meadowland beyond. The first of these was the old Earl of that town. Beside him rode a knight, tall and strong of figure, and behind these two came the lady of the Earl and his daughter. These presented a very dull and motley appearance, for the Earl was clad in frayed and weather-worn black, and Sir Geraint was clad in the ancient and battered armor of the Earl that had been given to him. In this he presented a very singular appearance, as though he had stepped from an olden painting.

When those who were there perceived how poor and ancient was the armor that Sir Geraint wore, there began a ripple of laughter that spread and grew in magnitude until it was like a torrent of high sounding mirth. But ever the Earl of the town did not join in this mirth, otherwise he sat with great dignity in his seat, and neither laughed nor smiled, although all of his court made great mirth and applauded at Sir Geraint as though he were some jester clad in armor for their sport.

But Sir Geraint paid no heed to all this merriment; otherwise he rode forward through the field. And after he had found place for the old Lord who was with him, and for the lady of that Earl and for Enid, he rode up to the high seat of the Earl and bespoke him thus:

“Lord, here stand I, a knight of the Court of King Arthur, and of his Round Table, to do battle upon behalf of the Lady Enid of this place for yonder silver sparrow-hawk. Now I pray thee tell me, have I thy permission to engage in that battle?”

But now no longer was there any sound of laughter or of jeering from the lords and the ladies of that court; otherwise, all stood up to look upon him, although they could see naught of his face by reason that the visor of his helmet was lowered.

“Sir Knight,” said the Earl, “this contest is open to all, wherefore it is also free to thee.”

Sir Geraint challenges the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk.

Then Sir Geraint saluted the Earl and his court, and riding across the meadow of battle to the pavilion of Gaudeamus, the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk, he smote with his spear upon the shield of that knight with all his might and main so that it rang again like a bell. Then the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk appeared at the door of his pavilion, and he said, “Who art thou in that ancient, outland armor who smites my shield with thy lance? Art thou a jester? If so, I think thy jest will cost thee very dear.”

Quoth Sir Geraint, “I am not a jester, but am one who hath come to do battle with thee. Therefore, prepare thyself to meet me, for I have great reason to be offended with thee. If fortune betide me, this day shalt thou do penance to a great lady for thy dwarf and for his discourtesy to her.”

“Hah!” quoth the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk, “this is a very strange thing, that thou shouldst have taken up such a quarrel as this against a strange and misshapen dwarf. As for thy challenge, it shall be answered immediately.” Therewith he of the Sparrow-Hawk went back into his pavilion again to put on his helmet and to make him ready for combat.{19}

Meantime Sir Geraint rode to his stand, which he assumed in due order, preparing himself in all wise for this encounter that was about to befall.

Anon came the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk, armed cap-a-pie in shining and very splendid armor. Upon his shield he had emblazoned a silver sparrow-hawk, and the crest upon his helmet was also a silver sparrow-hawk wreathed with a thin silver scarf. And all who beheld those two figures could not but applaud the splendor of his appearance, as they could not but laugh at the quaint appearance of Sir Geraint.

Sir Geraint engages the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk.

So when these two knights were in all wise ready, each in his place, the trumpets of the marshals of the list sounded the assault, and they rushed together like thunder

and so that the earth trembled and shook beneath the trampling of their horses' hoofs.

So they crashed together in the midst of the course with a roar and a crackle of splintered lance.

Sir Geraint overthrows the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk.

For in that assault the lance of the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk was broken into as many as twenty pieces, but the lance of Sir Geraint held, so that it pierced through the shield of the other knight, lifting him completely out of the saddle and casting him with great violence to the earth so that he rolled three times over ere he ceased to fall.

But when the people of the town beheld their champion thus cast to the earth by that strange knight in ancient armor they were very greatly displeased and murmured together saying, the one to the other, "What knight is this? Who is this clad in outland armor who overthroweth our champion? Is he a hero? Is he Sir Launcelot of the Lake; or who is he?"

But even whilst they thus spoke the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk recovered from the terrible violence of his fall. His wits returned to him like a flock of scattered birds, and with them a knowledge of the shame of his overthrow. Then he leaped to his feet and drew his sword, crying out, "Sir Knight! Come down and do me battle afoot! For though thou hast overthrown me with thy lance, yet thou hast not yet conquered me."

And with that, others of those who were there assembled began to cry out, "Come down, Sir Knight! Come down, and fight him afoot!"

Sir Geraint does battle with the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk.

So Sir Geraint leaped down from his horse and drew his sword. And he set his shield before him and so approached his enemy, and meantime Sir Gaudeamus had made ready for that assault. Then suddenly they sprang together like two wild bulls in battle; lashing and lashing again and again. The dust arose up around them and for a time no onlooker could tell which had the better of that fight. But at last Sir Geraint waxed very angry at being so withstood, wherefore he rained blow upon blow like the continual crashing of thunder. Then the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk grew weak in his assault. He bore back and held his shield full low. Upon that Sir Geraint uplifted his strength and smote his enemy with so furious a might that Sir Gaudeamus let fall his shield from his defence. Then again Sir Geraint smote him with all his might upon the crown of his undefended helmet, so woful a blow that the blade bit through the iron of the headpiece and deep into the bone of the brain pan.

He overcomes that knight.

With that blow the brains of the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk swam like water; the strength left his limbs; his thighs trembled and he fell down upon his knees and sought to catch hold of the thighs of Sir Geraint. But Sir Geraint avoided him, and reaching forward, he caught him by the helmet and snatched it from off his head. Then he caught the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk by the hair of the head and he drew his neck forward as though to smite off his head upon the ground. But the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk, beholding death hovering above him, cried out in a muffled voice, "Spare me, Sir Knight, spare my life!"

Then Sir Geraint cried out, "I will not spare thy life, Sir Knight, unless thou wilt thus, upon thy knees, tell me thy name."

The knight proclaims his name.

"My name," said the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk, "is Sir Gaudeamus of the Moors."

"Still will I not spare thee," said Sir Geraint, "unless thou wilt bind thyself with a pledge to go to the Court of King Arthur and there tell to Queen Guinevere thy name and thy degree of arms."

"All this," said the other, "I promise in full."

"Still I will not spare thee," said Sir Geraint, "unless thou wilt engage that thy dwarf shall go with thee to earn forgiveness for his discourtesy to the damsel of the queen whom he hath offended."

"This also," said the knight, "I will engage for him to do."

Sir Geraint spares the knight his life.

Then Sir Geraint said, "Arise, Sir Gaudeamus, for I spare thee." And therewith Sir Gaudeamus arose and stood upon his feet, still trembling with the weakness of his battle, and the blood running in torrents from the great wound upon his head. Then came several esquires and Sir Geraint said to them, "Take him away and look to his hurts," and they did so.

Now, after this, there came an herald upon the field of battle, and he approached Sir Geraint and said to him, "Sir Knight, the earl of this town hath sent me to beseech you to come to him." Sir Geraint said, "Take me to him.{21}"

So the herald led the way and Sir Geraint followed after him until he stood face to face with the Earl. The Earl said to him, "Sir Knight, I make my vow thou art a strong and

terrible knight. I pray thee, tell me thy name that I may know to whom I am to give the prize of battle.”

“Sir,” said Sir Geraint, “I am called Geraint, and am the son of the King of Erbin, and I am a Knight of King Arthur’s Court and of his Round Table.” “Hah!” said the Earl, “then it is small wonder that thou didst win thy battle so easily, for thy deeds are famous in all the courts of chivalry. Now I pray thee, Sir, that thou wilt come to my castle and will feast with me to-night, so that I may do honor to so famous a knight, for all the world knoweth of thee and of thy deeds.”

Then Sir Geraint looked at him very sternly and he said, “Messire, I will not sit down with thee at table unless I know by what right thou assumest thy state as earl, and by what right thou hast dispossessed the former earl of his state and his property.”

At this the Earl’s face fell, but he presently said, “Well, I will tell all these and several other things to thee if thou wilt come with me to my castle. And my brother the old Earl and his wife and his daughter shall also come. And when we sit at feast, I will lay all things before thee and thou shalt judge betwixt the old Earl and me, and I will abide by what thou decidest as to the rights of this case.”

“Then,” said Sir Geraint, “we will come to thy castle with thee.”

Sir Geraint feasts with the young Earl.

So that night there was a great feast prepared in honor of Sir Geraint, and Sir Geraint and the old Earl and his countess and their daughter Enid sat with the Earl and his court at the castle of the Earl. Sir Geraint sat upon the right hand of the Earl, and upon his left hand sat the old Earl.

So after they had eaten and whilst they sat with their wine before them, quoth Sir Geraint, “I pray thee now, my Lord Earl, for to tell me what thou promised to do; to wit, how it stands with thee and the old Earl of this city.”

“Sir Knight,” said the young Earl, “I will do so. Thus it was: When our father died he left this town to my brother, whilst to me he left that ruined castle yonderway across the valley.

“Now my brother was a very passive man and would do little to benefit this place either by regulating its laws or by punishing its criminals; or by establishing in it a court of chivalry.

The young Earl tells his story.

“All the affairs of state were left to my command, whilst my brother contented himself with his domestic life and did very little to regulate the affairs of the state. Hence it befell that the people of this town looked{22} to me to help them and to advise with them. Thus, at last, I became the real ruler of all our affairs. This continued for several years; then at last the people said, ‘Why should we support our Earl who does nothing for us, whilst this lord whom we do not support giveth us all that he hath in him to give?’ So the people arose one night, and drove their earl and his wife and his daughter out of the castle and out of the town, and since that time he hath been dwelling in that old ruined castle that one time belonged to me, where thou didst find him; and I have been dwelling here. This, Sir Geraint, is the true story of our affairs.”

Then Sir Geraint turned to the old Earl and he said, “Sir, I pray you tell me, is this true?” The old Earl said, “Methinks it is true.” “Then,” said Sir Geraint, “this is the doom that I pronounce: That the present Earl shall rule this town as he hath ruled it heretofore, but that he shall give to the old Earl the one-half of all the money receipts of the town, so that he may support the style of living befitting his rank. And I furthermore ordain that this Earl who rules this city shall transmit the rule thereof to whatsoever heirs or assigns he may elect to succeed him.”

Sir Geraint proclaims the doom of the two Earls.

So Sir Geraint decided his doom, and that which he said was satisfactory to all. And he abided several days at that place, and during that time he saw much of Enid and the more he saw of her the more he loved her.

So one day, they two walking in the garden of the old castle alone together, he said to her, “Lady, I have seen many fair dames in my day, but never did I behold one who was so dear to my heart as thou art. Now I pray thee tell me, have I found favor in thy sight?” She said, “Yea, Lord, thou hast found great favor.” Said Sir Geraint, “Have I found such favor that thou wilt depart hence with me as my wife?” Enid said, “Lord, if it is thy desire to have me do so I will gladly become thy wife, and will depart with thee whithersoever thou dost command; for, in truth, I have now no other thought in all the world but of thee.”

Then Sir Geraint kissed her and thus was their troth plighted.

Sir Geraint is betrothed to Enid.

So they were wedded, and before they were wedded the young Earl said, “Sir Geraint, suffer that I purvey thy lady with a robe of cloth of gold meet for such an one to wear upon the occasion of her marriage.” But Sir Geraint said to him, “Not so, Messire, for I won her whilst she was clad in this robe of plain blue cloth. Thus will I take her to the

Court of King Arthur and thus will I present her to Queen Guinevere, and I will have it that Queen Guinevere will provide her with fresh raiment meet for her to wear. {23}"

Then the young Earl bowed his head and said, "As thou sayst, so let it be."

Thus it befell that Sir Geraint was married, and the morning after his marriage he and his lady departed from that town. And he seated his lady before him upon the saddle and turned his horse's head toward the Court of King Arthur and so rode away.

Now return we to Queen Guinevere and to the Court of the King.

Sir Gaudeamus arrives at the court of Queen Guinevere.

Three days after the departure of Sir Geraint the Queen was riding abroad, and several of her court attendants were with her, and amongst them was the young damsel who had inquired of the dwarf concerning the name of the knight whom he followed. As they rode talking and laughing together—chattering in clear voices, like a bevy of bright and gloriously tinted birds—they perceived coming toward them a procession. First they beheld a litter borne by several bearers and on the litter was a wounded knight. Behind the litter came the horse of the knight, and the horse was laden with his bright and shining armor, and led by an esquire. Behind the horse there came a fair young lady clad in scarlet riding upon a white palfrey, and behind her a small misshapen dwarf.

Now when this party had come a little nigher, Queen Guinevere perceived the face of the dwarf more clearly and she knew him for that dwarf who had rebuffed her damsel as aforetold. And she said to that one of her attendants who had aforetime met the dwarf, "Is not that the dwarf who rebuffed thee a few days ago?" The damsel said, "Yea, Lady." "Then," said the Queen, "meseems the knight his master hath met Sir Geraint and hath suffered in his encounter and is coming here to bespeak me. Let us go forward to meet them."

So the Queen and her court hurried forward until they had come beside the litter. Then the Queen said, "Sir Knight, I pray you tell me, what is it that ails you?" "Lady," said he, "I am a knight who hath suffered in battle. Now I pray you tell me, where may I find Queen Guinevere?"

The Queen said, "Messire, I am she." Quoth the knight, "Lady, is it truth you are telling me or are you making sport of me?" The Queen said, "Sir, it is the truth."

Then Sir Gaudeamus raised himself upon his elbow in the litter, and he said, "Lady, I come to thee upon command of Sir Geraint, who hath overthrown me in battle; and upon his command I am to tell thee that my name is Sir Gaudeamus of the Moors, and upon his command I am to seek for the damsel to whom my dwarf was rude.{24}"

Said Queen Guinevere, "This is she."

Then Sir Gaudeamus said to the maiden, "Fair damsel, of thee I am to ask pardon for the rudeness of my dwarf, and to crave of thee that thou from thy grace and kindness wilt forgive his offence."

Then the heart of Queen Guinevere was moved with pity for the knight, and she said to him, "Messire Sir Gaudeamus of the Moors, thou and thy dwarf are fully forgiven by her and by me. Now I pray you to come straightway to the castle where your hurts may be examined and cured."

So the Queen led the way to the castle of the King, and all they went thitherward. And after they had come to the castle she had the wounded knight laid upon a couch in a bright and cheerful room, and she had the king's physician to come and to look at his hurts and to dress them. And so Sir Gaudeamus was made in all ways as comfortable as might be.

So passed three or four days.

Sir Geraint and Enid arrive at the castle of King Arthur.

One morning the Queen looked out from her bower window and she beheld a knight riding toward the castle. And there sat before him upon his saddle a fair lady with golden hair, and the lady was clad in blue. The Queen called to her bower women and said, "Who is that knight coming yonder?" Said one of the women, "That, methinks, is Sir Geraint." The Queen said, "Yea, that is true. Methought it was he; let us hasten to meet him."

So she and her ladies made haste and they met Sir Geraint and Enid at the gateway of the castle. The Queen said, "Sir Geraint, who is it that thou hast with thee?" He said, "Lady, this is my wife, to whom I am but newly married. I have brought her here clad in blue cloth as I first beheld her. And I have hope that thou wilt clothe her as beseemeth her estate as the daughter of an earl, the lady of a knight-royal, and as my wife."

Then the Queen said, "Welcome! welcome, Lady! I give thee welcome!" And after that she assisted Enid to dismount from the horse. Thereafter she took her to her bower, and there she clad her in the richest robes that could be furnished for her. And the face of Enid shone from out of that raiment of silver and gold as the face of the moon

upon a summer night shines from the thin and golden clouds that surround but do not obscure it.

Thus was the Fair Enid brought to the Court of King Arthur.{26}{25}

Sir Geraint lies asleep 卐 卐



{27}



Chapter Third

How Sir Geraint lived with the Lady Enid at Camelot. How he suspected her truth; how his suspicions were confirmed, and how he departed with her in search of adventure. Also how they met with three unusual adventures in the forest.

It is not always well for a man to be married to a woman of half his age; for that which he thinks and loves she may neither think nor love, and that which she thinks and loves, he maybe does not think and does not love.

Now Sir Geraint was serious, as became his years, and Enid was gay and debonaire as became her youth, so that there were many sports and pastimes that she engaged in that he looked upon remotely and from afar, and not always without displeasure.

Amongst the lords of the Court of King Arthur was a young knight and lord, hight Sir Peregrans, who was son to King Ludd of Cornwall. This noble young knight-royal was very full of joy and gladness. He was ruddy-cheeked and gay, with broad black eyebrows and curly black hair, and he was ever ready for any sport or pastime that fell his way.

It befell that he and Enid were much together in company and sports of several kinds, and though Sir Geraint was too proud to appear to observe this, yet he did observe it and was much affected by it. For he would sometimes say to himself, "What pity it is that this dear lady of mine should be bound to my age and sobriety instead of to one like this Sir Peregrans who is in all ways suited to her!" Yet Sir Geraint would say nothing to Enid concerning his thoughts, but only kept those thoughts locked in his own heart, and so withdrew himself from her afar off.

This and several other things the Lady Enid observed, and it sometimes seemed to her either that her lord was in trouble or that he was offended, yet she wist not what offence she could have given to him in any way. For it did not seem to her that it could be any offence for her to play in the same sports with Sir Peregrans, but only that it was natural and seemly upon her part to do so.{28}

Sir Geraint sits in thought.

Now one day Sir Geraint sat meditating concerning these things, and as he sat he gazed out of the window at the King's Castle. What time his eyes beheld a wide and fruitful stretch of meadow-land and fields, of glebe and of a river that wound through all this fair level fruitful campagne like to a ribbon of pure and shining silver. The sun at that hour shot his slanting rays across the earth, so that all this fair prospect appeared, as it were, to be bathed in a pure golden brightness. From the level stretch of horizon, great clouds climbed up into the blue and radiant sky, peeping, as it were, over one another's shoulders down upon the peaceful earth.

All this the eyes of Sir Geraint beheld, yet he saw nothing of it. For the sight of his soul was turned away from such things, and was directed inward upon himself, and there he beheld naught but gloom and darkness.

To that place where he sat came the Lady Enid, and she beheld him where he was, but he did not turn his eyes upon her, nor seem to know that she was there.

Enid comes to Sir Geraint.

Then she came to him and seated herself upon his knee. She put her thin fair arms about his neck, and interwove her fingers into one another. Then she said, "Dear my Lord, I pray thee tell me in what way I have offended thee. Thou art no longer toward me as thou wert when first I came hitherward to this court."

He said to her, speaking very gently, "Enid, thou hast in no wise offended me."

Then she said, "What is it that troubles thee, my husband?"

He said, "I have no trouble." Then, as in a second thought, he said, "Enid, I will tell thee somewhat." Therewith he unlocked her two hands and sat, holding one of them in his. "Sometimes," quoth he, "a man loveth the home that is his very own. So love I the home of my childhood and of my youth. There my father dwelleth in honor, and my mother also. It hath been many years since I have seen it and I long to see it now."

She said, "Dear Lord! Let us go thither."

He said, "Wouldst thou like to go, Enid? Well, then, we shall do so, and that as soon as my Lord the King shall grant us leave to depart."

So that very day Sir Geraint asked leave of King Arthur to leave the court for awhile, and King Arthur gave him permission to withdraw.

They two depart for the castle of Sir Geraint.

So the day after that day Sir Geraint and Enid departed from the Court of King Arthur, and travelling with a small party of noble attendants betook their way to Amadora (which was the name of the castle of Sir Geraint's father), which place they reached within three days of easy journeying.{29}

There they abided for several months, in which time there was hunting and hawking and jousting, so that the days were as full of joy and pleasure as it was possible to be.

Sir Geraint takes sport at his castle.

But in all that while Sir Geraint did nothing of knightly daring or adventure, so that by and by the people of Amadora began to talk to one another concerning the matter, saying, "How is this? Our Prince, the Lord Geraint, is surely besotted concerning his wife, for he is with her all the while. The time was when he took his joys, but when the time of those joys was past then he performed many works of knightly daring, so that

all we of this place were very proud of him. When now doth he enter into any such undertaking? Never. He is always the first in the chase or with the hawk or in the joust, yet his youthful glory is now departed from him, so that he lieth forever, as it were, with his head upon the knees of his wife.”

Thus the people talked amongst themselves, and at last such words, or words like these, came to the ears of the Lady Enid and troubled her very sorely.

Enid regards Sir Geraint whilst he sleeps.

