

Sir Thomas Malory

# THE NOBLE TALE OF THE SANGREAL

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edition, 1485, supplemented from the 1529  
edition of Wynkyn de Worde.



## BOOK XIII.

CHAPTER I. *How at the vigil of the Feast of Pentecost entered into the hall before King Arthur a damosel and desired Sir Lancelot for to come and dub a knight, and how he went with her.*

AT THE VIGIL of Pentecost, when all the fellowship of the Round Table were come unto Camelot and there heard their service, and the tables were set ready to the meat, right so entered into the hall a full fair gentlewoman on horseback that had ridden full fast, for her horse was all besweated. Then she there alighted and came before the king and saluted him, and he said, "Damosel, God thee bless."

"Sir," said she, "for God's sake say me where Sir Lancelot is."

"Yonder ye may see him," said the king.

Then she went unto Lancelot and said, "Sir Lancelot, I salute you on King Pelles' behalf, and I require you come on with me hereby into a forest."

Then Sir Lancelot asked her with whom she dwelled.

"I dwell," said she, "with King Pelles."

"What will ye with me?" said Lancelot.

"Ye shall know," said she, "when ye come thither."

"Well," said he, "I will gladly go with you."

So Sir Lancelot bade his squire saddle his horse and bring his arms, and in all haste he did his commandment.

Then came the queen unto Lancelot and said, "Will ye leave us at this high feast?"

"Madam," said the gentlewoman, "wit ye well he shall be with you to-morn by dinner time."

"If I wist," said the queen, "that he should not be with us here to-morn he should not go with you by my good will."

Right so departed Sir Lancelot with the gentlewoman and rode until that he came into a forest and into a great valley, where they saw an abbey of nuns, and there was a squire ready and opened the gates, and so they entered and descended off their horses, and there came a fair fellowship about Sir Lancelot and welcomed him and

were passing glad of his coming.

And then they led him unto the Abbess's chamber and unarmed him, and right so he was ware upon a bed lying two of his cousins, Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, and then he waked them, and when they saw him they made great joy.

"Sir," said Sir Bors unto Sir Lancelot, "what adventure hath brought you hither, for we weened to-morn to have found you at Camelot?"

"As God me help," said Sir Lancelot, "a gentlewoman brought me hither, but I know not the cause."

In the meanwhile that they thus stood talking together, therein came twelve nuns that brought with them Galahad, the which was passing fair and well made, that uneath<sup>1</sup> in the world men might not find his match. And all those ladies wept. "Sir," said they all, "we bring you here this child the which we have nourished, and we pray you to make him a knight, for of a more worthier man's hand may he not receive the order of knighthood."

Sir Lancelot beheld the young squire and saw him seemly and demure as a dove, with all manner of good features, that he weened of his age never to have seen so fair a man of form. Then said Sir Lancelot, "Cometh this desire of himself?"

He and all they said, "Yea."

"Then shall he," said Sir Lancelot, "receive the high order of knighthood as to-morn at the reverence of the high feast."

That night Sir Lancelot had passing good cheer, and on the morn at the hour of prime<sup>2</sup>, at Galahad's desire, he made him knight and said, "God make him a good man, for of beauty faileth you not as any that liveth."

CHAPTER II. *How the letters were found written in the Siege Perilous and of the marvellous adventure of the sword in a stone.*

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<sup>1</sup>uneath: not easily, scarcely (with the accompanying negative *might not*)

<sup>2</sup>Prime is six o'clock in the morning.

"NOW FAIR SIR," said Sir Lancelot, will ye come with me unto the court of King Arthur?"

"Nay," said he, "I will not go with you as at this time."

Then he departed from them and took his two cousins with him, and so they came unto Camelot by the hour of undern on Whitsunday<sup>1</sup>. By that time the king and the queen were gone to the minster to hear their service.

Then the king and the queen were passing glad of Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, and so was all the fellowship. So when the king and all the knights were come from service, the barons espied in the sieges of the Round Table all about, written with golden letters: here ought to sit he, and he ought to sit here. And thus they went so long till that they came to the Siege Perilous, where they found letters newly written of gold which said: "Four hundred winters and four and fifty accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ ought this siege to be fulfilled."

Then all they said, "This is a marvellous thing and an adventurous."

"In the name of God," said Sir Lancelot and then accopted the term of the writing from the birth of our Lord unto that day. "It seemeth me," said Sir Lancelot, "this siege ought to be fulfilled this same day, for this is the feast of Pentecost after the four hundred and four and fifty year, and if it would please all parties, I would none of these letters were seen this day, till he be come that ought to encheve<sup>2</sup> this adventure."

Then made they to ordain a cloth of silk for to cover these letters in the Siege Perilous. Then the king bade haste unto dinner.

"Sir," said Sir Kay the Steward, "if ye go now unto your meat ye shall break your old custom of your court, for ye have not used on

this day to sit at your meat or<sup>3</sup> that ye have seen some adventure."

"Ye say sooth," said the king, "but I had so great joy of Sir Lancelot and of his cousins, which be come to the court whole and sound, so that I bethought me not of mine old custom.

So, as they stood speaking, in came a squire and said unto the king, "Sir, I bring unto you marvellous tidings."

"What be they?" said the king.

"Sir, there is here beneath at the river a great stone which I saw fleet above the water, and therein I saw sticking a sword."

The king said, "I will see that marvel."

So all the knights went with him, and when they came to the river they found there a stone fleeting, as it were of red marble, and therein stuck a fair rich sword, and in the pommel thereof were precious stones wrought with subtle letters of gold. Then the barons read the letters, which said in this wise, "Never shall man take me hence, but only he by whose side I ought to hang, and he shall be the best knight of the world."

When the king had seen the letters, he said unto Sir Lancelot, "Fair sir, this sword ought to be yours, for I am sure ye be the best knight of the world."

Then Sir Lancelot answered full soberly, "Certes, sir, it is not my sword. Also, sir, wit ye well I have no hardiness to set my hand to it, for it longed not to hang by my side. Also, who that assayeth to take the sword and faileth of it, he shall receive a wound by that sword that he shall not be whole long after. And I will that ye wit that this same day shall the adventures of the Sangreal, that is called the Holy Vessel, begin."

