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TALES OF KING  
ARTHUR AND THE  
KNIGHTS OF THE  
ROUND TABLE

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Vol. 8 of 10

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BY  
VARIOUS

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Tales of King Arthur and the  
Knights of the Round Table,  
Vol. 8 of 10





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# **Tales of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, Vol. 8 of 10**

By

**Various**





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## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

### **About the Book**

This is a vast collection of great Arthurian literature: poetry, drama and essays, written after the main canon, principally in the 18th through to the early 20th centuries.





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## ROSENTHAL'S ELAINE, BY WILLIAM HENRY RHODES [1876]

I stood and gazed far out into the waste;  
No dip of oar broke on the listening ear;  
But the quick rippling of the inward flood  
Gave warning of approaching argosy.

Adown the west, the day's last fleeting gleam  
Faded and died, and left the world in gloom.  
Hope hung no star up in the murky east  
To cheer the soul, or guide the pilgrim's way.  
Black frown'd the heavens, and black the answering earth  
Reflected from her watery wastes the night.

Sudden, a splash! then silence. Once again  
The dripping oar dipped in its silver blade,  
Parting the waves, as smiles part beauty's lips.  
Betwixt me and the curtain of the cloud,  
Close down by the horizon's verge, there crept  
From out the darkness, barge and crew and freight,  
Sailless and voiceless, all!

Ah! Then I knew

I stood upon the brink of Time. I saw  
Before me Death's swift river sweep along  
And bear its burden to the grave.

"Elaine!"

One seamew screamed, in solitary woe;  
"Elaine! Elaine!" stole back the echo, weird  
And musical, from off the further shore.  
Then burst a chorus wild, "Elaine! Elaine!"  
And gazing upward through the twilight haze,  
Mine eyes beheld King Arthur's phantom Court.  
There stood the sturdy monarch: he who drove  
The hordes of Hengist from old Albion's strand;  
And, leaning on his stalwart arm, his queen,



The fair, the false, but trusted Guinevere!  
And there, like the statue of a demi-god,  
In marble wrought by some old Grecian hand,  
With eyes downcast, towered Lancelot of the Lake.  
Lavaine and Torre, the heirs of Astolat,  
And he, the sorrowing Sire of the Dead,  
Together with a throng of valiant knights  
And ladies fair, were gathered as of yore,  
At the Round Table of bold Arthur's Court.  
There, too, was Tristram, leaning on his lance,  
Whose eyes alone of all that weeping host  
Swam not in tears; but indignation burned  
Red in their sockets, like volcanic fires,  
And from their blazing depths a Fury shot  
Her hissing arrows at the guilty pair.  
Then Lancelot, advancing to the front,  
With glance transfixed upon the canvas true  
That sheds immortal fame on ROSENTHAL,  
Thus chanted forth his Requiem for the Dead:

Fresh as the water in the fountain,  
Fair as the lily by its side,  
Pure as the snow upon the mountain,  
Is the angel  
Elaine!  
My spirit bride!

Day after day she grew fairer,  
As she pined away in sorrow, at my side;  
No pearl in the ocean could be rarer  
Than the angel  
Elaine!  
My spirit bride!

The hours passed away all unheeded,  
For love hath no landmarks in its tide.  
No child of misfortune ever pleaded  
In vain  
To Elaine!  
My spirit bride!



Here, where sad Tamesis is rolling  
The wave of its sorrow-laden tide,  
Forever on the air is heard tolling  
The refrain  
Of Elaine!  
My spirit bride!





## KING ARTHUR'S SLEEP, BY ERNEST RHYS [1898]

### I.

On the morn of sweet St. Martin  
Davie drew a hazel wand,  
And he singing came to Bala,  
With the hazel in his hand.

What he sang, the cock-thrush echoed,  
Some wild rhyme of Merlin's doom,  
Or the sad refrain of Rhuddlan,  
Or the love of Hob and Twm.

From the hill, he heard the harpers,  
And the hagglers, in the town,  
And his heart leapt up to hear them,  
As he sang, and hastened down.

### II.

What cobbled ancentry is this comes coughing thro' the fair,  
Davie dear?  
Like one from out the grave arisen, the grave-mould in his hair?

The shepherd boys cry 'Druan!' the Bala maids 'Beware!  
Davie dear!  
Yea sure, at sight of Davie's wand, he waits a while to stare.

'If thou'll take me where thy hazel grew,--ah, this cough has made me old!  
Davie's told,--  
'I'll twine thy wand with silver, and bind thy belt with gold!'

Can you bear to leave untasted all the fun of Bala Fair, Davie dear?  
'Davie dear!' the maids keep calling. His wand leads elsewhere.



## III.

Far from Bala fair, the Lonnen  
Leans against the mountain side;  
Far above the Lonnen haystacks,  
Drops the brook the hazels hide.

Davie leads, the grey-man follows,  
As grey-eve, St. Martin's morn;  
While across the Lonnen haystacks,  
Now the pale frost-fog is borne.

Davie leads, the grey-man follows;  
And he coughs; but Davie sighs  
As they climb, and mark the night-fall;  
With no lantern but their eyes.

By the torrent, mid the hazels,  
Hardly may the grey-man see,  
Groping, kneeling, there, a gravestone,  
Cast with Druid charactry.

Ach, he coughs; his lean long fingers  
Strain upon it, til it stirs,  
But a cry from out the torrent,  
And the hazels Davie hears!

## IV.

Deep as Merlin's grave, the stairway  
That descended, gloom on gloom,  
Into darkness that no window  
Ever yet let sun illume.

Davie fears, but he must follow:  
Till the darkness soars and falls,--  
Arched and groined, and looped and lifted,  
Like St. David's twilit walls.

And within, a trembling twilight



Surely shewed a thousand men,  
All asleep, in shining helmets,  
Ah, to see them wake again.

'They are mighty Arthur's warriors!  
Said the grey-man; 'Till the day  
When the bell shall ring to wake them,  
They must sleep. Then wake for aye!

'With his knights at the Round Table,--  
Owain, Kai, and Percival,--  
See,--the little star that crowns him,  
There sleeps Arthur, King of all.

'But as Merlin said, not waking  
In our time, save yonder bell  
Ring,--and see the gold around them  
That is ours. Oh, Sirs, sleep well!

## V.

Davie's lips part, wide with wonder,  
At the warriors in their sleep,  
With such spears, and splendid helmets;  
'Ah,' he cries, 'to see them leap

'Forth to life, and march to music,  
Flashing all their thousand spears;  
Ring, you bell, until King Arthur  
Rises, royal, when he hears!

Still the old man gropes and grumbles  
O'er his gold, as Davie's gone;  
Hark, ye mystic hall of warriors,  
Hark, the bell rings, night is done!

At its stroke, the mountain trembled,  
And the thousand spears replied,  
Grounding on the mouldy pavement,  
As the men rose, side by side.



Oh, the soldiers rise in radiance,  
All in motion, helm and spear!  
And King Arthur's crown, above them,  
Like a star shines steadfast there!

But a voice cried,--'Sleep, King Arthur!  
Greed of gold, a boy at play,  
Wake thy destined sleep; far distant  
Still is the awakening day!'

And King Arthur cried,--'Sleep, soldiers!  
Sleep, my spears!' They sank again  
Into silence. Round the table  
Arthur slept with all his men!

But the old man hastened, stumbling,  
From his gold, and grumbling crept,  
And drew Davie up the stairway,  
Looking back at those who slept.

Far below, the Lonnen windows,  
Sent one gleam forth lonelily,  
As alone stood Davie, asking,--  
'Old man, gold man, where is he?'

## VI.

Many a morn, up from the Lonnen,  
Davie led his sheep to seek  
For the door, but never found it,--  
Many a morn, week after week!

Many an eve, too, Davie waited,  
Year by year, till he was grown  
Stalwart, and the Lonnen pastures,  
And the sheep there were his own.

And when he was grey, he told it,  
In his sounding mountain tongue



To his grandsons; and they told it  
To the harp when songs were sung.

So my grandsire told the story  
O'er to me: and long I sought  
For King Arthur's Hall,--and seeking,  
Yet must wander, finding nought.

Yet we wait the day of waking!  
But the grave its counsel keeps:  
Still within his Hall of Waiting,  
With his warriors Arthur sleeps.





## THE DEATH OF MERLIN, BY ERNEST RHYS [1898]

### I.--THE SEA-RUMOUR

#### I.

Three sailors pass, by the Water-gate,  
And sing of Merlin, as it grows late.  
Last night they sailed the Irish Sea,  
The bitter sea, in a wild twilight,  
Where its tide swims north to Enlli strait.  
From the Water-gate to Merlin's Tree,--  
They sing to-night  
Of Merlin's death and Annwn's might.

#### II.

To-night, oh Towy, from the seas,  
We saw their mast o'ertop thy trees,  
The tow rope swayed their top-mast tall;  
While the wind whipt the rain like a tarrying team,  
And the spent leaves speckled thy serpent stream:  
Thro' the sleepy town, what songs are these  
They sing, till they reach the Spital wall,  
And break the dream of Morial?

#### III.

### SAILORS' SONG

'Marvellous Merlin is wasted away  
With a wicked woman:--woe might she be!  
For she hath closed him in a crag  
On Cornwall coast.'

#### IV.



'A fair sea-tale! What woman could,  
With all the red witchery of her blood,  
Enchant the Enchanter that is lost?  
Her maiden mystery,' Morial said,  
'Was Nimua's art, in Merlin's mood.  
What iron crag of Cornwall coast,  
What cleft of fierce Tintagil's head,  
Keeps him that like a flower all Carnac sunward spread?'

## II.--THE SECOND SEA-RUMOUR

Deep, deep is the night, the street deserted:  
One house alone wakes broken-hearted:  
A candle winks in the window-pane.  
The children wake and cry within  
At the thing that never yet tear averted.  
As the monk sains the dead, another strain  
From the quay below, brings the sailor's din  
And tells some belated ship is in!

### II.

'Yo ho, yo he!' a hearty sound:  
But their barque has gotten a sore sea-wound.  
Her master hastens from the quay;  
At the Spital gate, now hear him knock,  
And hum to himself, while on the ground  
From his fierce red-beard, and his stained sea-frock,  
The salt sea-fret continually  
Drops as he drones his sea-mystery.

### III.

## SHIPMASTER'S SONG

Marvellous Merlin is wafted away  
In a sailing island, a ship of glass;  
Far over the edge of the world he's blown  
By Annwn's blast.

**IV.**

His voice fell as he sang, forlorn  
As a voice o'er the drown'd five cities borne:  
To a mariner on the winter sea:  
And the monk that came from the dead-chamber,  
With thought of death, grew sad to hear:  
And sad his 'Benedicite?'  
[Twas Morial spoke], as he turned the key.

**V.**

The wet night wind went whistling through  
The wicket as he swung it to,  
And the lantern gaped at the red sea-beard.  
'From demons save my soul,' began  
The Shipmaster: 'Hark ye, it blew  
The blackest blast that ever I knew,  
Under Enlli Isle: and we fell afeard,  
For the Isle was adrift, and we barely cleared.

**VI.**

'Like a ship of glass as white as milk,  
With mast of ebon and shroud of silk,  
She sailed away. But see in black  
Stands Merlin midships, round his head  
A ring of white-fire,--while the rack  
Screams by o'erhead: and the long-drown'd dead  
Stand up to see. But he never looks back:  
Tho' the hounds of Annwn are on his track.

**VII.**

'Oh, the dead cried out, and the sea-worms leapt,  
For her keel drag'd fathom deep, and swept  
Gulfs dark with demons in her wake!  
And they sea-witched us, me and my men,  
Till we drank the salt, and never slept,



And for many a moon beat the sea, and then,  
Came home, came home! Good Morial, take  
Off Satan's curse for Christ His sake!

### VIII.

Next noon, see, on the sunn'd ebbtide,  
His ship sails trim from Towy side,  
And the sailors sing: but Morial  
Thinks of the dead last night, and deems  
That Merlin lies indeed where glide  
Those snakes that demons are. His dreams  
Make pale moon-paintings on his wall;  
Where the drowned sink, saying,--'Death is all!'

### IX.

Oh, then to all else Morial died,  
Save scroll and desk, and wall beside:  
For Merlin's history let him write!  
The Abbot said, and nothing hide:  
But year by year the thread unwind  
Of Merlin's mystery from his mind;  
From demon birth, thro' sin and sleight,  
To the dark sea-death in the drifting night.

## III.--MORIAL'S DEATH-DREAM

### I.

Now Calan Gauav again draws on,  
And many a marching year is gone:  
And yet, as thirty years before,  
His faith thrice-slain, writes Morial.  
He hardly marks the one year more;  
The winter dusk stand at the door;  
The winter wind sigh in the wall;  
The winter leaves by the window fall.

### II.



To-night there should have been a moon:  
But it rained hard all afternoon,  
And chill the early twilight fell,  
O'er Merlin's death he bent his head,  
To tell the end: 'Now from Annwn,  
The demons call;' he writes, 'the bell  
[And never a mass for Merlin said,]  
Rings thrice in Enlli for the dead!'

### III.

With every word he writes, he dies;  
The historian with his histories.  
The parchment paled as now the pen  
With failing charactry made pause  
O'er Merlin's demon-obsequies,  
Too monstrous to be told of men:  
Thrice dead is all that Merlin was:--  
'MERLINUS MORTUUS: DEO LAUS!'

### IV.

His heart slept there: but sure the gloom  
Hid one that spoke within the room,  
A face that grew on the grey wall,  
And seemed to speak, and fade again  
'Beneath Galltvyrthen is my tomb,  
Where now the rain drips, Morial:  
But I hear the stars at their ancient strain:  
And it needs you come where I have lain.'

### V.

He knew that voice, that tone of fate;  
And cried, 'I come!' The Spital gate  
Creak'd as he passed. The wind made spears  
Of the shattered rain: his pulses leapt  
To feel them fall: his heart grew great  
With every gust: his only fears,



To feel how frail the pace he kept;  
To feel how slow his stiff feet stept.

## VI.

By Towy's tide, o'er Gwili's flood--  
Now Morial gains Galltvyrthen wood.  
In the heart of the wood the wind lay still;  
The moon in the trees lit a silver lamp;  
And Morial saw where the Nine Oaks stood  
About the grave-stone under the hill,  
That rose from the mould and the dead-leaf-damp,  
In the twilight of the moon's white lamp.

## IV.--THE WAKING OF MERLIN

### I.

'Merlin!' he cried. Like nine grey men,  
The oaks, he thought, moved nearer then  
The door of death, whose mysteries  
Gave way at the clay's rebirth;  
As shaking off the grave again,  
With all his smouldering fervencies  
Regathered from his mother Earth,  
Her Marvellous Son stood forth.

### II.

But first, half-risen from the clay,  
'Marw a garav,' he seemed to say--  
'Marw Mordav'--'Since Mordav's dead,  
I want to die!' So long ago,  
He cried on dread Arderyd's day,  
Thought Morial,--and in his bed  
Of death, that crimson stream of woe  
Seemed thro' his dream to flow and flow.

### III.



'Crist Celi' next he cries, with hands  
Heaved trembling up, and forthright stands:  
And surely now the nine Oak-trees  
Stand, nine grey Druids, robed in white,  
Armed with the smoking bardic brands,  
And hymn the Eternal Three Essences,  
And weave the rune of the crescent Light,  
Whose dawn-fire breaks on Merlin's night.

#### IV.

#### DRUIDS' SONG

Marvellous Merlin's awake with the day:  
The Morning Star calls the Dawn from the hill:  
The Flame wakes again on the ash of thy brands,  
Oh sacred hearth!

Wild Merlin's awake. The Sun's on his way;  
Where the Elements heard the harp of the Stars,  
That Darkness let shine, as Death does thy Life,  
Oh Cymraec Land!

#### V.

Their hymn was done. Their brands the smoke  
Sent branching up; and Merlin spoke:  
'The Soul aspires, past Night's last arch;  
Where they that stained Arderyd's dust,  
Cross, to the ardent fields of air;  
And make such music in their march,  
Their hearts forget the deadly thrust,  
Whose purple decks the robes they wear.

#### VI.

'Now Morning, from Caer Cennen's steep,  
Comes marching,' Merlin cries, 'to keep  
Watch on the mountain fastnesses!  
Crying to all the Cymraec fields--



Awake! Not long King Arthur's sleep  
Shall be, ere while the herd-boy sees  
The dawn that yields  
The cry of harps, the glancing of his shields!

## VII.

So Morial heard, that might not write  
Nor add the morn to Merlin's night.  
That ends his mortal chronicle;  
And some say still, that many a one  
Read Annwn's mark, and dreadful might,  
In the dead face of Morial:  
There speaks the Night! The Night is done:  
And Marvellous Merlin's Day's begun.





## THE WAKING OF KING ARTHUR, BRECHVA'S HARP SONG, BY ERNEST RHYS [1898]

Little harp, at the cry  
He shall come in his time;  
And thy sword-song on high,  
High shall chime.

Little harp, in his heart  
Is the fire; in his hand  
Are the sword, and the Art,  
To command.

Little harp, like the wind  
Is his strength; like thy sound  
Are his words, to unbind  
Every wound.

Little harp, if his name  
Be unknown, ye shall hear  
How the Stars tell his fame  
Far and near.

Little harp, if unknown  
He awake, there shall sing  
All the Stars, as they crown  
Him All-King!



## SIR LAUNCELOT AND THE SANGREAL, BY ERNEST RHYS [1905]

"Car il 1 n'or à nul pech'eour  
Ne compaignie ne amour."

He found a chamber where the door was shut,  
And thereto set his hand to open it;  
And mightily he tried, and still might not:  
And then he heard a voice which sang so sweet,  
It seemed none earthly thing that he heard sing,  
"Honour and joy be given  
To the High King of Heaven!"

It seemed none earthly thing that sung therein,  
So sweet the voice, it near had made him greet,--  
For well he knew his body, stained with sin,  
Was for that mystic chamber all unmeet,  
Wherein those voices rang, yes, choired and sang;  
"Honour and joy be given  
To the High King of Heaven!"

For well he knew that there the Sangreal  
Upon the board was set for sinless souls,  
While the three rays shone sidelong down the wall;  
While he without did kneel with many a stain,  
And there to that hid noise he joined his voice,  
"Pity and grace be given,  
To me, lost child of Heaven!"

With that he saw the chamber door unclose,  
And out there shone a clearness and a light  
As all the torches in the world that house  
Had lighted and been borne there burning bright  
About the Sangreal, while sang they all,  
"Honour and joy be given,



To the sweet lord of Heaven!"

Oh, much he marvelled, and would enter in,  
And cried, "Fair Father Jesu" in his need,  
Remembering then men's woe and mortal sin  
For which the Christ upon the Cross did bleed,--  
Yes, crying still that prayer, he entered there,--  
"Pity and grace be given  
To me, poor knight of Heaven!"

Right so he entered, where the Sancgreal  
Did shine to greet him; but a gust of fire,  
And a grim smoke, there smote and made him fall;  
It took his body's might, and all desire;  
He had no voice nor will, though they sang still,  
"Honour and joy be given,  
To the High King of Heaven!"

Then many hands did raise and bear him out,  
And there all night he lay, till morning time;  
And many a day like dead lay Launcelot,  
He heard no bell at matin or at prime:  
Nathless he deem'd did sing, none earthly thing,  
"Honour and joy be given,  
To the High King of Heaven!"

Then came a dayspring and a fair white dawn,  
And he rose up, yet did not rise the same:  
For all the bitterness and pain were gone:  
For he who sinn'd the sin had borne the shame,  
And seen the Sancgreal, and heard them call,  
"Honour and joy be given,  
To the High King of Heaven!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Oh now, frail sons of earth, who fell in sin;  
Learn from the piteous deed of this dread knight,  
Beat at the door, and cry, and enter in,  
And you shall win the Grail, and see the Light,



Yes, like none earthly thing, shall hear them sing,  
"Honour and joy be given,  
To the High King of Heaven!"

1 i.e. le Gréail."



## THE CITY OF SARRAS, BY ERNEST RHYS [1905]

"I require you that ye bury me not in this country, but as soon as I am dead put me in a boat at the next haven,. . . and as soon as ye three come to the city of Sarras, there to achieve the Holy Grail, . . . there bury me in the spiritual place."

### I.

OH, have you not heard of Sir Galahad,  
Sir Bors and Sir Percival,--  
How they came to the Castle of Carbonek,--  
On the Quest of the Sancgreal?

### II.

They sate at King Pelles' table,--  
And they saw a Spear that bled  
Three drops of blood most marvellous,--  
And a marvellous sweet voice said,--

### III.

"Sir Galahad,--Sir Galahad!  
Sir Bors, and Sir Percival!"--  
And all three saw a shining form  
By the cup of the Sancgreal.

### IV.

"This is Joseph of Arimathea,"  
It said, "The which had grace;  
Which was saved in the City of Sarras  
In the Spiritual Place!"

### V.



They grew adread to see the form  
Of one dead, three hundred year!  
But Joseph said, "A man like you,  
Look on me,--have no fear!"

#### VI.

Then they saw two angels stand there,  
Wax candles in their hand:  
And Joseph of Arimathea  
Between that twain did stand.

#### VII.

"Now," said he, "servants of Jesu Christ  
All three, you shall be fed  
Afore this table with meats, more sweet  
Than any knight ate," he said:  
But when he had said it, he vanished away,  
And the greater grew their dread.

#### VIII.

Then came One from the Holy Grail,--  
They saw his blood; they knew the Light!  
My knights, he said, my true children:  
You shall taste of the Grail this night.

#### IX.

Straightway Sir Galahad kneeled down,--  
Sir Bors, and Sir Percival:  
And they humbly received their Saviour  
And partook of the Sancgreal.

#### X.

Too sweet for earth its savour was;--  
Too marvellous to be told



Was the Mystery, and beyond man's sight  
What the three knights saw unroll'd.

**XI.**

This night, said he, you have seen much:  
But after Night, the Day;  
And here in the realm of Logris  
The Sancgreal cannot stay.

**XII.**

You have seen this night your souls' desire;  
But there waits a Mystery  
More strange, my knights, than you can think  
Till to Sarras you sail the sea,--

**XIII.**

Till you come where Joseph of Arimathea  
Stood with me, face to face;--  
Till you stand in the City of Sarras,  
In the Spiritual Place.



## THE LAMENT OF SIR ECTOR DE MARIS, BY ERNEST RHYS [1905]

### I.

Thro' waste and steep, this seven year  
Sir Ector seeks Sir Launcelot,  
His flower of knights, his brother dear.

From Calabre to Gwent, he sought;  
Last home to Joyous Garde, he hight  
By roads that once Sir Launcelot brought.

### II.

What lights are they that burn all night,  
Within the quire of Joyous Garde?  
Sir Ector draws rein at the sight.

What songs are they to heaven's Lord?  
What singing men, that sing and pause?  
Sir Ector doffs his helm and sword.

They sing no song of "Deo Laus":  
Sir Ector de Maris knows them not:  
Yet, well they know his thrice-scarr'd brows.

"There lies thy brother, Launcelot,"  
Sir Bors says, standing by the bier,  
"That thou this seven year hath sought!"

Through waste and steep, this seven year,  
He sought; and now he swoons to see  
That face he sought lie on the bier.

The kneeling knights rise silently:





They bear him forth to the cool night-air  
The summer night drinks from the sea.

### III.

When Ector woke, what anguish there  
He made, what pity in him wrought:  
His cries were more than heart can bear.

"Oh Launcelot, oh Launcelot,  
Of Christian knight, the flower and head,  
And there thou liest, Sir Launcelot.

"I will dare say," Sir Ector said,  
"Of all men thou wert courtliest,  
And the truest knight ever love bested.

"Of a sinful man, thou wert the best,  
That ever loved; and of all, did ride  
The lists full-arm'd, the goodliest.

"And thou wert first in the battle-tide  
To meet the spears; yet, the gentlest man  
That sate in hall by the ladies' side.

"And thou wert always the meekest one  
That served thy lord in Camelot:  
And the sternest knight, since wars began,

"Put spear in rest, or ever fought  
With thy mortal foe: and there, how low,  
How low, thou liest, Sir Launcelot!"

\* \* \*

The sorrow then, no man can know:  
Weeping, complaining, without end,  
For the noblest knight, the truest friend,  
That ever into the grave did go.



## THE LAST SLEEP OF SIR LAUNCELOT, BY ERNEST RHYS [1905]

"Behold also this mighty champion, Launcelot, peerless of knighthood, . . .  
that sometime was so terrible."

Still asleep, and fast asleep,  
The hermit-bishop lay,  
And fell upon a great laughter  
An hour before the day.

Therewith his fellowship arose,  
And asked what ailed him then?  
"Alas!" said he, "such joy was mine  
As shall not be again.

"Here was Sir Launcelot with me,  
And angels too, far more  
Than there be men, that heav'd him up  
To heaven's open door!"

"Vexing of dreams, it is but dreams,"  
Said Bors. The bishop said,  
"Yet go to Launcelot's bedside!"  
They go; they find him dead.

Still asleep, and fast asleep,  
Oh, sweet the smile he wore!  
Sir Launcelot lay fast asleep,  
To waken never more.

Yes, there he lay, and smiled in sleep;  
And a sweetest savour rose:  
But greater dolour none has heard,  
Than the dole within that house.



\* \* \*

Next day, the mass of requiem sung,  
They lift for him his sword.  
The same bier that bare Gwenevere,  
Bare him to Joyous Garde.

And still asleep, and fast asleep,  
His visage open laid,  
Within the quire of Joyous Garde  
Sir Launcelot lies dead.



## THE QUEST OF THE GRAIL: ON THE EVE, BY ERNEST RHYS [1905]

"And then the king and all estates went home unto Camelot, and so went to evensong to the great minster. And so after upon that to supper."

### I.

"Before you take this Quest," (he said), "in order set,--  
Each knight around the Table, --come, sup with me yet;  
Come, keep the feast, that after us men never shall forget!"

### II.

Now, round the Table seated, each tall knight in his place,--  
Hears noises like to thunder, and sees a light whose rays  
Make shine his fellows by him, with brows more bright than day's.

### III.

Not one could speak, for wonder. Then lo, within the hall  
Wrapt round with snow-white samite, the blessed Sangreal  
And sweetest savours filled the board; and meat and drink for all.

### IV.

The mystic Vessel like a gleam went by: it could not stay:  
And the knights all fell to feasting, and the vision passed away,  
That all shall quest, but few shall find, until the earth's last day.

### V.

And then they fell to babbling, their hands upon their knees,  
And babbled of the morrow, and all the joy there is  
For them that quest, and ride the lands, and cross the winter seas.



**VI.**

But the tears fell down King Arthur's cheeks, as he sate with his men:

"Ye have set me in great sorrow," said Arthur to them then:

"For oh, I doubt, my fellowship, shall meet no more again!"



## TIMOR MORTIS, BY ERNEST RHYS [1905]

"The thing that I feared is fallen upon me."

When deadly flesh, oh knight, shall see  
The spiritual things,  
The samite cloth, the Mystery,  
The long street where the wings  
Of eagles are the minstrelsy,  
And winnow death, like dust away  
Upon a windy day.

Then, if thine arm, like Galahad,  
And thy heart tremble too,  
Heave up, oh knight, thy hands, full glad  
To know the death he knew  
The samite drawn, the Grail unclad  
Logris and beyond the sea  
That sails to Ar'mathie.

There, healed and solaced by the Grail,  
Thy wounds shall hurt not so:  
But He, that Knight whom men did nail  
Upon the tree shall show  
Those wounds they made, that brow left pale  
By death, which call and bid thee come  
Safe, oh knight errant, home.



## MERLIN, BY EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON [1917]

### I.

"Gawaine, Gawaine, what look ye for to see,  
So far beyond the faint edge of the world?  
D'ye look to see the lady Vivian,  
Pursued by divers ominous vile demons  
That have another king more fierce than ours?  
Or think ye that if ye look far enough  
And hard enough into the feathery west  
Ye'll have a glimmer of the Grail itself?  
And if ye look for neither Grail nor lady,  
What look ye for to see, Gawaine, Gawaine?"

So Dagonet, whom Arthur made a knight  
Because he loved him as he laughed at him,  
Intoned his idle presence on a day  
To Gawaine, who had thought himself alone,  
Had there been in him thought of anything  
Save what was murmured now in Camelot  
Of Merlin's hushed and all but unconfirmed  
Appearance out of Brittany. It was heard  
At first there was a ghost in Arthur's palace,  
But soon among the scullions and anon  
Among the knights a firmer credit held  
All tongues from uttering what all glances told--  
Though not for long. Gawaine, this afternoon,  
Fearing he might say more to Lancelot  
Of Merlin's rumor-laden resurrection  
Than Lancelot would have an ear to cherish,  
Had sauntered off with his imagination  
To Merlin's Rock, where now there was no Merlin  
To meditate upon a whispering town  
Below him in the silence.--Once he said  
To Gawaine: "You are young; and that being so,



Behold the shining city of our dreams  
And of our King."--"Long live the King," said Gawaine.--  
"Long live the King," said Merlin after him;  
"Better for me that I shall not be King;  
Wherefore I say again, Long live the King,  
And add, God save him, also, and all kings--  
All kings and queens. I speak in general.  
Kings have I known that were but weary men  
With no stout appetite for more than peace  
That was not made for them."--"Nor were they made  
For kings," Gawaine said, laughing.--"You are young,  
Gawaine, and you may one day hold the world  
Between your fingers, knowing not what it is  
That you are holding. Better for you and me,  
I think, that we shall not be kings."

Gawaine,  
Remembering Merlin's words of long ago,  
Frowned as he thought, and having frowned again,  
He smiled and threw an acorn at a lizard:  
"There's more afoot and in the air to-day  
Than what is good for Camelot. Merlin  
May or may not know all, but he said well  
To say to me that he would not be King.  
Nor more would I be King." Far down he gazed  
On Camelot, until he made of it  
A phantom town of many stillnesses,  
Not reared for men to dwell in, or for kings  
To reign in, without omens and obscure  
Familiars to bring terror to their days;  
For though a knight, and one as hard at arms  
As any, save the fate-begotten few  
That all acknowledged or in envy loathed,  
He felt a foreign sort of creeping up  
And down him, as of moist things in the dark,--  
When Dagonet, coming on him unawares,  
Presuming on his title of Sir Fool,  
Addressed him and crooned on till he was done:  
"What look ye for to see, Gawaine, Gawaine?"





"Sir Dagonet, you best and wariest  
Of all dishonest men, I look through Time,  
For sight of what it is that is to be.  
I look to see it, though I see it not.  
I see a town down there that holds a king,  
And over it I see a few small clouds--  
Like feathers in the west, as you observe;  
And I shall see no more this afternoon,  
Than what there is around us every day,  
Unless you have a skill that I have not  
To ferret the invisible for rats."

"If you see what's around us every day,  
You need no other showing to go mad.  
Remember that and take it home with you;  
And say tonight, 'I had it of a fool--  
With no imediate obliquity  
For this one or for that one, or for me.'"  
Gawaine, having risen, eyed the fool curiously:  
"I'll not forget I had it of a knight,  
Whose only folly is to fool himself;  
And as for making other men to laugh,  
And so forget their sins and selves a little,  
There's no great folly there. So keep it up,  
As long as you've a legend or a song,  
And have whatever sport of us you like  
Till havoc is the word and we fall howling.  
For I've a guess there may not be so loud  
A sound of laughing here in Camelot  
When Merlin goes again to his gay grave  
In Brittany. To mention lesser terrors,  
Men say his beard is gone."

"Do men say that?"

A twitch of an impatient weariness  
Played for a moment over the lean face  
Of Dagonet, who reasoned inwardly:  
"The friendly zeal of this inquiring knight  
Will overtake his tact and leave it squealing,  
One of these days."--Gawaine looked hard at him:



"If I be too familiar with a fool,  
I'm on the way to be another fool,"  
He mused, and owned a rueful qualm within him:  
"Yes, Dagonet," he ventured, with a laugh,  
"Men tell me that his beard has vanished wholly,  
And that he shines now as the Lord's anointed,  
And wears the valiance of an ageless youth  
Crowned with a glory of eternal peace."

Dagonet, smiling strangely, shook his head:  
"I grant your valiance of a kind of youth  
To Merlin, but your crown of peace I question;  
For, though I know no more than any churl  
Who pinches any chambermaid soever  
In the King's palace, I look not to Merlin  
For peace, when out of his peculiar tomb  
He comes again to Camelot. Time swings  
A mighty scythe, and some day all your peace  
Goes down before its edge like so much clover.  
No, it is not for peace that Merlin comes,  
Without a trumpet--and without a beard,  
If what you say men say of him be true--  
Nor yet for sudden war."

Gawaine, for a moment,  
Met then the ambiguous gaze of Dagonet,  
And, making nothing of it, looked abroad  
As if at something cheerful on all sides,  
And back again to the fool's unasking eyes:  
"Well, Dagonet, if Merlin would have peace,  
Let Merlin stay away from Brittany,"  
Said he, with admiration for the man  
Whom Folly called a fool: "And we have known him;  
We knew him once when he knew everything."

"He knew as much as God would let him know  
Until he met the lady Vivian.  
I tell you that, for the world knows all that;  
Also it knows he told the King one day  
That he was to be buried, and alive,



In Brittany; and that the King should see  
The face of him no more. Then Merlin sailed  
Away to Vivian in Broceliande,  
Where now she crowns him and herself with flowers  
And feeds him fruits and wines and many foods  
Of many savors, and sweet ortolans.  
Wise books of every lore of every land  
Are there to fill his days, if he require them,  
And there are players of all instruments--  
Flutes, hautboys, drums, and viols; and she sings  
To Merlin, till he trembles in her arms  
And there forgets that any town alive  
Had ever such a name as Camelot.  
So Vivian holds him with her love, they say,  
And he, who has no age, has not grown old.  
I swear to nothing, but that's what they say.  
That's being buried in Broceliande  
For too much wisdom and clairvoyancy.  
But you and all who live, Gawaine, have heard  
This tale, or many like it, more than once;  
And you must know that Love, when Love invites  
Philosophy to play, plays high and wins,  
Or low and loses. And you say to me,  
'If Merlin would have peace, let Merlin stay  
Away from Brittany.' Gawaine, you are young,  
And Merlin's in his grave."

"Merlin said once  
That I was young, and it's a joy for me  
That I am here to listen while you say it.  
Young or not young, if that be burial,  
May I be buried long before I die.  
I might be worse than young; I might be old."--  
Dagonet answered, and without a smile:  
"Somehow I fancy Merlin saying that;

A fancy--a mere fancy." Then he smiled:  
"And such a doom as his may be for you,  
Gawaine, should your untiring divination  
Delve in the veiled eternal mysteries



Too far to be a pleasure for the Lord.  
And when you stake your wisdom for a woman,  
Compute the woman to be worth a grave,  
As Merlin did, and say no more about it.  
But Vivian, she played high. Oh, very high!  
Flutes, hautboys, drums, and viols,--and her love.  
Gawaine, farewell."

"Farewell, Sir Dagonet,  
And may the devil take you presently."  
He followed with a vexed and envious eye,  
And with an arid laugh, Sir Dagonet's  
Departure, till his gaunt obscurity  
Was cloaked and lost amid the glimmering trees.  
"Poor fool!" he murmured. "Or am I the fool?  
With all my fast ascendancy in arms,  
That ominous clown is nearer to the King  
Than I am--yet; and God knows what he knows,  
And what his wits infer from what he sees  
And feels and hears. I wonder what he knows  
Of Lancelot, or what I might know now,  
Could I have sunk myself to sound a fool  
To springe a friend. . . . No, I like not this day.  
There's a cloud coming over Camelot  
Larger than any that is in the sky,--  
Or Merlin would be still in Brittany,  
With Vivian and the viols. It's all too strange."

And later, when descending to the city,  
Through unavailing casements he could hear  
The roaring of a mighty voice within,  
Confirming fervidly his own conviction:  
"It's all too strange, and half the world's half crazy!"--  
He scowled: "Well, I agree with Lamorak."  
He frowned, and passed: "And I like not this day."

II

Sir Lamorak, the man of oak and iron,  
Had with him now, as a care-laden guest,  
Sir Bedivere, a man whom Arthur loved



As he had loved no man save Lancelot.  
Like one whose late-flown shaft of argument  
Had glanced and fallen afield innocuously,  
He turned upon his host a sudden eye  
That met from Lamorak's an even shaft  
Of native and unused authority;  
And each man held the other till at length  
Each turned away, shutting his heavy jaws  
Again together, prisoning thus two tongues  
That might forget and might not be forgiven.  
Then Bedivere, to find a plain way out,  
Said, "Lamorak, let us drink to some one here,  
And end this dryness. Who shall it be--the King,  
The Queen, or Lancelot?"--"Merlin," Lamorak growled;  
And then there were more wrinkles round his eyes  
Than Bedivere had said were possible.  
"There's no refusal in me now for that,"  
The guest replied; "so, 'Merlin' let it be.  
We've not yet seen him, but if he be here,  
And even if he should not be here, say 'Merlin.'"  
They drank to the unseen from two new tankards,  
And fell straightway to sighing for the past,  
And what was yet before them. Silence laid  
A cogent finger on the lips of each  
Impatient veteran, whose hard hands lay clenched  
And restless on his midriff, until words  
Were stronger than strong Lamorak:

"Bedivere,"  
Began the solid host, "you may as well  
Say now as at another time hereafter  
That all your certainties have bruises on 'em,  
And all your pestilent asseverations  
Will never make a man a salamander--  
Who's born, as we are told, so fire won't bite him,--  
Or a slippery queen a nun who counts and burns  
Herself to nothing with her beads and candles.  
There's nature, and what's in us, to be sifted  
Before we know ourselves, or any man  
Or woman that God suffers to be born.



That's how I speak; and while you strain your mazard,  
Like Father Jove, big with a new Minerva,  
We'll say, to pass the time, that I speak well.  
God's fish! The King had eyes; and Lancelot  
Won't ride home to his mother, for she's dead.  
The story is that Merlin warned the King  
Of what's come now to pass; and I believe it  
And Arthur, he being Arthur and a king,  
Has made a more pernicious mess than one,  
We're told, for being so great and amorous:  
It's that unwholesome and inclement cub  
Young Modred I'd see first in hell before  
I'd hang too high the Queen or Lancelot;  
The King, if one may say it, set the pace,  
And we've two strapping bastards here to prove it.  
Young Borre, he's well enough; but as for Modred,  
I squirm as often as I look at him.  
And there again did Merlin warn the King,  
The story goes abroad; and I believe it."

Sir Bedivere, as one who caught no more  
Than what he would of Lamorak's outpouring,  
Inclined his grizzled head and closed his eyes  
Before he sighed and rubbed his beard and spoke:  
"For all I know to make it otherwise,  
The Queen may be a nun some day or other;  
I'd pray to God for such a thing to be,  
If prayer for that were not a mockery.  
We're late now for much praying, Lamorak,  
When you and I can feel upon our faces  
A wind that has been blowing over ruins  
That we had said were castles and high towers--  
Till Merlin, or the spirit of him, came  
As the dead come in dreams. I saw the King  
This morning, and I saw his face. Therefore,  
I tell you, if a state shall have a king,  
The king must have the state, and be the state;  
Or then shall we have neither king nor state,  
But bones and ashes, and high towers all fallen:  
And we shall have, where late there was a kingdom,



A dusty wreck of what was once a glory--  
A wilderness whereon to crouch and mourn  
And moralize, or else to build once more  
For something better or for something worse.  
Therefore again, I say that Lancelot  
Has wrought a potent wrong upon the King,  
And all who serve and recognize the King,  
And all who follow him and all who love him.  
Whatever the stormy faults he may have had,  
To look on him today is to forget them;  
And if it be too late for sorrow now  
To save him--for it was a broken man  
I saw this morning, and a broken king--  
The God who sets a day for desolation  
Will not forsake him in Avilion,  
Or whatsoever shadowy land there be  
Where peace awaits him on its healing shores."

Sir Lamorak, shifting in his oaken chair,  
Growled like a dog and shook himself like one:  
"For the stone-chested, helmet-cracking knight  
That you are known to be from Lyonesse  
To northward, Bedivere, you fol-de-rol  
When days are rancid, and you fiddle-faddle  
More like a woman than a man with hands  
Fit for the smiting of a crazy giant  
With armor an inch thick, as we all know  
You are, when you're not sermonizing at us.  
As for the King, I say the King, no doubt,  
Is angry, sorry, and all sorts of things,  
For Lancelot, and for his easy Queen,  
Whom he took knowing she'd thrown sparks already  
On that same piece of tinder, Lancelot,  
Who fetched her with him from Leodogran  
Because the King--God save poor human reason!--  
Would prove to Merlin, who knew everything  
Worth knowing in those days, that he was wrong.  
I'll drink now and be quiet,--but, by God,  
I'll have to tell you, Brother Bedivere,  
Once more, to make you listen properly,



That crowns and orders, and high palaces,  
And all the manifold ingredients  
Of this good solid kingdom, where we sit  
And spit now at each other with our eyes,  
Will not go rolling down to hell just yet  
Because a pretty woman is a fool.  
And here's Kay coming with his fiddle face  
As long now as two fiddles. Sit ye down,  
Sir Man, and tell us everything you know  
Of Merlin--or his ghost without a beard.  
What mostly is it?"

Sir Kay, the seneschal,  
Sat wearily while he gazed upon the two:  
"To you it mostly is, if I err not,  
That what you hear of Merlin's coming back  
Is nothing more or less than heavy truth.  
But ask me nothing of the Queen, I say,  
For I know nothing. All I know of her  
Is what her eyes have told the silences  
That now attend her; and that her estate  
Is one for less complacent execration  
Than quips and innuendoes of the city  
Would augur for her sin--if there be sin--  
Or for her name--if now she have a name.  
And where, I say, is this to lead the King,  
And after him, the kingdom and ourselves?  
Here be we, three men of a certain strength  
And some confessed intelligence, who know  
That Merlin has come out of Brittany--  
Out of his grave, as he would say it for us--  
Because the King has now a desperation  
More strong upon him than a woman's net  
Was over Merlin--for now Merlin's here,  
And two of us who knew him know how well  
His wisdom, if he have it any longer,  
Will by this hour have sounded and appraised  
The grief and wrath and anguish of the King,  
Requiring mercy and inspiring fear  
Lest he forego the vigil now most urgent,





And leave unwatched a cranny where some worm  
Or serpent may come in to speculate."

"I know your worm, and his worm's name is Modred--  
Albeit the streets are not yet saying so,"  
Said Lamorak, as he lowered his wrath and laughed  
A sort of poisonous apology  
To Kay: "And in the meantime, I'll be gyved!  
Here's Bedivere a-wailing for the King,  
And you, Kay, with a moist eye for the Queen.  
I think I'll blow a horn for Lancelot;  
For by my soul a man's in sorry case  
When Guineveres are out with eyes to scorch him:  
I'm not so ancient or so frozen certain  
That I'd ride horses down to skeletons  
If she were after me. Has Merlin seen him--  
This Lancelot, this Queen-fed friend of ours?"

Kay answered sighing, with a lonely scowl:  
"The picture that I conjure leaves him out;  
The King and Merlin are this hour together,  
And I can say no more; for I know nothing.  
But how the King persuaded or beguiled  
The stricken wizard from across the water  
Outriddles my poor wits. It's all too strange."

"It's all too strange, and half the world's half crazy!"  
Roared Lamorak, forgetting once again  
The devastating carriage of his voice.  
"Is the King sick?" he said, more quietly;  
"Is he to let one damned scratch be enough  
To paralyze the force that heretofore  
Would operate a way through hell and iron,  
And iron already slimy with his blood?  
Is the King blind--with Modred watching him?  
Does he forget the crown for Lancelot?  
Does he forget that every woman mewing  
Shall some day be a handful of small ashes?"

"You speak as one for whom the god of Love



Has yet a mighty trap in preparation.  
We know you, Lamorak," said Bedivere:  
"We know you for a short man, Lamorak,--  
In deeds, if not in inches or in words;  
But there are fens and heights and distances  
That your capricious ranging has not yet  
Essayed in this weird region of man's love.  
Forgive me, Lamorak, but your words are words.  
Your deeds are what they are; and ages hence  
Will men remember your illustriousness,  
If there be gratitude in history.  
For me, I see the shadow of the end,  
Wherein to serve King Arthur to the end,  
And, if God have it so, to see the Grail  
Before I die."

But Lamorak shook his head:  
"See what you will, or what you may. For me,  
I see no other than a stinking mess--  
With Modred stirring it, and Agravaïne  
Spattering Camelot with as much of it  
As he can throw. The Devil got somehow  
Into God's workshop once upon a time,  
And out of the red clay that he found there  
He made a shape like Modred, and another  
As like as eyes are to this Agravaïne.  
'I never made 'em,' said the good Lord God,  
'But let 'em go, and see what comes of 'em.'  
And that's what we're to do. As for the Grail,  
I've never worried it, and so the Grail  
Has never worried me."

Kay sighed. "I see  
With Bedivere the coming of the end,"  
He murmured; "for the King I saw today  
Was not, nor shall he ever be again,  
The King we knew. I say the King is dead;  
The man is living, but the King is dead.  
The wheel is broken."



"Faugh!" said Lamorak;  
"There are no dead kings yet in Camelot;  
But there is Modred who is hatching ruin,--  
And when it hatches I may not be here.  
There's Gawaine too, and he does not forget  
My father, who killed his. King Arthur's house  
Has more divisions in it than I like  
In houses; and if Modred's aim be good  
For backs like mine, I'm not long for the scene."

### III.

King Arthur, as he paced a lonely floor  
That rolled a muffled echo, as he fancied,  
All through the palace and out through the world,  
Might now have wondered hard, could he have heard  
Sir Lamorak's apathetic disregard  
Of what Fate's knocking made so manifest  
And ominous to others near the King--  
If any, indeed, were near him at this hour  
Save Merlin, once the wisest of all men,  
And weary Dagonet, whom he had made  
A knight for love of him and his abused  
Integrity. He might have wondered hard  
And wondered much; and after wondering,  
He might have summoned, with as little heart  
As he had now for crowns, the fond, lost Merlin,  
Whose Nemesis had made of him a slave,  
A man of dalliance, and a sybarite.

"Men change in Brittany, Merlin," said the King;  
And even his grief had strife to freeze again  
A dreary smile for the transmuted seer  
Now robed in heavy wealth of purple silk,  
With frogs and foreign tassels. On his face,  
Too smooth now for a wizard or a sage,  
Lay written, for the King's remembering eyes,  
A pathos of a lost authority  
Long faded, and unconscionably gone;  
And on the King's heart lay a sudden cold:



"I might as well have left him in his grave,  
As he would say it, saying what was true--  
As death is true. This Merlin is not mine,  
But Vivian's. My crown is less than hers,  
And I am less than woman to this man."

Then Merlin, as one reading Arthur's words  
On viewless tablets in the air before him:  
"Now, Arthur, since you are a child of mine--  
A foster-child, and that's a kind of child--  
Be not from hearsay or despair too eager  
To dash your meat with bitter seasoning,  
So none that are more famished than yourself  
Shall have what you refuse. For you are King,  
And if you starve yourself, you starve the state;  
And then by sundry looks and silences  
Of those you loved, and by the lax regard  
Of those you knew for fawning enemies,  
You may learn soon that you are King no more,  
But a slack, blasted, and sad-fronted man,  
Made sadder with a crown. No other friend  
Than I could say this to you, and say more;  
And if you bid me say no more, so be it."

The King, who sat with folded arms, now bowed  
His head and felt, unfought and all aflame  
Like immanent hell-fire, the wretchedness  
That only those who are to lead may feel--  
And only they when they are maimed and worn  
Too sore to covet without shuddering  
The fixed impending eminence where death  
Itself were victory, could they but lead  
Unbitten by the serpents they had fed.  
Turning, he spoke: "Merlin, you say the truth:  
There is no man who could say more to me  
Today, or say so much to me, and live.  
But you are Merlin still, or part of him;  
I did you wrong when I thought otherwise,  
And I am sorry now. Say what you will.  
We are alone, and I shall be alone



As long as Time shall hide a reason here  
For me to stay in this infested world  
Where I have sinned and erred and heeded not  
Your counsel; and where you yourself--God save us!--  
Have gone down smiling to the smaller life  
That you and your incongruous laughter called  
Your living grave. God save us all, Merlin,  
When you, the seer, the founder, and the prophet,  
May throw the gold of your immortal treasure  
Back to the God that gave it, and then laugh  
Because a woman has you in her arms . . .  
Why do you sting me now with a small hive  
Of words that are all poison? I do not ask  
Much honey; but why poison me for nothing,  
And with a venom that I know already  
As I know crowns and wars? Why tell a king--  
A poor, foiled, flouted, miserable king--  
That if he lets rats eat his fingers off  
He'll have no fingers to fight battles with?  
I know as much as that, for I am still  
A king--who thought himself a little less  
Than God; a king who built him palaces  
On sand and mud, and hears them crumbling now,  
And sees them tottering, as he knew they must.  
You are the man who made me to be King--  
Therefore, say anything."

Merlin, stricken deep  
With pity that was old, being born of old  
Foreshadowings, made answer to the King:  
"This coil of Lancelot and Guinevere  
Is not for any mortal to undo,  
Or to deny, or to make otherwise;  
But your most violent years are on their way  
To days, and to a sounding of loud hours  
That are to strike for war. Let not the time  
Between this hour and then be lost in fears,  
Or told in obscurations and vain faith  
In what has been your long security;  
For should your force be slower than hate,



And your regret be sharper than your sight,  
And your remorse fall heavier than your sword,--  
Then say farewell to Camelot, and the crown.  
But say not you have lost, or failed in aught  
Your golden horoscope of imperfection  
Has held in starry words that I have read.  
I see no farther now than I saw then,  
For no man shall be given of everything  
Together in one life; yet I may say  
The time is imminent when he shall come  
For whom I founded the Siege Perilous;  
And he shall be too much a living part  
Of what he brings, and what he burns away in,  
To be for long a vexed inhabitant  
Of this mad realm of stains and lower trials.  
And here the ways of God again are mixed:  
For this new knight who is to find the Grail  
For you, and for the least who pray for you  
In such lost coombs and hollows of the world  
As you have never entered, is to be  
The son of him you trusted--Lancelot,  
Of all who ever jeopardized a throne  
Sure the most evil-fated, saving one,  
Your son, begotten, though you knew not then  
Your leman was your sister, of Morgause;  
For it is Modred now, not Lancelot,  
Whose native hate plans your annihilation--  
Though he may smile till he be sick, and swear  
Allegiance to an unforgiven father  
Until at last he shake an empty tongue  
Talked out with too much lying--though his lies  
Will have a truth to steer them. Trust him not,  
For unto you the father, he the son  
Is like enough to be the last of terrors--  
If in a field of time that looms to you  
Far larger than it is you fail to plant  
And harvest the old seeds of what I say,  
And so be nourished and adept again  
For what may come to be. But Lancelot  
Will have you first; and you need starve no more



For the Queen's love, the love that never was.  
Your Queen is now your Kingdom, and hereafter  
Let no man take it from you, or you die.  
Let no man take it from you for a day:  
For days are long when we are far from what  
We love, and mischief's other name is distance.  
Let that be all, for I can say no more;  
Not even to Blaise the Hermit, were he living,  
Could I say more than I have given you now  
To hear; and he alone was my confessor."

The King arose and paced the floor again.  
"I get gray comfort of dark words," he said;  
"But tell me not that you can say no more:  
You can, for I can hear you saying it.  
Yet I'll not ask for more. I have enough--  
Until my new knight comes to prove and find  
The promise and the glory of the Grail,  
Though I shall see no Grail. For I have built  
On sand and mud, and I shall see no Grail."--

"Nor I," said Merlin. "Once I dreamed of it,  
But I was buried. I shall see no Grail,  
Nor would I have it otherwise. I saw  
Too much, and that was never good for man.  
The man who goes alone too far goes mad--  
In one way or another. God knew best,  
And he knows what is coming yet for me.  
I do not ask. Like you, I have enough."

That night King Arthur's apprehension found  
In Merlin an obscure and restive guest,  
Whose only thought was on the hour of dawn,  
When he should see the last of Camelot  
And ride again for Brittany; and what words  
Were said before the King was left alone  
Were only darker for reiteration.  
They parted, all provision made secure  
For Merlin's early convoy to the coast,  
And Arthur tramped the past. The loneliness



Of kings, around him like the unseen dead,  
Lay everywhere; and he was loath to move,  
As if in fear to meet with his cold hand  
The touch of something colder. Then a whim,  
Begotten of intolerable doubt,  
Seized him and stung him until he was asking  
If any longer lived among his knights  
A man to trust as once he trusted all,  
And Lancelot more than all. "And it is he  
Who is to have me first," so Merlin says,--  
"As if he had me not in hell already.  
Lancelot! Lancelot!" He cursed the tears  
That cooled his misery, and then he asked  
Himself again if he had one to trust  
Among his knights, till even Bedivere,  
Tor, Bors, and Percival, rough Lamorak,  
Griflet, and Gareth, and gay Gawaine, all  
Were dubious knaves,--or they were like to be,  
For cause to make them so; and he had made  
Himself to be the cause. "God set me right,  
Before this folly carry me on farther,"  
He murmured; and he smiled unhappily,  
Though fondly, as he thought: "Yes, there is one  
Whom I may trust with even my soul's last shred;  
And Dagonet will sing for me tonight  
An old song, not too merry or too sad."

When Dagonet, having entered, stood before  
The King as one affrighted, the King smiled:  
"You think because I call for you so late  
That I am angry, Dagonet? Why so?  
Have you been saying what I say to you,  
And telling men that you brought Merlin here?  
No? So I fancied; and if you report  
No syllable of anything I speak,  
You will have no regrets, and I no anger.  
What word of Merlin was abroad today?"

"Today have I heard no man save Gawaine,  
And to him I said only what all men





Are saying to their neighbors. They believe  
That you have Merlin here, and that his coming  
Denotes no good. Gawaine was curious,  
But ever mindful of your majesty.  
He pressed me not, and we made light of it."

"Gawaine, I fear, makes light of everything,"  
The King said, looking down. "Sometimes I wish  
I had a full Round Table of Gawaines.  
But that's a freak of midnight,--never mind it.  
Sing me a song--one of those endless things  
That Merlin liked of old, when men were younger  
And there were more stars twinkling in the sky.  
I see no stars that are alive tonight,  
And I am not the king of sleep. So then,  
Sing me an old song."

Dagonet's quick eye  
Caught sorrow in the King's; and he knew more,  
In a fool's way, than even the King himself  
Of what was hovering over Camelot.  
"O King," he said, "I cannot sing tonight.  
If you command me I shall try to sing,  
But I shall fail; for there are no songs now  
In my old throat, or even in these poor strings  
That I can hardly follow with my fingers.  
Forgive me--kill me--but I cannot sing."  
Dagonet fell down then on both his knees  
And shook there while he clutched the King's cold hand  
And wept for what he knew.

"There, Dagonet;  
I shall not kill my knight, or make him sing.  
No more; get up, and get you off to bed.  
There'll be another time for you to sing,  
So get you to your covers and sleep well."  
Alone again, the King said, bitterly:  
"Yes, I have one friend left, and they who know  
As much of him as of themselves believe  
That he's a fool. Poor Dagonet's a fool.



And if he be a fool, what else am I  
Than one fool more to make the world complete?  
'The love that never was!' . . . Fool, fool, fool, fool!"

The King was long awake. No covenant  
With peace was his tonight; and he knew sleep  
As he knew the cold eyes of Guinevere  
That yesterday had stabbed him, having first  
On Lancelot's name struck fire, and left him then  
As now they left him--with a wounded heart,  
A wounded pride, and a sickening pang worse yet  
Of lost possession. He thought wearily  
Of watchers by the dead, late wayfarers,  
Rough-handed mariners on ships at sea,  
Lone-yawning sentries, wastrels, and all others  
Who might be saying somewhere to themselves,  
"The King is now asleep in Camelot;  
God save the King."--"God save the King, indeed,  
If there be now a king to save," he said.  
Then he saw giants rising in the dark,  
Born horribly of memories and new fears  
That in the gray-lit irony of dawn  
Were partly to fade out and be forgotten;  
And then there might be sleep, and for a time  
There might again be peace. His head was hot  
And throbbing; but the rest of him was cold,  
As he lay staring hard where nothing stood,  
And hearing what was not, even while he saw  
And heard, like dust and thunder far away,  
The coming confirmation of the words  
Of him who saw so much and feared so little  
Of all that was to be. No spoken doom  
That ever chilled the last night of a felon  
Prepared a dragging anguish more profound  
And absolute than Arthur, in these hours,  
Made out of darkness and of Merlin's words;  
No tide that ever crashed on Lyonesse  
Drove echoes inland that were lonelier  
For widowed ears among the fisher-folk,  
Than for the King were memories tonight



Of old illusions that were dead for ever.

#### IV.

The tortured King--seeing Merlin wholly meshed  
In his defection, even to indifference,  
And all the while attended and exalted  
By some unfathomable obscurity  
Of divination, where the Grail, unseen,  
Broke yet the darkness where a king saw nothing--  
Feared now the lady Vivian more than Fate;  
for now he knew that Modred, Lancelot,  
The Queen, the King, the Kingdom, and the World,  
Were less to Merlin, who had made him King,  
Than one small woman in Broceliande.  
Whereas the lady Vivian, seeing Merlin  
Acclaimed and tempted and allured again  
To service in his old magnificence,  
Feared now King Arthur more than storms and robbers;  
For Merlin, though he knew himself immune  
To no least whispered little wish of hers  
That might afflict his ear with ecstasy,  
Had yet sufficient of his old command  
Of all around him to invest an eye  
With quiet lightning, and a spoken word  
With easy thunder, so accomplishing  
A profit and a pastime for himself--  
And for the lady Vivian, when her guile  
Outlived at intervals her graciousness;  
And this equipment of uncertainty,  
Which now had gone away with him to Britain  
With Dagonet, so plagued her memory  
That soon a phantom brood of goblin doubts  
Inhabited his absence, which had else  
Been empty waiting and a few brave fears,  
And a few more, she knew, that were not brave,  
Or long to be disowned, or manageable.  
She thought of him as he had looked at her  
When first he had acquainted her alarm  
At sight of the King's letter with its import;



And she remembered now his very words:  
"The King believes today as in his boyhood  
That I am Fate," he said; and when they parted  
She had not even asked him not to go;  
She might as well, she thought, have bid the wind  
Throw no more clouds across a lonely sky  
Between her and the moon,--so great he seemed  
In his oppressed solemnity, and she,  
In her excess of wrong imagining,  
So trivial in an hour, and, after all  
A creature of a smaller consequence  
Than kings to Merlin, who made kings and kingdoms  
And had them as a father; and so she feared  
King Arthur more than robbers while she waited  
For Merlin's promise to fulfil itself,  
And for the rest that was to follow after:  
"He said he would come back, and so he will.  
He will because he must, and he is Merlin,  
The master of the world--or so he was;  
And he is coming back again to me  
Because he must and I am Vivian.  
It's all as easy as two added numbers:  
Some day I'll hear him ringing at the gate,  
As he rang on that morning in the spring,  
Ten years ago; and I shall have him then  
For ever. He shall never go away  
Though kings come walking on their hands and knees  
To take him on their backs." When Merlin came,  
She told him that, and laughed; and he said strangely:  
"Be glad or sorry, but no kings are coming.  
Not Arthur, surely; for now Arthur knows  
That I am less than Fate."

Ten years ago  
The King had heard, with unbelieving ears  
At first, what Merlin said would be the last  
Reiteration of his going down  
To find a living grave in Brittany:  
"Buried alive I told you I should be,  
By love made little and by woman shorn,



Like Samson, of my glory; and the time  
Is now at hand. I follow in the morning  
Where I am led. I see behind me now  
The last of crossways, and I see before me  
A straight and final highway to the end  
Of all my divination. You are King,  
And in your kingdom I am what I was.  
Wherever I have warned you, see as far  
As I have seen; for I have shown the worst  
There is to see. Require no more of me,  
For I can be no more than what I was."  
So, on the morrow, the King said farewell;  
And he was never more to Merlin's eye  
The King than at that hour; for Merlin knew  
How much was going out of Arthur's life  
With him, as he went southward to the sea.

Over the waves and into Brittany  
Went Merlin, to Broceliande. Gay birds  
Were singing high to greet him all along  
A broad and sanded woodland avenue  
That led him on forever, so he thought,  
Until at last there was an end of it;  
And at the end there was a gate of iron,  
Wrought heavily and invidiously barred.  
He pulled a cord that rang somewhere a bell  
Of many echoes, and sat down to rest,  
Outside the keeper's house, upon a bench  
Of carven stone that might for centuries  
Have waited there in silence to receive him.  
The birds were singing still; leaves flashed and swung  
Before him in the sunlight; a soft breeze  
Made intermittent whisperings around him  
Of love and fate and danger, and faint waves  
Of many sweetly-stinging fragile odors  
Broke lightly as they touched him; cherry-boughs  
Above him snowed white petals down upon him,  
And under their slow falling Merlin smiled  
Contentedly, as one who contemplates  
No longer fear, confusion, or regret,



May smile at ruin or at revelation.

A stately fellow with a forest air  
Now hailed him from within, with searching words  
And curious looks, till Merlin's glowing eye  
Transfixed him and he flinched: "My compliments  
And homage to the lady Vivian.  
Say Merlin from King Arthur's Court is here,  
A pilgrim and a stranger in appearance,  
Though in effect her friend and humble servant.  
Convey to her my speech as I have said it,  
Without abbreviation or delay,  
And so deserve my gratitude forever."  
"But Merlin?" the man stammered; "Merlin? Merlin?"--  
"One Merlin is enough. I know no other.  
Now go you to the lady Vivian  
And bring to me her word, for I am weary."  
Still smiling at the cherry-blossoms falling  
Down on him and around him in the sunlight,  
He waited, never moving, never glancing  
This way or that, until his messenger  
Came jingling into vision, weighed with keys,  
And inly shaken with much wondering  
At this great wizard's coming unannounced  
And unattended. When the way was open  
The stately messenger, now bowing low  
In reverence and awe, bade Merlin enter;  
And Merlin, having entered, heard the gate  
Clang back behind him; and he swore no gate  
Like that had ever clanged in Camelot,  
Or any other place if not in hell.  
"I may be dead; and this good fellow here,  
With all his keys," he thought, "may be the Devil,--  
Though I were loath to say so, for the keys  
Would make him rather more akin to Peter;  
And that's fair reasoning for this fair weather."