One day in the summer weather she awoke very early in the morning and the Lord Geraint lay upon his bed beside her. He had thrown aside the coverlets and he now lay with his great breast and his arms and shoulders bare to the softness of the air. These she beheld, how huge and mighty they were and how comely in their strength and power. Then she looked at her own arm, how slender and white it was, how lacking of strength, how feeble and childish in its weakness, and she thought to herself, “Is it then true what they say—that my white and tender limbs may hold my husband away from those great adventures to which he belongs? Is it then true that mine arms confine him in a little and narrow circumference? Alas! Is it true that the love of a woman can sap a man of all purpose and ambition in his life of activity? Nay; it is not true, for many knights who are wedded to other ladies are still noble knights in the field of adventure. Alas and alas! The weakness of my lord must indeed reside in me.” Here she sighed very deeply and with the deepness of that sigh Sir Geraint awoke from his slumbers and lay with his eyes still closed. Then she said, whispering as though to herself, “I am at fault and am no true, right wife for this noble hero.”

Sir Geraint hears her words.

Now Sir Geraint, lying with his eyes closed, overheard these last words that she thus whispered to herself. He heard her say that she was no true, right wife to him, and it seemed to him that she thus confessed that she was unfaithful to him. This thought was, as it were, a dagger thrust into his life, sudden, shining and very deep. And though he still lay with his eyes closed, he said to his heart, “Is she then false, and was I too late in bringing her away from the Court of King Arthur? Woe is me!”

Thereupon he opened his eyes, and looked her full in the face, and she, seeing that he was awake, smiled into his eyes. But he did not smile upon her in return, otherwise he said, “Lady, art thou there?” Then the smile slowly faded from her eyes, for she saw that he was in an angry mood. And so they regarded one another.

Then suddenly he arose and began dressing himself, and he said to her, “Arise, Lady, and clothe yourself.” And she did as he commanded. He upon his own part accoutred

himself in his full armor, that hung erstwhile shining against the stone wall of the room.

When they were thus apparelled he said to her, "Follow me." She said, "Whither, Lord?" but he made no reply to her. So they went forth together out of that apartment. And she followed him down the stairway to the courtyard, and she followed him from the courtyard to the stable, and still in all that while he spoke no further word to her.

Now this time was still very early in the morning, for the sun had only just arisen, round and red and full of the glory of daylight. The birds were chaunting with might and main, but all of the castle folk were yet asleep. All was cool and balmy and exceedingly pleasant, and the silence of the early daytime was full of the remote sound of the river below the castle, where it rushed down, roaring, through its deep and mossy gorges of green and slimy rocks and stones.

Sir Geraint entered the stables and Enid awaited him what he would do; and that while she stood not far off from the stable. After awhile he came forth from the stable again and by one hand he led the horse of Enid by the bridle, and by the other hand he led his own horse by the bridle.

He said to Enid, "Mount thy horse, Lady," and giving her his hand he lifted her very lightly to her saddle. Then he in his turn mounted his own horse.

They depart from the castle.

Then when he was seated in his saddle, he said to the Lady Enid his wife, "Lady, for this day and haply for several days I will endeavor to prove to thee that strength and life have not yet left me, but that I am still a strong and able knight and as well worth the love of any woman as I was in the full heyday of my youth. Ride you forth and lead the way, and I will follow after you. But make yourself well acquainted with this: that under no circumstances are you to speak a word to me unless I give you leave to speak to me. Only ride straight forward, anywhither you may be inclined."

She said to him, "Lord, I will fulfil your commands.{31}"

So they rode away from the castle without any one knowing that they were gone, for there stood no guard at the gateway at that hour and the porter drowsed in his lodge.

So, according to the command of Sir Geraint, the Lady Enid rode ahead of him and he himself followed after her some considerable distance behind.

Thus they went forward for several leagues, and meantime the sun rose very full and round and shone down hotly upon the earth. So by and by they approached the purlieu of a thick dark forest, and as they drew near to it the Lady Enid was aware of the sudden shining of armor through the leaves, wherefore she wist that some threatening of danger must lie before them. As they drew still nearer to that place, she perceived that there were three armed men hidden in the thickets, and anon she heard them speaking the one to the other. And she heard the voice of him who was the chief of the three say to the other two, "Hitherward cometh good fortune to us this morning. For here is one man, well appointed in all ways, but sunk very deep in brooding thought, and with him is a fair lady. Now if we engage him as three against one, it is not likely that he can withstand our assault, and so he and his horse and his armor and his lady shall be ours by right of battle."

Enid overhears the words of the robber chief.

These words, or words like these, the Lady Enid overheard the chief of the robbers speak to the other two who were with him; and she said to herself, "Here is great danger threatening my dear Lord. Well, if I warn him he may be very angry with me and may even chastise me for disobeying his command. But even if this is so, what will it matter?" So therewith she turned her horse and rode back toward Sir Geraint.

She tells Sir Geraint of the ambush.

He, when he beheld her coming, appeared to be very angry, and he said, "Lady, what is it disturbs you?" She said, "Dear Lord, have I your permission to speak?" Quoth he, "It seems that you have taken that permission yourself. Well, say on." She said, "Lord, at the edge of yonder wood I perceived three men of ill intent hidden in the thicket. I overheard them to say that they purposed presently to assail you. Wherefore I deemed it expedient that I should warn you of their presence."

Then Sir Geraint frowned so that his eyes shone with a bright green light. "Lady," said he, "it may perhaps be that you would not be displeased to see me fall before the attack of those three men. Nevertheless, I have hopes that I shall not fail in this encounter. Meantime, continue here and consider you of your disobedience in breaking my command laid^{32} upon you not to speak to me without my permission." Having thus spoken Sir Geraint closed and latched the visor of his helmet, and then with spear in hand he rode forward toward the edge of the woods.

Now when Sir Geraint had come pretty close to the woodland, all three of those armed men suddenly burst forth from their covert and bore down upon him in full charge, whilst he, upon his part, drave spurs into his war-horse and charged against

them. So they met in the midst of the course with such violence that a clap of thunder could not have been so great. All three of their spears struck Sir Geraint upon the shield, but he turned them so that all three were broken into a very great many pieces. But the spear of Sir Geraint held against him toward whom it was directed, so that it penetrated his shield and it penetrated his armor and it penetrated his body, so that he was lifted out of his saddle and cast dead the length of a spear and an arm's length behind his horse.

Sir Geraint slays the robbers.

Then Sir Geraint threw aside his spear and drew his bright shining sword. And he whirled his horse and with his sword in hand he bare down upon those other two villains. Then he arose in his saddle, crying out, "Hah, villain!" and therewith he smote down one. Then whirling about, he cried out again, "Hah, villain!" and so crying he smote down the other. Each man fell with a single blow of his sword. Thus in a little space of time, he slew all three of those villains who had for a long time infested those parts.

When Sir Geraint had thus ended this work, he wiped his sword and returned it to its scabbard. Then he removed the armor from each of the fallen men, and he lashed the armor to the saddle-bow of the horse to which it belonged. Then he tied all three bridle reins together and returned to where Enid sat watching him with terror and admiration commingled. And Sir Geraint said to her, "Lady, take thou the bridle reins of these three horses. Then ride forward as before, and this time bear well in mind that thou turn not to speak to me under any condition whatsoever. Once I have forgiven thee; twice I may not do so."

To this speech Enid made no reply, but taking the bridle reins of the three horses into her fair white hand, she rode forward into the forest, leading those three horses, Sir Geraint following after her as aforetime.

Thus they proceeded onward for a very considerable length of time and until high noontide, beholding nothing but the forest before them or behind them or on either side of them.

Enid overhears the words of the four men.

Thus they came almost to the centre of that wood where was a sudden turn in the high-road, which here entered into a defile between two high and very precipitous banks. At this place Enid perceived, not far away,{33} four armed and mounted men of a very evil appearance, and she overheard these men talking among themselves. The one who was chief of them was saying to his companions, "Look! yonder cometh a

good prize for us to take. For there is a very beautiful damsel and three sets of fine armor and three horses. And all this is guarded only by one armed man. Let us slay him and all these will be ours to do with as we choose.”

Then Enid said to herself, “Well, I can die but once, and even though my lord shall slay me for breaking his command, yet it would be by his beloved hands that I should die. So I will turn back and tell him of this.”

Therewith she turned her horse about and rode backward to Sir Geraint, and he, when he saw her coming, frowned very darkly. But she said, speaking very steadily, “Lord, have I your leave to speak?”

He said with great bitterness, “Lady, it appears that it does not need my leave for you to speak whensoever you choose to speak. Say on.”

She tells Sir Geraint.

She said, “Lord, I have to tell you that there are four very powerful and fully armed men yonder. And I overheard the chief of them to say to his fellows that their intent is to slay you so that they may have your horse and your armor and me and these three horses and this armor to dispose of as they see fit.”

“Is that all,” quoth he, “that thou hast to tell me? It seems that thy delight in talking is so great that thou canst not be checked. Bide thou here and I will go forward and deal with these men, and so will clear thy path for thee.”

Thereupon he closed the visor of his helmet and latched it. Then he set spurs to his horse, and being thus in all ways prepared, he drave forward to meet his enemies.

Suddenly they appeared bearing down upon him and riding two together (because of the narrowness of the way that prevented them from riding all four abreast).

Then Sir Geraint drave his war-horse to the charge and so they came together with a great crash and uproar, their spears striking him in the centre of the shield.

But in that encounter both their spears brake into several pieces, but Sir Geraint’s spear did not break. Otherwise it held and burst through the shield against which it was directed, and it burst through the armor and pierced through the body of the man within the armor so that he was cast dead upon the ground.

Then Sir Geraint threw aside his spear and drew his sword, and rising in his stirrups he smote the other man so fierce and direful a blow that he{34} split asunder his shield and his helmet and pierced through the brain-pan of the head and into the brains

themselves, so that he who was thus smitten cried out most dolorously, "I die! I die!" and thereupon fell grovelling to the earth.

Then Sir Geraint whirled his horse and setting spurs to its flanks he thundered down upon the other two, who sat beholding aghast how easily and quickly he had overthrown their comrades. Nor hardly had they recovered themselves than he was upon them, smiting to the right hand and to the left. Then observing an opening in the defence of one of them, he whirled upon him and smote with might and main, and the blade of the sword clave that man through from the shoulder to the midriff.

Sir Geraint slays the four men.

Then the fourth villain, seeing his companions fall thus terribly into death, would have escaped away, but death was upon him. For he beheld Sir Geraint rise in his stirrups with sword lifted. Then the sword descended like a thunderbolt, and he too fell with his brain dissolving into death.

Then Sir Geraint dismounted from his steed and wiped his terrible blade, and thrust it back into its scabbard. And he stripped the armor off the dead bodies, and tied each suit of armor upon the horse to whom it appertained. After that he tied the reins of the four horses the one with the other, and gave them all to Enid, and he said to her, "I call upon thee to observe that I yet possess my knightly manhood, and that I am not yet altogether devoid of strength and even of youth. Take thou now these four horses together with the three horses which thou hast and ride on before me as heretofore, leading all seven horses. And see to it that this time thou dost not turn to me to say a word of any sort. For I find that the anger of battle is upon me, and in my rage I may smite thee with my sword in haste and ere I am able to control myself."

She said, "Lord, I will do as thou dost command."

So she rode on before Sir Geraint, and though she rode in silence yet her heart sank within her, for she said to herself, "Did ever any lady before me possess such a high-exalted and noble lord as this lord of mine?"

Enid overhears the words of the five outlaws.

Now as Enid rode forward thus exulting she heard of a sudden the sound of voices talking together in the thickets near at hand. The one voice said to the other voices, "Look! hither cometh a beautiful damsel, leading seven good horses laden each with a noble suit of armor, and here is only one man in guard of all this train. Let us five make here an ambushment, and let us fall upon him from behind and from before. So we shall easily overcome him and obtain all those things for ourselves.{35}"

Then Enid said to herself, "It may be that my lord will do as he said, and will strike me with his sword in his haste if I disobey him for the third time by speaking to him. But what matters that? Rather would I die by his hands than suffer his anger without his love."

So she turned her horse and rode back to him and when she had come to him she said, "Lord, suffer me to speak to thee?"

He said, "Did I not tell thee to speak to me no more?"

She said, "Lord, this time I must speak to thee, for I cannot do otherwise."

He said, "So it appeareth. Well, then, say on!"

She tells Sir Geraint what they say.

She said, "Lord, this is what I have to say, that ahead of thee are five men lying in ambushment against thee with intent to destroy thee."

Sir Geraint said, "Is this all that thou hast to say?" To which she replied, "Yea, Lord."

He said, "Abide here with thy horses for a little and suffer me to go forward alone, to clear thy path for thee."

So Enid abided at that place, and Sir Geraint rode forward into the ambushment that was prepared for him.

So he reached that ambushment, and of a sudden there leaped all those five men out against him and about him.

Then there followed a great and bitter fight betwixt Sir Geraint and those who thus assailed him. And sometimes he might be seen and at other times he might not be seen for the press that gathered about him. His sword flashed like lightning and at every blow he uttered a great and terrible cry of war, for the fury of battle was now fully upon him. At first there were five against him and then there were but four, then three, then two and at last only one who cried out in terror, "Spare me, Lord! For I yield myself to thee."

Sir Geraint slays the five men.

Enid leads the twelve horses.

Sir Geraint said, "I will not spare thee," and therewith he struck him so dreadfully that he clave his head asunder and he fell down dead upon the ground. After he had thus overthrown all five of his enemies, he wiped his sword, panting, and put it away in to its sheath. Then he stripped the armor from off the dead bodies of the five, and bound a

suit of armor upon each horse. Then tying all five bridle reins together, he attached them to the bridle reins of the other horses and gave all twelve into Enid's hands, saying to her, "Lead them forward and speak to me no more, I charge thee."

So they travelled upon their way through the wood, and anon the day began to draw to a close, and the grey of twilight to descend. And Enid{36} led the twelve horses with difficulty. This Sir Geraint observed, and was sorry for her, but still they rode onward. Then the darkness fell and the moon arose, very bright and clear and round, silvering the tops of the trees and laying patches of silver upon the earth between the shadows of the leaves.

Then Sir Geraint called to Enid and he said to her, "Lady, I do not think we shall get out of this woods to-night. Let us rest here until to-morrow."

She said to him, "Lord, may I speak?" He said, "Say on." She said, "What will we do to eat?" Quoth he, "Lady, it oftentimes happens when a knight travelleth errant, as I have travelled to-day, that he goeth without food to eat for the entire day—and sometimes for even longer than that. Let that suffice."

Therewith she fell silent and sighed, for she was very hungry.

Meantime Sir Geraint gathered the leaves together into a sort of bed and he spread a cloak upon them. Then seeing that Enid was very weary and in pity of her weariness, he said, "Lie thou here, Lady, and I will keep watch for the night."

They abide that night in the forest.

So Enid laid herself down upon the bed of leaves and she was very sick for weariness. And for awhile she watched her lord, Sir Geraint, as he stood a little distance away, and she beheld how the moonlight flashed and sparkled upon his polished armor whensoever the soft night wind of summer stirred the leaves; and she heard the rustling and the stamp of the horses as they moved at their stations; and she heard a distant nightingale, singing from afar, now and then heard in the darkness, and the murmurous silence, and now and then silent again. Then all these things blended together, the darkness disappeared and she slept.

This was the first day of that journeying. Now if you would read of the second day thereof, I pray you to peruse that which hereinafter followeth, and which I have writ for your pleasure.{38}{37}



Enid talks with the Earl



{39}



Chapter Fourth

How Sir Geraint and Enid came forth out of the forest into the land of an earl. How they abided at an inn, and of what befell them thereafter.

WHEN the next morning had come Sir Geraint, very early, awoke Enid from her slumbers. The pangs of hunger were great upon her but she made no complaint thereof. Otherwise, she mounted her horse and took the reins of the twelve horses into her hands and rode away, followed by Sir Geraint as upon the former day.

Geraint and Enid come into the open country again.

Anon and after awhile the trees of the woodland grew thinner and the sunlight came more freely through their branches. Anon again and the trees of the forest ceased altogether, and so Enid and Geraint came forth out of the woodland and into the open plains once more.

Here were hedgerows upon either side of the way, and there were fields and open country beyond the hedgerows; and there were meadow-lands, and the mowers were mowing in the meadows.

They cross the river.

Before them lay a river and toward that they took their way. And there was a ford to the river and they entered the river, and all the horses bowed their heads and drank of the water. Afterward they crossed the ford and ascended a steep high bank upon the other side of the river.

At the top of this bank there stood a slender youth with yellow hair. And the youth had a satchel of leather slung over his shoulder, and in his hands he carried an earthenware crock of milk.

Sir Geraint bespeaks the youth.

Sir Geraint spoke to the youth, saying to him, "Whence cometh thou, fair youth?" Quoth the youth, "I come from the town which you cannot behold from here, but which you may behold from the crest of yonder hill when you have reached it. And now, Lord, if it be not too venturesome for me to ask, I pray you to tell me whence you have come?"

Said Sir Geraint, "Fair youth, we came from the forest yonder. All day{40} yesterday we travelled through the forest and all night we slept there beneath the trees."

"Well," said the youth, "I daresay you had but small entertainment at that place, and I daresay also you are very hungry to-day."

"I would," said Sir Geraint, "find food for this lady if it be possible to do so." Said the youth, "we are then well met, for in this satchel I have bread and cheese, which I am taking to the mowers for their breakfast; and in this crock I have milk, which also I am taking to them for their breakfast. If you will partake of these things, I will gladly give you to eat and to drink." "I give thee thanks, fair friend," said Sir Geraint, "and gladly will I accept the offer of thy hospitality."

The youth gives them to eat.

So the youth assisted the Lady Enid to dismount from her saddle, and she and Sir Geraint took their station at the roadside beneath the shade of a crab-apple tree. And the youth gave them to eat of the white bread and cheese from his satchel and he gave them to drink of the milk from the crock, and they were both greatly refreshed.

After the two had thus satisfied their hunger the youth said, "Now, Sir Knight, by thy leave I will depart for more food for the mowers."

Sir Geraint gives the youth a horse and the armor thereof.

Sir Geraint said, "Fair youth, I pray you to return to the town whence you came and to procure for us the best lodgings that are to be found at that place. And I also pray you that you will, in return for these courtesies of yours, choose whichsoever horse and suit of armor that best pleases you out of all those that the lady is conducting, and I pray you that you will keep that horse and armor for yourself." "Lord," said the youth, "what have I done for such a great reward? That is too much to accept for so small a service." "Nevertheless," said Sir Geraint, "I pray you to do as I bid you."

So the youth joyfully chose a horse and a suit of armor that pleased him the best, and leading these he departed for the town to fulfil Sir Geraint's behest as to securing him lodgings.

Now as the youth entered the town a servant of the Earl of that town met him and the servant of the Earl said to the youth, "Where got ye that horse and that armor?" The youth said, "A noble and knightly lord, who hath eleven other such horses and armor, gave this one to me."

The servant said, "This is a strange saying. Come with me to the Earl and tell him concerning these things."

The youth tells the Earl of Sir Geraint.

So the servant of the Earl took the youth to that lord, and the youth told his story to the Earl of how he had met the lordly knight and the lady, and of how the lady had led twelve horses loaded with armor, and of how the lord had given him one of those horses and the suit of armor that best pleased him. To all this the Earl hearkened, and then he said to the youth, "Go you and fetch that lord hitherward, for I would fain see him and his lady and entertain them at my castle. He shall lodge here with me."

So the youth hastened back to Sir Geraint where he sat with Enid resting beneath the crab-apple tree, and he said to him, "Lord, the Earl of yonder town hath sent me here to bid you come and lodge with him."

Then Geraint was displeased and he said to the youth, "How is this? I bade thee secure us lodgings, not with an earl but at some good inn. I will not lodge with the Earl, but will go to such an inn."

Then the youth was abashed, and he said, "I will take you to an inn."

The youth conducts them to an inn.

So the youth conducted Geraint and Enid into the town, and he conducted him to the best inn in the town. Here the landlord came forth to meet him and Geraint said, "Show us to the best room of this place," and the landlord did so. Geraint said to Enid, "Keep thou yonder to that side of the chamber, and I will keep to this side, for I am weary and fain would sleep." And Enid said, "I will do so." And Geraint said to the youth, "When I awake, be thou here to serve me."

The youth said, "I will be here; but meantime I would fain go and see the Earl and tell him where you are lodged." Sir Geraint said, "Go, but return again."

So whilst Sir Geraint slept, the youth hastened to the castle of the Earl, and he said to the Earl, "Sir, certes this man is a prince or a knight-royal, for he commandeth all things as he wills." Then the Earl said, "Where is he lodged?" And the youth told him, and the youth said, "I go presently to serve him when he awakes, for now he sleepeth." "Commend me to him when he awakeneth," said the Earl, and the youth replied, "I will do so."

Sir Geraint bids the landlord to summon his friends to a feast.