CHAPTER III. *How Sir Gawain assayed to draw out the sword, and how an old man brought in Galahad.*

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<sup>1</sup>undern on Whitsunday: Nine o'clock in the morning on Pentecost

<sup>2</sup>encheve: win, gain possession of; succeed

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<sup>3</sup>or (as a conjunction): before

"NOW, FAIR NEPHEW," said the king unto Sir Gawain, "assay ye, for my love."

"Sir," he said, "save your good grace, I shall not do that."

"Sir," said the king, "assay to take the sword and at my commandment."

"Sir," said Gawain, "your commandment I will obey." And therewith he took up the sword by the handles, but he might not stir it.

"I thank you," said the king to Sir Gawain.

"My lord, Sir Gawain," said Sir Lancelot, "now wit ye well this sword shall touch you so sore that ye shall will ye had never set your hand thereto for the best castle of this realm."

"Sir," he said, "I might not withsay mine uncle's will and commandment."

But when the king heard this he repented it much and said unto Sir Perceval that he should assay, for his love.

And he said, "Gladly, for to bear Sir Gawain fellowship." And therewith he set his hand on the sword and drew it strongly, but he might not move it. Then were there none that durst be so hardy to set their hands thereto.

"Now may ye go to your dinner," said Sir Kay unto the king, "for a marvellous adventure have ye seen." So the king and all went unto the court, and every knight knew his own place and set him therein, and young men that were knights served them.

So when they were served, and all sieges fulfilled save only the Siege Perilous, anon there befell a marvellous adventure, that all the doors and windows of the palace shut by themselves. Not for than<sup>1</sup> the hall was not greatly darked, and therewith they were all abashed

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<sup>1</sup>You will be running into *no for than* often in Malory. The *than* is an obsolete demonstrative pronoun used to mean *that* after a preposition. Hence, *for than* means *for that [reason]* and *not for than* means *notwithstanding that, despite that, although*.

both one and other. Then King Arthur spake first and said, "By God, fair fellows and lords, we have seen this day marvels, but or<sup>2</sup> night I suppose we shall see greater marvels."

In the meanwhile came in a good old man and an ancient, clothed all in white, and there was no knight knew from whence he came. And with him he brought a young knight, both on foot, in red arms, without sword or shield, save a scabbard hanging by his side. And these words he said, "Peace be with you, fair lords."

Then the old man said unto Arthur, "Sir, I bring here a young knight, the which is of king's lineage and of the kindred of Joseph of Arimathaea, whereby the marvels of this court and of strange realms shall be fully accomplished."

CHAPTER IV. *How the old man brought Galahad to the Siege Perilous and set him therein, and how all the knights marvelled.*

THE KING WAS right glad of his words and said unto the good man, "Sir, ye be right welcome, and the young knight with you."

Then the old man made the young man to unarm him, and he was in a coat of red sendal<sup>3</sup> and bare a mantle upon his shoulder that was furred with ermine and put that upon him. And the old knight said unto the young knight, "Sir, follow me." And anon he led him unto the Siege Perilous, where beside sat Sir Lancelot, and the good man lift up the cloth and found there letters that said thus: "This is the siege of Galahad, the haut prince."

"Sir," said the old knight, "wit ye well that place is yours."

And then he set him down surely in that siege. And then he said to the old man, "Sir, ye may now go your way, for well have ye done

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<sup>2</sup>or (as a preposition): before

<sup>3</sup>sendal: A thin rich silken material (OED)

that<sup>1</sup> ye were commanded to do, and recommend me unto my grandsire King Pelles and unto my lord Petchere, and say them on my behalf, I shall come and see them as soon as ever I may.”

So the good man departed, and there met him twenty noble squires and so took their horses and went their way.

Then all the knights of the Table Round marvelled greatly of Sir Galahad that he durst sit there in that Siege Perilous and was so tender of age and wist not from whence he came, but alonely<sup>2</sup> by God, and said, “This is he by whom the Sangreal shall be encheved, for there sat never none but he but he were mischieved.”

Then Sir Lancelot beheld his son and had great joy of him. Then Bors told his fellows<sup>3</sup>, “Upon pain of my life this young knight shall come unto great worship.”

This noise was great in all the court so that it came to the queen. Then she had marvel what knight it might be that durst adventure him to sit in the Siege Perilous. Many said unto the queen he resembled much unto Sir Lancelot. “I may well suppose,” said the queen, “that Sir Lancelot begat him on King Pelles’ daughter, by the which he was made to lie by by enchantment, and his name is Galahad. I would fain<sup>4</sup> see him,” said the queen, “for he must needs be a noble man, for so is his father that him begat, I report me<sup>5</sup> unto all the Table Round.”

So when the meat was done that the king and all were risen, the king yede<sup>6</sup> unto the Siege Perilous and lift up the cloth and found there the name of Galahad, and then he shewed it unto Sir Gawain and said, “Fair nephew, now have we among us Sir Galahad, the

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<sup>1</sup>that: that which (a usage that survived well into the nineteenth century)

<sup>2</sup>alonely: solely

<sup>3</sup>Malory uses *fellow* in the sense of *companion* (as in the fellowship of the Round Table), not in the more general sense of *man* or *chap*.

<sup>4</sup>fain: gladly

<sup>5</sup>I report me unto all the Table Round: As all the Round Table will confirm.

<sup>6</sup>yede: went

good knight that shall worship us all<sup>7</sup>, and upon pain of my life he shall encheve the Sangreal<sup>8</sup>, right as Sir Lancelot had done us to understand.”

Then came King Arthur unto Galahad and said, “Sir, ye be welcome, for ye shall move many good knights to the quest of the Sangreal, and ye shall encheve that never knights might bring to an end.” Then the king took him by the hand and went down from the palace to shew Galahad the adventures of the stone.

CHAPTER V. *How King Arthur shewed the stone hoving on the water to Galahad, and how he drew out the sword.*

THE QUEEN HEARD thereof and came after with many ladies and shewed them the stone where it hoved on the water.

“Sir,” said the king unto Sir Galahad, “here is a great marvel as ever I saw, and right good knights have assayed and failed.”

“Sir,” said Galahad, “that is no marvel, for this adventure is not theirs but mine, and for the surety of this sword I brought none with me, for here by my side hangeth the scabbard.”

And anon he laid his hand on the sword and lightly drew it out of the stone and put it in the sheath and said unto the king, “Now it goeth better than it did aforehand.”

“Sir,” said the king, “a shield God shall send you.”