"The lady Vivian says you are most welcome,"  
Said now the stately-favored servitor,  
"And are to follow me. She said, 'Say Merlin--



A pilgrim and a stranger in appearance,  
Though in effect my friend and humble servant--  
Is welcome for himself, and for the sound  
Of his great name that echoes everywhere."--  
"I like you and I like your memory,"  
Said Merlin, curiously, "but not your gate.  
Why forge for this elysian wilderness  
A thing so vicious with unholy noise?"--  
"There's a way out of every wilderness  
For those who dare or care enough to find it,"  
The guide said: and they moved along together,  
Down shaded ways, through open ways with hedgerows,  
And into shade again more deep than ever,  
But edged anon with rays of broken sunshine  
In which a fountain, raining crystal music,  
Made faery magic of it through green leafage,  
Till Merlin's eyes were dim with preparation  
For sight now of the lady Vivian.  
He saw at first a bit of living green  
That might have been a part of all the green  
Around the tinkling fountain where she gazed  
Upon the circling pool as if her thoughts  
Were not so much on Merlin--whose advance  
Betrayed through his enormity of hair  
The cheeks and eyes of youth--as on the fishes.  
But soon she turned and found him, now alone,  
And held him while her beauty and her grace  
Made passing trash of empires, and his eyes  
Told hers of what a splendid emptiness  
Her tedious world had been without him in it  
Whose love and service were to be her school,  
Her triumph, and her history: "This is Merlin,"  
She thought; "and I shall dream of him no more.  
And he has come, he thinks, to frighten me  
With beards and robes and his immortal fame;  
Or is it I who think so? I know not.  
I'm frightened, sure enough, but if I show it,  
I'll be no more the Vivian for whose love  
He tossed away his glory, or the Vivian  
Who saw no man alive to make her love him



Till she saw Merlin once in Camelot,  
And seeing him, saw no other. In an age  
That has no plan for me that I can read  
Without him, shall he tell me what I am,  
And why I am, I wonder?" While she thought,  
And feared the man whom her perverse negation  
Must overcome somehow to soothe her fancy,  
She smiled and welcomed him; and so they stood,  
Each finding in the other's eyes a gleam  
Of what eternity had hidden there.

"Are you always all in green, as you are now?"  
Said Merlin, more employed with her complexion,  
Where blood and olive made wild harmony  
With eyes and wayward hair that were too dark  
For peace if they were not subordinated;  
"If so you are, then so you make yourself  
A danger in a world of many dangers.  
If I were young, God knows if I were safe  
Concerning you in green, like a slim cedar,  
As you are now, to say my life was mine:  
Were you to say to me that I should end it,  
Longevity for me were jeopardized.  
Have you your green on always and all over?"

"Come here, and I will tell you about that,"  
Said Vivian, leading Merlin with a laugh  
To an arbored seat where they made opposites:  
"If you are Merlin--and I know you are,  
For I remember you in Camelot,--  
You know that I am Vivian, as I am;  
And if I go in green, why, let me go so,  
And say at once why you have come to me  
Cloaked over like a monk, and with a beard  
As long as Jeremiah's. I don't like it.  
I'll never like a man with hair like that  
While I can feed a carp with little frogs.  
I'm rather sure to hate you if you keep it,  
And when I hate a man I poison him."





"You've never fed a carp with little frogs,"  
Said Merlin; "I can see it in your eyes."--  
"I might then, if I haven't," said the lady;  
"For I'm a savage, and I love no man  
As I have seen him yet. I'm here alone,  
With some three hundred others, all of whom  
Are ready, I dare say, to die for me;  
I'm cruel and I'm cold, and I like snakes;  
And some have said my mother was a fairy,  
Though I believe it not."

"Why not believe it?"  
Said Merlin; "I believe it. I believe  
Also that you divine, as I had wished,  
In my surviving ornament of office  
A needless imposition on your wits,  
If not yet on the scope of your regard.  
Even so, you cannot say how old I am,  
Or yet how young. I'm willing cheerfully  
To fight, left-handed, Hell's three headed hound  
If you but whistle him up from where he lives;  
I'm cheerful and I'm fierce, and I've made kings;  
And some have said my father was the Devil,  
Though I believe it not. Whatever I am,  
I have not lived in Time until to-day."  
A moment's worth of wisdom there escaped him,  
But Vivian seized it, and it was not lost.

Embroidering doom with many levities,  
Till now the fountain's crystal silver, fading,  
Became a splash and a mere chilliness,  
They mocked their fate with easy pleasantries  
That were too false and small to be forgotten,  
And with ingenious insincerities  
That had no repetition or revival.  
At last the lady Vivian arose,  
And with a crying of how late it was  
Took Merlin's hand and led him like a child  
Along a dusky way between tall cones  
Of tight green cedars: "Am I like one of these?"



You said I was, though I deny it wholly."--  
"Very," said Merlin, to his bearded lips  
Uplifting her small fingers.--"O, that hair?"  
She moaned, as if in sorrow: "Must it be?  
Must every prophet and important wizard  
Be clouded so that nothing but his nose  
And eyes, and intimations of his ears,  
Are there to make us know him when we see him?  
Praise heaven I'm not a prophet! Are you glad?"--

He did not say that he was glad or sorry;  
For suddenly came flashing into vision  
A thing that was a manor and a castle,  
With walls and roofs that had a flaming sky  
Behind them, like a sky that he remembered,  
And one that had from his rock-sheltered haunt  
Above the roofs of his forsaken city  
Made flame as if all Camelot were on fire.  
The glow brought with it a brief memory  
Of Arthur as he left him, and the pain  
That fought in Arthur's eyes for losing him,  
And must have overflowed when he had vanished.  
But now the eyes that looked hard into his  
Were Vivian's, not the King's; and he could see,  
Or so he thought, a shade of sorrow in them.  
She took his two hands: "You are sad," she said.--  
He smiled: "Your western lights bring memories  
Of Camelot. We all have memories--  
Prophets, and women who are like slim cedars;  
But you are wrong to say that I am sad."--  
"Would you go back to Camelot?" she asked,  
Her fingers tightening. Merlin shook his head.  
"Then listen while I tell you that I'm glad,"  
She purred, as if assured that he would listen:  
"At your first warning, much too long ago,  
Of this quaint pilgrimage of yours to see  
'The fairest and most orgulous of ladies'--  
No language for a prophet, I am sure--  
Said I, 'When this great Merlin comes to me,  
My task and avocation for some time



Will be to make him willing, if I can,  
To teach and feed me with an ounce of wisdom.'<sup>1</sup>  
For I have eaten to an empty shell,  
After a weary feast of observation  
Among the glories of a tinsel world  
That had for me no glory till you came,  
A life that is no life. Would you go back  
To Camelot?"--Merlin shook his head again,  
And the two smiled together in the sunset.

They moved along in silence to the door,  
Where Merlin said: "Of your three hundred here  
There is but one I know, and him I favor;  
I mean the stately one who shakes the keys  
Of that most evil sounding gate of yours,  
Which has a clang as if it shut forever."--  
"If there be need, I'll shut the gate myself,"  
She said. "And you like Blaise? Then you shall have him.  
He was not born to serve, but serve he must,  
It seems, and be enamoured of my shadow.  
He cherishes the taint of some high folly  
That haunts him with a name he cannot know,  
And I could fear his wits are paying for it.  
Forgive his tongue, and humor it a little."--  
"I knew another one whose name was Blaise,"  
He said; and she said lightly, "Well, what of it?"--  
"And he was nigh the learnedest of hermits;  
His home was far away from everywhere,  
And he was all alone there when he died."--  
"Now be a pleasant Merlin," Vivian said,  
Patting his arm, "and have no more of that;  
for I'll not hear of dead men far away,  
Or dead men anywhere this afternoon.  
There'll be a trifle in the way of supper  
This evening, but the dead shall not have any.  
Blaise and this man will tell you all there is  
For you to know. Then you'll know everything."  
She laughed, and vanished like a humming-bird.

## V.



The sun went down, and the dark after it  
Starred Merlin's new abode with many a sconced  
And many a moving candle, in whose light  
The prisoned wizard, mirrored in amazement,  
Saw fronting him a stranger, falcon-eyed,  
Firm-featured, of a negligible age,  
And fair enough to look upon, he fancied,  
Though not a warrior born, nor more a courtier.  
A native humor resting in his long  
And solemn jaws now stirred, and Merlin smiled  
To see himself in purple, touched with gold,  
And fledged with snowy lace.--The careful Blaise,  
Having drawn some time before from Merlin's wallet  
The sable raiment of a royal scholar,  
Had eyed it with a long mistrust and said:  
"The lady Vivian would be vexed, I fear,  
To meet you vested in these learned weeds  
Of gravity and death; for she abhors  
Mortality in all its hues and emblems--  
Black wear, long argument, and all the cold  
And solemn things that appertain to graves."--  
And Merlin, listening, to himself had said,  
"This fellow has a freedom, yet I like him;"  
And then aloud: "I trust you. Deck me out,  
However, with a temperate regard  
For what your candid eye may find in me  
Of inward coloring. Let them reap my beard,  
Moreover, with a sort of reverence,  
For I shall never look on it again.  
And though your lady frown her face away  
To think of me in black, for God's indulgence,  
Array me not in scarlet or in yellow."--  
And so it came to pass that Merlin sat  
At ease in purple, even though his chin  
Reproached him as he pinched it, and seemed yet  
A little fearful of its nakedness.  
He might have sat and scanned himself for ever  
Had not the careful Blaise, regarding him,  
Remarked again that in his proper judgment,



And on the valid word of his attendants,  
No more was to be done. "Then do no more,"  
Said Merlin, with a last look at his chin;  
"Never do more when there's no more to do,  
And you may shun thereby the bitter taste  
Of many disillusion and regrets.  
God's pity on us that our words have wings  
And leave our deeds to crawl so far below them;  
For we have all two heights, we men who dream,  
Whether we lead or follow, rule or serve."--  
"God's pity on us anyhow," Blaise answered,  
"Or most of us. Meanwhile, I have to say,  
As long as you are here, and I'm alive,  
Your summons will assure the loyalty  
Of all my diligence and expedition.  
The gong that you hear singing in the distance  
Was rung for your attention and your presence."--  
"I wonder at this fellow, yet I like him,"  
Said Merlin; and he rose to follow him.

The lady Vivian in a fragile sheath  
Of crimson, dimmed and veiled ineffably  
By the flame-shaken gloom wherein she sat,  
And twinkled if she moved, heard Merlin coming,  
And smiled as if to make herself believe  
Her joy was all a triumph; yet her blood  
Confessed a tingling of more wonderment  
Than all her five and twenty worldly years  
Of waiting for this triumph could remember;  
And when she knew and felt the slower tread  
Of his unseen advance among the shadows  
To the small haven of uncertain light  
That held her in it as a torch-lit shoal  
Might hold a smooth red fish, her listening skin  
Responded with a creeping underneath it,  
And a crinkling that was incident alike  
To darkness, love, and mice. When he was there,  
She looked up at him in a whirl of mirth  
And wonder, as in childhood she had gazed  
Wide-eyed on royal mountebanks who made



So brief a shift of the impossible  
That kings and queens would laugh and shake themselves;  
Then rising slowly on her little feet,  
Like a slim creature lifted, she thrust out  
Her two small hands as if to push him back--  
Whereon he seized them. "Go away," she said;  
"I never saw you in my life before."--  
"You say the truth," he answered; "when I met  
Myself an hour ago, my words were yours.  
God made the man you see for you to like,  
If possible. If otherwise, turn down  
These two prodigious and remorseless thumbs  
And leave your lions to annihilate him."--

"I have no other lion than yourself,"  
She said; "and since you cannot eat yourself,  
Pray do a lonely woman, who is, you say,  
More like a tree than any other thing  
In your discrimination, the large honor  
Of sharing with her a small kind of supper."--  
"Yes, you are like a tree,--or like a flower;  
More like a flower to-night." He bowed his head  
And kissed the ten small fingers he was holding,  
As calmly as if each had been a son;  
Although his heart was leaping and his eyes  
Had sight for nothing save a swimming crimson  
Between two glimmering arms. "More like a flower  
To-night," he said, as now he scanned again  
The immemorial meaning of her face  
And drew it nearer to his eyes. It seemed  
A flower of wonder with a crimson stem  
Came leaning slowly and regretfully  
To meet his will--a flower of change and peril  
That had a clinging blossom of warm olive  
Half stifled with a tyranny of black,  
And held the wayward fragrance of a rose  
Made woman by delirious alchemy.  
She raised her face and yoked his willing neck  
With half her weight; and with hot lips that left  
The world with only one philosophy



For Merlin or for Anaxagoras,  
Called his to meet them and in one long hush  
Of capture to surrender and make hers  
The last of anything that might remain  
Of what was now their beardless wizardry.  
Then slowly she began to push herself  
Away, and slowly Merlin let her go  
As far from him as his outreaching hands  
Could hold her fingers while his eyes had all  
The beauty of the woodland and the world  
Before him in the firelight, like a nymph  
Of cities, or a queen a little weary  
Of inland stillness and immortal trees.

"Are you to let me go again sometime,"  
She said,--"before I starve to death, I wonder?  
If not, I'll have to bite the lion's paws,  
And make him roar. He cannot shake his mane,  
For now the lion has no mane to shake;  
The lion hardly knows himself without it,  
And thinks he has no face, but there's a lady  
Who says he had no face until he lost it.  
So there we are. And there's a flute somewhere,  
Playing a strange old tune. You know the words:  
'The Lion and the Lady are both hungry.'"

Fatigue and hunger--tempered leisurely  
With food that some devout magician's oven  
Might after many failures have delivered,  
And wine that had for decades in the dark  
Of Merlin's grave been slowly quickening,  
And with half-heard, dream-weaving interludes  
Of distant flutes and viols, made more distant  
By far, nostalgic hautboys blown from nowhere,--  
Were tempered not so leisurely, may be,  
With Vivian's inextinguishable eyes  
Between two shining silver candlesticks  
That lifted each a trembling flame to make  
The rest of her a dusky loveliness  
Against a bank of shadow. Merlin made,



As well as he was able while he ate,  
A fair division of the fealty due  
To food and beauty, albeit more times than one  
Was he at odds with his urbanity  
In honoring too long the grosser viand.  
"The best invention in Broceliande  
Has not been over-taxed in vain, I see,"  
She told him, with her chin propped on her fingers  
And her eyes flashing blindness into his:  
"I put myself out cruelly to please you,  
And you, for that, forget almost at once  
The name and image of me altogether.  
You needn't, for when all is analyzed,  
It's only a bird-pie that you are eating."

"I know not what you call it," Merlin said;  
"Nor more do I forget your name and image,  
Though I do eat; and if I did not eat,  
Your sending out of ships and caravans  
To get whatever 'tis that's in this thing  
Would be a sorrow for you all your days;  
And my great love, which you have seen by now,  
Might look to you a lie; and like as not  
You'd actuate some sinewed mercenary  
To carry me away to God knows where  
And seal me in a fearsome hole to starve,  
Because I made of this insidious picking  
An idle circumstance. My dear fair lady--  
And there is not another under heaven  
So fair as you are as I see you now--  
I cannot look at you too much and eat;  
And I must eat, or be untimely ashes,  
Whereon the light of your celestial gaze  
Would fall, I fear me, for no longer time  
Than on the solemn dust of Jeremiah--  
Whose beard you likened once, in heathen jest,  
To mine that now is no man's."

"Are you sorry?"  
Said Vivian, filling Merlin's empty goblet;





"If you are sorry for the loss of it,  
Drink more of this and you may tell me lies  
Enough to make me sure that you are glad;  
But if your love is what you say it is,  
Be never sorry that my love took off  
That horrid hair to make your face at last  
A human fact. Since I have had your name  
To dream of and say over to myself,  
The visitations of that awful beard  
Have been a terror for my nights and days--  
For twenty years. I've seen it like an ocean,  
Blown seven ways at once and wrecking ships,  
With men and women screaming for their lives;  
I've seen it woven into shining ladders  
That ran up out of sight and so to heaven,  
All covered with white ghosts with hanging robes  
Like folded wings,--and there were millions of them,  
Climbing, climbing, climbing, all the time;  
And all the time that I was watching them  
I thought how far above me Merlin was,  
And wondered always what his face was like.  
But even then, as a child, I knew the day  
Would come some time when I should see his face  
And hear his voice, and have him in my house  
Till he should care no more to stay in it,  
And go away to found another kingdom."--  
"Not that," he said; and, sighing, drank more wine;  
"One kingdom for one Merlin is enough."--  
"One Merlin for one Vivian is enough,"  
She said. "If you care much, remember that;  
But the Lord knows how many Vivians  
One Merlin's entertaining eye might favor,  
Indifferently well and all at once,  
If they were all at hand. Praise heaven they're not."

"If they were in the world--praise heaven they're not--  
And if one Merlin's entertaining eye  
Saw two of them, there might be left him then  
The sight of no eye to see anything--  
Not even the Vivian who is everything,



She being Beauty, Beauty being She,  
She being Vivian, and so on for ever."--  
"I'm glad you don't see two of me," she said;  
"For there's a whole world yet for you to eat  
And drink and say to me before I know  
The sort of creature that you see in me.  
I'm withering for a little more attention,  
But, being woman, I can wait. These cups  
That you see coming are for the last there is  
Of what my father gave to kings alone,  
And far from always. You are more than kings  
To me; therefore I give it all to you,  
Imploring you to spare no more of it  
Than a small cockle-shell would hold for me  
To pledge your love and mine in. Take the rest,  
That I may see tonight the end of it.  
I'll have no living remnant of the dead  
Annoying me until it fades and sours  
Of too long cherishing; for Time enjoys  
The look that's on our faces when we scowl  
On unexpected ruins, and thrift itself  
May be a sort of slow unwholesome fire  
That eats away to dust the life that feeds it.  
You smile, I see, but I said what I said.  
One hardly has to live a thousand years  
To contemplate a lost economy;  
So let us drink it while it's yet alive  
And you and I are not untimely ashes.  
My last words are your own, and I don't like 'em."--  
A sudden laughter scattered from her eyes  
A threatening wisdom. He smiled and let her laugh,  
Then looked into the dark where there was nothing:  
"There's more in this than I have seen," he thought,  
"Though I shall see it."--"Drink," she said again;  
"There's only this much in the world of it,  
And I am near to giving all to you  
Because you are so great and I so little."

With a long-kindling gaze that caught from hers  
A laughing flame, and with a hand that shook



Like Arthur's kingdom, Merlin slowly raised  
A golden cup that for a golden moment  
Was twinned in air with hers; and Vivian,  
Who smiled at him across their gleaming rims,  
From eyes that made a fuel of the night  
Surrounding her, shot glory over gold  
At Merlin, while their cups touched and his trembled.  
He drank, not knowing what, nor caring much  
For kings who might have cared less for themselves,  
He thought, had all the darkness and wild light  
That fell together to make Vivian  
Been there before them then to flower anew  
Through sheathing crimson into candle-light  
With each new leer of their loose, liquorish eyes.  
Again he drank, and he cursed every king  
Who might have touched her even in her cradle;  
For what were kings to such as he, who made them  
And saw them totter--for the world to see,  
And heed, if the world would? He drank again,  
And yet again--to make himself assured  
No manner of king should have the last of it--  
The cup that Vivian filled unfailingly  
Until she poured for nothing. "At the end  
Of this incomparable flowing gold,"  
She prattled on to Merlin, who observed  
Her solemnly, "I fear there may be specks."--  
He sighed aloud, whereat she laughed at him  
And pushed the golden cup a little nearer.  
He scanned it with a sad anxiety,  
And then her face likewise, and shook his head  
As if at her concern for such a matter:  
"Specks? What are specks? Are you afraid of them?"  
He murmured slowly, with a drowsy tongue;  
"There are specks everywhere. I fear them not.  
If I were king in Camelot, I might  
Fear more than specks. But now I fear them not.  
You are too strange a lady to fear specks."

He stared a long time at the cup of gold  
Before him but he drank no more. There came



Between him and the world a crumbling sky  
Of black and crimson, with a crimson cloud  
That held a far off town of many towers.  
All swayed and shaken, till at last they fell,  
And there was nothing but a crimson cloud  
That crumbled into nothing, like the sky  
That vanished with it, carrying away  
The world, the woman, and all memory of them,  
Until a slow light of another sky  
Made gray an open casement, showing him  
Faint shapes of an exotic furniture  
That glimmered with a dim magnificence,  
And letting in the sound of many birds  
That were, as he lay there remembering,  
The only occupation of his ears  
Until it seemed they shared a fainter sound,  
As if a sleeping child with a black head  
Beside him drew the breath of innocence.

One shining afternoon around the fountain,  
As on the shining day of his arrival,  
The sunlight was alive with flying silver  
That had for Merlin a more dazzling flash  
Than jewels rained in dreams, and a richer sound  
Than harps, and all the morning stars together,--  
When jewels and harps and stars and everything  
That flashed and sang and was not Vivian,  
Seemed less than echoes of her least of words--  
For she was coming. Suddenly, somewhere  
Behind him, she was coming; that was all  
He knew until she came and took his hand  
And held it while she talked about the fishes.  
When she looked up he thought a softer light  
Was in her eyes than once he had found there;  
And had there been left yet for dusky women  
A beauty that was heretofore not hers,  
He told himself he must have seen it then  
Before him in the face at which he smiled  
And trembled. "Many men have called me wise,"  
He said, "but you are wiser than all wisdom



If you know what you are."--"I don't," she said;  
"I know that you and I are here together;  
I know that I have known for twenty years  
That life would be almost a constant yawning  
Until you came; and now that you are here,  
I know that you are not to go away  
Until you tell me that I'm hideous;  
I know that I like fishes, ferns, and snakes,--  
Maybe because I liked them when the world  
Was young and you and I were salamanders;  
I know, too, a cool place not far from here,  
Where there are ferns that are like marching men  
Who never march away. Come now and see them,  
And do as they do--never march away.  
When they are gone, some others, crisp and green,  
Will have their place, but never march away."--  
He smoothed her silky fingers, one by one:  
"Some other Merlin, also, do you think,  
Will have his place--and never march away?"--  
Then Vivian laid a finger on his lips  
And shook her head at him before she laughed:  
"There is no other Merlin than yourself,  
And you are never going to be old."

Oblivious of a world that made of him  
A jest, a legend, and a long regret,  
And with a more commanding wizardry  
Than his to rule a kingdom where the king  
Was Love and the queen Vivian, Merlin found  
His queen without the blemish of a word  
That was more rough than honey from her lips,  
Or the first adumbration of a frown  
To cloud the night-wild fire that in her eyes  
Had yet a smoky friendliness of home,  
And a foreknowing care for mighty trifles.  
"There are miles and miles for you to wander in,"  
She told him once: "Your prison yard is large,  
And I would rather take my two ears off  
And feed them to the fishes in the fountain  
Than buzz like an incorrigible bee



For always around yours, and have you hate  
The sound of me; for some day then, for certain,  
Your philosophic rage would see in me  
A bee in earnest, and your hand would smite  
My life away. And what would you do then?  
I know: for years and years you'd sit alone  
Upon my grave, and be the grieving image  
Of lean remorse, and suffer miserably;  
And often, all day long, you'd only shake  
Your celebrated head and all it holds,  
Or beat it with your fist the while you groaned  
Aloud and went on saying to yourself:  
'Never should I have killed her, or believed  
She was a bee that buzzed herself to death,  
First having made me crazy, had there been  
Judicious distance and wise absences  
To keep the two of us inquisitive.'"--  
"I fear you bow your unoffending head  
Before a load that should be mine," said he;  
"If so, you led me on by listening.  
You should have shrieked and jumped, and then fled yelling;  
That's the best way when a man talks too long.  
God's pity on me if I love your feet  
More now than I could ever love the face  
Of any one of all those Vivians  
You summoned out of nothing on the night  
When I saw towers. I'll wander and amend."--  
At that she flung the noose of her soft arms  
Around his neck and kissed him instantly:  
"You are the wisest man that ever was,  
And I've a prayer to make: May all you say  
To Vivian be a part of what you knew  
Before the curse of her unquiet head  
Was on your shoulder, as you have it now,  
To punish you for knowing beyond knowledge.  
You are the only one who sees enough  
To make me see how far away I am  
From all that I have seen and have not been;  
You are the only thing there is alive  
Between me as I am and as I was



When Merlin was a dream. You are to listen  
When I say now to you that I'm alone.  
Like you, I saw too much; and unlike you  
I made no kingdom out of what I saw--  
Or none save this one here that you must rule,  
Believing you are ruled. I see too far  
To rule myself. Time's way with you and me  
Is our way, in that we are out of Time  
And out of tune with Time. We have this place,  
And you must hold us in it or we die.  
Look at me now and say if what I say  
Be folly or not; for my unquiet head  
Is no conceit of mine. I had it first  
When I was born; and I shall have it with me  
Till my unquiet soul is on its way  
To be, I hope, where souls are quieter.  
So let the first and last activity  
Of what you say so often is your love  
Be always to remember that our lyres  
Are not strung for Today. On you it falls  
To keep them in accord here with each other,  
For you have wisdom, I have only sight  
For distant things--and you. And you are Merlin.  
Poor wizard! Vivian is your punishment  
For making kings of men who are not kings;  
And you are mine, by the same reasoning,  
For living out of Time and out of tune  
With anything but you. No other man  
Could make me say so much of what I know  
As I say now to you. And you are Merlin!"

She looked up at him till his way was lost  
Again in the familiar wilderness  
Of night that love made for him in her eyes,  
And there he wandered as he said he would;  
He wandered also in his prison-yard,  
And, when he found her coming after him,  
Beguiled her with her own admonishing  
And frowned upon her with her own admonishing  
And frowned upon her with a fierce reproof



That many a time in the old world outside  
Had set the mark of silence on strong men--  
Whereat she laughed, not always wholly sure,  
Nor always wholly glad, that he who played  
So lightly was the wizard of her dreams:  
"No matter--if only Merlin keep the world  
Away," she thought. "Our lyres have many strings,  
But he must know them all, for he is Merlin."

And so for years, till ten of them were gone,--  
Ten years, ten seasons, or ten flying ages--  
Fate made Broceliande a paradise,  
By none invaded, until Dagonet,  
Like a discordant, awkward bird of doom,  
Flew in with Arthur's message. For the King,  
In sorrow cleaving to simplicity,  
And having in his love a quick remembrance  
Of Merlin's old affection for the fellow,  
Had for this vain, reluctant enterprise  
Appointed him--the knight who made men laugh,  
And was a fool because he played the fool.

"The King believes today, as in his boyhood,  
That I am Fate; and I can do no more  
Than show again what in his heart he knows,"  
Said Merlin to himself and Vivian:  
"This time I go because I made him King,  
Thereby to be a mirror for the world;  
This time I go, but never after this,  
For I can be no more than what I was,  
And I can do no more than I have done."  
He took her slowly in his arms and felt  
Her body throbbing like a bird against him:  
"This time I go; I go because I must."

And in the morning, when he rode away  
With Dagonet and Blaise through the same gate  
That once had clanged as if to shut for ever,  
She had not even asked him not to go;  
For it was then that in his lonely gaze





Of helpless love and sad authority  
She found the gleam of his imprisoned power  
That Fate withheld; and, pitying herself,  
She pitied the fond Merlin she had changed,  
And saw the Merlin who had changed the world.

## VI.

"No kings are coming on their hands and knees,  
Nor yet on horses or in chariots,  
To carry me away from you again,"  
Said Merlin, winding around Vivian's ear  
A shred of her black hair. "King Arthur knows  
That I have done with kings, and that I speak  
No more their crafty language. Once I knew it,  
But now the only language I have left  
Is one that I must never let you hear  
Too long, or know too well. When towering deeds  
Once done shall only out of dust and words  
Be done again, the doer may then be wary  
Lest in the complement of his new fabric  
There be more words than dust."

"Why tell me so?"  
Said Vivian; and a singular thin laugh  
Came after her thin question. "Do you think  
That I'm so far away from history  
That I require, even of the wisest man  
Who ever said the wrong thing to a woman,  
So large a light on what I know already--  
When all I seek is here before me now  
In your new eyes that you have brought for me  
From Camelot? The eyes you took away  
Were sad and old; and I could see in them  
A Merlin who remembered all the kings  
He ever saw, and wished himself, almost,  
Away from Vivian, to make other kings,  
And shake the world again in the old manner.  
I saw myself no bigger than a beetle  
For several days, and wondered if your love



Were large enough to make me any larger  
When you came back. Am I a beetle still?"  
She stood up on her toes and held her cheek  
For some time against his, and let him go.

"I fear the time has come for me to wander  
A little in my prison-yard," he said.--

"No, tell me everything that you have seen  
And heard and done, and seen done, and heard done,  
Since you deserted me. And tell me first  
What the King thinks of me."--"The King believes  
That you are almost what you are," he told her:

"The beauty of all ages that are vanished,  
Reborn to be the wonder of one woman."--

"I knew he hated me. What else of him?"--

"And all that I have seen and heard and done,  
Which is not much, would make a weary telling;  
And all your part of it would be to sleep,  
And dream that Merlin had his beard again."--

"Then tell me more about your good fool knight,  
Sir Dagonet. If Blaise were not half-mad  
Already with his pondering on the name  
And shield of his unshielding nameless father,  
I'd make a fool of him. I'd call him Ajax;  
I'd have him shake his fist at thunder-storms,  
And dance a jig as long as there was lightning,  
And so till I forgot myself entirely.

Not even your love may do so much as that."--

"Thunder and lightning are no friends of mine,"  
Said Merlin slowly, "more than they are yours;  
They bring me nearer to the elements  
From which I came than I care now to be."--

"You owe a service to those elements;

For by their service you outwitted age  
And made the world a kingdom of your will."--

He touched her hand, smiling: "Whatever service  
Of mine awaits them will not be forgotten,"

He said; and the smile faded on his face.--

"Now of all graceless and ungrateful wizards--"  
But there she ceased, for she found in his eyes



The first of a new fear. "The wrong word rules Today," she said; 'and we'll have no more journeys."

Although he wandered rather more than ever  
Since he had come again to Brittany  
From Camelot, Merlin found eternally  
Before him a new loneliness that made  
Of garden, park, and woodland, all alike,  
A desolation and a changelessness  
Defying reason, without Vivian  
Beside him, like a child with a black head,  
Or moving on before him, or somewhere  
So near him that, although he saw it not  
With eyes, he felt the picture of her beauty  
And shivered at the nearness of her being.  
Without her now there was no past or future,  
And a vague, soul-consuming premonition  
He found the only tenant of the present;  
He wondered, when she was away from him,  
If his avenging injured intellect  
Might shine with Arthur's kingdom a twin mirror,  
Fate's plaything, for new ages without eyes  
To see therein themselves and their declension.  
Love made his hours a martyrdom without her;  
The world was like an empty house without her,  
Where Merlin was a prisoner of love  
Confined within himself by too much freedom,  
Repeating an unending exploration  
Of many solitary silent rooms,  
And only in a way remembering now  
That once their very solitude and silence  
Had by the magic of expectancy  
Made sure what now he doubted--though his doubts,  
Day after day, were founded on a shadow.

For now to Merlin, in his paradise,  
Had come an unseen angel with a sword  
Unseen, the touch of which was a long fear  
For longer sorrow that had never come,  
Yet might if he compelled it. He discovered,



One golden day in autumn as he wandered,  
That he had made the radiance of two years  
A misty twilight when he might as well  
Have had no mist between him and the sun,  
The sun being Vivian. On his coming then  
To find her all in green against a wall  
Of green and yellow leaves, and crumbling bread  
For birds around the fountain while she sang  
And the birds ate the bread, he told himself  
That everything today was as it was  
At first, and for a minute he believed it.  
"I'd have you always all in green out here,"  
He said, "if I had much to say about it."--  
She clapped her crumbs away and laughed at him:  
"I've covered up my bones with every color  
That I can carry on them without screaming,  
And you have liked them all--or made me think so."--  
"I must have liked them if you thought I did,"  
He answered, sighing; "but the sight of you  
Today as on the day I saw you first,  
All green, all wonderful" . . . He tore a leaf  
To pieces with a melancholy care  
That made her smile.--"Why pause at 'wonderful'?  
You've hardly been yourself since you came back  
From Camelot, where that unpleasant King  
Said things that you have never said to me."--  
He looked upon her with a worn reproach:  
"The King said nothing that I keep from you."--  
"What is it then?" she asked, imploringly;  
"You man of moods and miracles, what is it?"--  
He shook his head and tore another leaf:  
"There is no need of asking what it is;  
Whatever you or I may choose to name it,  
The name of it is Fate, who played with me  
And gave me eyes to read of the unwritten  
More lines than I have read. I see no more  
Today than yesterday, but I remember.  
My ways are not the ways of other men;  
My memories go forward. It was you  
Who said that we were not in tune with Time;



It was not I who said it."--"But you knew it;  
What matter then who said it?"--"It was you  
Who said that Merlin was your punishment  
For being in tune with him and not with Time--  
With Time or with the world; and it was you  
Who said you were alone, even here with Merlin;  
It was not I who said it. It is I  
Who tell you now my inmost thoughts." He laughed  
As if at hidden pain around his heart,  
But there was not much laughing in his eyes.  
They walked, and for a season they were silent:  
"I shall know what you mean by that," she said,  
"When you have told me. Here's an oak you like,  
And here's a place that fits me wondrous well  
To sit in. You sit there. I've seen you there  
Before; and I have spoiled your noble thoughts  
By walking all my fingers up and down  
Your countenance, as if they were the feet  
Of a small animal with no great claws.  
Tell me a story now about the world,  
And the men in it, what they do in it,  
And why it is they do it all so badly."--  
"I've told you every story that I know,  
Almost," he said.--"O, don't begin like that."--  
"Well, once upon a time there was a King."--  
"That has a more commendable address;  
Go on, and tell me all about the King;  
I'll bet the King had warts or carbuncles,  
Or something wrong in his divine insides,  
To make him wish that Adam had died young."

Merlin observed her slowly with a frown  
Of saddened wonder. She laughed rather lightly,  
And at his heart he felt again the sword  
Whose touch was a long fear for longer sorrow.  
"Well, once upon a time there was a king,"  
He said again, but now in a dry voice  
That wavered and betrayed a venturing.  
He paused, and would have hesitated longer,  
But something in him that was not himself



Compelled an utterance that his tongue obeyed,  
As an unwilling child obeys a father  
Who might be richer for obedience  
If he obeyed the child: "There was a king  
Who would have made his reign a monument  
For kings and peoples of the waiting ages  
To reverence and remember, and to this end  
He coveted and won, with no ado  
To make a story of, a neighbor queen  
Who lured him with her smile and had of him,  
In token of their sin, what he found soon  
To be a sort of mongrel son and nephew--  
And a most precious reptile in addition--  
To ornament his court and carry arms,  
And latterly to be the darker half  
Of ruin. Also the king, who made of love  
More than he made of life and death together,  
Forgot the world and his example in it  
For yet another woman--one of many--  
And this one he made Queen, albeit he knew  
That her unsworn allegiance to the knight  
That he had loved the best of all his order  
Must one day bring along the coming end  
Of love and honor and of everything;  
And with a kingdom builded on two pits  
Of living sin,--so founded by the will  
Of one wise counsellor who loved the king,  
And loved the world and therefore made him king  
To be a mirror for it,--the king reigned well  
For certain years, awaiting a sure doom;  
For certain years he waved across the world  
A royal banner with a Dragon on it;  
And men of every land fell worshipping  
The Dragon as it were the living God,  
And not the living sin."

She rose at that,  
And after a calm yawn, she looked at Merlin:  
"Why all this new insistence upon sin?"  
She said; "I wonder if I understand



This king of yours, with all his pits and dragons;  
I know I do not like him." A thinner light  
Was in her eyes than he had found in them  
Since he became the willing prisoner  
That she had made of him; and on her mouth  
Lay now a colder line of irony  
Than all his fears or nightmares could have drawn  
Before today: "What reason do you know  
For me to listen to this king of yours?  
What reading has a man of woman's days,  
Even though the man be Merlin and a prophet?"

"I know no call for you to love the king,"  
Said Merlin, driven ruinously along  
By the vindictive urging of his fate;  
"I know no call for you to love the king,  
Although you serve him, knowing not yet the king  
You serve. There is no man, or any woman,  
For whom the story of the living king  
Is not the story of the living sin.  
I thought my story was the common one,  
For common recognition and regard."

"Then let us have no more of it," she said;  
"For we are not so common, I believe,  
That we need kings and pits and flags and dragons  
To make us know that we have let the world  
Go by us. Have you missed the world so much  
That you must have it in with all its clots  
And wounds and bristles on to make us happy--  
Like Blaise, with shouts and horns and seven men  
Triumphant with a most unlovely boar?  
Is there no other story in the world  
Than this one of a man that you made king  
To be a moral for the speckled ages?  
You said once long ago, if you remember,  
'You are too strange a lady to fear specks';  
And it was you, you said, who feared them not.  
Why do you look at me as at a snake  
All coiled to spring at you and strike you dead?"



I am not going to spring at you, or bite you;  
I'm going home. And you, if you are kind,  
Will have no fear to wander for an hour.  
I'm sure the time has come for you to wander;  
And there may come a time for you to say  
What most you think it is that we need here  
To make of this Broceliande a refuge  
Where two disheartened sinners may forget  
A world that has today no place for them."

A melancholy wave of revelation  
Broke over Merlin like a rising sea,  
Long viewed unwillingly and long denied.  
He saw what he had seen, but would not feel,  
Till now the bitterness of what he felt  
Was in his throat, and all the coldness of it  
Was on him and around him like a flood  
Of lonelier memories than he had said  
Were memories, although he knew them now  
For what they were--for what his eyes had seen,  
For what his ears had heard and what his heart  
Had felt, with him not knowing what it felt.  
But now he knew that his cold angel's name  
Was Change, and that a mightier will than his  
Or Vivian's had ordained that he be there.  
To Vivian he could not say anything  
But words that had no more of hope in them  
Than anguish had of peace: "I meant the world . . .  
I meant the world," he groaned; "not you--not me."

Again the frozen line of irony  
Was on her mouth. He looked up once at it.  
And then away--too fearful of her eyes  
To see what he could hear now in her laugh  
That melted slowly into what she said,  
Like snow in icy water: "This world of yours  
Will surely be the end of us. And why not?  
I'm overmuch afraid we're part of it,--  
Or why do we build walls up all around us,  
With gates of iron that make us think the day





Of judgment's coming when they clang behind us?  
And yet you tell me that you fear no specks!  
With you I never cared for them enough  
To think of them. I was too strange a lady.  
And your return is now a speckled king  
And something that you call a living sin--  
That's like an uninvited poor relation  
Who comes without a welcome, rather late,  
And on a foundered horse."

"Specks? What are specks?"  
He gazed at her in a forlorn wonderment  
That made her say: "You said, 'I fear them not.'  
'If I were king in Camelot,' you said,  
'I might fear more than specks.' Have you forgotten?  
Don't tell me, Merlin, you are growing old.  
Why don't you make somehow a queen of me,  
And give me half the world? I'd wager thrushes  
That I should reign, with you to turn the wheel,  
As well as any king that ever was.  
The curse on me is that I cannot serve  
A ruler who forgets that he is king."

In his bewildered misery Merlin then  
Stared hard at Vivian's face, more like a slave  
Who sought for common mercy than like Merlin:  
"You speak a language that was never mine,  
Or I have lost my wits. Why do you seize  
The flimsiest of opportunities  
To make of what I said another thing  
Than love or reason could have let me say,  
Or let me fancy? Why do you keep the truth  
So far away from me, when all your gates  
Will open at your word and let me go  
To some place where no fear or weariness  
Of yours need ever dwell? Why does a woman,  
Made otherwise a miracle of love  
And loveliness, and of immortal beauty,  
Tear one word by the roots out of a thousand,  
And worry it, and torture it, and shake it,



Like a small dog that has a rag to play with?  
What coil of an ingenious destiny  
Is this that makes of what I never meant  
A meaning as remote as hell from heaven?"

"I don't know," Vivian said reluctantly,  
And half as if in pain; "I'm going home.  
I'm going home and leave you here to wander,  
Pray take your kings and sins away somewhere  
And bury them, and bury the Queen in also.  
I know this king; he lives in Camelot,  
And I shall never like him. There are specks  
Almost all over him. Long live the king,  
But not the king who lives in Camelot,  
With Modred, Lancelot, and Guinevere--  
And all four speckled like a merry nest  
Of addled eggs together. You made him King  
Because you loved the world and saw in him  
From infancy a mirror for the millions.  
The world will see itself in him, and then  
The world will say its prayers and wash its face,  
And build for some new king a new foundation.  
Long live the King! . . . But now I apprehend  
A time for me to shudder and grow old  
And garrulous--and so become a fright  
For Blaise to take out walking in warm weather--  
Should I give way to long considering  
Of worlds you may have lost while prisoned here  
With me and my light mind. I contemplate  
Another name for this forbidden place,  
And one more fitting. Tell me, if you find it,  
Some fitter name than Eden. We have had  
A man and woman in it for some time,  
And now, it seems, we have a Tree of Knowledge."  
She looked up at the branches overhead  
And shrugged her shoulders. Then she went away;  
And what was left of Merlin's happiness,  
Like a disloyal phantom, followed her.

He felt the sword of his cold angel thrust



And twisted in his heart, as if the end  
Were coming next, but the cold angel passed  
Invisibly and left him desolate,  
With misty brow and eyes. "The man who sees  
May see too far, and he may see too late  
The path he takes unseen," he told himself  
When he found thought again. "The man who sees  
May go on seeing till the immortal flame  
That lights and lures him folds him in its heart,  
And leaves of what there was of him to die  
An item of inhospitable dust  
That love and hate alike must hide away;  
Or there may still be charted for his feet  
A dimmer faring, where the touch of time  
Were like the passing of a twilight moth  
From flower to flower into oblivion,  
If there were not somewhere a barren end  
Of moths and flowers, and glimmering far away  
Beyond a desert where the flowerless days  
Are told in slow defeats and agonies,  
The guiding of a nameless light that once  
Had made him see too much--and has by now  
Revealed in death, to the undying child  
Of Lancelot, the Grail. For this pure light  
Has many rays to throw, for many men  
To follow; and the wise are not all pure,  
Nor are the pure all wise who follow it.  
There are more rays than men. But let the man  
Who saw too much, and was to drive himself  
From paradise, play too lightly or too long  
Among the moths and flowers, he finds at last  
There is a dim way out; and he shall grope  
Where pleasant shadows lead him to the plain  
That has no shadow save his own behind him.  
And there, with no complaint, nor much regret,  
Shall he plod on, with death between him now  
And the far light that guides him, till he falls  
And has an empty thought of empty rest;  
Then Fate will put a mattock in his hands  
And lash him while he digs himself the grave



That is to be the pallet and the shroud  
Of his poor blundering bones. The man who saw  
Too much must have an eye to see at last  
Where Fate has marked the clay; and he shall delve,  
Although his hand may slacken, and his knees  
May rock without a method as he toils;  
For there's a delving that is to be done--  
If not for God, for man. I see the light,  
But I shall fall before I come to it;  
For I am old. I was young yesterday.  
Time's hand that I have held away so long  
Grips hard now on my shoulder. Time has won.  
Tomorrow I shall say to Vivian  
That I am old and gaunt and garrulous,  
And tell her one more story: I am old."

There were long hours for Merlin after that,  
And much long wandering in his prison-yard,  
Where now the progress of each heavy step  
Confirmed a stillness of impending change  
And imminent farewell. To Vivian's ear  
There came for many days no other story  
Than Merlin's iteration of his love  
And his departure from Broceliande,  
Where Merlin still remained. In Vivian's eye,  
There was a quiet kindness, and at times  
A smoky flash of incredulity  
That faded into pain. Was this the Merlin--  
This incarnation of idolatry  
And all but supplicating deference--  
This bowed and reverential contradiction  
Of all her dreams and her realities--  
Was this the Merlin who for years and years  
Before she found him had so made her love him  
That kings and princes, thrones and diadems,  
And honorable men who drowned themselves  
For love, were less to her than melon-shells?  
Was this the Merlin whom her fate had sent  
One spring day to come ringing at her gate,  
Bewildering her love with happy terror



That later was to be all happiness?  
Was this the Merlin who had made the world  
Half over, and then left it with a laugh  
To be the youngest, oldest, weirdest, gayest,  
And wisest, and sometimes the foolishhest  
Of all the men of her consideration?  
Was this the man who had made other men  
As ordinary as arithmetic?  
Was this man Merlin who came now so slowly  
Towards the fountain where she stood again  
In shimmering green? Trembling, he took her hands  
And pressed them fondly, one upon the other,  
Between his:

"I was wrong that other day,  
For I have one more story. I am old."  
He waited like one hungry for the word  
Not said; and she found in his eyes a light  
As patient as a candle in a window  
That looks upon the sea and is a mark  
For ships that have gone down. "Tomorrow," he said;  
"Tomorrow I shall go away again  
To Camelot; and I shall see the King  
Once more; and I may come to you again  
Once more; and I shall go away again  
For ever. There is now no more than that  
For me to do; and I shall do no more.  
I saw too much when I saw Camelot;  
And I saw farther backward into Time,  
And forward, than a man may see and live,  
When I made Arthur king. I saw too far,  
But not so far as this. Fate played with me  
As I have played with Time; and Time, like me,  
Being less than Fate, will have on me his vengeance.  
On Fate there is no vengeance, even for God."  
He drew her slowly into his embrace  
And held her there, but when he kissed her lips  
They were as cold as leaves and had no answer;  
For Time had given him then, to prove his words,  
A frozen moment of a woman's life.



When Merlin the next morning came again  
In the same pilgrim robe that he had worn  
While he sat waiting where the cherry-blossoms  
Outside the gate fell on him and around him  
Grief came to Vivian at the sight of him;  
And like a flash of a swift ugly knife,  
A blinding fear came with it. "Are you going?"  
She said, more with her lips than with her voice;  
And he said, "I am going. Blaise and I  
Are going down together to the shore,  
And Blaise is coming back. For this one day  
Be good enough to spare him, for I like him.  
I tell you now, as once I told the King,  
That I can be no more than what I was,  
And I can say no more than I have said.  
Sometimes you told me that I spoke too long  
And sent me off to wander. That was good.  
I go now for another wandering,  
And I pray God that all be well with you."

For long there was a whining in her ears  
Of distant wheels departing. When it ceased,  
She closed the gate again so quietly  
That Merlin could have heard no sound of it.

## VII.

By Merlin's Rock, where Dagonet the fool  
Was given through many a dying afternoon  
To sit and meditate on human ways  
And ways divine, Gawaine and Bedivere  
Stood silent, gazing down on Camelot.  
The two had risen and were going home:  
"It hits me sore, Gawaine," said Bedivere,  
"To think on all the tumult and affliction  
Down there, and all the noise and preparation  
That hums of coming death, and, if my fears  
Be born of reason, of what's more than death.  
Wherefore, I say to you again, Gawaine,--



To you--that this late hour is not too late  
For you to change yourself and change the King:  
For though the King may love me with a love  
More tried, and older, and more sure, may be,  
Than for another, for such a time as this  
The friend who turns him to the world again  
Shall have a tongue more gracious and an eye  
More shrewd than mine. For such a time as this  
The King must have a glamour to persuade him."

"The King shall have a glamour, and anon,"  
Gawaine said, and he shot death from his eyes;  
"If you were King, as Arthur is--or was--  
And Lancelot had carried off your Queen,  
And killed a score or so of your best knights--  
Not mentioning my two brothers, whom he slew  
Unarmored and unarmed--God save your wits!  
Two stewards with skewers could have done as much,  
And you and I might now be rotting for it."

"But Lancelot's men were crowded,--they were crushed;  
And there was nothing for them but to strike  
Or die, not seeing where they struck. Think you  
They would have slain Gareth and Gaheris,  
And Tor, and all those other friends of theirs?  
God's mercy for the world he made, I say,  
And for the blood that writes the story of it.  
Gareth and Gaheris, Tor and Lamorak,--  
All dead, with all the others that are dead!  
These years have made me turn to Lamorak  
For counsel--and now Lamorak is dead."

"Why do you fling those two names in my face?  
'Twas Modred made an end of Lamorak,  
Not I; and Lancelot now has done for Tor.  
I'll urge no king on after Lancelot  
For such a two as Tor and Lamorak:  
Their father killed my father, and their friend  
was Lancelot, not I. I'll own my fault--  
I'm living; and while I've a tongue can talk,



I'll say this to the King: 'Burn Lancelot  
By inches till he give you back the Queen;  
Then hang him--drown him--or do anything  
To rid the world of him.' He killed my brothers,  
And he was once my friend. Now damn the soul  
Of him who killed my brothers! There you have me."

"You are a strong man, Gawaine, and your strength  
Goes ill where foes are. You may cleave their limbs  
And heads off, but you cannot damn their souls;  
What you may do now is to save their souls,  
And bodies too, and like enough your own.  
Remember that King Arthur is a king,  
And where there is a king there is a kingdom.  
Is not the kingdom any more to you  
Than one brief enemy? Would you see it fall  
And the King with it, for one mortal hate  
That burns out reason? Gawaine, you are king  
Today. Another day may see no king  
But Havoc, if you have no other word  
For Arthur now than hate for Lancelot.  
Is not the world as large as Lancelot?  
Is Lancelot, because one woman's eyes  
Are brighter when they look on him, to sluice  
The world with angry blood? Poor flesh! Poor flesh!  
And you, Gawaine,--are you so gaffed with hate  
You cannot leave it and so plunge away  
To stiller places and there see, for once,  
What hangs on this pernicious expedition  
The King in his insane forgetfulness  
Would undertake--with you to drum him on?  
Are you as mad as he and Lancelot  
Made ravening into one man twice as mad  
As either? Is the kingdom of the world,  
Now rocking, to go down in sound and blood  
And ashes and sick ruin, and for the sake  
Of three men and a woman? If it be so,  
God's mercy for the world he made, I say,--  
And say again to Dagonet. Sir Fool,  
Your throne is empty, and you may as well





Sit on it and be ruler of the world  
From now till supper-time."

Sir Dagonet,  
Appearing, made reply to Bedivere's  
Dry welcome with a famished look of pain,  
On which he built a smile: "If I were King,  
You, Bedivere, should be my counsellor;  
And we should have no more wars over women.  
I'll sit me down and meditate on that."  
Gawaine, for all his anger, laughed a little,  
And clapped the fool's lean shoulder; for he loved him  
And was with Arthur when he made him knight.  
Then Dagonet said on to Bedivere,  
As if his tongue would make a jest of sorrow:  
"Sometime I'll tell you what I might have done  
Had I been Lancelot and you King Arthur--  
Each having in himself the vicious essence  
That now lives in the other and makes war.  
When all men are like you and me, my lord,  
When all are rational or rickety,  
There may be no more war. But what's here now?  
Lancelot loves the Queen, and he makes war  
Of love; the King, being bitten to the soul  
By love and hate that work in him together,  
Makes war of madness; Gawaine hates Lancelot,  
And he, to be in tune, makes war of hate;  
Modred hates everything, yet he can see  
With one damned illegitimate small eye  
His father's crown, and with another like it  
He sees the beauty of the Queen herself;  
He needs the two for his ambitious pleasure,  
And therefore he makes war of his ambition;  
And somewhere in the middle of all this  
There's a squeezed world that elbows for attention.  
Poor Merlin, buried in Broceliande!  
He must have had an academic eye  
For woman when he founded Arthur's kingdom,  
And in Broceliande he may be sorry.  
Flutes, hautboys, drums, and viols. God be with him!



I'm glad they tell me there's another world,  
For this one's a disease without a doctor."

"No, not so bad as that," said Bedivere;  
The doctor, like ourselves, may now be learning;  
And Merlin may have gauged his enterprise  
Whatever the cost he may have paid for knowing.  
We pass, but many are to follow us,  
And what they build may stay; though I believe  
Another age will have another Merlin,  
Another Camelot, and another King.  
Sir Dagonet, farewell."

"Farewell, Sir Knight,  
And you, Sir Knight: Gawaine, you have the world  
Now in your fingers--an uncommon toy,  
Albeit a small persuasion in the balance  
With one man's hate. I'm glad you're not a fool,  
For then you might be rickety, as I am,  
And rational as Bedivere. Farewell.  
I'll sit here and be king. God save the King!"

But Gawaine scowled and frowned and answered nothing  
As he went slowly down with Bedivere  
To Camelot, where Arthur's army waited  
The King's word for the melancholy march  
To Joyous Gard, where Lancelot hid the Queen  
And armed his host, and there was now no joy,  
As there was now no joy for Dagonet  
While he sat brooding, with his wan cheek-bones  
Hooked with his bony fingers: "Go, Gawaine,"  
He mumbled: "Go your way, and drag the world  
Along down with you. What's a world or so  
To you if you can hide an ell of iron  
Somewhere in Lancelot, and hear him wheeze  
And sputter once or twice before he goes  
Wherever the Queen sends him? There's a man  
Who should have been a king, and would have been,  
Had he been born so. so should I have been  
A king, had I been born so, fool or no:



King Dagonet, or Dagonet the King;  
King-Fool, Fool-King; 'twere not impossible.  
I'll meditate on that and pray for Arthur,  
Who made me all I am, except a fool.  
Now he goes mad for love, as I might go  
Had I been born a king and not a fool.  
Today I think I'd rather be a fool;  
Today the world is less than one scared woman--  
Wherefore a field of waving men may soon  
Be shorn by Time's indifferent scythe, because  
The King is mad. The seeds of history  
Are small, but given a few goutts of warm blood  
For quickening, they sprout out wondrously  
And have a leaping growth whereof no man  
May shun such harvesting of change or death,  
Or life, as may fall on him to be borne.  
When I am still alive and rickety,  
And Bedivere's alive and rational--  
If he come out of this, and there's a doubt,--  
The King, Gawaine, Modred, and Lancelot  
May all be lying underneath a weight  
Of bloody sheaves too heavy for their shoulders  
All spent, and all dishonored, and all dead;  
And if it come to be that this be so,  
And if it be true that Merlin saw the truth,  
Such harvest were the best. Your fool sees not  
So far as Merlin sees: yet if he saw  
The truth--why then, such harvest were the best  
I'll pray for Arthur; I can do no more."

"Why not for Merlin? Or do you count him,  
In this extreme, so foreign to salvation  
That prayer would be a stranger to his name?"

Poor Dagonet, with terror shaking him,  
Stood up and saw before him an old face  
Made older with an inch of silver beard,  
And faded eyes more eloquent of pain  
And ruin than all the faded eyes of age  
Till now had ever been, although in them



There was a mystic and intrinsic peace  
Of one who sees where men of nearer sight  
See nothing. On their way to Camelot,  
Gawaine and Bedivere had passed him by,  
With lax attention for the pilgrim cloak  
They passed, and what it hid: yet Merlin saw  
Their faces, and he saw the tale was true  
That he had lately drawn from solemn strangers.

"Well, Dagonet, and by your leave," he said,  
"I'll rest my lonely relics for a while  
On this rock that was mine and now is yours.  
I favor the succession; for you know  
Far more than many doctors, though your doubt  
Is your peculiar poison. I foresaw  
Long since, and I have latterly been told  
What moves in this commotion down below  
To show men what it means. It means the end--  
If men whose tongues had less to say to me  
Than had their shoulders are adept enough  
To know; and you may pray for me or not,  
Sir Friend, Sir Dagonet."

"Sir fool, you mean,"  
Dagonet said, and gazed on Merlin sadly:  
"I'll never pray again for anything,  
And last of all for this that you behold--  
The smouldering faggot of unlovely bones  
That God has given to me to call Myself.  
When Merlin comes to Dagonet for prayer,  
It is indeed the end."

"And in the end  
Are more beginnings, Dagonet, than men  
Shall name or know today. It was the end  
Of Arthur's insubstantial majesty  
When to him and his knights the Grail foreshowed  
The quest of life that was to be the death  
Of many, and the slow discouraging  
Of many more. Or do I err in this?"



"No," Dagonet replied; "there was a Light;  
And Galahad, in the Siege Perilous,  
Alone of all on whom it fell, was calm;  
There was a Light wherein men saw themselves  
In one another as they might become--  
Or so they dreamed. There was a long to-do,  
And Gawaine, of all forlorn ineligibles,  
Rose up the first, and cried more lustily  
Than any after him that he should find  
The Grail, or die for it,--though he did neither;  
For he came back as living and as fit  
For new and old iniquity as ever.  
Then Lancelot came back, and Bors came back,--  
Like men who had seen more than men should see,  
And still come back. They told of Percival  
Who saw too much to make of this worn life  
A long necessity, and of Galahad,  
Who died and is alive. They all saw Something.  
God knows the meaning or the end of it,  
But they saw Something. And if I've an eye,  
Small joy has the Queen been to Lancelot  
Since he came back from seeing what he saw;  
For though his passion hold him like hot claws,  
He's neither in the world nor out of it.  
Gawaine is king, though Arthur wears the crown;  
And Gawaine's hate for Lancelot is the sword  
That hangs by one of Merlin's fragile hairs  
Above the world. Were you to see the King,  
The frenzy that has overthrown his wisdom,  
Instead of him and his upheaving empire,  
Might have an end."

"I came to see the King,"  
Said Merlin, like a man who labors hard  
And long with an importunate confession.  
"No, Dagonet, you cannot tell me why,  
Although your tongue is eager with wild hope  
To tell me more than I may tell myself  
About myself. All this that was to be



Might show to man how vain it were to wreck  
The world for self if it were all in vain.  
When I began with Arthur I could see  
In each bewildered man who dots the earth  
A moment with his days a groping thought  
Of an eternal will, strangely endowed  
With merciful illusions whereby self  
Becomes the will itself and each man swells  
In fond accordance with his agency.  
Now Arthur, Modred, Lancelot, and Gawaine  
Are swollen thoughts of this eternal will  
Which have no other way to find the way  
That leads them on to their inheritance  
Than by the time-infuriating flame  
Of a wrecked empire, lighted by the torch  
Of woman, who, together with the light  
That Galahad found, is yet to light the world."

A wan smile crept across the weary face  
Of Dagonet the fool: "If you knew that  
Before your burial in Broceliande,  
No wonder your eternal will accords  
With all your dreams of what the world requires.  
My master, I may say this unto you  
Because I am a fool, and fear no man;  
My fear is that I've been a groping thought  
That never swelled enough. You say the torch  
Of woman and the light that Galahad found  
Are some day to illuminate the world?  
I'll meditate on that. The world is done  
For me; and I have been, to make men laugh,  
A lean thing of no shape and many capers.  
I made them laugh, and I could laugh anon  
Myself to see them killing one another  
Because a woman with corn-colored hair  
Has pranked a man with horns. 'Twas but a flash  
Of chance, and Lancelot, the other day  
That saved this pleasing sinner from the fire  
That she may spread for thousands. Were she now  
The cinder the King willed, or were you now



To see the King, the fire might yet go out;  
But the eternal will says otherwise.  
So be it; I'll assemble certain gold  
That I may say is mine and get myself  
Away from this accurst unhappy court,  
And in some quiet place where shepherd clowns  
And cowherds may have more respondent ears  
Than kings and kingdom-builders, I shall troll  
Old men to easy graves and be a child  
Again among the children of the earth.  
I'll have no more kings, even though I loved  
King Arthur, who is mad, as I could love  
No other man save Merlin, who is dead."

"Not wholly dead, but old. Merlin is old."  
The wizard shivered as he spoke, and stared  
Away into the sunset where he saw  
Once more, as through a cracked and cloudy glass,  
A crumbling sky that held a crimson cloud  
Wherein there was a town of many towers  
All swayed and shaken, in a woman's hand  
This time, till out of it there spilled and flashed  
And tumbled, like loose jewels, town, towers, and walls,  
And there was nothing but a crumbling sky  
That made anon of black and red and ruin  
A wild and final rain on Camelot.  
He bowed, and pressed his eyes: "Now by my soul,  
I have seen this before--all black and red--  
Like that--like that--like Vivian--black and red;  
Like Vivian, when her eyes looked into mine  
Across the cups of gold. A flute was playing--  
Then all was black and red."

Another smile  
Crept over the wan face of Dagonet,  
Who shivered in his turn. "The torch of woman,"  
He muttered, "and the light that Galahad found,  
Will some day save us all, as they saved Merlin.  
Forgive my shivering wits, but I am cold,  
And it will soon be dark. Will you go down



With me to see the King, or will you not?  
If not, I go tomorrow to the shepherds.  
The world is mad, and I'm a groping thought  
Of your eternal will; the world and I  
Are strangers, and I'll have no more of it--  
Except you go with me to see the King."