That afternoon when Geraint awoke, it was time for them to take their food. So Sir Geraint summoned the landlord and bade him prepare him a feast, and the landlord said he would do so. Then Sir Geraint inquired of the landlord whether he had not some companions whom he would like to entertain, and the landlord said, yea, that there were several. Upon this Sir Geraint commanded the landlord to summon those companions and to prepare for them the best that there was in the town both to eat and to drink. "For," quoth he, "though I be unhappy myself, yet do I love to behold those about me as happy and as gay as may be." So the landlord went forth and bade many to come and feast with him, all these feasted at Sir Geraint's expense, so that the entire inn was full of light and laughter and noise and merrymaking. {42}

The Earl visits Sir Geraint.

That evening the Earl came to visit Sir Geraint, and with him he brought twelve of the worthiest knights of his court. Then Sir Geraint arose and welcomed him, and the Earl greeted Sir Geraint and sat down and conversed with him. And he asked Geraint the

object of his journey, to which Geraint replied, "I have no object, saving to seek adventure such as may become the life of a knight-errant."

Then the Earl cast his eyes upon Enid, and he looked at her very steadily, and he thought that he had never beheld a lady so fair and so beautiful as she. And as he gazed upon her his heart went out to her and he found that he loved her very extremely. Then he said to Geraint, "Have I thy permission to converse with yonder lady? For I see that she is not with thee." "Thou hast it gladly," said Geraint.

The Earl bespeaks Enid the Fair.

So the Earl went to where Enid sat, and he said to her, "Lady, thy hands are soft and white and thy body is fragile and delicate; it cannot be pleasant for thee to travel through the rough and cruel world with this man." She said, "It is not unpleasant for me to journey with him whithersoever he goeth."

The Earl said, "Lady, thou shouldst have youths and maidens to wait upon thee and to attend thee and to serve thee." She said, "It is pleasanter to me to travel alone with yonder man than to live in state with youths and maidens to wait upon me."

"Listen," said the Earl, "I will give thee good advice. Give up that man and come with me. All my earldom will be at thy disposal if thou wilt do so, and thou shalt be the mistress of it and of me and of my life."

Then Enid was very angry, and she said, "Lord, I will not go with thee! Know thou that yonder man is dearer to me than all the earth and its kingdoms and principalities, its dukedoms and its earldoms. He was the first man to whom I plighted my faith, and never hath it been withdrawn from his keeping. Shall I then leave him now for the sake of this little patch of ground, to live with thee in dishonor and suffer him to go forth into the world alone?"

Then the Earl said, "Lady, thou art in the wrong in this, for if I slay that man, then can I take thee by force. And if I take thee by force, then, when I tire of thee, I shall cast thee off into the world. But if thou comest to me willingly, then I will never cast thee off, but will keep thee as my most precious treasure so long as I am permitted to breathe the breath of life. Come thou with me, and yonder man may be suffered to depart in peace, hale and strong in limb and body, but come thou not with me and he shall die.{43}"

Then Enid was greatly troubled at that which the Earl had said to her, for she saw that he had the strength and the will and the power to do with Sir Geraint whatsoever he chose. So at last she said to him, "Listen, O great Lord and Earl. All this that I have said

to thee I have said for the sake of mine honor. But if thou art of the mind that thou sayst, I would rather abide with thee. Come hither to-morrow morning with twelve armed knights and bear me away as though by force. For thus it shall appear that I have not yielded up to thee, except by force.” “I will do so,” said the Earl. “This and all things shall be as thou sayst.” After that, in a little while he arose and departed from that place.

But of all that had passed Enid said nothing to Geraint, lest he should be blinded by his rage against the Earl. Otherwise, she kept it secretly in her heart for that time.

Enid prepares the armor of Sir Geraint.

That night they both lay in the same chamber. In a little while Sir Geraint fell asleep, but Enid did not sleep. When she heard his deep breathing she arose very softly and she gathered his armor together piece by piece. And she piled all the armor where he could easily lay hand upon it. Then she lay down and slept.

Enid telleth Sir Geraint of the Earl.

Before the day broke she arose and went softly to where Sir Geraint slept, and touched her finger upon his breast and with that he awoke and started up. “Lord,” said she, “knowest thou what the Earl of this town said to me last night?” Geraint said, “Tell me.” So Enid told him all that the Earl had proposed to her. Then Geraint was very angry, and he said, “Thy beauty bringeth evil whithersoever thou bringest it. Now I will slay this Earl ere I leave this place, for he hath proposed dishonor to me.”

“Not so,” said Enid, “let be the Earl, for there are many scores against thee, and thou art only one. Rather put thou on thy armor and let us go hence with all the speed that we may, for there is yet time to escape, and thus only may we escape in peace.”

Then Geraint perceived that what she said was very true, and that he was at that place in a parlous state. So he arose and put on his armor and he summoned the landlord and the landlord came to him.

Sir Geraint gives all the horses and all of the armor to the landlord.

Quoth Sir Geraint, “What do I owe thee, good fellow, for the entertainment that I have had at this house?” Said the landlord, “Not a great deal, Messire.” “Well,” said Sir Geraint, “take thou all those eleven horses and the armor appertaining to them for thy reckoning. Will that pay our score?” “Heaven bless thee, Messire,” cried the landlord, “but that is far more than thou owest me; for thou hast not consumed in this house the value of a single{44} horse.” “Well,” said Sir Geraint, “in that case thou wilt be all the richer. But put on thy cloak and thy hat and conduct me out of this place by some

way that is another way than that by which we entered here, for I must hasten upon my quest." Quoth the landlord, "I will do so, Lord."

With that he hurried away. Anon he returned again, clad as for a journey. Then Sir Geraint mounted his horse and Enid mounted her horse, and they departed from that place after the landlord.

The landlord leads them from the town.

So the landlord led them by another highway from the town, and when the sun arose Sir Geraint dismissed him from their service.

The Earl follows Sir Geraint and Enid the Fair.

Now when the landlord returned to the inn he beheld that several men surrounded that place. Those men were the Earl of that town, and the twelve chief knights of his state, and all were clad in full armor. The Earl was very wroth and when he beheld the landlord he cried out to him, "Fellow, where is the knight and where is that lady who were with thee last night?" "Lord," quoth the landlord, "they have departed and by now are many miles from this. For I myself conducted them far upon the way, and am only now returned from guiding them." Quoth the Earl, "What way went they?" and the landlord told him. Then the Earl and his court of knights departed thence. And they rode at a swift gallop upon the way that the landlord directed them. Anon they beheld the marks of horses' hoofs fresh upon the earth, wherefore they wist that they were upon the right way.

Now as Enid and Sir Geraint rode onward upon their course, Enid looked behind her many times. At last she beheld a cloud of dust that came rapidly nearer, and she was aware that in that cloud of dust were the Earl and his court of knights. Then she cried out to Sir Geraint, "Sir Knight, prepare for battle, for yonder come thine enemies."

Then Sir Geraint, who had been sunk in thought, became aware of the coming of those others. Thereupon he closed the visor of his helmet and prepared himself in all ways for the encounter. Thereafter he turned his horse in the middle of the highway and stood waiting for his enemies.

Anon they reached him and drew rein a little distance away. Then the Earl came forward and spake to Sir Geraint, saying, "Sir Knight, we mean no harm to thee, but only ask thee that thou wilt give up that lady whom thou hast with thee. For thou holdest her against her desire; her only desire being to go with us."

Then Sir Geraint turned to Enid and said, "Lady, is this true? If thou desirest to go with yonder Lord thou hast my leave to do so." "Nay,{45}" said she, "I do not desire to go with him. Rather would I go with thee to death than to go with him to joy."

So Sir Geraint said to the Earl, "Messire, the lady says thou art mistaken and she does not desire to go with thee."

The Earl said to Enid, "Lady, what didst thou tell me yesterday?" And Enid said, "Messire, I told thee many things to mislead thee, for the occasion called upon me to do so."

Then the Earl talked aside for a little while with his followers. Anon he called to Sir Geraint, "Sir Knight, I will not let thee go until thou hast tried a fall or two with these knights of mine for the sake of thy lady, her bright eyes and her slender body." "Well," said Sir Geraint, "I am willing to do battle with thy knights now or at any time." "And this shall be the result of this battle," said the Earl. "If thou winnest this battle, thou mayst go free, but if we win then thy lady must return with us." Quoth Sir Geraint, "That is certes a hard saying."

Sir Geraint does battle with the followers of the Earl.

So the strongest and most powerful of all those knights made him ready for the assault, and when he was in all ways prepared, he and Geraint made a violent charge, the one against the other. Three times they charged and at the third assault Sir Geraint overthrew him so violently that he lay like one dead in the middle of the high-road. Then one after the other all the others of those twelve knights assaulted Sir Geraint, and each in turn was overthrown very violently upon the earth.

Then the Earl said to Sir Geraint, "Sir Knight, thou hast fought well and very valiantly for thy lady, and truly hast thou won her. Depart in peace." "Not so," cried Sir Geraint in great passion, "for I have one more to deal with, and that one is thou thyself. For I have yet to do with thee ere I depart from this place."

"Well," said the Earl, "be it as thou sayst. For I will fight with thee till either thee or I have overcome the other. And to that one who overthroweth the other thy lady shalt belong." "So be it," said Sir Geraint.

Sir Geraint overthrows the Earl.

So each made him ready for the encounter, and when they were in all ways prepared they set spur to flank and drave the one against the other with such violence that they met with a crash as of thunder in the middle of the course. In that encounter Sir Geraint was upborn by his passion so that he smote true and fairly against his enemy's

shield. But the spear of the Earl was shattered into a great many pieces. The spear of Sir Geraint held, so that it pierced the shield of the Earl, and Sir Geraint lifted the Earl out of his saddle and{46} hurled him several ells behind the crupper of his horse, where he lay like one dead upon the earth.

Then Sir Geraint ran to where the Earl was. And he rushed off his helmet and he drew his sword and catching the Earl by the long hair of his head he drew forward his neck so as to sever his head from his body. Thereupon the Earl awoke from his swoon and perceiving that death loomed very near to him, he clutched Sir Geraint about the thighs, clinging to them and crying out, "Sir Knight, spare my life!" "Why should I spare thee?" cried out Sir Geraint very violently. "Hast thou not attempted my life and hast thou not attempted mine honor and the honor of my lady, and were we not guests in thy town? I will not spare thy life!" And he whirled his sword as though to strike.

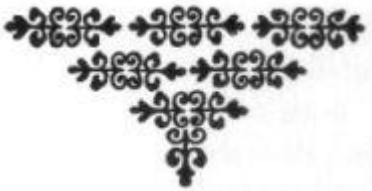
Sir Geraint spares the life of the Earl.

Then Enid came to where Sir Geraint was and clutched him by the arm and she said, "Worthy knight, Sir Geraint! I pray thee spare this man his life. For what canst thou gain by slaying him?" "Well," said Sir Geraint, "since this lady asks thy life at my hands I give it to her to dispose of as she pleases." Enid said, "I thank thee, Lord!" Then she said to the Earl, "Arise, and go thou hence in peace!"

So after that Sir Geraint remounted his horse and he and Enid departed from that place, riding as aforetime. That is, Enid rode a long distance ahead and Geraint rode behind, following after her.

But of the knights whom he overthrew in that encounter it is to be written that several were so sorely hurt that it was many weeks ere they were sufficiently recovered to be abroad again.

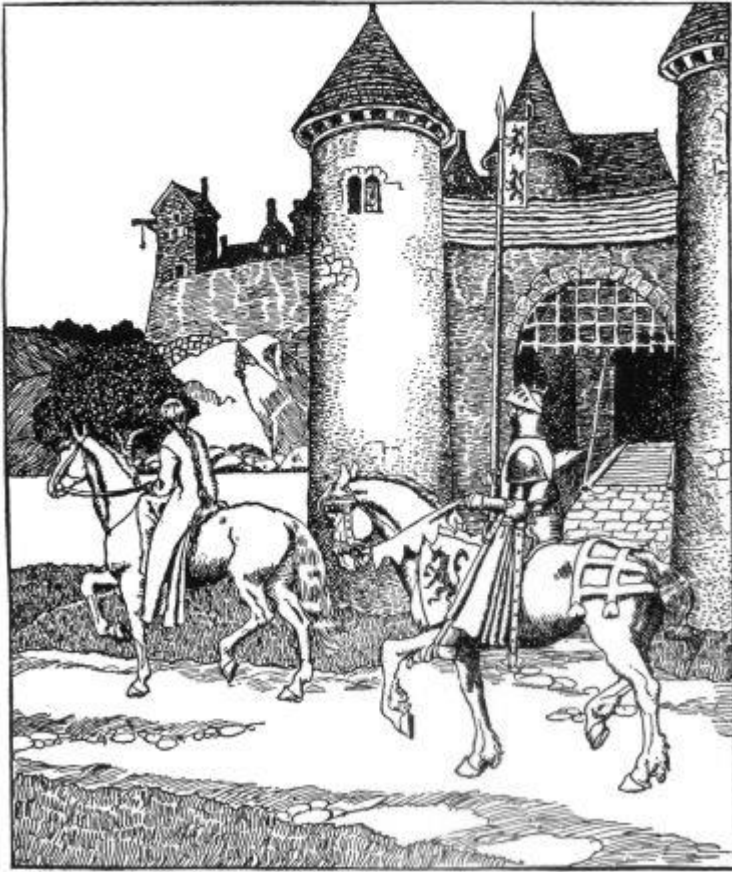
And now followeth the further adventures of Sir Geraint and of Enid at this time; so I pray you to read that which hereinafter appeareth.



{47}

{48}

Enid and Geraint ride past the Town bridge ⁂ ⁂ ⁂



{49}



Chapter Fifth

Sir Geraint is wounded in his encounter with another knight. He is discovered by the Court of King Arthur and is healed of his wounds.

SO Sir Geraint and Enid travelled in that wise until at last they came through a thin, small woods and so out into another open place.

Here they beheld before them a valley of singular beauty, for through the centre of the valley there ran a wide, smoothly flowing river, and upon either side of the river there

were meadow-lands and fields, and not far away from where they were there was a town, very large and considerable. All around the town was a wall of stone, very high and strong. And about the town was a fortress castle, tall and forbidding, that looked down upon the town and upon the high-road. The high-road upon which they travelled crossed a bridge over the river, and so entered the town, but ere it reached the bridge it branched and one branch ran down along one side of the river upon which they were. Upon either side of the bridge head were two tall towers that overlooked the bridge and guarded it.

Sir Geraint questions the horseman concerning the town.

So Sir Geraint and Enid sat for awhile looking down upon that fair prospect, and the more they looked upon it the more they delighted in it. As they so sat, anon they beheld a horseman come from the town and cross the bridge, and when he had crossed the bridge he turned him in their direction. By and by he had approached closely enough for Sir Geraint to speak to him, and thereupon Sir Geraint rode forth and met him and they two saluted one another. Then Sir Geraint said to him, "Sir, I pray you tell me; what town is that yonder, and who is the lord of this fair and beautiful valley and of yonder town?" "Messire," said the other, "I will gladly tell thee that and anything else that I am able. The town itself is called the Town of Redlands. The lord of all this country is a very brave, renowned and valiant Earl called the Little King. He is so called because he rules this place away from all other lords as though he were king of it in his own right."

Sir Geraint said, "May I pass by yonder bridge head where are the two{50} towers without crossing over the bridge and into the town?" The other replied, "Messire, I will tell thee truly. The Little King hath ordained it that no one shall pass into his land without his permission, wherefore he will not allow that any knight shall pass by yonder bridge and into the lands beyond it." "Nevertheless," said Sir Geraint, "I am of a mind to pass by that bridge and into the country beyond it maugre his will that wise or otherwise." "If thou dost do so," said the other, "thou wilt in all likelihood meet with shame and disgrace." "No matter for that," said Sir Geraint, "I shall assume even such a risk as that." At that the other laughed, and so they saluted each one the other again and then the knight departed upon his way.

Sir Geraint and Enid pass by the bridge head.

So Sir Geraint followed the Lady Enid and she preceded and he followed after her. Thus together they went down to the river. Coming there, he bade her not to cross the bridge, so in obedience to that command they went past the bridge and past the two towers at the bridge head, and so rode along beside the river. Thus with Enid riding

before him and he riding behind her, he had gone a considerable distance when he became suddenly aware that some one was galloping behind them. Then Sir Geraint turned him about and beheld that an armed knight was following after them at a swift gallop.

So Sir Geraint drew rein and waited for the other to come up with them, and when the other knight had come pretty close to where he stood, he also drew rein. The Strange Knight said, "Sir Knight, is it through ignorance or through presumption that you travel thus without leave through my dominions?" Him Sir Geraint answered very proudly, saying, "Messire, how should I know that this road was forbid to those who would pass to travel along it?"

"Nay," said the other fiercely, "thou didst know that it is forbidden to any one to pass into my land without my permission and so thou hast infringed the rules of my earldom. Hence thou shalt come now with me to my court and do me satisfaction." "I will not come with thee to thy castle," said Sir Geraint, "and I will not do thee any satisfaction. For this is an high-road and it is free for any one to travel upon it who chooses to do so." "Well," said the other, "let that be as it may; but I tell thee that thou shalt this day do satisfaction to me or else I will suffer defeat at thy hands." "That," said Sir Geraint, "shall be as Heaven shall foreordain."

Sir Geraint does battle with the knight.

So upon that each knight made him ready for the combat, and Enid stood to one side to observe what happened. Anon they were in all ways prepared, and each took post for a tilt. When all this was prepared, each knight shouted to his horse, and each{51} drove spurs into the flanks of his steed and each launched the one against the other with wonderful speed and vehemence. So they met in the midst of the course with a crash like to thunder, and in that encounter the lance of each knight held so that the horse of each sank back upon his haunches quivering from the shock of that assault.

Then each knight threw aside his lance and sprang from his saddle, and each drew his sword and each rushed the one against the other like two fierce bulls raging for battle. Each lashed at the other many terrible and severe strokes, and for a time neither had any advantage over the other. Several times Geraint was wounded and several times more he wounded his adversary. Thus they fought for a long while, and Geraint suffered many wounds, until at last, because of the smart of those wounds, his anger flamed up like fire and added strength to his strength. Then he rained blows fast and furious upon his assailant, striking him with terrible violence again and again and yet again, so rapidly and so fiercely, violently and furiously that the Little King bore back

before him, holding his shield full low because of his weariness and wounds. Then Geraint beheld the opening that the other gave him, and with that he rushed in upon him, and he smote him with might and main upon the crown of the helmet.

So terribly fierce was that blow that it split apart the helmet and the iron cap beneath and cut deep into the bone beneath the cap.

Sir Geraint overthrows the knight.

Then the wits of the Little King flew away from him like a flock of flies, his strength deserted him, his thighs trembled and he sank down upon his knees. Thereupon Geraint rushed upon him and plucked the helmet off of his head. Then he caught him by the hair of the head and drew his head forward, whirling his sword aloft as though to strike the head off from the body.

At that the senses returned to the Little King, and he beheld that death was very near to him. So he clutched Sir Geraint about the knees, and cried out aloud, "Lord, spare me my life." "I will spare thee," said Sir Geraint, "upon one condition, and that is that thou wilt swear to be true fellow to me henceforth and shall be faithful to me as I shall be to thee. For certes thou art the noblest, worthiest knight that ever I have yet encountered." Then the other arose from his knees. "Sir Knight," said he, "I know not who thou art." "I am Sir Geraint," said Sir Geraint, "the son of King Erbin."

"Well do I know of thee," said the Little King. "Often have I heard of thee, and had I known who thou wert, I would not have assaulted thee." Then the Little King said to Sir Geraint, "Sir Knight, Sir Geraint, I perceive that thou art hurt in several places, and I am very sorry for{52} that. For lo, the leg-pieces of thine armor are all red with blood, and blood is flowing from thy body armor from several wounds. Thou art not fit to travel in the hot sun, so I pray thee that thou and thy lady will return with me to my castle. There thou mayst refresh and recover thyself from thy hurts, and rest and reinvigorate thyself for thy continued journeyings."

But Sir Geraint refused him. "Nay," said he, "I will not go with thee to thy castle, but instead of that I will go forward upon my way."

Then the Little King looked at Enid, and when he beheld how fragile and how beautiful she was, and when he beheld how grieved she was that Geraint had suffered so many and such grievous wounds, he felt great pity for her. "Messire," he said to Sir Geraint, "thou dost wrong not to rest thyself and have thy wounds looked to and dressed, for if thou fallest in with another adventure such as this, it is not likely that thou wilt be able to defend thyself from assault. Who then would have care of thy lady if harm should befall thee?"