“Now have I that sword that sometime was the good knight’s, Balin le Savage, and he was a passing good man of his hands, and with this sword he slew his brother Balan, and that was great pity, for he was a good knight, and either slew other through a dolorous stroke that Balin gave unto my grandfather King Pelles, the which is

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<sup>7</sup>worship us all: invest us all with honour or repute (OED)

<sup>8</sup>upon pain of my life he shall encheve the Sangreal: you may take my life if he does not succeed in his quest for the Holy Grail

not yet whole, nor not shall be till I heal him.”

Therewith the king and all espied where came riding down the river a lady on a white palfrey toward them. Then she saluted the king and the queen and asked if that Sir Lancelot was there. And then he answered himself, “I am here, fair lady.”

Then she said all with weeping, “How your great doing is changed sith this day in the morn!”

“Damosel, why say you so?” said Lancelot.

“I say you sooth,” said the damosel, “for ye were this day the best knight of the world, but who should say so now, he should be a liar, for there is now one better than ye, and well it is proved by the adventures of the sword whereto ye durst not set to your hand, and that is the change and leaving of your name. Wherefore I make unto you a remembrance, that ye shall not ween from henceforth that ye be the best knight of the world.”

“As touching unto that,” said Lancelot, “I know well I was never the best.”

“Yes,” said the damosel, “that were ye, and are yet, of any sinful man of the world. And, Sir King, Nacien the hermit sendeth thee word that thee shall befall the greatest worship that ever befell king in Britain, and I say you wherefore, for this day the Sangreal appeared in thy house and fed thee and all thy fellowship of the Round Table.”

So she departed and went that same way that she came.

CHAPTER VI. *How King Arthur had all the knights together for to joust in the meadow beside Camelot or they departed.*

“NOW,” SAID THE KING, I am sure at this quest of the Sangreal shall all ye of the Table Round depart, and never shall I see you again whole together. Therefore I will see you all whole together in the meadow of Camelot to joust and to tourney, that after your death men may speak of it that such good knights were wholly together such a day.”

As unto that counsel and at the king’s request they accorded all and took on their harness that longed unto jousting. But all this moving of the king was for this intent, for to see Galahad proved, for the king deemed he should not lightly come again unto the court after his departing.

So were they assembled in the meadow, both more and less. Then Sir Galahad, by the prayer of the king and the queen, did upon him a noble jesseraunce<sup>1</sup>, and also he did on his helm, but shield would he take none for no prayer of the king. And then Sir Gawain and other knights prayed him to take a spear. Right so he did, and the queen was in a tower with all her ladies for to behold that tournament.

Then Sir Galahad dressed him in midst of the meadow and began to break spears marvellously, that all men had wonder of him, for he there surmounted all other knights, for within a while he had defouled many good knights of the Table Round save twain. That was Sir Lancelot and Sir Perceval.

CHAPTER VII. *How the queen desired to see Galahad, and how, after, all the knights were replenished with the Holy Sangreal, and how they avowed the enquest of the same.*

THEN THE KING at the queen’s request made him to alight and to unlace his helm that the queen might see him in the visage. When she beheld him she said, “Soothly I dare well say that Sir Lancelot begat him, for never two men resembled more in likeness. Therefore it nis<sup>2</sup> no marvel though he be of great prowess.”

So a lady that stood by the queen said, “Madam, for God’s sake

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<sup>1</sup>When Galahad did upon him a noble jesseraunce, he put on a noble suit of armour.

<sup>2</sup>nis: a negative form of *is*

ought he of right to be so good a knight?"

"Yea, forsooth," said the queen, "for he is of all parties come of the best knights of the world and of the highest lineage, for Sir Lancelot is come but of the eighth degree from our Lord Jesu Christ, and Sir Galahad is of the ninth degree from our Lord Jesu Christ. Therefore I dare say they be the greatest gentlemen of the world."

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, and every knight sat in his own place as they were toforehand. Then anon they heard cracking and crying of thunder, that them thought the place should all to-drive<sup>1</sup>. In the midst of this blast entered a sunbeam more clearer by seven times than ever they saw day, and all they were alighted of the grace of the Holy Ghost. Then began every knight to behold other, and either saw other, by their seeming fairer than ever they saw afore. Not for than there was no knight might speak one word a great while, and so they looked every man on other as they had been dumb. Then there entered into the hall the Holy Grail covered with white samite<sup>2</sup>, but there was none might see it, nor who bare it. And there was all the hall fulfilled with good odours, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world. And when the Holy Grail had been borne through the hall, then the holy vessel departed suddenly, that they wist not where it became. Then had they all breath to speak.

And then the king yielded thankings to God of His good grace that he had sent them. "Certes," said the king, "we ought to thank our Lord Jesu greatly for that he hath shewed us this day at the reverence of this high feast of Pentecost."

"Now," said Sir Gawain, "we have been served this day of what meats and drinks we thought on, but one thing beguiled us: we might not see the Holy Grail, it was so precious covered. Wherefore

I will make here avow that to-morn, without longer abiding, I shall labour in the quest of the Sangreal, that I shall hold me out a twelvemonth and a day, or more if need be, and never shall I return again unto the court till I have seen it more openly than it hath been seen here, and if I may not speed I shall return again as he that may not be against the will of our Lord Jesu Christ."

When they of the Table Round heard Sir Gawain say so, they arose up the most part and made such avows as Sir Gawain had made. Anon as King Arthur heard this he was greatly displeased, for he wist well they might not again-say their avows.

"Alas," said King Arthur unto Sir Gawain, "ye have nigh slain me with the avow and promise that ye have made, for through you ye have bereft me the fairest fellowship and the truest of knighthood that ever were seen together in any realm of the world, for when they depart from hence I am sure they all shall never meet more in this world, for they shall die many in the quest. And so it forthinketh me a little, for I have loved them as well as my life, wherefore it shall grieve me right sore the departition of this fellowship, for I have had an old custom to have them in my fellowship."

CHAPTER VIII. *How great sorrow was made of the king and the queen and ladies for the departing of the knights, and how they departed.*

AND THEREWITH THE tears fell in his eyes. And then he said, "Gawain, Gawain, ye have set me in great sorrow, for I have great doubt that my true fellowship shall never meet here more again."

"Ah," said Sir Lancelot, "comfort yourself, for it shall be unto us a great honour and much more than if we died in any other places, for of death we be siker<sup>3</sup>."