"No, Dagonet, you cannot leave me now,"  
Said Merlin, sadly. "You and I are old;  
And, as you say, we fear no man. God knows  
I would not have the love that once you had  
For me be fear of me, for I am past  
All fearing now. But Fate may send a fly  
Sometimes, and he may sting us to the grave,  
So driven to test our faith in what we see.  
Are you, now I am coming to an end,  
As Arthur's days are coming to an end,  
To sting me like a fly? I do not ask  
Of you to say that you see what I see,  
Where you see nothing; nor do I require  
Of any man more vision than is his;  
Yet I could wish for you a larger part  
For your last entrance here than this you play  
Tonight of a sad insect stinging Merlin.  
The more you sting, the more he pities you;  
And you were never overfond of pity.  
Had you been so, I doubt if Arthur's love,  
Or Gawaine's, would have made of you a knight.  
No, Dagonet, you cannot leave me now,  
Nor would you if you could. You call yourself  
A fool, because the world and you are strangers.  
You are a proud man, Dagonet; you have suffered  
What I alone have seen. You are no fool;  
And surely you are not a fly to sting  
My love to last regret. Believe or not  
What I have seen, or what I say to you,  
But say no more to me that I am dead  
Because the King is mad, and you are old,  
And I am older. In Broceliande  
Time overtook me as I knew he must;





And I, with a fond overplus of words,  
Had warned the lady Vivian already,  
Before these wrinkles and this hesitancy  
Inhibiting my joints oppressed her sight  
With age and dissolution. She said once  
That she was cold and cruel; but she meant  
That she was warm and kind, and over-wise  
For woman in a world where men see not  
Beyond themselves. She saw beyond them all,  
As I did; and she waited, as I did,  
The coming of a day when cherry-blossoms  
Were to fall down all over me like snow  
In springtime. I was far from Camelot  
That afternoon; and I am farther now  
From her. I see no more for me to do  
Than to leave her and Arthur and the world  
Behind me, and to pray that all be well  
With Vivian, whose unquiet heart is hungry  
For what is not, and what shall never be  
Without her, in a world that men are making,  
Knowing not how, nor caring yet to know  
How slowly and how grievously they do it,--  
Though Vivian, in her golden shell of exile,  
Knows now and cares, not knowing that she cares,  
Nor caring that she knows. In time to be,  
The like of her shall have another name  
Than Vivian, and her laugh shall be a fire,  
Not shining only to consume itself  
With what it burns. She knows not yet the name  
Of what she is, for now there is no name;  
Some day there shall be. Time has many names,  
Unwritten yet, for what we say is old  
Because we are so young that it seems old.  
And this is all a part of what I saw  
Before you saw King Arthur. When we parted,  
I told her I should see the King again,  
And, having seen him, might go back again  
To see her face once more. But I shall see  
No more the lady Vivian. Let her love  
What man she may, no other love than mine



Shall be an index of her memories.  
I fear no man who may come after me,  
And I see none. I see her, still in green,  
Beside the fountain. I shall not go back.  
We pay for going back; and all we get  
Is one more needless ounce of weary wisdom  
To bring away with us. If I come not,  
The lady Vivian will remember me,  
And say: 'I knew him when his heart was young,  
Though I have lost him now. Time called him home,  
And that was as it was; for much is lost  
Between Broceliande and Camelot.'"

He stared away into the west again,  
Where now no crimson cloud or phantom town  
Deceived his eyes. Above a living town  
There were gray clouds and ultimate suspense,  
And a cold wind was coming. Dagonet,  
Now crouched at Merlin's feet in his dejection,  
Saw multiplying lights far down below,  
Where lay the fevered streets. At length he felt  
On his lean shoulder Merlin's tragic hand  
And trembled, knowing that a few more days  
Would see the last of Arthur and the first  
Of Modred, whose dark patience had attained  
To one precarious half of what he sought:  
"And even the Queen herself may fall to him,"  
Dagonet murmured.--"The Queen fall to Modred?  
Is that your only fear tonight?" said Merlin;  
"She may, but not for long."--"No, not my fear;  
For I fear nothing. But I wish no fate  
Like that for any woman the King loves,  
Although she be the scourge and the end of him  
That you saw coming, as I see it now."  
Dagonet shook, but he would have no tears,  
He swore, for any king, queen, knave, or wizard--  
Albeit he was a stranger among those  
Who laughed at him because he was a fool.  
"You said the truth, I cannot leave you now,"  
He stammered, and was angry for the tears



That mocked his will and choked him.

Merlin smiled,  
Faintly, and for the moment: "Dagonet,  
I need your word as one of Arthur's knights  
That you will go on with me to the end  
Of my short way, and say unto no man  
Or woman that you found or saw me here.  
No good would follow, for a doubt would live  
Unstifled of my loyalty to him  
Whose deeds are wrought for those who are to come;  
And many who see not what I have seen,  
Or what you see tonight, would prattle on  
For ever, and their children after them,  
Of what might once have been had I gone down  
With you to Camelot to see the King.  
I came to see the King,--but why see kings?  
All this that was to be is what I saw  
Before there was an Arthur to be king,  
And so to be a mirror wherein men  
May see themselves, and pause. If they see not,  
Or if they do see and they ponder not,--  
I saw; but I was neither Fate nor God.  
I saw too much; and this would be the end,  
Were there to be an end. I saw myself--  
A sight no other man has ever seen;  
And through the dark that lay beyond myself  
I saw two fires that are to light the world."

On Dagonet the silent hand of Merlin  
Weighed now as living iron that held him down  
With a primeval power. Doubt, wonderment,  
Impatience, and a self-accusing sorrow  
Born of an ancient love, possessed and held him  
Until his love was more than he could name,  
And he was Merlin's fool, not Arthur's now:  
"Say what you will, I say that I'm the fool  
Of Merlin, King of Nowhere; which is Here.  
With you for king and me for court, what else  
Have we to sigh for but a place to sleep?"

I know a tavern that will take us in;  
And on the morrow I shall follow you  
Until I die for you. And when I die . . ."--  
"Well, Dagonet, the King is listening."--  
And Dagonet answered, hearing in the words  
Of Merlin a grave humor and a sound  
Of graver pity, "I shall die a fool."  
He heard what might have been a father's laugh,  
Faintly behind him; and the living weight  
Of Merlin's hand was lifted. They arose,  
And, saying nothing, found a groping way  
Down through the gloom together. Fiercer now,  
The wind was like a flying animal  
That beat the two of them incessantly  
With icy wings, and bit them as they went.  
The rock above them was an empty place  
Where neither seer nor fool should view again  
The stricken city. Colder blew the wind  
Across the world, and on it heavier lay  
The shadow and the burden of the night;  
And there was darkness over Camelot.

## **GOD'S GRAAL, BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI [1911]**

The ark of the Lord of Hosts  
Whose name is called by the name of Him  
Who dwelleth between the Cherubim.

O Thou that in no house dost dwell,  
But walk'st in tent and tabernacle.

For God of all strokes will have one  
In every battle that is done.

Lancelot lay beside the well:  
(God's Graal is good)  
Oh my soul is sad to tell  
The weary quest and the bitter quell;  
For he was the lord of lordlihood  
And sleep on his eyelids fell.

Lancelot lay before the shrine;  
(The apple tree's in the wood)  
There was set Christ's very sign,  
The bread unknown and the unknown wine  
That the soul's life for a livelihood  
Craves from his wheat and vine.

# THE BIRTH OF MERLIN; OR, THE CHILDE HATH FOUND HIS FATHER, BY WILLIAM ROWLEY [1662]

## DRAMMATIC PERSONAE

AURELIUS, KING OF BRITAIN  
VORTIGER, KING OF (WELSH) BRITAIN  
UTER PENDRAGON THE PRINCE, BROTHER TO AURELIUS  
DONOBERT, A NOBLEMAN, AND FATHER TO CONSTANTIA AND MODESTIA  
THE EARL OF GLOSTER, AND FATHER TO EDWIN  
EDOL, EARL OF CHESTER, AND GENERAL TO KING AURELIUS  
CADOR, EARL OF CORNWAL, AND SUITOR TO CONSTANTIA  
EDWIN, SON TO THE EARL OF GLOSTER, AND SUITOR TO MODESTIA  
TOCLIO AND OSWOLD, TWO NOBLEMEN  
MERLIN THE PROPHET  
ANSELME THE HERMIT, AFTER BISHOP OF WINCHESTER  
CLOWN, BROTHER TO JOAN, MOTHER OF MERLIN  
SIR NICHODEMUS NOTHING, A COURTIER  
THE DEVIL, FATHER OF MERLIN  
OSTORIUS, THE SAXON GENERAL  
OCTA, A SAXON NOBLEMAN  
PROXIMUS, A SAXON MAGICIAN  
TWO BISHOPS  
TWO SAXON LORDS  
TWO OF EDOLS CAPTAINS  
TWO GENTLEMEN  
A LITTLE ANTICK SPIRIT  
ARTESIA, SISTER TO OSTORIUS THE SAXON GENERAL  
CONSTANTIA AND MODESTIA, DAUGHTERS TO DONOBERT  
JOAN GOE-TOO'T, MOTHER OF MERLIN  
A WAITING-WOMAN TO ARTESIA  
LUCINA, QUEEN OF THE SHADES

**THE SCENE: Brittain**

**ACT I.**

## SCENE I.

CADOR. You teach me language, sir, as one that knows  
The debt of love I owe unto her vertues;  
Wherein like a true courtier I have fed  
My self with hope of fair success, and now  
Attend your wisht consent to my long suit.

DONOBERT. Believe me, youthful lord,  
Time could not give an opportunity  
More fitting your desires, always provided,  
My daughters love be suited with my grant.

CADOR. 'Tis the condition, sir, her promise seal'd.

DONOBERT. Ist so, Constantia?

CONSTANTIA. I was content to give him words for oathes;  
He swore so oft he lov'd me--

DONOBERT. That thou believest him?

CONSTANTIA. He is a man, I hope.

DONOBERT. That's in the trial, girl.

CONSTANTIA. However, I am a woman, sir.

DONOBERT. The law's on thy side then: sha't have a husband,  
I, and a worthy one. Take her, brave Cornwall,  
And make our happiness great as our wishes.

CADOR. Sir, I thank you.

GLOSTER. Double the fortunes of the day, my lord,  
And crown my wishes too: I have a son here,  
Who in my absence would protest no less  
Unto your other daughter.

DONOBERT. Ha, Gloster, is it so? what says Lord Edwin?  
Will she protest as much to thee?

EDWIN. Else must she want some of her sisters faith, sir.

MODESTIA. Of her credulity much rather, sir:  
My lord, you are a soldier, and methinks  
The height of that profession should diminish  
All heat of loves desires,  
Being so late employ'd in blood and ruine.

EDWIN. The more my conscience tyes me to repair  
The worlds losses in a new succession.

MODESTIA. Necessity, it seems, ties your affections then,  
And at that rate I would unwillingly

Be thrust upon you; a wife is a dish soon cloy, sir.

EDWIN. Weak and diseased appetites it may.

MODESTIA. Most of your making have dull stomachs, sir.

DONOBERT. If that be all, girl, thou shalt quicken him;

Be kinde to him, Modestia: Noble Edwin,

Let it suffice, what's mine in her speaks yours;

For her consent, let your fair suit go on,

She is a woman, sir, and will be won.

EDWIN. You give me comfort, sir.

Enter Toclio .

DONOBERT. Now, Toclio?

TOCLIO. The king, my honor'd lords, requires your presence,

And calls a council for return of answer

Unto the parling enemy, whose ambassadors

Are on the way to court.

DONOBERT. So suddenly?

Chester, it seems, has ply'd them hard at war,

They sue so fast for peace, which by my advice

They ne're shall have, unless they leave the realm.

Come, noble Gloster, let's attend the king.

It lies, sir, in your son to do me pleasure,

And save the charges of a wedding dinner;

If you'll make haste to end your love affairs,

One cost may give discharge to both my cares.

Exit Donobert, Gloster .

EDWIN. I'll do my best.

CADOR. Now, Toclio, what stirring news at court?

TOCLIO. Oh, my lord, the court's all fill'd with rumor, the city with news,

and the country with wonder, and all the bells i'th' kingdom must proclaim

it, we have a new holy-day a coming.

CONSTANTIA. A holy-day! for whom? for thee?

TOCLIO. Me, madam! 'sfoot! I'de be loath that any man Should make a holy-day for me yet:

In brief, 'tis thus: there's here arriv'd at court,

Sent by the Earl of Chester to the king,

A man of rare esteem for holyness,

A reverent hermit, that by miracle



Not onely saved our army,  
 But without aid of man o'rethrew  
 The pagan host, and with such wonder, sir,  
 As might confirm a kingdom to his faith.

EDWIN. This is strange news, indeed; where is he?

TOCLIO. In conference with the king, that much respects him.

MODESTIA. Trust me, I long to see him.

TOCLIO. Faith, you will finde no great pleasure in him, for ought that I can see, lady. They say he is half a prophet too: would he could tell me any news of the lost prince; there's twenty talents offer'd to him that finds him.

CADOR. Such news was breeding in the morning.

TOCLIO. And now it has birth and life, sir. If fortune bless me, I'll once more search those woods where then we lost him; I know not yet what fate may follow me. [ Exit .

CADOR. Fortune go with you, sir. Come, fair mistriss,  
 Your sister and Lord Edwin are in game,  
 And all their wits at stake to win the set.

CONSTANTIA. My sister has the hand yet; we had best leave them:

She will be out anon as well as I;  
 He wants but cunning to put in a dye.

Exit Cador, Constantia .

EDWIN. You are a cunning gamester, madam.

MODESTIA. It is a desperate game, indeed, this marriage,  
 Where there's no winning without loss to either.

EDWIN. Why, what but your perfection, noble lady,  
 Can bar the worthiness of this my suit?

If so you please I count my happiness  
 From difficult obtaining, you shall see  
 My duty and observance.

MODESTIA. There shall be place to neither, noble sir;

I do beseech you, let this mild reply  
 Give answer to your suit: for here I vow,  
 If e're I change my virgin name, by you  
 It gains or looses.

EDWIN. My wishes have their crown.

MODESTIA. Let them confine you then,  
 As to my promise you give faith and credence.

EDWIN. In your command my willing absence speaks it. [ Exit .

MODESTIA. Noble and vertuous: could I dream of marriage,  
I should affect thee, Edwin. Oh, my soul,  
Here's something tells me that these best of creatures,  
These models of the world, weak man and woman,  
Should have their souls, their making, life, and being,  
To some more excellent use: if what the sense  
Calls pleasure were our ends, we might justly blame  
Great natures wisdom, who rear'd a building  
Of so much art and beauty to entertain  
A guest so far uncertain, so imperfect:  
If onely speech distinguish us from beasts,  
Who know no inequality of birth or place,  
But still to fly from goodness: oh, how base  
Were life at such a rate! No, no, that power  
That gave to man his being, speech and wisdom,  
Gave it for thankfulness. To him alone  
That made me thus, may I whence truly know,  
I'll pay to him, not man, the love I owe. [ Exit .

## SCENE II.

Flourish cornets. Enter Aurelius King of Brittain, Donobert, Gloster, Cadon,  
Edwin, Toclio, Oswald, and Attendants .

AURELIUS. No tiding of our brother yet? 'Tis strange,  
So ne're the court, and in our own land too,  
And yet no news of him: oh, this loss  
Tempers the sweetness of our happy conquests  
With much untimely sorrow.

DONOBERT. Royal sir,  
His safety being unquestion'd should to time  
Leave the redress of sorrow: were he dead,  
Or taken by the foe, our fatal loss  
Had wanted no quick herald to disclose it.

AURELIUS. That hope alone sustains me,  
Nor will we be so ingrateful unto heaven  
To question what we fear with what we enjoy.  
Is answer of our message yet return'd  
From that religious man, the holy hermit,  
Sent by the Earl of Chester to confirm us

In that miraculous act? For 'twas no less:  
 Our army being in rout, nay, quite o'rethrown,  
 As Chester writes, even then this holy man,  
 Arm'd with his cross and staff, went smiling on,  
 And boldly fronts the foe; at sight of whom  
 The Saxons stood amaz'd: for, to their seeming,  
 Above the hermit's head appear'd such brightness,  
 Such clear and glorious beams, as if our men  
 March't all in fire; wherewith the pagans fled,  
 And by our troops were all to death pursu'd.

GLOSTER. 'Tis full of wonder, sir.

Oh, Gloster, he's a jewel worth a kingdom.

Where's Oswald with his answer?

OSWOLD. 'Tis here, my royal lord.

AURELIUS. In writing? will he not sit with us?

OSWOLD. His orizons perform'd, he bad me say,  
 He would attend with all submission.

AURELIUS. Proceed to council then; and let some give order,  
 The ambassadors being come to take our answer,  
 They have admittance. Oswald, Toclio,  
 Be it your charge!-- [ Exeunt Oswald and Toclio .  
 And now, my lords, observe  
 The holy council of this reverend hermit:

[ Reads .] As you respect your safety, limit not  
 That onely power that hath protected you;  
 Trust not an open enemy too far,  
 He's yet a looser, and knows you have won;  
 Mischiefs not ended are but then begun .  
 Anselme the Hermit .

DONOBERT. Powerful and pithie, which my advice confirms:  
 No man leaves physick when his sickness slakes,  
 But doubles the receipts: the word of peace  
 Seems fair to blood-shot eyes, but being appli'd  
 With such a medicine as blinds all the sight  
 Argues desire of cure, but not of art.

AURELIUS. You argue from defects; if both the name  
 And the condition of the peace be one,  
 It is to be prefer'd, and in the offer,

Made by the Saxon, I see nought repugnant.  
GLOSTER. The time of truce requir'd for thirty days  
Carries suspicion in it, since half that space  
Will serve to strength their weakned regiment.  
CADOR. Who in less time will undertake to free  
Our country from them?  
EDWIN. Leave that unto our fortune.  
DONOBERT. Is not our bold and hopeful general  
Still master of the field, their legions faln,  
The rest intrencht for fear, half starv'd, and wounded,  
And shall we now give o're our fair advantage?  
'Fore heaven, my lord, the danger is far more  
In trusting to their words then to their weapons.

Enter Oswold .

OSWOLD. The ambassadors are come, sir.  
AURELIUS. Conduct them in.  
We are resolv'd, my lords, since policy fail'd  
In the beginning, it shall have no hand  
In the conclusion.  
That heavenly power that hath so well begun  
Their fatal overthrow, I know, can end it:  
From which fair hope my self will give them answer.

Flourish cornets . Enter Artesia with the Saxon lords .

DONOBERT. What's here? a woman orator?  
AURELIUS. Peace, Donobert!--Speak, what are you, lady?  
ARTESIA. The sister of the Saxon general,  
Warlike Ostorius the East Anglese king;  
My name Artesia, who in terms of love  
Brings peace and health to great Aurelius,  
Wishing she may return as fair a present  
As she makes tender of.  
AURELIUS. The fairest present e're mine eyes were blest with!--  
Command a chair there for this Saxon beauty:--  
Sit, lady, we'l confer: your warlike brother  
Sues for a peace, you say?  
ARTESIA. With endless love unto your state and person.

AURELIUS. Ha's sent a moving orator, believe me.--  
What thinkst thou, Donobert?

DONOBERT. Believe me, sir, were I but yong agen,  
This gilded pill might take my stomack quickly.

AURELIUS. True, thou art old: how soon we do forget  
Our own defects! Fair damsel,--oh, my tongue  
Turns traitor, and will betray my heart--sister to  
Our enemy:--'sdeath, her beauty mazes me,  
I cannot speak if I but look on her.--  
What's that we did conclude?

DONOBERT. This, royal lord--

AURELIUS. Pish, thou canst not utter it:--  
Fair'st of creatures, tell the king your brother,  
That we, in love--ha!--and honor to our country,  
Command his armies to depart our realm.  
But if you please, fair soul--Lord Donobert,  
Deliver you our pleasure.

DONOBERT. I shall, sir:

Lady, return, and certifie your brother--

AURELIUS. Thou art too blunt and rude! return so soon?  
Fie, let her stay, and send some messenger  
To certifie our pleasure.

DONOBERT. What meanes your grace?

AURELIUS. To give her time of rest to her long journey;  
We would not willingly be thought uncivil.

ARTESIA. Great King of Brittain, let it not seem strange,  
To embrace the princely offers of a friend,  
Whose vertues with thine own, in fairest merit,  
Both states in peace and love may now inherit.

AURELIUS. She speakes of love agen:

Sure, 'tis my fear, she knows I do not hate her.

ARTESIA. Be, then, thy self, most great Aurelius,  
And let not envy nor a deeper sin

In these thy councillors deprive thy goodness  
Of that fair honor we in seeking peace

Give first to thee, who never use to sue

But force our wishes. Yet, if this seem light,

Oh, let my sex, though worthless your respect,

Take the report of thy humanity,

Whose mild and vertuous life loud fame displayes,

As being o'recome by one so worthy praise.

AURELIUS. She has an angels tongue.--Speak still.

DONOBERT. This flattery is gross, sir; hear no more on't.--

Lady, these childish complements are needless;

You have your answer, and believe it, madam,

His grace, though yong, doth wear within his breast

Too grave a counsellor to be seduc't

By smoothing flattery or oylly words.

ARTESIA. I come not, sir, to wooe him.

DONOBERT. 'Twere folly, if you should; you must not wed him.

AURELIUS. Shame take thy tongue! Being old and weak thy self,

Thou doat'st, and looking on thine own defects,

Speak'st what thou'dst wish in me. Do I command

The deeds of others, mine own act not free?

Be pleas'd to smile or frown, we respect neither:

My will and rule shall stand and fall together.

Most fair Artesia, see the king descends

To give thee welcome with these warlike Saxons,

And now on equal terms both sues and grants:

Instead of truce, let a perpetual league

Seal our united bloods in holy marriage;

Send the East Angles king this happy news,

That thou with me hast made a league for ever,

And added to his state a friend and brother.

Speak, dearest love, dare you confirm this title?

ARTESIA. I were no woman to deny a good

So high and noble to my fame and country.

AURELIUS. Live, then, a queen in Brittain.

GLOSTER. He meanes to marry her.

DONOBERT. Death! he shall marry the devil first!

Marry a pagan, an idolater?

CADOR. He has won her quickly.

EDWIN. She was woo'd afore she came, sure,

Or came of purpose to conclude the match.

AURELIUS. Who dares oppose our will? My Lord of Gloster,

Be you ambassador unto our brother,

The brother of our queen Artesia;

Tell him for such our entertainment looks him,

Our marriage adding to the happiness

Of our intended joys; mans good or ill

In this like waves agree, come double still.

Enter Hermit .

Who's this? the hermit? Welcome, my happiness!

Our countries hope, most reverent holy man,

I wanted but thy blessing to make perfect

The infinite sum of my felicity.

HERMIT. Alack, sweet prince, that happiness is yonder,

Felicity and thou art far asunder;

This world can never give it.

AURELIUS. Thou art deceiv'd: see here what I have found,

Beauty, alliance, peace, and strength of friends,

All in this all exceeding excellence:

The league's confirm'd.

HERMIT. With whom, dear lord?

AURELIUS. With the great brother of this beauteous woman,

The royal Saxon king.

HERMIT. Oh, then I see,

And fear thou art too near thy misery.

What magick could so linck thee to this mischief?

By all the good that thou hast reapt by me,

Stand further from destruction.

AURELIUS. Speak as a man, and I shall hope to obey thee.

HERMIT. Idolaters, get hence! fond king, let go:

Thou hug'st thy ruine and thy countries woe.

DONOBERT. Well spoke, old father; too him, bait him soundly.

Now, by heavens blest Lady, I can scarce keep patience.

1. SAXON LORD. What devil is this?

2. SAXON LORD. That cursed Christian, by whose hellish charmes

Our army was o'rethrown.

HERMIT. Why do you dally, sir? Oh, tempt not heaven;

Warm not a serpent in your naked bosom:

Discharge them from your court.

AURELIUS. Thou speak'st like madness!

Command the frozen shepherd to the shade,

When he sits warm i'th' sun; the fever sick

To add more heat unto his burning pain:

These may obey, 'tis less extremity

Then thou enjoynst to me. Cast but thine eye

Upon this beauty, do it, I'll forgive thee,  
Though jealousy in others findes no pardon;  
Then say thou dost not love; I shall then swear  
Th'art immortal and no earthly man.

Oh, blame then my mortality, not me.

HERMIT. It is thy weakness brings thy misery,  
Unhappy prince.

AURELIUS. Be milder in thy doom.

HERMIT. 'Tis you that must indure heavens doom, which faln  
Remember's just.

ARTESIA. Thou shalt not live to see it.--How fares my lord?

If my poor presence breed dislike, great prince,  
I am no such neglected soul, will seek  
To tie you to your word.

AURELIUS. My word, dear love! may my religion,  
Crown, state, and kingdom fail, when I fail thee.  
Command Earl Chester to break up the camp  
Without disturbance to our Saxon friends;  
Send every hour swift posts to hasten on  
The king her brother, to conclude this league,  
This endless happy peace of love and marriage;  
Till when provide for revels, and give charge  
That nought be wanting which make our triumphs  
Sportful and free to all. If such fair blood  
Ingender ill, man must not look for good.  
Exit all but Hermit . Florish .

Enter Modestia, reading in a book .

MODESTIA. How much the oft report of this blest hermit  
Hath won on my desires; I must behold him:  
And sure this should be he. Oh, the world's folly,  
Proud earth and dust, how low a price bears goodness!  
All that should make man absolute shines in him.

Much reverent sir, may I without offence  
Give interruption to your holy thoughts?

HERMIT. What would you, lady?

MODESTIA. That which till now ne're found a language in me:  
I am in love.

HERMIT. In love? with what?



MODESTIA. With vertue.

HERMIT. There's no blame in that.

MODESTIA. Nay, sir, with you, with your religious life,

Your vertue, goodness, if there be a name

To express affection greater, that,

That would I learn and utter: reverent sir,

If there be any thing to bar my suit,

Be charitable and expose it; your prayers

Are the same orizons which I will number.

Holy sir,

Keep not instruction back from willingness,

Possess me of that knowledge leads you on

To this humility; for well I know,

Were greatness good, you would not live so low.

HERMIT. Are you a virgin?

MODESTIA. Yes, sir.

HERMIT. Your name?

MODESTIA. Modestia.

HERMIT. Your name and vertues meet, a modest virgin:

Live ever in the sanctimonious way

To heaven and happiness. There's goodness in you,

I must instruct you further. Come, look up,

Behold yon firmament: there sits a power,

Whose foot-stool is this earth. Oh, learn this lesson,

And practise it: he that will climb so high,

Must leave no joy beneath to move his eye. [ Exit .

MODESTIA. I apprehend you, sir: on heaven I fix my love,

Earth gives us grief, our joys are all above;

For this was man in innocence naked born,

To show us wealth hinders our sweet return. [ Exit .

## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

Enter Clown and his sister great with childe .

CLOWN. Away, follow me no further, I am none of thy brother. What, with childe? great with childe, and knows not whose the father on't! I am asham'd to call thee sister.

JOAN. Believe me, brother, he was a gentleman.

CLOWN. Nay, I believe that; he gives arms, and legs too, and has made you the herald to blaze 'em: but, Joan, Joan, sister Joan, can you tell me his name that did it? how shall we call my cousin, your bastard, when we have it?

JOAN. Alas, I know not the gentlemans name, brother.

I met him in these woods the last great hunting;

He was so kinde and proffer'd me so much,

As I had not the heart to ask him more.

CLOWN. Not his name? why, this shoves your country breeding now; had you been brought up i'th' city, you'd have got a father first, and the childe afterwards: hast thou no markes to know him by?

JOAN. He had a most rich attire, a fair hat and feather, a gilt sword, and most excellent hangers.

CLOWN. Pox on his hangers, would he had bin gelt for his labor.

JOAN. Had you but heard him swear, you would have thought--

CLOWN. I, as you did; swearing and lying goes together still. Did his oathes get you with childe? we shall have a roaring boy then, yfaith. Well, sister, I must leave you.

JOAN. Dear brother, stay, help me to finde him out,

I'll ask no further.

CLOWN. 'Sfoot, who should I finde? who should I ask for?

JOAN. Alas, I know not, he uses in these woods,

And these are witness of his oathes and promise.

CLOWN. We are like to have a hot suit on't, when our best witness's but a knight a'th' post.

JOAN. Do but enquire this forrest, I'll go with you;

Some happy fate may guide us till we meet him.

CLOWN. Meet him? and what name shall we have for him, when we meet him? 'Sfoot, thou neither knowst him nor canst tell what to call him. Was ever man tyr'd with such a business, to have a sister got with childe, and know not who did it? Well, you shall see him, I'll do my best for you, Ile make proclamation; if these woods and trees, as you say, will bear any witness, let them answer. Oh yes: If there be any man that wants a name will come in for conscience sake, and acknowledge himself to be a whore-master, he shal have that laid to his charge in an hour, he shall not be rid

on in an age; if he have lands, he shall have an heir; if he have patience, he shall have a wife; if he have neither lands nor patience, he shall have a whore. So ho, boy, so ho, so, so, so.

[ Within .] PRINCE UTER. So ho, boy, so ho, illo ho, illo ho.

CLOWN. Hark, hark, sister, there's one hollows to us; what a wicked world's this! a man cannot so soon name a whore, but a knave comes presently: and see where he is; stand close a while, sister.

Enter Prince Uter .

PRINCE. How like a voice that Eccho spake, but oh,  
My thoughts are lost for ever in amazement.

Could I but meet a man to tell her beauties,  
These trees would bend their tops to kiss the air  
That from my lips should give her praises up.

CLOWN. He talks of a woman, sister.

JOAN. This may be he, brother.

CLOWN. View him well; you see, he has a fair sword, but his hangers are faln.

PRINCE. Here did I see her first, here view her beauty:  
Oh, had I known her name, I had been happy.

CLOWN. Sister, this is he, sure; he knows not thy name neither. A couple of wise fools yfaith, to get children, and know not one another.

PRINCE. You weeping leaves, upon whose tender cheeks  
Doth stand a flood of tears at my complaint,  
Who heard my vows and oathes--

CLOWN. Law, Law, he has been a great swearer too; tis he, sister.

PRINCE. For having overtook her;  
As I have seen a forward blood-hound strip  
The swifter of the cry, ready to seize  
His wished hopes, upon the sudden view,  
Struck with astonishment, at his arriv'd prey,  
Instead of seizure stands at fearful bay;  
Or like to Marius soldiers, who, o'retook,  
The eye sight killing Gorgon at one look  
Made everlasting stand: so fear'd my power,  
Whose cloud aspir'd the sun, dissolv'd a shower.  
Pigmalion, then I tasted thy sad fate,

Whose ivory picture and my fair were one:  
Our dotage past imagination.

I saw and felt desire--

CLOWN. Pox a your fingering! did he feel, sister?

PRINCE. But enjoy'd not.

Oh fate, thou hadst thy days and nights to feed  
On calm affection; one poor sight was all,  
Converts my pleasure to perpetual thrall:  
Imbracing thine, thou lostest breath and desire,  
So I, relating mine, will here expire.

For here I vow to you mournful plants,  
Who were the first made happy by her fame,  
Never to part hence, till I know her name.

CLOWN. Give me thy hand, sister, the childe has found his father . This is he, sure; as I am a man, had I been a woman, these kinde words would have won me, I should have had a great belly too, that's certain. Well, I'll speak to him.--Most honest and fleshly minded gentleman, give me your hand, sir.

PRINCE. Ha, what art thou, that thus rude and boldly darest  
Take notice of a wretch so much ally'd  
To misery as I am?

CLOWN. Nay, sir, for our aliance, I shall be found to be a poor brother in law of your worships: the gentlewoman you spake on is my sister: you see what a clew she spreads; her name is Joan Go-too't. I am her elder, but she has been at it before me; 'tis a womans fault.--Pox a this bashfulness! come forward, jug, prethee, speak to him.

PRINCE. Have you e're seen me, lady?

CLOWN. Seen ye? ha, ha! It seems she has felt you too: here's a yong Go-too't a coming, sir; she is my sister; we all love to Go-too't, as well as your worship. She's a maid yet, but you may make her a wife, when you please, sir.

PRINCE. I am amaz'd with wonder: tell me, woman,  
What sin have you committed worthy this?

JOAN. Do you not know me, sir?

PRINCE. Know thee! as I do thunder, hell, and mischief;  
Witch, scullion, hag!

CLOWN. I see he will marry her; he speaks so like a husband.

PRINCE. Death! I will cut their tongues out for this blasphemy.

Strumpet, villain, where have you ever seen me?

CLOWN. Speak for your self, with a pox to ye.

PRINCE. Slaves, Ile make you curse your selves for this temptation.

JOAN. Oh, sir, if ever you did speak to me,

It was in smoother phrase, in fairer language.

PRINCE. Lightning consume me, if I ever saw thee.

My rage o'reflowes my blood, all patience flies me. [ Beats her .

CLOWN. Hold, I beseech you, sir, I have nothing to say to you.

JOAN. Help, help! murder, murder!

Enter Toclio and Oswald .

TOCLIO. Make haste, sir, this way the sound came, it was a wood.

OSWOLD. See where she is, and the prince, the price of all our wishes.

CLOWN. The prince, say ye? ha's made a poor subject of me, I am sure.

TOCLIO. Sweet prince, noble Uter, speak, how fare you, sir?

OSWOLD. Dear sir, recal your self; your fearful absence

Hath won too much already on the grief

Of our sad king, from whom our laboring search

Hath had this fair success in meeting you.

TOCLIO. His silence and his looks argue distraction.

CLOWN. Nay, he's mad, sure, he will not acknowledge my sister, nor the childe neither.

OSWOLD. Let us entreat your grace along with us;

Your sight will bring new life to the king your brother.

TOCLIO. Will you go, sir?

PRINCE. Yes, any whether; guide me, all's hell I see;

Man may change air, but not his misery. [ Exit Prince, Toclio .

JOAN. Lend me one word with you, sir.

CLOWN. Well said, sister, he has a feather, and fair hangers too, this may be he.

OSWOLD. What would you, fair one?

JOAN. Sure, I have seen you in these woods e're this.

OSWOLD. Trust me, never; I never saw this place,

Till at this time my friend conducted me.

JOAN. The more's my sorrow then.

OSWOLD. Would I could comfort you.

I am a bachelor, but it seems you have

A husband, you have been foully o'reshot else.

CLOWN. A womans fault, we are all subject to go to't, sir.

Enter Toclio .

TOCLIO. Oswald, away; the prince will not stir a foot without you.

OSWOLD. I am coming. Farewel, woman.

TOCLIO. Prithee, make haste. [ Exit Oswald .

JOAN. Good sir, but one word with you, e're you leave us.

TOCLIO. With me, fair soul?

CLOWN. Shee'l have a fling at him too; the childe must have a father.

JOAN. Have you ne'er seen me, sir?

TOCLIO. Seen thee? 'Sfoot, I have seen many fair faces in my time: prithee, look up, and do not weep so. Sure, pretty wanton, I have seen this face before.

JOAN. It is enough, though you ne're see me more. [ Sinks down .

TOCLIO. 'Sfoot, she's faln: this place is enchanted, sure; look to the woman, fellow. [ Exit .

CLOWN. Oh, she's dead, she's dead! As you are a man, stay and help, sir.-- Joan, Joan, sister Joan, why, Joan Go-too't, I say; will you cast away your self, and your childe, and me too? what do you mean, sister?

JOAN. Oh, give me pardon, sir; 'twas too much joy

Opprest my loving thoughts; I know you were

Too noble to deny me--ha! Where is he?

CLOWN. Who, the gentleman? he's gone, sister.

JOAN. Oh! I am undone, then! Run, tell him I did

But faint for joy; dear brother, haste; why dost thou stay?

Oh, never cease, till he give answer to thee.

CLOWN. He: which he? what do you call him, tro?

JOAN. Unnatural brother,

Shew me the path he took; why dost thou dally?

Speak, oh, which way went he?

CLOWN. This way, that way, through the bushes there.

JOAN. Were it through fire,

The journey's easie, winged with sweet desire. [ Exit .

CLOWN. Hey day, there's some hope of this yet. Ile follow her for kindreds sake; if she miss of her purpose now, she'l challenge all she findes, I see; for if ever we meet with a two-leg'd creature in the whole kingdom, the childe shall have a father, that's certain. [ Exit .

## SCENE II.

Loud musick. Enter two with the sword and mace, Cador, Edwin, two Bishops, Aurelius, Ostorius, leading Artesia crown'd, Constancia, Modestia, Octa, Proximus a Magician, Donobert, Gloster, Oswald, Toclio; all pass over the stage. Manet Donobert, Gloster, Edwin, Cador .

DONOBERT. Come, Gloster, I do not like this hasty marriage.

GLOSTER. She was quickly wooed and won: not six days since Arrived an enemy to sue for peace, And now crown'd Queen of Brittain; this is strange.

DONOBERT. Her brother too made as quick speed in coming, Leaving his Saxons and his starved troops, To take the advantage, whilst 'twas offer'd. 'Fore heaven I fear the king's too credulous; Our Army is discharg'd too.

GLOSTER. Yes, and our general commanded home. Son Edwin, have you seen him since?

EDWIN. He's come to court, but will not view the presence, Nor speak unto the king; he's so discontent At this so strange aliance with the Saxon, As nothing can perswade his patience.

CADOR. You know his humor will indure no check, No, if the king oppose it: All crosses feeds both his spleen and his impatience; Those affections are in him like powder, Apt to inflame with every little spark, And blow up all his reason.

GLOSTER. Edol of Chester is a noble soldier.

DONOBERT. So is he, by the Rood, ever most faithful To the king and kingdom, how e're his passions guide him.

Enter Edol with Captains .

CADOR. See where he comes, my lord.

OMNES. Welcome to court, brave earl.

EDOL. Do not deceive me by your flatteries: Is not the Saxon here? the league confirm'd? The marriage ratifi'd? the court divided

With pagan infidels, the least part Christians,  
At least in their commands? Oh, the gods!  
It is a thought that takes away my sleep,  
And dulls my senses so I scarcely know you:  
Prepare my horses, Ile away to Chester.

CAPTAIN. What shall we do with our companies, my lord?

EDOL. Keep them at home to increase cuckolds,  
And get some cases for your captainships;  
Smooth up your brows, the wars has spoil'd your faces,  
And few will now regard you.

DONOBERT. Preserve your patience, sir.

EDOL. Preserve your honors, lords, your countries safety,  
Your lives and lands from strangers. What black devil  
Could so bewitch the king, so to discharge  
A royal army in the height of conquest,  
Nay, even already made victorious,  
To give such credit to an enemy,  
A starved foe, a stragling fugitive,  
Beaten beneath our feet, so low dejected,  
So servile, and so base, as hope of life  
Had won them all to leave the land for ever?

DONOBERT. It was the kings will.

EDOL. It was your want of wisdom,  
that should have laid before his tender youth  
The dangers of a state, where forain powers  
Bandy for sovereignty with lawful kings;  
Who being settled once, to assure themselves,  
Will never fail to seek the blood and life  
Of all competitors.

DONOBERT. Your words sound well, my lord, and point at safety,  
Both for the realm and us; but why did you,  
Within whose power it lay, as general,  
With full commission to dispose the war,  
Lend ear to parly with the weakned foe?

EDOL. Oh the good gods!

CADOR. And on that parly came this embassie.

EDOL. You will hear me?

EDWIN. Your letters did declare it to the king,  
Both of the peace, and all conditions  
Brought by this Saxon lady, whose fond love



Has thus bewitched him.

EDOL. I will curse you all as black as hell,  
Unless you hear me; your gross mistake would make  
Wisdom her self run madding through the streets,  
And quarrel with her shadow. Death!  
Why kill'd ye not that woman?

DONOBERT. GLOSTER. Oh, my lord!

EDOL. The great devil take me quick, had I been by,  
And all the women of the world were barren,  
She should have died, e're he had married her  
On these conditions.

CADOR. It is not reason that directs you thus.

EDOL. Then have I none, for all I have directs me.  
Never was man so palpably abus'd,  
So basely marted, bought and sold to scorn.  
My honor, fame, and hopeful victories,  
The loss of time, expences, blood, and fortunes,  
All vanisht into nothing.

EDWIN. This rage is vain, my lord:

What the king does nor they nor you can help.

EDOL. My sword must fail me then.

CADOR. 'Gainst whom will you expose it?

EDOL. What's that to you? 'gainst all the devils in hell,  
To guard my country.

EDWIN. These are airy words.

EDOL. Sir, you tread too hard upon my patience.

EDWIN. I speak the duty of a subjects faith,  
And say agen, had you been here in presence,  
What the king did, you had not dar'd to cross it.

EDOL. I will trample on his life and soul that says it.

CADOR. My lord!

EDWIN. Come, come.

EDOL. Now, before heaven--

CADOR. Dear sir!

EDOL. Not dare? thou liest beneath thy lungs.

GLOSTER. No more, son Edwin.

EDWIN. I have done, sir; I take my leave.

EDOL. But thou shalt not, you shall take no leave of me, sir.

DONOBERT. For wisdoms sake, my lord--

EDOL. Sir, I'll leave him, and you, and all of you,

The court and king, and let my sword and friends  
Shuffle for Edols safety: stay you here,  
And hug the Saxons, till they cut your throats,  
Or bring the land to servile slavery.  
Such yokes of baseness Chester must not suffer.  
Go, and repent betimes these foul misdeeds,  
For in this league all our whole kingdom bleeds,  
Which Ile prevent, or perish. [ Exit Edol, Captains .  
GLOSTER. See how his rage transports him!  
CADOR. These passions set apart, a braver soldier  
Breathes not i'th' world this day.  
DONOBERT. I wish his own worth do not court his ruine.  
The king must rule, and we must learn to obey,  
True vertue still directs the noble way.

### SCENE III.

Loud musick. Enter Aurelius, Artesia, Ostorius, Octa, Proximus, Toclio,  
Oswold, Hermit .

AURELIUS. Why is the court so dull? me thinks, each room  
And angle of our palace should appear  
Stuck full of objects fit for mirth and triumphs,  
To show our high content. Oswold, fill wine!  
Must we begin the revels? Be it so, then!  
Reach me the cup: Ile now begin a health  
To our lov'd queen, the bright Artesia,  
The royal Saxon king, our warlike brother.  
Go and command all the whole court to pledge it.  
Fill to the hermit there! Most reverent Anselme,  
Wee'l do thee honor first, to pledge my queen.  
HERMIT. I drink no healths, great king, and if I did,  
I would be loath to part with health to those  
That have no power to give it back agen.  
AURELIUS. Mistake not, it is the argument of love  
And duty to our queen and us.  
ARTESIA. But he owes none, it seems.  
HERMIT. I do to vertue, madam: temperate minds  
Covets that health to drink, which nature gives  
In every spring to man; he that doth hold

His body but a tenement at will,  
Bestows no cost, but to repair what's ill:  
Yet if your healths or heat of wine, fair princes,  
Could this old frame or these cras'd limbes restore,  
Or keep out death or sickness, then fill more,  
I'll make fresh way for appetite; if no,  
On such a prodigal who would wealth bestow?  
OSTORIUS. He speaks not like a guest to grace a wedding.

Enter Toclio .

ARTESIA. No, sir, but like an envious imposter.  
OCTA. A Christian slave, a cinick.  
OSTORIUS. What vertue could decline your kingly spirit  
To such respect of him whose magick spells  
Met with your vanquisht troops, and turn'd your arms  
To that necessity of fight, which, thro dispair  
Of any hope to stand but by his charms,  
Had been defeated in a bloody conquest?  
OCTA. 'Twas magick, hellbred magick did it, sir,  
And that's a course, my lord, which we esteem  
In all our Saxon wars unto the last  
And lowest ebbe of servile treachery.  
AURELIUS. Sure, you are deceiv'd, it was the hand of heaven  
That in his vertue gave us victory.  
Is there a power in man that can strike fear  
Thorough a general camp, or create spirits  
In recreant bosoms above present sense?  
OSTORIUS. To blind the sense there may, with apparition  
Of well arm'd troops within themselves are air,  
Form'd into humane shapes, and such that day  
Were by that sorcerer rais'd to cross our fortunes.  
AURELIUS. There is a law tells us that words want force  
To make deeds void; examples must be shown  
By instances alike, e're I believe it.  
OSTORIUS. 'Tis easily perform'd, believe me, sir:  
Propose your own desires, and give but way  
To what our magick here shall straight perform,  
And then let his or our deserts be censur'd.  
AURELIUS. We could not wish a greater happiness

Then what this satisfaction brings with it.

Let him proceed, fair brother.

OSTORIUS. He shall, sir.

Come, learned Proximus, this task be thine:

Let thy great charms confound the opinion

This Christian by his spells hath falsly won.

PROXIMUS. Great king, propound your wishes, then:

What persons, of what state, what numbers, or how arm'd,

Please your own thoughts; they shall appear before you.

AURELIUS. Strange art! What thinkst thou, reverent hermit?

HERMIT. Let him go on, sir.

AURELIUS. Wilt thou behold his cunning?

HERMIT. Right gladly, sir; it will be my joy to tell,

That I was here to laugh at him and hell.

AURELIUS. I like thy confidence.

ARTESIA. His sawcy impudence! Proceed to th'trial.

PROXIMUS. Speak your desires, my lord, and be it plac'd

In any angle underneath the moon,

The center of the earth, the sea, the air,

The region of the fire, nay, hell it self,

And I'll present it.

AURELIUS. Wee'l have no sight so fearful, onely this:

If all thy art can reach it, show me here

The two great champions of the Trojan War,

Achilles and brave Hector, our great ancestor,

Both in their warlike habits, armor, shields,

And weapons then in use for fight.

PROXIMUS. 'Tis done, my lord, command a halt and silence,

As each man will respect his life or danger.

Armel, Plesgeth!

Enter Spirits .

SPIRITS. Quid vis?

PROXIMUS. Attend me.

AURELIUS. The apparition comes; on our displeasure,

Let all keep place and silence. [ Within drums beat marches .

Enter Proximus, bringing in Hector, attir'd and arm'd after the Trojan manner, with target, sword, and battel-ax, a trumpet before him, and a

spirit in flame colours with a torch; at the other door Achilles with his spear and falchion, a trumpet, and a spirit in black before him; trumpets sound alarm, and they manage their weapons to begin the fight: and after some charges, the hermit steps between them, at which seeming amaz'd the spirits tremble. Thunder within .

PROXIMUS. What means this stay, bright Armel, Plesgeth?  
Why fear you and fall back?

Renew the alarms, and enforce the combat,  
Or hell or darkness circles you for ever.

ARMEL. We dare not.

PROXIMUS. Ha!

PLESGETH. Our charms are all dissolv'd: Armel, away!  
'Tis worse then hell to us, whilst here we stay. [ Exit all .

HERMIT. What! at a non-plus, sir? command them back, for shame.

PROXIMUS. What power o're-aws my spells? Return, you hell-hounds!  
Armel, Plesgeth, double damnation seize you!

By all the infernal powers, the prince of devils  
Is in this hermits habit: what else could force  
My spirits quake or tremble thus?

HERMIT. Weak argument to hide your want of skill:

Does the devil fear the devil, or war with hell?  
They have not been acquainted long, it seems.

Know, mis-believing pagan, even that power,  
That overthrew your forces, still lets you see,  
He onely can controul both hell and thee.

PROXIMUS. Disgrace and mischief! Ile enforce new charms,  
New spells, and spirits rais'd from the low abyss  
Of hells unbottom'd depths.

AURELIUS. We have enough, sir;

Give o're your charms, wee'l finde some other time  
To praise your art. I dare not but acknowledge

That heavenly power my heart stands witness to:

Be not dismay'd, my lords, at this disaster,

Nor thou, my fairest queen: we'l change the scene

To some more pleasing sports. Lead to your chamber.

How'ere in this thy pleasures finde a cross,

Our joy's too fixed here to suffer loss.

TOCLIO. Which I shall adde to, sir, with news I bring:

The prince, your brother, lives.

AURELIUS. Ha!

TOCLIO. And comes to grace this high and heaven-knit marriage.

AURELIUS. Why dost thou flatter me, to make me think  
Such happiness attends me?

Enter Prince Uter and Oswald .

TOCLIO. His presence speaks my truth, sir.

DONOBERT. Force me, 'tis he: look, Gloster.

GLOSTER. A blessing beyond hope, sir.

AURELIUS. Ha! 'tis he: welcome, my second comfort.

Artesia, dearest love, it is my brother,

My princely brother, all my kingdoms hope:

Oh, give him welcome, as thou lov'st my health.

ARTESIA. You have so free a welcome, sir, from me,

As this your presence has such power, I swear,

O're me, a stranger, that I must forget

My country, name, and friends, and count this place

My joy and birth-right.

PRINCE. 'Tis she! 'tis she, I swear! oh, ye good gods, 'tis she!

That face within those woods where first I saw her,

Captived my senses, and thus many moneths

Bar'd me from all society of men.

How came she to this place,

Brother Aurelius? Speak that angels name,

Her heaven-blest name, oh, speak it quickly, sir.

AURELIUS. It is Artesia, the royal Saxon princess.

PRINCE. A woman, and no deity, no feigned shape,

To mock the reason of admiring sense,

On whom a hope as low as mine may live,

Love, and enjoy, dear brother, may it not?

AURELIUS. She is all the good or vertue thou canst name,

My wife, my queen.

PRINCE. Ha! your wife!

ARTESIA. Which you shall finde, sir, if that time and fortune

May make my love but worthy of your tryal.

PRINCE. Oh!

AURELIUS. What troubles you, dear brother?

Why with so strange and fixt an eye dost thou

Behold my joys?

ARTESIA. You are not well, sir.

PRINCE. Yes, yes.--Oh, you immortal powers,

Why has poor man so many entrances

For sorrow to creep in at, when our sense

Is much too weak to hold his happiness?

Oh, say, I was born deaf: and let your silence

Confirm in me the knowing my defect;

At least be charitable to conceal my sin,

For hearing is no less in me, dear brother.

AURELIUS. No more!

I see thou art a rival in the joys

Of my high bliss. Come, my Artesia;

The day's most prais'd when 'tis eclips'd by night,

Great good must have as great ill opposite.

PRINCE. Stay, hear but a word; yet now I think on't,

This is your wedding-night, and were it mine,

I should be angry with least loss of time.

ARTESIA. Envy speaks no such words, has no such looks.

PRINCE. Sweet rest unto you both.

AURELIUS. Lights to our nuptial chamber.

ARTESIA. Could you speak so,

I would not fear how much my grief did grow.

AURELIUS. Lights to our chamber; on, on, set on! [ Exeunt . Manet Prince .

PRINCE. `Could you speak so,

I would not fear how much my griefs did grow.'

Those were her very words; sure, I am waking:

She wrung me by the hand, and spake them to me

With a most passionate affection.

Perhaps she loves, and now repents her choice,

In marriage with my brother. Oh, fond man,

How darest thou trust thy traitors thoughts, thus to

Betray thy self? 'twas but a waking dream

Wherein thou madest thy wishes speak, not her,

In which thy foolish hopes strives to prolong

A wretched being. So sickly children play

With health lov'd toys, which for a time delay,

But do not cure the fit. Be, then, a man,

Meet that destruction which thou canst not flie.

From not to live, make it thy best to die,

And call her now, whom thou didst hope to wed,

Thy brothers wife: thou art too nere a kin,  
And such an act above all name's a sin  
Not to be blotted out; heaven pardon me!  
She's banisht from my bosom now for ever.  
To lowest ebbes men justly hope a flood;  
When vice grows barren, all desires are good.

Enter Waiting Gentlewoman with a jewel .

GENTLEWOMAN. The noble prince, I take it, sir?

PRINCE. You speak me what I should be, lady.

GENTLEWOMAN. Know, by that name, sir, Queen Artesia greets you.

PRINCE. Alas, good vertue, how is she mistaken!

GENTLEWOMAN. Commending her affection in this jewel, sir.

PRINCE. She binds my service to her: ha! a jewel; 'tis

A fair one, trust me, and methinks, it much

Resembles something I have seen with her.

GENTLEWOMAN. It is an artificial crab, sir.

PRINCE. A creature that goes backward.

GENTLEWOMAN. True, from the way it looks.

PRINCE. There is no moral in it alludes to her self?

GENTLEWOMAN. 'Tis your construction gives you that, sir;

She's a woman.

PRINCE. And, like this, may use her legs and eyes

Two several ways.

GENTLEWOMAN. Just like the sea-crab,

Which on the mussel prayes, whilst he bills at a stone.

PRINCE. Pretty in troth. Prithee, tell me, art thou honest?

GENTLEWOMAN. I hope I seem no other, sir.

PRINCE. And those that seem so are sometimes bad enough.

GENTLEWOMAN. If they will accuse themselves for want of witness,

Let them, I am not so foolish.

PRINCE. I see th'art wise.

Come, speak me truly: what is the greatest sin?

GENTLEWOMAN. That which man never acted; what has been done

Is as the least, common to all as one.

PRINCE. Dost think thy lady is of thy opinion?

GENTLEWOMAN. She's a bad scholar else; I have brought her up,

And she dares owe me still.

PRINCE. I, 'tis a fault in greatness, they dare owe



Many, e're they pay one. But darest thou  
Expose thy scholar to my examining?

GENTLEWOMAN. Yes, in good troth, sir, and pray put her to't too;  
'Tis a hard lesson, if she answer it not.

PRINCE. Thou know'st the hardest?

GENTLEWOMAN. As far as a woman may, sir.

PRINCE. I commend thy plainness.

When wilt thou bring me to thy lady?

GENTLEWOMAN. Next opportunity I attend you, sir.

PRINCE. Thanks, take this, and commend me to her.

GENTLEWOMAN. Think of your sea-crab, sir, I pray. [ Exit .

PRINCE. Oh, by any means, lady.--

What should all this tend to?

If it be love or lust that thus incites her,

The sin is horrid and incestuous;

If to betray my life, what hopes she by it?

Yes, it may be a practice 'twixt themselves,

To expel the Brittaines and ensure the state

Through our destructions; all this may be

Valid, with a deeper reach in villany

Then all my thoughts can guess at;--however,

I will confer with her, and if I finde

Lust hath given life to envy in her minde,

I may prevent the danger: so men wise

By the same step by which they fell, may rise.

Vices are vertues, if so thought and seen,

And trees with foulest roots branch soonest green. [ Exit .

### ACT III.

#### SCENE I.

Enter Clown and his sister .

CLOWN. Come, sister, thou that art all fool, all mad-woman.

JOAN. Prithee, have patience, we are now at court.

CLOWN. At court! ha, ha, that proves thy madness: was there ever any woman in thy taking travel'd to court for a husband? 'Slid, 'tis enough for them to get children, and the city to keep 'em, and the country to finde nurses: every thing must be done in his due place, sister.

JOAN. Be but content a while; for, sure, I know  
This journey will be happy. Oh, dear brother,  
This night my sweet friend came to comfort me;  
I saw him and embrac't him in mine arms.

CLOWN. Why did you not hold him, and call me to help you?

JOAN. Alas, I thought I had been with him still,  
But when I wak't--

CLOWN. Ah! pox of all loger-heads, then you were but in a dream all this  
while, and we may still go look him. Well, since we are come to court, cast  
your cats eyes about you, and either finde him out you dreamt on, or some  
other, for Ile trouble my self no further.

Enter Donobert, Cador, Edwin & Toclio .

See, see, here comes more courtiers; look about you; come, pray, view 'em  
all well; the old man has none of the marks about him, the other have both  
swords and feathers: what thinkest thou of that tall yong gentleman?

JOAN. He much resembles him; but, sure, my friend,  
Brother, was not so high of stature.

CLOWN. Oh, beast, wast thou got a childe with a short thing too?

DONOBERT. Come, come, Ile hear no more on't: go, lord Edwin,  
Tell her, this day her sister shall be married

To Cador, Earl of Cornwall; so shall she  
To thee, brave Edwin, if she'll have my blessing.

EDWIN. She is addicted to a single life,  
She will not hear of marriage.

DONOBERT. Tush, fear it not: go you from me to her,  
Use your best skill, my lord, and if you fail,  
I have a trick shall do it: haste, haste about it.

EDWIN. Sir, I am gone;  
My hope is in your help more then my own.

DONOBERT. And worthy Toclio, to your care I must  
Commend this business

For lights and musick, and what else is needful.

TOCLIO. I shall, my lord.

CLOWN. We would intreat a word, sir. Come forward, sister. [ Exeunt  
Donobert, Toclio, Cador .

EDWIN. What lackst thou, fellow?

CLOWN. I lack a father for a childe, sir.

EDWIN. How! a God-father?

CLOWN. No, sir, we mean the own father: it may be you, sir, for any thing we know; I think the childe is like you.

EDWIN. Like me! prithee, where is it?

CLOWN. Nay, 'tis not born yet, sir, 'tis forth coming, you see; the childe must have a father: what do you think of my sister?

EDWIN. Why, I think if she ne're had husband, she's a whore, and thou a fool. Farewell. [ Exit .

CLOWN. I thank you, sir. Well, pull up thy heart, sister; if there be any law i'th' court, this fellow shall father it, 'cause he uses me so scurvily. There's a great wedding towards, they say; we'l amongst them for a husband for thee.

Enter Sir Nicodemus with a letter .

If we miss there, Ile have another bout with him that abus'd me. See! look, there comes another hat and feather, this should be a close letcher, he's reading of a love-letter.

SIR NICODEMUS. Earl Cador's marriage, and a masque to grace it.  
So, so.

This night shall make me famous for presentments.--

How now, what are you?

CLOWN. A couple of great Brittaines you may see by our bellies, sir.

SIR NICODEMUS. And what of this, sir?

CLOWN. Why, thus the matter stands, sir: there's one of your courtiers hunting nags has made a gap through another mans inclosure. Now, sir, here's the question, who should be at charge of a fur-bush to stop it?

SIR NICODEMUS. Ha, ha, this is out of my element: the law must end it.

CLOWN. Your worship says well; for, surely, I think some lawyer had a hand in the business, we have such a troublesom issue.

SIR NICODEMUS. But what's thy business with me now?

CLOWN. Nay, sir, the business is done already, you may see by my sisters belly.

SIR NICODEMUS. Oh, now I finde thee: this gentlewoman, it seems, has been humbled.

CLOWN. As low as the ground would give her leave, sir, and your worship knows this: though there be many fathers without children, yet to have a childe without a father were most unnatural.

SIR NICODEMUS. That's true, ifaith, I never heard of a childe yet that e're begot his father.

CLOWN. Why, true, you say wisely, sir.

SIR NICODEMUS. And therefore I conclude, that he that got the childe is without all question the father of it.

CLOWN. I, now you come to the matter, sir; and our suit is to your worship for the discovery of this father.

SIR NICODEMUS. Why, lives he in the court here?

JOAN. Yes, sir, and I desire but marriage.

SIR NICODEMUS. And does the knave refuse it? Come, come, be merry, wench; he shall marry thee, and keep the childe too, if my knighthood can do any thing. I am bound by mine orders to help distressed ladies, and can there be a greater injury to a woman with childe, then to lack a father for't? I am asham'd of your simpleness: Come, come, give me a courtiers fee for my pains, and Ile be thy advocate my self, and justice shall be found; nay, Ile sue the law for it; but give me my fee first.

CLOWN. If all the money I have i'th' world will do it, you shall have it, sir.

SIR NICODEMUS. An angel does it.

CLOWN. Nay, there's two, for your better eye sight, sir.

SIR NICODEMUS. Why, well said! Give me thy hand, wench, Ile teach thee a trick for all this, shall get a father for thy childe presently, and this it is, mark now: You meet a man, as you meet me now, thou claimest marriage of me, and layest the childe to my charge; I deny it: push, that's nothing, hold thy claim fast, thy words carries it, and no law can withstand it.

CLOWN. Ist possible?

SIR NICODEMUS. Past all opposition; her own word carries it: let her challenge any man, the childe shall call him father; there's a trick for your money now.

CLOWN. Troth, sir, we thank you, we'l make use of your trick, and go no further to seek the childe a father, for we challenge you, sir: sister, lay it to him, he shall marry thee, I shall have a worshipful old man to my brother.

SIR NICODEMUS. Ha, ha, I like thy pleasantness.

JOAN. Nay, indeed, sir, I do challenge you.

CLOWN. You think we jest, sir?

SIR NICODEMUS. I, by my troth, do I. I like thy wit, yfaith: thou shalt live at court with me; didst never here of Nicodemus Nothing? I am the man.

CLOWN. Nothing? 'slid, we are out agen: thou wast never got with childe with nothing, sure.

JOAN. I know not what to say.

SIR NICODEMUS. Never grieve, wench, show me the man, and process shall fly out.

CLOWN. 'Tis enough for us to finde the children, we look that you should finde the father, and therefore either do us justice, or we'l stand to our first challenge.

SIR NICODEMUS. Would you have justice without an adversary? Unless you can show me the man, I can do you no good in it.

CLOWN. Why, then I hope you'l do us no harm, sir; you'l restore my money.

SIR NICODEMUS. What, my fee? marry, law forbid it!

Finde out the party, and you shall have justice,

Your fault clos'd up, and all shall be amended,

The childe, his father, and the law defended. [ Exit .

CLOWN. Well, he has deserv'd his fee, indeed, for he has brought our suit to a quick end, I promise you, and yet the childe has never a father; nor we have no more mony to seek after him. A shame of all lecherous placcats! now you look like a cat had newly kitten'd; what will you do now, tro? Follow me no further, lest I beat your brains out.

JOAN. Impose upon me any punishment, rather then leave me now.

CLOWN. Well, I think I am bewicht with thee; I cannot finde in my heart to forsake her. There was never sister would have abus'd a poor brother as thou hast done; I am even pin'd away with fretting, there's nothing but flesh and bones about me. Well, and I had my money agen, it were some comfort. Hark, sister, [ thunder ] does it not thunder?

JOAN. Oh yes, most fearfully: what shall we do, brother?

CLOWN. Marry, e'ene get some shelter, e're the storm catch us: away, let's away, I prithee.

Enter the Devil in mans habit, richly attir'd, his feet and his head horrid .

JOAN. Ha, 'tis he! Stay, brother, dear brother, stay.

CLOWN. What's the matter now?

JOAN. My love, my friend is come; yonder he goes.

CLOWN. Where, where? show me where; I'll stop him, if the devil be not in him.

JOAN. Look there, look yonder!

Oh, dear friend, pity my distress,

For heaven and goodness, do but speak to me.

DEVIL. She calls me, and yet drives me headlong from her.

Poor mortal, thou and I are much uneven,

Thou must not speak of goodness nor of heaven,

If I confer with thee; but be of comfort:

Whilst men do breath, and Brittain's name be known,

The fatal fruit thou bear'st within thy womb

Shall here be famous till the day of doom.

CLOWN. 'Slid, who's that talks so? I can see no body.

JOAN. Then art thou blind or mad. See where he goes,

And beckons me to come; oh, lead me forth,

I'll follow thee in spite of fear or death. [ Exit .

CLOWN. Oh brave! she'll run to the devil for a husband; she's stark mad, sure, and talks to a shadow, for I could see no substance: well, I'll after her; the childe was got by chance, and the father must be found at all adventure. [ Exit .

## SCENE II.

Enter Hermit, Modestia, and Edwin.

MODESTIA. Oh, reverent sir, by you my heart hath reacht

At the large hopes of holy piety,

And for this I craved your company,

Here in your sight religiously to vow

My chaste thoughts up to heaven, and make you now

The witness of my faith.

HERMIT. Angels assist thy hopes.