Then Sir Geraint cried out very fiercely, "Sir, already have I answered thee that I will continue on my way, therefore do not try to dissuade me any further, for both I and my lady are going forward upon our way!" So saying he went to his horse and he mounted upon his saddle and he took his spear in hand and rode away from that place, and he bade the Lady Enid to ride on before him as aforetime she had ridden and so they quitted that place.

Sir Geraint suffers because of his wounds.

Sir Geraint stands beneath a tree.

Now the day was very hot so that the blood within the armor of Sir Geraint when he ceased to bleed, it dried upon him by reason of the heat of the sun. Then the wounds that Sir Geraint had suffered were glued with blood to the armor, so that he suffered three times more pain from those wounds now than he suffered when he had received them. But of this he said naught, only he rode along very grimly. But at last he could endure his pain no more, wherefore he called upon the Lady Enid to halt for a little while at a certain place where the oak trees of a woodland came down to the road and shaded the high-road. Then the Lady Enid would have helped him to dismount, but he would not suffer her to do so but forbade her, saying to her, "Go and stand aside under yonder tree, for my wounds ache me and I would be alone for a little while." So Enid went to the other tree and stood there weeping, and Sir Geraint dismounted from his horse and stood under his tree, suffering very bitter pain from his wounds.

As they thus stood, there came the sound of a sudden tumult of horses and of voices, and the cause of that tumult was that King Arthur and{53} his court were come hunting into the neighboring woodland. So whilst Sir Geraint was considering which way he should go to escape from them, he was espied by a foot-page who was attendant upon Sir Kay the Seneschal.

This page went to Sir Kay, and he said to him, "Sir, yonder under that tree is a man in broken and defaced armor who appeareth to be wounded." Sir Kay said, "Where is he?" and then he too beheld Sir Geraint.

Sir Kay bespeaks Sir Geraint.

So Sir Kay came to where Sir Geraint was, and at his coming the Lady Enid slipped behind her tree, for she was ashamed for Sir Kay to behold her weeping in that place. So Sir Kay did not know Sir Geraint, but Sir Geraint knew Sir Kay. Sir Kay said to Sir Geraint, "Sir, how is this? I perceive you are wounded! What art thou doing here?" Sir Geraint replied, "I am standing under the shade of this tree so as to avoid the heat. For in the sun my armor clings to my wounds so that they ache me." Said Sir Kay, "Whither

dost thou journey, and who art thou?" Quoth Sir Geraint, "It matters not who I am. As for my journeying, wist thou that I am in search of adventure." Said Sir Kay, "I wit thou hast had adventures enough for one day. Come with me and I will take thee to King Arthur, who is near by." "I will not go with thee," said Sir Geraint, "for I am not fit to stand before the King." Said Sir Kay, "Thou must needs come with me." And so saying, he advanced and laid hold of the arm of Sir Geraint.

Sir Geraint strikes Sir Kay.

Now in all this time, as hath been said, Sir Geraint knew Sir Kay who he was, but Sir Kay knew not Sir Geraint because his shield was so defaced with battle and his armor so stained with blood. But when Sir Kay laid hold of Sir Geraint, the anger broke hot within the wounded man, wherefore he lifted his spear, and he smote Sir Kay upon the head with the butt of the spear (for he scorned to strike him with the point thereof), and with the force of that blow Sir Kay fell down upon the ground, like an ox when the butcher smites it with a mallet.

After a little while Sir Kay stirred and then he sat up. Then he awoke and arose and went away, leaving Sir Geraint standing where he was.

Now it happened that the pavilion of Sir Percival was not far away. Thither went Sir Kay, and Sir Percival was in his pavilion. Sir Kay said to Sir Percival, "My page tells me that over yonder under that tree there stands a wounded man in armor. Hadst thou not better go and see who it is and bring him to King Arthur?" Sir Percival said, "Where is he?" Sir Kay said, "Over yonder. But beyond doubt he is hasty of temper, so be wary of thy approach to him."

Sir Percival bespeaks Sir Geraint.

Then Sir Percival went thither to that tree and he beheld where Sir Geraint was standing, and he knew him not because his armor was so{54} defaced and wounded and stained. But Sir Geraint knew Sir Percival who he was. Sir Percival said to Sir Geraint, "Sir Knight, wilt thou not come to the tent of King Arthur and have thy wounds searched and dressed?" "No," said Sir Geraint, "I will not do so."

Sir Percival knoweth Enid the Fair.

Now the Lady Enid heard the voice of Sir Percival and knew it, so she appeared from behind the tree and her face was all wet with weeping. And she cried out to Sir Percival, "Sir Percival, I beseech thee to compel him to go to King Arthur."

Then Sir Percival knew the Lady Enid and he wist that the wounded man must be Sir Geraint. So he cried out, "Sir Geraint, is it thou?" Sir Geraint said, "Nay, I am not Sir Geraint."

But Sir Percival put these words aside and he said, "What condition is this that thou and thy lady are in, and whither wouldst thou go? If thou goest forward, thou wilt die, and if thou stayest here thou wilt die."

Sir Geraint said, "I will go forward," and at those words Enid fell to weeping again.

Now there was a page standing a little aside and Sir Percival beckoned to him and the page came to Sir Percival. Sir Percival whispered to the page, saying, "Go, find King Arthur and tell him that Sir Geraint is standing here wounded," and the page made haste and ran away.

Then Sir Percival spoke aside to the Lady Enid and he said to her, "How is it that thou and thy lord are in this outland place?" Enid replied, "I know not how it is, but my lord commanded me to ride errant with him and I have done so." Sir Percival said, "Certes, I think he is mad."

King Arthur comes to Sir Geraint and Enid the Fair.

Anon King Arthur and several of his court and Queen Guinevere and several of her court came to that place. Sir Percival said to King Arthur, "Lord, this is Sir Geraint whom thou seest here in such a sad melancholy condition." And Geraint said nothing, only he groaned very dolorously. King Arthur said to the Lady Enid, "Enid, how came ye to this pass?" "Lord," said Enid, "I know not how it is, only that whithersoever my lord goeth, thither also I am bound to go." Then King Arthur said to Queen Guinevere, "Lady, I pray thee take the Lady Enid and care for her. As for Sir Geraint, him shall I put beneath the care of my physicians."

"Lord," cried out Sir Geraint, "I beseech thee to let me go upon my way thither I was going." "I will not do so," said King Arthur. "Thou art mad, for that would let thee go to thy death. Thou canst not live with such wounds as those that cover thee, fresh and undressed as they{55} are." Then Sir Geraint said, "They are not so bad," but King Arthur would not listen to this.

The physicians search the wounds of Sir Geraint.

So King Arthur had a tent pitched at that place, and he had a soft couch laid within the tent, and he had Sir Geraint laid upon the couch. And the King had his own physicians come to search the wounds of Sir Geraint and to anoint them and to bind them up, and so Sir Geraint was put in great comfort from their attention.

Meanwhile the Queen brought the Lady Enid to her pavilion and she had her change her riding robes for clothes of another sort. And she asked Enid many things and Enid told her many things of her adventures, and all marvelled at what the Lady Enid had to relate.

So Geraint and Enid remained at that woodland court of King Arthur for nearly a month, and Enid was very well entertained by the court of the King. And whilst it was so that she was not permitted to see Sir Geraint nor to speak to him, yet she heard very intimately from him from day to day, and wist that ever he was becoming healed of his wounds. For, after that month was passed, Sir Geraint's wounds were knit together and were scarred over with fair white flesh. And even at that time Sir Geraint grew restless, for as he grew stronger of body he remembered more and more strongly the words that he had overheard the Lady Enid speak that morning when he awakened, and again he doubted her.

So one day he said to King Arthur, "Lord, I pray thee let me depart from this place, for I must be upon my journeying again." King Arthur said, "Messire, whither wouldst thou go?" Geraint said, "I know not, saving only that I would go errant in search of adventure."

King Arthur said, "Then let thy Lady abide at this place." Quoth Sir Geraint, "She cannot abide here, but she must travel abroad with me." King Arthur said, "Sir, this is not folly but madness, for thy lady's body is too soft and delicate for her to endure such hardships as thou wilt have to endure." "No matter," said Sir Geraint, "she must travel with me whithersoever I go."

Then King Arthur considered a little and after a little he said, "Sir, I will not let you go until my physicians declare you to be healed." Quoth Sir Geraint, "Call the physicians."

So King Arthur summoned the physicians and he asked them if Sir Geraint was healed of his wounds and the physicians declared that he was healed.{56}

Sir Geraint and Enid depart from the Court of the King.

So King Arthur gave leave to Sir Geraint to depart and that day Sir Geraint took leave of King Arthur and his court and he and the Lady Enid departed as aforetime. That is to say, the Lady Enid rode some distance ahead of Sir Geraint, and Sir Geraint rode some distance behind the Lady Enid as it was before.

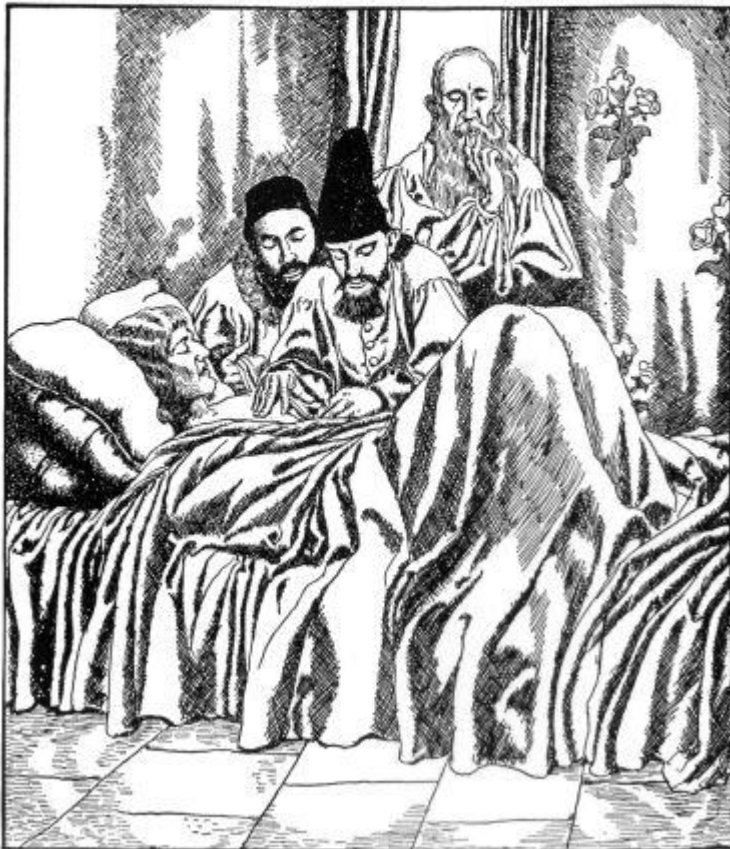
Here followeth the further adventures of these two which you may read if you will
peruse that which is herein written.



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{58}

The King's physicians attende
Sir Geraint. ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶



{59}



Chapter Sixth

How Sir Geraint destroyed three giants of the highway. How he was hurt, and how he and the Lady Enid were carried off by a knight of that country. Also how Geraint slew the knight.

Sir Geraint finds a lady in grief.

NOW after they had travelled in that wise for some time they came to a wood, and the wood was very thick and dark and dismal, and some way in the wood they heard the sound of a voice lifted in lamentation. Thitherward they directed their steps and anon they came to an open glade of the forest. Here they beheld a lady and two horses and the figure of a knight who lay dead, all covered with blood, upon the ground. Sir Geraint said to that lady, "Lady what ails thee?" "Alas!" she said, "I have journeyed thitherward, but three gigantic oafs broke out of the woodland upon us. Him they slew as thou beholdest and so I sit mourning for him here."

"What way went these giants of whom thou speakest?" said Sir Geraint. "They went yonder way by that path," said she.

Geraint said to Enid, "Bide thou here for a little while with this lady, and I will ride forward and punish those three giants." Enid said, "Lord, remember thou art only now fresh from thy bed of pain."

But Sir Geraint paid no heed to what Enid said, otherwise he rode forward upon the path that the lady had pointed out. After awhile he beheld before him the three gigantic men, walking side by side along the way.

Each wore about his body a huge body-piece of armor, and each carried over his shoulder a huge club shod with iron.

The giant strikes Sir Geraint.

Upon them Sir Geraint charged, and the first of the three he ran through his body with the lance. Then he withdrew the lance very quickly, and charged the second of the three, and him also he transfixes with his spear. But ere he could withdraw his lance again the third of the three smote him a terrible buffet with his club so that his shield was split and his helmet was split and the armor was beaten off from his shoulder. Under that blow Sir Geraint fell upon his knees,{60} and all his wounds burst out bleeding as though they were freshly given. But quickly he recovered himself. He drew

his sword, and rushing at the giant he smote him with the sword so that his head and his neck and his shoulders were split asunder even to the pap of the breast, and that giant also fell dead to the ground.

Sir Geraint swoons a death-swoon.

Then leaving those three where they lay, Geraint mounted his horse again and returned to where he had left Enid and the widowed lady. And when he came to her he tried to speak but he could not speak. He began by saying “Lady—” but then he stopped, and swaying from side to side, he fell lifeless from his horse to the ground.

Then Enid ran to him and lifted his head and laid it in her lap. And Enid thought that he was dead, for his face was the color of wax for whiteness. Then believing him to be dead she lifted up her voice and wept very loud and shrill.

Now it chanced that an earl known as the Earl of Limours was in that part of the forest, and several of his attendant knights were with him. These heard the loud piercing sound of Enid’s grief, and the Earl of Limours said, “Hark! What is that sound?” And one of his attendant knights said, “It is the sound of somebody in grief.” Quoth the Earl, “Let us go thitherward.”

The Earl of Limours comes to that place.

So the Earl of Limours and his attendants galloped toward that place, and anon they came out into the forest glade. There they beheld the four horses, and the two ladies and the two knights.

The Earl of Limours said to Enid, “Lady, what is the cause of thy grief?” “Alas, Sir,” she cried, “the only man that I ever loved or ever shall love is slain.” Then the Earl of Limours said to the other lady, “What is the cause of thy grief?” Quoth she, “They have slain my husband also.” “Who was it slew them?” said the Earl of Limours. “My husband,” said the Lady, “was slain by three giants. This other knight pursued the three giants, and when he returned he was as thou seest.” “Whither went those giants?” said the Earl. She replied, “They went yonder ways.” “I will go and see what has befallen them,” said the Earl of Limours.

The Earl finds the dead outlaws.

So that Earl took several of his knights and he went in that direction, and in a little while he found all three giants lying dead upon the ground. “Pardee,” quoth he, “yonder was a parlous strong knight to slay all three of those giants.”

The Earl carries Sir Geraint to his castle.

After that he returned to the forest glade and he made examination of the knights that lay there. The one knight he found was dead, but it{61} did not seem to him that Sir Geraint was altogether dead. So the one knight he buried, but Sir Geraint he laid in the hollow of a shield with his sword behind him. And he laid him upon a bier and so he bore him away toward his castle, the two ladies accompanying them.

By and by, after a very long journeying, they came to the castle of the Earl of Limours. And the castle was very large and comely and strong.

The Earl and those who were with him entered the castle and he had the shield with Sir Geraint stretched upon it borne into the hall of the castle. And he had his physician to come and examine Geraint and the leech came and made examination of him. Then after due examination the leech said that he was not yet dead, but that he was exceedingly near to death.

Then the Earl bade the two ladies to go and change their clothes and to assume garments that were more fitting to grace that hall, and the other lady went as he bade, but Enid would not go.

The Earl of Limours said to her, "Lady, thou art not wise in this, for I mean well by thee. Thou pleasest me very greatly by thy appearance. When thy lord is dead, then will I marry thee and will bestow upon thee myself and this castle and all these lands through which we passed to-day, and all other things thou shalt have that are mine." But Enid only wept, and she said, "Alas! I know not what to do, for I am very lonely. If my lord dieth, nevermore shall I have any more joy or happiness as long as I shall live."

The Earl of Limours said, "Take heart, my pretty one." But she said, "I cannot take any heart." Then the Earl gave orders that a feast should be made ready, and it was done according to his command. And when that feast was ready, he said to Enid, "Come and sit here beside me and eat." She said, "I will not eat and I will not sit at table unless my lord sits here also." Then the Earl laughed, and he said, "Lady, thou art very foolish in this, for thy knight will never sit at table again, for he is dead, or else he is dying." Then Enid wept again, very bitterly.

The Earl of Limours strikes Enid the Fair.

The Earl said, "Come sit beside me, and I will have thy knight at table also." So he had them bring the bier whereon Sir Geraint lay to the side of the table. Then he took Enid by the hand and led her to the table and compelled her to sit beside him. But still she would not eat. Then the Earl offered her a goblet of wine and he said, "Drink this wine, for it will help thee to forget thy sorrows." "I will not drink," she said, "until my husband shall arise and drink with me." Then the Earl of Limours became angry. "A plague upon

thee and thy knight!" he cried, and so crying he lifted his hand and delivered to her a box upon the ear.

Then Enid felt her loneliness as never before. For she knew that had Geraint been with her the Earl of Limours would not have dared to serve her thus. So when she felt that blow upon her face she lifted up her voice and shrieked aloud.

Now Geraint had been recovering from his swoon, but still he lay with his eyes closed listening to what was said and done about him. And he heard Enid how that she refused to eat or to drink, and he heard the blow that the Earl of that place delivered upon her face, and he heard her shriek with the pain thereof. At that the eyes of his soul were opened, and he beheld how mad and how blind he had been, and he knew how faithful to him Enid had been, maugre any words she might have uttered. Then rage and shame flamed up like fire within him, the last vapors of his swoon passed away, and he felt within him the strength of ten.

Sir Geraint slays the Earl of Limours.

Thereupon he grasped the sword that lay beside him in the hollow of the shield and he arose from the shield all white and wan and smeared with blood, and those who beheld him saw him arise as though from the dead. Then they shrieked and screamed and fell aside before him. But Geraint leaped from the hollow of the shield and he ran to where the Earl of Limours sat, and crying out, "Wouldst thou dare to smite my wife?" he smote him with all his might upon the head. So terrible was that blow that it smote asunder the head and the neck and the breast of the Earl, and was only stopped by the oaken board of the table against which the sword blade smote in its descent.

Then all those who thus beheld the dead man arise from his death and strike that blow, shrieked and roared aloud, and they fled away from that place in terror and amazement, and no one was left but Geraint and Enid, and the dead man sitting dreadfully in his seat.

Then Enid said, "O my lord! Art thou dead or art thou alive?" And Geraint said, "Beloved, I am alive and well." And Enid said, "I thank God for that." But Geraint said, "Let us hasten to escape from this place whilst we may, for presently these people will return again." And he said to her, "Where are our horses?" She said, "I know not where is my horse, but thy horse is in the house yonder, for I saw them put him there."

So Geraint and Enid went to the house that was near at hand and there Geraint found his horse. And Geraint took his horse out of the stable and he mounted upon his horse and he reached his hand to Enid and lifted her up from the ground and placed her

upon the horse behind him; and{63} she clasped her arms around his body and felt his body with her arms with great joy and delight.

Sir Geraint and Enid depart from that place.

So they rode away from that place and no one dared to stop them, for all believed that it was the living riding with the dead.

Then, when they were come out into the sunlight again, Sir Geraint turned his head and looked his lady, Enid, in the face, and he perceived how she had lost her color and was grown thin and fragile because of the hardships to which his anger and his injustice had subjected her. Then he turned his own face away and bowed his head.

By and by he lifted his head and said to her, "Lady, canst thou forgive me?" To that she smiled a little, but very faintly. "I do forgive thee," said she, "but never shall I forget." Therewith the tears ran from her eyes and fell like diamonds down her cheeks, and Sir Geraint turned away his face again and again bowed down his head.

So they rode in silence, each occupied with his or her own thoughts, until at last they came to a place where there were high hedges upon either side of the way. At this place they heard the sound of many horses coming toward them, and in a little while they perceived the points of a number of spears between them and the sky over the top of the hedge. So Geraint put Enid upon the other side of the hedge and made him ready to face those who were coming.

The Little King finds Sir Geraint and Enid.

Anon there came a small host of horsemen in armor into that road, and the first of all those who came was the Little King. Then Geraint cried out with joy, "Is that thou, the Little King?" And the other said, "Yea, it is I, but who art thou?" For he did not know Sir Geraint because of the blood that was upon him and because of his changed appearance. Then Geraint said, "It is I, Geraint the son of Erbin."