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<sup>1</sup>to-drive: To drive asunder, disperse, rout, scatter (OED)

<sup>2</sup>samite: a rich silk fabric, sometimes interwoven with gold (OED)

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<sup>3</sup>siker: safe, certain, sure

“Ah, Lancelot,” said the king, “the great love that I have had unto you all the days of my life maketh me to say such doleful words, for never Christian king had never so many worthy men at his table as I have had this day at the Round Table, and that is my great sorrow.”

When the queen, ladies, and gentlewomen wist these tidings, they had such sorrow and heaviness that there might no tongue tell it, for those knights had held them in honour and chierté<sup>1</sup>. But among all other Queen Guinevere made great sorrow. “I marvel,” said she, “my lord would suffer them to depart from him.”

Thus was all the court troubled for the love of the departition of those knights, and many of those ladies that loved knights would have gone with their lovers. And so had they done, had not an old knight come among them in religious clothing, and then he spake all on high and said, “Fair lords, which have sworn in the quest of the Sangreal, thus sendeth you Nacien the hermit word that none in this quest lead lady nor gentlewoman with him, for it is not to do in so high a service as they labour in. For I warn you plain, he that is not clean of his sins, he shall not see the mysteries of our Lord Jesu Christ.” And for this cause they left these ladies and gentlewomen.

After this the queen came unto Galahad and asked him of whence he was and of what country. He told her of whence he was. And son unto Lancelot, she said he was. As to that, he said neither yea nor nay. “So God me help,” said the queen, “of your father ye need not to shame you, for he is the goodliest knight, and of the best men of the world come, and of the strain, of all parties, of kings. Wherefore ye ought of right to be, of your deeds, a passing good man, and certainly,” she said, “ye resemble him much.”

Then Sir Galahad was a little ashamed and said, “Madam, sith ye know in certain, wherefore do ye ask it me? For he that is my father shall be known openly and all betimes<sup>2</sup>.”

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<sup>1</sup>chierté: tenderness, affection

<sup>2</sup>betimes: in good time. Also, *soon, early*

And then they went to rest them. And in the honour of the highness of Galahad he was led into King Arthur's chamber and there rested in his own bed.

And as soon as it was day the king arose, for he had no rest of all that night for sorrow. Then he went unto Gawain and to Sir Lancelot that were arisen for to hear mass. And then the king again said, “Ah Gawain, Gawain, ye have betrayed me. For never shall my court be amended by you, but ye will never be sorry for me as I am for you.” And therewith the tears began to run down by his visage. And therewith the king said, “Ah, knight Sir Lancelot, I require thee thou counsel me, for I would that this quest were undone, an<sup>3</sup> it might be.”

“Sir,” said Sir Lancelot, “ye saw yesterday so many worthy knights that then were sworn that they may not leave it in no manner of wise.”

“That wot I well,” said the king, “but it shall so heavy me at their departing that I wot well there shall no manner of joy remedy me.” And then the king and the queen went unto the minster.

So anon Lancelot and Gawain commanded their men to bring their arms. And when they all were armed save their shields and their helms, then they came to their fellowship, which were all ready in the same wise for to go to the minster to hear their service. Then after the service was done the king would wit how many had undertaken the quest of the Holy Grail, and to accompt them he prayed them all. Then found they by the tale<sup>4</sup> an hundred and fifty, and all were knights of the Round Table. And then they put on their helms and departed and recommended them all wholly unto the queen, and there was weeping and great sorrow.

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<sup>3</sup>an: if, suppose that, provided that, on condition that (*OED*). Today the usage is regional, but otherwise obsolete except in “If ifs and ans were pots and pans / There'd be no need for tinkers.”

<sup>4</sup>by the tale: by count or number (cf. *tally*)

Then the queen departed into her chamber and held her so that no man should perceive her great sorrows. When Sir Lancelot missed the queen he went till her chamber, and when she saw him she cried aloud, "O Lancelot, Lancelot, ye have betrayed me and put me to the death for to leave thus my lord."

"Ah, madam, I pray you be not displeased, for I shall come again as soon as I may with my worship<sup>1</sup>."

"Alas," said she, "that ever I saw you. But he that suffered upon the cross for all mankind, he be unto you good conduct and safety and all the whole fellowship."

Right so departed Sir Lancelot and found his fellowship that abode his coming, and so they mounted upon their horses and rode through the streets of Camelot, and there was weeping of rich and poor, and the king turned away and might not speak for weeping.

So within a while they came to a city and a castle that hight Vagon. There they entered into the castle, and the lord of that castle was an old man that hight Vagon, and he was a good man of his living and set open the gates and made them all the cheer that he might. And so on the morn they were all accorded that they should depart everych<sup>2</sup> from other, and on the morn they departed with weeping cheer, and every knight took the way that him liked best.

CHAPTER IX. *How Galahad gat him a shield, and how they sped that presumed to take down the said shield.*

NOW RIDETH SIR GALAHAD yet without shield, and so he rode four

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<sup>1</sup>with my worship: with my good name

<sup>2</sup>*everych* is an old compound of *every* and *each*. The emphasis is both on the individual (*each*) and the group (*every*) referred to. A rough modern equivalent would be *each of them all* or (where only two are involved) *each of them both*.

days without any adventure. And at the fourth day after evensong he came to a White Abbey<sup>3</sup>, and there he was received with great reverence and led unto a chamber, and there was he unarmed, and then was he ware of two knights of the Table Round. One was Sir Bagdemagus, and that other was Sir Uwain. And when they saw him they went unto Galahad and made of him great solace, and so they went unto supper.

"Sirs," said Sir Galahad, "what adventure brought you hither?"

"Sir," said they, "it is told us that within this place is a shield that no man may bear about his neck but he be mischieved outh<sup>4</sup> dead within three days or maimed for ever.

"Ah, sir," said King Bagdemagus, "I shall it bear to-morrow for to assay this adventure."

"In the name of God," said Sir Galahad.

"Sir," said Bagdemagus, "an I may not encheve the adventure of this shield, ye shall take it upon you, for I am sure ye shall not fail."

"Sir," said Galahad, "I right well agree me thereto, for I have no shield."

So on the morn they arose and heard mass. Then Bagdemagus asked where the adventurous shield was. Anon a monk led him behind an altar where the shield hung as white as any snow, but in the midst was a red cross.