EDWIN. What means my love? thou art my promis'd wife.

MODESTIA. To part with willingly what friends and life

Can make no good assurance of.

EDWIN. Oh, finde remorse, fair soul, to love and merit,

And yet recant thy vow.

MODESTIA. Never:

This world and I are parted now for ever.

HERMIT. To finde the way to bliss, oh, happy woman,

Th'ast learn'd the hardest lesson well, I see.

Now show thy fortitude and constancy:

Let these thy friends thy sad departure weep,

Thou shalt but loose the wealth thou could'st not keep.

My contemplation calls me, I must leave ye.

EDWIN. O, reverent sir, perswade not her to leave me.

HERMIT. My lord, I do not, nor to cease to love ye;

I onely pray her faith may fixed stand;

Marriage was blest, I know, with heavens own hand. [ Exit .

EDWIN. You hear him, lady, 'tis not a virgins state,

But sanctity of life, must make you happy.

MODESTIA. Good sir, you say you love me; gentle Edwin,

Even by that love I do beseech you, leave me.

EDWIN. Think of your fathers tears, your weeping friends,

Whom cruel grief makes pale and bloodless for you.

MODESTIA. Would I were dead to all.

EDWIN. Why do you weep?

MODESTIA. Oh, who would live to see

How men with care and cost seek misery?

EDWIN. Why do you seek it then? What joy, what pleasure

Can give you comfort in a single life?

MODESTIA. The contemplation of a happy death,

Which is to me so pleasing that I think

No torture could divert me: What's this world,

Wherein you'd have me walk, but a sad passage

To a dread judgement-seat, from whence even now

We are but bail'd, upon our good abearing,

Till that great sessions come, when Death, the cryer,

Will surely summon us and all to appear,

To plead us guilty or our bail to clear?

What musick's this? [ Soft musick .

Enter two Bishops, Donobert, Gloster, Cador, Constancia, Oswald, Toclío .

EDWIN. Oh, now resolve, and think upon my love!  
This sounds the marriage of your beauteous sister,  
Vertuous Constancia, with the noble Cador.  
Look, and behold this pleasure.

MODESTIA. Cover me with night,  
It is a vanity not worth the sight.

DONOBERT. See, see, she's yonder.  
Pass on, son Cador, daughter Constancia,  
I beseech you all, unless she first move speech,  
Salute her not.--Edwin, what good success?

EDWIN. Nothing as yet, unless this object take her.

DONOBERT. See, see, her eye is fixt upon her sister;  
Seem careless all, and take no notice of her:--

On afore there; come, my Constancia.

MODESTIA. Not speak to me, nor dain to cast an eye,  
To look on my despised poverty?

I must be more charitable;--pray, stay, lady,  
Are not you she whom I did once call sister?

CONSTANCIA. I did acknowledge such a name to one,  
Whilst she was worthy of it, in whose folly,  
Since you neglect your fame and friends together,  
In you I drown'd a sisters name for ever.

MODESTIA. Your looks did speak no less.

GLOSTER. It now begins to work, this sight has moved her.

DONOBERT. I knew this trick would take, or nothing.

MODESTIA. Though you disdain in me a sisters name,  
Yet charity, me thinks, should be so strong  
To instruct e're you reject. I am a wretch.

Even follies instance, who perhaps have er'd,  
Not having known the goodness bears so high  
And fair a show in you; which being exprest,  
I may recant this low despised life,  
And please those friends whom I mov'd to grief.

CADOR. She is coming, yfaith; be merry, Edwin.

CONSTANCIA. Since you desire instruction, you shall have it.  
What ist should make you thus desire to live  
Vow'd to a single life?



MODESTIA. Because I know I cannot flie from death.

Oh, my good sister, I beseech you, hear me:

This world is but a masque, catching weak eyes

With what is not our selves but our disguise,

A vizard that falls off, the dance being done,

And leaves Deaths glass for all to look upon;

Our best happiness here lasts but a night,

Whose burning tapers makes false ware seem right.

Who knows not this, and will not now provide

Some better shift before his shame be spy'd,

And knowing this vain world at last will leave him,

Shake off these robes that help but to deceive him?

CONSTANCIA. Her words are powerful, I am amaz'd to hear her!

DONOBERT. Her soul's enchanted with infected spells.

Leave her, best girl; for now in thee

Ile seek the fruits of age, posterity.--

Out o' my sight! sure, I was half asleep

Or drunk, when I begot thee.

CONSTANCIA. Good sir, forbear. What say you to that, sister?

The joy of children, a blest mothers name!

Oh, who without much grief can loose such fame?

MODESTIA. Who can enjoy it without sorrow rather?

And that most certain where the joy's unsure,

Seeing the fruit that we beget endure

So many miseries, that oft we pray

The heavens to shut up their afflicted day;

At best we do but bring forth heirs to die,

And fill the coffins of our enemy.

CONSTANCIA. Oh, my soul!

DONOBERT. Hear her no more, Constanca,

She's sure bewicht with error; leave her, girl.

CONSTANCIA. Then must I leave all goodness, sir: away,

Stand off, I say.

DONOBERT. How's this?

CONSTANCIA. I have no father, friend, no husband now;

All are but borrowed robes, in which we masque

To waste and spend the time, when all our life

Is but one good betwixt two ague-days,

Which from the first e're we have time to praise,

A second fever takes us: Oh, my best sister,

My souls eternal friend, forgive the rashness  
Of my distemper'd tongue; for how could she,  
Knew not her self, know thy felicity,  
From which worlds cannot now remove me?  
DONOBERT. Art thou mad too, fond woman? what's thy meaning?  
CONSTANCIA. To seek eternal happiness in heaven,  
Which all this world affords not.  
CADOR. Think of thy vow, thou art my promis'd wife.  
CONSTANCIA. Pray, trouble me no further.  
OMNES. Strange alteration!  
CADOR. Why do you stand at gaze, you sacred priests?  
You holy men, be equal to the gods,  
And consummate my marriage with this woman.  
BISHOP. Her self gives barr, my lord, to your desires  
And our performance; 'tis against the law  
And orders of the Church to force a marriage.  
CADOR. How am I wrong'd! Was this your trick, my lord?  
DONOBERT. I am abus'd past sufferance;  
Grief and amazement strive which sense of mine  
Shall loose her being first. Yet let me call thee daughter.  
CADOR. Me, wife.  
CONSTANCIA. Your words are air, you speak of want to wealth,  
And wish her sickness, newly rais'd to health.  
DONOBERT. Bewitched girls, tempt not an old mans fury,  
That hath no strength to uphold his feeble age,  
But what your sights give life to: oh, beware,  
And do not make me curse you.  
[ Kneel . ] MODESTIA. Dear father,  
Here at your feet we kneel, grant us but this,  
That, in your sight and hearing, the good hermit  
May plead our cause; which, if it shall not give  
Such satisfaction as your age desires,  
We will submit to you.  
CONSTANCIA. You gave us life;  
Save not our bodies, but our souls, from death.  
DONOBERT. This gives some comfort yet: Rise with my blessings.--  
Have patience, noble Cador, worthy Edwin;  
Send for the hermit that we may confer.  
For, sure, religion tyes you not to leave  
Your careful father thus; if so it be,

Take you content, and give all grief to me. [ Exeunt .

### SCENE III.

Thunder and lightning; enter Devil .

DEVIL. Mix light and darkness; earth and heaven dissolve,  
 Be of one piece agen, and turn to Chaos;  
 Break all your works, you powers, and spoil the world,  
 Or, if you will maintain earth still, give way  
 And life to this abortive birth now coming,  
 Whose fame shall add unto your oracles.  
 Lucina Hecate, dreadful Queen of Night,  
 Bright Proserpine, be pleas'd for Ceres love,  
 From Stigian darkness summon up the Fates,  
 And in a moment bring them quickly hither,  
 Lest death do vent her birth and her together. [ Thunder .  
 Assist, you spirits of infernal deeps,  
 Squint ey'd Erictho, midnight incubus,  
 Rise, rise to aid this birth prodigious.

Enter Lucina and the three Fates .

Thanks, Hecate; hail, sister to the gods!  
 There lies your way, haste with the Fates, and help,  
 Give quick dispatch unto her laboring throws,  
 To bring this mixture of infernal seed  
 To humane being; [ Exit Fates .  
 And to beguil her pains, till back you come,  
 Anticks shall dance and musick fill the room.-- [ Dance .  
 DEVIL. Thanks, Queen of Shades.  
 LUCINA. Farewel, great servant to th'infernal king.  
 In honor of this childe, the Fates shall bring  
 All their assisting powers of knowledge, arts,  
 Learning, wisdom, all the hidden parts  
 Of all-admiring prophecy, to fore-see  
 The event of times to come: his art shall stand  
 A wall of brass to guard the Brittain land.  
 Even from this minute, all his arts appears  
 Manlike in judgement, person, state, and years.

Upon his brest the Fates have fixt his name,  
And since his birth place was this forrest here,  
They now have nam'd him Merlin Silvester.  
DEVIL. And Merlins name in Brittany shall live,  
Whilst men inhabit here or Fates can give  
Power to amazing wonder; envy shall weep,  
And mischief sit and shake her ebbone wings,  
Whilst all the world of Merlins magick sings. [ Exit .

#### SCENE IV.

Enter Clown .

CLOWN. Well, I wonder how my poor sister does, after all this thundering; I think she's dead, for I can hear no tidings of her. Those woods yields small comfort for her; I could meet nothing but a swinherds wife, keeping hogs by the forestside, but neither she nor none of her sowes would stir a foot to help us; indeed, I think she durst not trust her self amongst the trees with me, for I must needs confess I offer'd some kindness to her. Well, I would fain know what's become of my sister: if she have brought me a yong cousin, his face may be a picture to finde his father by. So oh! sister Joan, Joan Go-too't, where art thou?

[ Within .] JOAN. Here, here, brother, stay but a while, I come to thee.

CLOWN. O brave! she's alive still, I know her voice; she speaks, and speaks cherfully, methinks. How now, what moon-calf has she got with her?

Enter Joan and Merlin with a book .

JOAN. Come, my dear Merlin, why dost thou fix thine eye  
So deeply on that book?

MERLIN. To sound the depth  
Of arts, of learning, wisdom, knowledge.

JOAN. Oh, my dear, dear son,  
Those studies fits thee when thou art a man.

MERLIN. Why, mother, I can be but half a man at best,  
And that is your mortality; the rest  
In me is spirit; 'tis not meat, nor time,  
That gives this growth and bigness; no, my years  
Shall be more strange then yet my birth appears.

Look, mother, there's my uncle.

JOAN. How doest thou know him, son? thou never saw'st him.

MERLIN. Yet I know him, and know the pains he has taken for ye, to finde out my father.--Give me your hand, good uncle.

CLOWN. Ha, ha, I'de laugh at that, yfaith. Do you know me, sir?

MERLIN. Yes, by the same token that even now you kist the swinherds-wife i'th' woods, and would have done more, if she would have let you, uncle.

CLOWN. A witch, a witch, a witch, sister: rid him out of your company, he is either a witch or a conjurer; he could never have known this else.

JOAN. Pray, love him, brother, he is my son.

CLOWN. Ha, ha, this is worse then all the rest, yfaith; by his beard he is more like your husband. Let me see, is your great belly gone?

JOAN. Yes, and this the happy fruit.

CLOWN. What, this hartichoke? A childe born with a beard on his face?

MERLIN. Yes, and strong legs to go, and teeth to eat.

CLOWN. You can nurse up your self, then? There's some charges sav'd for soap and caudle. 'Slid, I have heard of some that has been born with teeth, but never none with such a talking tongue before.

JOAN. Come, come, you must use him kindly, brother;

Did you but know his worth, you would make much of him.

CLOWN. Make much of a moncky? This is worse then Tom Thumb, that let a fart in his mothers belly; a childe to speak, eat, and go the first hour of his birth; nay, such a baby as had need of a barber before he was born too; why, sister, this is monstrous, and shames all our kindred.

JOAN. That thus 'gainst nature and our common births

He comes thus furnisht to salute the world,

Is power of Fates, and gift of his great father.

CLOWN. Why, of what profession is your father, sir?

MERLIN. He keeps a hot-house i'th' Low Countries; will you see him, sir?

CLOWN. See him? why, sister, has the childe found his father?

MERLIN. Yes, and Ile fetch him, uncle. [ Exit .

CLOWN. Do not uncle me, till I know your kindred: for my conscience, some baboon begot thee.--Surely, thou art horribly deceived, sister, this urchin

cannot be of thy breeding; I shall be asham'd to call him cousin, though his father be a gentleman.

Enter Merlin and Devil .

MERLIN. Now, my kinde uncle, see: the childe has found his father, this is he.

CLOWN. The devil it is; ha, ha, is this your sweet-heart, sister? have we run through the countrey, haunted the city, and examin'd the court to finde out a gallant with a hat and feather, and a silken sword, and golden hangers, and do you now bring me to a ragamuffin with a face like a frying-pan?

JOAN. Fie, brother, you mistake, behold him better.

CLOWN. How's this? do you juggle with me, or are mine eyes matches? Hat and feather, sword, and hangers, and all! this is a gallant indeed, sister; this has all the marks of him we look for.

DEVIL. And you have found him now, sir:

Give me your hand, I now must call you brother.

CLOWN. Not till you have married my sister, for all this while she's but your whore, sir.

DEVIL. Thou art too plain, Ile satisfie that wrong

To her, and thee, and all, with liberal hand:

Come, why art thou fearful?

CLOWN. Nay, I am not afraid, and you were the devil, sir.

DEVIL. Thou needst not; keep with thy sister still,

And Ile supply your wants, you shall lack nothing

That gold and wealth can purchase.

CLOWN. Thank you, brother: we have gone many a weary step to finde you; you may be a husband for a lady, for you are far fetcht and dear bought, I assure you. Pray, how should I call your son, my cousin here?

DEVIL. His name is Merlin.

CLOWN. Merlin? Your hand, cousin Merlin; for your fathers sake I accept you to my kindred: if you grow in all things as your beard does, you will be talkt on. By your mothers side, cousin, you come of the Go-too'ts, Suffolk bred, but our standing house is at Hocklye i'th' Hole, and Layton-buzzard. For your father, no doubt you may from him claim titles of worship, but I cannot describe it; I think his ancestors came first from Hell-bree in Wales, cousin.

DEVIL. No matter whence we do derive our name:  
 All Brittany shall ring of Merlin's fame,  
 And wonder at his acts. Go hence to Wales,  
 There live a while; there Vortiger the king  
 Builds castles and strong holds, which cannot stand,  
 Unless supported by yong Merlins hand.  
 There shall thy fame begin: wars are a breeding;  
 The Saxons practise treason, yet unseen,  
 Which shortly shall break out.--Fair love, farewell;  
 Dear son and brother, here must I leave you all,  
 Yet still I will be near at Merlins call. [ Exit .

MERLIN. Will you go, uncle?

CLOWN. Yes, Ile follow you, cousin.-- Well, I do most horribly begin to suspect my kindred; this brother in law of mine is the devil, sure, and though he hide his horns with his hat and feather, I spi'd his cloven foot for all his cunning. [ Exit .

#### SCENE V.

Enter Ostorius, Octa, and Proximus .

OSTORIUS. Come, come, time calls our close complots to action.  
 Go, Proximus, with winged speed flie hence,  
 Hye thee to Wales: salute great Vortiger  
 With these our letters; bid the king to arms,  
 tell him we have new friends, more forces landed  
 In Norfolk and Northumberland; bid him  
 Make haste to meet us; if he keep his word,  
 Wee'l part the realm between us.

OCTA. Bend all thine art to quit that late disgrace  
 The Christian hermit gave thee; make thy revenge  
 Both sure and home.

PROXIMUS. That thought, sir, spurs me on,  
 Till I have wrought their swift destruction. [ Exit .

OSTORIUS. Go, then, and prosper. Octa, be vigilant:  
 Speak, are the forts possest? the guards made sure?  
 Revolve, I pray, on how large consequence  
 The bare event and sequel of our hopes  
 Joynly consists, that have embark't our lives

Upon the hazzard of the least miscarriage.  
OCTA. All's sure: the queen your sister hath contrived  
The cunning plot so sure, as at an instant  
The brothers shall be both surpriz'd and taken.  
OSTORIUS. And both shall die; yet one a while must live,  
Till we by him have gather'd strength and power  
To meet bold Edol, their stern general,  
That now, contrary to the kings command,  
Hath re-united all his cashier'd troops,  
And this way beats his drums to threaten us.  
OCTA. Then our plot's discover'd.  
OSTORIUS. Come, th'art a fool, his army and his life  
Is given unto us: where is the queen my sister?  
OCTA. In conference with the prince.  
OSTORIUS. Bring the guards nearer, all is fair and good;  
Their conference, I hope, shall end in blood. [ Exeunt .

#### SCENE VI.

Enter Prince and Artesia .

ARTESIA. Come, come, you do but flatter;  
What you term love is but a dream of blood,  
Wakes with enjoying, and with open eyes  
Forgot, contemn'd, and lost.  
PRINCE. I must be wary, her words are dangerous.--  
True, we'll speak of love no more, then.  
ARTESIA. Nay, if you will, you may;  
'Tis but in jest, and yet so children play  
With fiery flames, and covet what is bright,  
But, feeling his effects, abhor the light.  
Pleasure is like a building, the more high,  
The narrower still it grows; cedars do dye  
Soonest at top.  
PRINCE. How does your instance suit?  
ARTESIA. From art and nature to make sure the root,  
And lay a fast foundation, e're I try  
The incertain changes of a wavering skie.  
Make your example thus.--You have a kiss,--  
Was it not pleasing?



PRINCE. Above all name to express it.

ARTESIA. Yet now the pleasure's gone,  
And you have lost your joys possession.

PRINCE. Yet when you please, this flood may ebb again.

ARTESIA. But where it never ebbs, there runs the main.

PRINCE. Who can attain such hopes?

ARTESIA. Ile show the way to it, give you  
A taste once more of what you may enjoy. [ Kiss .

PRINCE. Impudent whore!--

I were more false than atheism can be,  
Should I not call this high felicity.

ARTESIA. If I should trust your faith, alas, I fear,  
You soon would change belief.

PRINCE. I would covet martyrdom to make't confirm'd.

ARTESIA. Give me your hand on that you'll keep your word?

PRINCE. I will.

ARTESIA. Enough: Help, husband, king Aurelius, help!  
Rescue betraid Artesia!

PRINCE. Nay, then 'tis I that am betraid, I see;  
Yet with thy blood Ile end thy treachery.

ARTESIA. How now! what troubles you? Is this you, sir,  
That but even now would suffer martyrdom  
To win your hopes, and is there now such terror  
In names of men to fright you? nay, then I see  
What mettle you are made on.

PRINCE. Ha! was it but tryal? then I ask your pardon:  
What a dull slave was I to be so fearful!--

Ile trust her now no more, yet try the utmost.--  
I am resolved, no brother, no man breathing,  
Were he my bloods begetter, should withhold  
Me from your love; I'd leap into his bosom,  
And from his brest pull forth that happiness  
Heaven had reserved in you for my enjoying.

ARTESIA. I, now you speak a lover like a prince!--  
Treason, treason!

PRINCE. Agen?

ARTESIA. Help, Saxon princes: treason!

Enter Ostorius, Octa, etc .

OSTORIUS. Rescue the queen: strike down the villain.

Enter Edol, Aurelius, Donobert, Cador, Edwin, Toclío, Oswald, at the other door .

EDOL. Call in the guards: the prince in danger!

Fall back, dear sir, my brest shall buckler you.

AURELIUS. Beat down their weapons!

EDOL. Slave, wert thou made of brass, my sword shall bite thee.

AURELIUS. Withdraw, on pain of death: where is the traitor?

ARTESIA. Oh, save your life, my lord; let it suffice,

My beauty forc't mine own captivity.

AURELIUS. Who did attempt to wrong thee?

PRINCE. Hear me, sir.

AURELIUS. Oh, my sad soul! was't thou?

ARTESIA. Oh, do not stand to speak; one minutes stay

Prevents a second speech for ever.

AURELIUS. Make our guards strong:

My dear Artesia, let us know thy wrongs

And our own dangers.

ARTESIA. The prince your brother, with these Brittain lords,

Have all agreed to take me hence by force

And marry me to him.

PRINCE. The devil shall wed thee first:

Thy baseness and thy lust confound and rot thee!

ARTESIA. He courted me even now, and in mine ear

Sham'd not to plead his most dishonest love,

And their attempts to seize your sacred person,

Either to shut you up within some prison,

Or, which is worse, I fear, to murder you.

OMNES BRITAINS. 'Tis all as false as hell.

EDOL. And as foul as she is.

ARTESIA. You know me, sir?

EDOL. Yes, deadly sin, we know you,

And shall discover all your villany.

AURELIUS. Chester, forbear!

OSTORIUS. Their treasons, sir, are plain:

Why are their souldiers lodg'd so near the court?

OCTA. Nay, why came he in arms so suddenly?

EDOL. You fleeing anticks, do not wake my fury.

OCTA. Fury!

EDOL. Ratsbane, do not urge me.

ARTESIA. Good sir, keep farther from them.

PRINCE. Oh, my sick heart!

She is a witch by nature, devil by art.

AURELIUS. Bite thine own slanderous tongue; 'tis thou art false.

I have observ'd your passions long ere this.

OSTORIUS. Stand on your guard, my lord, we are your friends,  
And all our force is yours.

EDOL. To spoil and rob the kingdom.

AURELIUS. Sir, be silent.

EDOL. Silent! how long? till Doomsday? shall I stand by,  
And hear mine honor blasted with foul treason,  
The state half lost, and your life endanger'd,  
Yet be silent?

ARTESIA. Yes, my blunt lord, unless you speak your treasons.

Sir, let your guards, as traitors, seize them all,  
And then let tortures and devulsive racks  
Force a confession from them.

EDOL. Wilde-fire and brimstone eat thee! Hear me, sir.

AURELIUS. Sir, Ile not hear you.

EDOL. But you shall. Not hear me!

Were the worlds monarch, Cesar, living, he  
Should hear me.

I tell you, sir, these serpents have betraid  
Your life and kingdom: does not every day  
Bring tidings of more swarms of lowsie slaves,  
The offal fugitives of barren Germany,  
That land upon our coasts, and by our neglect  
Settle in Norfolk and Northumberland?

OSTORIUS. They come as aids and safeguards to the king.

OCTA. Has he not need, when Vortiger's in arms,  
And you raise powers, 'tis thought, to joyn with him?

EDOL. Peace, you pernicious rat.

DONOBERT. Prithee, forbear.

EDOL. Away! suffer a gilded rascal,  
A low-bred despicable creeper, an insulting toad,  
To spit his poison'd venome in my face!

OCTA. Sir, sir!

EDOL. Do not reply, you cur; for, by the gods,

Tho' the kings presence guard thee, I shall break all patience,  
And, like a lion rous'd to spoil, shall run  
Foul-mouth'd upon thee, and devour thee quick.--  
Speak, sir: will you forsake these scorpions,  
Or stay till they have stung you to the heart?  
AURELIUS. Y'are traitors all. This is our wife, our queen:  
Brother Ostorius, troop your Saxons up,  
We'll hence to Winchester, raise more powers,  
To man with strength the Castle Camilot.--  
Go hence, false men, joyn you with Vortiger,  
The murderer of our brother Constantine:  
We'll hunt both him and you with dreadful vengeance.  
Since Brittain fails, we'll trust to forrain friends,  
And guard our person from your traitorous ends. [ Exeunt Aurelius,  
Ostorius, Octa, Artesia, Toclio, Oswald .

EDWIN. He's sure bewitcht.

GLOSTER. What counsel now for safety?

DONOBERT. Onely this, sir: with all the speed we can,  
Preserve the person of the king and kingdom.

CADOR. Which to effect, 'tis best march hence to Wales,  
And set on Vortiger before he joyn  
His forces with the Saxons.

EDWIN. On, then, with speed for Wales and Vortiger!  
That tempest once o'reblown, we come, Ostorius,  
To meet thy traiterous Saxons, thee and them,  
That with advantage thus have won the king,  
To back your factions and to work our ruines.  
This, by the gods and my good sword, I'll set  
In bloody lines upon thy burgonet. [ Exeunt .

#### ACT IV.

#### SCENE I.

Enter Clown, Merlin, and a little antick Spirit .

MERLIN. How now, uncle? why do you search your pockets so? Do you miss any thing?

CLOWN. Ha! Cousin Merlin, I hope your beard does not overgrow your honesty; I pray, remember, you are made up of sisters thread; I am your mothers brother, whosoever was your father.

MERLIN. Why, wherein can you task my duty, uncle?

CLOWN. Your self or your page it must be, I have kept no other company, since your mother bound your head to my protectorship; I do feel a fault of one side; either it was that sparrowhawk, or a cast of Merlins, for I finde a covy of cardecu's sprung out of my pocket.

MERLIN. Why, do you want any money, uncle? Sirrah, had you any from him?

CLOWN. Deny it not, for my pockets are witness against you.

SPIRIT. Yes, I had, to teach you better wit to look to it.

CLOWN. Pray, use your fingers better, and my wit may serve as it is, sir.

MERLIN. Well, restore it.

SPIRIT. There it is.

CLOWN. I, there's some honesty in this; 'twas a token from your invisible father, cousin, which I would not have to go invisibly from me agen.

MERLIN. Well, you are sure you have it now, uncle?

CLOWN. Yes, and mean to keep it now from your pages filching fingers too.

SPIRIT. If you have it so sure, pray show it me agen.

CLOWN. Yes, my little juggler, I dare show it. Ha, cleanly conveyance agen! ye have no invisible fingers, have ye? 'Tis gone, certainly.

SPIRIT. Why, sir, I toucht you not.

MERLIN. Why, look you, uncle, I have it now: how ill do you look to it! here, keep it safer.

CLOWN. Ha, ha, this is fine, yfaith. I must keep some other company, if you have these slights of hand.

MERLIN. Come, come, uncle, 'tis all my art, which shall not offend you, sir, onely I give you a taste of it to show you sport.

CLOWN. Oh, but 'tis ill jesting with a mans pocket, tho'. But I am glad to see you cunning, cousin, for now will I warrant thee a living till thou diest. You have heard the news in Wales here?

MERLIN. Uncle, let me prevent your care and counsel, 'Twill give you better knowledge of my cunning.

You would prefer me now, in hope of gain,  
To Vortiger, King of the Welch Brittain,  
To whom are all the artists summon'd now,  
That seeks the secrets of futurity:  
The bards, the druids, wizards, conjurers,  
Not an auraspex with his whisling spells,  
No capnomanster with his musty fumes,  
No witch or juggler, but is thither sent,  
To calculate the strange and fear'd event  
Of his prodigious castle, now in building,  
Where all the labors of the painful day  
Are ruin'd still i'th' night, and to this place  
You would have me go.

CLOWN. Well, if thy mother were not my sister, I would say she was a witch that begot thee; but this is thy father, not thy mother wit. Thou hast taken my tale into thy mouth, and spake my thoughts before me; therefore away, shuffle thy self amongst the conjurers, and be a made man before thou comest to age.

MERLIN. Nay, but stay, uncle, you overslip my dangers:  
The prophecies and all the cunning wizards  
Have certifi'd the king that this his castle  
Can never stand, till the foundation's laid  
With mortar temper'd with the fatal blood  
Of such a childe whose father was no mortal.

CLOWN. What's this to thee? If the devil were thy father, was not thy mother born at Carmarden? Diggon for that, then; and then it must be a childes blood, and who will take thee for a childe with such a beard of thy face? Is there not diggon for that too, cousin?

MERLIN. I must not go: lend me your ear a while,  
I'll give you reasons to the contrary.

Enter two Gentlemen .

1 GENTLEMAN. Sure, this is an endless piece of work the king has sent us about!

2 GENTLEMAN. Kings may do it, man; the like has been done to finde out the unicorn.

1 GENTLEMAN. Which will be sooner found, I think, then this fiend begotten childe we seek for.

2 GENTLEMAN. Pox of those conjurers that would speak of such a one, and yet all their cunning could not tell us where to finde him.

1 GENTLEMAN. In Wales they say assuredly he lives; come, let's enquire further.

MERLIN. Uncle, your perswasions must not prevail with me: I know mine enemies better then you do.

CLOWN. I say, th'art a bastard then, if thou disobey thine uncle: was not Joan Go-too't, thy mother, my sister? If the devil were thy father, what kin art thou to any man alive but bailys and brokers? and they are but brothers in law to thee neither.

1 GENTLEMAN. How's this? I think we shall speed here.

2 GENTLEMAN. I, and unlook't for too: go ne're and listen to them.

CLOWN. Hast thou a beard to hide it? will't thou show thy self a childe? will't thou have more hair then wit? Will't thou deny thy mother, because no body knows thy father? Or shall thine uncle be an ass?

1 GENTLEMAN. Bless ye, friend: pray, what call you this small gentlemans name?

CLOWN. Small, sir? a small man may be a great gentleman; his father may be of an ancient house, for ought we know, sir.

2 GENTLEMAN. Why? do you not know his father?

CLOWN. No, nor you neither, I think, unless the devil be in ye.

1 GENTLEMAN. What is his name, sir?

CLOWN. His name is my cousin, sir, his education is my sisters son, but his maners are his own.

MERLIN. Why ask ye, gentlemen? my name is Merlin.

CLOWN. Yes, and a goshawk was his father, for ought we know; for I am sure his mother was a wind-sucker.

2 GENTLEMAN. He has a mother, then?

CLOWN. As sure as I have a sister, sir.

1 GENTLEMAN. But his father you leave doubtful.

CLOWN. Well, sir, as wise men as you doubt whether he had a father or no?

1 GENTLEMAN. Sure, this is he we seek for.

2 GENTLEMAN. I think no less: and, sir, we let you know  
The king hath sent for you.

CLOWN. The more childe he; and he had bin rul'd by me,  
He should have gone before he was sent for.

1 GENTLEMAN. May we not see his mother?

CLOWN. Yes, and feel her too, if you anger her; a devilish thing, I can tell  
ye, she has been. Ile go fetch her to ye. [ Exit .

2 GENTLEMAN. Sir, it were fit you did resolve for speed,  
You must unto the king.

MERLIN. My service, sir,  
Shall need no strict command, it shall obey  
Most peaceably; but needless 'tis to fetch  
What is brought home: my journey may be staid,  
The king is coming hither  
With the same quest you bore before him; hark,  
This drum will tell ye. [ Within drums beat a low march .

1 GENTLEMAN. This is some cunning indeed, sir.

Florish . Enter Vortiger, reading a letter, Proximus, with drum and Soldiers,  
etc .

VORTIGER. Still in our eye your message, Proximus,  
We keep to spur our speed:

Ostorius and Octa we shall salute  
With succor against Prince Uter and Aurelius,  
Whom now we hear incamps at Winchester.  
There's nothing interrupts our way so much  
As doth the erection of this fatal castle,  
That spite of all our art and daily labor,  
The night still ruins.

PROXIMUS. As erst I did affirm, still I maintain,  
The fiend begotten childe must be found out,  
Whose blood gives strength to the foundation;  
It cannot stand else.

Enter Clown and Joan, Merlin .

VORTIGER. Ha! Is't so?  
Then, Proximus, by this intelligence



He should be found: speak, is this he you tell of?

CLOWN. Yes, sir, and I his uncle, and she his mother.

VORTIGER. And who is his father?

CLOWN. Why, she, his mother, can best tell you that, and yet I think the childe be wise enough, for he has found his father.

VORTIGER. Woman, is this thy son?

JOAN. It is, my lord.

VORTIGER. What was his father? Or where lives he?

MERLIN. Mother, speak freely and unastonisht;  
That which you dar'd to act, dread not to name.

JOAN. In which I shall betray my sin and shame.

But since it must be so, then know, great king,  
All that my self yet knows of him is this:

In pride of blood and beauty I did live,  
My glass the altar was, my face the idol;

Such was my peevish love unto my self,  
That I did hate all other; such disdain

Was in my scornful eye that I suppos'd  
No mortal creature worthy to enjoy me.

Thus with the peacock I beheld my train,  
But never saw the blackness of my feet;  
Oft have I chid the winds for breathing on me,  
And curst the sun, fearing to blast my beauty.

In midst of this most leaprous disease,  
A seeming fair yong man appear'd unto me,  
In all things suiting my aspiring pride,  
And with him brought along a conquering power,  
To which my frailty yielded; from whose embraces  
This issue came; what more he is, I know not.

VORTIGER. Some incubus or spirit of the night  
Begot him then, for, sure, no mortal did it.

MERLIN. No matter who, my lord; leave further quest,  
Since 'tis as hurtful as unnecessary  
More to enquire: go to the cause, my lord,  
Why you have sought me thus?

VORTIGER. I doubt not but thou knowst; yet, to be plain,  
I sought thee for thy blood.

MERLIN. By whose direction?

PROXIMUS. By mine;

My art infalable instructed me,  
Upon thy blood must the foundation rise  
Of the kings building; it cannot stand else.

MERLIN. Hast thou such leisure to enquire my fate,  
And let thine own hang careless over thee?  
Knowst thou what pendelous mischief roofs thy head,  
How fatal, and how sudden?

PROXIMUS. Pish!

Bearded abortive, thou foretel my danger!  
My lord, He trifles to delay his own.

MERLIN. No, I yield my self: and here before the king  
Make good thine augury, as I shall mine.  
If thy fate fall not, thou hast spoke all truth,  
And let my blood satisfie the kings desires:  
If thou thy self wilt write thine epitaph,  
Dispatch it quickly, there's not a minutes time  
'Twixt thee and thy death.

PROXIMUS. Ha, ha, ha! [ A stone falls and kills Proximus .

MERLIN. I, so thou mayest die laughing.

VORTIGER. Ha! This is above admiration: look, is he dead?

CLOWN. Yes, sir, here's brains to make mortar on, if you'l use them. Cousin  
Merlin, there's no more of this stone fruit ready to fall, is there? I pray, give  
your uncle a little fair warning.

MERLIN. Remove that shape of death. And now, my lord,  
For clear satisfaction of your doubts,  
Merlin will show the fatal cause that keeps  
Your castle down and hinders your proceedings.

Stand there, and by an apparition see  
The labor and end of all your destiny.

Mother and uncle, you must be absent.

CLOWN. Is your father coming, cousin?

MERLIN. Nay, you must be gone.

JOAN. Come, you'l offend him, brother.

CLOWN. I would fain see my brother i'law; if you were married, I might  
lawfully call him so.

Merlin strikes his wand . Thunder and lightning; two dragons appear, a  
white and a red; they fight a while, and pause .

VORTIGER. What means this stay?

MERLIN. Be not amaz'd, my lord, for on the victory,  
Of loss or gain, as these two champions ends,  
Your fate, your life, and kingdom all depends;  
Therefore observe it well.

VORTIGER. I shall: heaven be auspicious to us.

Thunder: the two dragons fight agen, and the white dragon drives off the red .

VORTIGER. The conquest is on the white dragons part.  
Now, Merlin, faithfully expound the meaning.

MERLIN. Your grace must then not be offended with me.

VORTIGER. It is the weakest part I found in thee,  
To doubt of me so slightly. Shall I blame  
My prophet that foretells me of my dangers?  
Thy cunning I approve most excellent.

MERLIN. Then know, my lord, there is a dampish cave,  
The nightly habitation of these dragons,  
Vaulted beneath where you would build your castle,  
Whose enmity and nightly combats there  
Maintain a constant ruine of your labors.  
To make it more plain, the dragons, then,  
Your self betoken and the Saxon king;  
The vanquisht red is, sir, your dreadful emblem.

VORTIGER. Oh, my fate!

MERLIN. Nay, you must hear with patience, royal sir.

You slew the lawful king Constantius:

'Twas a red deed, your crown his blood did cement.

The English Saxon, first brought in by you

For aid against Constantius brethren,

Is the white horror who now, knit together,

Have driven and shut you up in these wilde mountains;

And though they now seek to unite with friendship,

It is to wound your bosom, not embrace it,

And with an utter extirpation

To rout the Britains out, and plant the English.

Seek for your safety, sir, and spend no time

To build the airy castles; for Prince Uter,

Armed with vengeance for his brothers blood,

Is hard upon you. If you mistrust me,

And to my words crave witness, sir, then know,

Here comes a messenger to tell you so. [ Exit Merlin .

Enter Messenger .

MESSENGER. My lord! Prince Uter!

VORTIGER. And who else, sir?

MESSENGER. Edol, the great general.

VORTIGER. The great devil! they are coming to meet us?

MESSENGER. With a full power, my lord.

VORTIGER. With a full vengeance,

They mean to meet us; so! we are ready

To their confront. At full march, double footing,

We'll loose no ground, nor shall their numbers fright us:

If it be fate, it cannot be withstood;

We got our crown so, be it lost in blood. [ Exeunt .

## SCENE II.

Enter Prince Uter, Edol, Cadur, Edwin, Toctio, with drum and Soldiers .

PRINCE. Stay, and advice; hold, drum!

EDOL. Beat, slave! why do you pause?

Why make a stand? where are our enemies?

Or do you mean we fight amongst our selves?

PRINCE. Nay, noble Edol,

Let us here take counsel, it cannot hurt,

It is the surest garison to safety.

EDOL. Fie on such slow delays! so fearful men,

That are to pass over a flowing river,

Stand on the bank to parly of the danger,

Till the tide rise, and then be swallowed.

Is not the king in field?

CADOR. Proud Vortiger, the trator, is in field.

EDWIN. The murderer and usurper.

EDOL. Let him be the devil, so I may fight with him.

For heavens love, sir, march on! Oh, my patience!

Will you delay, untill the Saxons come

To aid his party? [ A tucket .

PRINCE. There's no such fear: prithee, be calm a while.

Hark! it seems by this, he comes or sends to us.

EDOL. If it be for parly, I will drown the summons,

If all our drums and hoarseness choke me not.

Enter Captain .

PRINCE. Nay, prithee, hear.--From whence art thou?

CAPTAIN. From the King Vortiger.

EDOL. Traitor, there's none such: alarum, drum; strike, slave,  
Or, by mine honor, I will break thy head,  
And beat thy drums heads both about thine ears.

PRINCE. Hold, noble Edol,  
Let's hear what articles he can inforce.

EDOL. What articles or what conditions  
Can you expect to value half your wrong,  
Unless he kill himself by thousand tortures,  
And send his carcase to appease your vengeance  
For the foul murder of Constantius,  
And that's not a tenth part neither.

PRINCE. 'Tis true,  
My brothers blood is crying to me now;  
I do applaud thy counsel: hence, be gone!-- [ Exit Captain .  
We'll hear no parly now but by our swords.

EDOL. And those shall speak home in death killing words:  
Alarum to the fight; sound, sound the alarum. [ Exeunt .

### SCENE III.

Alarum . Enter Edol, driving all Vortigers force before him, then Exit . Enter Prince Uter pursuing Vortiger .

VORTIGER. Dost follow me?

PRINCE. Yes, to thy death I will.

VORTIGER. Stay, be advis'd;  
I would not be the onely fall of princes,  
I slew thy brother.

PRINCE. Thou didst, black traitor,  
And in that vengeance I pursue thee.

VORTIGER. Take mercy for thy self, and flie my sword,  
Save thine own life as satisfaction,  
Which here I give thee for thy brothers death.

PRINCE. Give what's thine own: a traitors heart and head,

That's all thou art right lord of. The kingdom  
Which thou usurp'st, thou most unhappy tyrant,  
Is leaving thee; the Saxons which thou broughtst  
To back thy usurpations, are grown great,  
And where they seat themselves, do hourly seek  
To blot the records of old Brute and Brittain  
From memory of men, calling themselves  
Hingest-men, and Hingest-land, that no more  
The Brittain name be known: all this by thee,  
Thou base destroyer of thy native country.

Enter Edol .

EDOL. What, stand you talking? [ Fight .

PRINCE. Hold, Edol.

EDOL. Hold out, my sword,

And listen not to king or princes word;

There's work enough abroad, this task is mine. [ Alarum .

PRINCE. Prosper thy valour, as thy vertues shine. [ Exeunt .

#### SCENE IV.

Enter Cador and Edwin .

CADOR. Bright victory her self fights on our part,

And, buckled in a golden beaver, rides

Triumphantly before us.

EDWIN. Justice is with her,

Who ever takes the true and rightful cause.

Let us not lag behinde them.

Enter Prince .

CADOR. Here comes the prince. How goes our fortunes, sir?

PRINCE. Hopeful and fair, brave Cador.

Proud Vortiger, beat down by Edols sword,

Was rescu'd by the following multitudes,

And now for safety's fled unto a castle

Here standing on the hill: but I have sent

A cry of hounds as violent as hunger,

To break his stony walls; or, if they fail,  
We'll send in wilde fire to dislodge him thence,  
Or burn them all with flaming violence. [ Exeunt .

### SCENE V.

Blazing star appears .

Florish tromp . Enter Prince Uter, Edol, Cadon, Edwin, Toclio, with drum and Soldiers .

PRINCE. Look, Edol:

Still this fiery exhalation shoots  
His frightful horrors on th'amazed world;  
See, in the beam that's 'bout his flaming ring,  
A dragons head appears, from our whose mouth  
Two flaming flakes of fire stretch east and west.

EDOL. And see, from forth the body of the star  
Seven smaller blazing streams directly point  
On this affrighted kingdom.

CADON. 'Tis a dreadful meteor.

EDWIN. And doth portend strange fears.

PRINCE. This is no crown of peace; this angry fire  
Hath something more to burn then Vortiger;  
If it alone were pointed at his fall,  
It would pull in his blasing piramids  
And be appeas'd, for Vortiger is dead.

EDOL. These never come without their large effects.

PRINCE. The will of heaven be done! our sorrow's this,  
We want a mistick Python to expound  
This fiery oracle.

CADON. Oh no, my lord,  
You have the best that ever Brittain bred;  
And durst I prophecy of your prophet, sir,  
None like him shall succeed him.

PRINCE. You mean Merlin?

CADON. True, sir, wonderous Merlin;  
He met us in the way, and did foretell  
The fortunes of this day successful to us.

EDWIN. He's sure about the camp; send for him, sir.

CADOR. He told the bloody Vortiger his fate,  
And truly too, and if I could give faith  
To any wizards skill, it should be Merlin.

Enter Merlin and Clown .

CADOR. And see, my lord, as if to satisfie  
Your highness pleasure, Merlin is come.

PRINCE. See,

The comet's in his eye, disturb him not.

EDOL. With what a piercing judgement he beholds it!

MERLIN. Whither will heaven and fate translate this kingdom?

What revolutions, rise and fall of nations

Is figur'd yonder in that star, that sings

The change of Brittians state and death of kings?

Ha! He's dead already; how swiftly mischief creeps!

Thy fatal end, sweet prince, even Merlin weeps.

PRINCE. He does foresee some evil, his action shows it,

For, e're he does expound, he weeps the story.

EDOL. There's another weeps too. Sirrah, dost thou understand what thou lamentst for?

CLOWN. No, sir, I am his uncle, and weep because my cousin weeps; flesh and blood cannot forbear.

PRINCE. Gentle Merlin, speak thy prophetick knowledge

In explanation of this fiery horror,

From which we gather from thy mounful tears

Much sorrow and disaster in it.

MERLIN. 'Tis true,

Fair prince, but you must hear the rest with patience.

PRINCE. I vow I will, tho' it portend my ruine.

MERLIN. There's no such fear.

This brought the fiery fall of Vortiger,

And yet not him alone: this day is faln

A king more good, the glory of our land,

The milde and gentle, sweet Aurelius.

PRINCE. Our brother!

EDWIN. Forefend it heaven!

MERLIN. He at his palace royal, sir,

At Winchester, this day is dead and poison'd.

CADOR. By whom? Or what means, Merlin?



MERLIN. By the traitorous Saxons.

EDOL. I ever fear'd as much: that devil Ostorius  
And the damn'd witch Artesia, sure, has done it.

PRINCE. Poison'd! oh, look further, gentle Merlin,  
Behold the star agen, and do but finde  
Revenge for me, though it cost thousand lives,  
And mine the foremost.

MERLIN. Comfort your self, the heavens have given it fully:  
All the portentious ills to you is told.  
Now hear a happy story, sir, from me  
To you and to your fair posterity.

CLOWN. Me thinks, I see something like a peel'd onion; it makes me weep  
agen.

MERLIN. Be silent, uncle, you'll be forc't else.

CLOWN. Can you not finde in the star, cousin, whether I can hold my  
tongue or no?

EDOL. Yes, I must cut it out.

CLOWN. Phu, you speak without book, sir, my cousin Merlin knows.

MERLIN. True, I must tie it up. Now speak your pleasure, uncle.

CLOWN. Hum, hum, hum, hum.

MERLIN. So, so.--

Now observe, my lord, and there behold,  
Above yon flame-hair'd beam that upward shoots,  
Appears a dragons head, out of whose mouth  
Two streaming lights point their flame-feather'd darts  
Contrary ways, yet both shall have their aims:  
Again behold, from the ignifirent body  
Seven splendant and illustrious rays are spred,  
All speaking heralds to this Brittain isle,  
And thus they are expounded: The dragons head  
Is the heroglyphick that figures out  
Your princely self, that here must reign a king;  
Those by-form'd fires that from the dragons mouth  
Shoot east and west, emblem two royal babes,  
Which shall proceed from you, a son and daughter.  
Her pointed constellation, northwest bending,  
Crowns her a queen in Ireland, of whom first springs  
That kingdoms title to the Brittain kings.

CLOWN. Hum, hum, hum.

MERLIN. But of your son thus fate and Merlin tells:

All after times shall fill their chronicles  
With fame of his renown, whose warlike sword  
Shall pass through fertile France and Germany;  
Nor shall his conquering foot be forc't to stand,  
Till Romes imperial wreath hath crown'd his fame  
With monarch of the west, from whose seven hills,  
With conquest and contributory kings,  
He back returns to enlarge the Brittain bounds,  
His heraldry adorn'd with thirteen crowns.

CLOWN. Hum, hum, hum.

MERLIN. He to the world shall add another Worthy,  
And, as a loadstone, for his prowess draw  
A train of marshal lovers to his court:  
It shall be then the best of knight-hoods honor,  
At Winchester to fill his castle hall,  
And at his royal table sit and feast  
In warlike orders, all their arms round hurl'd,  
As if they meant to circumscribe the world. [ He touches the Clowns mouth  
with his wand .

CLOWN. Hum, hum, hum: oh, that I could speak a little!

MERLIN. I know your mind, uncle; agen be silent. [ Strikes agen .

PRINCE. Thou speakst of wonders, Merlin; prithee, go on,  
Declare at full this constellation.

MERLIN. Those seven beams pointing downward, sir, betoken  
The troubles of this land, which then shall meet  
With other fate: war and dissension strives  
To make division, till seven kings agree  
To draw this kingdom to a hepterchy.

PRINCE. Thine art hath made such proof that we believe  
Thy words authentical: be ever neer us,  
My prophet and the guide of all my actions.

MERLIN. My service shall be faithful to your person,  
And all my studies for my countries safety.

CLOWN. Hum, hum, hum.

MERLIN. Come, you are releast, sir.

CLOWN. Cousin, pray, help me to my tongue agen; you do not mean I shall  
be dumb still, I hope?

MERLIN. Why, hast thou not thy tongue?

CLOWN. Ha! yes, I feel it now, I was so long dumb, I could not well tell  
whether I spake or no.

PRINCE. Is't thy advice we presently pursue  
 The bloody Saxons, that have slain my brother?  
 MERLIN. With your best speed, my lord;  
 Prosperity will keep you company.  
 CADOR. Take, then, your title with you, royal prince,  
 'Twill adde unto our strength: long live King Uter!  
 EDOL. Put the addition to't that heaven hath given you:  
 The dragon is your emblem, bear it bravely,  
 And so live long and ever happy, styl'd  
 Uter-Pendragon, lawful king of Brittain.  
 PRINCE. Thanks, Edol, we imbrace the name and title,  
 And in our sheild and standard shall the figure  
 Of a red dragon still be born before us,  
 To fright the bloody Saxons. Oh, my Aurelius,  
 Sweet rest thy soul; let thy disturbed spirit  
 Expect revenge; think what it would, it hath:  
 The dragon's coming in his fiery wrath. [ Exeunt .

## ACT V.

### SCENE I.

Thunder, then musick .

Enter Joan fearfully, the Devil following her .

JOAN. Hence, thou black horror! is thy lustful fire  
 Kindled agen? Not thy loud throated thunder  
 Nor thy adulterate infernal musick  
 Shall e're bewitch me more: oh, too too much  
 Is past already.  
 DEVIL. Why dost thou fly me?  
 I come a lover to thee, to imbrace  
 And gently twine thy body in mine arms.  
 JOAN. Out, thou hell-hound!  
 DEVIL. What hound so e're I be,  
 Fawning and sporting as I would with thee,  
 Why should I not be stroakt and plaid withal?  
 Will't thou not thank the lion might devour thee,  
 If he shall let thee pass?

JOAN. Yes, thou art he;

Free me, and Ile thank thee.

DEVIL. Why, whither wouldst?

I am at home with thee, thou art mine own,

Have we not charge of family together?

Where is your son?

JOAN. Oh, darkness cover me!

DEVIL. There is a pride which thou hast won by me,

The mother of a fame, shall never die.

Kings shall have need of written chronicles

To keep their names alive, but Merlin none;

Ages to ages shall like sabalists

Report the wonders of his name and glory,

While there are tongues and times to tell his story.

JOAN. Oh, rot my memory before my flesh,

Let him be called some hell or earth-bred monster,

That ne're had hapless woman for a mother!

Sweet death, deliver me! Hence from my sight:

Why shouldst thou now appear? I had no pride

Nor lustful thought about me, to conjure

And call thee to my ruine, when as at first

Thy cursed person became visible.

DEVIL. I am the same I was.

JOAN. But I am chang'd.

DEVIL. Agen Ile change thee to the same thou wert,

To quench my lust.--Come forth, by thunder led,

My coajutors in the spoils of mortals. [ Thunder .

Enter Spirit .

Claspe in your ebon arms that prize of mine,

Mount her as high as palled Hecate;

And on this rock Ile stand to cast up fumes

And darkness o're the blew fac'd firmament:

From Brittain and from Merlin Ile remove her.

They ne're shall meet agen.

JOAN. Help me some saving hand,

If not too late, I cry: let mercy come!

Enter Merlin .

MERLIN. Stay, you black slaves of night, let loose your hold,  
 Set her down safe, or by th'infernal Stix,  
 Ile binde you up with exorcisms so strong,  
 That all the black pentagoron of hell  
 Shall ne're release you. Save your selves and vanish! [ Exit Spirit .  
 DEVIL. Ha! What's he?

MERLIN. The childe has found his father. Do you not know me?

DEVIL. Merlin!

JOAN. Oh, help me, gentle son.

MERLIN. Fear not, they shall not hurt you.

DEVIL. Relievest thou her to disobey thy father?

MERLIN. Obedience is no lesson in your school;  
 Nature and kind to her commands my duty;  
 The part that you begot was against kinde,  
 So all I ow to you is to be unkind.

DEVIL. Ile blast thee, slave, to death, and on this rock  
 Stick thee an eternal monument.

MERLIN. Ha, ha, thy powers too weak; what art thou, Devil,  
 But an inferior lustful incubus,  
 Taking advantage of the wanton flesh,  
 Wherewith thou dost beguile the ignorant?  
 Put off the form of thy humanity,  
 And cral upon thy speckled belly, serpent,  
 Or Ile unclasp the jaws of Achoron,  
 And fix thee ever in the local fire.

DEVIL. Traitor to hell! curse that I e're begot thee!

MERLIN. Thou didst beget thy scourge: storm not, nor stir;  
 The power of Merlins art is all confirm'd  
 In the Fates decretals. Ile ransack hell,  
 And make thy masters bow unto my spells.  
 Thou first shall taste it.-- [ Thunder and lightning in the rock .  
 Tenibrarum princeps, devitiarum & infirorum deus, hunc incubum in ignis  
 eterni abisum accipite, aut in hoc carcere tenebroso in sempeternum  
 astringere mando.

[ The rock incloses him .

So! there beget earthquakes or some noisom damp,  
 For never shalt thou touch a woman more.--  
 How chear you, mother?

JOAN. Oh, now my son is my deliverer,  
Yet I must name him with my deepest sorrow. [ Alarum afar off .  
MERLIN. Take comfort now: past times are ne're recal'd;  
I did foresee your mischief, and prevent it.  
Hark, how the sounds of war now call me hence  
To aid Pendragon that in battail stands  
Against the Saxons, from whose aid  
Merlin must not be absent. Leave this soyl,  
And Ile conduct you to a place retir'd,  
Which I by art have rais'd, call'd Merlins Bower.  
There shall you dwell with solitary sighs,  
With grones and passions your companions,  
To weep away this flesh you have offended with,  
And leave all bare unto your aierial soul:  
And when you die, I will erect a monument  
Upon the verdant plains of Salisbury,  
No king shall have so high a sepulchre,  
With pendulous stones that I wil hang by art,  
Where neither lime nor mortar shalbe us'd,  
A dark enigma to the memory,  
For none shall have the power to number them,--  
A place that I will hollow for your rest,  
Where no night-hag shall walk, nor ware-wolf tread,  
Where Merlins mother shall be sepulcher'd. [ Exeunt .

## SCENE II.

Enter Donobert, Gloster, and Hermit .

DONOBERT. Sincerely, Gloster, I have told you all:  
My daughters are both vow'd to single life,  
And this day gone unto the nunnery,  
Though I begot them to another end,  
And fairly promis'd them in marriage,  
One to Earl Cador, t'other to your son,  
My worthy friend, the Earl of Gloster.  
Those lost, I am lost: they are lost, all's lost.  
Answer me this, then: Ist a sin to marry?  
HERMIT. Oh no, my lord.  
DONOBERT. Go to, then, Ile go no further with you;

I persuade you to no ill; persuade you, then,  
That I persuade you well.  
GLOSTER. 'Twill be a good office in you, sir.

Enter Cador and Edwin .

DONOBERT. Which since they thus neglect,  
My memory shall lose them now for ever.--  
See, see, the noble lords, their promis'd husbands!  
Had fate so pleas'd, you might have call'd me father.  
EDWIN. Those hopes are past, my lord; for even this minute  
We saw them both enter the monastery,  
Secluded from the world and men for ever.  
CADOR. 'Tis both our griefs we cannot, sir:  
But from the king take you the times joy from us:  
The Saxon king Ostorius slain and Octa fled,  
That woman-fury, Queen Artesia,  
Is fast in hold, and forc't to re-deliver  
London and Winchester (which she had fortifi'd)  
To princely Uter, lately styl'd Pendragon,  
Who now triumphantly is marching hither  
To be invested with the Brittain crown.  
DONOBERT. The joy of this shall banish from my breast  
All thought that I was father to two children,  
Two stubborn daughters, that have left me thus.  
Let my old arms embrace, and call you sons,  
For, by the honor of my fathers house,  
I'll part my estate most equally betwixt you.  
EDWIN, CADOR. Sir, y'are most noble!

Florish . Trompet . Enter Edol with drum and colours, Oswald bearing the  
standard, Toclio the sheild, with the red dragon pictur'd in'em, two Bishops  
with the crown, Prince Uter, Merlin, Artesia bound, Guard, and Clown .

PRINCE. Set up our sheild and standard, noble soldiers.  
We have firm hope that, tho' our dragon sleep,  
Merlin will us and our fair kingdom keep.  
CLOWN. As his uncle lives, I warrant you.  
GLOSTER. Happy restorer of the Brittain's fame,  
Uprising sun, let us salute thy glory:

Ride in a day perpetual about us,  
And no night be in thy thrones zodiack.  
Why do we stay to binde those princely browes  
With this imperial honor?

PRINCE. Stay, noble Gloster:

That monster first must be expel'd our eye,  
Or we shall take no joy in it.

DONOBERT. If that be hindrance, give her quick judgement,  
And send her hence to death; she has long deserv'd it.

EDOL. Let my sentence stand for all: take her hence,  
And stake her carcase in the burning sun,  
Till it be parcht and dry, and then fley off  
Her wicked skin, and stuff the pelt with straw  
To be shown up and down at fairs and markets:  
Two pence a piece to see so foul a monster  
Will be a fair monopoly, and worth the begging.

ARTESIA. Ha, ha, ha!

EDOL. Dost laugh, Erictho?

ARTESIA. Yes, at thy poor invention.

Is there no better torture-monger?

DONOBERT. Burn her to dust.

ARTESIA. That's a phoenix death, and glorious.

EDOL. I, that's to good for her.

PRINCE. Alive she shall be buried, circled in a wall.

Thou murrress of a king, there starve to death.

ARTESIA. Then Ile starve death when he comes for his prey,  
And i'th' mean time Ile live upon your curses.

EDOL. I, 'tis diet good enough; away with her.

ARTESIA. With joy, my best of wishes is before;  
Thy brother's poison'd, but I wanted more. [ Exit .

PRINCE. Why does our prophet Merlin stand apart,  
Sadly observing these our ceremonies,

And not applaud our joys with thy hid knowledge?  
Let thy divining art now satisfie

Some part of my desires; for well I know,

'Tis in thy power to show the full event,

That shall both end our reign and chronicle.

Speak, learned Merlin, and resolve my fears,

Whether by war we shal expel the Saxons,

Or govern what we hold with beauteous peace



In Wales and Brittain?

MERLIN. Long happiness attend Pendragons reign!  
What heaven decrees, fate hath no power to alter:  
The Saxons, sir, will keep the ground they have,  
And by supplying numbers still increase,  
Till Brittain be no more. So please your grace,  
I will in visible apparitions  
Present you prophecies which shall concern  
Succeeding princes which my art shall raise,  
Till men shall call these times the latter days.

PRINCE. Do it, my Merlin,  
And crown me with much joy and wonder.

Merlin strikes . Hoebots . Enter a king in armour, his sheild quarter'd with thirteen crowns . At the other door enter divers princes who present their crowns to him at his feet, and do him homage; then enters Death and strikes him; he, growing sick, crowns Constantine . Exeunt .

MERLIN. This king, my lord, presents your royal son,  
Who in his prime of years shall be so fortunate,  
That thirteen several princes shall present  
Their several crowns unto him, and all kings else  
Shall so admire his fame and victories,  
That they shall all be glad,  
Either through fear or love, to do him homage;  
But death (who neither favors the weak nor valliant)  
In the midst of all his glories soon shall seize him,  
Scarcely permitting him to appoint one  
In all his purchased kingdoms to succeed him.

PRINCE. Thanks to our prophet  
For this so wish'd for satisfaction;  
And hereby now we learn that always fate  
Must be observ'd, what ever that decree:  
All future times shall still record this story,  
Of Merlin's learned worth and Arthur's glory. [ Exeunt Omnes .

## THE BRIDAL OF TRIERMALN, BY SIR WALTER SCOTT [1813]

### Introduction

#### I.

Come Lucy! while 'tis morning hour  
The woodland brook we needs must pass;  
So, ere the sun assume his power,  
We shelter in our poplar bower,  
Where dew lies long upon the flower,  
Though vanish'd from the velvet grass.  
Curbing the stream, this stony ridge  
May serve us for a silvan bridge;  
For here, compell'd to disunite,  
Round petty isles the runnels glide,  
And chafing off their puny spite,  
The shallows murmurers waste their might,  
Yielding to footstep free and light  
A dry-shod pass from side to side.

#### II.

Nay, why this hesitating pause?  
And, Lucy, as thy step withdraws,  
Why sidelong eye the streamlet's brim?  
Titania's foot without a slip,  
Like, thine, though timid, light, and slim,  
From stone to stone might safely trip,  
Nor risk the glow-worm clasp to dip  
That binds her slipper's silken rim.  
Or trust thy lover's strength; nor fear  
That this same stalwart arm of mine,  
Which could yon oak's prone trunk uprear,  
Shall shrink beneath, the burden dear

Of form so slender, light, and fine;  
So! now, the danger dared at last,  
Look back, and smile at perils past!

### III.

And now we reach the favourite glade,  
Paled in copsewood, cliff, and stone,  
Where never harsher sounds invade,  
To break affection's whispering tone,  
Than the deep breeze that waves the shade,  
Than the small brooklet's feeble moan.  
Come! rest thee on thy wonted seat;  
Moss'd is the stone, the turf is green,  
A place where lovers best may meet  
Who would not that their love be seen.  
The boughs, that dim the summer sky,  
Shall hide us from each lurking spy,  
That fain would spread the invidious tale,  
How Lucy of the lofty eye,  
Noble in birth, in fortunes high,  
She for whom lords and barons sigh,  
Meets her poor Arthur in the dale.

### IV.

How deep that blush! -- how deep that sigh!  
And why does Lucy shun mine eye?  
Is it because that crimson draws  
Its colour from some secret cause,  
Some hidden movement of the breast  
She would not that her Arthur guess'd?  
O! quicker far is lovers' ken  
Than the dull glance of common men,  
And, by strange sympathy, can spell  
The thoughts the loved one will not tell!  
And mine, in Lucy's blush, saw met  
The hues of pleasure and regret;  
Pride mingled in the sigh her voice,  
And shared with Love the crimson glow;

Well pleased that thou art Arthur's choice,  
Yet shamed thine own is placed so low:  
Thou turn'st thy self-confessing cheek,  
As if to meet the breeze's cooling:  
Then, Lucy, hear thy tutor speak,  
For Love, too, has his hours of schooling.

#### V.

Too oft my anxious eye has spied  
That secret grief thou fain wouldst hide,  
The passing pang of humbled pride;  
Too oft, when through the splendid hall,  
The load-star of each heart and eye,  
My fair one leads the glittering ball,  
Will her stol'n glance on Arthur fall,  
With such a blush and such a sigh!  
Thou wouldst not yield, for wealth or rank,  
The heart thy worth and beauty won,  
Nor leave me on this mossy bank,  
To meet a rival on a throne:  
Why, then, should vain repinings rise,  
That to thy lover fate denies  
A nobler name, a wide domain,  
A Baron's birth, a menial train,  
Since Heaven assign'd him, for his part,  
A lyre, a falchion, and a heart?