Then the Little King came forward, and embraced him. And Enid came forth from her hiding, and the Little King paid his respects to her. Quoth the Little King, "I was in search of thee, Sir Geraint, for I heard thou wert in trouble. So I am here." And Sir Geraint said, "That is according to the conditions of our bond."

So Sir Geraint and Enid and the Little King returned along the way toward the castle of the Little King, and when they reached the castle the wounds of Sir Geraint were searched and dressed and he was made in all wise as comfortable as he could be.{64}



THUS have I told you the story of Sir Geraint and of Lady Enid at this, its fitting time.

Of the story, how it hath been sung of old.

This story has been very often sung and told and so you have no doubt heard of it or read it before this. For it hath been told by a great poet, and it hath been told by the ancient bards of Wales, and both that great poet and I have obtained it from those ancient chronicles of the Welsh Mabinogi.

But as this story concerns the story of King Arthur and his court, so it must be written when it cometh in its due place and so I have written it.

So I pray you read it and consider it as a very famous story of one of the chiefest knights of the Round Table of King Arthur.

And now I shall have to tell you of the coming of Sir Galahad and of the Quest of the Grail by certain of the Knights of King Arthur and his Round Table, and of how certain other knights failed in that quest. So if you will read that which followeth you shall be informed of all those very wonderful things which many people for many years believed to be sooth and real.



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PART II

The Story of Sir Galahad

HERE beginneth the Story of Sir Galahad, which same includes the history of the recovery of the Grail and its deposit in the Minster of Sarras, also its exaltation into Paradise, as follows:—{66}

Sir Galahad cometh with the
Hermit of the fforest:



{67}



Chapter Firsts

How Sir Galahad was made a knight; how he came to the Court of King Arthur, and of the several miracles that happened at that time.

A damsel comes to the Court of the King.

ONE day Sir Launcelot sat at court with many lords and ladies of high degree who were gathered there at that time. Suddenly there entered that place a maiden clad in a long, straight robe of white, girdled about the middle of the body with a crimson girdle of leather. And the girdle was embroidered with threads of gold. This maiden stood at the door of the hall and called out in a high and very clear voice, "Sir Launcelot of the Lake—which knight is he?"

To this Sir Launcelot made reply, "I am he; what seekest thou of me?" The maiden said, "Sir Launcelot, I bid thee arise and follow me." Quoth he, "To what purpose?" She said, "Thou shalt see."

So Sir Launcelot arose and, clad as he was and without armor of any sort, he followed her.

Sir Launcelot rides with her.

Outside of the hall were two horses standing; one of them was a white palfrey, the other was a black stallion. Sir Launcelot assisted the maiden to mount upon the white palfrey and he himself mounted upon the black stallion, and so together they rode away from Camelot.

They travelled for some while until they came to the skirts of the forest. Then they rode into the forest, and all day they traversed the woodlands.{68} Toward eventide of that same day they came to an open place amidst the surrounding trees, where was a quiet and very fruitful valley, stretched out wide to the length and breadth of a league. In that valley Sir Launcelot beheld orchards and fields of wheat and barley, and meadow-lands where cattle were browsing in numbers. For it was a very beautiful and fertile spot.

In the midst of this valley there stood a nunnery, with white walls and green trees all about it. Above the nunnery was the clear and radiant sky, very blue and all full of floating clouds. A soft wind blew up the length of the valley, and upon the breeze there came the remote sound of a crowing cock and the voice of the ploughboy as he drave the plough horses along the smoking, upturned furrows, the ploughman following laboring behind them.

Quoth the maiden, "Thither is where I am taking thee." Said Sir Launcelot, "To what end?" "That thou shalt presently see," said the maiden.

They come to the nunnery.

So the maiden rode down into the valley and Sir Launcelot rode after her. Thus, anon, they came to that pleasant and secluded convent. Here the gate was opened to them by a fair and youthful esquire, and they entered the portals of the place. Then several came and assisted them to dismount, and took the horses of Sir Launcelot and the maiden.

After that the maiden led Sir Launcelot across the quadrangle of the convent and so to the chapel, and they entered the chapel. Here Sir Launcelot beheld four ladies kneeling upon four cushions before the altar; and he beheld that beside these ladies there were two knights kneeling, each upon a cushion. Of the four ladies, one was the Lady Abbess of that convent; and of the two knights, one was Sir Bors de Ganis and the other was Sir Lionel.

Sir Launcelot finds two whom he knows.

Anon they who kneeled there ceased their orisons and arose, and Sir Launcelot beheld the faces of Sir Bors and Sir Lionel and knew them, and they knew him. Then Sir Launcelot said to them, "Messires, what is it brings you hitherward?" To this Sir Bors replied, "Sir, we were in distant places and to each of us came a fair maiden who was the messenger who brought each of us to this place. Since our coming we have been waiting for thee, and now thou art here." Sir Launcelot said, "For what purpose have I been brought hither?" Sir Lionel said, "Thou shalt see." Then Sir Lionel said to the Abbess, "Bring him forth that Sir Launcelot may behold him."

Sir Launcelot finds his son.

Upon this the Lady Abbess turned to one of the nuns who stood beside{69} her and she spake aside to her, and with that the nun left them and went away. For a little while she was gone, and then in a little while she returned, bringing with her a youth of eighteen years of age, very tall and fair, and clad from top to toe in clothes of white silk. Said Sir Launcelot to the Abbess, "Lady, what youth is this?" The Abbess replied to him, "Sir, this is thine own son, hight Galahad, and his mother was the Lady Elaine the Fair."

Then Sir Launcelot cried out in a loud voice, "How is this? I knew not that I had a son. I beheld the Lady Elaine the Fair upon a certain black and terrible day, lying dead in a boat at Camelot, and I stood upon the quay and the boat floated beneath my feet. All this I beheld, and never shall I forget it; but I knew not that she left a son behind her." Said the Abbess, "Ne'ertheless she did so, and this is that son. Here hath he lived with us since the time of his birth when Sir Bors fetched him hither, and no one knew that

he dwelt with us saving only Sir Bors de Ganis. But now hath the time come that he must quit us, for the period is imminent when the search for the Holy Grail shall be begun, and this is he who shall achieve the Grail. He is now to be knighted, and for that purpose thou hast been sent for that thou mightest make him a knight. This is the reason for thy being brought hither." Quoth Sir Launcelot, "Let me then make him a knight. For I know of no joy that would be greater than that, that I should make him a knight."

Sir Launcelot makes Galahad a knight.

So that night Galahad watched his armor in the chapel, and Sir Bors and Sir Lionel sat near to him to support him in his watch. And when the morning was come, they two took him thence and bathed him, and Sir Bors marked the sign of the cross upon his right shoulder and Sir Lionel marked the sign of the cross upon his left shoulder, each with the water of the bath. Thereafter that, they clad him in a robe of white, pure and spotless, and they brought him to where Sir Launcelot was, and Sir Launcelot made a knight of him, according to the accepted custom.

So was Sir Galahad made a knight by the hand of his own father, Sir Launcelot of the Lake.

Sir Launcelot returns to the court.

Now, after this ceremony was completed, Sir Launcelot besought Sir Galahad that he would accompany them to the Court of King Arthur, so that the King might behold him (for Sir Launcelot desired that Sir Galahad should be manifested to the entire world of chivalry). But to this Sir Galahad replied, "Sir, I cannot yet go to the Court of the King, for all is not yet accomplished to prepare me for that going. Anon, however, I shall come thither; meantime, do{70} thou wait for me at King Arthur's Court." So, shortly after this, Sir Launcelot and Sir Lionel and Sir Bors de Ganis departed from that convent, and that same day they reached the Court of the King at Camelot.

But they said nothing to that court concerning the knighting of Galahad, for at that present it was not to be made known to the world that there was such an one as Galahad, and that he was Sir Launcelot's son and a knight of Sir Launcelot's making.

So it befell Pentecost Day, what time the Feast of the Round Table was held. Upon this day those miracles happened that are here written of, and that were afterward so much talked of and concerning which so much was written.

Concerning the miracle of the sword.

For it happened upon that day, early in the morning when the water-carriers went down to the river to draw water, they there beheld at that place a very strange, and wonderful sight. For beside the river they beheld where there stood a great block of red marble—cubical in shape, and polished until it was smooth as glass. And into that cube of stone there was thrust a sword, half way down its blade into the marble. And the hilt of the sword and the haft, thereof, was studded all over with precious stones of divers sizes and colors, very rich and glorious to behold. And the blade of that sword (so much thereof as could be seen) shone like to lightning for brightness.

Then they who beheld the wonder that appeared before them made all haste to the castle of the King, and straightway told the news of what they had seen. Anon this reached the ears of the King and of several of those lords who were in attendance upon him. Then the King spoke to those lords, saying, “What is this I hear tell of? Let us straightway go and see.”

The King and his lords view the sword.

So the King, and those lords of the court who were in his company, went down to the river to look upon that wonder, and amongst those lords were Sir Launcelot of the Lake and Sir Percival of Gales and Sir Bors de Ganis and Sir Lionel and Sir Ector and Sir Gawaine, and several other high lords of chivalry.

When they had come to that place where the sword was they beheld that there were words written around about the blade thereof. So King Arthur commanded Sir Launcelot that he should read those words, and Sir Launcelot read as follows:

“This sword is for the greatest knight in the world and for him who shall win the Holy Grail.”

{71}

Then he read:

“Whoso draweth forth this sword from the stone, to him shall that sword belong; but upon him who shall endeavor to draw it forth and shall not be able to do so, shall fall a wound from the blade thereof.”

Then King Arthur said to Sir Launcelot of the Lake, “Messire, thou art the greatest knight in the world, and perhaps thou shalt win the Holy Grail. Let me see thee draw forth that blade.”

Sir Launcelot will not attempt the sword.

Quoth Sir Launcelot, "Lord, I know not that I am the greatest knight in the world, and I fear me that I shall not be able to win the Grail, for I am a sinful man. Look you; it saith here that he who shall endeavor to draw it forth from the marble and shall fail to do so, he shall be wounded by the blade thereof. So I would fain not endeavor to draw forth this sword."

Then King Arthur turned him to Sir Gawaine, and he said, "Sir, let me see thee attempt that sword, for mayhap thou mayst be able to draw it forth out of the marble." Sir Gawaine said, "Lord, if Sir Launcelot dare not attempt that sword, so, also, do I not dare to do so." King Arthur said to him, "Gawaine, I command thee upon thy fealty to attempt that sword." Quoth Sir Gawaine, "Dear my Lord, if thou dost command me upon my fealty, then I must attempt to obey thy command." King Arthur said, "I do command thee thus."

Sir Gawaine attempts the sword.

So Sir Gawaine came forth and he laid hand to the hilt of the sword and drew strongly upon it, but the sword did not move a hair's breadth in the marble stone in which it stood emplaced.

Then Sir Launcelot spoke and said, "Alas, Sir Gawaine, that thou shouldst have made that attempt and failed therein. For if thou art wounded by that bright-shining blade it may be of more injury to thee than it would be if thou shouldst lose three several castles." Quoth Sir Gawaine, "That may well be, Sir Launcelot, but yet it was incumbent upon me to do that which the King's command called upon me to do."

Sir Percival attempts the sword.

Then up spake Sir Percival, "Lord," said he, "let me also attempt that sword, for if it should be turned against Sir Gawaine I would have it that it should be turned equally against me. Else I would endeavor to draw it forth from the stone for mine own." The King said, "Try thou for the sword." So Sir Percival laid his hand to the sword and drew upon it very strongly, but neither could he move it so much as the breadth of a single hair.

After that no other lord of all those present chose to attempt the sword, but all avoided it from a distance, no one coming nigh enough to it to touch it.

So, thereafter, they all withdrew from that place and went away, marvelling at the miracle. And all that day many came to where was that sword and the block of marble, and these stood to look upon that sight and to marvel at it.

Such is the story of the sword so far as this, and so have I told it to you as I have read of it in an ancient book of olden days, wherein these adventures and several other adventures are spoken of.

Thus that day of marvels began, and by and by came the time of the Feast of the Round Table.

Sir Galahad is brought to the Feast of the Round Table.

Now all they of the Round Table were gathered about that board and every man sat in his place, and behind every knight stood a young knight to serve him with meat and drink. Thus, as they all sat there, there came, of a sudden, a commotion at the doorway, and after that commotion there appeared at the doorway an old man clad all in white. That old man was the Hermit of the Forest, and with him he brought a tall, fair young knight and that knight was Sir Galahad. At that time Sir Galahad was clad in flame-colored armor from top to toe, but he bare no shield for his defence upon his shoulder, nor was there any sword within the sheath that hung empty and hollow at his side. From his shoulders there hung a long mantle of flame-colored cloth, and the mantle was lined with sable and trimmed and bordered with sable.

The old man lifted up his voice and spake aloud to all who were there, saying, “Lords, here by the grace of God come I amongst you with him who is to be the greatest knight that ever the world beheld. Also, he is to be the one who shall achieve the Holy Grail. So I have brought him hither to this place.”

Him answered King Arthur, saying, “Holy Sir, if thou sayest sooth, then this is a very great and marvellous thing. But soon shall we put it to the test; yonder is the Seat Perilous wherein no one hath dared to seat himself for all this while of the Round Table. Let this youth take there his seat, for that seat is for him who is without sin of the flesh—then will we believe that which thou tellest us. Also, down beside the river there is a strange and marvellous sword in a cube of marble. Let him draw that sword and then shall we certes believe in him.{73}”

Sir Galahad assumes the Seat Perilous.

The old hermit said, “Sir King, it shall be done as thou desirest. Let him take that seat.” So the old man took him by one hand and King Arthur arose and took him by the other, and so together they led Sir Galahad to the Seat Perilous. Here he took his seat, and lo! no harm of any sort befell him. Then, anon, Sir Launcelot reached forward and drew aside the silken coverlet that hung at the back of the seat upon which Sir

Galahad sat, and, behold! there was a word estamped upon the back of the seat in letters of gold; and that word was:

SIR GALAHAD

Then a great shout went up from all the Knights of the Round Table, for thus was the Seat Perilous achieved, and so was the Round Table completed.

Then King Arthur said, "Lo! this youth is he for whom we have been waiting for all this time. For so the miracle of the Round Table is fulfilled. Let us now take him to the sword thrust into the marble stone, for certes he shall draw forth that sword, and it shall be his. For, wit ye, that this is he who shall indeed achieve the Holy Grail."

Sir Galahad draweth the sword.

So all they arose from their seats and went forth, and they conducted Sir Galahad down to the river. There he beheld the stone of marble and the sword thrust into the stone, and he said to those who stood about that place, "This sword is assuredly mine, for I have no sword, and for that sword I have come hitherward." So Sir Galahad went to where was the sword and he set hand to the sword and drew it forth from the stone very smoothly and easily, and where the sword came forth it left no mark upon the stone, for, lo! it was solid and whole and without any blemish whatsoever. Then Sir Galahad thrust the bright-shining blade into the scabbard that hung beside him, and it fitted to the scabbard, and so he was armed.

Thereafter King Arthur took him by the hand and kissed him upon either cheek, and the King said, "Hail, Sir Galahad! All hail to thee! For thou art to be the crowning glory of my entire reign. For many mysteries and miracles have befallen in that reign, but thy coming is the greatest miracle of all." And he said, "Come, let us go up to the castle that I may present thee to the Queen."

Sir Galahad will not stay at Camelot.

Then Sir Galahad said, "Not so, O Lord! I cannot go with thee now. For one cometh and is nigh to here at this present, and with her I must go. For I go first to seek for the shield of Balan, who slew his brother Balin unwittingly at the time of Uther{74} Pendragon. Through him the Holy Grail was lost to the earth, so that I must recover first his shield and then the Holy Grail. After I have thus armed me with that shield, then must I go to search for the Holy Grail, for that same is my mission here in life. Likewise I have this news to tell thee, that two of those knights here present shall win the Grail along with me; but who those two shall be, I may not relate to you at this time."

A maiden cometh for Galahad.

Thus said Sir Galahad, and even as he ceased speaking there appeared in the distance a damsel clad all in white raiment, and the maiden came thitherward, riding upon a white palfrey, and by her hand she led by its bridle-rein a coal-black charger of great size and girth. So as she drew near, Sir Galahad went forward to meet her, and to him the maiden said, speaking very high and clear, "Art thou ready, Sir Galahad?" Whereunto he said, "Yea, I am ready." And she said, "Come!" So Sir Galahad mounted upon the black charger, and he saluted King Arthur and he saluted Sir Launcelot and he saluted Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, and after that he rode away from that place, leaving them all in great wonder and amazement, both at his coming and at his going, and at all that had befallen.

So, when he had gone, King Arthur turned to his court of lords, and he said, "This is certes a very wonderful visitation, for this youth came to us like an angel from heaven, and, like an angel, he hath gone. Let us now go and hear the mass ere we return to the Hall of the Round Table."

So all they who were there went to the mass, and as they were going Sir Gawaine said to Sir Launcelot, "Messire, this is a sad day for thee, for now there is a greater knight than thou art in the world." Him answered Sir Launcelot, "Not so, Messire, there is no sadness in this for me, for, wit you, that this is mine own and well-beloved son. Wherefore I, being his father, may well surrender unto him that glory which I cannot carry with me into paradise, but which I would not be willing to yield to any other man."

So said Sir Launcelot, and thus all the world became acquainted with that fact that no one but Sir Bors and Sir Lionel knew until then; to wit, that Sir Galahad was the true son of Sir Launcelot of the Lake.

The knights vow to attempt the Grail.

Now, after the mass in the minster was over, all they of the Knights of the Round Table retired to the Hall of the Round Table, and there they took their seats in due order. Then, when all were seated, King Arthur up and said, "Messires and Lords of the Round Table, all ye have heard what Sir Galahad hath said but a little while since; to wit, that two of you who are here should achieve the Grail with him. Now it doth seem to me that several of you who are the chief of all the knights should go forth in search of that Holy Chalice, so as to be able to join him. For, by not going, those two may miss the chance of achieving that great glory."

So said King Arthur, and, in answer, all those who were there arose, each man in his place. And each man drew his sword and each held up the handle of his sword before his eyes as a crucifix. And each man swore upon that crucifix that he would presently

depart from the Court of the King, and that he would search for the Holy Grail either until he discovered it or until he should perish, or until the Grail should have been achieved.

King Arthur takes sorrow.

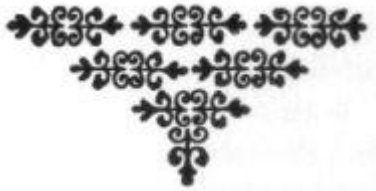
Then King Arthur was filled with sorrow, for he would not that all of his knights should go in that wise, for many of them he would have kept with him at his court. And most of all he was grieved that Sir Gawaine should go, for he loved Sir Gawaine above all the knights of his court, because Sir Gawaine was the son of the well-beloved sister of the King. So he said to Sir Gawaine, "Alas, Gawaine, you have slain the joy of my life! For with this oath that ye all have uttered there departeth from this court all that was of joy therein. Until now there hath been great joy and good content at this Court of Camelot, but now that joy hath taken wing and hath flown away. For, though many of you shall return to this place, yet I foresee that many shall die; and I foresee that from this time there shall follow great bitterness and rancor, and anon that death and devastation shall overtake us all. For this is the time foretold by Merlin, of which ye all have heard tell. For, according to that prophecy, this day the Round Table hath been filled to its completion, so that hereafter it shall soon fall apart into warring and contention until it be altogether destroyed."

Sir Launcelot comforts King Arthur.

Then Sir Launcelot said to the King, "Comfort you, my lord, for though the Round Table may indeed perish thus, yet, ere it be dissolved, there shall come great honor and a great glory unto you and unto us all. For what greater glory can there be to you than that the knights of your Round Table should achieve the Holy Grail? And what greater honor can there be than that we should endanger our lives in that quest? For we all seek death hither and thither, and if it so befall that death cometh to us in this cause, how much better is it to die in that wise than to have death come to us in some vain quarrel or adventure."

Quoth King Arthur, "That which thou sayest, Launcelot, is very true, yet do I greatly grieve for this happening. For though we may look forward to a glorious sorrow, yet when that sorrow cometh to us it appeareth{76} to be so much greater than the glory that it hides that glory from our eyes. So, Launcelot, is it with me; for though I may take glory that my knights shall achieve the Holy Grail, yet is the sorrow very great to me that this Round Table should be dissolved. Alas, and alas, that it should be so!"

Thus the Knights of the Round Table went forth in quest of the Grail—fifty of them in all. All of those who thus went had adventures, and many of them lost their lives and did never return again. But of those of whom this history telleth there is only Sir Launcelot, Sir Gawaine, Sir Percival, Sir Bors, and Sir Galahad, and one or two others. Of them and of their adventures it remains now to be told; wherefore, followeth the history of those things hereinafter written.