"Sir," said the monk, "this shield ought not to be hanged about no knight's neck but he be the worthiest knight of the world. Therefore I counsel you knights to be well advised."

"Well," said Bagdemagus, "I wot well that I am not the best knight of the world, but yet I shall assay to bear it," and so bare<sup>5</sup> it out of the minster. And then he said unto Galahad, "An it please you, abide here still, till ye wit how that I speed."

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<sup>3</sup>A White Abbey is an monastery of white monks, or Cistercians.

<sup>4</sup>outh<sup>4</sup>: one or other of two, either (*OED*)

<sup>5</sup>bare: bore (past tense of *bear*)

"I shall abide you," said Galahad.

Then King Bagdemagus took with him a good squire to bring tidings unto Sir Galahad how he sped.

Then when they had ridden a two mile and came to a fair valley afore an hermitage, then they saw a knight come from that part in white armour, horse and all, and he came as fast as his horse might run, and his spear in his rest, and Bagdemagus dressed his spear against him and brake it upon the white knight. But the other struck him so hard that he brast the mails and sheef<sup>1</sup> him through the right shoulder, for the shield covered him not as at that time, and so he bare him from his horse. And therewith he alighted and took the white shield from him, saying, "Knight, thou hast done thyself great folly, for this shield ought not to be borne but by him that shall have no peer that liveth."

And then he came to Bagdemagus' squire and said, "Bear this shield unto the good knight Sir Galahad that thou left in the abbey, and greet him well by me."

"Sir," said the squire, "what is your name?"

"Take thou no heed of my name," said the knight, "for it is not for thee to know nor for none earthly man."

"Now, fair sir," said the squire, "at the reverence of Jesu Christ, tell me for what cause this shield may not be borne but if the bearer thereof be mischieved."

"Now sith thou hast conjured me so," said the knight, "this shield behoveth unto no man but unto Galahad."

And the squire went unto Bagdemagus and asked whether he were sore wounded or not.

"Yea, forsooth," said he, "I shall escape hard from the death."

Then he fetched his horse and brought him with great pain unto an abbey. Then was he taken down softly and unarmed and laid in a bed and there was looked to his wounds. And as the book telleth,

he lay there long and escaped hard with the life.

CHAPTER X. *How Galahad departed with the shield, and how King Evelake had received the shield of Joseph of Arimathaea.*

"SIR GALAHAD," SAID the squire, "that knight that wounded Bagdemagus sendeth you greeting and bade that ye should bear this shield, wherethrough great adventures should befall."

"Now blessed be God and fortune," said Galahad.

And then he asked his arms and mounted upon his horse and hung the white shield about his neck and commended them unto God. And Sir Uwain said he would bear him fellowship if it pleased him.

"Sir," said Galahad, "that may ye not, for I must go alone, save this squire shall bear me fellowship," and so departed Uwain.

Then within a while came Galahad thereas<sup>2</sup> the white knight abode him by the hermitage, and everych saluted other courteously.

"Sir," said Galahad, "by this shield be many marvels fallen."

"Sir," said the knight, "it befell after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ thirty-two year that Joseph of Arimathaea, the gentle knight the which took down our Lord off the holy Cross, at that time he departed from Jerusalem with a great party of his kindred with him. And so he laboured till that they came to a city that hight Sarras. And at that same hour that Joseph came to Sarras there was a king that hight Evelake that had great war against the Saracens and in especial against one Saracen, the which was King Evelake's cousin, a rich king and a mighty, which marched nigh this land, and his name was called Tolleme la Feintes. So on a day these two met to do battle.

"Then Joseph, the son of Joseph of Arimathaea, went to King Evelake and told him he should be discomfit and slain but if he left

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<sup>1</sup>sheef: thrust (obsolete form of the past tense of *shove*)

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<sup>2</sup>thereas: in that place in which, where

his belief of the old law and believed upon the new law. And then there he shewed him the right belief of the Holy Trinity, to the which he agreed unto with all his heart, and there this shield was made for King Evelake in the name of Him that died upon the Cross. And then through his good belief he had the better of King Tolleme. For when Evelake was in the battle there was a cloth set afore the shield, and when he was in the greatest peril he let put away the cloth, and then his enemies saw a figure of a man on the Cross, wherethrough they all were discomfit. And so it befell that a man of King Evelake's was smitten his hand off and bare that hand in his other hand, and Joseph called that man unto him and bade him go with good devotion touch the Cross. And as soon as that man had touched the Cross with his hand it was as whole as ever it was to-fore. Then soon after there fell a great marvel, that the cross of the shield at one time vanished away that no man wist where it became. And then King Evelake was baptised, and for the most part all the people of that city.

“So, soon after Joseph would depart, and King Evelake would go with him whether he wold or nold. And so by fortune they came into this land, that at that time was called Great Britain, and there they found a great felon paynim that put Joseph into prison. And so, by fortune, tidings came unto a worthy man that hight Mondrames, and he assembled all his people for the great renown he had heard of Joseph, and so he came into the land of Great Britain and disherited this felon paynim and consumed him and therewith delivered Joseph out of prison. And after that all the people were turned to the Christian faith.”

CHAPTER XI. *How Joseph made a cross on the white shield with his blood, and how Galahad was by a monk brought to a tomb.*

“NOT LONG AFTER that, Joseph was laid in his deadly bed. And when King Evelake saw that, he made much sorrow and said, ‘For thy love

I have left my country, and sith ye shall depart out of this world, leave me some token of yours that I may think on you.’

“Joseph said, ‘That will I do full gladly. Now bring me your shield that I took you when ye went into battle against King Tolleme.’

“Then Joseph bled sore at the nose, so that he might not by no mean be staunched. And there upon that shield he made a cross of his own blood. ‘Now may ye see a remembrance that I love you, for ye shall never see this shield but ye shall think on me, and it shall be always as fresh as it is now. And never shall man bear this shield about his neck but he shall repent it, unto the time that Galahad, the good knight, bear it, and the last of my lineage shall have it about his neck, that shall do many marvellous deeds.’

“‘Now,’ said King Evelake, ‘where shall I put this shield, that this worthy knight may have it?’

“‘Ye shall leave it thereas Nacien the hermit shall be put after his death, for thither shall that good knight come the fifteenth day after that he shall receive the order of knighthood, and so that day that they set is this time that he have his shield, and in the same abbey lieth Nacien, the hermit.’”