#### VI.

My sword -- its master must be dumb;  
But, when a soldier names my name,  
Approach, my Lucy! fearless come,  
Nor dread to hear of Arthur's shame.  
My heart! 'mid all yon courtly crew  
Of lordly rank and lofty line,  
Is there to love and honour true,  
That boasts a pulse so warm as mine?  
They praised thy diamonds' lustre rare --  
Match'd with thine eyes, I thought it faded;

They praised the pearls that bound thy hair--  
 I saw only the locks they braided;  
 They talk'd of wealthy dower and land,  
 And titles of high birth the token --  
 I thought of Lucy's heart and hand,  
 Nor knew the sense of what was spoken.  
 And yet, if rank'd in Fortune's roll,  
 I might have learn'd their choice unwise,  
 Who rate the dower above the soul,  
 And Lucy's diamonds o'er her eyes.

### VII.

My lyre -- it is an idle toy,  
 That borrows accents not its own,  
 Like warbler of Colombian sky,  
 That sings in a mimic tone.  
 Ne'er did it sound o'er sainted well,  
 Nor boasts it aught of Border spell;  
 It strings no feudal slogan pour,  
 Its heroes draw no broad claymore;  
 No shouting clans applauses raise,  
 Because it sung their father's praise;  
 On Scottish moor, or English down,  
 It ne'er was graced with fair renown;  
 Nor won -- best meed to minstrel true --  
 One favouring smile from fair BUCCLEUCH!  
 By one poor streamlet sounds its tone,  
 And heard by one dear maid alone.

### VIII.

But, if thou bid'st, these tones shall tell  
 Of errant knight, and damozelle;  
 Of a dread knot a Wizard tied,  
 In punishment of maiden's pride,  
 In notes of marvel and of fear,  
 That best may charm romantic ear.  
 For Lucy loves (like COLLINS, ill-starred name,  
 Whose lay's requital was that tardy fame,

Who bound no laurel round his living head,  
Should hang it o'er his monument when dead)  
For Lucy loves to tread enchanted strand,  
And thread, like him, the maze of fairy land;  
Of golden battlements to view the gleam,  
And slumber soft by some Elysian stream;  
Such lays she loves; and, such my Lucy's choice,  
What other song can claim her Poet's voice?

### Canto First.

#### I.

Where is the maiden of mortal strain  
That may match with the Baron of Triermain?  
She must be lovely, and constant, and kind,  
Holy and pure, and humble of mind,  
Blithe of cheer, and gentle of mood,  
Courteous, and generous, and noble of blood,  
Lovely as the sun's first ray  
When it breaks the clouds of an April day;  
Constant and true as the widow'd dove,  
Kind as a minstrel that sings of love;  
Pure as the fountain in rocky cave,  
Where never sunbeam kiss'd the wave;  
Humble as a maiden that loves in vain,  
Holy as a hermit's vesper strain;  
Gentle as a breeze that but whispers and dies,  
Yet blithe as the light leaves that dance in its sighs;  
Courteous as monarch the morn he is crown'd,  
Generous as spring-dews that bless the glad ground;  
Noble her blood as the currents that met  
In the veins of the noblest Plantagenet:  
Such must her form be, her mood and her strain,  
That shall match with Sir Roland of Triermain.

#### II.

Sir Roland de Vaux he hath laid him to sleep,  
His blood it was fever'd, his breathing was deep.

He had been pricking against the Scot,  
The foray was long, and the skirmish hot;  
His dinted helm and his buckler's plight  
Bore token of a stubborn fight.  
All in the castle must hold them still,  
Harpers must lull him to his rest  
With the slow soft tunes he loves the best,  
Till sleep sink down upon his breast  
Like the dew on a summer hill.

### III.

It was the dawn of an autumn day;  
The sun was struggling with a frost-fog grey,  
That like a silvery crape was spread  
Round Skiddaw's dim and distant head,  
And faintly gleam'd each painted pane  
Of the lordly halls of Triermain,  
When that Baron bold awoke.  
Starting he woke, and loudly did call,  
Rousing his menials in bower and hall,  
While hastily he spoke.

### IV.

'Hearken, my minstrels! which of ye all  
Touch'd his harp with that dying fall,  
So sweet, so soft, so faint,  
It seem'd an angel's whisper'd call  
To an expiring saint?  
And harken, my merry men! what time or where  
Did she pass, that maid with her heavenly brow,  
With her look so sweet and her eyes so fair,  
And her graceful step and her angel air,  
And the eagle plume in her dark-brown hair,  
That pass'd from my bower e'en now?'

### V.

Answer'd him Richard de Bretville -- he

Was chief of the Baron's minstrelsy:  
'Silent, noble chieftain, we  
Have sat since midnight close,  
When such lulling sounds as the brooklet sings  
Murmur'd from our melting strings  
And hush'd you to repose.  
Had a harp-note sounded here  
It had caught my watchful ear,  
Although it fell as faint and shy  
As bashful maiden's half-form'd sigh,  
When she thinks her lover near.'  
Answer'd Philip of Fastwaite tall --  
He kept guard in the outer hall:  
'Since at eve our watch took post,  
Not a foot has thy portal cross'd;  
Else had I heard the steps, though low  
And light they fell, as when the earth receives,  
In morn of frost, the wither'd leaves  
That drop when no winds blow.'

## VI.

'Then come thou hither, Henry, my page,  
Whom I saved from the sack of Hermitage,  
When that dark castle, tower, and spire,  
Rose to the skies a pile of fire.  
And redden'd all the Nine-stane Hill,  
And the shrieks of death, that wildly broke  
Through devouring flame and smothering smoke,  
Made the warrior's heart-blood chill.  
The trustiest thou of all my train,  
My fleetest courser thou must rein,  
And ride to Lyulph's tower,  
And from the Baron of Treirmain  
Greet well that sage of power.  
He is sprung from Druid sires,  
And British bards that tuned their lyres  
To Arthur's and Pendragon's praise,  
And his who sleeps at Dunmailraise.  
Gifted like his gifted race,



He the characters can trace,  
Graven deep in elder time,  
Upon Helvellyn's cliffs sublime;  
Sign and sigil well doth he know,  
And can bode of weal and woe,  
Of kingdoms' fall, and fate of wars,  
From mystic dreams and course of stars.  
He shall tell if middle earth,  
To that enchanting shape gave birth,  
Of if t'was but an airy thing,  
Such as fantastic slumbers bring,  
Fram'd from the rainbow's varying dyes  
Or fading tints of western skies.  
For, by the Blessed Rood I swear,  
If that fair form breathe vital air,  
No other maiden by my side  
Shall ever rest De Vaux's bride!

#### VII.

The faithful Page he mounts his steed,  
And soon he cross'd green Irthing's mead,  
Dash'd o'er Kirkoswald's verdant plain,  
And Eden barr'd his course in vain.  
He pass'd red Penrith's Table Round,  
For feats of chivalry renown'd.  
Left Mayburgh's mound and stones of power,  
By Druid's raised in magic hour,  
And traced the Eamont's winding way,  
Till Ulfo's lake beneath him lay.

#### VIII.

Onward he rode, the pathway still  
Winding betwixt the lake and hill;  
Till, on the fragment of a rock,  
Struck from its base by lightning shock,  
He saw the hoary Sage;  
The silver moss and lichen twined,  
With fern and deer-hair check'd and lined,

A cushion fit for age;  
And o'er him shook the aspen-tree,  
A restless, rustling canopy.  
Then sprung young Henry from his selle,  
And greeted Lyulph grave;  
And then his master's tale did tell,  
And then for counsel crave.  
The Man of Years mused long and deep,  
Of time's lost treasures taking keep,  
And then, as rousing from a sleep,  
His solemn answer gave.

### IX.

'That maid is born of middle earth,  
And may of man be won,  
Though there have glided since her birth  
Five hundred years and one,  
But where's the knight in all the north  
That dare the adventure follow forth,  
So perilous to knightly worth,  
In the valley of Saint John?  
Listen, youth, to what I tell,  
And bind it on thy memory well;  
Nor muse that I commence the rhyme  
Far distant 'mid the wrecks of time.  
The mystic tale, by bard and sage,  
Is handed down from Merlin's age.

### X.

#### LYULPH'S TALE

'King Arthur has ridden from merry Carlisle  
When Pentecost was o'er:  
He journey'd like errant-knight the while,  
And sweetly the summer sun did smile  
On mountain, moss, and moor.  
Above his solitary track  
Rose Glaramara's ridgy back,

Amid whose yawning gulfs the sun  
Cast umber'd radiance red and dun,  
Though never sunbeam could discern  
The surface of that sable tarn,  
In whose black mirror you may spy  
The stars, while noontide lights the sky.  
The gallant King he skirted still  
The margin of that mighty hill;  
Rock upon rocks incumbent hung,  
And torrents down the gullies flung,  
Join'd the rude river that brawl'd on,  
Recoiling now from crag and stone,  
Now diving deep from human ken,  
And raving down its darksome glen.  
The Monarch judg'd this desert wild,  
With such romantic ruin piled,  
Was theatre by Nature's hand  
For feat of high achievement plann'd.

## XI.

'O rather he chose, that Monarch bold,  
On vent'rous quest to ride,  
In plate and mail, by wood and wold,  
Than, with ermine trapp'd and cloth of gold,  
In princely bower to bide:  
The bursting crash of a foeman's spear  
As it shiver'd against his mail,  
Was merrier music to his ear  
Than courtier's whisper'd tale:  
And the clash of Caliburn more dear,  
When on the hostile casque it rung,  
Than all the lays  
To their monarch's praise  
That the harpers of Reged sung.  
He loved better to rest by wood or river,  
Than in bower of his bride, Dame Guenever,  
For he left that lady, so lovely of cheer,  
To follow adventures of danger and fear;  
And the frank-hearted Monarch full little did wot

That she smiled in his absence, on brave Lancelot.

## XII.

'He rode, till over down and dell  
The shade more broad and deeper fell;  
And though around the mountain's head  
Flow'd streams of purple, and gold, and red,  
Dark at the base, unblest by beam  
Frown'd the black rocks, and roar'd the stream.  
With toil the King his way pursued  
By lonely Threlkeld's waste and wood,  
Till on his course obliquely shone  
The narrow valley of SAINT JOHN,  
Down sloping to the western sky,  
Where lingering sunbeams love to lie.  
Right glad to feel those beams again,  
The King drew up his charger's rein;  
With gauntlet raised he screen'd his sight,  
As dazzled with the level light,  
And, from beneath his glove of mail,  
Scann'd at his ease his the lovely vale,  
While 'gainst the sun his armour bright  
Gleam'd ruddy like the beacon's light.

## XIII.

'Paled in by many a lofty hill,  
The narrow dale lay smooth and still,  
And, down its verdant bosom led,  
A winding brooklet found its bed.  
But, midmost of the vale, a mound  
Arose with airy turrets crown'd,  
Buttress, and rampire's circling bound  
And mighty keep and tower;  
Seem'd some primeval giant's hand  
The castle's massive walls had plann'd,  
A ponderous bulwark to withstand  
Ambitious Nimrod's power.  
Above the moated entrance slung,

The balanced drawbridge trembling hung,  
As jealous of a foe;  
Wicket of oak, as iron hard,  
With iron studded, clench'd, and barr'd,  
And prong'd portcullis, join'd to guard  
The gloomy pass below.  
But the grey walls, no banners crown'd,  
Upon the watch-tower's airy round  
No warder stood his horn to sound,  
No guard beside the drawbridge was found,  
And, where the Gothic gateway frown'd  
Glanced neither bill nor bow.

**XIV.**

'Beneath the castle's gloomy pride  
In ample round did Arthur ride  
Three times; nor living thing he spied,  
Nor heard a living sound,  
Save that, awakening from her dream,  
The owlet now began to scream,  
In concert with the rushing stream,  
That wash'd the battled mound.  
He lighted from his goodly steed,  
And left him to graze on bank and mead;  
And slowly he climb'd the narrow way  
That reach'd the entrance grim and grey,  
And he stood the outward arch below,  
And his bugle-horn prepared to blow,  
In summons blithe and bold,  
Deeming to rouse from iron sleep  
The guardian of this dismal Keep,  
Which well he guess'd the hold  
Of wizard stern, or goblin grim,  
Or pagan of gigantic limb,  
The tyrant of the wold.

**XV.**

'The ivory bugle's golden tip

Twice touch'd the Monarch's manly lip,  
And twice his hand withdrew.  
Think not but Arthur's heart was good!  
His shield was cross'd by the blessed rood,  
Had a pagan host before him stood  
He had charged them through and through;  
Yet the silence of that ancient place  
Sunk on his heart, and he paused a space  
Ere yet his horn he blew.  
But, instant as its 'larum rung,  
The castle gate was open flung,  
Portcullis rose with crashing groan  
Full harshly up its groove of stone;  
And down the trembling drawbridge cast;  
The vaulted arch before him lay,  
With nought to bar the gloomy way,  
And onward Arthur paced, with hand  
On Caliburn's resistless brand.

#### XVI.

'An hundred torches, flashing bright,  
Dispell'd at once the gloomy night  
That lour'd along the walls,  
And show'd the King's astonish'd sight  
The inmates of the halls.  
Nor wizard stern, nor goblin grim,  
Nor giant huge of form and limb,  
Nor heathen knight, was there;  
But the cressets, which odours flung aloft,  
Show'd by their yellow light and soft,  
A band of damsels fair.  
Onward they came, like summer wave  
That dances to the shore;  
An hundred voices welcome gave,  
And welcome o'er and o'er!  
An hundred lovely hands assail  
The bucklers of the Monarch's mail,  
And busy labour'd to unhasp  
Rivet of steel and iron clasp,

One wrapp'd him in a mantle fair,  
And one flung odours on his hair;  
His short curl'd ringlets one smooth'd down,  
One wreath'd them in a myrtle crown.  
A bride upon her wedding-day  
Was tended ne'er by troop so gay.

**XVII.**

'Loud laugh'd they all,-- the King, in vain,  
With questions task'd the giddy train;  
Let him entreat, or crave, or call,  
'Twas one reply -- loud laugh'd they all.  
Then o'er him mimic chains they fling,  
Framed of the fairest flowers of spring.  
While some of their gentle force unite  
Onwards to drag the wondering knight;  
Some, bolder, urge his pace with blows,  
Dealt with the lily or the rose.  
Behind him were in triumph borne  
The warlike arms he late had worn.  
Four of the train combined to rear  
The terrors of Tintadgel's spear;  
Two, laughing at their lack of strength,  
Dragg'd Caliburn in cumbrous length;  
One, while she aped a martial stride,  
Placed on her brows the helmit's pride;  
Then scream'd, 'twixt laughter and surprise,  
To feel its depth o'erwhelm her eyes.  
With revel-shout, and triumph-song,  
Thus gaily march'd the giddy throng.

**XVIII.**

'Through many a gallery and hall  
They led, I ween, their royal thrall;  
At length, beneath a fair arcade  
Their march and song at once they staid.  
The eldest maiden of the band  
(The lovely maid was scarce eighteen)

Raised, with imposing air, her hand  
And reverent silence did command,  
On entrance of their Queen,  
And they were mute, -- But as a glance  
They steal on Arthur's countenance  
Bewilder'd with surprise,  
Their smother'd mirth again 'gan speak,  
In archly dimpled chin and cheek,  
And laughter-lighted eyes.

**XIX.**

'The attributes of those high days  
Now only live in minstrel lays;  
For Nature, now exhausted, still  
Was then profuse of good and ill.  
Strength was gigantic, valour high,  
And wisdom soar'd beyond the sky,  
And beauty had such matchless beam  
As lights not now a lover's dream.  
Yet e'en in that romantic age,  
Ne'er were such charms by mortal seen,  
As Arthur's dazzled eyes engage,  
When forth on that enchanted stage,  
With glittering train of maid and page,  
Advanced the castle's Queen!  
While up the hall she slowly pass'd  
Her dark eye on the King she cast,  
That flash'd expression strong;  
The longer dwelt that lingering look,  
Her cheek the livelier colour took,  
And scarce the shame-faced King could brook  
The gaze that lasted long.  
A sage, who had that look espied,  
Where kindling passion strove with pride,  
Had whispered, "Prince, beware!  
From the chafed tiger rend the prey,  
Rush on the lion when at bay  
Bar the fell dragon's blighted way,  
But shun that lovely snare!"



**XX.**

'At once, that inward strife suppress'd,  
The dame approach'd her warlike guest,  
With greeting in that fair degree,  
Where female pride and courtesy  
Are blended with such passing art  
As awes at once and charms the heart.  
A courtly welcome first she gave,  
Then of his goodness 'gan to crave  
Construction fair and true  
Of her light maidens' idle mirth  
Who drew from lovely glens their birth,  
Nor knew to pay to stranger worth  
And dignity their due;  
Then she pray'd that he would rest  
That night her castle's honour'd guest.  
The Monarch meetly thanks express'd;  
The banquet rose at her behest;  
With lay and tale, and laugh and jest,  
Apace the evening flew.

**XXI.**

'The Lady sate the Monarch by,  
Now in her turn abash'd and shy,  
And with indifference seem'd to hear  
They toys he whisper'd in her ear.  
Her bearing modest was and fair,  
Yet shadows of constraint were there,  
That show'd an over-cautious care  
Some inward thought to hide;  
Oft did she pause in full reply,  
And oft cast down her large dark eye,  
Oft check'd the soft voluptuous sigh  
That heav'd her bosom's pride.  
Slight symptoms these, but shepherds know  
How hot the mid-day sun shall glow  
From the midst of morning sky;

And so the wily Monarch guess'd  
That this assumed restraint express'd  
More ardent passions in the breast  
Than ventured to the eye.  
Closer he press'd, while beakers rang,  
While maidens laugh'd and minstrels sang,  
Still closer to her ear --  
But why pursue the common tale?  
Or wherefore show how knights prevail  
When ladies dare to hear?  
Or wherefore, trace, from what slight cause  
Its source one tyrant passion draws,  
Till, mastering all within,  
Where lives the man that has not tried  
How mirth can into folly glide,  
And folly into sin?

**Canto Second.**  
**Lyulph's Tale, Continued.**

I.

'Another day, another day,  
And yet another, glides away!  
The Saxon stern, the pagan Dane,  
Maraud on Britain's shores again.  
Arthur, of Christendom the flower,  
Lies loitering in a lady's bower;  
The horn, that foemen wont to fear,  
Sounds but to wake the Cumbrian deer,  
And Caliburn, the British pride,  
Hangs useless by a lover's side.

II.

'Another day, another day,  
And yet another, glides away!  
Heroic plans in pleasure drown'd,  
He thinks not of the Table Round;  
In lawless love dissolved his life,

He thinks not of his beauteous wife:  
Better he loves to snatch a flower  
From the bosom of his paramour,  
Than from a Saxon knight to wrest  
The honours of his heathen crest!  
Better to wreathe, 'mid tresses brown,  
The heron's plume her hawk struck down,  
Than o'er the alter give to flow  
The banners of a Paynim foe.  
Thus, week by week, and day by day,  
His life inglorious glides away:  
But she, that soothes his dream, with fear  
Beholds his hour of waking near!

### III.

'Much force have mortal charms to stay  
Our peace in Virtue's toilsome way;  
But Guendolen's might far outshine  
Each maid of merely mortal line.  
Her mother was of human birth,  
Her sire a Genie of the earth,  
In days of old deem'd to preside  
O'er lovers' wiles and beauty's pride,  
By youths and virgins worshipp'd long  
With festive dance and choral song,  
Till, when the cross to Britain came,  
On heathen alters died the flame.  
Now, deep in Wastdale solitude,  
The downfall of his rights he rued,  
And, born of his resentment heir,  
He train'd to guile that lady fair,  
To sink in slothful sin and shame  
The champions of the Christian name.  
Well skill'd to keep vain thoughts alive,  
And all to promise, nought to give;  
The timid youth had hope in store,  
The bold and pressing gain'd no more.  
As wilder'd children leave their home  
After the rainbow's arch to roam,

Her lovers barter'd fair esteem,  
Faith, fame, and honour, for a dream.

#### IV.

'Her sire's soft arts the soul to tame  
She practised thus, till Arthur came;  
Then frail humanity had part,  
And all the mother claim'd her heart.  
Forgot each rule her father gave,  
Sunk from a princess to a slave,  
Too late must Guendolen deplore;  
He, that has all, can hope no more!  
Now must she see her lover strain,  
At every turn, her feeble chain;  
Watch, to new-bind each knot, and shrink  
To view each fast-decaying link.  
Art she invokes to Nature's aid,  
Her vest to zone, her locks to braid;  
Each varied pleasure heard her call,  
The feast, the tourney, and the ball:  
Her storied lore she next applies,  
Taxing her mind to aid her eyes;  
Now more than mortal wise, and then  
In female softness sunk again;  
Now, raptured, with each wish complying,  
With feigned reluctance now denying:  
Each charm she varied, to retain  
A varying heart, and all in vain!

#### V.

'Thus in the garden's narrow bound,  
Flank'd by some castle's Gothic round,  
Fain would the artist's skill provide  
The limits of his realms to hide.  
The walks in labyrinths he twines,  
Shade after shade with skill combines,  
With many a varied flowery knot,  
And copse, and arbour, decks the spot,

Tempting the hasty foot to stay,  
And linger on the lovely way;  
Vain art! vain hope! 'tis fruitless all!  
At length we reach the bounding wall,  
And, sick of flower and trim-dress'd tree,  
Long for rough glades and forest free.

## VI.

'Three summer months had scantly flown  
When Arthur, in embarrass'd tone,  
Spoke of his liegemen and his throne;  
Said, all too long had been his stay,  
And duties, which a monarch sway,  
Duties, unknown to humbler men,  
Must tear her knight from Guendolen.  
She listen'd silently the while,  
Her mood express'd in bitter smile;  
Beneath her eye must Arthur quail,  
And oft resume the unfinish'd tale.  
Confessing, by his downcast eye,  
The wrong he sought to justify.  
He ceased. A moment mute she gazed,  
And then her looks to heaven she rais'd;  
One palm her temples veiled, to hide  
The tear that sprung in spite of pride;  
The other for an instant press'd  
The foldings of her silken vest!

## VII.

'At her reproachful sign and look,  
The hint the Monarch's conscience took.  
Eager he spoke -- "No, lady, no!  
Deem not of British Arthur so,  
Nor think he can deserter prove  
To the dear pledge of mutual love.  
I swear by sceptre and by sword,  
As belted knight and Britain's lord,  
That if a boy shall claim my care,

That boy is born a kingdom's heir;  
But if a maiden Fate allows,  
To choose that maid a fitting spouse,  
A summer-day in lists shall strive  
My knights, the bravest knights alive,  
And he, the best and bravest tried,  
Shall Arthur's daughter claim for bride."  
He spoke, with voice resolved and high;  
The lady deign'd him not reply.

### VIII.

'At dawn of morn, ere on the brake  
His matins did a warbler make,  
Or stirr'd his wing to brush away  
A single dewdrop from the spray,  
Ere yet a sunbeam, through the mist,  
The castle-battlements had kiss'd,  
The gates revolve, the drawbridge falls,  
And Arthur sallies from the walls.  
Doff'd his soft garb of Persia's loom,  
And steel from spur to helmet-plume,  
His Lybian steed full proudly trode,  
And joyful neigh'd beneath his load.  
The Monarch gave a passing sigh  
To penitence and pleasures by,  
When, lo! to his astonish'd ken  
Appear'd the form of Guendolen.

### IX.

'Beyond the outmost wall she stood,  
Attired like huntress of the wood:  
Sandall'd her feet, her ankles bare,  
And eagle-plumage deck'd her hair;  
Firm was her look, her bearing bold,  
And in her hand a cup of gold.  
"Thou goest!" she said, "and ne'er again  
Must we two meet, in joy or pain.  
Full fain would I this hour delay,

Though weak the wish -- yet, wilt thou stay?  
No! thou look'st forward. Still, attend!  
Part we like lover and like friend."  
She raised the cup -- "Not this the juice  
The sluggish vines of earth produce;  
Pledge we, at parting, in the draught  
Which Genii love!" She said, and quaff'd;  
And strange unwonted lustres fly  
From her flush'd cheek and sparkling eye.

### X.

'The courteous Monarch bent him low,  
And, stooping down from saddlebow,  
Lifted the cup, in act to drink.  
A drop escaped the goblet's brink --  
Intense as liquid fire from hell,  
Upon the charger's neck it fell.  
Screaming with agony and fright,  
He bolted twenty feet upright!  
The peasant still can show the dint  
Where his hoofs lighted on the flint.  
From Arthur's hand the goblet flew,  
Scattering a shower of fiery dew,  
That burn'd and blighted where it fell!  
The frantic steed rush'd up the dell,  
As whistles from the bow the reed;  
Nor bit nor rein could check his speed  
Until he gain'd the hill;  
Then breath and sinew fail'd apace  
And, reeling from the desperate race,  
He stood, exhausted, still.  
The Monarch, breathless and amazed,  
Back on the fatal castle gazed:  
Nor tower nor donjon could he spy,  
Darkening against the morning sky;  
But, on the spot where they once frown'd,  
The lonely streamlet brawl'd around  
A tufted knoll, where dimly shone  
Fragments of rock and rifted stone.

Musing on this strange hap a while,  
The King wends back to fair Carlisle;  
And cares, that cumber royal sway,  
Wore memory of the past away.

### XI.

'Full fifteen years and more were sped,  
Each brought new wreaths to Arthur's head.  
Twelve bloody fields, with glory fought,  
The Saxons to subjection brought:  
Rython, the mighty giant, slain  
By his good brand, relieved Bretagne:  
The Pictish Gillamore in fight,  
And Roman Lucius, own'd his might;  
And wide were through the world renown'd  
The glories of his Table Round.  
Each knight who sought adventurous fame,  
To the bold court of Britain came,  
And all who suffer'd causeless wrong,  
From tyrant proud, or faitour strong,  
Sought Arthur's presence, to complain,  
Nor there for aid implored in vain.

### XII.

'For this the King, with pomp and pride,  
Held solemn court at Whitsuntide,  
And summon'd Prince and Peer,  
All who owed homage for their land  
Or who craved knighthood from his hand,  
Or who had succour to demand,  
To come from far and near.  
At such high tide were glee and game  
Mingled with feats of martial fame,  
For many a stranger champion came  
In lists to break a spear;  
And not a knight in Arthur's host,  
Save that he trode on some foreign coast,  
But at this Feast of Pentecost



Before him must appear.  
Ah, Minstrels! when the Table Round  
Arose, with all its warriors crown'd,  
There was a theme for bards to sound  
In triumph to their string!  
Five hundred years are past and gone,  
But Time shall draw his dying groan  
Ere he behold the British throne  
Begirt with such a ring!

### XIII.

'The heralds named the appointed spot,  
As Caerleon or Camelot,  
Or Carlisle fair and free.  
At Penrith, now, the feast was set,  
And in fair Eamont's vale were met  
The flower of Chivalry.  
There Galahad sate with manly grace,  
Yet maiden meekness in his face;  
There Morolt of the iron mace,  
And love-lorn Tristrem there:  
And Dinadam with lively glance,  
And Lanval with the fairy lance,  
And Mordred with his look askance,  
Brunor and Bevidere.  
Why should I tell of numbers more?  
Sir Cay, Sir Banier, Sir Bore,  
Sir Carodac the keen,  
The gentle Gawain's courteous lore,  
Hector de Mares and Pellinore,  
And Lancelot, that evermore  
Look'd stol'n-wise on the Queen.

### XIV.

'When wine and mirth did most abound,  
And harpers play'd their blithest round,  
A shrilly trumpet shook the ground,  
And marshals cleared the ring;

A maiden, on a palfrey white,  
Heading a band of damsels bright,  
Paced through the circle, to alight  
And kneel before the King.  
Arthur, with strong emotion, saw  
Her graceful boldness check'd by awe,  
Her dress, like huntress of the wold,  
Her bow and baldric trapp'd with gold,  
Her sandall'd feet, her ankles bare,  
And the eagle-plume that deck'd her hair.  
Graceful her veil she backward flung;  
The King, as from his seat he sprung,  
Almost cried "Guendolen!"  
But 'twas a face more frank and wild,  
Betwixt the woman and the child,  
Where less of magic beauty smiled  
Than of the race of men;  
And in the forehead's haughty grace  
The lines of Britain's royal race,  
Pendragon's, you might ken.

**XV.**

'Faltering, yet gracefully she said --  
"Great Prince! behold an orphan maid,  
In her departed mother's name,  
A father's vow'd protection claim!  
The vow was sworn in desert lone,  
In the deep valley of Saint John."  
At once the King the suppliant raised,  
And kiss'd her brow, her beauty praised;  
His vow, he said, should well be kept,  
Ere in the sea the sun was dipp'd;  
Then, conscious, glanced upon his queen;  
But she, unruffled at the scene  
Of human frailty, construed mild,  
Look'd upon Lancelot, and smiled.

**XVI.**

"Up! up! each knight of gallant crest,  
Take buckler, spear, and brand!  
He that to-day shall bear him best  
Shall win my Gyneth's hand.  
And Arthur's daughter, when a bride,  
Shall bring a noble dower;  
Both fair Strath-Clyde and Reged wide,  
And Carlisle town and tower."  
Then might you hear each valiant knight  
To page and squire that cried,  
"Bring my armour bright, and my courser wight!  
'Tis not each day that a warrior's might  
May win a royal bride."  
Then cloaks and caps of maintenance  
In haste aside they fling;  
The helmets glance, and gleams the lance,  
And the steel-weaved hauberks ring.  
Small care had they of their peaceful array, --  
They might gather it that wolde;  
For brake and bramble glitter'd gay  
With pearls and cloth of gold.

## XVII.

'Within trumpet sound of the Table Round  
Were fifty champions free,  
And they all arise to fight that prize,  
They all arise but three.  
Nor love's fond troth, nor wedlock's oath,  
One gallant could withhold,  
For priests will allow of a broken vow  
For penance or for gold.  
But sigh and glance from ladies bright  
Among the troop were thrown,  
To plead their right, and true-love plight,  
And 'plain of honor flown.  
The knights they busied them so fast,  
With buckling spur and belt,  
That sigh and look, by ladies cast,  
Were neither seen or felt.

From pleading, or upbraiding glance,  
Each gallant turns aside,  
And only thought, "If speeds my lance,  
A queen becomes my bride!  
She has fair Strath-Clyde, and Reged wide,  
And Carlisle tower and town;  
She is the loveliest maid, beside,  
That ever heir'd a crown."  
So in haste their coursers they bestride,  
And strike their visors down.

### XVIII.

'The champions, arm'd in martial sort,  
Have throng'd into the list,  
And but three knights of Arthur's court  
Are from the tourney miss'd.  
And still these lovers' fame survives  
For faith so constant shown, --  
There were two who loved their neighbors' wives,  
And one who loved his own.  
The first was Lancelot de Lac,  
The second Tristrem bold,  
The third was valiant Carodac,  
Who won the cup of gold,  
What time, of all King Arthur's crew  
(Thereof came jeer and laugh)  
He, as the mate of lady true,  
Alone the cup could quaff.  
Though envy's tongue would fain surmise  
That, but for very shame,  
Sir Carodac, to fight that prize,  
Had given both cup and dame;  
Yet, since but one of that fair court  
Was true to wedlock's shrine,  
Brand him who will with base report,  
He shall be free from mine.

### XIX.

'Now caracoled the steeds in air,  
Now plumes and pennons wanton'd fair,  
As all around the lists so wide  
In panoply the champions ride.  
King Arthur saw, with startled eye,  
The flower of chivalry march by,  
The bulwark of the Christian creed,  
The kingdom's shield in hour of need.  
Too late he thought him of the woe  
Might from their civil conflict flow;  
For well he knew they would not part  
Till cold was many a gallant heart.  
His hasty vow he 'gan to rue,  
And Gyneth then apart he drew;  
To her his leading-staff resign'd,  
But added caution grave and kind.

**XX.**

"Thou see'st, my child, as promise-bound,  
I bid the trump for tourney sound.  
Take thou my warder, as the queen  
And umpire of the martial scene;  
But mark thou this: as Beauty bright  
Is polar star to valiant knight,  
As at her word his sword he draws,  
His fairest guerdon her applause,  
So gentle maid should never ask  
Of knighthood vain and dangerous task;  
And Beauty's eyes should ever be  
Like the twin stars that soothe the sea,  
And Beauty's breath shall whisper peace,  
And bid the storm of battle cease.  
I tell thee this, lest all too far  
These knights urge tourney into war.  
Blithe at the trumpet let them go,  
And fairly counter blow for blow;  
No striplings these, who succour need  
For a razed helm or a falling steed.  
But, Gyneth, when the strife grows warm,

And threatens death or deadly harm,  
Thy sire entreats, thy king commands,  
Thou drop the warder from thy hands.  
Trust thou thy father with thy fate,  
Doubt not he choose thee fitting mate;  
Nor be it said, through Gyneth's pride  
A rose of Arthur's chaplet died."

**XXI.**

'A proud and discontented glow  
O'ershadow'd Gyneth's brow of snow;  
She put the warder by:  
"Reserve thy boon, my liege," she said,  
"Thus chaffer'd down and limited,  
Debased and narrow'd, for a maid  
Of less degree than I.  
No petty chief, but holds his heir  
At a more honour'd price and rare  
Than Britain's King holds me!  
Although the sun-burn'd maid, for dower,  
Has but her father's rugged tower,  
His barren hill and lee.  
King Arthur swore, By crown and sword,  
As belted knight and Britain's lord,  
That a whole summer's day should strive  
His knights, the bravest knights alive!  
Recall thine oath! and to her glen  
Poor Gyneth can return agen;  
Not on thy daughter will the stain,  
That soils thy sword and crown, remain.  
But think not she will e'er be bride  
Save to the bravest, proved and tried;  
Pendragon's daughter will not fear  
For clashing sword or splinter'd spear,  
Nor shrink though blood should flow;  
And all to well sad Guendolen  
Hath taught the faithlessness of men,  
That child of hers should pity, when  
Their meed they undergo."

**XXII.**

'He frown'd and sigh'd, the Monarch bold:  
"I give what I may not withhold;  
For not for danger, dread, or death,  
Must British Arthur break his faith.  
Too late I mark thy mother's art  
Hath taught thee this relentless part  
I blame her not, for she hath wrong,  
But not to these my faults belong.  
Use, then, the warder as thou wilt;  
But trust me, that, if life be spilt,  
In Arthur's love, in Arthur's grace,  
Gyneth shall lose a daughter's place."  
With that he turn'd his head aside,  
Nor brook'd to gaze upon her pride,  
As, with the truncheon raised, she sate  
The arbitress of mortal fate;  
Nor brook'd to mark, in ranks disposed,  
How the bold champions stood opposed,  
For shrill the trumpet-flourish fell  
Upon his ear like passing bell!  
Then first from sight of martial fray  
Did Britain's hero turn away.

**XXIII.**

'But Gyneth heard the clangour high  
As hears the hawk the partridge cry.  
Oh, blame her not; the blood was hers  
That at the trumpet's summons stirs!  
And e'en the gentlest female eye  
Might the brave strife of chivalry  
Awhile untroubled view;  
So well accomplish'd was each knight,  
To strike and to defend in fight,  
Their meeting was a goodly sight,  
While plate and mail held true.  
The lists with painted plumes were strown,

Upon the wind at random thrown,  
But helm and breastplate bloodless shone,  
It seem'd their feather'd crests alone  
Should this encounter rue.  
And ever, as the combat grows,  
The trumpet's cheery voice arose,  
Like lark's shrill song the flourish flows,  
Heard while the gale of April blows  
The merry greenwood through.

**XXIV.**

'But soon to earnest grew their game,  
The spears drew blood, the swords struck flame,  
And, horse and man, to ground there came  
Knights who shall rise no more!  
Gone was the pride the war that graced,  
Gay shields were cleft, and crests defaced ,  
And steel coats riven, and helms unbraced,  
And pennons stream'd with gore.  
Gone, too, were fence and fair array,  
And desperate strength made deadly way  
At random through the bloody fray,  
And blows were dealt with headlong sway,  
Unheeding where they fell;  
And now the trumpet's clamours seem  
Like the shrill sea-bird's wailing scream,  
Heard o'er the whirlpool's gulging stream,  
The sinking seaman's knell!

**XXV.**

'Seem'd in this dismal hour, that Fate  
Would Camlan's ruin antedate,  
And spare dark Mordred's crime;  
Already gasping on the ground  
Lie twenty of the Table Round,  
Of chivalry the prime.  
Arthur, in anguish, tore away  
From head and beard his tresses grey,



And she, proud Gyneth, felt dismay,  
And quaked with ruth and fear;  
But still she deem'd her mother's shade  
Hung o'er the tumult, and forbade  
The sign that had the slaughter staid,  
And chid the rising tear.  
Then Brunor, Taulas, Mador, fell,  
Helias the White, and Lionel,  
And many a champion more;  
Rochemont and Dinadam are down,  
And Ferrand of the Forest Brown  
Lies gasping in his gore.  
Vanoc, by mighty Morolt press'd  
Even to the confines of the list,  
Young Vanoc of the beardless face  
(Fame spoke the youth of Merlin's race)  
O'erpower'd at Gyneth's footstool bled,  
His heart's-blood dyed her sandals red.  
But then the sky was overcast,  
Then howl'd at once a whirlwind's blast,  
And, rent by sudden throes,  
Yawn'd in mid lists the quaking earth,  
And from the gulf, tremendous birth!  
The form of Merlin rose.

#### XXIV.

'Sternly the Wizard Prophet eyed  
The dreary lists with slaughter dyed,  
And sternly raised his hand:  
"Madmen," he said, "your strife forbear;  
And thou, fair cause of mischief, hear  
The doom thy fates demand!  
Long shall close in stony sleep  
Eyes for ruth that would not weep;  
Iron lethargy shall seal  
Heart that pity scorn'd to feel.  
Yet, because thy mother's art  
Warp'd thine unsuspecting heart,  
And for love of Arthur's race,

Punishment is blent with grace,  
Thou shalt bear thy penance lone  
In the Valley of Saint John,  
And this weird shall overtake thee;  
Sleep, until a knight shall awake thee,  
For feats of arms as far renown'd  
As warrior of the Table Round.  
Long endurance of thy slumber  
Well may teach the world to number  
All their woes from Gyneth's pride,  
When the Red Cross champions died."

### XXVII.

'As Merlin speaks, on Gyneth's eye  
Slumber's load begins to lie;  
Fear and anger vainly strive  
Still to keep its light alive.  
Twice, with effort and with pause,  
O'er her brow her hand she draws;  
Twice her strength in vain she tries,  
From the fatal chair to rise;  
Merlin's magic doom is spoken,  
Vanoc's death must now be wroken.  
Slow the dark-fringed eyelids fall,  
Curtaining each azure ball,  
Slowly as on summer eves  
Violets fold their dusky leaves.  
The weighty baton of command  
Now bears down on her sinking hand,  
On her shoulder droops her head;  
Net of pearl and golden thread,  
Bursting, gave her locks to flow  
O'er her arm and breast of snow.  
And so lovely seem'd she there,  
Spell-bound in her ivory chair,  
That her angry sire, repenting,  
Craved stern Merlin for relenting,  
And the champions, for her sake,  
Would again the contest wake;

Till, in necromantic night,  
Gyneth vanish'd from their sight.

### XXVIII.

'Still she bears her weird alone,  
In the Valley of Saint John;  
And her semblance oft will seem,  
Mingling in a champion's dream,  
Of her weary lot to 'plain,  
And crave his aid to burst her chain.  
While her wondrous tale was new,  
Warriors to her rescue drew,  
East and west, and south and north,  
From the Liffy, Thames, and Forth.  
Most have sought in vain the glen,  
Tower nor castle could they ken;  
Not at every time or tide,  
Nor by every eye, descried.  
Fast and vigil must be borne,  
Many a night in watching worn,  
Ere an eye of mortal powers  
Can discern those magic towers.  
Of the persevering few,  
Some from hopeless task withdrew,  
When they read the dismal threat  
Graved upon the gloomy gate.  
Few have braved the yawning door,  
And those few return'd no more.  
In the lapse of time forgot,  
Wellnigh lost is Gyneth's lot;  
Sound her sleep as in the tomb,  
Till waken'd by the trump of doom."

### End of Lyulph's Tale.

#### I.

Here pause my tale! for all too soon,  
My Lucy, comes the hour of noon.

Already from thy lofty dome  
Its courtly inmates 'gin to roam,  
And each, to kill the goodly day  
That God has granted them, his way  
Of lazy sauntering has sought;  
Lordlings and wtlings not a few,  
Incapable of doing aught,  
Yet ill at ease with nought to do.  
Here, is no longer place for me;  
For, Lucy, thou wouldst blush to see  
Some phantom. fashionably thin,  
With limb of lath and kerchief'd chin,  
And lounging gape, or sneering grin,  
Steal sudden on our privacy.  
And how should I, so humbly born,  
Endure the graceful spectre's scorn!  
Faith! ill, I fear, while conjuring wand  
Of English oak is hard at hand.

## II.

Or grant the hour be all too soon  
For Hessian boot and pantaloons,  
And grant the lounge seldom strays  
Beyond the smooth and gravell'd maze,  
Laud we the gods, that Fashion's train  
Holds hearts of more adventurous strain.  
Artists are hers, who scorn to trace  
Their rules from Nature's boundless grace,  
But their right paramount assert  
To limit her by pendant art,  
Damning whate'er of vast and fair  
Exceeds a canvas three feet square.  
This thicket, for their gumption fit,  
May furnish such a happy bit .  
Bard, too, are hers, wont to recite  
Their own sweet lays by waxen light,  
Half in the salver's tingle drown'd,  
While the chasse-café glides around;  
And such may hither secret stray,

To labor an extempore:  
Or sportsman, with his boisterous hollo,  
May here his wiser spaniel follow;  
Or stage-struck Juliet may presume  
To choose this bower for tiring-room;  
And we alike must shun regard,  
From painter, player, sportsman, bard.  
Insects that skim in Fashion's sky,  
Wasp, blue-bottle, or butterfly,  
Lucy, have all alarms for us,  
For all can hum and all can buzz.

### III.

But oh, my Lucy, say how long  
We still must dread this trifling throng,  
And stoop to hide, with coward art,  
The genuine feelings of the heart!  
No parent thine whose just command  
Should rule their child's obedient hand;  
Thy guardians, with contending voice  
Press each his individual choice.  
And which is Lucy's? Can it be  
That puny fop, trimm'd cap-a-pie,  
Who loves in the saloon to show  
The arms that never knew a foe;  
Whose sabre trails along the ground,  
Whose legs in shapeless boots are drown'd;  
A new Achilles, sure! the steel  
Fled from his breast to fence his heel;  
One, for the simple manly grace  
That wont to deck our martial race,  
Who comes in foreign trashery  
Of tinkling chain and spur,  
A walking haberdashery,  
Of feathers, lace and fur:  
In Rowley's antiquated phrase,  
Horse-milliner of modern days?

### IV.

Or is it he, the wordy youth,  
So early train'd for statesman's part,  
Who talks of honour, faith, and truth,  
As themes that he has got by heart;  
Whose ethics Chesterfield can teach,  
Whose logic is from Single-speech;  
Who scorns the meanest thought to vent,  
Save in the phrase of Parliament;  
Who, in a tale of cat and mouse,  
Calls 'order' and 'divides the house,'  
Who 'craves permission to reply,'  
Whose 'noble friend is in his eye,'  
Whose loving tender some have reckon'd  
A motion, you should gladly second?

## V.

What! neither? Can there be a third,  
To such resistless swains preferr'd?  
Oh why, my Lucy, turn aside,  
With that quick glance of injured pride?  
Forgive me, love, I cannot bear  
That alter'd and resentful air.  
Were all the wealth of Russell mine,  
And all the rank of Howard's line,  
All would I give for leave to dry  
That dewdrop trembling in thine eye.  
Think not I fear such fops can wile  
From Lucy more than careless smile;  
But yet if wealth and high degree  
Give gilded counters currency,  
Must I not fear, when rank and birth  
Stamp the pure ore of genuine worth?  
Nobles there are, whose martial fires  
Rival the fame that raised their sires,  
And patriots, skill'd through storms of fate  
To glide and guard the reeling state.  
Such, such there are: if such should come,  
Arthur must tremble and be dumb,

Self-exiled seek some distant shore,  
And mourn till life and grief are o'er.

## VI.

What sight, what signal of alarm,  
That Lucy clings to Arthur's arm?  
Or is it, that the rugged way  
Makes Beauty lean on lover's stay?  
Oh, no! for on the vale and brake  
Nor sight nor sounds of danger wake,  
And this trim sward of velvet green  
Were carpet for the Fairy Queen.  
That pressure slight was but to tell  
That Lucy loves her Arthur well,  
And fain would banish from his mind  
Suspicious fear and doubt unkind.

## VII.

But wouldst thou bid the demons fly  
Like mist before the dawning sky,  
There is but one resistless spell--  
Say, wilt thou guess, or must I tell?  
'Twere hard to name, in minstrel phrase,  
A laudaulet and four blood-bays,  
But bards agree this wizard band  
Can but be bound in Northern land.  
'Tis there--nay, draw not back thy hand!  
'Tis there this slender finger round  
Must golden amulet be bound,  
Which, bless'd with many a holy prayer,  
Can change to rapture lover's care,  
And doubt and jealousy shall die,  
And fears give place to ecstasy.

## VIII.

Now, trust me, Lucy, all too long  
Has been thy lover's tale and song.

O, why so silent, love, I pray?  
Have I not spoke the livelong day?  
And will not Lucy deign to say  
One word her friend to bless.  
I ask but one, a simple sound,  
Within three little letters bound,  
O, let the word be Yes!

### Introduction to Canto Third

#### I.

Long loved, long woo'd, and lately won,  
My life's best hope, and now mine own!  
Doth not this rude and Alpine glen  
Recall our favourite haunts agen?  
A wild resemblance we can trace,  
Though reft of every softer grace,  
As the rough warrior's brow may bear  
A likeness to a sister fair.  
Full well advised our Highland host,  
That this wild pass on foot be cross'd,  
While round Ben-Cruach's mighty base  
Wheel the slow steeds and lingering chaise.  
The keen old carle, with Scottish pride,  
He praised his glen and mountains wide;  
An eye he bears for Nature's face,  
Ay, and for woman's lovely grace.  
Even in such mean degree we find  
The subtle Scot's observing mind;  
For, nor the chariot nor the train  
Could gape of vulgar wonder gain,  
But when old Allan would expound  
Of Beal-na-paish the Celtic sound,  
His bonnet doff'd, and bow, applied  
His legend to my bonny bride;  
While Lucy blush'd beneath his eye,  
Courteous and cautious, shrewd and sly.

#### II.



Enough of him. Now, ere we lose,  
Plunged in the vale, the distant views,  
Turn thee, my love! look back once more  
To the blue lake's retiring shore.  
On its smooth breast the shadows seem  
Like objects in a morning dream,  
What time the slumberer is aware  
He sleeps, and all the vision's air:  
Even so, on yonder liquid lawn,  
In hues of bright reflection drawn,  
Distinct the shaggy mountains lie,  
Distinct the rocks, distinct the sky:  
The summer-clouds so plain we note  
That we might count each dappled spot:  
We gaze and we admire, yet know  
The scene is all delusive show.  
Such dreams of bliss would Arthur draw  
When first his Lucy's form he saw;  
Yet sigh'd and sicken'd as he drew,  
Despairing they could e'er prove true!

### III.

But, Lucy, turn thee now, to view  
Up the fair glen, our destined way:  
The fairy path that we pursue,  
Distinguish'd but by greener hue,  
Winds round the purple brae,  
While Alpine flowers of varied dye  
For carpet serve, or tapestry.  
See how the little runnels leap,  
In threads of silver, down the steep,  
To swell the brooklet's moan!  
Seems that the Highland Naiad grieves,  
Fantastic while her crown she weaves,  
Of rowan, birch, and alder leaves,  
So lovely, and so lone.  
There's no illusion there; these flowers,  
That wailing brook, these lovely bowers,

Are, Lucy, all our own;  
And since thine Arthur call'd thee wife,  
Such seems the prospect of his life,  
A lovely path, on-winding still,  
By gurgling brook and sloping hill.  
'Tis true, that mortals cannot tell  
What waits them in the distant dell;  
But be it hap, or be it harm,  
We tread the pathway arm in arm.

#### IV.

And now, my Lucy, wot'st thou why  
I could thy bidding twice deny,  
When twice you pray'd I would again  
Resume the legendary strain  
Of the bold Knight of Triermain?  
At length yon peevish vow you swore,  
That you would sue to me no more,  
Until the minstrel fit drew near,  
And made me prize a listening ear.  
But, loveliest, when thou first didst pray  
Continuance of the knightly lay,  
Was it not on the happy day  
That made thy hand mine own?  
When, dizzied with mine ecstasy,  
Nought past, or present, or to be,  
Could I or think on, hear, or see,  
Save, Lucy, thee alone!  
A giddy draught my rapture was,  
As ever a chemist's magic gas.

#### V.

Again the summons I denied  
In yon fair capital of Clyde:  
My Harp -- or let me rather choose  
The good old classic form -- my Muse,  
(For Harp's an over-scutchèd phrase,  
Worn out by bards of modern days)

My Muse, then -- seldom will she wake,  
 Save by dim wood and silent lake;  
 She is the wild and rustic Maid,  
 Whose foot unsandall'd loves to tread  
 Where the soft greensward is inlaid  
 With varied moss and thyme;  
 And, lest the simple lily-braid  
 That coronets her temples fade,  
 She hides her still in greenwood shade  
 To meditate her rhyme.

## VI.

And now she comes. The murmur dear  
 Of the wild brook hath caught her ear,  
 The glade hath won her eye;  
 She longs to join with each blithe rill  
 That dances down the Highland hill  
 Her blither melody.  
 And now, my Lucy's way to cheer,  
 She bids Ben-Cruach's echoes hear  
 How closed the tale my love whilere  
 Loved for its chivalry.  
 List how she tells, in notes of flame,  
 'Childe Roland to the dark tower came!'

## Canto Third

### I.

Bewcastle now must keep the Hold,  
 Speir-Adam's steeds must bide in stall,  
 Of Hartley-burn the bowmen bold  
 Must only shoot from battled wall;  
 And Liddesdale my buckle spur,  
 And Teviot now may belt the brand,  
 Taras and Ewes keep nightly stir,  
 And Eskdale foray Cumberland.  
 Of wasted fields and plunder'd flocks  
 The Borderers bootless may complain;

They lack the sword of brave de Vaux,  
There comes no aid from Triermain.  
That lord, on high adventure bound,  
Hath wander'd forth alone,  
And day and night keeps watchful round  
In the valley of Saint John.

## II.

When first began his vigil bold,  
The moon twelve summer nights was old,  
And shone both fair and full;  
High in the vault of cloudless blue,  
O'er streamlet, dale, and rock, she threw  
Her light composed and cool.  
Stretch'd on the brown hill's heathy breast,  
Sir Roland, eyed the vale;  
Chief where, distinguish'd from the rest,  
Those clustering rocks uprear'd their crest,  
The dwelling of the fair distress'd,  
As told grey Lyulph's tale.  
Thus as he lay, the lamp of night  
Was quivering on his armour bright,  
In beams that rose, and fell,  
And danced upon his buckler's boss  
That lay beside him on the moss,  
As on a crystal well.

## III.

Ever he watch'd, and oft he deem'd,  
While on the mound the moonlight stream'd,  
It alter'd to his eyes;  
Fain would he hope the rocks 'gan change  
To butress'd walls their shapeless range,  
Fain think, by transmutation strange,  
He saw grey turrets rise.  
But scarce his heart with hope throbb'd high,  
Before the wild illusions fly  
Which fancy had conceived,

Abetted by an anxious eye,  
That long'd to be deceived.  
It was a fond deception all,  
Such as, in a solitary hall,  
Beguiles the musing eye,  
When, gazing on the sinking fire,  
Bulwark, and battlement, and spire,  
In the red gulf we spy.  
For, seen by moon of middle night,  
Or by the blaze of noontide bright,  
Or by the dawn of morning light,  
Or evening's western flame,  
In every tide, at every hour,  
In mist, in sunshine, and in shower,  
The rocks remain'd the same.

#### IV.

Oft has he traced the charmed mound,  
Oft climb'd its crest, or paced it round,  
Yet nothing might explore,  
Save that the crags so rudely piled,  
At distance seen, resemblance wild  
To a rough fortress bore.  
Yet still his watch the warrior keeps,  
Feeds hard and spare, and seldom sleeps,  
And drinks but of the well:  
Ever by day he walks the hill,  
And when the evening gale is chill,  
He seeks a rocky cell,  
Like hermit poor to bid his bead,  
And tell his Ave and his Creed,  
Invoking every saint at need,  
For aid to burst his spell.

#### V.

And now the moon her orb has hid,  
And dwindled to a silver thread,  
Dim seen in middle heaven,

While o'er its curve careering fast,  
Before the fury of the blast  
The midnight clouds are driven.  
The brooklet raved, for on the hills  
The upland showers had swoln the rills,  
And down the torrents came;  
Mutter'd the distant thunder dread,  
And frequent o'er the vale was spread  
A sheet of lightning flame.  
DeVaux, within his mountain cave,  
(No human step the storm durst brave)  
To moody meditation gave  
Each faculty of soul,  
Till, lull'd by distant torrent sound,  
And the sad winds that whistled round,  
Upon his thoughts, in musing drown'd,  
A broken slumber stole.

#### VI.

'Twas then was heard a heavy sound  
(Sound strange and fearful there to hear,  
'Mongst desert hills, where, leagues around,  
Dwelt but the gorcock and the deer):  
As, starting from his couch of fern,  
Again he heard, in clangor stern,  
That deep and solemn swell, --  
Twelve times, in measured tone, it spoke,  
Like some proud minster's pealing clock,  
Or city's larum-bell, --  
What thought was Roland's first when fell,  
In that deep wilderness, the knell  
Upon his startled ear?  
To slander warrior were I loth,  
Yet must I hold my minstrel troth, --  
It was a thought of fear.

#### VII.

But lively was the mingled thrill

That chased that momentary chill,  
For Love's keen wish was there,  
And eager Hope, and Valour high,  
And the proud glow of Chivalry,  
That burn'd to do and dare.  
Forth from the cave the warrior rush'd,  
Long ere the mountain-voice was hush'd,  
That answer'd to the knell;  
For long and far the unwonted sound,  
Eddying in echoes round and round,  
Was toss'd from fell to fell;  
And Glaramara answer flung,  
And Grisdale-pike responsive rung,  
And Legbert heights their echoes swung  
As far as Derwent's dell.

### VIII.

Forth upon trackless darkness gazed  
The Knight, bedeaften'd and amazed,  
Till all was hush'd and still.  
Save the swoln torrent's sullen roar,  
And the night-blast that wildly bore  
Its course along the hill.  
Then on the northern sky there came  
A light, as of reflected flame,  
And over Legbert-head,  
As if by magic art controll'd,  
A mighty meteor slowly roll'd  
Its orb of fiery red;  
Thou wouldst have thought some demon dire  
Came, mounted on that car of fire,  
To do his errand dread.  
Far on the sloping valley's course,  
On thicket, rock, and torrent hoarse,  
Shingle and Scrae, and Fell and Force,  
A dusky light arose:  
Display'd, yet alter'd was the scene;  
Dark rock, and brook of silver sheen,  
Even the gay thicket's summer green,

In bloody tincture glows.

### IX.

De Vaux had mark'd the sunbeams set,  
At eve, upon the coronet  
Of that enchanted mound,  
And seen but crags at random flung,  
That, o'er the brawling torrent hung,  
In desolation frown'd.

What sees he by that meteor's lour?  
A banner'd Castle, keep, and tower,  
Return the lurid gleam,  
With battled walls and buttress fast,  
And barbican and ballium vast,  
And airy flanking towers, that cast  
Their shadows on the stream.  
'Tis no deceit! distinctly clear  
Crenell and parapet appear,  
While o'er the pile that meteor drear  
Makes momentary pause;  
Then forth its solemn path it drew,  
And fainter yet and fainter grew  
Those gloomy towers upon the view,  
As its wild light withdraws.

### X.

Forth from the cave did Roland rush,  
O'er crag and stream, through brier and bush;  
Yet far he had not sped  
Ere sunk was that portentous light  
Behind the hills, and utter night  
Was on the valley spread.  
He paused perforce, and blew his horn,  
And on the mountain-echoes borne  
Was heard an answering sound,  
A wild and lonely trumpet-note;  
In middle air it seem'd to float  
High o'er the battled mound;



And sounds were heard, as when a guard  
Of some proud castle, holding ward,  
Pace forth their nightly round.  
The valiant Knight of Triermain  
Rung forth his challenge-blast again,  
But answer came there none;  
And 'mid the mingled wind and rain,  
Darkling he sought the vale in vain,  
Until the dawning shone;  
And when it dawn'd, that wondrous sight,  
Distinctly seen by meteor light --  
It all had pass'd away;  
And that enchanted mount once more  
A pile of granite fragments bore,  
As at the close of day.

## XI.

Steel'd for the dead, De Vaux's heart  
Scorn'd from his vent'rous quest to part  
He walks the vale once more;  
But only sees, by night or day,  
That shatter'd pile of rocks so grey,  
Hears but the torrent's roar.  
Till when, through hills of azure borne,  
The moon renew'd her silver horn,  
Just at the time her waning ray,  
Had faded in the dawning day,  
A summer mist arose;  
Adown the vale the vapours float,  
And cloudy undulations moat  
That tufted mound of mystic note,  
As round its base they close.  
And higher now the fleecy tide  
Ascends its stern and shaggy side,  
Until the airy billows hide  
The rock's majestic isle;  
It seem'd a veil of filmy lawn,  
By some fantastic fairy drawn  
Around enchanted pile.

## XII.

The breeze came softly down the brook,  
And, sighing as it blew,  
The veil of silver mist it shook,  
And to De Vaux's eager look  
Renew'd that wondrous view.  
For, though the loitering vapour braved  
The gentle breeze, yet oft it waved  
Its mantle dewy fold;  
And still, when shook that filmy screen,  
Were towers and bastions dimly seen,  
And Gothic battlements between  
Their gloomy length unroll'd.  
Speed, speed, De Vaux, ere on thine eye  
Once more the fleeting vision die!  
The gallant knight 'gan speed  
As prompt and light as, when the hound  
Is opening, and the horn is wound,  
Careers the hunter's steed.  
Down the steep dell his course amain  
Hath rivall'd archer's shaft;  
But ere the mound he could attain,  
The rocks their shapeless form regain,  
And, mocking loud his labour vain,  
The mountain spirits laugh'd.  
Far up the echoing dell was borne  
Their wild unearthly shout of scorn.

## XIII.

Wroth wax'd the Warrior: 'Am I then  
Fool'd by the enemies of men,  
Like a poor hind, whose homeward way  
Is haunted by malicious fay?  
Is Triermain become your taunt,  
De Vaux your scorn? False fiends, avaunt!  
A weighty curtal-axe he bare;  
The baleful blade so bright and square,

And the tough shaft of heben wood,  
Were oft in Scottish gore imbrued.  
Backward his stately form he drew,  
And at the rocks the weapon threw,  
Just where one crag's projected crest  
Hung proudly balanced o'er the rest.  
Hurl'd with main force, the weapon's shock  
Rent a huge fragment of the rock.  
If by mere strength, 'twere hard to tell,  
Or if the blow dissolved some spell,  
But down the headlong ruin came,  
With cloud of dust and flash of flame.  
Down bank, o'er bush, its course was borne,  
Crush'd lay the copse, the earth was torn,  
Till staid at length, the ruin dread  
Cumber'd the torrent's rocky bed,  
And bade the water's high-swoln tide  
Seek other passage for its pride.

#### XIV.

When ceased that thunder, Triermain  
Survey'd the mound's rude front again;  
And, lo! the ruin had laid bare,  
Hewn in the stone, a winding stair,  
Whose moss'd and fractured steps might lend  
The means the summit to ascend;  
And by whose aid the brave De Vaux  
Began to scale these magic rocks,  
And soon a platform won,  
Where, the wild witchery to close,  
Within three lances' length arose  
The Castle of Saint John!  
No misty phantom of the air,  
No meteor-blazoned show was there;  
In morning splendour, full and fair,  
The massive fortress shone.

#### XV.

Embattled high and proudly tower'd,  
Shaded by pond'rous flankers, lower'd  
The portal's gloomy way.  
Though for six hundred years and more  
Its strength had brook'd the tempest's roar,  
The scutcheon'd emblems which it bore  
Had suffer'd no decay:  
But from the eastern battlement  
A turret had made sheer descent,  
And, down in recent ruin rent,  
In the mid-torrent lay.  
Else, o'er the Castle's brow sublime,  
Insults of violence or of time  
Unfelt had pass'd away.  
In shapeless characters of yore,  
The gate this stern inscription bore: --

**XVI.**

'Patience waits the destined day,  
Strength can clear the cumber'd way.  
Warrior, who hast waited long,  
Firm of soul, of sinew strong,  
It is given to thee to gaze  
On the pile of ancient days.  
Never mortal builder's hand  
This enduring fabric plann'd;  
Sign and sigil, word of power,  
From the earth raised keep and tower.  
View it o'er, and pace it round,  
Rampart, turret, battled mound.  
Dare no more! To cross the gate  
Were to tamper with thy fate;  
Strength and fortitude were vain,  
View it o'er -- and turn again.'

**XVII.**

'That would I,' said the Warrior bold,  
'If that my frame were bent and old,

And my thin blood dropp'd slow and cold  
As icicle in thaw;  
But while my heart can feel it dance,  
Blithe as the sparkling wine of France,  
And this good arm wields sword or lance,  
I mock these words of awe!  
He said; the wicket felt the sway  
Of his strong hand, and straight gave way,  
And, with rude crash and jarring bray,  
The rusty bolts withdraw;  
But o'er the threshold as he strode,  
And forward took the vaulted road,  
An unseen arm, with force amain,  
The ponderous gate flung close again,  
And rusted bolt and bar  
Spontaneous took their place once more,  
While the deep arch with sullen roar  
Return'd their surly jar.  
'Now closed is the gin and the prey within  
By the Rood of Lanercost!  
But he that would win the war-wolf's skin  
May rue him of his boast.'  
Thus muttering, on the Warrior went,  
By dubious light down deep descent.