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The Lady of the Lake and Sirs Galahad:



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Chapter Second

How Sir Galahad was led by a strange lady to a monastery of White Friars. How he met there two other Knights of the Round Table. How King Bagdemagus wore the shield, and how it was taken from him and given unto Sir Galahad. Also the story of the shield.

SIR Galahad rode away from Camelot, where was the Court of King Arthur, following after the maiden clad all in white. Thus they wended onward until they reached the skirts of the forest. At this place the maiden said, "Sir Galahad, I must here leave you. But go you farther upon yonder path, and by and by you will be met and entertained."

Sir Galahad comes to a strange country.

So Sir Galahad rode forward upon that path as the maiden directed. And he rode a great distance into the forest until at last he reached the Forest of Arroy, otherwise called the Forest of Adventure. Here, after he had ridden for a considerable time, he came at last to a very strange place. For he found the trees grew thin and thinner about him. Then, at last, the trees ceased around him, and he found himself upon the edge of a wide and open plain. And he beheld that all about him in this plain there were great quantities of lilies, and there were also daffodils, and all those flowers moved this way and that, very slowly in the gentle air, as though they saluted him in coming. And Sir Galahad beheld that this was a very wonderful place indeed, for the light that illumined it was not the light of the sun nor of the moon, but it was a radiant and golden glory that was not due to the light of either of those luminaries.

And in the midst of that flowery plain Sir Galahad beheld that there was a wide and very placid lake that was in no wise troubled by the soft breeze that blew across it, but that was otherwise like a smooth mirror of clear water.

So as Sir Galahad beheld all these things and marvelled at them, he was aware that this was not the land of common earth, but that it was fay.{80}

Then anon he was aware that voices were calling aloud, saying, "Welcome, welcome, Sir Galahad!" as it were with great rejoicing. So he looked, and lo! he beheld to one side a fair and shining pavilion of green silk. And there were many people gathered in the field near the pavilion, and some of them were ladies and some were lords and others were pages, and all were clad in very gay and rainbow colors, so that it appeared as though it were a flock of gaudy birds of various plumage that was gathered in that place.

So Sir Galahad turned him toward that gay and jocund company, and as he drew near to them he beheld that they were weaving garlands and wreaths of fair flowers.

(For these, you are to know, were the attendants of the Lady of the Lake, and that was the lake in which was her habitation, and he had been led to that place for a certain purpose that they and others might see and know him.)

Sir Galahad abides there for four days.

So this place pleased Sir Galahad very greatly, and he remained for three days, taking great joy in that jocund company. For somewhiles they feasted and somewhiles they sang; somewhiles they danced and somewhiles they related pleasant tales and

contes of several kinds. So it was that these three days passed very pleasantly and very quickly with Sir Galahad.

There cometh the Lady of the Lake.

Then, upon the morning of the fourth day, there appeared a lady in their midst to whom all who were there paid great deference and high respect; and this lady was of a very wonderful appearance. For she was clad in green samite from head to foot, and her hair was long and extraordinarily black, and very soft and glossy. And her face was pale, like to ivory, and her eyes were bright, like to jewels set in ivory. And upon her neck and around her arms were chains and bracelets of gold inset with emerald stones. Wherefore, from these things, and from the appearance of all about him, Sir Galahad was aware that that lady was not mortal, but that she was fay.

(For this was indeed the Lady of the Lake, although he knew it not then nor afterward.)

So Sir Galahad kneeled in the grass before the lady and he set his palms together. But she smiled upon him and she said to him, "Arise, Galahad, and kneel not to me, who am not of the spirit, but of the earth." And she said to him, "Where is thy shield?" He said to her, "Lady, I have no shield." She said to him, "Let us go and find thee a shield."

So straightway there came several attendants, and some of these brought Sir Galahad his black charger, and others brought for the lady a beautiful{81} janet as white as milk. And upon the back of the janet was a saddle of scarlet Spanish leather, embossed with gold and jewels, so that it shone and glistered with great splendor.

Then Sir Galahad mounted his horse and the lady mounted herself upon the janet, and so together they rode away from that place.

The Lady of the Lake leadeth Sir Galahad to a shield.

Thus they rode for all that day, and against the sloping of the afternoon they had come to the edge of the forest opposite to that part of the forest where was the town of Camelot. At this place there was a monastery of White Friars, and to this the lady pointed and said to Sir Galahad, "Thither thou wilt find a shield."

Then Sir Galahad would have thanked her for bringing him thither, but lo! she was gone from his sight and he was alone. Then the monastery bell began ringing, and Sir Galahad rode down to that holy house.

Sir Galahad enters the monastery.

So he came to the monastery and smote with the butt of his lance upon the gate. Then the porters came and opened the gate to him, and when they beheld him they gave

him welcome to that place. So he entered the courtyard of the monastery, and several came and gathered about him. Some of these took his horse and led it away to the stable; others conducted him into the house and afterward brought him to the chamber wherein he was to be lodged. Here they removed his armor and brought him to a bath of tepid water. After that they clad him in raiment that was soft and warm so that he had great ease and comfort.

Sir Galahad findeth Sir Bagdemagus and Sir Ewaine.

Then, when he was thus clad, they conducted him to the hall of that monastery, and there he beheld that there were two other knights then present. The one of these was Sir Ewaine, and the other was Sir Bagdemagus, erstwhile called King Bagdemagus. These were both Knights of the Round Table, wherefore they greeted him and gave him great welcome.

Sir Ewaine said to him, "I pray you, sir, tell us how you came hither." Sir Galahad said, "I will tell you." So he told them how he had abided in the midst of the forest near to that magic lake for the space of three days. And he told them how that lady, who was fay, had conducted him to that place, and had told him that there was here a shield with which he might provide himself. To all this Sir Ewaine and King Bagdemagus listened, and then Sir Ewaine said to Sir Galahad, "Messire, no doubt that lady who accompanied thee hitherward was the Lady of the Lake, for so hath she appeared to several of King Arthur's Court as she hath appeared to thee.{82}"

The Abbot tells of the shield.

Just then came the Abbot of that place, and King Bagdemagus said to him, "Sir, I pray you tell us, is there at this place a shield of such and such a sort?" The Abbot replied to him, "Aye, sir, there is here a strange and miraculous shield, and it hangeth behind the altar, and it hath hung there for God knoweth how long." King Bagdemagus said, "I would fain see that shield." The Abbot replied, "I will show it to you to-morrow morning, but not to-night. For I am come to conduct you to supper, and not to show you a shield."

So, when they were seated at supper, Sir Galahad said to the two knights, "I pray you tell me how you came hitherward to this place." "That I will do," quoth Sir Ewaine. And he said, "Sir Bagdemagus and I set forth from Camelot in search of the Grail. After we had journeyed for a long distance, we came to that part of the forest that is called the Forest of Arroy, or otherwise the Forest of Adventure. Here we wandered for some while without being freed from it, for the Forest of Adventure is not very difficult to find, but is often very difficult to escape from. After a while, however, we found a way

to escape from that forest, and so came out upon the further side of it. There we beheld, below us, this place and so we came to it. Such, sir, is the way in which we came hither.”

Thus these three knights and the high officers of that monastery ate and drank together, discoursing very pleasantly the while. And when they had ceased eating and drinking and talking together, they were weary, and each withdrew to his couch and to sleep.

The Abbot takes the three knights to the shield.

Now, when the next morning had come and when they had broken their fast, King Bagdemagus said to the Abbot, “I pray you now to show us that shield concerning which we spoke last night.” The Abbot said, “I will do so. Come with me.” So he led them to the chapel and he led them behind the altar, and there they beheld the shield where it hung. And the shield was exceedingly white and shining, as it were of brightly polished silver. And upon the shield was marked a red cross, very strong and bold in its marking.

King Bagdemagus covets the shield.

But when King Bagdemagus beheld the shield, he coveted it exceedingly, and he said, “That is a very beautiful shield. I pray you let me have that shield for mine own, and I will give my shield to Sir Galahad.” To him the Abbot replied, “Messire, I would gladly give you that shield, but there is said of it that whoever taketh it except the one man for whom it is destined, harm shall come to him, and great suffering.” King Bagdemagus said, “That may be so, but, haply, I am he for whom it is destined. At any rate, I am a tried and well-approved knight, wherefore if I take it I will essay to keep it, as a knight of standing may hope to keep his shield.” The Abbot said to him, “Then take it, sir, in God’s name.”

So King Bagdemagus took the shield and hung it about his neck. And he said to those other two knights, “Messires, I know not whether there is any malaventure appertaining to this shield, but, at any rate, I shall essay to keep and to hold it. Nevertheless, I pray you to await me here for this day. And if anything happeneth to me, I will return and give you report as to that happening.”

To this Sir Galahad and Sir Ewaine replied that they would remain at that place until the following morning.

Sir Bagdemagus rides errant into the forest.

After that Sir Bagdemagus mounted horse and rode away. And he directed his horse into the forest, and rode there a considerable distance away from the monastery. So, by and by, he came to a place where two highways parted, and where there was a cross of stone, and at that place he beheld a knight in white armor, seated upon a white horse. This White Knight stood across the way upon which Sir Bagdemagus was travelling, and he appeared to be very threatening and austere. So, when Sir Bagdemagus came pretty close to that White Knight, the White Knight said to him, "Messire, I prithee tell me, where got you that shield that I behold hanging upon your neck?" Sir Bagdemagus said to him, "I got this shield at a monastery of White Friars, at some distance from this." The White Knight said to him, "I bid you take back that shield, and return it whence you got it, for it belongeth not to you." Quoth Sir Bagdemagus, "That will I not do until I am compelled. For now that I have this shield I propose to keep it for mine own, unless it is taken away from me in battle." To this the White Knight replied, "Very well, then, thou shalt do battle for it, and that anon. Now prepare thyself straightway for battle with me."

Sir Bagdemagus is overthrown by the White Knight.

Upon this each knight made himself ready, and when they were in all ways prepared, they dashed together with great violence. In that encounter the spear of Sir Bagdemagus passed very smoothly from the shield of the White Knight, but the spear of the White Knight pierced the shoulder of Sir Bagdemagus, over above the shield which protected not that part of his body. And the point of the spear of the White Knight passed through the shoulder of Sir Bagdemagus, so that he was flung with great violence to the earth.

Then anon the White Knight came to where Sir Bagdemagus lay, and he said to him, "Sir, how fares it with you?" Quoth Sir Bagdemagus, "Alas, Messire, I am very grievously hurt, for thou hast pierced through my shoulder with thy lance, and I suffer very greatly.{84}"

Therewith the White Knight dismounted from his horse and he lifted and raised Sir Bagdemagus. And after that he had beheld the wound, he laid Sir Bagdemagus upon his horse. Then he took the bridle-rein of Sir Bagdemagus' horse, and he led the horse and the wounded man back to the monastery whence he had that morning come.

The White Knight bringeth Sir Bagdemagus to the monastery.

So, by and by, they two arrived there, and several came and took the horse of Sir Bagdemagus. And they lifted him from his horse and carried him into the house, and laid him upon a bed, and searched his wound. But when they came to look for the

White Knight, he was gone, nor wist they whither he went. And the wound of Sir Bagdemagus was very deep, so that for a long while he hung, as it were, balanced betwixt life and death.

But Sir Bagdemagus did not die; otherwise, the next day, he summoned Sir Galahad to him. And when Sir Galahad had come to him, Sir Bagdemagus said to him, "Messire, I had no right to that shield and I suffered for taking it. I believe that it belongeth, indeed, to you; wherefore I pray you for to take it and to wear it, henceforth, for your own. But who that White Knight was who met me, or whence he came, or how he knew that I had that shield, I know not, nor perhaps ever shall know."

To this Sir Galahad answered, "Sir, I will assume that shield and all the dangers that appertain to it, trusting that it belongs to me, and doing battle to retain it if need be."

Sir Galahad takes the shield.

So Sir Galahad took the shield and hung it about his neck. Then he called for his horse, and mounting upon it he rode away from that place.

But King Bagdemagus lay there at the monastery for many days and for several weeks ere he was fit to travel again.

After that Sir Galahad travelled for all that day, and anon, toward the sloping of the afternoon, he was an hungered, and he wist not where he should come at refreshment for to eat. At that time he passed through a little woodland, and when he had traversed it he came out of it upon a small, open place upon the other side of it, where there was a fair meadow of short green grass.

Here he beheld a pavilion of particolored silks, and he beheld that before the pavilion there stood a tall and noble-appearing knight, clad in white armor. This knight, beholding Sir Galahad, said to him, "Sir, whence come you?"

To this Sir Galahad made answer, "Sir, I came from a monastery over yonderways, where I got me this shield." Quoth the White Knight, "Art thou Sir Galahad?" and Sir Galahad replied, "Yea, I am he.{85}"

Sir Galahad meets the White Knight.

Then the White Knight said to him, "I pray you, sir, to dismount from your horse and to come in and refresh yourself, for I have been awaiting you this long while." And Sir Galahad replied, "Sir, I give you grammercy for your kindness."

So the White Knight assisted Sir Galahad to dismount from his horse. And he brought him into the pavilion, and Sir Galahad beheld that there was there set a feast spread

ready for his coming. So they seated themselves at table, and three esquires clad in green samite waited upon them, and they both ate and drank of the food and drink that was set before them, and which was very excellent.

Then the White Knight said, "Sir, to-morrow we shall ride together for a little way, meanwhile let us rest here to-night." And Sir Galahad said, "So let it be."

So, by and by, there came two other esquires who took Sir Galahad and brought him to where was a soft and luxurious couch of down, and there he rested and slept for the night.

And when the morrow had come, Sir Galahad arose and the White Knight arose and the esquires came and armed them. Then they each mounted his horse, and so they rode away together.

The White Knight tells Sir Galahad of the shield.

Now when these two, to wit, Sir Galahad and the White Knight, were thus upon their way, the White Knight said to Sir Galahad, "Sir, wit you what is the story of the Grail, and what is the history of that shield that you wear at your neck?" Sir Galahad said, "Nay, but I pray you to tell me that story." Quoth the White Knight, "I will do so. It is as follows:

"In the old days of Uther Pendragon there were two knights who were twin brothers. One of these knights was hight Balan and the other was hight Balin.

"Now at that time there was in the enchanted city of Sarras two very great marvels; one of these was the spear with which the blessed side was wounded at the time of the crucifixion, and the other was the chalice into which the blood was drained from that deep and pitiful wound. But how they came to the city of Sarras is too long a story to tell.

How Sir Balan came to Sarras.

"Now Sir Balan was in the city of Sarras, and he was entertained at the castle of the king of that country, whose name was King Pischer. This King was at enmity with Sir Balan, whom he very greatly hated. So that night when Sir Balan lay upon his bed, King Pischer, at the head of several men, attacked Sir Balan where he lay unarmed. He, starting up from his sleep, beheld them coming, and so he fled away from those who would assail him, and so he escaped into the chapel of the castle, where those two holy relics—to wit,{86} the spear and the chalice—were kept. Hither his enemies followed him and would have slain him, even upon the steps of the altar, only that, beholding the spear, Sir Balan seized upon it and ran with it against them. In that

assault he smote King Pischer with the spear, a very great and bitter stroke. For the point of the spear penetrated the corselet of King Pischer, and inflicted a deep wound in the shoulder. And after that Sir Balan attacked the others who were with King Pischer, and drave them all before him. So Sir Balan used that holy spear for his own preservation.

“But as Sir Balan stood holding the spear and beholding his enemies retreat from that place, there came to him a voice as from heaven, saying to him, ‘Balan! Balan! what hast thou done?’

How there came an earthquake.

“And as the voice ceased its words there came, as from beneath, a deep and hollow rumbling. And the rumbling grew louder and louder, until it became a great earthquake, so that the earth rocked beneath the feet. Then the chapel and the castle and all that place reeled, and the castle fell, one stone upon another, so that all who were within it were buried beneath the ruins. At the same time the spear and the chalice disappeared from that place, and neither have they ever been seen from that time—saving only that in visions they have been seen. For Sir Percival beheld both the spear and the chalice, and others have beheld them from time to time.

How Sir Balan escapes.

“Sir Balan was not killed by the fall of that castle, nor was King Pischer killed, but all others in the castle perished in its fall. But rather had King Pischer been killed, for that wound in his shoulder remained unhealed, and King Pischer could not die for a long while, though he suffered very greatly from that wound every day that he lived. Such, O Galahad! is the story of the Grail.

“Now touching this shield; wit you it is the shield of Sir Balan, and the way in which it came to the monastery of the White Friars is as followeth:

How Sir Balan fought with the Knight of the Ford.

“One day Sir Balan came to a certain part of the country where was a monastery of White Friars, and where he had news of a knight who guarded the ford of a river at that place. So Sir Balan went to that river and he beheld there the knight guarding the ford. Then Sir Balan attempted to pass the ford, but the knight would not allow him to do so, wherefore they came to battle with one another. They fought for an entire morning, and for longer than that, and each gave the other many grievous wounds, and what with loss of blood and with continuous fighting they grew ever weaker and weaker, so that neither of them could stand without great ado. But at last Sir Balan gave to his

enemy a deadly blow that brought him to the earth.{87} Then he rushed off his helmet to make an end of him, but when the face beneath was free from its helmet he beheld it, and saw that it was the face of his twin brother, Sir Balin, whom he was about to slay.

“Then he cried out in horror, ‘Alas, and woe is me! Is it thou, Balin, whom I am about to slay? Lo! I am thy brother Balan!’

How Sir Balan slew his brother Balin.

“Then Balin, feeling that he was near to death, wept a great deal. And he forgave his brother Balan, and he bade Balan, when he was dead, to bury him at that place beneath a thorn tree that grew there and that was covered all over with spikes, as it were a chevaux de frise. Then he died, and Balan performed that task—to wit, to bury him there.

“Anon came several White Friars from a monastery that was near by, and these took Balan to the monastery and there he died, for he was very sorely wounded, and his heart was broken.

How Sir Balan marked the shield.

“But ere he died he took his shield to him and he drew upon it a great cross in his own blood. And he told the friars of that place to keep that shield until he should come who was to achieve the Holy Grail and to return it unto Sarras again. And Sir Balan predicted of that shield that it should always remain bright as silver until that time, and that the cross of blood should ever remain as red as it was that day; and he predicted of it that no one should be able to wear that shield saving only that one for whom it was intended; and he predicted of that shield that it should never be pierced by the point of any weapon forged by the hand of man. So it was and such is that shield which thou carriest, Sir Galahad.”

All this Sir Galahad listened to and heard, and when the White Knight had ended his words, he said, “Sir, I would that I knew who thou art. I pray thee to tell me that.” But to this the White Knight only smiled and made reply, “I may not tell thee who I am, only this I may say, that I am he who hath had that shield under continual surveillance until now, and now I find that it hath fallen into hands that are even better able to care for it and to cherish it than were the hands of Sir Balan of old.”

Sir Galahad parts from the White Knight.

Thus these two knights travelled forward together until night to the setting of the sun. Then at last they came to a place where the roadway divided, and at that place the

White Knight said to Sir Galahad, “Messire, here I must leave thee. Continue upon that way and anon thou wilt come to a chapel where thou mayst be refreshed, and where thou mayst lodge for the night.” So saying, the White Knight saluted Sir Galahad, and he saluted the White Knight again. Then the White Knight rode down one path into the woods, and Sir Galahad entered upon the other path as he had been directed to do. But Sir Galahad turned his head to look after the White Knight ere he should reach the forest, but lo! he was not there, nor was anything to be seen, saving only the trees of the woodland and the red light of the sunset that lay upon the ground, falling through the leaves of the trees like to liquid gold spread there upon the earth in small, round, and brightly shining discs.

After that Sir Galahad continued upon his way until, anon, he heard the ringing of a bell, and with that he wist where he was, and that he was not far distant from the chapel of the Hermit of the Forest. So Sir Galahad spurred forward and in a little while he beheld the chapel, and he beheld the Hermit of the Forest, ringing the bell for vespers.

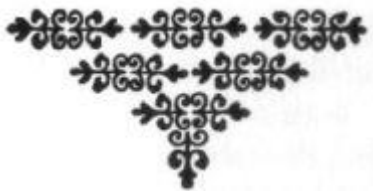
Sir Galahad lodges with the Hermit of the Forest.

So he came to that place that was very quiet and innocent, for he beheld that many birds sat perched upon the branches of the trees coadjacent to that place, and that several of the wild creatures of the woods, together with a wild doe and its fawn, were also there. For these things loved the Hermit of the Forest, and followed him whithersoever he went about that place.

Then the Hermit of the Forest beheld Sir Galahad and gave him welcome, and he brought him to eat and drink and prepared a lodging for him for the night.