And then the white knight vanished away.

Anon as the squire had heard these words, he alighted off his hackney and kneeled down at Galahad's feet and prayed him that he might go with him till he had made him knight.”

“Yea, I would not refuse you.”

“Then will ye make me a knight?” said the squire. “And that order, by the grace of God, shall be well set in me.”

So Sir Galahad granted him and turned again unto the abbey where they came from, and there men made great joy of Sir Galahad. And anon as he was alighted there was a monk brought him unto a tomb in a churchyard, where there was such a noise that who that heard it should verily nigh be mad or lose his strength. “And sir,” they said, “we deem it is a fiend.”

CHAPTER XII. *Of the marvel that Sir Galahad saw and heard in the tomb, and how he made Melias knight.*

"NOW LEAD ME thither," said Galahad. And so they did, all armed save his helm.

"Now," said the good man, "go to the tomb and lift it up."

So he did and heard a great noise, and piteously he said, that all men might hear it, "Sir Galahad, the servant of Jesu Christ, come thou not nigh me, for thou shalt make me go again there where I have been so long."

But Galahad was nothing afraid but lifted up the stone, and there came out so foul a smoke, and after he saw the foulest figure leap thereout that ever he saw in the likeness of a man, and then he blessed him and wist well it was a fiend. Then heard he a voice say, "Galahad, I see there environ about thee so many angels that my power may not dere<sup>1</sup> thee."

Right so Sir Galahad saw a body all armed lie in that tomb, and beside him a sword. "Now, fair brother," said Galahad, "let us remove this body, for it is not worthy to lie in this churchyard, for he was a false Christian man." And therewith they all departed and went to the abbey.

And anon as he was unarmed a good man came and set him down by him and said, "Sir, I shall tell you what betokeneth all that ye saw in the tomb, for that covered body betokeneth the duress of the world and the great sin that Our Lord found in the world. For there was such wretchedness that the father loved not the son, nor the son loved not the father, and that was one of the causes that Our Lord took flesh and blood of a clean maiden, for our sins were so great at that time that well-nigh all was wickedness."

"Truly," said Galahad, "I believe you right well."

So Sir Galahad rested him there that night, and upon the morn he

made the squire knight and asked him his name and of what kindred he was come. "Sir," said he, "men calleth me Melias de Lile, and I am the son of the King of Denmark."

"Now, fair sir," said Galahad, "sith that ye be come of kings and queens, now look that knighthood be well set in you, for ye ought to be a mirror unto all chivalry."

"Sir," said Sir Melias, "ye say sooth. But, sir, sithen<sup>2</sup> ye have made me a knight ye must of right grant me my first desire that is reasonable."

"Ye say sooth," said Galahad.

Melias said, "Then that ye will suffer me to ride with you in this quest of the Sangreal, till that some adventure depart us."

"I grant you, sir."

Then men brought Sir Melias his armour and his spear and his horse, and so Sir Galahad and he rode forth all that week or they found any adventure. And then upon a Monday in the morning, as they were departed from an abbey, they came to a cross which departed two ways, and in that cross were letters written that said thus: "Now, ye knights errant, the which goeth to seek knights adventurous, see here two ways. That one way defendeth thee<sup>3</sup> that thou ne go that way, for he shall not go out of the way again but if he be a good man and a worthy knight, and if thou go on the left hand, thou shalt not lightly there win prowess, for thou shalt in this way be soon assayed."

"Sir," said Melias to Galahad, "if it like you to suffer me to take the way on the left hand, tell me, for there I shall well prove my strength."

"It were better," said Galahad, "ye rode not that way, for I deem I should better escape in that way than ye."

"Nay, my lord, I pray you let me have that adventure."

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<sup>1</sup>dere: injure, harm, trouble, annoy (*OED*)

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<sup>2</sup>sithen: seeing that

<sup>3</sup>defendeth thee: wards you off, prohibits you

“Take it in God’s name,” said Galahad.

CHAPTER XIII. *Of the adventure that Melias had, and how Galahad revenged him, and how Melias was carried into an abbey.*

AND THEN RODE Melias into an old forest, and therein he rode two days and more. And then he came into a fair meadow, and there was a fair lodge of boughs. And then he espied in that lodge a chair, wherein was a crown of gold, subtly wrought. Also there were cloths covered upon the earth and many delicious meats set thereon. Sir Melias beheld this adventure and thought it marvellous, but he had no hunger, but of the crown of gold he took much keep, and therewith he stooped down and took it up and rode his way with it.

And anon he saw a knight came riding after him that said, “Knight, set down that crown which is not yours, and therefore defend you.”

Then Sir Melias blessed him and said, “Fair Lord of heaven, help and save thy new-made knight.”

And then they let their horses run as fast as they might, so that the other knight smote Sir Melias through hauberk<sup>1</sup> and through the left side, that he fell to the earth nigh dead. And then he took the crown and went his way, and Sir Melias lay still and had no power to stir.

In the meanwhile by fortune there came Sir Galahad and found him there in peril of death. And then he said, “Ah, Melias, who hath wounded you? Therefore it had been better to have ridden the other way.”

And when Sir Melias heard him speak, “Sir,” he said, “for God’s love let me not die in this forest, but bear me unto the abbey here beside, that I may be confessed and have my rites.”

“It shall be done,” said Galahad, “but where is he that hath

wounded you?”

With that Sir Galahad heard in the leaves cry on high, “Knight, keep thee from me.”

“Ah sir,” said Melias, “beware, for that is he that hath slain me.”

Sir Galahad answered, “Sir knight, come on your peril.”

Then either dressed to other and came together as fast as their horses might run, and Galahad smote him so that his spear went through his shoulder and smote him down off his horse, and in the falling Galahad’s spear brake. With that came out another knight out of the leaves and brake a spear upon Galahad or ever he might turn him. Then Galahad drew out his sword and smote off the left arm of him, so that it fell to the earth. And then he fled, and Sir Galahad pursued fast after him.

And then he turned again unto Sir Melias, and there he alighted and dressed him softly on his horse to-fore him, for the truncheon of his spear<sup>2</sup> was in his body, and Sir Galahad stert up behind him<sup>3</sup> and held him in his arms and so brought him to the abbey and there unarmed him and brought him to his chamber. And then he asked<sup>4</sup> his Saviour. And when he had received Him he said unto Sir Galahad, “Sir, let death come when it pleaseth him.”