### VIII.

Unbarr'd, unlock'd, unwatch'd, a port  
Led to the Castle's outer court:  
There the main fortress, broad and tall,  
Spread its long range of bower and hall,  
And towers of varied size,  
Wrought with each ornament extreme  
That Gothic art, in wildest dream  
Of fancy, could devise;  
But full between the Warrior's way  
And the main portal arch, there lay  
An inner moat;  
Nor bridge nor boat  
Affords De Vaux the means to cross

The clear, profound, and silent fosse.  
His arms aside in haste he flings,  
Cuirass of steel and hauberk rings,  
And down falls helm, and down the shield,  
Rough with the dints of many a field.  
Fair was his manly form, and fair  
His keen dark eye, and close curl'd hair,  
When, all unarm'd, save that the brand  
Of well-proved metal graced his hand,  
With nought to fence his dauntless breast  
But the close gipon's under-vest,  
Whose sullied buff the sable stains  
Of hauberk and of mail retains,  
Roland De Vaux upon the brim  
Of the broad moat stood prompt to swim.

### XIX.

Accoutred thus he dared the tide,  
And soon he reach'd the farther side,  
And enter'd soon the hold,  
And paced a hall, whose wall so wide  
Were blazon'd all with feats of pride,  
By warriors done of old.  
In middle lists they counter'd here,  
While trumpets seem'd to blow;  
And there, in den or desert drear'  
They quell'd gigantic foe,  
Braved the fierce griffon in his ire,  
Or faced the dragon's breath of fire.  
Strange in their arms, and strange in face,  
Heroes they seem'd of ancient race,  
Whose deeds of arms, and race, and name,  
Forgotten long by later fame,  
Were here depicted, to appal  
Those of an age degenerate,  
Whose bold intrusion braved their fate  
In this enchanted hall.  
For some short space the venturous knight  
With these high marvels fed his sight,

Then sought the chamber's upper end,  
Where three broad easy steps ascend  
To an arch'd portal door,  
In whose broad folding leaves of state  
Was framed a wicket window-grate,  
And, ere he ventured more,  
The gallant Knight took earnest view  
The grated wicket-window through.

**XX.**

Oh, for his arms! Of martial weed  
Had never mortal Knight such need!  
He spied a stately gallery; all  
Of snow-white marble was the wall,  
The vaulting, and the floor;  
And, contrast strange! on either hand  
There stood array'd in sable band  
Four maids whom Afric bore;  
And each a bright Lybian tiger led,  
Held by as bright and frail a thread  
As Lucy's golden hair, --  
For the leash that bound these monsters dread  
Was but of gossamèr.  
Each maiden's short barbaric vest  
Left all unclosed the knee and breast,  
And limbs of shapely jet;  
White was their vest and turban's fold,  
On arms and ankles rings of gold  
In savage pomp were set;  
A quiver on their shoulders lay,  
And in their hand an assagay.  
Such and so silent stood they there,  
That Roland wellnigh hoped  
He saw a band of statues rare,  
Station'd the gazer's soul to scare;  
But when the wicket oped,  
Each grisley beast 'gan upward draw,  
Roll'd his grim eye, and spread his claw,  
Scented the air, and licked his jaw;

While these weird maids, in Moorish tongue,  
A wild and dismal warning sung.

**XXI.**

'Rash adventurer, bear thee back!  
Dread the spell of Dahomay!  
Fear the race of Zaharak,  
Daughters of the burning day!

'When the whirlwind's gusts are wheeling,  
Ours it is the dance to braid;  
Zarah's sands in pillars reeling  
Join the measure that we tread,  
When the moon has donn'd her cloak,  
And the stars are red to see,  
Shrill when pipes the sad siroc,  
Music meet for such as we.

'Where the shatter'd columns lie,  
Showing Carthage once had been,  
If the wandering Santon's eye  
Our mysterious rites hath seen, --  
Oft he cons the prayer of death,  
To the nations preaches doom,  
"Azrael's brand hath left the sheath!  
Moslems, think upon the tomb!"

'Ours the scorpion, ours the snake,  
Our the hydra of the fen,  
Ours the tiger of the brake,  
All that plague the sons of men.  
Ours the tempest's midnight wrack,  
Pestilence that wastes by day:  
Dread the race of Zaharak!  
Fear the spell of Dahomay!"

**XXII.**

Uncouth and strange the accents shrill



Rung those vaulted roofs among,  
Long it was ere, faint and still,  
Died the far-resounding song.  
While yet the distant echoes roll,  
The Warrior communed with his soul:  
'When first I took this venturous quest,  
I swore upon the rood,  
Neither to stop, nor turn, nor rest,  
For evil or for good.  
My forward path too well I ween,  
Lies yonder fearful ranks between!  
For man unarm'd, 'tis bootless hope  
With tigers and with fiends to cope;  
Yet, if I turn, what waits me there,  
Save famine dire and fell despair?  
Other conclusion let me try,  
Since, choose howe'er I list, I die.  
Forward, lies faith and knightly fame;  
Behind, are perjury and shame.  
In life or death I hold my word!'  
With that he drew his trusty sword,  
Caught down a banner from the wall,  
And enter'd thus the fearful hall.

### XXIII.

On high each wayward maiden threw  
Her swarthy arm, with wild halloo --  
On either side a tiger sprung:  
Against the leftward foe he flung  
The ready banner, to engage  
With tangling folds the brutal rage;  
The right-hand monster in mid air  
He struck so fiercely and so fair,  
Through gullet and through spinal bone,  
The trenchant blade had sheerly gone.  
His grisly brethren ramp'd and yell'd,  
But the slight leash their rage withheld,  
Whilst, 'twixt their ranks, the dangerous road  
Firmly, though swift, the champion strode.

Safe to the gallery's bound he drew,  
Safe pass'd an open portal through;  
And when against pursuit he flung  
The gate, judge if echoes rung!  
Onward his daring course he bore,  
While, mix'd with dying growl and roar,  
Wild jubilee and loud hurra  
Pursued him on his venturous way.

**XXIV.**

'Hurra, hurra! our watch is done!  
We hail once more the tropic sun,  
Pallid beams of northern day,  
Farewell, farewell! Hurra, hurra!

'Five hundred years o'er this cold glen  
Hath the pale sun come round agen;  
Foot of man, till now, hath ne'er  
Dared to cross the Hall of Fear.

'Warrior! thou, whose dauntless heart  
Gives us from our ward to part,  
Be as strong in future trial,  
Where resistance is denial.

'Now for Afric's glowing sky,  
Zwenga wide and Atlas high,  
Zaharak and Dahomay!  
Mount the winds! Hurra, hurra!'

**XXV.**

The wizard song at distance died,  
As if in ether borne astray,  
While through the waste halls and chambers wide,  
The knight pursued his steady way,  
Till to a lofty dome he came,  
That flash'd, with such a brilliant flame,  
As if the wealth of all the world

Were there in such confusion hurl'd.  
For there the gold, in sandy heaps,  
With duller earth, incorporate, sleeps;  
Was there in ingots piled; and there  
Coin'd badge of empery it bare;  
Yonder, huge bars of silver lay,  
Dimm'd by the diamond's neighbouring ray,  
Like the pale moon in morning day;  
And in the midst four maidens stand,  
The daughters of some distant land.  
Their hue was of the dark red dye,  
That fringes oft a thunder sky;  
Their hands palmetto baskets bare,  
And cotton fillets bound their hair;  
Slim was their form, their mien was shy,  
To earth they bent the humbled eye,  
Folded their arms, and suppliant kneel'd,  
And thus their proffer'd gifts revealed.

#### XXVI.

##### CHORUS.

'See the treasures Merlin piled,  
Portion meet for Arthur's child.  
Bathe in wealth's unbounded stream,  
Wealth that avarice ne'er could dream!'

##### FIRST MAIDEN.

'See these clots of virgin gold!  
Sever'd from the sparry mould,  
Nature's mystic alchemy  
In the mine thus bade them lie;  
And their orient smile can win  
Kings to stoop, and saints to sin.'

##### SECOND MAIDEN

'See these pearls, that long have slept;  
These were the tears by Naiads wept  
For the loss of Marinel.  
Tritons in the silver shell

Treasured them, till hard and white  
As the teeth of Amphitrite."

#### THIRD MAIDEN

'Does a livelier hue delight?  
Here are rubies blazing bright,  
Here are emerald's fairy green,  
And the topaz glows between;  
Here their varied hues unite,  
In the changeful chrysolite.'

#### FOURTH MAIDEN.

'Leave these gems of poorer shine,  
Leave them all, and look on mine!  
While their glories I expand,  
Shade thine eyebrows with thy hand.  
Mid-day sun and diamond's blaze  
Blind the rash beholder's gaze.'

#### CHORUS

'Warrior, seize the splendid store;  
Would 'twere all our mountains bore!  
We should ne'er in future story  
Read, Peru, thy perish'd glory!'

#### XXVII.

Calmly and unconcern'd, the knight  
Waved aside the treasures bright: --  
'Gentle maidens, rise, I pray!  
Bar not thus my destined way.  
Let these boasted brilliant toys  
Braid the hair of girls and boys!  
Bid your streams of gold expand  
O'er proud London's thirsty land.  
De Vaux of wealth saw never need,  
Save to purvey him arms and steed,  
And all the ore he deign'd to hoard  
Inlays his helm, and hilts his sword.'  
Thus gently parting from their hold,

He left, unmoved, the dome of gold.

### XXVIII.

And now the morning sun was high,  
De Vaux was weary, faint, and dry;  
When, lo! a plashing sound he hears,  
A gladsome signal that he nears  
Some frolic water-run;  
And soon he reach'd a court-yard square,  
Where, dancing in the sultry air,  
Toss'd high aloft, fountain fair  
Was sparkling in the sun.  
On right and left, a fair arcade,  
In long perspective view display'd  
Alleys and bowers, for sun and shade:  
But, full in front, a door,  
Low-brow'd and dark, seem'd as it led  
To the lone dwelling of the dead,  
Whose memory was no more.

### XXIV.

Here stopp'd De Vaux an instant's space,  
To bathe his parched lips and face,  
And mark'd with well-pleas'd eye,  
Refracted on the fountain stream,  
In rainbow's hues the dazzling beam  
Of that gay summer sky.  
His senses felt a mild control,  
Like that which lulls the weary soul,  
From contemplation high  
Relaxing, when the ear receives  
The music that the greenwood leaves  
Make to the breezes' sigh.

### XXX.

And oft in such a dreamy mood,  
The half-shut eye can frame

Fair apparitions in the wood  
As if the nymphs of field and flood  
In gay procession came.  
Are these of such fantastic mould,  
Seen distant down the fair arcade,  
These maids enlink'd in sister-fold,  
Who, late at bashful distance staid,  
Now tripping from the greenwood shade,  
Nearer the musing champion draw,  
And, in a pause of seeming awe,  
Again stand doubtful now?  
Ah, that sly pause of witching powers  
That seems to say, 'To please be ours,  
Be yours to tell us how.'  
Their hue was of the golden glow  
That suns of Candahar bestow,  
O'er which in slight suffusion flows  
A frequent tinge of paly rose;  
Their limbs were fashion'd fair and free,  
In nature's justest symmetry;  
And, wreathed with flowers, with odours graced,  
Their raven ringlets reach'd the waist:  
In eastern pomp, its gilding pale  
The hennah lent each shapely nail,  
And the dark sumah gave the eye  
More liquid and more lustrous dye.  
The spotless veil of misty lawn,  
In studied disarrangement, drawn  
The form and bosom o'er,  
To win the eye, or tempt the touch,  
For modesty show'd all too much --  
Too much, yet promised more.

**XXXI.**

'Gentle knight, a while delay,'  
Thus they sung, 'thy toilsome way,  
While we pay the duty due  
To our Master and to you.  
Over avarice, over fear,

Love triumphant led thee here;  
Warrior, list to us, for we  
Are slaves to love, are friends to thee.  
Though no treasured gems have we,  
To proffer on the bended knee,  
Though we boast nor arm nor heart,  
For the assagay or dart,  
Swains allow each simple girl  
Ruby lip and teeth of pearl;  
Or, if dangers more you prize,  
Flatters find them in our eyes.

'Stay, then, gentle warrior, stay,  
Rest till evening steal on day;  
Stay, O stay! in yonder bowers  
We will braid thy locks with flowers,  
Spread the feast and fill the wine,  
Charm thy ear with sounds divine,  
Weave our dances till delight  
Yield to languor, day to night.  
Then shall she you most approve,  
Sing they lays that best you love,  
Soft thy mossy couch shall spread,  
Watch thy thy pillow, prop thy head,  
Till the weary night be o'er;  
Gentle warrior, wouldst thou more?  
Wouldst thou more, fair warrior? She  
Is slave to love and slave to thee.'

### XXXII.

O do not hold it for a crime  
In the bold hero of my rhyme,  
For Stoic look,  
And meet rebuke,  
He lack'd the heart or time;  
As round the band of sirens trip,  
He kiss'd one damsel's laughing lip,  
And press'd another's proffer'd hand.  
Spoke to them all in accents bland,

But broke their magic circle through;  
'Kind maids,' he said, 'adieu, adieu!  
My fate, my fortune, forward lies.'  
He said, and vanish'd from their eyes;  
But, as he dared that darksome way,  
Still heard behind their lovely lay:  
'Fair Flowers of Courtesy, depart!  
Go, where the feelings of the heart  
With the warm pulse in concord move;  
Go, where virtue sanctions love!'

### XXXIII.

Downward De Vaux through darksome ways  
And ruin'd vaults has gone,  
Till issue from their wilder'd maze,  
Or safe retreat, seem'd none;  
And e'en the dismal path he strays  
Grew worse as he went on.  
For cheerful sun, for living air,  
Foul vapours rise and mine-fires glare,  
Whose fearful light the dangers show'd  
That dogg'd him on that dreadful road.  
Deep pits, and lakes of waters dun,  
They show'd, but show'd not how to shun.  
These scenes of desolate despair,  
These smothering clouds of poison'd air,  
How gladly had De Vaux exchanged,  
Though 'twere to face yon tigers ranged!  
Nay, soothful bards have said  
So perilous his state seem'd now,  
He wish'd him under arbour bough  
With Asia's willing maid.  
When, joyful sound! at distance near  
A trumpet flourish'd loud and clear,  
And as it ceased, a lofty lay  
Seem'd thus to chide his lagging way.

### XXXIV.



'Son of Honour, theme of story,  
Think on the reward before ye!  
Danger, darkness, toil despise;  
'Tis ambition bids thee rise.

'He that would her heights ascend,  
Many a weary step must wend;  
Hand and foot and knee he tries;  
Thus ambition's minions rise.

'Lag not now, though rough the way,  
Fortune's mood brooks no delay;  
Grasp the boon, that's spread before ye,  
Monarch's power, and conqueror's glory!

It ceased. Advancing on the sound,  
A steep ascent the wanderer found,  
And then a turret stair:  
Nor climb'd he far its steepy round  
Till fresher blew the air,  
And next a welcome glimpse was given,  
That cheer'd him with the light of heaven.  
At length his toil had won  
A lofty hall with trophies dress'd  
Where, as to greet imperial guest,  
Four maidens stood, whose crimson vest  
Was bound with golden zone.

### XXXV.

Of Europe seem'd the damsels all;  
The first a nymph of lively Gaul,  
Whose easy step and laughing eye  
Her borrow'd air of awe belie;  
The next a maid of Spain,  
Dark-eyed, dark-hair'd, sedate, yet bold;  
White ivory skin and tress of gold,  
Her shy and bashful comrade told  
For daughter of Almaïne.  
These maidens bore a royal robe,

With crown, with sceptre, and with globe,  
Emblems of empery;  
The fourth a space behind them stood,  
And leant upon a harp, in mood  
Of minstrel ecstasy.  
Of merry England she, in dress  
Like ancient British Druidess.  
Her hair an azure fillet bound,  
And, in her hand display'd  
A crown that did that fourth maiden hold,  
But unadorn'd with gems and gold,  
Of glossy laurel made.

### XXXVI.

At once to brave De Vaux knelt down  
These foremost maidens three,  
And proffer'd sceptre, robe and crown,  
Liegedom and seignorie,  
O'er many a region wide and fair,  
Destined, they said, for Arthur's heir;  
But homage would he none:  
'Rather,' he said, 'De Vaux would ride,  
A warden of the Border-side,  
In plate and mail, than, robed in pride,  
A monarch's empire own;  
Rather, far rather, would he be  
A free-born knight in England free,  
Than sit on despot's throne.'  
So pass'd he on, when that fourth maid,  
As starting from a trance,  
Upon the harp her finger laid;  
Her magic touch the chords obey'd,  
Their soul awak'd at once!

### SONG OF THE FOURTH MAIDEN

'Quake to your foundations deep,  
Stately towers, and banner'd keep,  
Bid your vaulted echoes moan,

As the dreaded step they own.

'Fiends, that wait on Merlin's spell,  
Hear the foot-fall! mark it well!  
Spread your dusky wings abroad,  
Boune ye for your homeward road!

'It is his, the first who e'er  
Dared the dimal Hall of Fear;  
His, who hath the snares defied  
Spread by pleasure, wealth and pride.

'Quake to your foundations deep,  
Bastion huge, and turret steep!  
Tremble, keep! and totter, tower!  
This is Gyneth's waking hour.'

### XXXVII.

Thus while she sung, the venturous knight  
Has reach'd a bower, where milder light  
Through crimson curtains fell;  
Such soften'd shade the hill receives,  
Her purple veil when twilight leaves  
Upon its western swell.  
That bower, the gazer to bewitch,  
Hath wondrous store of rare and rich  
As e'er was seen with eye;  
For there with magic skill, I wis,  
Form of each thing that living is  
Was limn'd in proper dye.  
All seem'd to sleep -- the timid hare  
On form, the stag upon his lair,  
The eagle in her eyrie fair  
Between the earth and sky.  
But what of pictured rich and rare  
Could win De Vaux's eye-glance, where,  
Deep slumbering in the fatal chair,  
He saw King Arthur's child!  
Doubt, and anger, and dismay,

From her brow had pass'd away,  
Forgot was that fell tourney-day,  
For, as she slept, she smiled:  
It seem'd, that the repentant Seer  
Her sleep of many a hundred year  
With gentle dreams beguiled.

**XXXVIII.**

That form of maiden loveliness,  
'Twixt childhood and 'twixt youth,  
That ivory chair, that silvan dress,  
The arms and ankles bare, express  
Of Lyulph's tale the truth.  
Still upon her garment's hem  
Vanoc's blood made purple gem,  
And the warder of command  
Cumber'd still her sleeping hand;  
Still her dark locks dishevell'd flow  
From net of pearl o'er breast of snow;  
And so fair the slumberer seems,  
That De Vaux impeach'd his dreams,  
Vapid all and void of might,  
Hiding half her charms from sight.  
Motionless a while he stands,  
Folds his arms and clasps his hands,  
Trembling in his fitful joy,  
Doubtful how he should destroy  
Long-enduring spell;  
Doubtful, too, when slowly rise  
Dark-fringed lids of Gyneth's eyes,  
What these eyes shall tell.  
'Saint George! Saint Mary! can it be,  
That they will kindly look on me!'

**XXXIX.**

Gently, lo! the warrior kneels,  
Soft that lovely hand he steals.  
Soft to kiss, and soft to clasp --

But the warder leaves his grasp;  
 Lightning flashes, rolls the thunder!  
 Gyneth startles from her sleep,  
 Totters tower, and trembles keep,  
 Burst the castle-walls asunder!  
 Fierce and frequent were the shocks, --  
 Melt the magic halls away;  
 But beneath their mystic rocks,  
 In the arms of bold De Vaux,  
 Safe the princess lay;  
 Safe and free from magic power,  
 Blushing like the rose's flower  
 Opening to the day;  
 And round the champion's brow's were bound  
 The crown that Druidess had wound,  
 Of the green laurel-bay.  
 And this was what remain'd of all  
 The wealth of each enchanted hall,  
 The garland and the dame:  
 But where should warrior seek the meed,  
 Due to high worth for daring deed,  
 Except from love and fame!

## CONCLUSION

### I.

My Lucy,, when the maid is won,  
 The minstrel's task, thou know'st, is done.  
 And to require of bard  
 That to his dregs the tale should run,  
 Were ordinance too hard.  
 Our lovers, briefly be it said,  
 Wedded as lovers wont to wed,  
 When tale or play is o'er;  
 Lived long and blest, loved fond and true,  
 And saw a numerous race renew  
 The honours that they bore.  
 Know, too, that when a pilgrim strays,  
 In morning mist or evening maze,

Along the mountain lone,  
That fairy fortress often mocks  
His gaze upon the castled rocks  
Of the Valley of Saint John;  
But never man since brave De Vaux  
The charmed portal won.  
'Tis now a vain illusive show,  
That melts whene'er the sunbeams glow  
Or the fresh breeze hath blown.

## II.

But see, my love, where far below  
Our lingering wheels are moving slow,  
The whiles, up-gazing still,  
Our menials eye our steepy way,  
Marvelling, perchance, what whim can stay  
Our steps, when eve is sinking grey,  
On this gigantic hill.  
So think the vulgar: Life and time  
Ring all their joys in one dull chime  
Of luxury and ease;  
And, O! beside these simple knaves,  
How many better born are slaves  
To such coarse joys as these!  
Dead to nobler sense that glows  
When nature's grander scenes unclose!  
But, Lucy, we will love them yet,  
The mountain's misty coronet,  
The greenwood, and the wold;  
And love the more that of their maze  
Adventure high of other days  
By ancient bards is told,  
Bringing, perchance, like my poor tale,  
Some moral truth in fiction's veil:  
Nor love them less, that o'er the hill  
The evening breeze, as now, comes chill; --  
My love shall wrap her warm,  
And, fearless of the slippery way  
While safe she trips the heathy brae,

Shall hang on Arthur's arm.

## VIVIEN, BY ALAN SEEGER [1916]

Her eyes under their lashes were blue pools  
Fringed round with lilies; her bright hair unfurled  
Clothed her as sunshine clothes the summer world.  
Her robes were gauzes--gold and green and gules,  
All furry things flocked round her, from her hand  
Nibbling their foods and fawning at her feet.  
Two peacocks watched her where she made her seat  
Beside a fountain in Broceliande.  
Sometimes she sang. . . . Whoever heard forgot  
Errand and aim, and knights at noontide here,  
Riding from fabulous gestes beyond the seas,  
Would follow, tranced, and seek . . . and find her not . . .  
But wake that night, lost, by some woodland mere,  
Powdered with stars and rimmed with silent trees.



## GAWAIN AND THE LADY OF AVALON, BY GEORGE AUGUSTUS SIMCOX [1869]

Came tidings unto Caerleon,  
Where Arthur kept Shrovetide,  
How, far away in Avalon,  
A scaly dragon's pride,  
With visage like a woman's wan,  
Wasted the country-side.

Arthur let cry through all his land,  
"Who curses me for wrong?"  
Then flowed there in on every hand  
The stream of loyal song,  
"If right could make a king's throne stand,  
Then Arthur's would stand long."

When Arthur's praise was duly sung,  
A way-worn maiden came,  
And said, with duteous faltering tongue,  
"Ye are not much to blame,  
My liege, for we were very young,  
Though ye forgot our game.

"We played at guessing thoughts," she said.  
"Ye did not guess aright.  
Ye sware to give me one to wed,  
To be my lord and knight.  
Now twenty years, methinks, are fled,  
And ye forget our plight."

The dew was on her raven hair  
And her blue glistening eye;  
No dust on foot or ankle bare,  
Though all the land was dry;  
And every knight was ready there

To wed with her or die.

"But I," she said, "am dowerless,  
And comfortless of men,  
And sojourn in the wilderness,  
And in the dragon's den."  
Pale looks were plentiful, I guess,  
About the Table then.

Lancelot looked in her pleading face,  
And sighed, "If I were free;"  
Quoth Tristram as he left the place,  
"His answer serves for me."  
Galahad said something of God's grace;  
She said, "I choose not thee."

Geraint bowed over Enid's veil;  
His visage was more white.  
Lamorack buckled up his mail,  
And looked into the night.  
Gawain, whose face was always pale,  
Seemed ruddy in the light.

She laid her little hand in his,  
He chose to let it stay;  
She put her rosy cheek to his,  
He did not turn away;  
She put her cherry lips to his,  
Which were as dim as clay.

He spake, as soon as it was time,  
Of pleasant ways of love,  
That rules the sweetly-ordered chime  
Of stars and saints above,  
And bade the minstrels sing the rhyme  
Of the true turtle-dove;

And bade them call the holy priest  
To knit the twain in one.  
She said, "I keep my marriage-feast

Not here, at Avalon."  
None knew why all men as she ceased  
Trembled in Caerleon.

"Where shall we find a priest to wait  
And bless the marriage-bed?  
And if your house be desolate,  
How shall your guests be fed?  
And who will guide them to our gate?"  
The courteous bridegroom said.

"The dragon's scales of woven glass  
Will light my banquet well;  
Iscaiot will sing the mass,  
And Pilate toll the bell;  
And all my marriage guests will pass  
Over the mouth of hell.

"I go to the great wilderness,  
And to the dragon's lair,  
Where the great hills are harbourless,  
And the sharp rocks are bare;  
And if thou pity my distress,  
Then thou wilt meet me there.

"But sit thou with thy master here  
For three days yet," saith she;  
"Then shalt thou ride in desert drear,  
Three days alone to me;  
The seventh day with lordly cheer  
Our marriage-feast shall be."

She kissed Sir Gawain on the mouth,  
He kissed her on the hand;  
Then she departed to the south,  
Between the sea and sand,  
Leaving behind a bitter drouth  
In all King Arthur's land.

Thereat the King was full of woe,

The princes of dismay.  
A bolder man had feared to go,  
But Gawain feared to stay,  
And parted in a storm of snow,  
Alone, on the third day.

The seventh day, by Grammarie,  
And by the dragon's power,  
He saw beside a leaden sea  
A rosy granite tower,  
That fronted to a sunny lea,  
Blood-red with wild windflower.

Thereon went many quick and dead,  
And some who do not die;  
Each wore a garland on the head,  
Each laughed within the eye.  
No flower was bent beneath their tread,  
No dewy leaf brushed dry.

They passed within the granite gate,  
And there was room for all;  
Gawain could see his lady wait,  
In green and purple pall.  
As he lit down, the cloud of fate  
Went up from Arthur's hall.

Beneath Gawain his feet seemed lame,  
He stumbled and he fell;  
There lived for him a subtle flame  
In every crushed wind-bell.  
She said, "No marvel, for ye came  
Over the mouth of hell."

He saw an altar to the west,  
He saw the incense sink,  
And in the bag on the priest's breast  
He heard the silver chink.  
One stood to serve in purple vest,  
Whose hands were washed in ink.

Black serpents round the altar ran,  
But Judas chanted well,  
And sweetly rang his sacristan  
The silver sacring bell;  
And so the marriage rite began,  
Over the pit of hell.

Sweet gusts of music from below  
Lifted the lady's veil;  
Soft sudden flakes of rosy snow  
Flecked the black serpent's mail.  
'Mid happy faces all aglow  
The bridegroom's face was pale.

The altar sank beneath the floor,  
Arose the marriage feast,  
Sweeter and merrier and more  
The melody increased;  
None started as grim graveworms tore  
The sacristan and priest.

In shifting many-coloured light,  
Too bright to look upon,  
You saw the guests, you saw the knight,  
Where that wild radiance shone;  
You did not see the lady bright  
Who reigns in Avalon.

Yet all, as though beneath her eye,  
Were busy to rejoice;  
And now the music mounted high  
To glorify her choice,  
Who felt the dragon sliding by,  
And heard the lady's voice.

A moment not a guest was seen  
Within the marriage room;  
A moment, and the magic sheen  
Faded in magic gloom,

Through which, half seen, the fairy queen  
Scattered a sweet perfume.

Gawain bent low for courtesie,  
And thanked her for her grace;  
He laid his hand upon her knee  
And looked into her face,  
And wondered if he did not see  
The dragon in her place.

The lady his weak hand hath ta'en,  
And bidden him be of cheer;  
He asked her, "Is the dragon slain?"  
She said, "He is not here.  
The dragon will not waste again  
In Arthur's golden year."

Arose a happy fairy sound,  
As of a little well  
By the first break of spring unbound;  
Cool flowers began to swell  
From underneath the burning ground,  
To veil the mouth of hell.

The moon above the misty lea  
Hung like a globe of fire,  
Whereby Gawain a hag might see  
In ghastly gay attire,  
Whose wrinkled face flushed horribly  
With jubilant desire.

He knew her, for she held the hand  
He gave to one more fair;  
He knew her by the magic band  
His lady used to wear,  
With jewels from an unknown land  
Bound in her raven hair.

Fondly she lisped, "My honey knight,  
It needs not to rehearse

Wherefore I lifted up the blight,  
And took away the curse,  
Because ye took me in God's sight  
For better and for worse.

"Though thou be very fair to see,  
And I a loathly crone,  
Yet what is that to thee and me  
Before King Arthur's throne?  
And when I hunger after thee,  
I hunger for mine own."

Gawain, the knight of courtesie,  
Bowed down his stately head,  
And said, "Sweet wife, most certainly  
We in God's sight are wed,"  
As he drew back the canopy  
Over the bridal bed.

Full still he lay till break of day  
In counterfeited bliss,  
Nor turned his loyal cheek away  
From any loathly kiss,  
And saw the while the lightnings play,  
And heard her serpents hiss.

There lay beside Gawain at morn  
A maiden undefiled,  
As rosy as the blooming thorn  
When eves in May are mild;  
As tender as the babe unborn,  
To life scarce reconciled.

Her brow was veiled with woven brass,  
And bonds were on the hands,  
Which held an emerald hourglass  
Wherein few golden sands;  
Her feet seemed quivering to pass  
Into untravelled lands.

She kissed her husband thick and fast  
On lip and brow and cheek,  
Her captive arms round him she cast,  
And then she tried to speak,  
Until the love came out at last,  
Although the voice was weak.

"Wilt have by day a lovely may,  
By night a loathly crone,  
That other men may see and say,  
His bride becomes a throne;  
Or have me foul for them by day,  
And fair for thee alone?"

He thought, "Whate'er my choice may be,  
I cannot choose but ill,  
For she by slight of Grammarie  
Would fool my simple skill."  
He said, "This is too hard for me,  
Use your own gentle will."

Oh, sweetly smiled the lady then,  
And sweetly laughed the lea,  
Sweet roses veiled the dragon's den;  
"Henceforth my face shall be  
Fair when I will for other men,  
And all day long for thee!"

She laughed, "'Tis well ye did not play  
When Arthur lost the game,  
For you have guessed aright to-day  
The wish of every dame."  
"Yet," said Gawain, "I cannot say  
My lady's lovesome name."

The colours of the dragon's mail  
Flashed in the dewy grass;  
The lady's face flushed red and pale,  
"And I had hoped, alas!  
That thou shouldst rend the brazen veil,



And loose the bonds of glass.

"Ah! woe is me, it may not be,  
And I have loved thee so;  
But henceforth thou shalt never see  
My footprints where I go,  
To wake the flowers upon the lea,  
And kiss away the snow."

He smiled farewell, her colour rose;  
She cried aloud, "For shame!  
I sojourn seven years with those  
Who do not ask my name.  
Hence with thee and thy painted shows;  
Hence by the road ye came!

"Go home and boast in Caerleon,  
Below thy courtly breath,  
About the bonny bride ye won,  
For whom hell hungereth!  
But come no more to Avalon,  
For that will be thy death."

Low fell the veil of woven brass,  
On heavy eyelids bound;  
On folded hands the bonds of glass  
Clanked softly without sound;  
And so Gawain beheld her pass  
Over the dewy ground.

## THE FAREWELL OF GANORE, BY GEORGE AUGUSTUS SIMCOX [1869]

Ganore was standing at the convent gate  
With Lancelot, and she held him by the hand,  
And in the fierce noon of a harvest day  
They both looked forth upon a wasted land;  
And Queen Ganore was in her royal state  
Of widowhood, as when she kept at bay  
The rabble, when they hungered for her death,  
Saying, "Surely Arthur will not come again  
Till that lewd sorceress be foully slain."  
But she had stood for her own life and fame  
Until from Lyonesse Sir Lancelot came,  
Unblenching, though old memories choked her breath.  
Lancelot was travel-stained, and all his face  
Was flushed, and clouded by an eager doubt;  
His eyes were heavy with the tears of grace,  
And, bending to his love, he faltered out  
Penitent words, with stifled sobs between,  
"Alas, and yet again alas, my Queen,  
That ever we met and one another knew;  
For all the ill that reckless hate can do,  
My loyal, scrupulous love hath done to you;  
For through my loyal love your lord is slain,  
Your lord and mine, who bred me up to knight;  
And on your womanhood is come a stain  
Of treason, which no oaths will e'er wash white,  
And all your joy is hidden out of sight.  
But I will leave my realm of Lyonesse  
In peace, for Galahad my chaste son to rule;  
And in the wilderness my sad heart school  
To worship God, and pray for you aright;  
Because this world is very pitiless,  
To make us buy with sin its brief delight."  
Trembling he spoke, and looking up to her,

But she stood upright, looking far away,  
With a hot glory on her golden head;  
Her scarcely sunken cheek was flushed full fair,  
Not at his words, but at the fierce sun ray:  
Then, bending on him eyes which were not red,  
With lofty, motherly regard, she said,  
Smoothing his tangled curls with soft cool hand,  
"Yea, and is Lyonesse a peaceful land?  
God give you comfort of it, as you grow  
Sadly to heaven, in your bleak hermitage,  
For surely Britain shall sit down in woe,  
Since Arthur died with all his baronage.  
Farewell, my friend, whom I shall see no more,  
For even in heaven we shall dwell apart  
Where God, who came between us heretofore,  
Seals up within himself weak heart from heart."  
She took him, and she kissed him on the brow,  
And bade him go in peace to keep his vow,  
And saw him ride away, and did not start,  
But listened till his echoing tramp had died  
Upon the granite of the bleak hillside;  
Then, when she knew that Lancelot would not hear,  
She loosed her voice and made complaint aloud.  
The nuns behind her shivered in much fear,  
Seeing her stand beneath a thundercloud  
Which suddenly had overshadowed her;  
But where they stood the arch of heaven was clear,  
And from the cloud an icy wind, which fell  
From heaven to probe the fiery heart of hell,  
Through underground, deep-echoing caverns bore  
The lamentation of the Queen Ganore:--  
"Alone for evermore.  
I watched him, and he did not turn his head,  
And I shall be alone till I am dead;  
Alone for evermore.  
And I would weep a little ere I die,  
And all the fountain of my tears is dry,  
Which heretofore  
With many vain desires my true love fed,  
While I believed the oaths that Lancelot swore;

But now I do not weep, I feel no pain;  
I tell myself aloud my lord is slain,  
I tell myself my love is gone away,  
Never to come again;  
And find no passionate true word to say,  
But only this unmeaning cuckoo cry,  
Alone until I die.

"Surely these words are sharp enough to slay  
One who did once love well,  
Or scourge me out of the bleak, desolate day  
Into meek cloister cell;  
But I, I loiter still outside the door,  
Alone for evermore.  
Through me the fiery river of life hath flowed  
Hot and clear with love and sin;  
Through me and over me, and I have glowed  
Body and soul therein.  
And then I was not molten in that heat  
Nor broken; I was wise and it was sweet.  
And now the river hath gone by,  
And left me cold and dark and dry,  
Cast on a slimy bank accursed.  
Also I know that this is not the worst;  
But each day will be drearier till I die.  
Arthur could weep for me, why cannot I?  
O Arthur, O my perfect knight,  
And thou didst pity me,  
Not knowing that I loved thee even then,  
Who love thee now much more, not pitying thee,  
Since now thou judgest in God's tender light  
Rightly of me and men.  
Yes, God will make you understand  
Those bitter things I would not say,  
Thinking it easier, kinder to deceive.  
But now you will not grieve  
Where you are sitting by the glassy sea,  
On a great ivory throne at God's right-hand,--  
God's hand who cut you off from me,  
Who made me of such different clay.

I love thee much too well to weep for thee,  
Who art gone home,--gone home to thy reward,  
Arthur, my Arthur once, my gentle lord.

"I have desired and I have not attained;  
And I have given and I have not received;  
And I have lived and nought is gained  
Of all those goodly things my youth believed.  
I have lived, do I say?  
And yet I have to live  
Long, very long, before I pass away,  
Before my beauty and my strength decay,--  
My strength, which hath been helpful heretofore;  
My beauty, which no knights shall worship more.  
I asked of Arthur what he could not give;  
I gave what Lancelot could not repay.  
My God, what shall I say?  
And Arthur asked of me  
To live in dreams, hoping what shall not be;  
And Arthur asked in vain.  
Because we asked how many have been slain!  
Wilt thou require their blood of me?  
And Lancelot is parted now in pain,  
Because I am less sorrowful than he,  
And still could have been happy out of thee;  
But thou, it seems, dost otherwise ordain.  
And unto earth is sunshine after rain,  
But unto us no gladness after pain,  
Or none that may endure,  
None that is pure.  
But when the storm is past,  
The sky laughs without stain;  
While sorrow doth our spirits overcast  
With clouds that do not wash them white again.  
Yet how shall I complain  
That Arthur loved too little, I too much;  
That Lancelot's hot love shrivelled at the touch  
Of thy disdain?  
Yea, how shall I complain  
Of thee, my God, with whom I hope to reign?"

For this is all of thee.  
I made thee not, thou madest me.  
Doubtless I might have striven against the stream,  
Labouring to live in Arthur's knightly dream.  
He might have folded me in arms of love  
More closely, though his eyes were set above.  
But not by us the river of our woe  
Was fed with vain desires, or learned to flow  
Through flowery mountains to a barren plain;  
And since we drifted many have been slain,  
And very many homes are desolate;  
And yet, behold, I curse thee not, O God!  
Though men curse me;  
Because I do not think it is in hate  
That we are beaten down before thy rod,  
Which flowers, though late.  
And I am tired, and it is rest to wait;  
And one grief comes to drive another out,  
And turbulent desire is purged by doubt;  
And this too is of thee,  
To bring us very low and set us free.  
For Arthur verily is dead,  
So I am not in bondage to his bed;  
And Lancelot is gone to keep his vow;  
I am not debtor unto any now.  
I do not think that I shall tarry here,  
To teach these pitiful nuns to hold me dear;  
But I will out into the wilds, and know  
If Lancelot and the priests have told me true,  
If I in very deed am fallen so low  
That I should be as they,  
Whose very hearts are grey;  
And yet Christ is their spouse, they say,  
Whose mercy I need too."

And then she paused in her lament, and sighed,  
And spake again, "Men only have I tried,  
And they have shallow hearts, and so have I.  
I will away from them before I die,  
And be a little child and taste the summer-tide.

I will away; the sunny world is wide,--  
And desolate," her aching heart replied.

Yet not the less she bade the nuns farewell  
In courteous words, and covered up her pride,  
Saying, "O my sisters, it is yours to hide  
For ever in your Husband's wounded side.  
Yet He, you know, ere he was crucified,  
Went forth into the wilderness to dwell,  
And taste, before the Cross, the might of Hell;  
And I must meet Him there, and there be tried."  
Nor knew she whether she spake truth, or lied,  
Of some fierce trial which she thought to bide.  
So the nuns kissed her, and they shut the door,  
Who neither on that day nor any more  
Beheld again the beauty of Ganore.  
But, as one stealing silently from thrall,  
The Queen went softly by the cloister-wall,  
Where the green moss deadened her light footfall.  
Turning away from the waste harvest-lands,  
Which at that time were desolate with war,  
Upon whose edge the quaint peaked convent stands  
Upon a little knoll of jutting moor,  
Jutting into a sea of yellow corn,  
Bounded by a grey scoop of granite shore,  
Too thinly veiled by withered bents forlorn,  
Where Lancelot had ridden, but Ganore  
Would have died rather than have followed him.  
And round the knoll the fringe of copse was dim  
With tangled glades she had not trod before,  
And she passed into them, and was content;  
For through the copse a leaping river went,  
Tawny between the purple-lichened rocks:  
Ripe iris-heads were green among the bent,  
And here and there a spike of foxglove grew,  
Where through the twisted oaks the sun broke through;  
And overhead was a soft noise of flocks,  
Feeding on purple, overarched with blue.  
So she went stumbling softly through the shade,  
By a green path made rough with roots and stones,

Where still, I think, the fly of summer drones,  
But no queen stumbles upward through the glade.  
But then a dreamy queen went fingering  
At reddening berries and at fading flowers,  
Kissing them often as she wandered on,  
In happy memory of those early hours,  
Unclouded by the grim dreams of the King,  
When she and Lancelot had often gone  
Together, in glad lowland woods, in May;  
And all that happiness was past away  
For ever, and she knew it, but a sleep  
Was on her soul; she saw quaint shadows play  
Under the leaves, and she forgot to weep;  
And something in her heart began to pray,  
And magnify God's mother, queen of spring  
And harvest, in a little childish lay,  
For very gladness of that glorious day.  
And from the birckenshaw a milk-white doe  
Kissed the Queen's feet, who went on pilgrimage;  
Then fluttering out of her fair woodland cage,  
Her eyes took wing, seeing a great lake glow  
In azure set between two golden hills,  
Golden with furze and fading birch below;  
Above was purple heath, which fed the rills  
That leapt in silver round the rocky head,  
With double cirque of green encompassed;  
Where grey turf hung between grey crags of stone,  
But in the light the grass was golden green.  
Then at her left Ganore espied a crone,  
Branded as bondmaid to the Holy Grail,  
Who wore her white hair woven for a veil,  
Crowned with gold rays, for she too was a queen,  
And sat upon the black coils of a snake,  
And her blue feet hung down in the blue lake,  
Nailed to an iron cross, but did not bleed;  
And backwards she was spelling out a creed.  
But higher up she saw a white flock feed,  
And upon each there were three locks of red,  
And in the figure of the cross they fed;  
Their shepherd was a boy in gay attire



Of many colours, with a crook of gold;  
He lay as haply fifteen summers old,  
But where his face should be there was a fire,  
Whence came a carolling how the stars should pale  
Before the radiance of the Holy Grail.  
Ganore beheld, and did not think it strange,  
For all these sights were fixed in the bright day,  
And seemed as if they could not pass away,  
But had been uncontaminate by change  
Since the world was, abiding in one stay.  
Wherefore Ganore, beholding, only sighed,  
"How many of the Table would have died,  
And held the forfeit of life's earthly bliss  
Too cheap a purchase for a sight like this!"  
But to the shepherd-boy the old Queen cried,  
"When wilt thou take her captive to the Grail?"  
But from the fire there came a sighing wail,  
"How can I, for her love is crucified?"  
Whereat Ganore fled up the steep hillside  
Towards the right, but one of that fair flock  
Leapt from the shadow of a brambly rock,  
And thenceforth went before her for a guide;  
But when Ganore laid hand upon its head,  
Her hand, and all the wool it touched, were red.  
So they pushed on together through the brake,  
And ever as they clomb Ganore looked down  
Over the steep green slope to the blue lake,  
And marvelled, "How if once my steps should slide!"  
And thought she saw far off the old Queen frown.  
But when they won the crest of that glad slope,  
Ganore was disappointed of her hope  
To look upon new lands and a new sky;  
Only she saw an upward stretching moor,  
Where in the treacherous peat the black pools lie,  
And no heath grew thereon, but rushes hoar:  
And these were autumn hued, and all the green  
Was moss, wherethrough the still moor waters run.  
And as she journeyed on, the lonely queen  
Looked up into the sky, and missed the sun,  
And missed the shapely peaks of splintered rock,

And missed the shepherd with his magic flock,  
And shuddered in the wailing evening wind,  
And saw the country gleam below, behind,  
In the warm brilliance of the sun's broad ray;  
And said, "Alas for those who walk on high,  
Because for them the sun makes haste to set!"  
And then she spake again, "O God, forget  
My sin, and give me light before I die,"  
For the chill purple air was full of death;  
Nor knew she how one little ridge of clay  
Shut out the glorious deathbed of the day.  
And then she went a little further on,  
Hanging her head because the light was gone,  
And stumbled in the reeds, and caught her breath;  
For suddenly she stood against the sky,  
And close beneath her lay a breadth of sea,  
Plashing against a space of weedy shore,  
Still dripping from the ebbing waves, and bright  
With bars of purple, flecked with ruddier gold,  
For on the left the thunderclouds were rolled  
Each upon each, to slumber through the night,  
And through their curtains glared the fiery sun.  
But in the east, upon the right, Ganore  
Saw a dim purple clinging round the sea,  
Like a dim veil that clings about a nun;  
And a soft rose flushed the chill middle sky,  
And in the rose, the young moon rode on high;  
But Queen Ganore fell down, and bent the knee,  
Trembling alone at God's great majesty.  
Then she went down, slowly with knocking knees,  
Catching at tufts of grass and stunted trees,  
By a dry watercourse, and heard the breeze  
Hiss over the steep slope of loose dry stone,  
And crossed her bleeding hands, and bowed her head:  
"If I die here,--what matter were I dead!  
None will lament for me, I am alone."  
But she died not, but gained the lonely shore,  
And saw the white sheep skipping on before,  
And waxed more hopeful following where it led  
Still to the west, and it was twilight now,

And in the twilight every rocky brow  
Showed sharp and clear against the ghost of day,  
Against clear hungry spiritual grey.  
But, with the sun, the wind had died away;  
So all was peace, and you could scarcely hear  
The loving splash of the returning tide,  
As though some tender angel hovering near  
Made all things to forget their strength and pride.  
And so in peace, Ganore turned round a rock  
Sharply, and she was in a little bay,  
Fronting the perfect circle of the west;  
And on the sands a little shallop lay  
Ready to float upon the ebb to sea,  
Wherein was neither anchor, helm, nor oar,  
But one fair sail of purple wrought with gold,  
And in the sheets a little crimson fold,  
Wherein a scroll in silver words to say,  
"For the espousals of the Queen Ganore."  
Whereat the queen was troubled when she read,  
And knew that she was taken in the bay,  
For now on either side the full sea rolled;  
So she, adventuring on the mystery,  
Sat in the boat, and took upon her knee  
The patient firstling of the magic flock,  
And waited, bowing down her black veiled head  
Over her white hands folded on her breast,  
And after her long journey took sweet rest,  
Where, on the solitary, rock-bound shore,  
The balmy night came down upon Ganore.

## CAMELFORD, BY DOUGLAS B. W. SLADAN [1885]

### Camelford--Camelot

#### I.

Not Camelot the towered--the goodly town  
Upon the shining rive, whither passed  
The Lady of Shalott, when fallen at last  
A victim to her spell, slow-wafted down!  
Not Camelot the towered, the glittering crown  
Of all King Arthur's cities! Yet thou hast  
Thy legend of the King--how Modred massed  
His traitor legions, where the waters brown  
Run neath the Bridge of Slaughter, how the King,  
With Launcelot dishonoured, Tristram slain  
And half of his Round-table following  
Dead or apostate--triumphed; then was ta'en;  
Stricken to death, by bold Sir Bedivere  
To Dozmary and passed upon the mere.

### Camelford--Slaughter Bridge

#### II.

In the soft prelude of an August night  
We sallied forth from Camelford in quest  
Of where his last great battle in the west  
Brought death to Athur. Grey the gloaming light  
Ere we were in the valley of the fight,  
A spot by Nature framed for fierce contest,  
With ridge commanding ridge, and crest on crest,  
On either side a little river, bright  
With waving sedge and darting trout. The bridge  
Was wreathed with blackhaired spleenwort and wild flowers,  
And the rank grass beneath the lowest bridge

Guarded a stone, in characters not ours,  
Claimed by the country-folk with wondering eyes  
To tell that Arthur underneath it lies.

## PASTORAL OF GALAHAD, BY ELINOR SWEETMAN [1899]

The blackthorn-flower hath fallen away--  
The blackthorn-flower that wise men say  
Keeps wild and variable skies  
As long as it may stay:  
But here's the gorse, and here's the whin,  
And here the pearlèd may appears,  
And poison-weeds of satin skin  
Through every bank prick long green ears  
To hear the cuckoo-cries.

By early field and coppice dark,  
One cometh singing like the lark;  
His limbs with silver plates are clad  
More bright than beechen-bark;  
And bathed in mist, half sun, half steam,  
The yokels made their clumsy bow,  
Or pull aside their smoking team  
To murmur kneeling in the plough:  
"Here cometh Galahad."

And Galahad hath stayed his song  
To help the labouring hinds along,  
And prayed them, pitying the dumb,  
To spare both goad and thong;  
And blessed them all, and wandered forth  
Through pasture purpled o'er with thyme,  
And cried unto the fragrant earth,  
And louder than the minster chime:  
"Laudate Dominum!"

For earth is soft with summer's dole:  
Each worn-out mare hath got a foal  
To suck her weariness away,

And make old bruises whole;  
And deep in grass may weaklings rest  
Beside the milky mother-things;  
The starling by his hidden nest  
Like a low sound of bubbling springs  
Chuckles the livelong day.

"I thank Thee, Lord," Sir Galahad said,  
"Thy sinless earth is happy made."  
By day, by night, his thrilling voice  
Ringeth through sun and shade.  
At eve he picks the flowering thorn  
To scourge therewith his shoulders bare;  
The flowers fly off, the flesh is torn,  
Yet ever more he sings in prayer:  
"Rejoice, my heart, rejoice."

Now with the full-leaved Whitsuntide  
The truant knights to Camelot ride,  
That they may keep the festival  
By noble Arthur's side.  
And some are bronzed by wind and sun,  
And some are seamed with blows and care,  
And all are full of speech; but none  
The record of his soul lays bare  
Within that courtly hall.

Eleven at the Table Round  
With gemmy carcanets are crowned:  
The twelfth hath flowers of woodroffe wild  
Around his forehead bound.  
He cometh singing like the lark--  
He entereth gay with garlands green--  
"Art shepherd-clown or chapel-clerk,  
O knight?" said Guinevere the queen  
To Galahad undefiled.

"Why Galahad this joyous mien?  
O Galahad where hast thou been?"

Hath prayed and fasted all the Lent? <sup>1</sup>  
What vision hast thou seen?"  
But Galahad throws his garland down:  
"O king, O knights, no monk am I;  
Nor yet, my queen, a shepherd-clown;  
In wanderings 'neath the open sky  
Mine idle days were spent.

"In grassy ways I set my feet;  
I tuned mine ears to chirp and bleat;  
I saw a sickle-moon at birth  
Over the young green what.  
I sate among the kindly beasts  
And knew them seasonably glad;  
Of balsam-herbs I made my feasts;  
A happier man than Galahad  
Was never seen on earth.

"My heart was glad for that I knew  
The fallen bole had greened anew,  
And sucking things were glad and mad  
And gambolled in the dew;  
For when new leaves come round the bole,  
And every beast hath young unto her,  
O king, within the loneliest soul  
Are silent place all in flower!"  
Answereth Galahad.

"Shame! shame!" cry then the Table Round,  
"What! never a blow, and never a wound?  
And never a holy image kissed  
In crypts beneath the ground?"  
Saith Galahad: "I think no shame;  
The story of the Lord of all  
When first on Christmas night He came  
Beginneth with a pastoral:  
Even your captain, Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> The text reads feasted , but fasted is obviously intended.



"Have ye not heard of ass and ox  
That warmed the stable in the rocks?  
Have ye not read of them that kept  
Night-watches o'er their flocks?  
And shall His humble virgin knight  
With herds and shepherds scorn to dwell,  
If He who leads all heaven's might  
To battle with the crews of hell,  
By beasts of burden slept?

"I am not less a soldier sealed,  
Because in life of tilth and field  
I saw the light, I heard the call,  
That God Himself revealed.  
But king, hast thou a perilous quest,  
And would'st thou doubt which knight to send?  
Mine arm is strong, my heart at rest--  
Behold the man!"  
Here hath an end  
Sir Galahad's pastoral.

## PASTORAL OF LANCELOT, BY ELINOR SWEETMAN [1899]

The field was green, and green the elder-bough;  
The land all burnished with unopened bud  
Let the large light and wholesome wind blow through  
Its airy glades and ragged underwood,  
Where now with boisterous breath the early year  
Like a young child in lusty hardihood  
Stretched out its growing days; the roughcoat steer  
Trampled his plashy meadow to a slough,  
Or drank his fill at pools of melted snow.

Behold them riding two and two abreast  
Along the path that leads from Merlin's hall!  
Through the bare copse and o'er the lone hill-crest--  
Lancelot, and Galahad, and Percival,  
Tristram, and Bors, and many a knight beside,  
All sealed in Christ to seek the San Graäl  
Wherein men's sinful souls are purified;  
All Arthur's Table Round, all Camelot's best  
Perilous pilgrims of a holy quest.

Down in the reeds, where marshy ways divide,  
Two mournful eyes stare out the stems between;  
It is the faun that aye at Easter-tide  
Pipes up the sap in boughs and rushes green.  
Poor waif of lost and luscious years gone by,  
To whom sweet earth hath place of joyance been,  
What should he know of doleful Calvary?  
Of Jewish spear, or of the Riven Side  
That fills the chalice of the Crucified?

He pipeth, and the meadow heareth him,  
He calls the little grasses by their name,  
He pipeth till the sluices overbrim,

And the green life shoots up like altar-flame;  
 He pipeth as the knights come trampling nigh--  
 But now his sweetest song is hushed in shame,  
 And he is sorrowful he knows not why;  
 For these have Sabbath at their hearts, and dim  
 Seems the wild voice beside the river-rim.

Anon he pipes again, and April hears,  
 And muffles up the parted knights in mist,  
 And weeps in meadows all her moon of tears,  
 And bids her warm winds whisper what they list.  
 Lo! now were holy pilgrimage to pass  
 Where leaf laps leaf, and bough with bough hath kissed,  
 Well might it pause: so murmurous is the grass--  
 So deep--so thick!--Sir Lancelot by the meres,  
 Hears the wild waters roaring in his ears.

For all life sings, and singing it sucks down  
 The noble heart of Arthur's noblest knight;  
 A little soulless faun hath willed him drown  
 Deep, deep in mounting waves of Spring delight.  
 "O Lancelot," sigh the branches overhead,  
 "Come rest awhile: the Grail is not in sight."  
 "O Lancelot," lisp the grasses, "make thy bed  
 Here on the kindly earth; forget renown  
 And thy sick soul of all but dream discrown."

Sir Lancelot lieth in the lone green-wood,  
 Sir Lancelot wrestleth in the tall grass-spears:  
 Fain would he think upon the Holy Rood,  
 And Christ's red cup, and sweet Saint Mary's tears;  
 But then come memories of the balmy lips  
 And the soft eyelids that are Guinevere's--  
 He dreams, and as he dreams, wild apple dips  
 Her brooding boughs, and flowers of milk and blood  
 Between his strong convulsèd heart and God.

And times he saith: "Why must man aye forego?  
 And why is life a nobler thing through pain?"  
 And times: "Since love's sweet apple hangs so low,

Shall I not strongly grasp and count it gain?"  
And thousand times he yearneth for the Grail,  
And God's own blood to cleanse his life from stain;  
And prays against his love to no avail.  
Love's immortality hath root in woe:  
All human tragedies do prove it so.

Three cups of life are proffered to his taste:  
One is the chalice of forbidden bliss;  
But though his lonely spirit lieth waste  
In wish thereof, he is too great for this.  
One is the chalice of the San Graäl:  
For this he is too base: no lip may kiss  
The cup wherefrom the pure apostles all  
Drank, when their loving Saviour blessed it last,  
Save that of meekest men, and maidens chaste.

One cup is left to him: the cup of pain.  
O bitter wine! can life be nourished so?  
Pain and renouncement ever; these remain  
When vision is all too high, and dream too low.  
Drink deep, Sir Lancelot, this draught is blest;  
Then back to Camelot through young April go;  
Though thou hast failed upon a higher quest,  
Yet none the less God's chalice shalt thou drain,  
And in thine ear the faun will pipe in vain.

But who shall glimpse the Holy Grail of God?  
Not Lancelot, bravest man, and sternest knight,  
Nor Tristram, nor the hundred more who rode  
From Camelot gates that April morning bright.  
Yet Galahad still trusteth in his heart,  
And of the mystic chalice hopeth sight;  
In fast and prayer his days are spent apart;  
And wheresoe'er his step hath touched the sod  
Spring lily-tuft and angus-castus bud.

Hardby his chapel-cave a blasted thorn  
Withdrew in pain from earth its roots accurst:  
Long leafless years in agony outworn,

Had left it lone, and naked, and athirst,  
With limbs that evermore did rot and twist;  
And none to pass that way at even durst;  
But Galahad beholding, thought: "The Christ  
On some such wood as this was sure up-borne."  
And prayed among its shadows night and morn.

Now as he kneeleth underneath the spray,  
One cometh stumbling like a hunted beast  
That all day long hath kept the hounds at bay,  
And falleth blindly on a place of rest.  
With hands that grasp the tree this other lies  
Like some new growth of its contorted breast;  
But can wood breathe or hath it anguished eyes?  
And Galahad for pity cannot pray,  
Nor "Rise thou noble knight" to Lancelot say.

But from an incorrupted heart he cries:  
"O Christ Who camest not to call the just  
But sinners, and for them did'st agonise;  
Bethink Thee man was moulded out of dust,  
Nor lay this sin unto my brother's charge."  
Again he cries with tears: "In Thee I trust!"  
And eyes through fast and vigil over-large  
He raiseth meekly to the evening skies,  
As he would pierce the floors of paradise.

Behold! those glorious clouds above the wood  
Are stirred with pinions of an angel-quire,  
And in their midst, the Chalice of the Blood  
The blessed Grail of Galahad's desire.  
Impelled and pressed by deathless charity,  
Bathes men and angels with a bloom of fire,  
Wherein the holy seraphs move, and dye  
More deeply red their vesture crimson-hued,  
Baptising all things from its burning flood.

O blessed are the pure! They shall not fail  
To see the Lord their God as in a glass;  
Their souls have eyes, their flesh is but a veil--

Thus Galahad found grace above. Alas  
For Arthur's greatest lying at his feet!  
The faun is shrivelled like a wisp of grass,  
Withered by passage of the Paraclete,  
When Lancelot lifteth up his forehead pale--  
Sir Lancelot hath not seen the Holy Grail.

## A FAMOUS PREDICTION OF MERLIN, BY JONATHAN SWIFT [1709]

**L**AST year was published a paper of predictions, pretended to be written by one Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq; but the true design of it was to ridicule the art of astrology, and expose its professors as ignorant, or impostors. Against this imputation, Dr. Partridge hath learnedly vindicated himself in his Almanack for that year.

For a farther defence of this famous art, I have thought fit to present the world with the following prophecy. The original is said to be of the famous Merlin, who lived about a thousand years ago: And the following translation is two hundred years old; for it seems to be written near the end of Henry the Seventh's reign. I found it in an old edition of Merlin's Prophecies; imprinted at London by Johan Haukyns, in the year 1530. Page 39. I set it down word for word in the old orthography, and shall take leave to subjoin a few explanatory notes.

SEVEN and TEN addyd to NINE,  
 Of Fraunce hir Woe thys is the Sygne,  
 Tamys Rivere twys y-frozen,  
 Walke sans wetyng Shoes ne Hosen,  
 Then cometh foorthe, Ich understonde,  
 From Toune of Stoffe to fattyn Londe,  
 An herdie Chiftan, woe the Morne  
 To Fraunce, that evere he was borne.  
 Then shall the Fyshe beweyle his Bosse;  
 Nor shal grin Berrys make up the Losse.  
 Yonge Symnele shall again miscarrye:  
 And Norways Pryd again shall marrey.  
 And from the Tree where Blosums fele,  
 Ripe Fruit shall come, and all is wele.  
 Reaums shall daunce honde in honde,  
 And it shall be merye in old Inglonde.  
 Then old Inglonde shall be no more,

And no Man shall be sorie therefore.  
Geryon shall have three Hedes agayne,  
Till Hapsburge makyth them but twayne.

### Explanatory Notes

Seven and Ten . This line describes the year when these events shall happen. Seven and ten make seventeen, which I explain seventeen hundred, and this number added to nine makes the year we are now in; for it must be understood of the natural year, which begins the first of January.

Tamys Ryvere twys , &c. The River Thames frozen twice in one year, so as men to walk on it, is a very signal accident; which perhaps hath not fallen out for several hundred years before; and is the reason why some astrologers have thought that this prophecy could never be fulfilled; because they imagined such a thing could never happen in our climate.

From Toune of Stoffe , &c. This is a plain designation of the Duke of Marlborough. One kind of stuff used to fatten land is called Marle , and every body knows, that Borough is a name for a town; and this way of expression is after the usual dark manner of old astrological predictions.

Then shall the Fyshe , &c. By the Fish is understood the Dauphin of France, as the Kings eldest sons are called: It is here said, he shall lament the loss of the Duke of Burgundy, called the Bosse, which is an old English word for Hump-shoulder or Crook-back , as that Duke is known to be: And the prophecy seems to mean, that he should be overcome, or slain. By the Grin Berrys , in the next line, is meant the young Duke of Berry, the Dauphin's third son, who shall not have valour or fortune enough to supply the loss of his eldest brother.

Yonge Symnele , &c. By Symnele is meant the pretended Prince of Wales; who, if he offers to attempt any thing against England, shall miscarry as he did before. Lambert Symnel is the name of a young man noted in our histories for personating the son (as I remember) of Edward the Fourth.

And Norways Pryd , &c. I cannot guess who is meant by Norways Pride , perhaps the reader may, as well as the sense of the two following lines.



Reaums shall , &c. Reaums , or as the word is now, Realms , is the old name for Kingdoms : And this is a very plain prediction of our happy union, with the felicities that shall attend it. It is added, that Old England shall be no more, and yet no man shall be sorry for it. And, indeed, properly speaking, England is now no more; for the whole island is one kingdom, under the name of Britain.

Geryon shall &c. This prediction, though somewhat obscure is wonderfully adapt. Geryon is said to have been a king of Spain, whom Hercules slew. It was a fiction of the poets, that he had three heads, which the author says he shall have again. That is, Spain shall have three kings; which is now wonderfully verified: For, besides the King of Portugal, which properly is part of Spain, there are now two rivals for Spain; Charles and Philip. But Charles being descended from the Count of Hapsburgh, founder of the Austrian family, shall soon make those heads but two; by overturning Philip, and driving him out of Spain.