Thus, then, was Sir Galahad armed with his shield, and therewith was he armed completely, for he needed no other thing to arm him for his defence.

So I have told you the history of these doings that you might know of them how they were. Now, having thus armed him entirely, so shall we turn to the further history of the adventures relating to these things.



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ir Galahad meets Sir Melyas :-



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Chapter Third

How Sir Galahad met with Sir Melyas. How Sir Melyas was overthrown, and how Sir Galahad overthrew his enemies. Also how Sir Galahad did at the Castle of Maidens.

NOW Sir Galahad departed next morning betimes, after he had broken his fast. And he wended his way through the forest, he knew not whitherward. After a considerable

while he came to where two roads crossed one another, and where there was a cross of stone. Here was a clear, limpid fountain of cold water, and at the fountain Sir Galahad beheld that there sat a young knight.

This young knight had been refreshing himself with draughts of the water, and now sat with his helmet beside him, whilst the soft and gentle wind blew upon his forehead and his hair.

Sir Galahad meets Sir Melyas.

Anon, when Sir Galahad had come nigh to him he said to the youthful knight, "Sir, I pray you tell me who you are." "I will do so," replied the young knight. "But you must also tell me your name and degree." "That I will do," said Sir Galahad. "Wit you that I am called Galahad, and that I am lately made a knight of King Arthur's Round Table." "And I," said the other, "am hight Melyas, and I am the son of the King of Denmark." Quoth Sir Galahad, "I give you grammercy for your information." And he said, "I pray you tell me, what do you here in the forest alone?"

"Last night," said Sir Melyas, "I came hitherward, and since then I have been travelling through the forest. I slept in the woodland then and I have not broken my fast since the prime of yesterday." "Hah!" said Sir Galahad. "Now I will give you advice. Journey whence I came and by this road, and you will, by and by, come to the chapel of the Hermit of the Forest, which is not very far distant. He will give you to eat and to drink."

Quoth Sir Melyas, "I give you thanks, Messire." Thereupon he arose, and assuming his helmet he mounted his horse; and, having saluted Sir{92} Galahad and Sir Galahad having saluted him, they parted company, each going upon his way.

Sir Melyas meets two strange knights.

Now Sir Melyas had not gone half a mile from that place when he met two knights, and as Sir Melyas approached them, one of the knights set his horse athwart the way and he said, "Sir, I pray you tell me who you are and whither you go." Him answered Sir Melyas very mildly, "Messire, my name is Melyas, and I travel toward the chapel of the Hermit of the Forest."

Quoth the knight, "Well, sir, since you come hitherward, I will have it that you try a pass with me. So prepare yourself to encounter me forthwith."

Him answered Sir Melyas, "Messire, I have naught against you, but if it is your will that I do battle with you, then I must do so."

The strange knight overthrows Sir Melyas.

So Sir Melyas prepared himself in all ways for that encounter, and the other knight likewise prepared himself, and when both were in all ways ready they launched themselves the one against the other with the utmost violence. So they met in the midst of the course and the spear of Sir Melyas was broken into a great many pieces in that encounter, but the spear of the other knight held, so that it pierced through the shield of Sir Melyas, wounding him in the side, and casting him with such violence to the earth that he lay there without motion, like one who is dead. Then the other knight leaped from his horse and he ran to Sir Melyas and rushed the helmet from his head and he set his misericordia to his throat, saying, "Yield thee, Sir Knight, or I shall presently slay thee." And Sir Melyas reviving from his swoon said, "Sir, slay me not, for I am sorely hurt."

Now turn we to Sir Galahad:

As he rode onward upon his way, a voice suddenly spoke within him, as it were in his very ears. And the voice said, "Return, Sir Galahad, for Sir Melyas is in peril of his life." And again it said, "Return in haste, for Sir Melyas is in peril of his life."

Sir Galahad rides to rescue Sir Melyas.

Thereupon Sir Galahad turned his horse about and set it to the gallop, for he thought that were he mistaken in the voice, then was there no great harm done in returning. So he rode back whence he had come. And anon he reached that place where Sir Melyas had fallen, and he beheld the knight kneeling upon Sir Melyas with the misericordia at his throat, and he heard the words that the knight uttered and that Sir Melyas uttered. Then Sir Galahad cried out in a loud voice, "Sir Knight, withhold thy hand. Turn thou to me, for I am here to defend that knight.{93}"

Then the knight withheld his hand, and he cried out, "Who art thou, Sir Knight, who cometh hither?" Sir Galahad replied, "It matters not who I am, saving only that I am here to defend that fallen knight." "Well," quoth the other, "let it be that way if such is your will. Make you ready." So the knight arose and ran to his horse and mounted thereon; and he took his spear in hand, and when he was in all ways prepared, each knight took stand for the assault.

Sir Galahad overthrows the strange knight.

Then they rushed together like a thunderbolt and each knight smote the other in the midst of the shield. But the spear of the knight could not penetrate the shield of Sir Galahad; otherwise, it slid away from it as though it had been made of adamant, and in sliding away the spear was broken into several pieces. But the spear of Sir Galahad held, so that with it he pierced through the shield of the other, and pierced through his

body until the spear's point stood a hand's breadth out behind his back. With that the knight was flung to the earth with such violence that his neck was broken and he lay dead.

When the other knight beheld him fall, he cried out, "Hah, Messire, what have you done? You have slain my brother." Therewith he drew his sword and rushed at Sir Galahad, and Sir Galahad threw aside his spear and drew his sword in defence. Then the knight launched a blow at Sir Galahad, which he turned with his sword and his shield. Then rising in his stirrups he launched a blow at the knight that was like a stroke of lightning for speed and force.

Sir Galahad overcometh the other knight.

The other knight tried to turn that blow, and he did turn it from his head, but the blow fell upon his left shoulder with great and terrible force, so that the edge of the sword cut through the epulier of the shoulder and it cut through the flesh and the bone of the arm so that the arm was severed from the trunk.

Then the knight emitted a great loud and bitter cry, and casting aside his sword he set spurs to his horse and sped away through the forest, crying aloud as he spurred, "Oh, God! Alas, and woe is me!"

Sir Galahad bringeth Sir Melyas to the Hermit of the Forest.

Then Sir Galahad wiped his sword and thrust it back into its scabbard. And he turned to Sir Melyas, and he said, "Sir, how fares it with you?" Quoth Sir Melyas, "Messire, I am sorely wounded, but you have saved me; for never did I behold so fierce and terrible a blow as that which you struck just now, nor did I think it possible that anyone could strike with such dreadful force as that." Quoth Sir Galahad, "Nor could I have struck such a blow were it not that meseemed that those two knights represented two great sins; the one of the sin of pride, the other the sin of cruelty. So that thought gave{94} me, as it were, the strength of ten, wherefore when I struck I struck with the strength as of ten." After that he turned to the knight lying upon the ground and found him dead. And he raised Sir Melyas and set him upon his horse. And he upheld him in that wise and returned with him to the chapel of the Hermit of the Forest. There the Hermit received Sir Melyas, and laid him upon a couch. And he searched his wound and dressed it, and Sir Melyas was put to all possible ease with him.

This was Sir Galahad's first adventure, and so I have told it to you as it happened, for so have I read it in the ancient history of these things.

Sir Galahad heareth of the Castle of the Maidens.

Now, after Sir Galahad had quitted that forest he came out the next day upon a fair and fertile plain. Anon he met an old man and a young lad. These he saluted, and he said to the old man, "Reverend Sir, I pray you tell me, is there any adventure hereabouts that a young knight such as I am might undertake to his honor?" Quoth the old man, "Aye, I know of such an adventure." And he said, "Know you that there is not far from this a castle called the Castle of Maidens. At that castle there are ten knights dwelling, who exact tribute from every passer-by. Moreover, these knights are very cruel and unruly, for they now govern all this land as with a rod of iron, exacting taxes from the people thereof where no taxes are due, so that all in this country groan beneath the burden laid upon them. Pass you by that castle, fair sir, and you will have adventure enough and to spare from those ten knights."

Then Sir Galahad inquired, "Whither is that castle whereof thou speakest?" And the old man pointed in a certain direction with his hand, saying, "Yonderway you will find it." So Sir Galahad gave the old man grammercy for that which he had told him, and he rode away whitherward the other pointed.

Anon he came to the crest of a high, steep hill of no very great extent, and from that hilltop he beheld beneath him a large and noble castle. And the castle had tall, red roofs of tile, and great quantities of rooks and daws flew about those roofs like bees about a beehive. And a river ran down past the castle and beyond it, and where it ran past the castle the pollard willows were pressed close against the castle walls, because of the narrowness of the space between the castle wall and the waters of the river. Beside the walls of the castle there was a town, and the town was very populous, for Sir Galahad, from the hilltop where he sat, could behold many people coming and going along the stony streets thereof. Then{95} Sir Galahad surmised that this must be the Castle of Maidens (though why it was so called he did not know then nor till afterward).

Sir Galahad cometh to that castle.

So Sir Galahad gathered up his reins and he rode down that hill and toward the castle, and he was not aware that anyone knew of his coming. But as he rode past the castle beneath the walls thereof, he was of a sudden called to from above. And when he looked up he beheld there a small turret, and he beheld that upon that turret there stood ten fair maidens, and these were they who called to him. Beholding these ten fair young ladies at that place, he bespoke them, saying, "Ladies, heaven keep and defend you. Now, I pray you tell me, what is the name of this castle, and what is it you do here?" They say to him, "Fair Sir, this castle is called the Castle of Maidens. We are

prisoners here, and are kept in this duress by ten wicked and discourteous knights, from whom heaven keep you. For if you travel on the road upon which you are journeying, you will pass by the bridge-head of this castle, and they will maybe come down to assail you.” To them Sir Galahad said, “Ladies, I know not whether I could do battle with success as one against ten—yet if I considered these knights as being the ten deadly sins, methinks I would have strength given to me to do combat with them. Now I pray you tell me, how may I assure myself to meet these knights?”

Quoth one of the ladies upon the turret, “Sir, assuredly thou hast a great heart within thee. Now if thou wilt pursue the way thou art going, thou wilt by and by come by the bridge-head. Thereby thou wilt find an iron horn hanging from a stone pillar. If those knights do not appear, set thou that horn to thy lips and blow upon it, and anon thou wilt behold those ten warriors of whom we have been speaking.”

Sir Galahad bloweth the castle horn.

So Sir Galahad saluted them and rode away, and anon he came to where the bridge crossed the stream, and there he beheld the post of stone and from it, hanging by a chain, he beheld the horn of iron. This horn he set to his lips and blew very loud and shrilly upon it, so that the walls of the castle echoed back the bleat of that horn.

Soon after that the gates of the castle were opened and the portcullis let fall, and there came thundering forth from that place ten knights, armed cap-a-pie in shining armor.

The foremost of those knights rode up to Sir Galahad and said to him, “Sir, art thou shriven?” “Why ask you that?” said Sir Galahad. “Because,” said that knight, “thou art presently to die, therefore thou shouldst be shriven.” “So far as that is concerned,” said Sir Galahad, “I am not unready to die.” “Then,” said the other, “thou shalt presently awaken in paradise, since thou art ready for it.{96}”

So each knight assumed such stand as appeared to him to be fitting, and each set his spear in rest, and then each dashed at the other with might and main. So they met in the middle of the course with such violence and uproar as was wonderful to see and to hear.

Sir Galahad overcometh the first knight.

In that encounter the spear of the knight of the castle slipped from the shield of Sir Galahad, and was broken into many pieces, but the spear of Sir Galahad held, wherefore he overthrew that knight with such terrible violence that his neck was broken in his fall, and he lay dead upon the earth.

Sir Galahad doeth battle with nine.

Then when the other knights beheld the fall of that knight, they cried out, "Hah! A rescue! a rescue!" Therewith they all nine made at Sir Galahad to overwhelm him with numbers. All nine of them struck him upon the shield at one time, but their spears glanced from the shield of Sir Galahad and could not penetrate it, nor was he overthrown by their assault, nor did he lose even a foot from his stirrup.

Then Sir Galahad cast aside his spear and drew his bright, shining sword, and he rode at those nine knights and he rode in amongst them, striking with his blade to the right hand and to the left. Nor could their blows harm him, for in that short time he struck down to the ground three of those knights, so that there were but six of them left.

Sir Galahad overcometh the knights.

Then the hearts of those six knights began to fail them, and they bore back across the bridge with intent to enter the castle once more. But meantime the people of the castle, seeing how affairs went with them, had raised the bridge and had closed the castle gates against them. Nor would they lower the bridge nor open the gates again, wherefore those knights wist not what to do in their hour of need. Then Sir Galahad was upon them and smote down two more of them and with that the four who were left fled with great speed and he pursued them back across the bridge. And Sir Galahad still pursued them, and he struck once and again, now to the right and now to the left, so that ere they could escape from him and in those two blows Sir Galahad had struck down two more of them. Then the two who were left made their escape and they fled from that place with might and main. And Sir Galahad pursued them also with might and main, but their horses were fresher than his, and so they escaped away from him.

So Sir Galahad rode back again slowly to the castle, and at his coming the gates were opened with great sound of rejoicing. For the streets were full of people of all sorts and conditions, and these lifted up their voices with loud and prolonged applause. And of those eight whom he had^{97} overthrown, all of them were dead. For those who had not died by their fall, the people had put to death upon their own account.

Then Sir Galahad said to the chief magistrate of that town, "Where are those ten maidens who bespoke me ere I came to this place?" And the chief magistrate answered him, "Sir, we will bring them to you." So anon came those ladies, and when they had come to Sir Galahad they kneeled before him and kissed his hand and gave him great praise and loud acclaim. Sir Galahad said to them, "Why do you kneel to me, and why do you kiss my hand?" They say to him, "Because of your strength and

your prowess." He said, "Nay, that strength and that prowess I gave not to myself; therefore, if I have shown strength and prowess, give praise therefor unto the God who gave them to me, and not to me who am their continent." And he said, "Where is the chief lord of this town?"

Sir Galahad liberates the captive lord.

The ten maidens said, "Sir, he is our father, and he is a prisoner now in the dungeon of this place. For those ten knights overthrew him and made him prisoner, wherefore he now lieth in duress." Sir Galahad said, "Bring him forth that I may behold him." So several ran to where he was, and anon they returned with him, and the chains that bound him were still upon his hands and feet. Sir Galahad said, "Let these chains be removed." And when they were taken off of that knight, he said to him, "Take back that which is thine own and oppress not thy people. For so have they been oppressed of late by their ten masters, who were the ten knights whom I have overthrown. But now thine enemies are either slain or put to flight, so that thou art free. Nor shall you ever be put to such pain again."

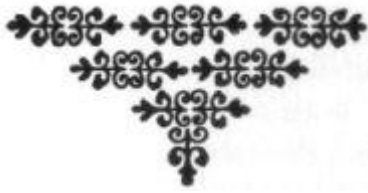
Then, again, was there great applause.

Then the eldest of those ten maidens said to him, "Sir, will you not rest here awhile with us?" Sir Galahad said, "I may not rest with you, for my time is short and there is much to do in that time; wherefore I must be again upon my way."

So he bade them farewell, and after that he departed from that place, taking with him the thanks and the blessings of all the people dwelling therein. Yet for many long years afterward, the memory of Sir Galahad was held at that place, and parents told to their children, and those children to their children for several generations, how that Sir Galahad of the Grail had come thither and had done those great and redoubtable actions at arms that are herein told of and recounted. For it was not until afterward that he became known as the greatest knight that the world had ever beheld until that time.{98}

Such is the story of Sir Galahad and of the Castle of the Maidens; so he, one knight, overcame the ten knights of that castle, and thus he departed thereafter.

Now turn we from Sir Galahad and take we up the adventures of Sir Launcelot at this time. Wherefore I pray you to read that which followeth.



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The Grail is manifested, and Sir Launcelot sleepeth:



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Chapter Fourth

How Sir Launcelot and Sir Percival met Sir Galahad, and what befell them. Also how Sir Launcelot beheld the Grail in a dream.

AFTER Sir Launcelot left the Court of the King of Camelot, he wended his way from place to place, meeting no adventure anywhere. So, upon a certain day, he came to a farmhouse, close to the borders of the forest, and there sought shelter for the night.

She who met him was the farmer's wife, and she was both brown and buxom. Beside her stood two children, holding by the skirts of her garments. She gave Sir Launcelot welcome, and said to him, "Here, to-day, hath come another knight who hath sought shelter as you now beseech it." Sir Launcelot said, "Who is he?" She said, "I know not, only that he is gentle and kind."

Sir Launcelot meets Sir Percival at the farmhouse.

So Sir Launcelot entered the house, and he whom he beheld there was Sir Percival, and at that he was very glad. And Sir Percival was also very glad to behold Sir Launcelot. So the next morning early, and after they had broken their fast, they took horse and rode away very lovingly together.

So they journeyed for the great part of that morning, and about high noontide they had come to a very pleasant part of the country where were hills covered with green fields rising up against the sky; where were many pleasant streams and watercourses; and where were flocks and herds browsing in the long, damp grass of the pasture lands.

Here in a dale where there was a small wooden bridge crossing a glassy and smooth-flowing river, they beheld a knight coming from the other direction, and Sir Launcelot and Sir Percival were upon one side of the bridge, and that knight was upon the other side. And that other knight was Sir Galahad, though neither of those two knew who he was.

Then Sir Launcelot held up his hand, and he cried out, "Messire, I pray you for to wait until we have crossed the bridge, for three of us cannot cross it at the same time.{102}"

"Nay, sir," quoth Sir Galahad, "my business does not allow me to wait, so I pray you to let me pass."

Sir Launcelot challenges Sir Galahad at the bridge.

"Not so," quoth Sir Launcelot, "I cannot let you pass until you have proven your right to pass. You must run a tilt with me, and if I overthrow you, then will you wait to let us

pass; but if you overthrow me, then will we wait to let you pass.” So said Sir Launcelot, for it did not seem to him to be possible that the strange knight could overthrow him.

Sir Launcelot is overthrown.

So each knight set his spear in rest, and anon each charged with great violence at each other. Thus they swept together like a hurricane, and so met in the centre of the bridge. In that encounter the spear of Sir Launcelot struck the shield of Sir Galahad, directly in the centre thereof; but the blow that he gave glanced aside as if the shield had been a polished mirror. But the spear of Sir Galahad struck Sir Launcelot in the middle of the shield and it held, and so violent was the blow of Sir Galahad that both Sir Launcelot and his steed were overthrown upon the planking of the bridge.

Sir Percival is wounded.

Sir Percival looked with great amazement at the overthrow of Sir Launcelot. Then, crying out in a great voice, “Sir, what have you done? Defend yourself from me!” he drew his sword and rushed forward upon the bridge. And Sir Galahad, when he beheld Sir Percival approach in that manner, cast aside his spear and drew his sword likewise. So, when they met in the middle of the bridge, Sir Percival smote Sir Galahad a great buffet with his sword, which stroke Sir Galahad turned with his shield. Then Sir Galahad rose up in his stirrups and he launched a blow like a thunderbolt against Sir Percival. Sir Percival endeavored to turn that blow with his shield, but he could not turn it, for it smote through his shield and it smote through his helmet and it smote through the iron cap beneath the helmet, and, had the blade not turned in the hand of Sir Galahad, it would have slain Sir Percival. As it was, Sir Percival’s head swam beneath that blow and he swooned away, swaying from side to side in his saddle until he fell from his saddle and lay upon the bridge without life or motion, like one who was dead.

But Sir Galahad did not stop to inquire who were those two knights whom he had overthrown, nor did he pause to inquire how badly he had hurt them; but regaining his spear and setting spurs to his horse he rode away from that place, leaving them lying upon the bridge.

Anon Sir Launcelot aroused himself, and he beheld Sir Percival where he lay. Then Sir Launcelot arose and went to Sir Percival, and removed his helmet. And he cast water into the face of Sir Percival so that, in a little{103} while, Sir Percival was aroused from his swoon. Then Sir Launcelot said, “I would God I knew who that knight was, for never have I felt such a blow as I just now received, nor have I ever been so shamed as I was shamed this day.” Said Sir Percival, “Wit ye not who that knight was?” and he said,

“Meseems it was none other than your son, Sir Galahad.” Quoth Sir Launcelot, “At that I would take comfort were he my son, but not at anything else.”

Then each knight mounted his horse, and so together they presently rode away from that place. But Sir Launcelot’s head hung down upon his breast, for the memory of that blow which had overthrown him, and for the shame thereof; for never had he been overthrown from his horse before this day in all of his life. And, somewhiles, he thought that he who had overthrown him was, maybe, Sir Galahad, and at that he took comfort, because Sir Galahad was his son. But otherwhiles he thought that it was not Sir Galahad, and then he was filled with shame because of his overthrow.