And therewith he drew out the truncheon of the spear out of his body, and then he swooned. Then came there an old monk which sometime had been a knight and beheld Sir Melias. And anon he ransacked him<sup>5</sup>, and then he said unto Sir Galahad, “I shall heal him of his wound, by the grace of God, within the term of seven weeks.”

“Then was Sir Galahad glad and unarmed him and said he would abide there three days. And then he asked Sir Melias how it stood

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<sup>2</sup>The truncheon of a spear is a piece broken off from a spear (*OED*)

<sup>3</sup>When Galahad stert up behind him, he started, that is, jumped up behind him.

<sup>4</sup>asked: asked for

<sup>5</sup>ransacked him: examined him thoroughly

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<sup>1</sup>hauberk: a military tunic, usually of ring or chain mail (*OED*)

with him. Then he said he was turned unto helping<sup>1</sup>, God be thanked.

CHAPTER XIV. *How Sir Galahad departed, and how he was commanded to go to the Castle of Maidens to destroy the wicked custom.*

“NOW WILL I depart,” said Galahad, “for I have much on hand, for many good knights be full busy about it, and this knight and I were in the same quest of the Sangreal.”

“Sir,” said a good man, “for his sin he was thus wounded, and I marvel,” said the good man, “how ye durst take upon you so rich a thing as the high order of knighthood without clean confession, and that was the cause ye were bitterly wounded.

“For the way on the right hand betokeneth the highway of our Lord Jesu Christ, and the way of a good true good liver. And the other way betokeneth the way of sinners and of misbelievers. And when the devil saw your pride and presumption for to take you in the quest of the Sangreal, that made you to be overthrown, for it may not be encheved but by virtuous living.

“Also, the writing on the cross was a signification of heavenly deeds and of knightly deeds in God’s works and no knightly deeds in worldly works. And pride is head of all deadly sins, that caused this knight to depart from Galahad. And where thou tookest the crown of gold thou sinnest in covetise and in theft. All this were no knightly deeds.

“And this Galahad, the holy knight, the which fought with the two knights, the two knights signify the two deadly sins which were wholly in this knight Melias, and they might not withstand you, for ye are without deadly sin.”

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<sup>1</sup>helping: a means of help, an aid, an ally (*OED*)

Now departed Galahad from thence and betaught them all unto God. Sir Melias said, “My lord Galahad, as soon as I may ride I shall seek you.”

“God send you health,” said Galahad, and so took his horse and departed and rode many journeys<sup>2</sup> forward and backward as adventure would lead him. And at the last it happened him to depart from a place or<sup>3</sup> a castle the which was named Abblasoure, and he had heard no mass, the which he was wont ever to hear or ever he departed out of any castle or place, and kept that for a custom.

Then Sir Galahad came unto a mountain where he found an old chapel and found there nobody, for all, all was desolate, and there he kneeled to-fore the altar and besought God of wholesome counsel. So as he prayed he heard a voice that said, “Go thou now, thou adventurous knight, to the Castle of Maidens, and there do thou away the wicked customs.”

CHAPTER XV. *How Sir Galahad fought with the knights of the castle and destroyed the wicked custom.*

WHEN SIR GALAHAD heard this he thanked God and took his horse, and he had not ridden but half a mile, he saw in the valley afore him a strong castle with deep ditches, and there ran beside it a fair river that hight Severn, and there he met with a man of great age, and either saluted other, and Galahad asked him the castle’s name.

“Fair sir,” said he, “it is the Castle of Maidens.”

“That is a cursed castle,” said Galahad, “and all they that be conversant therein, for all pity is out thereof, and all hardiness and mischief is therein.”

“Therefore, I counsel you, sir knight, to turn again.”

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<sup>2</sup>A journey is either a day or a the distance travelled in a day.

<sup>3</sup>or: before

“Sir,” said Galahad, “wit you well I shall not turn again.”

Then looked Sir Galahad on his arms that nothing failed him, and then he put his shield afore him, and anon there met him seven fair maidens, the which said unto him, “Sir knight,” ye ride here in a great folly, for ye have the water to pass over.”

“Why should I not pass the water?” said Galahad.

So rode he away from them and met with a squire that said, “Knight, those knights in the castle defy you and defenden<sup>1</sup> you ye go no further till that they wit what ye would.”

“Fair sir,” said Galahad, “I come for to destroy the wicked custom of this castle.”

“Sir, an ye will abide by that, ye shall have enough to do.”

“Go you now,” said Galahad, “and haste my needs.”

Then the squire entered into the castle. And anon after there came out of the castle seven knights, and all were brethren. And when they saw Galahad they cried, “Knight, keep thee, for we assure thee nothing but death.”

“Why,” said Galahad, “will ye all have ado with me at once?”

“Yea,” said they, “thereto mayst thou trust.”

Then Galahad put forth his spear and smote the foremost to the earth, that near he brake his neck. And therewithal the other smote him on his shield great strokes, so that their spears brake. Then Sir Galahad drew out his sword and set upon them so hard that it was marvel to see it, and so through great force he made them to forsake the field, and Galahad chased them till they entered into the castle and so passed through the castle at another gate.

And there met Sir Galahad an old man clothed in religious clothing and said, “Sir, have here the keys of this castle.”

Then Sir Galahad opened the gates and saw so much people in the streets that he might not number them, and all said, “Sir, ye be welcome, for long have we abiden here our deliverance.”

Then came to him a gentlewoman and said, “These knights be fled, but they will come again this night and here to begin again their evil custom.”

“What will ye that I shall do?” said Galahad.

“Sir,” said the gentlewoman, “that ye send after all the knights hither that hold their lands of this castle and make them to swear for to use the customs that were used heretofore of old time.”

“I will well,” said Galahad.

And there she brought him an horn of ivory bounden with gold richly and said, “Sir, blow this horn, which will be heard two mile about this castle.”

When Sir Galahad had blown the horn he set him down upon a bed.

Then came a priest to Galahad and said, “Sir, it is past a seven year agone that these seven brethren came into this castle and harboured with the lord of this castle that hight the Duke Lianour, and he was lord of all this country. And when they espied the duke’s daughter that was a full fair woman, then by their false covin<sup>2</sup> they made debate betwixt themself, and the duke of his goodness would have departed them, and there they slew him and his eldest son.