Some of these predictions are already fulfilled; and it is highly probable the rest may be in due time: And, I think, I have not forced the words, by my explication, into any other sense than what they will naturally bear. If this be granted, I am sure it must be also allowed, that the author (whoever he were) was a person of extraordinary sagacity; and that astrology brought to such perfection as this, is, by no means, an art to be despised; whatever Mr. Bickerstaff, or other merry gentlemen are pleased to think. As to the tradition of these lines, having been writ in the original by Merlin; I confess, I lay not much weight upon it: But it is enough to justify their authority, that the book from whence I have transcribed them, was printed 170 years ago, as appears by the title-page. For the satisfaction of any gentleman, who may be either doubtful of the truth, or curious to be informed; I shall give order to have the very book sent to the printer of this paper, with directions to let any body see it that pleases; because I believe it is pretty scarce.

## QUEEN YSEULT, BY ALGERNON CHARLES SWIN- BURNE [1857]

### CANTO 1

Of the birth of Sir Tristram, and how he voyaged into Ireland

In the noble days were shown  
Deeds of good knights many one,  
Many worthy wars were done.

It was time of scath and scorn  
When at breaking of the morn  
Tristram the good knight was born.

He was fair and well to see  
As his mother's child might be:  
Many happy wars had he;

Slew Moronde the knight alone,  
Whence was all the ill begun  
That on Blancheflour was done.

For long since Queen Blancheflour  
Took a knight to paramour,  
Who had served her well of yore.

And across the waters dim  
And by many a river's rim  
Went Queen Blancheflour with him.

Many a bitter path she went,  
Many a stone her feet had rent,  
But her heart was well content.

"Lo!" she said, "I lady free

Took this man for lord of me  
Where the crowned saints might see.

"And I will not bid him go,  
Not for joyance nor for woe,  
Till my very love he know."

When he kissed her as they went,  
All her heart was well content,  
For the love that she him meant.

Now this knight was called Roland,  
And he had within his hand  
Ermonie the happy land.

So five months in Ermonie  
Dwelt they in their pleasure free;  
For they knew not what should be.

Then came Moronde with his men,  
Warring with her lord again.  
All her heart was bitter then.

But she said: "If this be so,  
Tho' I die, he shall not know."  
And she kissed and bade him go;

And he wept and went from her.  
Then was all the land astir  
With a trouble in the air.

When Roland the knight was gone,  
Praise of men his warriors won  
Warring well before the sun.

But Moronde the evil knight  
Smote him falsely in the fight,  
Slew him basely out of sight.

Then was weeping long and sore:

For the great love they him bore  
All men wept but Blancheflour.

But she took her golden ring  
And a fair sword of the king  
Wrought with many a carven thing.

With no crown about her head,  
Thinking wild thoughts of the dead,  
Evermore she fled and fled.

Far within the forest fair,  
A great anguish came on her  
Till a strong manchild she bare.

And she fain had suckled him,  
There beneath the lindens dim,  
Round a fountain's weedy brim.

But too soon came death to take  
All her beauty for his sake;  
And ere death she moaned and spake.

"Ah, fair child," the lady said,  
"For this anguish that it had  
All thy mother's heart is dead.

"Sweet, I would not live to see  
Any sorrow rest on thee,  
Better thou hadst died with me.

"Only thou art still too fair  
For that smile I cannot bear  
In such eyes as Roland's were.

"Now, fair child, mine own wert thou  
(And she kissed the small soft brow)  
But for death that takes me now.

"And a bitter birth is thine;

But no man can stain thy line  
With a shame that was not mine.

"Thou art pure and princely born;  
Fairer name was never worn,  
Past the touch of any scorn.

"Now thy grief has come on me,  
As I prayed that it might be  
Lest some woe should rest on thee."

Wept the low voice musical;  
"Now that mine has given thee all,  
Better love thy love befall.

"Purer prayers be round thy sleep,  
Truer tears than these that drip  
On thy tender cheek and lip.

"Now, dear child, of all on earth  
Thou art yet the fairest birth  
For the pain thy life was worth.

"Sweetest name and sweetest heart,  
Now I see thee as thou art  
I have had the better part.

"For the grief my love has had,  
May the sweet saints keep thee glad  
Tho' thy birth were strange and sad.

"Now, dear child" (her thin voice strove  
Thro' the drawn dry sobs to move),  
"Leave I thee to Christ's own love."

So she died in that dark place,  
With the anguish in her face;  
Mary took her into grace.

On the robe was sown her name,

Where a fine thread white as flame  
Thro' the coloured samite came.

For on skirt and hem between  
Wrought she letters white and green  
"This is Blanche flour the Queen."

There men found her as they sped,  
Very beautiful and dead,  
In the lilies white and red.

And beside her lying there,  
Found a manchild strong and fair  
Lain among the lilies bare.

And they thought it were ill fate,  
If the child, for fear or hate,  
They should leave in evil state.

So they took him lying there,  
Playing with the lady's hair,  
For his face was very fair.

And so tenderly he played,  
Half asmile and half afraid,  
With her lips and hair, I said,

That the strong men for his sake  
Could have wept for dear heartache  
At the murmurs he did make.

And the strongest lightly stepped  
Forth to where the mother slept;  
Stooping over her, he wept.

Lightly bowed above the child  
The large face whose might was mild  
With black-bearded lips that smiled.

Then he took it of his grace,

Bowed him where she lay in place,  
Put to hers the little face.

Then they softly buried her  
Where the greenest leaves did stir,  
With some white flowers in her hair.

And for the sweet look he had,  
Weeping not but very sad,  
Tristram by his name they bade.

"For he looks upon her so,  
Pity where he should not grow  
All the piteous thing to know."

And they took the sword and ring  
That were of Roland the king,  
Wrought with many a carven thing.

So they bred him as they knew;  
And a noble child he grew,  
Like a tree in sun and dew.

Ere he was ten summers old  
All the sorrow they him told,  
Showed the sword and ring of gold.

Kissed the boy both sword and ring;  
"As my father was a king,  
I will wreak this bitter thing."

Kissed the boy both ring and sword;  
"As my mother to her lord,  
Fast I cling to this my word."

So he grew in might and grace,  
With her look about his face:  
All men saw his royal race.

But when twenty years were done

At the rising of the sun  
Tristram from his place was gone.

Forth with warriors is he bound  
Over many a change of ground,  
To have wreak of Sir Moronde.

When he came to Ermonie,  
Bare upon the earth bowed he,  
Kissed the earth with kisses three.

To the city men him bring,  
Where the herald stood to sing  
"Largesse of Moronde the king!"

To the king came Tristram then,  
To Moronde the evil man,  
Treading softly as he can.

Spake he loftily in place:  
A great light was on his face:  
"Listen, king, of thy free grace.

"I am Tristram, Roland's son;  
By thy might my lands were won,  
All my lovers were undone.

"Died by thee Queen Blancheflour,  
Mother mine in bitter hour,  
That was white as any flower.

"Tho' they died not well aright,  
Yet, for thou art belted knight,  
King Moronde, I bid thee fight."

A great laughter laughed they all,  
Drinking wine about the hall,  
Standing by the outer wall.

But the pale king leapt apace,



Caught his staff that lay in place  
And smote Tristram on the face.

Tristram stood back paces two,  
All his face was reddened so  
Round the deep mark of the blow.

Large and bright the king's eyes grew:  
As knight Roland's sword he drew,  
Fiercely like a pard he flew.

And above the staring eyes  
Smote Moronde the king flatwise,  
That men saw the dear blood rise.

At the second time he smote,  
All the carven blade, I wot,  
With the blood was blurred and hot.

At the third stroke that he gave,  
Deep the carven steel he drave,  
Thro' King Moronde's heart it clave.

Well I ween his wound was great  
As he sank across the seat,  
Slain for Blanche flour the sweet.

Then spake Tristram, praising God;  
In his father's place he stood  
Wiping clean the smears of blood,

That the sword, while he did pray,  
At the throne's foot he might lay;  
Christ save all good knights, I say.

Then spake all men in his praise,  
Speaking words of the old days,  
Sweeter words than sweetest lays.

Said one, "Lo the dead queen's hair

And her brows so straight and fair;  
So the lips of Roland were."

For all praised him as he stood,  
That such things none other could  
Than the son of kingly blood.

Round he looked with quiet eyes;  
"When ye saw King Moronde rise,  
None beheld me on this wise."

At such words as he did say,  
Bare an old man knelt to pray;  
"Christ be with us all to-day.

"This is Tristram the good lord;  
Knightly hath he held his word,  
Warring with his father's sword."

Then one brought the diadem,  
Clear and golden like pure flame;  
And his thanks did grace to them.

Next in courteous wise he bade  
That fair honour should be had  
Of the dear queen that was dead.

So in her great sorrow's praise  
A fair tomb he bade them raise  
For a wonder to the days.

And between its roof and floor  
Wrote he two words and no more,  
Wrote Roland and Blancheflour .

That was carven sharp in gold,  
For a great praise to behold,  
Where the queen lay straight and cold,

All was graven deep and fine,

In and out, and line with line,  
That all men might see it shine.

So far off it sprang and shone,  
Ere ten paces one had gone,  
Showing all the sorrow done.

And the pillars, that upbore  
The large roof for evermore,  
In wrought flowers her sweet name wore:

Points of stone carved gently all,  
Wrought in cusp and capital,  
Climbing still to creep and fall.

And in many a tender nook,  
Traced soft as running brook,  
Shone her face's quiet look.

And above they wrought to lie  
King Roland all white on high,  
With the lady carven by.

Very patient was her face,  
Stooping from its maiden place  
Into strange new mother-grace.

Parted lips and closing eyes,  
All the quiet of the skies  
Fills her beauty where she lies.

On her hair the forest crown  
Lets the sliding tresses down,  
Touched ere dark with golden brown;

Both with carven hands uplift,  
Praying softly as at shrift,  
So it stood a kingly gift.

And when all was graven fair

Tristram came, and standing there  
Kissed his mother's tender hair.

Then he bade them take for King  
His true father in each thing,  
Him who saved the sword and ring.

So they hearkened to his word,  
And they took to be their lord  
Him who kept the ring and sword.

Then by many painful ways,  
With a noble thought in chase,  
Tristram journeyed many days.

Towards the Cornwall king he bore,  
Since an oath of love he swore  
For the name of Blancheflour,

That King Mark, her brother true,  
He would honour as he knew;  
This was he I tell to you.

When he stood in Cornwall there,  
Mark beheld him standing bare,  
And he knew his sister's hair.

All these things to Mark he told,  
To the king so lean and cold,  
And he showed her ring of gold.

Then wept all the valiant men,  
Wept King Mark upon him then,  
Thinking what a grief had been.

Then was Tristram belted knight,  
For his happy hand in fight.  
Then spake Mark in all men's sight:

"For the love my sister won,

I will honour as I can  
This her son, the loved man.

"And this praise I give him here:  
He shall go to bring anear  
My new bride with noble cheer.

"For strange things are said in place  
Of the wonder of her face  
And her tender woman's grace."

Spake the king so lean and cold:  
"She hath name of honour old,  
Yseult queen, the hair of gold.

"All her limbs are fair and strong,  
And her face is straight and long,  
And her talk is as a song.

"And faint lines of colour stripe  
(As spilt wine that one should wipe)  
All her golden hair corn-ripe;

"Drawn like red gold ears that stand  
In the yellow summer land;  
Arrow-straight her perfect hand,

"And her eyes like river-lakes  
Where a gloomy glory shakes  
Which the happy sunset makes.

"Her shall Tristram go to bring,  
With a gift of some rich thing  
Fit to free a prisoned king."

As Sir Mark said, it was done;  
And ere set the morrow's sun,  
Tristram the good knight was gone.

Forth to Ireland bade he come,

Forth across the grey sea-foam,  
All to bring Queen Yseult home.

## CANTO 2

Of Queen Yseult, and of the voyage to Cornwall

Day by day and year by year  
In the quiet chambers here  
Grew the lady white and dear.

Day by day and week by week  
Grew the glory of her cheek  
Till it seemed to breathe and speak.

Day by day and night by night  
Grew she in her mother's sight,  
Maiden Yseult dear and white.

Ever as her face grew fair  
In a light of growing hair  
Grew the tresses bright and bare.

For no crown the maiden had,  
But with tresses golden-glad  
Was her perfect body clad.

And no gems the maiden wore  
But the bright hair evermore  
All her warm white limbs before.

Ah, dear saints, to see her face  
Many would have died in place,  
She was wonderful for grace.

Wept for love her mother fair,  
Wept for utter love of her,  
Kissing soft her maiden hair.

Many maidens have men seen,

But on earth has never been  
Any maiden like the queen.

So did all her love endure  
In a life most sweet and sure,  
Very beautiful and pure.

For her mother and the king  
Sang she many a maiden thing,  
Standing at their feet to sing.

Unto her came Tristram then,  
Sailing straight with many men  
For King Mark her love to win.

And most royal gifts he bare,  
Robes for any queen to wear,  
And great jewels for her hair.

And he brought a royal ring  
Such as noble knight should bring,  
Wedding her for Mark the king.

Very courteously he spake,  
That for holy honour's sake  
Maiden Yseult should him take.

So the king bade send for her;  
And she came before them there,  
Clothed upon with golden hair.

And Sir Tristram for her sight  
Praised all the saints aright  
As men would for happy fight.

And he would have died in place  
But for love and knightly grace  
That he saw that maiden face.

And he knelt with heart aflame,

Took her robe in sight of them,  
Kissed the skirt and kissed the hem.

Ah, dear saints, how well it were,  
Thought he, to die knightly there  
For that lady's golden hair.

And he thought it very good  
He should perish where she stood  
Crowned upon with maidenhood.

And his whole heart for her sake  
With a large delight did ache  
Till it seemed to burn and break.

And he thought it well and meet,  
Lain before that lady sweet,  
To be trodden by her feet.

And so loved he her least tress,  
That his heart strange thoughts did bless  
Of its deep unworthiness.

For no nearer would he be  
Her he lovèd loyally  
With a bright humility.

And he thought him, loving her,  
Of sweet words he used to hear,  
Lancelot and Guinevere.

And what love some men might see,  
So in under-breath spake he,  
"Now I know what things they be."

Then the king spake gravely all,  
And his large voice in the hall  
Ever seemed to grow and fall.

Then the queen spake softlier,



And it seemèd him to bear  
A new trouble in the air.

Answered Yseult maidenwise;  
Great hot tears grew thro' his eyes,  
That he could not speak or rise.

Knowing not what words she said  
Seemed to beat upon his head  
Noise that vex't him, being dead.

But he spake in courteous wise  
So that all the knights did rise  
With a light in their grave eyes.

And the king with straight grey hairs  
Laid Sir Tristram's hand in hers  
As the bridal manner bears.

And her mother that had skill  
In all herbs that sain or heal  
Arrow-wound or fever ill,

Gave a secret drink of might  
That she bade her maiden bright  
Drink upon the bridal night.

"For it is a mighty thing,  
And great love to both shall bring  
If thou drink with Mark the king."

So was Yseult brought to ship,  
There she kissed her mother's lip  
And sat softly down to weep.

Forth to Cornwall back they come,  
Over all the grey salt foam  
Brought they maiden Yseult home.

So came Yseult from her own;

Wept the grave king on his throne,  
And her mother wept alone.

Now the days grew bright and long,  
And her voice the men among  
Warmed their spirits like a song.

And the men at oar that rowed,  
Seeing Yseult where she trode  
For her dear face praised God.

For they said, "Was never man  
Since the world's great hap began  
Such a lady to him wan."

So they spake between their oars,  
Rowing level by green shores,  
Sloped about with great grey moors.

And when days were full of spring  
Tristram prayed her well to sing  
In their ears some happy thing.

So the lady sang to them,  
And all faces grew aflame,  
And on all great glory came.

So the lady sang alway,  
And the men rose up to pray,  
For her face shone bright as day.

So her song the lady kept,  
And their souls to Godwards leapt,  
And with pride the meanest wept.

When Queen Yseult's song had end,  
All they bowed with head and hand,  
Speaking soft in whispers bland.

But with all the summer heat

That about them burned and beat  
Sore athirst was Yseult sweet.

For she sang so loud and long  
To the rowers rowing strong  
That she thirsted in her song.

Than bade Tristram bring her wine  
In her chalice carven fine,  
Rich with many a tender line.

So the chalice wine was brought,  
And the drink of power that wrought  
Change in face and change in thought.

And the wine was fierce and sweet,  
But the lady, drinking it,  
Shuddered to her hands and feet.

But the drink her mother gave  
In the carven chalice brave  
Like warm gold did float and wave.

And Sir Tristram, courteous-wise,  
With a smile about his eyes  
Pledged the queen in knightly guise.

As they drank in love and truth,  
Lo, there grew in heart and mouth  
As a hot and bitter drouth.

Then he bent towards her there,  
And he knew that she was fair,  
And he stooped and kissed her hair.

And Queen Yseult, pained sore  
For the love that him she bore,  
As she kissed him, trembled more.

At their hearts it stirred and crept,

Round their hearts it grew and leapt,  
Till they kissed again and wept.

So was their great love begun,  
Sitting silent in the sun,  
Such a little thing was done.

And Queen Yseult, weeping still,  
Tristram had to do his will  
That his list she should fulfil.

Tristram had her body fair,  
And her golden corn-ripe hair,  
And her golden ring to wear.

So he took the golden ring  
That was of Sir Mark the king,  
As to serve her in each thing.

And his mother's Yseult had  
To keep wisely as he bade;  
So they sware it, low and glad.

So they slept the night long there,  
And above their faces bare  
Flowed and glowed the golden hair.

So to Cornwall did they come  
All across the flowing foam,  
So was brought Queen Yseult home.

So King Mark his bride hath got  
That he little knew, I wot,  
When his heart with wine was hot.

And men said, "Great pity is  
He such queen should ever kiss,  
Little were his need, I wis."

But they knew not what had been,

And with smiles and moans between  
On Sir Tristram looked the Queen.

So they brought her by his hold  
To the king so lean and cold,  
Yseult queen, the hair of gold.

### CANTO 3

How Sir Tristram and Queen Yseult loved each other by the space of three  
years

All that night and all thro' day  
Many minstrels bade men play  
That the king's great praise they say.

So they sang in court and hall,  
But it only grieved them all  
Such a bride should him befall.

For none wist what had been done,  
Yseult's maidens all but one  
Said their queen a bride were gone.

Many days this love grew old,  
While abode the hair of gold  
By the king so lean and cold.

And such love their love did bless  
They had much of happiness  
And their hope grew never less.

And at morning when she leant  
From her lattice in content  
Over him her face was bent.

And on kingly summer eves  
When much light is in the leaves,  
Had they joy of all that lives.

Sometimes in the garden place,  
When much light was in her face,  
Would he sing of her great grace.

So she leant to hear his song,  
Heard him in the leaves among  
Singing in the sweet French tongue.

"This was love that Yseult wan,  
That to any maid or man  
Spake she courteous as she can.

"This was praise that Yseult had,  
That her happiness made glad  
Man or maiden that was sad.

"Now this Yseult ever knew  
That such love about her grew  
As kept all men pure like dew.

"And this Yseult had but one  
To love well beneath the sun  
Till her very love were done."

And he praised her as he can  
For the love that him began  
That she loved none other man.

And he praised her without fear,  
Like a songbird singing clear,  
Lady Yseult white and dear.

Singing where he saw her stand,  
"Is none like her in the land,  
Golden hair and arrow hand."

And such praises would he sing,  
Harping high before the king,  
And of many a happy thing.

And men praised him by his name,  
But her brows were all aflame  
That she from the banquet came.

And she walked alone and said,  
"Of such knight was never read."  
So that summer they were glad.

But when snows were thick about  
Yseult sent for Tristram out  
Soft dry leaves of melilote.

That was for a sign to stand  
That he came to take her hand  
In the happy garden land.

For he sent her words to see,  
"Yseult, of thy courtesy,  
Have now pity as of me,

"For my love is barren here."  
To him came an answer clear  
Of the lady white and dear.

So that when his love had got  
Those dry leaves of melilote,  
He the pain remembered not.

But he saw not where to go,  
Lest his feet some man should know,  
For the ways were marred with snow.

So his bitter doubt he wrote,  
And she sent him for his doubt  
The same leaves of melilote.

And he marvelled; but he said,  
"Tho' I die, her rede be read."  
And for help of Love he prayed.

And it seemèd well to go  
By the court where slept he now,  
Right against her in the snow.

And at night she came and spake,  
"Tristram, as for love's true sake,  
All my pleasure bid me take."

And he sware her will to do,  
And she smiled that it was so;  
"I shall hear thee thro' the snow."

A great wonder took him there,  
For her face was very fair  
Under all her gathered hair.

And more near and soft she stept,  
And both arms about him crept,  
That for bitter love he wept.

All his heart was drawn in two  
That he wist not what to do;  
And she kissed him, thinking so.

Then she raised him tenderly,  
Bore him lightly as might be,  
That was wonderful to see.

So they passed by trail and track,  
Slowly, in the night all black,  
And she bore him on her back.

As they twain went on along,  
Such great love had made her strong,  
All her heart was full of song.

Pausing, she breathed sharply there;  
And about her, bowed and bare,  
Flashed and fell the golden hair.



Pausing, round her body sweet  
Rolled the ripe hair to her feet;  
Forth she bare him as was meet.

Thro' the court all white and wide  
Straight across from side to side  
Bare she him in patient pride.

She was hurt with snow and stone,  
Came no sob nor any moan.  
That with bare feet had she gone.

And when all her pain was great,  
Smiling in such evil state  
Did she walk beneath his weight.

And his heart yearned sharp for her,  
And he would not breathe or stir  
For a pain of bitter fear.

Till she stood on the strewn floor  
Right within the chamber door,  
With the weight of love she bore.

When he stood beside her there  
Smiling, she drew back the hair  
From her throat and bosom fair.

All her neck was strained and red;  
Then soft words to him she said,  
Leaning on his face her head.

And his kisses on her hair  
And her throat and shoulders bare  
Fierce and bitter kisses were.

Then he wept for anger sweet,  
Flung him down to touch her feet  
And to kiss them as was meet.

And above him while she stood,  
Stains upon her red as blood;  
Then she kissed him as he would.

So great love that time had they;  
And would God that I could say  
All their love by year and day.

Now three years this thing had been,  
And no wrath was them between,  
For the love he bare the queen.

Till a knight they loved of old  
To Sir Mark this marvel told,  
To the king so lean and cold.

A great shadow took his face,  
Somewhat low he spake in place  
And flushed red in little space.

Then his hands began to stir,  
Plucking at his face and hair,  
Shameful things he spake of her.

Sware he by his fathers dead  
(Then his thin face was not red),  
"She shall bear the steel," he said.

So he bade to wreak his thought  
She should bear the white steel hot;  
But the nobles hearkened not.

Then most shameful things he spake  
That the nobles for his sake  
Seemèd not their sense to take.

And she spake where men might see,  
"Thou, Sir Mark, that shamest me,  
None I gave my hand but thee.

"And if other ever were  
(And a great scorn made her fair)  
It was he that standeth there."

Then great laughter laughèd all,  
For against the outer wall  
Evil-clad he stood in hall.

And the men for very shame  
Spake her quit of ill defame,  
And Sir Mark bade praise her name.

But for love he bare her so  
Softly bade she Tristram go;  
Thence to both was wail and woe.

So he went from her apace;  
And she dwelt by Mark in place  
With a trouble in her face.

#### CANTO 4

How Sir Tristram came to Brittany

So much grief for him was made,  
All the land was changed and sad,  
But Queen Yseult nothing said.

Then came Tristram the good knight  
From his lady's noble sight,  
All athirst for toil and fight.

So he went by many ways  
Thro' strange lands by many days,  
And in wars he won him praise.

Then for love of Lancelot  
And the praise his love had got  
Came the knight to Camelot.

There beheld he Guinevere,  
All her face like light was clear,  
That men shook for loving fear.

And more smooth than steel or glass  
All her happy forehead was,  
Thro' her eyes some dream did pass.

And he thought of Yseult now,  
"For this lady's eyes and brow  
She might stand with her, I trow."

But the king and Lancelot  
For the great praise he had got  
Did him welcome as they mote.

So long time he dwelt with them,  
In his fight was found no blame  
That he won a noble name.

All men for his sake were glad,  
But in thought he ever had  
The gold hair that Yseult clad.

And he thirsted for one tress,  
Praising her in humbleness.  
Men him called of Lyonesse,

For that so his birth had been.  
And when many months were seen  
Took he farewell of the queen.

Farewell of the king he took,  
And set sail with heavy look,  
For this time he could not brook.

All his heart so weary was  
And so worn with love, alas!  
With great love in bitter case,

That he thirsted thence to be,  
So they sailed the blowing sea  
Till they came to Brittany.

He was shent in evil plight,  
As one soiled with storm and fight,  
Yet he stood a perfect knight.

For his face was fair and strong,  
And his body straight along,  
And his deep speech like a song,

And his eyes were clear and sad  
As the bitter love they had,  
Men for him great marvel made.

And they told him how their lord  
Died in war with hand on sword,  
Died and held his knightly word.

So his daughter had their land,  
Yseult of the white snow-hand,  
Pale and still they saw him stand.

Then as one in pain he stirred,  
Speaking low some loving word  
In a voice that no man heard.

And a great smile overtook  
All the trouble of his look,  
And he neither breathed nor spoke.

When he came by her in place,  
He beheld her small sweet face  
And pure eyes of patient grace.

All her face was hushed and dim  
As her courcet's pearlèd rim  
With a maiden fear of him.

And in courteous wise she bade  
That fair honour should be had  
Of the knight so pale and sad.

So he dwelt beside her long,  
In his heart he would no wrong,  
But she drew it like a song;

Some dim song at waking heard  
When the tender gloom is stirr'd  
With the joy of some sweet bird.

So he gladly dwelt by her  
In the grey great castle there,  
And she grew a lady fair.

And she mused of him alone,  
Musing when the day was done  
By the ranges of black stone,

Till her eyes grew strange and deep,  
And it seemed they could not sleep  
Tho' men saw she did not weep.

And all men that saw her loved  
For her quiet eyes approved  
All her changes when she moved;

And each day by her he came  
For the love of her sweet name  
And her love who bare the same.

And as days were come and gone,  
With no laughter and no moan,  
Love grew up ere doubt was done.

Deep in her sweet soul she kept  
All the tender pain that slept  
So far down, she never wept.

But in all her heart she said,  
"If such care for me he had,  
Certes I were dear and glad."

And it fell one gentle day  
In the greenest week of May,  
That her sorrow went away.

For the day was nearly done,  
And among the woods alone  
Was Sir Tristram softly gone.

All about the woods were green,  
Walked he in the leaves between,  
Thinking sweetly of the queen.

What great love he won of her,  
And he thirsted for her here,  
Arrow hand and golden hair.

Her old praises did he sing,  
Hidden in the happy spring  
Sang he many a bitter thing.

And the leaves about him shook,  
For great weeping overtook  
All his voice and quiet look.

And the snow-hand of her grace  
Sought him in the garden place,  
With a doubt in her sweet face.

And she heard his singing low,  
Clear glad words she seemed to know,  
And she loved him, singing so.

"This was praise that Yseult wan,  
That to any maid or man  
Spake she courteous as she can.

"This was praise that Yseult had,  
That her happiness made glad  
Man or maiden that was sad."

And hereat the sorrow broke  
Thro' the happy words he spoke,  
And the quick tears marred his look.

But the lady whiter grew,  
White as fear and pale as dew,  
So his voice her spirit drew.

For she fain would comfort him,  
And she shook in heart and limb,  
And her eyes were hot and dim.

"Ah," she said, "our love is so  
That he will not speak of woe,  
And I dare not come to know.

"For I would not any change  
Came to make this old life strange,  
Or throw love beyond its range.

"Yet indeed he sang my name."  
And a slow blush overcame  
Her bowed face with maiden flame.

"And he spake sweet things of me  
For pure love and courtesy  
Where none else had cared to see.

"I that am but simple maid  
Shall he give me love," she said,  
"With men's praise to crown his head?"

"Yet I ween he sang my name,"  
And again the glorious shame  
All her sweet face overcame.



Then he met her, grave and mild,  
And the maiden lips that smiled  
Trembled as a chidden child.

And his heart went up for her,  
Till each thought that harboured there  
Rose as pure as any prayer.

And he wist that it were well  
In her quiet love to dwell;  
So their marriage-time befell.

For in love to her he spake  
And was troubled for her sake,  
And the grief her love might make.

And in quiet maiden wise,  
While a light fled thro' her eyes  
Faster than a shadow flies,

Spake she to him, very low,  
Then a fear did overflow  
All her heart lest he should know.

But the knight her soft love knew,  
And her spirit sweet and true  
Where the love lay light as dew.

And such grave pure speech he made  
That to listen bowed her head  
With still joy of that was said.

And the maiden love snow-pure  
In her heart should well endure,  
Like a fair tree planted sure.

For she loved him as the light,  
And was fairest in his sight  
As a lake the noon keeps bright.

So their day of love was glad,  
And his face nor proud nor sad,  
So his maiden bride he had.

And great joy was thro' the land  
When in love the twain should stand,  
Tristram and the sweet snow-hand.

Then much grief for him was made,  
All the land was changed and sad,  
But the cold king's heart was glad.

So came Tristram the good knight  
From his lady's noble sight,  
All athirst for toil and fight.

And great praise he won him there,  
So that all men spake him fair  
For the wondrous name he bare.

And when Yseult heard them speak  
Died the pain that kept her weak,  
Died the sorrow from her cheek.

Forth to Camelot he came,  
Riding silent as in shame  
Thro' the noises of his fame.

When was made his welcome there,  
He beheld Queen Guinevere,  
All her face like light was clear.

Thro' her eyes a dream did pass,  
And more smooth than steel or glass  
All her happy forehead was.

So he thought, "For eyes and brow  
She might stand by Yseult now,  
Yet were mine as fair, I trow."

All men for his sake were glad,  
But in thought he ever had  
The gold hair that Yseult clad.

And he thirsted for her eyes  
As a bird that bleeds and flies  
For the fountain where it dies.

And he yearned to touch her hand,  
As a river drawn thro' sand  
Thirsts to reach the smooth green land.

And he pined to kiss her mouth,  
As a rose in dewless drouth  
For the warm rains of the south.

So for thirst of her sweet look  
And the hair that shone and shook,  
Night or day he could not brook.

Ere a leaf had left its tree,  
Sailed he all the blowing sea  
Till he came to Brittany.

## CANTO 5

Of the bridal night of Sir Tristram and the Lady Yseult aux Blanchés Mains

So at night the maidens came;  
And they called her by her name,  
And she followed without shame.

And the singing-maidens there  
Led the bride with tresses bare,  
Singing bridal songs of her.

Purple flowers, blue and red,  
On the rushes round the bed  
Strewed they for her feet to tread.

But about the bed they set  
Large white blossoms, white and wet,  
Crowns the fairest they could get.

Her blue robe along the hem  
Coloured like a lily's stem,  
She put off and gave to them.

And she bade the fairest girl  
All her soft hair comb and curl  
With a comb of jet and pearl.

By the mirrored steel she stood,  
Thinking gently as she could  
Sweet new thoughts of womanhood.

In his eyes that she would please  
Will she seem the queen of these,  
With the hair swept round her knees?

Then the tallest maiden came,  
Called her softly by her name;  
And she lay down without shame.

Then came Tristram softly in;  
Long he stood without, I ween,  
Thinking old thoughts of the queen.

Sweet old thoughts he could not say,  
How in other times he lay  
By Queen Yseult till the day.

Softly to the bed he came;  
But between the taper's flame  
A fair face looked out at them.

He lay down and dreamed: but she  
Lay and looked towards the sea;  
And a bitter dream dreamt he.

But he stood away and said:  
"Lo, an evil rede were read  
If I had her maidenhead.

"One that I love more than her  
Dwells across the water fair,  
Yseult of the golden hair.

"And for love that she has worn  
Men will smite her face with scorn,  
Shame that such a queen were born!

"Lo, to both much ill were done,  
For this Yseult, loving one,  
Loves but him below the sun.

"And great shame will overtake  
All her beauty for my sake  
If her maidenhood I break.

"And this thing shall never be  
That for maiden love for me  
Men should shame her as they see.

"For some men will say, 'Behold,  
Yseult queen, the hair of gold  
Was his paramour of old.'

"And for love I loved before  
Shall they call her paramour."  
So he musèd long and sore.

And the maiden in his sight  
Lay beside him, very bright,  
Like a sleeper, straight and white.

Then he thought him, lying there,  
Of Queen Yseult's golden hair  
And the brows of Guinevere.

Spake the snow-hand maidenly,  
"Tristram, for thy courtesy  
Think thou no scorn to kiss me."

A great tremble took his heart,  
Many memories made him start,  
Listening as he lay apart.

Sidelong to him crept she close,  
Pale as any winter rose  
When the air is grey with snows.

For she heard him start and stir,  
And drew ever near and near  
Lest his heart were wrath with her.

But his eyes grew very dim,  
And a tremble went thro' him  
Shuddering over heart and limb.

For pure love of her he wept  
As in fear she crept and crept  
Slowly, lest perchance he slept.

Soft as lighteth bird on bough  
Thrice he kissed her, breathing low,  
Kissed her mouth and maiden brow.

And in under breath said he  
When his face she could not see,  
"Christ look over her and me."

Low sweet words of love she said  
With her face against his head  
On the pillows of the bed.

Then a pleasure bright and mild  
Smoothed her sweet face, and she smiled,  
Sleeping as a maiden child.

And his hands for love of her  
From the throat and shoulders bare  
Parted off the ruffling hair.

Then he kissed her hair and head  
For the sweet words she had said;  
And in kissing her he prayed.

Praying in his heart he spake,  
That for Mary's maiden sake  
Christ would keep his faith awake.

And the sweet saints knew aright  
That he bore him well in fight,  
Warring ever in their sight.

And the Mother pitied him,  
For he shook in heart and limb,  
Lying in the chamber dim.

And he bowed his body fair  
Down athwart the window there,  
Weeping for the golden hair.

It was wonderful to see  
That he wept so bitterly  
With his face to the blown sea.

As he turned and softly stept,  
Lest perchance she had not slept,  
Bitterly he wept and wept.

She lay out before him there,  
All her body white and bare  
Overswept with waves of hair.

There she rested, breathing low,  
Purer than the naked snow,  
Beautiful to see and know.

In her sleep she spake and prayed;  
And for those dear words she said,  
He came softly to the bed.

And in love he would not hide,  
Praying between pain and pride,  
Laid him softly at her side.

So from evening till the day  
At her side in love he lay;  
Slept no child as pure as they.

So her love had all it would,  
All night sleeping as she could,  
Sleeping in her maidenhood.

#### CANTO 6

How Queen Yseult kept her ring

Days are come and days are gone  
Over Cornwall many a one,  
Since her ordeal was done.

Mark was tender with his fear,  
Lest some worse thing he should hear,  
And bade all men honour her.

So Queen Yseult's days were fair,  
And her maidens, waiting bare,  
Combed and crowned the golden hair.

But King Mark would keep apart,  
Lest her eyes should make him start,  
Full of envy was his heart.

And his face grew long and lean  
And his lips more pale, I ween,  
Hiding harsh words of the queen.



And in bitter speech he said,  
When much wine had filled his head,  
A bad prayer that she were dead.

So the court began to stir,  
And the maidens gathered near,  
Whispered secret things of her.

And most bitter pain she had,  
Pained thro' her speeches glad,  
Till her heart grew faint or mad.

In the pleasure that she made  
At the revels the king bade,  
Wild and wandering words she said.

And at night when all the room  
Spread about her black and dumb,  
She lay gazing thro' the gloom.

All old comfort she forgot,  
And her throat and lips grew hot,  
And her large eyes moistened not.

Then she thought the grave were cold,  
And spake soft her name of old,  
"Yseult, queen, the hair of gold."

And she wept for that one thing,  
For she looked upon the king,  
And drew forth her golden ring.

Slept King Mark upon the bed,  
Thick hot wine had filled his head,  
Some fierce word in sleep he said.

She had thought long since to hear  
Speech of Tristram spoken clear,  
That his life was kept for her.

And when any knight came nigh  
To her place for courtesy,  
Saw she Tristram standing by.

And when songs of her were sung,  
Heard his voice the leaves among  
Singing in the sweet French tongue.

And when harpers harped anew,  
Very pale and faint she grew  
Like a lily dead in dew.

So she held him dead and lain  
Out beyond the water-plain,  
Naked under sun and rain.

In the dark she rose to weep,  
"Long wet tendrils clasp and creep  
Where the good knight lies asleep."

No one heard the words she said  
On the pillows of the bed,  
Praise and prayer for Tristram dead.

No one saw her girdle slip,  
Saw her loosen it to weep,  
Thinking how he touched her lip.

Heavily her robe sank white,  
Heavily her hair sank bright,  
Rustling down in the dead night.

And her breast was loosened so  
From the hunger of its woe,  
Where the samite rustled low.

Clothèd queenlike sate she there,  
Sate she in the moonlight bare,  
Golden light and golden hair.

To much evil was she brought,  
Very bitter things she thought  
Thro' her quiet lips said naught.

And the sweet saints pitied her  
As they saw the weeping hair,  
And the face so very fair.

At her side no queen might stand,  
Was none like her in the land,  
Golden hair and arrow hand.

Then she prayed, if any heard,  
And the air about her stirr'd  
As the motions of a bird.

And she thought an angel came,  
Poised his wings of painted flame,  
And spoke bitterly her name.

For she bowed before his look,  
And her heart such trembling took,  
That her limbs with weeping shook.

Then she rose and did not pray,  
Far off sounds she heard at play  
Blown about a windy bay.

Down athwart the window bright  
Leant she into the dead light,  
Wept for Tristram the good knight.

The deep sky and sharp grey crag,  
Black with many a jut and jag,  
The pale stream where stirred the flag,

All the long white lines of sea,  
All the long white slope of lea,  
In the moonlight watch & egraved she.

Then again she sank to weep,  
In the rushes rustling deep,  
Flung a white and golden heap,

And she thought, "The world is wide,  
Somewhere I might flee and hide,  
So the king should ease his pride.

"And thereafter will he know  
All the chance of this our woe,  
And repent him, hearing so.

"He will say in all men's sight  
That this Yseult had not right,  
Who took Tristram for her knight.

"If King Mark should weep," said she,  
Thinking what a woe might be,  
"Shall not all men pity me?

"For none ever," soft she said,  
"Any truer woman had  
Than this Tristram that is dead.

"All things had my lord of me,  
Love and help and mercy free,  
And my thought his thought to be."

So her heart was comforted  
Of the bitter pain it had,  
As she lay down on the bed.

And the saints sent sleep to her,  
In the moonlight very fair,  
Golden light and golden hair.

She remembered that old night  
When across the courts all white  
Bare she Tristram the good knight.

And she smiled with pride anon,  
As came to her one by one  
All the mercies she had done.

How for very love she bore  
Things no woman knew before,  
And would bear for evermore.

And a dumb great smile smiled she,  
And it deepened still to see,  
Till she laughed low laughters three.

And she said, "This love put by  
(In a holy voice and high)  
Shall not perish tho' I die.

"And when men shall praise him dead  
(Both her cheeks flushed royal-red)  
All my story shall be said.

"For I shall not blush to know  
(And she rose up, speaking so)  
That men speak of this my woe.

"For that I love Tristram well  
(And her voice rang like a bell)  
Is no shame for them to tell.

"Since indeed no shame it were  
(Said she, shaking back her hair)  
That one loved him thrice as fair.

"For such knight was never seen  
(Spake most loftily the Queen)  
Since a noble man has been.

"For the wars he warred of old  
(Straight she drew the hair of gold)  
In all people will be told.

"So by Tristram the good knight  
(All her face was full of light)  
Shall I stand in all men's sight.

"Hair and eyes and smile and speech  
(Soft she wove it, plait and pleach)  
Gave I to Sir Tristram each.

"Men would praise me oft in place  
(Wondrous was her lighted face)  
For my smile and spoken grace.

"Many singers sang of me  
(Stately stood she, as a tree)  
For pure heart and courtesy.

"Thought and grace and loving heart  
(She looked up with lips apart)  
All I gave to be his part.

"Now there is no more to say  
(Said she softly as one may)  
Tho' I die for him ere day."

And she knew the measures bland,  
"Is none like her in the land,  
Golden hair and arrow hand."

All day long the eager light  
Was a trouble in her sight,  
And the festal lamps by night.

Then the king soft speeches made,  
Half in hate and half afraid,  
And she loathed the words he said,

Tho' she hearkened not a whit;  
And a sorrow vexed her wit,  
Ever turning over it.

And her pride was made most weak,  
And a shadow blind and meek  
Took her brows and altered cheek.

And old thoughts about her came  
When the dais was all aflame  
With large lights, each day the same.

And she wist not what to say  
Could not move her lips to pray  
For the heart that beat always.

And she paused before her glass,  
For so tight the girdle was  
By her breast, she could not pass.

And she thought, "If he should come  
Back across the grey salt foam  
I were altered in his doom.

"Nay," she said, "for love were there,  
And the corn-ripe golden hair,  
Tho' the face should be less fair."

Then she smiled, and faintlier  
Came the silken courtly stir;  
But the king's eyes hated her.

And their straight cold look she knew,  
And again more faint she grew  
Than a lily dead in dew.

So she saw days go and come,  
And at night in the old room  
Lay she gazing thro' the gloom.

## THE DAY BEFORE THE TRIAL, BY ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE [1857]

King Arthur says being alone.  
Now the day comes near and near  
I feel its hot breath, and see it clear,  
How strange it is and full of fear;  
And I grow old waiting here,  
Grow sick with pain of Guenevere,  
My wife, that loves not me.  
So strange it seems to me, so new  
To have such shame between us two,  
I dare not hold this Mador true  
Nor false, because his words ran thro'  
My blood with all the shame they drew  
And burnt me to the bone; I knew  
That some such tale would be  
For all these years she grew more fair,  
More sweet her low sweet speeches were,  
More long and heavy grew her hair,  
Not such as other women wear;  
But ever as I looked on her  
Her face seemed fierce and thin.  
I felt half sick, and on my head  
The gold crown seemed not gold but lead;  
Strange words I heard that no man said,  
Strange noises where all noise was dead;  
Was it pure blood that made her red  
From brows to rounded chin?  
Sometimes I knew she loved me not;  
Down to my hands the blood went hot  
In a dull hate of Launcelot  
For all the praise of her he got,  
Being so pure of sin.  
For he was clean as any maid,  
And on his head God's hand was laid





As on a maiden's; so men said;  
But I, a woman's hands there weighed  
Instead of God's upon my head,  
No maid was I, to see  
The white Sangreal borne up in air,  
To touch at last God's body fair,  
To feel strange terror stir my hair  
As a slow light went past; but here  
I had to my honours year by year,  
I had the name of king to bear,  
And watch the eyes of Guenevere,  
My wife, who loves not me.

## JOYEUSE GARDE, BY ALGERNON CHARLES SWIN- BURNE [1859]

The sun was heavy; no more shade at all  
Than you might cover with a hollow cup  
There was in the south chamber; wall by wall,  
Slowly the hot noon filled the castle up.  
One hand among the rushes, one let play  
Where the loose gold began to swerve and droop  
From his fair mantle to the floor, she lay;  
Her face held up a little, for delight  
To feel his eyes upon it, one would say.  
Her grave shut lips were glad to be in sight  
Of Tristram's kisses; she had often turned  
Against her shifted pillows in the night  
To lessen the sore pain wherein they burned  
For want of Tristram; her great eyes had grown  
Less keen and sudden, and a hunger yearned  
Her sick face through, these wretched years ago.  
Her eyes said "Tristram" now, but her lips held  
The joy too close for any smile or moan  
To move them; she was patiently fulfilled  
With a slow pleasure that slid everwise  
Even into hands and feet, but could not build  
The house of its abiding in her eyes,  
Nor measure any music by her speech.  
Between the sunlight came a noise of flies  
To pain sleep from her, thick from peach to peach  
Upon the bare wall's hot red level, close  
Among the leaves too high for her to reach.  
So she drew in and set her feet, and rose  
Saying "Too late to sleep; I pray you speak  
To save me from the noises, lest I lose  
Some minute of this season; I am weak  
And cannot answer if you help me not,  
When the shame catches on my brow and cheek."

For in the speaking all her face grew hot,  
And her mouth altered with some pain, I deem  
Because her word had stung like a bad thought  
That makes us recollect some bitter dream.  
She bowed to let him kiss her, and went on:  
"All things are changed so, will this day not seem  
Most sad and evil when I sit alone  
Outside your eyes? will it not vex my prayer  
To think of laughter that is twin to moan,  
And happy words that make not holier?  
Nathless I had good will to say one thing,  
Though it seems pleasant in the late warm air  
To ride alone and see the last of spring.  
I cannot lose you, Tristram; (a weak smile  
Moved her lips and went out) men say the king  
Hath set keen spies about for many a mile,  
Quick hands to get them gold, sharp eyes to see  
Where your way swerves across them. This long while  
Hath Mark grown older with his hate of me,  
And now his hand for lust to smite at us  
Plucks the white hairs inside his beard that he  
This year made thicker. Seeing this he does  
I pray you note that we may meet with him  
At riding through the branches growth, and then  
Our wine grow bitter at the golden rim  
And taste of blood and tears, not sweet to drink  
As this new honey wherein juices swim  
Of fair red vintage."  
Her voice done, I think  
He had no heart to answer; yet some time  
The noon outside them seem to throb and sink,  
Wrought in the quiet to a rounded rhyme.  
Then "certes," said he, "this were harm to both  
If spears grew thick between the beech and lime,  
Or amid reeds that let the river south,  
Yet so I think you might get help of me.  
Had I not heart to smile, when Iseult's mouth  
Kissed Palomydes under a thick tree?  
For I remember, as the wind sets low,  
How all that peril ended quietly

In a green place where heavy sunflowers blow."

## THE TALE OF BALEN, BY ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE [1896]

### I.

In hawthorn-time the heart grows light,  
The world is sweet in sound and sight,  
Glad thoughts and birds take flower and flight,  
The heather kindles toward the light,  
The whin is frankincense and flame.  
And be it for strife or be it for love  
The falcon quickens as the dove  
When earth is touched from heaven above  
With joy that knows no name.

And glad in spirit and sad in soul  
With dream and doubt of days that roll  
As waves that race and find no goal  
Rode on by bush and brake and bole  
A northern child of earth and sea.  
The pride of life before him lay  
Radiant: the heavens of night and day  
Shone less than shone before his way  
His ways and days to be.

And all his life of blood and breath  
Sang out within him: time and death  
Were even as words a dreamer saith  
When sleep within him slackeneth,  
And light and life and spring were one.  
The steed between his knees that sprang,  
The moors and woods that shone and sang,  
The hours wherethrough the spring's breath rang,  
Seemed ageless as the sun.

But always through the bounteous bloom

That earth gives thanks if heaven illumine  
His soul forefelt a shadow of doom,  
His heart foreknew a gloomier gloom  
Than closes all men's equal ways.  
Albeit the spirit of life's light spring  
With pride of heart upheld him, king  
And lord of hours like snakes that sting  
And nights that darken days.

And as the strong spring round him grew  
Stronger, and all blithe winds that blew  
Blither, and flowers that flowered anew  
More glad of sun and air and dew,  
The shadow lightened on his soul  
And brightened into death and died  
Like winter, as the bloom waxed wide  
From woodside on to riverside  
And southward goal to goal.

Along the wandering ways of Tyne,  
By beech and birch and thorn that shine  
And laugh when life's requickening wine  
Makes night and noon and dawn divine  
And stirs in all the veins of spring,  
And past the brightening banks of Tees,  
He rode as one that breathes and sees  
A sun more blithe, a merrier breeze,  
A life that hails him king.

And down the softening south that knows  
No more how glad the heather glows,  
Nor how, when winter's clarion blows  
Across the bright Northumbrian snows,  
Sea-mists from east and westward meet,  
Past Avon senseless yet of song  
And Thames that bore but swans in throng  
He rode elate in heart and strong  
In trust of days as sweet.

So came he through to Camelot,

Glad, though for shame his heart waxed hot,  
For hope within it withered not  
To see the shaft it dreamed of shot  
Fair toward the glimmering goal of fame.  
And all King Arthur's knightliest there  
Approved him knightly, swift to dare  
And keen to bid their records bear  
Sir Balen's northern name.

Sir Balen of Northumberland  
Gat grace before the king to stand  
High as his heart was, and his hand  
Wrought honour toward the strange north strand  
That sent him south so goodly a knight.  
And envy, sick with sense of sin,  
Began as poisonous herbs begin  
To work in base men's blood, akin  
To men's of nobler might.

And even so fell it that his doom,  
For all his bright life's kindling bloom  
And light that took no thought for gloom,  
Fell as a breath from the opening tomb  
Full on him ere he wist or thought.  
For once a churl of royal seed,  
King Arthur's kinsman, faint in deed  
And loud in word that knew not heed,  
Spake shame where shame was nought.

"What doth one here in Camelot  
Whose birth was northward? Wot we not  
As all his brethren borderers wot  
How blind of heart, how keen and hot,  
The wild north lives and hates the south?  
Men of the narrowing march that knows  
Nought save the strength of storms and snows,  
What would these carles where knighthood blows  
A trump of kinglike mouth?"

Swift from his place leapt Balen, smote

The liar across his face, and wrote  
His wrath in blood upon the bloat  
Brute cheek that challenged shame for note  
How vile a king-born knave might be.  
Forth sprang their swords, and Balen slew  
The knave ere well one witness knew  
Of all that round them stood or drew  
What sight was there to see.

Then spake the great king's wrathful will  
A doom for six dark months to fill  
Wherein close prison held him, still  
And steadfast-souled for good or ill.  
But when those weary days lay dead  
His lordliest knights and barons spake  
Before the king for Balen's sake  
Good speech and wise, of force to break  
The bonds that bowed his head.

## II.

In linden-time the heart is high  
For pride of summer passing by  
With lordly laughter in her eye;  
A heavy splendour in the sky  
Uplifts and bows it down again.  
The spring had waned from wood and wold  
Since Balen left his prison hold  
And lowlier-hearted than of old  
Beheld it wax and wane.

Though humble heart and poor array  
Kept not from spirit and sense away  
Their noble nature, nor could slay  
The pride they bade but pause and stay  
Till time should bring its trust to flower,  
Yet even for noble shame's sake, born  
Of hope that smiled on hate and scorn,  
He held him still as earth ere morn  
Ring forth her rapturous hour.



But even as earth when dawn takes flight  
And beats her wings of dewy light  
Full in the faltering face of night,  
His soul awoke to claim by right  
The life and death of deed and doom,  
When once before the king there came  
A maiden clad with grief and shame  
And anguish burning her like flame  
That feeds on flowers in bloom.

Beneath a royal mantle, fair  
With goodly work of lustrous vair,  
Girt fast against her side she bare  
A sword whose weight bade all men there  
Quail to behold her face again.  
Save of a passing perfect knight  
Not great alone in force and fight  
It might not be for any might  
Drawn forth, and end her pain.

So said she: then King Arthur spake:  
"Albeit indeed I dare not take  
Such praise on me, for knighthood's sake  
And love of ladies will I make  
Assay if better none may be."  
By girdle and by sheath he caught  
The sheathed and girded sword, and wrought  
With strength whose force availed him nought  
To save and set her free.

Again she spake: "No need to set  
The might that man has matched not yet  
Against it; he whose hand shall get  
Grace to release the bonds that fret  
My bosom and my girdlestead  
With little strain of strength or strife  
Shall bring me as from death to life  
And win to sister or to wife  
Fame that outlives men dead."

Then bade the king his knights assay  
This mystery that before him lay  
And mocked his might of manhood. "Nay,"  
Quoth she, "the man that takes away  
This burden laid on me must be  
A knight of record clean and fair  
As sunlight and the flowerful air,  
By sire and mother born to bear  
A name to shame not me."

Then forth strode Launcelot, and laid  
The mighty-moulded hand that made  
Strong knights reel back like birds affrayed  
By storm that smote them as they strayed  
Against the hilt that yeilded not.  
Then Tristram, bright and sad and kind  
As one that bore in noble mind  
Love that made light as darkness blind,  
Fared even as Launcelot.

Then Lamoracke, with hardier cheer,  
As one that held all hope and fear  
Wherethrough the spirit of man may steer  
In life and death less dark or dear,  
Laid hand thereon, and fared as they.  
With half a smile his hand he drew  
Back from the spell-bound thing, and threw  
With half a glance his heart anew  
Toward no such blameless may.

Between Iseult and Guenevere  
Sat one of name as high to hear,  
But darklier doomed than they whose cheer  
Foreshowed not yet the deadlier year  
That bids the queenliest head bow down,  
The queen Morgause of Orkney: they  
With scarce a flash of the eye could say  
The very word of dawn, when day  
Gives earth and heaven their crown.

But bright and dark as night or noon  
And lowering as a storm-flushed moon  
When clouds and thwarting winds distune  
The music of the midnight, soon  
To die from darkening star to star  
And leave a silence in the skies  
That yearns till dawn find voice and rise,  
Shone strange as fate Morgause, with eyes  
That dwelt on days afar.

A glance that shot on Lamoracke  
As from a storm-cloud bright and black  
Fire swift and blind as death's own track  
Turned fleet as flame on Arthur back  
From him whose hand forsook the hilt:  
And one in blood and one in sin  
Their hearts caught fire of pain within  
And knew no goal for them to win  
But death that guerdons guilt.

Then Gawain, sweet of soul and gay  
As April ere he dreams of May,  
Strove, and prevailed not; then Sir Kay,  
The snake-souled envier, vile as they  
That fawn and foam and lurk and lie,  
Sire of the bastard band whose brood  
Was always found at servile feud  
With honour, faint and false and lewd,  
Scarce grasped and put it by.

Then wept for woe the damsel bound  
With iron and with anguish round,  
That none to help her grief was found  
Or loose the inextricably inwound  
Grim curse that girt her life with grief  
And made a burden of her breath,  
Harsh as the bitterness of death.  
Then spake the king as one that saith  
Words bitterer even than brief.

"Methought the wide round world could bring  
Before the face of queen or king  
No knights more fit for fame to sing  
Than fill this full Round Table's ring  
With honour higher than pride of place:  
But now my heart is wrung to know,  
Damsel, that none whom fame can show  
Finds grace to heal or help thy woe:  
God gives them not the grace."

Then from the lowliest place thereby,  
With heart-enkindled cheek and eye  
Most like the star and kindling sky  
That say the sundawn's hour is high  
When rapture trembles through the sea,  
Strode Balen in his poor array  
Forth, and took heart of grace to pray  
The damsel suffer even him to assay  
His power to set her free.

Nay, how should he avail, she said,  
Averse with scorn-averted head,  
Where these availed not? none had sped  
Of all these mightier men that led  
The lists wherein he might not ride,  
And how should less men speed? But he,  
With lordlier pride of courtesy,  
Put forth his hand and set her free  
From pain and humbled pride.

But on the sword he gazed elate  
With hope set higher than fear or fate,  
Or doubt of darkling days in wait;  
And when her thankful praise waxed great  
And craved of him the sword again,  
He would not give it. "Nay, for mine  
It is till force may make it thine."  
A smile that shone as death may shine  
Spake toward him bale and bane.

Strange lightning flickered from her eyes.  
"Gentle and good in knightliest guise  
And meet for quest of strange emprise  
Thou hast here approved thee: yet not wise  
To keep the sword from me, I wis.  
For with it thou shalt surely slay  
Of all that look upon the day  
The man best loved of thee, and lay  
Thine own life down for his."

"What chance God sends, that chance I take,"  
He said. Then soft and still she spake;  
"I would but for thine only sake  
Have back the sword of thee, and break  
The links of doom that bind thee round.  
But seeing thou wilt not have it so,  
My heart for thine is wrung with woe."  
"God's will," quoth he, "it is, we know,  
Wherewith our lives are bound."

"Repent it must thou soon," she said,  
"Who wouldst not hear the rede I read  
For thine and not for my sake, sped  
In vain as waters heavenward shed  
From springs that falter and depart  
Earthward. God bids not thee believe  
Truth, and the web thy life must weave  
For even this sword to close and cleave  
Hangs heavy round my heart."

So passed she mourning forth. But he,  
With heart of springing hope set free  
As birds that breast and brave the sea,  
Bade horse and arms and armour be  
Made straightway ready toward the fray.  
Nor even might Arthur's royal prayer  
Withhold him, but with frank and fair  
Thanksgiving and leave-taking there  
He turned him thence away.

## III.

As the east wind, when the morning's breast  
Gleams like a bird's that leaves the nest,  
A fledgeling halcyon's bound on quest,  
Drives wave on wave on wave to west  
Till all the sea be life and light,  
So time's mute breath, that brings to bloom  
All flowers that strew the dead spring's tomb,  
Drives day on day on day to doom  
Till all man's day be night.

Brief as the breaking of a wave  
That hurls on man his thunderous grave  
Ere fear find breath to cry or crave  
Life that no chance may spare or save,  
The light of joy and glory shone  
Even as in dreams where death seems dead  
Round Balen's hope-exalted head,  
Shone, passed, and lightened as it fled  
The shadow of doom thereon.

For as he bound him thence to fare,  
Before the stately presence there  
A lady like a windflower fair,  
Girt on with raiment strange and rare  
That rippled whispering round her, came.  
Her clear cold eyes, all glassy grey,  
Seemed lit not with the light of day  
But touched with gleams that waned away  
Of quelled and fading flame.

Before the king she bowed and spake:  
"King, for thine old faith's plighted sake  
To me the lady of the lake,  
I come in trust of thee to take  
The guerdon of the gift I gave,  
Thy sword Excalibur." And he  
Made answer: "Be it whate'er it be,

If mine to give, I give it thee,  
Nor need is thine to crave."

As when a gleam of wicked light  
Turns half a low-lying water bright  
That moans beneath the shivering night  
With sense of evil sound and sight  
And whispering witchcraft's bated breath  
Her wan face quickened as she said:  
"This knight that won the sword--his head  
I crave or hers that brought it. Dead,  
Let these be one in death."

"Not with mine honour this may be;  
Ask all save this thou wilt," quoth he,  
"And have thy full desire." But she  
Made answer: "Nought will I of thee,  
Nought if not this." Then Balen turned,  
And saw the sorceress hard beside  
By whose fell craft his mother died:  
Three years he had sought her, and here espied  
His heart against her yearned.

"Ill be thou met," he said, "whose ire  
Would slake with blood thy soul's desire:  
By thee my mother died in fire;  
Die thou by me a death less dire."  
Sharp flashed his sword forth, fleet as flame,  
And shore away her sorcerous head.  
"Alas for shame," the high king said,  
"That one found once my friend lies dead;  
Alas for all our shame!

"Thou shouldst have here forborne her; yea,  
Were all the wrongs that bid men slay  
Thine, heaped too high for wrath to weigh,  
Not here before my face to-day  
Was thine the right to wreak thy wrong."  
Still stood he then as one that found  
His rose of hope by storm discrowned,

And all the joy that girt him round  
Brief as a broken song.

Yet ere he passed he turned and spake:  
"King, only for thy nobler sake  
Than aught of power man's power may take  
Or pride of place that pride may break  
I bid the lordlier man in thee,  
That lives within the king, give ear.  
This justice done before thee here  
On one that hell's own heart holds dear,  
Needs might not this but be.

"Albeit, for all that pride would prove,  
My heart be wrung to lose thy love,  
It yet repents me not hereof:  
So many an eagle and many a dove,  
So many a knight, so many a may,  
This water-snake of poisonous tongue  
To death by words and wiles hath stung,  
That her their slayer, from hell's lake sprung,  
I did not ill to slay."

"Yea," said the king, "too high of heart  
To stand before a king thou art;  
Yet irks it me to bid thee part  
And take thy penance for thy part,  
That God may put upon thy pride."  
Then Balen took the severed head  
And toward his hostry turned and sped  
As one that knew not quick from dead  
Nor good from evil tide.

He bade his squire before him stand  
And take that sanguine spoil in hand  
And bear it far by shore and strand  
Till all in glad Northumberland  
That loved him, seeing it, all might know  
His deadliest foe was dead, and hear  
How free from prison as from fear



He dwelt in trust of the answering year  
To bring him weal for woe.

"And tell them, now I take my way  
To meet in battle, if I may,  
King Ryons of North Wales, and slay  
That king of kernes whose fiery sway  
Doth all the marches dire despite  
That serve King Arthur: so shall he  
Again be gracious lord to me,  
And I that leave thee meet with thee  
Once more in Arthur's sight."

So spake he ere they parted, nor  
Took shame or fear to counsellor,  
As one whom none laid ambush for;  
And wist not how Sir Launceor,  
The wild king's son of Ireland, hot  
And high in wrath to know that one  
Stood higher in fame before the sun,  
Even Balen, since the sword was won,  
Drew nigh from Camelot.

For thence, in heat of hate and pride,  
As one that man might bid not bide,  
He craved the high king's grace to ride  
On quest of Balen far and wide  
And wreak the wrong his wrath had wrought.  
"Yea," Arthur said, "for such despite  
Was done me never in my sight  
As this thine hand shall now requite  
If trust avail us aught."

But ere he passed, in eager mood  
To feed his hate with bitter food,  
Before the king's face Merlin stood  
And heard his tale of ill and good,  
Of Balen, and the sword achieved.  
And whence it smote as heaven's red ire  
That direful dame of doom as dire;

And how the king's wrath turned to fire  
The grief wherewith he grieved.

And darkening as he gave it ear,  
The still face of the sacred seer  
Waxed wan with wrath and not with fear.  
And ever changed its cloudier cheer  
Till all his face was very night.  
"This damosel that brought the sword,"  
He said, "before the king my lord,  
And all these knights about his board,  
Hath done them all despite.

"The falsest damosel she is  
That works men ill on earth, I wis,  
And all her mind is toward but this,  
To kill as with a lying kiss  
Truth, and the life of noble trust.  
A brother hath she, --see but now  
The flame of shame that brands her brow!--  
A true man, pure as faith's own vow,  
Whose honour knows not rust.