Sir Launcelot and Sir Percival part company.

So riding in that wise they, by and by, came to where the road divided into two ways, and here Sir Launcelot said, “Sir, let us part company, for you shall take one road and I will take the other.” Quoth Sir Percival, “Are you then weary of riding with me?” “Nay,” said Sir Launcelot, “but I have been overthrown and I am ashamed.” Said Sir Percival, “What shame do you take in that, seeing it was your own son that overthrew you?” But to this Sir Launcelot made no reply.

Then, seeing that Sir Launcelot was determined to quit him, Sir Percival took the left-hand road, and Sir Launcelot took the right-hand road, and so they parted.

Now follow we Sir Launcelot after they had thus separated.

Sir Launcelot findeth a deserted chapel.

Sir Launcelot rode for the rest of that day without meeting further adventure, until about evening time, when he came to a bare and naked knoll covered with furze bushes. Here, in the midst of that wild, he beheld an ancient ruined chapel, and he said to himself, “Here will I rest me for the night.” So he rode around that chapel, seeking for the door thereof, but he could find no door upon any side of the chapel, but only windows, very high raised from the ground. And he could not enter that chapel by any of its windows, because they were built in the wall so far beyond his reach that he could not attain to them. Then Sir Launcelot said, “This is a very strange chapel that it should have no doors, but only windows so high that I cannot enter by them. Now I will rest here and see what is the meaning of this place.”{104}

So saying, he dismounted from his horse, and lay down beneath a thornbush that was not far distant from the chapel.

Now, as Sir Launcelot lay there, a drowsiness began to descend upon him, and though he could not sleep yet it was as though he did sleep, for he could move nor hand nor

foot. Yet was he conscious of all that passed about him as though he had been wide awake. For he was conscious of the dark and silent vaults of sky, sprinkled all over with an incredible number of stars, and he was conscious of his horse cropping the herbage beside him in the darkness, and he was conscious of the wind that blew across his face, and that moved the corner of his cloak in the silence of the night time. Of all these things was he conscious, and yet he could not move of his own will so much as a single hair.

There cometh a wounded knight.

Anon, whilst he lay in that wise he was presently aware that some people were approaching the chapel in the darkness, for he heard the sound of voices and of the feet of horses moving upon the road. So, in a little while, there came to that place a knight and an esquire. And the knight was very sorely wounded, for his armor was broken and shattered by battle, and the esquire sustained him in the saddle so that, except for the upholding of the esquire's arm and hand, he would have fallen prostrate down upon the ground.

Then Sir Launcelot, as he lay in that waking sleep, heard the knight say to the esquire, "Floradaine, is the chapel near at hand, for mine eyes are failing and I cannot see." And the esquire wept and he said, "Yea, Lord, it is here. Sustain yourself but for a little and you will be there."

To this the knight made answer, "Floradaine, I cannot sustain myself for long." And the esquire said, "It is here." The knight said, "Give thanks to God for that, for had it been a little farther I would have fallen from my horse. Now, Floradaine, lift me to earth."

Therewith the esquire drew rein and he dismounted from his horse and he lifted the knight down from his charger, and the knight groaned very dolorously as the esquire lifted him down. Then, breathing very heavily and with great labor, the knight said, "Floradaine, is there a light?" And the esquire said, "Not yet, Messire." Again, after a little, the knight said, "Is there yet a light?" And again the esquire answered, "Not yet, Messire." And again, after awhile, the knight said for the third time, "Floradaine, is there yet a light?" And this time the knight breathed the words as in a whisper of death. Then of a sudden the esquire called out in a loud and joyful voice, "Yea, Lord, now I behold a light!"

There cometh a light.

All this Sir Launcelot beheld in that waking dream, and though it was in the darkness of night, yet he beheld it very clearly, as though it were by{105} the sun of noonday. For he beheld the face of the knight that it was white as of pure wax, and that the sweat of

death stood in beads upon his forehead. And he beheld that the esquire was young and fair, and that he had long ringlets of yellow hair that curled down upon his shoulder. Then when the esquire said that he beheld a light, Sir Launcelot beheld the windows of the chapel that they were illuminated from within with a pale blue lustre, as though the dawn were shining in that chapel. And he heard the sound of chaunting voices, at first very faint and far away, but anon ever growing stronger and stronger as the light from the chapel grew stronger. And those voices chaunted a melody that was so sweet and ravishing that it caused the heart to melt as with an agony.

Then the walls of that chapel opened like a door and a light shone forth with a remarkable lustre so that it illuminated the face of that dying knight, and of the page who upheld him. And at the same time the song burst forth in great volume, as it were a thunder of chaunting.

Then forthwith there came out of the chapel a bright shining spear, and two fair hands held the spear by the butt, yet Sir Launcelot could not behold the body to whom those two hands belonged. And after the spear there came forth a chalice, and two fair, white hands held that chalice, but neither could Sir Launcelot behold any body to which those hands belonged. And the chalice seemed to send forth a light of such dazzling radiance that it was as though one looked at the bright and shining sun in his glory.

Sir Launcelot beholdeth the Grail in a dream.

Then Sir Launcelot was aware that this was the Holy Grail of which he was in search, and he strove with all his might to arouse himself, but he could not do so. Then the tears burst out from his eyes and traced down his cheeks in streams, but still he could not arouse himself, but lay chained in that waking sleep.

So the chalice advanced toward that knight, but the knight had not strength to reach forth and touch it. Then the esquire took the arm of the knight and raised it, and he raised the hand of the knight so that the hand touched the chalice.

The Grail healeth the wounded knight.

Then it was as though Sir Launcelot beheld the virtue of the Grail go forth from it, and that it passed through the hand of the wounded knight, and that it passed through his arm and penetrated into his body. For he beheld that the blood ceased to flow from that wounded knight, and that the color flooded back into his cheeks and that the light came back into his eyes and that the strength returned to his body.{106}

Then the knight arose and he kneeled down before the Grail, and he set his palms together and he prayed before the Grail.

Then, slowly, the light that had been so bright from the Grail began to wane. First the spear disappeared, and then the hands that held it disappeared. Then, for awhile, the Grail glowed with a faint, pallid light, and then it, too, vanished, and all was dark as it had been before.

So Sir Launcelot beheld the vision of the Grail, but as in the vision of a dream as I have told it here to you. And still the tears rained from his eyes, for he could not rouse himself to behold it with his waking eyes.

After this the knight and the esquire approached to the place where Sir Launcelot lay asleep, and the esquire said to the knight, "Messire, who is this man, and why sleepeth he here whilst all these wonders pass him by?" And the knight said, "This knight is a very sinful man, and his name is Sir Launcelot of the Lake." Quoth the esquire, "How hath he sinned?" To which the knight replied, "He hath sinned in this way. He had a beautiful and gentle lady, and he deserted that wife for the sake of Queen Guinevere. So his lady went away and left him, and anon she gave birth to Galahad, and in that birth she also gave her life. So Sir Launcelot betrayed his wife, and because of that betrayal he now lieth sleeping, and he cannot waken until after we are gone away from this place."

The knight taketh Sir Launcelot's horse.

Then the esquire said to the knight, "Messire, behold; here this knight hath a good, strong horse. Take thou this horse and leave thine own in its stead. For this horse is fresh and full of life, and thine is spent and weary with battle." And the knight said, "I will take that horse."

So the knight took the horse of Sir Launcelot instead of his own. And he left his own horse behind him. Then he mounted the horse of Sir Launcelot and the esquire mounted his horse, and after that the knight and the esquire rode away from that place.

Then, after they had gone, Sir Launcelot bestirred himself and awoke. And he would have thought that all that he had beheld was a dream, but he beheld the worn and weary horse of the knight was there, and that his horse was gone. Then he cried aloud in great agony of soul, "Lord, my sin hath found me out!" And therewith he rushed about like a madman, seeking to find a way into that chapel, and finding no way.

Sir Launcelot is absolved by the Hermit of the Forest.

So when the day broke he mounted the worn and weary horse that the knight had left, and he rode away from that place and back into the forest; and his head hung low upon his breast. When he had come into the forest and to the cell of the hermit thereof, he laid aside his armor and he kneeled down before{107} the Hermit of the Forest, and confessed all his sins to him. And the Hermit of the Forest gave him absolution for these sins, and he said, "Take peace, my son. For although thou shalt not behold the Grail in thy flesh, yet shall God forgive thee these sins of thine that lie so heavily upon thy soul."

Then Sir Launcelot arose chastened from his confession. And he left his armor where it lay and assumed the garb of an anchorite. And he went away from that place, into the remoter recesses of the forest. There he dwelt in the caves and in the wilds, living upon berries and the fruits of the forest. And he dwelt there a long time until he felt assured that God had forgiven him. Then he returned to his kind again; but never after that day was he seen to smile.

So hath this been told to you that you may see how it is that the sins that one hath committed follow one through one's life and in the end bring the soul such distress and failure as that which Sir Launcelot here suffered and endured. For it hath already been told in another volume than this book (which same is called "The Story of Sir Launcelot and His Companions") how that Sir Launcelot of the Lake remained at the Court of King Arthur whilst his Lady, Elaine the Fair, quitted the court, and how that he remained at that court, being held there by the wiles and the charms of Queen Guinevere. Then it was told how that the Lady Elaine died for loneliness and grief in giving birth to Galahad, and it was told how that Sir Launcelot repented him for that death with deep and bitter remorse.

So it was because of that sin that he was not now permitted to behold the Grail with his waking eyes nor to touch it with his living hands. For a sin doth not quit a man because he hath remorse for it nor is it wiped from his soul because he repents him of it, but always it remaineth by him and by and by the time cometh when he must pay to the full the account of that sin which he hath one time committed.

For so it is with all of those who commit a sin, be it great or be it less. For they cannot correct that sin by remorse or by repentance, but only by so living a life of righteousness that that sin shall be removed away from them, so that it becometh as though it were not.

So it was with Launcelot, for he was to pay in full for that sin which he had committed. For never did he behold the Grail other than it was at that time and never did he touch it with his hand; nay; never did he touch it even with so much as a single finger; but otherwise he{108} remained as a recluse in a cell coadjacent to the cell of the Hermit of the Forest, as aforesaid.

There leave we him to follow the other parts of this story, for here followeth the story of Sir Percival, which you are now to read if you would enter further into the history of these things herein told of.



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ir Percival rideth the black horse:



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Chapter Fifth

Sir Percival findeth a horse that nearly bringeth him to destruction. Also he meeteth a fair damsel and feasts with her. Finally he enters a boat and there finds rest and comfort.

NOW, after Sir Percival had left Sir Launcelot as aforetold of, he rode upon his way alone. And his way led him, by and by, through a waste of land where was nothing growing, but where there were great quantities of stones scattered all over the earth. Here he rode for some time, looking forward before him for something that grew.

Sir Percival's horse falleth lame.

So while the mind of Sir Percival was elsewhere, the horse which he rode slipped his foot upon a round, loose stone, and the stone turned under the horse's foot so that it strained its shoulder. At first Sir Percival knew naught of this mishap, but presently, anon, the horse began to limp as it walked. And every minute the horse of Sir Percival limped worse than it had limped the minute before. So Sir Percival wist not what to do, for here was he with a horse that could not fare farther with him, and there was no house within sight, and there was no person within sight upon all that barren waste.

So Sir Percival dismounted from his horse, and he took the bridle of the horse over his arm, and so he walked with the bridle over his arm and the horse limped behind him.

Thus he travelled for a great way, and anon he left that stony waste behind him, and came to a country where green things grew. And anon after that he came to a place that was spread all over with fertile fields of grass interspersed with plantations of trees, both oak trees and elm trees.

Sir Percival meeteth a damsel in red.

Here, passing by a small fountain of water, he beheld a fair damsel sitting beside the margin of that fountain, and the damsel was clad all in red, from top to toe. This damsel had with her a palfrey and a great black horse beside that palfrey, and the black horse was very remarkable for breadth and sinew, for his shoulders were deep and his legs were corded with muscles, and his fetlocks were adorned with long and curling hairs, and his eyes were very bright and shining as with fire beneath them, and his ears were sharp and pointed, as though they had been cut with a fine knife, and his mane and tail were thick and black, like the clouds of night, and there was not a white hair upon him, from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail.

The damsel giveth a horse to Sir Percival.

Quoth Sir Percival, "Hah, maiden, that is a fine horse that thou hast there." Said she, "Yea, Messire; he is a very fine horse." Said Sir Percival, "I would that thou wouldst sell me that horse; for mine own, as thou seest, is gone lame." The maiden said, "Sir, are you not Sir Percival of Gales?" Then Sir Percival was greatly astonished that the damsel should know him, and he said, "Yea, damsel, that is my name." "Then," quoth she, "I cannot accept money from you for this horse. But if you will take him for your own, then you may have him. So leave you your lame horse here, and take this horse instead of it. For wit you I have been sent with this horse that you might have it to ride upon."

Then was Sir Percival still more astonished at what the damsel said, and he knew not what to think that the damsel should be there at that place with a fresh, sound horse for his use when his own horse had fallen lame. So he thanked the damsel in great measure, and he handed her the reins of his horse, and took the reins of the black horse. Then he put his foot in the stirrup and mounted the black horse at one leap.

The horse rideth away with Sir Percival.

So the horse stood quite still until Sir Percival had his seat and his feet in the stirrups. After that it bowed its head and took the bit in its teeth. Then immediately it rushed away to the southward with great speed like the wind, and its mane and tail stood out straight behind it because of its speed. Nor could Sir Percival control or guide it, for the horse held the bit between its teeth and it was as though blinded, rushing forward like the wind. And ever it ran toward the southward, without let or stay. And Sir Percival said to himself, "What sort of a beast is this upon which I am sitting, is it a horse or is it a lion or is it a dæmon?"

The horse bringeth him to the sea.

So the horse rushing onward began, by and by, to draw nigh to the sea, for now and then Sir Percival could catch glimpses of the sea across the uplands like a thread of bright silver against the distant horizon; for by this time night had fallen. And anon he could hear the roaring of the sea beating upon a place where there were a great many rocks, and where the water spouted and churned amongst the rocks as white as milk. Then, reaching this spot, the horse^{113} stopped all of a sudden, panting and trembling and all a lather with sweating foam.

Then Sir Percival dismounted from the horse, and as soon as his foot touched the earth the black horse vanished and Sir Percival stood there alone. And he wist not what to do, but stood there doubting and wondering.

Sir Percival meeteth a beautiful lady.

Anon as he so stood he beheld something coming a great way off, and ever it came nearer and nearer, and by and by he perceived that it was a boat, and that it was approaching very rapidly the place where he stood, and that without either sails or oars to urge it upon its course. So Sir Percival stood there and watched the boat as it drew rapidly nearer to him, and by and by he perceived that there was someone in the boat, and then he perceived that it was a beautiful lady, and that there were seven beautiful damsels attendant upon her. And he beheld that this lady was clad all in red, and that her hair was red, the color of gold, and that it was emmeshed in a net of gold. And around her dress and her neck he beheld that there were chains and ornaments

of gold, so that the lady sparkled and gleamed as though she had been an image of jewels and of gold. And the attendants of the lady were also clad in red and also wore ornaments of gold about their necks, wherefore the whole boat gleamed and shone as with a shine of golden light.

Thus that boat came to the beach where Sir Percival stood, and the lady stepped from the boat upon the sand, and Sir Percival came forward and assisted her to disembark. And the lady said, "Hail, Sir Percival, and give thee peace." And all the attendants of that lady also said, "Give thee peace."

Quoth Sir Percival, "Who are ye who know me and I know not you?" To the which the lady made reply, "We are fay and not of this earth, therefore we know many things that you wit not of."

Sir Percival sits at feast with the lady.

Then that lady bade her attendants to set up a pavilion and they did so, and the pavilion was of red samite, and above it was a great banner of white samite embroidered with the figure of a leopard in threads of gold. And in the pavilion they set a table of gold, and they covered the table with a napkin of finest linen, and the lady of the boat took Sir Percival by the hand and led him into the pavilion.

Then Sir Percival and the lady seated themselves at the table, and the damsels attendant upon the lady served them with food. And certain of these attendant maidens took harps into their hands, and they played upon the harps, and sang in unison to those two, and so sweet was the music they made that it melted the heart to listen to them.{114}

And those who waited upon Sir Percival and the lady brought to them all manner of dishes, dressed with spices and condiments of all sorts, and Sir Percival and the damsel ate together. Then others brought wines of all sorts, both white wines and red, and this wine was very powerful and sweet, and Sir Percival and the lady drank together. And the wine flowed very strongly through the veins of Sir Percival so that his head swam with the strength of that wine and with the potency thereof.

Then, by and by, the lady grew very fond toward Sir Percival, and she put her arms about his shoulders and held him very close to her. With this the wine swam still more powerfully in Sir Percival's head, and he knew not very well what he said or did. And he said, "Lady, tell me—what is this, and why am I here?" To this she answered, "Percival, thou glorious knight! this is the pavilion of Love, and I am the spirit of Venus who inhabits it. So yield thou to that spirit and take thou the joy of thy life whiles thou mayst."

Sir Percival kisses the lady.

Therewith she reached her arms again to Sir Percival and he reached his arms toward her and he took her into his arms. And Sir Percival kissed her upon the lips and the fire from her lips passed into his heart and set his soul aflame.

Then, in that moment, he knew not why, he suddenly bethought him of that fair lady whom he had met in the tent when first he went forth as a knight, clad in his armor of wicker-work. And he thought of how he had kissed her that time; and he thought of how he had beheld her in that cold and windy room of the castle, lying dead and white before him; and he thought of how he had beheld the Spear and the Grail that time in the castle. Then it was as though a wind of ice struck across the flame of his passion, and he cried out thrice in a loud voice, "God! God! God! What is this I would do, and why should I sin in this wise?" And therewith he drew upon his forehead the sign of the cross.

The lady disappears.

Then in an instant the lady who sat beside him shrieked very loud and shrill, and all about him was confusion and turbulence. And Sir Percival looked, and behold! it was not a strange and beautiful lady who sat beside him like a wonderful goddess, but it was the Enchantress Vivien, clad in red and bedecked with her jewels. For it was she who had thus planned the undoing of Sir Percival by causing him to sin.

Then Sir Percival cried, "Hah! Is it thou who wouldst betray me?" And therewith he reached for his sword which he had laid aside. Then, seeing what he intended, the Enchantress Vivien shrieked again, and she smote her hands together, and in that instant she disappeared, and all her{115} attendants disappeared, and the pavilion and the table and all of the feast and wine disappeared, and the boat in which she had come disappeared, and Sir Percival found himself sitting alone upon the seaside.

Then Sir Percival kneeled down and he set his hands together and he prayed. And he said, "O God! how hast thou saved thy servant by means of a floating thought? For the thought of that which was sacred and holy hath purged my sin that was very close to me." And he said, "How shall I thank thee for this; for lo! I trod upon a crust so thin that, had I borne even a part of my weight upon it, I would have fallen through that crust as into a lake of fire."

So he prayed for a long time and by and by he was comforted. Then he arose and stood up, and he girded his sword tight about him. And he cast his eyes all around and he beheld that he was alone and in a very desolate place. And, at that time, the full moon was shining very brightly.

Anon he beheld in the gloom of the distance an object that approached very rapidly. And this object also was a boat, but there was no one in it.

And when the boat approached nigh enough he beheld that there was a couch within it, and that the couch was covered with white linen. But no other thing was in the boat but that.

Then Sir Percival said, "What is this? Is there a sin also in this, or is it without sin?" And he said, "If this be sin, then let it declare itself," and therewith he marked the sign of the cross upon his forehead.

But there followed not any malignant sign after that, but the boat remained there where it was.

Sir Percival entereth a boat.

Then Sir Percival perceived that it was intended for him to enter that boat, and he did enter it. And at that time the moon had arisen very full and round. And the moon shone down upon the earth with a wonderful radiance. So that what with the light in the sky from the moonlight, it was as though a strange and magical radiance embalmed the entire earth.

The boat sails away with him.

Then the boat moved away from the shore very rapidly and smoothly. And it ran past the sharp and treacherous rocks, and it went past all obstructions and so out into the broad and heaving surface of the sea beyond.

Here all was stillness and peace, for all about was the hush and silence of night time, and there was no sound whatsoever to mar that stillness, but only the moon and the stars shining above in the sky.{116}

So Sir Percival laid him down upon the couch and anon he slept a very deep and dreamless sleep.

Now leave we Sir Percival lying in that boat, and turn we to the story of Sir Bors de Ganis and how it befell with him at this time.