"This good knight found within her bower  
A felon and her paramour,  
And slew him in his shameful hour,  
As right gave might and righteous power  
To hands that wreaked so foul a wrong.  
Then, for the hate her heart put on,  
She sought by ways where death had gone  
The lady Lyle of Avalon,  
Whose crafts are strange and strong.

"The sorceress, one with her in thought,  
Gave her that sword of magic, wrought  
By charms whereof sweet heaven sees nought,  
That hither girt on her she brought  
To be by doom her brother's bane.  
And grief it is to think how he  
That won it, being of heart so free

And perfect found in chivalry,  
Shall by that sword lie slain.

"Great pity it is and strange despite  
That one whose eyes are stars to light  
Honour, and shine as heaven's own height,  
Should perish, being the goodliest knight  
That even the all-glorious north had borne.  
Nor shall my lord the king behold  
A lordlier friend of mightier mould  
Than Balen, though his tale be told  
Ere noon fulfil his morn."

#### IV.

As morning hears before it run  
The music of the mounting sun,  
And laughs to watch his trophies won  
From darkness, and her hosts undone,  
And all the night become a breath,  
Nor dreams that fear should hear and flee  
The summer menace of the sea,  
So hears our hope what life may be,  
And knows it not for death.

Each day that slays its hours and dies  
Weeps, laughs, and lightens on our eyes,  
And sees and hears not: smiles and sighs  
As flowers ephemeral fall and rise  
About its birth, about its way,  
And pass as love and sorrow pass,  
As shadows flashing down a glass,  
As dew-flowers blowing in flowerless grass,  
As hope from yesterday.

The blossom of the sunny dew  
That now the stronger sun strikes through  
Fades off the blade whereon it blew  
No fleetlier than the flowers that grew  
On hope's green stem in life's fierce light.

Nor might the glory soon to sit  
Awhile on Balen's crest alit  
Outshine the shadow of doom on it  
Or stay death's wings from flight.

Dawn on a golden moorland side  
By holt and heath saw Balen ride  
And Launceor after, pricked with pride  
And stung with spurring envy: wide  
And far he had ridden athwart strange lands  
And sought amiss the man he found  
And cried on, till the stormy sound  
Rang as a rallying trumpet round  
That fires men's hearts and hands.

Abide he bade him: nor was need  
To bid when Balen wheeled his steed  
Fiercely, less fain by word than deed  
To bid his envier evil speed,  
And cried, "What wilt thou with me?" Loud  
Rang Launceor's vehement answer: "Knight,  
To avenge on thee the dire despite  
Thou hast done us all in Arthur's sight  
I stand toward Arthur vowed."

"Ay?" Balen said: "albeit I see  
I needs must deal in strife with thee,  
Light is thy wyte thou layest on me;  
For her I slew and sinned not, she  
Was dire in all men's eyes as death,  
Or none were lother found than I  
By me to bid a woman die:  
As lief were loyal men to lie,  
Or scorn what honour saith."

As the arched wave's weight against the reef  
Hurls, and is hurled back like a leaf  
Storm-shrivelled, and its rage of grief  
Speaks all the loud broad sea in brief,  
And quells the hearkening hearts of men,

Or as the crash of overfalls  
Down under blue smooth water brawls  
Like jarring steel on ruining walls,  
So rang their meeting then.

As wave on wave shocks, and confounds  
The bounding bulk whereon it bounds  
And breaks and shattering seaward sounds  
As crying of the old sea's wolves and hounds  
That moan and ravin and rage and wail,  
So steed on steed encountering sheer  
Shocked, and the strength of Launceor's spear  
Shivered on Balen's shield, and fear  
Bade hope within him quail.

But Balen's spear through Launceor's shield  
Clove as a ploughshare cleaves the field  
And pierced the hauberk triple-steeled,  
That horse with horseman stricken reeled,  
And as a storm-breached rock falls, fell,  
And Balen turned his horse again  
And wist not yet his foe lay slain,  
And saw him dead that sought his bane  
And wrought and fared not well.

Suddenly, while he gazed and stood,  
And mused in many-minded mood  
If life or death were evil or good,  
Forth of a covert of a wood  
That skirted half the moorland lea  
Fast rode a maiden flower-like white  
Full toward that fair wild place of fight,  
Anhungered of the woful sight  
God gave her there to see.

And seeing the man there fallen and dead,  
She cried against the sun that shed  
Light on the living world, and said,  
"O Balen, slayer whose hand is red,  
Two bodies and one heart thou hast slain,

Two hearts within one body: aye,  
Two souls thou hast lost; by thee they die,  
Cast out of sight of earth and sky  
And all that made them fain."

And from the dead his sword she caught,  
And fell in trance that wist of nought,  
Swooning: but softly Balen sought  
To win from her the sword she thought  
To die on, dying by Launceor's side.  
Again her wakening wail outbroke  
As wildly, sword in hand, she woke  
And struck one swift and bitter stroke  
That healed her, and she died.

And sorrowing for their strange love's sake  
Rode Balen forth by lawn and lake,  
By moor and moss and briar and brake,  
And in his heart their sorrow spake  
Whose lips were dumb as death, and said  
Mute words of presage blind and vain  
As rain-stars blurred and marred by rain  
To wanderers on a moonless main  
Where night and day seem dead.

Then toward a sunbright wildwood side  
He looked and saw beneath it ride  
A knight whose arms afar espied  
By note of name and proof of pride  
Bare witness of his brother born,  
His brother Balan, hard at hand,  
Twin flower of bright Northumberland,  
Twin sea-bird of their loud sea-strand,  
Twin song-bird of their morn.

Ah then from Balen passed away  
All dread of night, all doubt of day,  
All care what life or death might say,  
All thought of all worse months than May:  
Only the might of joy in love

Brake forth within him as a fire,  
And deep delight in deep desire  
Of far-flown days whose full-souled quire  
Rang round from the air above.

From choral earth and quiring air  
Rang memories winged like songs that bear  
Sweet gifts for spirit and sense to share:  
For no man's life knows love more fair  
And fruitful of memorial things  
Than this the deep dear love that breaks  
With sense of life on life, and makes  
The sundawn sunnier as it wakes  
Where morning round it rings.

"O brother, O my brother!" cried  
Each upon each, and cast aside  
Their helms unbraced that might not hide  
From sight of memory single-eyed  
The likeness graven of face and face,  
And kissed and wept upon each other  
For joy and pity of either brother,  
And love engrafted by sire and mother,  
God's natural gift of grace.

And each with each took counsel meet  
For comfort, making sorrow sweet,  
And grief a goodly thing to greet:  
And word from word leapt light and fleet  
Till all the venturous tale was told,  
And how in Balen's hope it lay  
To meet the wild Welsh king and slay,  
And win from Arthur back for pay  
The grace he gave of old.

"And thither wilt not thou with me  
And win as great a grace for thee?"  
"That will I well," quoth Balan: "we  
Will cleave together, bound and free,  
As brethren should, being twain and one."

But ere they parted thence there came  
A creature withered as with flame,  
A dwarf mismade in nature's shame,  
Between them and the sun.

And riding fleet as fire may glide  
He found the dead lie side by side,  
And wailed and rent his hair and cried,  
"Who hath done this deed?" And Balen eyed  
The strange thing loathfully, and said,  
"The knight I slew, who found him fain  
And keen to slay me: seeing him slain,  
The maid I sought to save in vain,  
Self-stricken, here lies dead.

"Sore grief was mine to see her die,  
And for her true faith's sake shall I  
Love, and with love of heart more high,  
All women better till I die."  
"Alas," the dwarf said, "ill for thee  
In evil hour this deed was done:  
For now the quest shall be begun  
Against thee, from the dawning sun  
Even to the sunset sea.

"From shore to mountain, dawn to night,  
The kinsfolk of this great dead knight  
Will chase thee to thy death." A light  
Of swift blithe scorn flashed answer bright  
As fire from Balen's eye. "For that,  
Small fear shall fret my heart," quoth he:  
"But that my lord the king should be  
For this dead man's sake wroth with me,  
Weep might it well thereat."

Then murmuring passed the dwarf away,  
And toward the knights in fair array  
Came riding eastward up the way  
From where the flower-soft lowlands lay  
A king whose name the sweet south-west



Held high in honour, and the land  
That bowed beneath his gentle hand  
Wore on its wild bright northern strand  
Tintagel for a crest.

And Balen hailed with homage due  
King Mark of Cornwall, when he knew  
The pennon that before him flew:  
And for those lovers dead and true  
The king made moan to hear their doom;  
And for their sorrow's sake he sware  
To seek in all the marches there  
The church that man might find most fair  
And build therein their tomb.

#### V.

As thought from thought takes wing and flies,  
As month on month with sunlit eyes  
Tramples and triumphs in its rise,  
As wave smites wave to death and dies,  
So chance on hurtling chance like steel  
Strikes, flashes, and is quenched, ere fear  
Can whisper hope, or hope can hear,  
If sorrow or joy be far or near  
For time to hurt or heal.

Swift as a shadow and strange as light  
That cleaves in twain the shadow of night  
Before the wide-winged word takes flight  
That thunder speaks to depth and height  
And quells the quiet hour with sound,  
That came before King Mark and stood  
Between the moorside and the wood  
The man whose word God's will made good,  
Nor guile was in it found.

And Merlin said to Balen: "Lo,  
Thou hast wrought thyself a grievous woe  
To let this lady die, and know

Thou mightst have stayed her deadly blow."  
And Balen answered him and said,  
"Nay, by my truth to faith, not I,  
So fiercely fain she was to die;  
Ere well her sword had flashed on high,  
Self-slain she lay there dead."

Again and sadly Merlin spake:  
"My heart is wrung for this deed's sake,  
To know thee therefore doomed to take  
Upon thine hand a curse, and make  
Three kingdoms pine through twelve years' change,  
In want and woe: for thou shalt smite  
The man most noble and truest knight  
That looks upon the live world's light  
A dolorous stroke and strange.

"And not till years shall round their goal  
May this man's wound thou hast given be whole."  
And Balen, stricken through the soul  
By dark-winged words of doom and dole,  
Made answer: "If I wist it were  
No lie but sooth thou sayest of me,  
Then even to make a liar of thee  
Would I too slay myself, and see  
How death bids dead men fare."

And Merlin took his leave and passed  
And was not: and the shadow as fast  
Went with him that his word had cast,  
Too fleet for thought thereof to last:  
And there those brethren bade King Mark  
Farewell: but fain would Mark have known  
The strong knight's name who had overthrown  
The pride of Launceor, when it shone  
Bright as it now lay dark.

And Balan for his brother spake,  
Saying: "Sir, albeit him list not break  
The seal of secret time, nor shake

Night off him ere his morning wake,  
By these two swords he is girt withal  
May men that praise him, knights and lords,  
Call him the knight that bears two swords,  
And all the praise his fame accords  
Make answer when they call."

So parted they toward eventide;  
And tender twilight, heavy-eyed,  
Saw deep down glimmering woodlands ride  
Baln and Baln side by side,  
Till where the leaves grew dense and dim  
Again they spied from far draw near  
The presence of the sacred seer,  
But so disguised and strange of cheer  
That seeing they knew not him.

"Now whither ride ye," Merlin said,  
"Through shadows that the sun strikes red,  
Ere night be born or day be dead?"  
But they, for doubt half touched with dread,  
Would say not where their goal might lie.  
"And thou," said Baln, "what art thou,  
To walk with shrouded eye and brow?"  
He said: "Me lists not show thee now  
By name what man am I."

"Ill seen is this of thee," said they,  
"That thou art true in word and way  
Nor fain to fear the face of day,  
Who wilt not as a true man say  
The name it shames not him to bear."  
He answered: "Be it or be it not so,  
Yet why ye ride this way I know,  
To meet King Ryons as a foe,  
And how your hope shall fare.

"Well, if ye hearken toward my rede,  
Ill, if ye hear not, shall ye speed."  
"Ah, now," they cried, "thou art ours at need:

What Merlin saith we are fain to heed."  
"Great worship shall ye win," said he,  
"And look that ye do knightly now,  
For great shall be your need, I trow."  
And Balen smiled: "By knighthood's vow,  
The best we may will we."

Then Merlin bade them turn and take  
Rest, for their good steeds' weary sake,  
Between the highway and the brake,  
Till starry midnight bade them wake:  
Then "Rise," he said, "the king is nigh,  
Who hath stolen from all his host away  
With threescore horse in armed array,  
The goodliest knights that bear his sway  
And hold his kingdom high.

"And twenty ride of them before  
To bear his errand, ere the door  
Turn of the night, sealed fast no more,  
And sundawn bid the stars wax hoar;  
For by the starshine of to-night  
He seeks a leman where she waits  
His coming, dark and swift as fate's,  
And hearkens toward the unopening gates  
That yield not him to sight."

Then through the glimmering gloom around  
A shadowy sense of light and sound  
Made, ere the proof thereof were found,  
The brave blithe hearts within them bound,  
And "Where," quoth Balen, "rides the king?"  
But softer spake the seer: "Abide,  
Till hither toward your spears he ride,  
Where all the narrowing woodland side  
Grows dense with boughs that cling."

There in that straitening way they met  
The wild Welsh host against them set,  
And smote their strong king down, ere yet

His hurrying horde of spears might get  
Fierce vantage of them. Then the fight  
Grew great and joyous as it grew,  
For left and right those brethren slew,  
Till all the lawn waxed red with dew  
More deep than dews of night.

And ere the full fierce tale was read  
Full forty lay before them dead,  
And fast the hurtling remnant fled  
And wist not whither fear had led:  
And toward the king they went again,  
And would have slain him: but he bowed  
Before them, crying in fear aloud  
For grace they gave him, seeing the proud  
Wild king brought lowest of men.

And ere the wildwood leaves were stirred  
With song or wing of wakening bird,  
In Camelot was Merlin's word  
With joy in joyous wonder heard  
That told of Arthur's bitterest foe  
Diskingdomed and discomfited.  
"By whom?" the high king smiled and said.  
He answered: "Ere the dawn wax red,  
To-morrow bids you know.

"Two knights whose heart and hope are one  
And fain to win your grace have done  
This work whereby if grace be won  
Their hearts shall hail the enkindling sun  
With joy more keen and deep than day."  
And ere the sundawn drank the dew  
Those brethren with their prisoner drew  
To the outer guard they gave him to  
And passed again away.

And Arthur came as toward his guest  
To greet his foe, and bade him rest  
As one returned from nobler quest

And welcome from the stormbright west,  
But by what chance he fain would hear.  
"The chance was hard and strange, sir king,"  
Quoth Ryons, bowed in thanksgiving.  
"Who won you?" Arthur said: "the thing  
Is worth a warrior's ear."

The wild king flushed with pride and shame,  
Answering: "I know not either name  
Of those that there against us came  
And withered all our strength like flame:  
The knight that bears two swords is one,  
And one his brother: not on earth  
May men meet men of knightlier worth  
Nor mightier born of mortal birth  
That hail the sovereign sun."

And Arthur said: "I know them not;  
But much am I for this, God wot,  
Beholden to them: Launcelot  
Nor Tristram, when the war waxed hot  
Along the marches east and west,  
Wrought ever nobler work than this."  
"Ah," Merlin said, "sore pity it is  
And strange mischance of doom, I wis,  
That death should mar their quest.

"Balan, the perfect knight that won  
The sword whose name is malison,  
And made his deed his doom, is one:  
Nor hath his brother Balan done  
Less royal service: not on earth  
Lives there a nobler knight, more strong  
Of soul to win men's praise in song,  
Albeit the light abide not long  
That lightened round his birth.

"Yea, and of all sad things I know  
The heaviest and the highest in woe  
Is this, the doom whose date brings low

Too soon in timeless overthrow  
A head so high, a hope so sure.  
The greatest moan for any knight  
That ever won fair fame in fight  
Shall be for Balen, seeing his might  
Must now not long endure."

"Alas," King Arthur said, "he hath shown  
Such love to me-ward that the moan  
Made of him should be mine alone  
Above all other, knowing it known  
I have ill deserved it of him." "Nay,"  
Said Merlin, "he shall do for you  
Much more, when time shall be anew,  
Than time hath given him chance to do  
Or hope may think to say.

"But now must be your powers purveyed  
To meet, ere noon of morn be made  
To-morrow, all the host arrayed  
Of this wild foe's wild brother, laid  
Around against you: see to it well,  
For now I part from you." And soon,  
When sundawn slew the withering moon,  
Two hosts were met to win the boon  
Whose tale is death's to tell.

A lordly tale of knights and lords  
For death to tell by count of swords  
When war's wild harp in all its chords  
Rang royal triumph, and the hordes  
Of hurtling foemen rocked and reeled  
As waves wind-thwarted on the sea,  
Was told of all that there might be,  
Till scarce might battle hear or see  
The fortune of the field.

And many a knight won fame that day  
When even the serpent soul of Kay  
Was kindled toward the fiery play

As might a lion's be for prey,  
And won him fame that might not die  
With passing of his rancorous breath  
But clung about his life and death  
As fire that speaks in cloud, and saith  
What strong men hear and fly.

And glorious works were Arthur's there,  
That lit the battle-darkened air:  
But when they saw before them fare  
Like stars of storm the knight that bare  
Two swords about him girt for fray,  
Baln, and Balan with him, then  
Strong wonder smote the souls of men  
If heaven's own host or hell's deep den  
Had sent them forth to slay.

So keen they rode across the fight,  
So sharp they smote to left and right,  
And made of hurtling darkness light  
With lightning of their swords, till flight  
And fear before them flew like flame,  
That Arthur's self had never known,  
He said, since first his blast was blown,  
Such lords of war as these alone  
That whence he knew not came.

But while the fire of war waxed hot  
The wild king hearkened, hearing not,  
Through storm of spears and arrow-shot,  
For succour toward him from King Lot  
And all his host of sea-born men,  
Strong as the strong storm-baffling bird  
Whose cry round Orkney's headlands heard  
Is as the sea's own sovereign word  
That mocks our mortal ken.

For Merlin's craft of prophecy,  
Who wist that one of twain must die,  
Put might in him to say thereby



Which head should lose its crown, and lie  
Stricken, though loth he were to know  
That either life should wane and fail;  
Yet most might Arthur's love avail,  
And still with subtly tempered tale  
His wile held fast the foe.

With woven words of magic might  
Wherein the subtle shadow and light  
Changed hope and fear till fear took flight,  
He stayed King Lot's fierce lust of fight  
Till all the wild Welsh war was driven  
As foam before the wind that wakes  
With the all-awakening sun, and breaks  
Strong ships that rue the mirth it makes  
When grace to slay is given.

And ever hotter lit and higher,  
As fire that meets encountering fire,  
Waxed in King Lot his keen desire  
To bid revenge within him tire  
On Arthur's ravaged fame and life:  
Across the waves of war between  
Floated and flashed, unseen and seen,  
The lustrous likeness of the queen  
Whom shame had sealed his wife.

But when the woful word was brought  
That while he tarried, doubting nought,  
The hope was lost whose goal he sought  
And all the fight he yearned for fought,  
His heart was rent for grief and shame,  
And half his hope was set on flight  
Till word was given him of a knight  
Who said: "They are weary and worn with fight.  
And we more fresh than flame."

And bright and dark as night and day  
Ere either find the unopening way  
Clear, and forego the unaltering sway,

The sad king's face shone, frowning: "Yea,  
I would that every knight of mine  
Would do his part as I shall do,"  
He said, "till death or life anew  
Shall judge between us as is due  
With wiser doom than thine."

Then thundered all the awakening field  
With crash of hosts that clashed and reeled,  
Banner to banner, shield to shield,  
And spear to splintering spear-shaft, steeled  
As heart against high heart of man,  
As hope against high hope of knight  
To pluck the crest and crown of fight  
From war's clenched hand by storm's wild light,  
For blessing given or ban.

All hearts of hearkening men that heard  
The ban twin-born with blessing, stirred  
Like springtide waters, knew the word  
Whereby the steeds of storm are spurred  
With ravenous rapture to destroy,  
And laughed for love of battle, pierced  
With passion of tempestuous thirst  
And hungering hope to assuage it first  
With draughts of stormy joy.

But sheer ahead of the iron tide  
That rocked and roared from side to side  
Rode as the lightning's lord might ride  
King Lot, whose heart was set to abide  
All peril of the raging hour,  
And all his host of warriors born  
Where lands by warring seas are worn  
Was only by his hands upborne  
Who gave them pride and power.

But as the sea's hand smites the shore  
And shatters all the strengths that bore  
The ravage earth may bear no more,

So smote the hand of Pellinore  
Charging, a knight of Arthur's chief,  
And clove his strong steed's neck in twain,  
And smote him sheer through brow and brain,  
Falling: and there King Lot lay slain,  
And knew not wrath or grief.

And all the host of Orkney fled,  
And many a mother's son lay dead:  
But when they raised the stricken head  
Whence pride and power and shame were fled  
And rage and anguish now cast out,  
And bore it toward a kingly tomb,  
The wife whose love had wrought his doom  
Came thither, fair as morning's bloom  
And dark as twilight's doubt.

And there her four strong sons and his,  
Gawain and Gareth, Gaherys  
And Agravain, whose sword's sharp kiss  
With sound of hell's own serpent's hiss  
Should one day turn her life to death,  
Stood mourning with her: but by these  
Seeing Mordred as a seer that sees,  
Anguish of terror bent her knees  
And caught her shuddering breath.

The splendour of her sovereign eyes  
Flashed darkness deeper than the skies  
Feel or fear when the sunset dies  
On his that felt as midnight rise  
Their doom upon them, there undone  
By faith in fear ere thought could yield  
A shadowy sense of days revealed,  
The ravin of the final field,  
The terror of their son.

For Arthur's, as they caught the light  
That sought and durst not seek his sight,  
Darkened, and all his spirit's might

Withered within him even as night  
Withers when sunrise thrills the sea.  
But Mordred's lightened as with fire  
That smote his mother and his sire  
With darkling doom and deep desire  
That bade its darkness be.

And heavier on their hearts the weight  
Sank of the fear that brings forth fate,  
With all the grief and love and hate  
That turn to fire men's days on earth.  
And glorious was the funeral made,  
And dark the deepening dread that swayed  
Their darkening souls whose light grew shade  
With sense of death in birth.

## VI.

In autumn, when the wind and sea  
Rejoice to live and laugh to be,  
And scarce the blast that curbs the tree  
And bids before it quail and flee  
The fiery foliage, where its brand  
Is radiant as the seal of spring,  
Sounds less delight, and waves a wing  
Less lustrous, life's loud thanksgiving  
Puts life in sea and land.

High hope in Balen's heart alight  
Laughed, as from all that clamorous fight  
He passed and sought not Arthur's sight,  
Who fain had found his kingliest knight  
And made amend for Balen's wrong.  
But Merlin gave his soul to see  
Fate, rising as a shoreward sea,  
And all the sorrow that should be  
Ere hope or fear thought long.

"O where are they whose hands upbore  
My battle," Arthur said, "before

The wild Welsh host's wide rage and roar?  
Balun and Balan, Pellinore  
Where are they?" Merlin answered him:  
"Balun shall be not long away  
From sight of you, but night nor day  
Shall bring his brother back to say  
If life burn bright or dim."

"Now, by my faith," said Arthur then,  
"Two marvellous knights are they, whose ken  
Toward battle makes the twain as ten,  
And Balun most of all born men  
Passeth of prowess all I know  
Or ever found or sought to see:  
Would God he would abide with me  
To face the times foretold of thee  
And all the latter woe."

For there had Merlin shown the king  
The doom that songs unborn should sing,  
The gifts that time should rise and bring  
Of blithe and bitter days to spring  
As weeds and flowers against the sun.  
And on the king for fear's sake fell  
Sickness, and sorrow deep as hell,  
Nor even might sleep bid fear farewell  
If grace to sleep were won.

Down in a meadow green and still  
He bade the folk that wrought his will  
Pitch his pavilion, where the chill  
Soft night would let not rest fulfil  
His heart wherein dark fears lay deep.  
And sharp against his hearing cast  
Came a sound as of horsehoofs fast  
Passing, that ere their sound were past  
Aroused him as from sleep.

And forth he looked along the grass  
And saw before his portal pass

A knight that wailed aloud, "Alas  
That life should find this dolorous pass  
And find no shield from doom and dole!"  
And hearing all his moan, "Abide,  
Fair sir," the king arose and cried,  
"And say what sorrow bids you ride  
So sorrowful of soul."

"My hurt may no man heal, God wot,  
And help of man may speed me not,"  
The sad knight said, "nor change my lot."  
And toward the castle of Melyot  
Whose towers arose a league away  
He passed forth sorrowing: and anon,  
Ere well the woful sight were gone,  
Came Balen down the meads that shone,  
Strong, bright, and brave as day.

And seeing the king there stand, the knight  
Drew rein before his face to alight  
In reverence made for love's sake bright  
With joy that set his face alight  
As theirs who see, alive, above,  
The sovereign of their souls, whose name  
To them is even as love's own flame  
To enkindle hope that heeds not fame  
And knows no lord but love.

And Arthur smiled on him, and said,  
"Right welcome be thou: by my head,  
I would not wish me better sped.  
For even but now there came and fled  
Before me like a cloud that flies  
A knight that made most heavy cheer,  
I know not wherefore; nor may fear  
Or pity give my heart to hear  
Or lighten on mine eyes.

"But even for fear's and pity's sake  
Fain were I thou shouldst overtake

And fetch again this knight that spake  
No word of answering grace to make  
Reply to mine that hailed him: thou,  
By force or by goodwill, shalt bring  
His face before me." "Yea, my king,"  
Quoth Balen, "and a greater thing  
Were less than is my vow.

"I would the task required and heard  
Were heavier than your sovereign word  
Hath laid on me:" and thence he spurred  
Elate at heart as youth, and stirred  
With hope as blithe as fires a boy:  
And many a mile he rode, and found  
Far in a forest's glimmering bound  
The man he sought afar around  
And seeing took fire for joy.

And with him went a maiden, fair  
As flowers aflush with April air.  
And Balen bade him turn him there  
To tell the king what woes they were  
That bowed him down so sore: and he  
Made woful answer: "This should do  
Great scathe to me, with nought for you  
Of help that hope might hearken to  
For boot that may not be."

And Balen answered: "I were loth  
To fight as one perforce made wroth  
With one that owes by knighthood's oath  
One love, one service, and one troth  
With me to him whose gracious hand  
Holds fast the helm of knighthood here  
Whereby man's hope and heart may steer:  
I pray you let not sorrow or fear  
Against his bidding stand."

The strange knight gazed on him, and spake:  
"Will you, for Arthur's royal sake,

Be warrant for me that I take  
No scathe from strife that man may make?  
Then will I go with you." And he  
Made joyous answer: "Yea, for I  
Will be your warrant or will die."  
And thence they rode with hearts as high  
As men's that search the sea.

And as by noon's large light the twain  
Before the tented hall drew rein,  
Suddenly fell the strange knight, slain  
By one that came and went again  
And none might see him; but his spear  
Clove through the body, swift as fire,  
The man whose doom, forefelt as dire,  
Had darkened all his life's desire,  
As one that death held dear.

And dying he turned his face and said,  
"Lo now thy warrant that my head  
Should fall not, following forth where led  
A knight whose pledge hath left me dead.  
This darkling manslayer hath to name  
Garlon: take thou my goodlier steed,  
Seeing thine is less of strength and speed,  
And ride, if thou be knight indeed,  
Even thither whence we came.

"And as the maiden's fair behest  
Shall bid you follow on my quest,  
Follow: and when God's will sees best,  
Revenge my death, and let me rest  
As one that lived and died a knight,  
Unstained of shame alive or dead."  
And Balen, wrung with sorrow, said,  
"That shall I do: my hand and head  
I pledge to do you right."

And thence with sorrowing heart and cheer  
He rode, in grief that cast out fear



Lest death in darkness yet were near,  
And bore the truncheon of the spear  
Wherewith the woful knight lay slain  
To her with whom he rode, and she  
Still bare it with her, fain to see  
What righteous doom of God's might be  
The darkling manslayer's bane.

And down a dim deep woodland way  
They rode between the boughs asway  
With flickering winds whose flash and play  
Made sunlight sunnier where the day  
Laughed, leapt, and fluttered like a bird  
Caught in a light loose leafy net  
That earth for amorous heaven had set  
To hold and see the sundawn yet  
And hear what morning heard.

There in the sweet soft shifting light  
Across their passage rode a knight  
Flushed hot from hunting as from fight,  
And seeing the sorrow-stricken sight  
Made question of them why they rode  
As mourners sick at heart and sad,  
When all alive about them bade  
Sweet earth for heaven's sweet sake be glad  
As heaven for earth's love glowed.

"Me lists not tell you," Balen said.  
The strange knight's face grew keen and red;  
"Now, might my hand but keep my head,  
Even here should one of twain lie dead  
Were he no better armed than I."  
And Balen spake with smiling speed,  
Where scorn and courtesy kept heed  
Of either: "That should little need:  
Not here shall either die."

And all the cause he told him through  
As one that feared not though he knew

All: and the strange knight spake anew,  
Saying: "I will part no more from you  
While life shall last me." So they went  
Where he might arm himself to ride,  
And rode across wild ways and wide  
To where against a churchyard side  
A hermit's harbour leant.

And there against them riding came  
Fleet as the lightning's laugh and flame  
The invisible evil, even the same  
They sought and might not curse by name  
As hell's foul child on earth set free,  
And smote the strange knight through, and fled,  
And left the mourners by the dead.  
"Alas, again," Sir Balen said,  
"This wrong he hath done to me."

And there they laid their dead to sleep  
Royally, lying where wild winds keep  
Keen watch and wail more soft and deep  
Than where men's choirs bid music weep  
And song like incense heave and swell.  
And forth again they rode, and found  
Before them, dire in sight and sound,  
A castle girt about and bound  
With sorrow like a spell.

Above it seemed the sun at noon  
Sad as a wintry withering moon  
That shudders while the waste wind's tune  
Craves ever none may guess what boon,  
But all may know the boon for dire.  
And evening on its darkness fell  
More dark than very death's farewell,  
And night about it hung like hell,  
Whose fume the dawn made fire.

And Balen lighted down and passed  
Within the gateway, whence no blast

Rang as the sheer portcullis, cast  
Suddenly down, fell, and made fast  
The gate behind him, whence he spied  
A sudden rage of men without  
And ravin of a murderous rout  
That girt the maiden hard about  
With death on either side.

And seeing that shame and peril, fear  
Bade wrath and grief awake and hear  
What shame should say in fame's wide ear  
If she, by sorrow sealed more dear  
Than joy might make her, so should die:  
And up the tower's curled stair he sprang  
As one that flies death's deadliest fang,  
And leapt right out amid their gang  
As fire from heaven on high.

And they thereunder seeing the knight  
Unhurt among their press alight  
And bare his sword for chance of fight  
Stood from him, loth to strive or smite,  
And bade him hear their woful word,  
That not the maiden's death they sought;  
But there through years too dire for thought  
Had lain their lady stricken, and nought  
Might heal her: and he heard.

For there a maiden clean and whole  
In virgin body and virgin soul,  
Whose name was writ on royal roll,  
That would but stain a silver bowl  
With offering of her stainless blood,  
Therewith might heal her: so they stayed  
For hope's sad sake each blameless maid  
There journeying in that dolorous shade  
Whose bloom was bright in bud.

No hurt nor harm to her it were  
If she should yield a sister there

Some tribute of her blood, and fare  
Forth with this joy at heart to bear,  
That all unhurt and unafraid  
This grace she had here by God's grace wrought.  
And kindling all with kindly thought  
And love that saw save love's self nought,  
Shone, smiled, and spake the maid.

"Good knight of mine, good will have I  
To help this healing though I die."  
"Nay," Balen said, "but love may try  
What help in living love may lie.  
--I will not lose the life of her  
While my life lasteth." So she gave  
The tribute love was fain to crave,  
But might not heal though fain to save,  
Were God's grace helpfuller.

Another maid in later Mays  
Won with her life that woful praise,  
And died. But they, when surging day's  
Deep tide fulfilled the dawn's wide ways,  
Rode forth, and found by day or night  
No chance to cross their wayfaring  
Till when they saw the fourth day spring  
A knight's hall gave them harbouring  
Rich as a king's house might.

And while they sat at meat and spake  
Words bright and kind as grace might make  
Sweet for true knighthood's kindly sake,  
They heard a cry beside them break  
The still-souled joy of blameless rest.  
"What noise is this?" quoth Balen. "Nay,"  
His knightly host made answer, "may  
Our grief not grieve you though I say  
How here I dwell unblest.

"Not many a day has lived and died  
Since at a tournay late I tried

My strength to smite and turn and ride  
Against a knight of kinglike pride,  
King Pellam's brother: twice I smote  
The splendour of his strength to dust:  
And he, fulfilled of hate's fierce lust,  
Swore vengeance, pledged for hell to trust,  
And keen as hell's wide throat.

"Invisible as the spirit of night  
That heaven and earth in depth and height  
May see not by the mild moon's light  
Nor even when stars would grant them sight,  
He walks and slays as plague's blind breath  
Slays: and my son, whose anguish here  
Makes moan perforce that mars our cheer,  
He wounded, even ere love might fear  
That hate were strong as death.

"Nor may my son be whole till he  
Whose stroke through him hath stricken me  
Shall give again his blood to be  
Our healing: yet may no man see  
This felon, clothed with darkness round  
And keen as lightning's life." Thereon  
Spake Balen, and his presence shone  
Even as the sun's when stars are gone  
That hear dawn's trumpet sound.

"That knight I know: two knights of mine,  
Two comrades, sealed by faith's bright sign,  
Whose eyes as ours that live should shine,  
And drink the golden sunlight's wine  
With joy's thanksgiving that they live,  
He hath slain in even the same blind wise:  
Were all wide wealth beneath the skies  
Mine, might I meet him, eyes on eyes,  
All would I laugh to give."

His host made answer, and his gaze  
Grew bright with trust as dawn's moist maze

With fire: "Within these twenty days,  
King Pellam, lord of Lystenayse,  
Holds feast through all this country cried,  
And there before the knightly king  
May no knight come except he bring  
For witness of his wayfaring  
His paramour or bride.

"And there that day, so soon to shine,  
This knight, your felon foe and mine,  
Shall show, full-flushed with bloodred wine,  
The fierce false face whereon we pine  
To wreak the wrong he hath wrought us, bare  
As shame should see and brand it." "Then,"  
Said Balen, "shall he give again  
His blood to heal your son, and men  
Shall see death blind him there."

"Forth will we fare to-morrow," said  
His host: and forth, as sunrise led,  
They rode; and fifteen days were fled  
Ere toward their goal their steeds had sped.  
And there alighting might they find  
For Balen's host no place to rest,  
Who came without a gentler guest  
Beside him: and that household's hest  
Bade leave his sword behind.

"Nay," Balen said, "that do I not:  
My country's custom stands, God wot,  
That none whose lot is knighthood's lot,  
To ride where chance as fire is hot  
With hope or promise given of fight,  
Shall fail to keep, for knighthood's part,  
His weapon with him as his heart;  
And as I came will I depart,  
Or hold herein my right."

Then gat he leave to wear his sword  
Beside the strange king's festal board

Where feasted many a knight and lord  
In seemliness of fair accord:  
And Balen asked of one beside,  
"Is there not in this court, if fame  
Keep faith, a knight that hath to name  
Garlon?" and saying that word of shame,  
He scanned that place of pride.

"Yonder he goeth against the light,  
He with the face as swart as night,"  
Quoth the other: "but he rides to fight  
Hid round by charms from all men's sight,  
And many a noble knight he hath slain,  
Being wrapt in darkness deep as hell  
And silence dark as shame." "Ah, well,"  
Said Balen, "is that he? the spell  
May be the sorcerer's bane."

Then Balen gazed upon him long,  
And thought, "If here I wreak my wrong,  
Alive I may not scape, so strong  
The felon's friends about him throng;  
And if I leave him here alive,  
This chance perchance may life not give  
Again: much evil, if he live,  
He needs must do, should fear forgive  
When wrongs bid strike and strive."

And Garlon, seeing how Balen's eye  
Dwelt on him as his heart waxed high  
With joy in wrath to see him nigh,  
Rose wolf-like with a wolfish cry  
And crossed and smote him on the face,  
Saying, "Knight, what wouldst thou with me? Eat,  
For shame, and gaze not: eat thy meat:  
Do that thou art come for: stands thy seat  
Next ours of royal race?"

"Well hast thou said: thy rede rings true;  
That which I came for will I do,"

Quoth Balen: forth his fleet sword flew,  
And clove the head of Garlon through  
Clean to the shoulders. Then he cried  
Loud to his lady, "Give me here  
The truncheon of the shameful spear  
Wherewith he slew your knight, when fear  
Bade hate in darkness ride."

And gladly, bright with grief made glad,  
She gave the truncheon as he bade,  
For still she bare it with her, sad  
And strong in hopeless hope she had,  
Through all dark days of thwarting fear,  
To see if doom should fall aright  
And as God's fire-fraught thunder smite  
That head, clothed round with hell-faced night,  
Bare now before her here.

And Balen smote therewith the dead  
Dark felon's body through, and said  
Aloud, "With even this truncheon, red  
With baser blood than brave men bled  
Whom in thy shameful hand it slew,  
Thou hast slain a nobler knight, and now  
It clings and cleaves thy body: thou  
Shalt cleave again no brave man's brow,  
Though hell would aid anew."

And toward his host he turned and spake;  
"Now for your son's long-suffering sake  
Blood ye may fetch enough, and take  
Wherewith to heal his hurt, and make  
Death warm as life." Then rose a cry  
Loud as the wind's when stormy spring  
Makes all the woodland rage and ring:  
"Thou hast slain my brother," said the king,  
"And here with him shalt die."

"Ay?" Balen laughed him answer. "Well,  
Do it then thyself." And the answer fell



Fierce as a blast of hate from hell,  
"No man of mine that with me dwell  
Shall strike at thee but I their lord  
For love of this my brother slain."  
And Pellam caught and grasped amain  
A grim great weapon, fierce and fain  
To feed his hungering sword.

And eagerly he smote, and sped  
Not well: for Balen's blade, yet red  
With lifeblood of the murderous dead,  
Between the swordstroke and his head  
Shone, and the strength of the eager stroke  
Shore it in sunder: then the knight,  
Naked and weaponless for fight,  
Ran seeking him a sword to smite  
As hope within him woke.

And so their flight for deathward fast  
From chamber forth to chamber passed  
Where lay no weapon, till the last  
Whose doors made way for Balen cast  
Upon him as a sudden spell  
Wonder that even as lightning leapt  
Across his heart and eyes, and swept  
As storm across his soul that kept  
Wild watch, and watched not well.

For there the deed he did, being near  
Death's danger, breathless as the deer  
Driven hard to bay, but void of fear,  
Brought sorrow down for many a year  
On many a man in many a land.  
All glorious shone that chamber, bright  
As burns at sunrise heaven's own height:  
With cloth of gold the bed was dight,  
That flamed on either hand.

And one he saw within it lie:  
A table of all clear gold thereby

Stood stately, fair as morning's eye,  
With four strong silver pillars, high  
And firm as faith and hope may be:  
And on it shone the gift he sought,  
A spear most marvellously wrought,  
That when his eye and handgrip caught  
Small fear at heart had he.

Right on King Pellam then, as fire  
Turns when the thwarting winds wax higher,  
He turned, and smote him down. So dire  
The stroke was, when his heart's desire  
Struck, and had all its fill of hate,  
That as the king fell swooning down  
Fell the walls, rent from base to crown,  
Prone as prone seas that break and drown  
Ships fraught with doom for freight.

And there for three days' silent space  
Balén and Pellam face to face  
Lay dead or deathlike, and the place  
Was death's blind kingdom, till the grace  
That God had given the sacred seer  
For counsel or for comfort led  
His Merlin thither, and he said,  
Standing between the quick and dead,  
"Rise up, and rest not here."

And Balén rose and set his eyes  
Against the seer's as one that tries  
His heart against the sea's and sky's  
And fears not if he lives or dies,  
Saying, "I would have my damosel,  
Ere I fare forth, to fare with me."  
And sadly Merlin answered, "See  
Where now she lies; death knows if she  
Shall now fare ill or well.

"And in this world we meet no more,  
Balén." And Balén, sorrowing sore,

Though fearless yet the heart he bore  
Beat toward the life that lay before,  
Rode forth through many a wild waste land  
Where men cried out against him, mad  
With grievous faith in fear that bade  
Their wrath make moan for doubt they had  
Lest hell had armed his hand.

For in that chamber's wondrous shrine  
Was part of Christ's own blood, the wine  
Shed of the true triumphal vine  
Whose growth bids earth's deep darkness shine  
As heaven's deep light through the air and sea;  
That mystery toward our northern shore  
Arimathean Joseph bore  
For healing of our sins of yore,  
That grace even there might be.

And with that spear there shrined apart  
Was Christ's side smitten to the heart.  
And fiercer than the lightning's dart  
The stroke was, and the deathlike smart  
Wherewith, nigh drained of blood and breath,  
The king lay stricken as one long dead:  
And Joseph's was the blood there shed,  
For near akin was he that bled,  
Near even as life to death.

And therefore fell on all that land  
Sorrow: for still on either hand,  
As Balen rode alone and scanned  
Bright fields and cities built to stand  
Till time should break them, dead men lay;  
And loud and long from all their folk  
Living, one cry that cursed him broke;  
Three countries had his dolorous stroke  
Slain, or should surely slay.

## VII.

In winter, when the year burns low  
As fire wherein no firebrands glow,  
And winds dishevel as they blow  
The lovely stormy wings of snow,  
The hearts of northern men burn bright  
With joy that mocks the joy of spring  
To hear all heaven's keen clarions ring  
Music that bids the spirit sing  
And day give thanks for night.

Aloud and dark as hell or hate  
Round Balen's head the wind of fate  
Blew storm and cloud from death's wide gate:  
But joy as grief in him was great  
To face God's doom and live or die,  
Sorrowing for ill wrought unaware,  
Rejoicing in desire to dare  
All ill that innocence might bear  
With changeless heart and eye.

Yet passing fain he was when past  
Those lands and woes at length and last.  
Eight times, as thence he fared forth fast,  
Dawn rose and even was overcast  
With starry darkness dear as day,  
Before his venturous quest might meet  
Adventure, seeing within a sweet  
Green low-lying forest, hushed in heat,  
A tower that barred his way.

Strong summer, dumb with rapture, bound  
With golden calm the woodlands round  
Wherethrough the knight forth faring found  
A knight that on the greenwood ground  
Sat mourning: fair he was to see,  
And moulded as for love or fight  
A maiden's dreams might frame her knight;  
But sad in joy's far-flowering sight  
As grief's blind thrall might be.

"God save you," Balen softly said,  
"What grief bows down your heart and head  
Thus, as one sorrowing for his dead?  
Tell me, if haply I may stead  
In aught your sorrow, that I may."  
"Sir knight," that other said, "thy word  
Makes my grief heavier that I heard."  
And pity and wonder inly stirred  
Drew Balen thence away.

And so withdrawn with silent speed  
He saw the sad knight's stately steed,  
A war-horse meet for warrior's need,  
That none who passed might choose but heed,  
So strong he stood, so great, so fair,  
With eyes afire for flight or fight,  
A joy to look on, mild in might,  
And swift and keen and kind as light,  
And all as clear of care.

And Balen, gazing on him, heard  
Again his master's woful word  
Sound sorrow through the calm unstirred  
By fluttering wind or flickering bird,  
Thus: "Ah, fair lady and faithless, why  
Break thy pledged faith to meet me? soon  
An hour beyond thy trothplight noon  
Shall strike my death-bell, and thy boon  
Is this, that here I die.

"My curse for all thy gifts may be  
Heavier than death or night on thee;  
For now this sword thou gavest me  
Shall set me from thy bondage free."  
And there the man had died self-slain,  
But Balen leapt on him and caught  
The blind fierce hand that fain had wrought  
Self-murder, stung with fire of thought,  
As rage makes anguish fain.

Then, mad for thwarted grief, "Let go  
My hand," the fool of wrath and woe  
Cried, "or I slay thee." Scarce the glow  
In Balen's cheek and eye might show,  
As dawn shows day while seas lie chill,  
He heard, though pity took not heed,  
But smiled and spake, "That shall not need:  
What man may do to bid you speed  
I, so God speed me, will."

And the other craved his name, beguiled  
By hope that made his madness mild.  
Again Sir Balen spake and smiled:  
"My name is Balen, called the Wild  
By knights whom kings and courts make tame,  
Because I ride alone afar  
And follow but my soul for star."  
"Ah, sir, I know the knight you are  
And all your fiery fame.

"The knight that bears two swords I know,  
Most praised of all men, friend and foe,  
For prowess of your hands, that show  
Dark war the way where balefires glow  
And kindle glory like the dawn's."  
So spake the sorrowing knight, and stood  
As one whose heart fresh hope made good:  
And forth they rode by wold and wood  
And down the glimmering lawns.

And Balen craved his name who rode  
Beside him, where the wild wood glowed  
With joy to feel how noontide flowed  
Through glade and glen and rough green road  
Till earth grew joyful as the sea.  
"My name is Garnysshe of the Mount,  
A poor man's son of none account,"  
He said, "where springs of loftier fount  
Laugh loud with pride to be.

"But strength in weakness lives and stands  
As rocks that rise through shifting sands;  
And for the prowess of my hands  
One made me knight and gave me lands,  
Duke Hermel, lord from far to near,  
Our prince; and she that loved me--she  
I love, and deemed she loved but me,  
His daughter, pledged her faith to be  
Ere now beside me here."

And Balen, brief of speech as light  
Whose word, beheld of depth and height,  
Strikes silence through the stars of night,  
Spake, and his face as dawn's grew bright,  
For hope to help a happier man,  
"How far then lies she hence?" "By this,"  
Her lover sighed and said, "I wis,  
Not six fleet miles the passage is,  
And straight as thought could span."

So rode they swift and sure, and found  
A castle walled and dyked around:  
And Balen, as a warrior bound  
On search where hope might fear to sound  
The darkness of the deeps of doubt,  
Made entrance through the guardless gate  
As life, while hope in life grows great,  
Makes way between the doors of fate  
That death may pass thereout.

Through many a glorious chamber, wrought  
For all delight that love's own thought  
Might dream or dwell in, Balen sought  
And found of all he looked for nought,  
For like a shining shell her bed  
Shone void and vacant of her: thence  
Through devious wonders bright and dense  
He passed and saw with shame-struck sense  
Where shame and faith lay dead.

Down in a sweet small garden, fair  
With flowerful joy in the ardent air,  
He saw, and raged with loathing, where  
She lay with love-dishevelled hair  
Beneath a broad bright laurel tree  
And clasped in amorous arms a knight,  
The unloveliest that his scornful sight  
Had dwelt on yet; a shame the bright  
Broad noon might shrink to see.

And thence in wrathful hope he turned,  
Hot as the heart within him burned,  
To meet the knight whose love, so spurned  
And spat on and made nought of, yearned  
And dreamed and hoped and lived in vain,  
And said, "I have found her sleeping fast,"  
And led him where the shadows cast  
From leaves wherethrough light winds ran past  
Screened her from sun and rain.

But Garnysse, seeing, reeled as he stood  
Like a tree, kingliest of the wood,  
Half hewn through: and the burning blood  
Through lips and nostrils burst aflood:  
And gathering back his rage and might  
As broken breakers rally and roar  
The loud wind down that drives off shore,  
He smote their heads off: there no more  
Their life might shame the light.

Then turned he back toward Balen, mad  
With grief, and said, "The grief I had  
Was nought: ere this my life was glad:  
Thou hast done this deed: I was but sad  
And fearful how my hope might fare:  
I had lived my sorrow down, hadst thou  
Not shown me what I saw but now."  
The sorrow and scorn on Balen's brow  
Bade silence curb him there.



And Balen answered: "What I did  
I did to hearten thee and bid  
Thy courage know that shame should rid  
A man's high heart of love that hid  
Blind shame within its core: God knows,  
I did, to set a bondman free,  
But as I would thou hadst done by me,  
That seeing what love must die to see  
Love's end might well be woe's."

"Alas," the woful weakling said,  
"I have slain what most I loved: I have shed  
The blood most near my heart: the head  
Lies cold as earth, defiled and dead,  
That all my life was lighted by,  
That all my soul bowed down before,  
And now may bear with life no more:  
For now my sorrow that I bore  
Is twofold, and I die."

Then with his red wet sword he rove  
His breast in sunder, where it clove  
Life, and no pulse against it strove,  
So sure and strong the deep stroke drove  
Deathward: and Balen, seeing him dead,  
Rode thence, lest folk would say he had slain  
Those three: and ere three days again  
Had seen the sun's might wax and wane,  
Far forth he had spurred and sped.

And riding past a cross whereon  
Broad golden letters written shone,  
Saying, "No knight born may ride alone  
Forth toward this castle," and all the stone  
Glowed in the sun's glare even as though  
Blood stained it from the crucified  
Dead burden of one that there had died,  
An old hoar man he saw beside  
Whose face was wan as woe.

"Balén the Wild," he said, "this way  
Thy way lies not: thou hast passed to-day  
Thy bands: but turn again, and stay  
Thy passage, while thy soul hath sway  
Within thee, and through God's good power  
It will avail thee:" and anon  
His likeness as a cloud was gone,  
And Balén's heart within him shone  
Clear as the cloudless hour.

Nor fate nor fear might overcast  
The soul now near its peace at last.  
Suddenly, thence as forth he past,  
A mighty and a deadly blast  
Blown of a hunting-horn he heard,  
As when the chase hath nobly sped.  
"That blast is blown for me," he said,  
"The prize am I who am yet not dead,"  
And smiled upon the word.

As toward a royal hart's death rang  
That note, whence all the loud wood sang  
With winged and living sound that sprang  
Like fire, and keen as fire's own fang  
Pierced the sweet silence that it slew.  
But nought like death or strife was here:  
Fair semblance and most goodly cheer  
They made him, they whose troop drew near  
As death among them drew.

A hundred ladies well arrayed  
And many a knight well weaponed made  
That kindly show of cheer: the glade  
Shone round them till its very shade  
Lightened and laughed from grove to lawn  
To hear and see them: so they brought  
Within a castle fair as thought  
Could dream that wizard hands had wrought  
The guest among them drawn.

All manner of glorious joy was there:  
Harping and dancing, loud and fair,  
And minstrelsy that made of air  
Fire, so like fire its raptures were.  
Then the chief lady spake on high:  
"Knight with the two swords, one of two  
Must help you here or fall from you:  
For needs you now must have ado  
And joust with one hereby.

"A good knight guards an island here  
Against all swords that chance brings near,  
And there with stroke of sword and spear  
Must all for whom these halls make cheer  
Fight, and redeem or yield up life."  
"An evil custom," Balen said,  
"Is this, that none whom chance hath led  
Hither, if knighthood crown his head,  
May pass unstirred to strife."

"You shall not have ado to fight  
Here save against one only knight,"  
She said, and all her face grew bright  
As hell-fire, lit with hungry light  
That wicked laughter touched with flame.  
"Well, since I shall thereto," said he,  
"I am ready at heart as death for me:  
Fain would I be where death should be  
And life should lose its name.

"But travelling men whose goal afar  
Shines as a cloud-constraining star  
Are often weary, and wearier are  
Their steeds that feel each fret and jar  
Wherewith the wild ways wound them: yet,  
Albeit my horse be weary, still  
My heart is nowise weary; will  
Sustains it even till death fulfil  
My trust upon him set."

"Sir," said a knight thereby that stood,  
"Meseems your shield is now not good  
But worn with warrior work, nor could  
Sustain in strife the strokes it would:  
A larger will I lend you." "Ay,  
Thereof I thank you," Balen said,  
Being single of heart as one that read  
No face aright whence faith had fled,  
Nor dreamed that faith could fly.

And so he took that shield unknown  
And left for treason's touch his own,  
And toward that island rode alone,  
Nor heard the blast against him blown  
Sound in the wind's and water's sound,  
But hearkening toward the stream's edge heard  
Nought save the soft stream's rippling word,  
Glad with the gladness of a bird,  
That sang to the air around.

And there against the water-side  
He saw, fast moored to rock and ride,  
A fair great boat anear abide  
Like one that waits the turning tide,  
Wherein embarked his horse and he  
Passed over toward no kindly strand:  
And where they stood again on land  
There stood a maiden hard at hand  
Who seeing them wept to see.

And "O knight Balen," was her cry,  
"Why have ye left your own shield? why  
Come hither out of time to die?  
For had ye kept your shield, thereby  
Ye had yet been known, and died not here.  
Great pity it is of you this day  
As ever was of knight, or may  
Be ever, seeing in war's bright way  
Praise knows not Balen's peer."

And Balen said, "Thou hast heard my name  
Right: it repenteth me, though shame  
May tax me not with base men's blame,  
That ever, hap what will, I came  
Within this country; yet, being come,  
For shame I may not turn again  
Now, that myself and nobler men  
May scorn me: now is more than then,  
And faith bids fear be dumb.

"Be it life or death, my chance I take,  
Be it life's to build or death's to break:  
And fall what may, me lists not make  
Moan for sad life's or death's sad sake."  
Then looked he on his armour, glad  
And high of heart, and found it strong:  
And all his soul became a song  
And soared in prayer that soared not long,  
For all the hope it had.

Then saw he whence against him came  
A steed whose trappings shone like flame,  
And he that rode him showed the same  
Fierce colour, bright as fire or fame,  
But dark the visors were as night  
That hid from Balen Balan's face,  
And his from Balan: God's own grace  
Forsook them for a shadowy space  
Where darkness cast out light.

The two swords girt that Balen bare  
Gave Balan for a breath's while there  
Pause, wondering if indeed it were  
Balen his brother, bound to dare  
The chance of that unhappy quest:  
But seeing not as he thought to see  
His shield, he deemed it was not he,  
And so, as fate bade sorrow be,  
They laid their spears in rest.

So mighty was the course they ran  
With spear to spear so great of span,  
Each fell back stricken, man by man,  
Horse by horse, borne down: so the ban  
That wrought by doom against them wrought:  
But Balen by his falling steed  
Was bruised the sorer, being indeed  
Way-weary, like a rain-bruised reed,  
With travel ere he fought.

And Balen rose again from swoon  
First, and went toward him: all too soon  
He too then rose, and the evil boon  
Of strength came back, and the evil tune  
Of battle unnatural made again  
Mad music as for death's wide ear  
Listening and hungering toward the near  
Last sigh that life or death might hear  
At last from dying men.

Balan smote Balen first, and clove  
His lifted shield that rose and strove  
In vain against the stroke that drove  
Down: as the web that morning wove  
Of glimmering pearl from spray to spray  
Dies when the strong sun strikes it, so  
Shrank the steel, tempered thrice to show  
Strength, as the mad might of the blow  
Shore Balen's helm away.

Then turning as a turning wave  
Against the land-wind, blind and brave  
In hope that dreams despair may save,  
With even the unhappy sword that gave  
The gifts of fame and fate in one  
He smote his brother, and there had nigh  
Felled him: and while they breathed, his eye  
Glanced up, and saw beneath the sky  
Sights fairer than the sun.

The towers of all the castle there  
Stood full of ladies, blithe and fair  
As the earth beneath and the amorous air  
About them and above them were:  
So toward the blind and fateful fight  
Again those brethren went, and sore  
Were all the strokes they smote and bore,  
And breathed again, and fell once more  
To battle in their sight.

With blood that either spilt and bled  
Was all the ground they fought on red,  
And each knight's hauberk hewn and shred  
Left each unmailed and naked, shed  
From off them even as mantles cast:  
And oft they breathed, and drew but breath  
Brief as the word strong sorrow saith,  
And poured and drank the draught of death,  
Till fate was full at last.

And Balan, younger born than he  
Whom darkness bade him slay, and be  
Slain, as in mist where none may see  
If aught abide or fall or flee,  
Drew back a little and laid him down,  
Dying: but Balen stood, and said,  
As one between the quick and dead  
Might stand and speak, "What good knight's head  
Hath won this mortal crown?"

"What knight art thou? for never I  
Who now beside thee dead shall die  
Found yet the knight afar or nigh  
That matched me." Then his brother's eye  
Flashed pride and love; he spake and smiled  
And felt in death life's quickening flame,  
And answered: "Balan is my name,  
The good knight Balen's brother; fame  
Calls and miscalls him wild."

The cry from Balen's lips that sprang  
Sprang sharper than his sword's stroke rang.  
More keen than death's or memory's fang,  
Through sense and soul the shuddering pang  
Shivered: and scarce he had cried, "Alas  
That ever I should see this day,"  
When sorrow swooned from him away  
As blindly back he fell, and lay  
Where sleep lets anguish pass.

But Balan rose on hands and knees  
And crawled by childlike dim degrees  
Up toward his brother, as a breeze  
Creeps wingless over sluggard seas  
When all the wind's heart fails it: so  
Beneath their mother's eyes had he,  
A babe that laughed with joy to be,  
Made toward him standing by her knee  
For love's sake long ago.

Then, gathering strength up for a space,  
From off his brother's dying face  
With dying hands that wrought apace  
While death and life would grant them grace  
He loosed his helm and knew not him,  
So scored with blood it was, and hewn  
Athwart with darkening wounds: but soon  
Life strove and shuddered through the swoon  
Wherein its light lay dim.

And sorrow set these chained words free:  
"O Balan, O my brother! me  
Thou hast slain, and I, my brother, thee:  
And now far hence, on shore and sea,  
Shall all the wide world speak of us."  
"Alas," said Balan, "that I might  
Not know you, seeing two swords were dight  
About you; now the unanswering sight  
Hath here found answer thus.



"Because you bore another shield  
Than yours, that even ere youth could wield  
Like arms with manhood's tried and steeled  
Shone as my star of battle-field,  
I deemed it surely might not be  
My brother." Then his brother spake  
Fiercely: "Would God, for thy sole sake,  
I had my life again, to take  
Revenge for only thee!

"For all this deadly work was wrought  
Of one false knight's false word and thought,  
Whose mortal craft and counsel caught  
And snared my faith who doubted nought,  
And made me put my shield away.  
Ah, might I live, I would destroy  
That castle for its customs: joy  
There makes of grief a deadly toy,  
And death makes night of day."

"Well done were that, if aught were done  
Well ever here beneath the sun,"  
Said Balan: "better work were none:  
For hither since I came and won  
A woful honour born of death,  
When here my hap it was to slay  
A knight who kept this island way,  
I might not pass by night or day  
Hence, as this token saith.

"No more shouldst thou, for all the might  
Of heart and hand that seals thee knight  
Most noble of all that see the light,  
Brother, hadst thou but slain in fight  
Me, and arisen unscathed and whole,  
As would to God thou hadst risen! though here  
Light is as darkness, hope as fear,  
And love as hate: and none draws near  
Save toward a mortal goal."

Then, fair as any poison-flower  
Whose blossom blights the withering bower  
Whereon its blasting breath has power,  
Forth fared the lady of the tower  
With many a lady and many a knight,  
And came across the water-way  
Even where on death's dim border lay  
Those brethren sent of her to slay  
And die in kindless fight.

And all those hard light hearts were swayed  
With pity passing like a shade  
That stays not, and may be not stayed,  
To hear the mutual moan they made,  
Each to behold his brother die,  
Saying, "Both we came out of one tomb,  
One star-crossed mother's woful womb,  
And so within one grave-pit's gloom  
Untimely shall we lie."

And Balan prayed, as God should bless  
That lady for her gentleness,  
That where the battle's mortal stress  
Had made for them perforce to press  
The bed whence never man may rise  
They twain, free now from hopes and fears,  
Might sleep; and she, as one that hears,  
Bowed her bright head: and very tears  
Fell from her cold fierce eyes.

Then Balen prayed her send a priest  
To housel them, that ere they ceased  
The hanel of the heavenly feast  
That fills with light from the answering east  
The sunset of the life of man  
Might bless them, and their lips be kissed  
With death's requickening eucharist,  
And death's and life's dim sunlit mist  
Pass as a stream that ran.

And so their dying rites were done:  
And Balen, seeing the death-struck sun  
Sink, spake as he whose goal is won:  
"Now, when our trophied tomb is one,  
And over us our tale is writ,  
How two that loved each other, two  
Born and begotten brethren, slew  
Each other, none that reads anew  
Shall choose but weep for it.

"And no good knight and no good man  
Whose eye shall ever come to scan  
The record of the imperious ban  
That made our life so sad a span  
Shall read or hear, who shall not pray  
For us for ever." Then anon  
Died Balan; but the sun was gone,  
And deep the stars of midnight shone,  
Ere Balen passed away.

And there low lying, as hour on hour  
Fled, all his life in all its flower  
Came back as in a sunlit shower  
Of dreams, when sweet-souled sleep has power  
On life less sweet and glad to be.  
He drank the draught of life's first wine  
Again: he saw the moorland shine,  
The rioting rapids of the Tyne,  
The woods, the cliffs, the sea.

The joy that lives at heart and home,  
The joy to rest, the joy to roam,  
The joy of crags and scaurs he clomb,  
The rapture of the encountering foam  
Embraced and breasted of the boy,  
The first good steed his knees bestrode,  
The first wild sound of songs that flowed  
Through ears that thrilled and heart that glowed,  
Fulfilled his death with joy.

So, dying not as a coward that dies  
And dares not look in death's dim eyes  
Straight as the stars on seas and skies  
Whence moon and sun recoil and rise,  
He looked on life and death, and slept.  
And there with morning Merlin came,  
And on the tomb that told their fame  
He wrote by Balan's Balen's name,  
And gazed thereon, and wept.

For all his heart within him yearned  
With pity like as fire that burned.  
The fate his fateful eye discerned  
Far off now dimmed it, ere he turned  
His face toward Camelot, to tell  
Arthur of all the storms that woke  
Round Balen, and the dolorous stroke,  
And how that last blind battle broke  
The consummated spell.

"Alas," King Arthur said, "this day  
I have heard the worst that woe might say:  
For in this world that wanes away  
I know not two such knight as they."  
This is the tale that memory writes  
Of men whose names like stars shall stand,  
Balen and Balan, sure of hand  
Two brethren of Northumberland,  
In life and death good knights.

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