“And then they took the maiden and the treasure of the castle. And then by great force they held all the knights of this castle against their will under their obeisance and in great service and truage robbing and pilling the poor common people of all that they had.

“So it happened on a day the duke’s daughter said, ‘Ye have done unto me great wrong to slay mine own father and my brother and thus to hold our lands. Not for than,’ she said, ‘ye shall not hold this castle for many years, for by one knight ye shall be overcome.’ Thus she prophesied seven years agone.’

“Well,’ said the seven knights, ‘sithen ye say so, there shall never

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<sup>1</sup>defenden: forbid

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<sup>2</sup>A covin is a private agreement, a compact, covenant, often, as the *OED* says, with unfavourable connotation.

lady nor knight pass this castle but they shall abide maugre their heads or die therefore, till that knight be come by whom we shall lose this castle. And therefore is it called the Maidens' Castle, for they have devoured many maidens."

"Now," said Galahad, "is she here for whom this castle was lost?"

"Nay sir," said the priest, "she was dead within these three nights after that she was thus enforced, and sithen<sup>1</sup> have they kept her younger sister, which endureth great pains with mo other ladies."

By this were the knights of the country come, and then he made them do homage and fealty to the king's daughter and set them in great ease of heart. And in the morn there came one to Galahad and told him how that Gawain, Gareth, and Uwain had slain the seven brethren. "I suppose well," said Sir Galahad, and took his armour and his horse and commended them unto God.

CHAPTER XVI. *How Sir Gawain came to the abbey for to follow Galahad, and how he was shriven to a hermit.*

NOW, SAITH THE tale, after Sir Gawain departed, he rode many journeys both toward and froward, and at the last he came to the abbey where Sir Galahad had the white shield, and there Sir Gawain learned the way to sue after Sir Galahad, and so he rode to the abbey where Melias lay sick, and there Sir Melias told Sir Gawain of the marvellous adventures that Sir Galahad did.

"Certes," said Sir Gawain, "I am not happy that I took not the way that he went, for an I may meet with him I will not depart from him lightly, for all marvellous adventures Sir Galahad encheveth."

"Sir," said one of the monks, "he will not of your fellowship."

"Why?" said Sir Gawain.

"Sir," said he, "for ye be wicked and sinful, and he is full blessed."

Right as they thus stood talking there came in riding Sir Gareth. And then they made joy either of other. And on the morn they heard mass and so departed. And by the way they met with Sir Uwain les Avoutres, and there Sir Uwain told Sir Gawain how he had met with none adventure sith he departed from the court.

"Nor we," said Sir Gawain.

And either promised other of the three knights not to depart while they were in that quest, but if fortune caused it.

So they departed and rode by fortune till that they came by the Castle of Maidens, and there the seven brethren espied the three knights and said, "Sithen we be flemed<sup>2</sup> by one knight from this castle, we shall destroy all the knights of King Arthur's that we may overcome, for the love of Sir Galahad."

And therewith the seven knights set upon the three knights, and by fortune Sir Gawain slew one of the brethren, and each one of his fellows slew another and so slew the remnant.

And then they took the way under the castle, and there they lost the way that Sir Galahad rode, and there everych of them departed from other, and Sir Gawain rode till he came to an hermitage, and there he found the good man saying his evensong of Our Lady, and there Sir Gawain asked harbour for charity, and the good man granted it him gladly.

Then the good man asked him what he was.

"Sir," he said, "I am a knight of King Arthur's that am in the quest of the Sangreal, and my name is Sir Gawain."

"Sir," said the good man, "I would wit how it standeth betwixt God and you."

"Sir," said Sir Gawain, "I will with a good will shew you my life if it please you," and there he told the hermit how a monk of an abbey "called me wicked knight."

"He might well say it," said the hermit, "for when ye were first

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<sup>1</sup>sithen: then, afterwards, subsequently

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<sup>2</sup>To be flemed is to be driven out, put to flight, chased

made knight ye should have taken you to knightly deeds and virtuous living, and ye have done the contrary, for ye have lived mischievously many winters, and Sir Galahad is a maid and sinned never, and that is the cause he shall encheve where he goeth that ye nor none such shall not attain, nor none in your fellowship, for ye have used the most untriest life that ever I heard knight live.

“For certes had ye not been so wicked as ye are, never had the seven brethren been slain by you and your two fellows. For Sir Galahad himself alone beat them all seven the day to-fore, but his living is such he shall slay no man lightly.

“Also I may say you the Castle of Maidens betokeneth the good souls that were in prison afore the Incarnation of Jesu Christ. And the seven knights betoken the seven deadly sins that reigned that time in the world, and I may liken the good Galahad unto the son of the High Father, that lighted within a maid and bought all the souls out of thrall. So did Sir Galahad deliver all the maidens out of the woeful castle.

“Now, Sir Gawain,” said the good man, “thou must do penance for thy sin.”

“Sir, what penance shall I do?”

“Such as I will give,” said the good man.

“Nay,” said Sir Gawain, “I may do no penance, for we knights adventurous oft suffer great woe and pain.”

“Well,” said the good man, and then he held his peace.

And on the morn Sir Gawain departed from the hermit and betaught him unto God. And by adventure he met with Sir Agloval and Sir Griflet, two knights of the Table Round. And they two rode four days without finding of any adventure, and at the fifth day they departed. And everych held<sup>1</sup> as fell them by adventure.

Here leaveth the tale of Sir Gawain and his fellows, and speak we of Sir Galahad.

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<sup>1</sup>held: kept going, proceeded, continued (*OED*)

CHAPTER XVII. *How Sir Galahad met with Sir Lancelot and Sir Perceval and smote them down and departed from them.*

SO WHEN SIR GALAHAD was departed from the Castle of Maidens he rode till he came to a waste forest, and there he met with Sir Lancelot and Sir Perceval, but they knew him not, for he was new disguised. Right so Sir Lancelot, his father, dressed his spear and brake it upon Sir Galahad, and Galahad smote him so again that he smote down horse and man. And then he drew his sword and dressed him unto Sir Perceval and smote him so on the helm that it rove to the coif of steel, and had not the sword swerved Sir Perceval had been slain, and with the stroke he fell out of his saddle.

This jousts was done to-fore the hermitage where a recluse dwelled. And when she saw Sir Galahad ride, she said, “God be with thee, best knight of the world. Ah certes,” said she, all aloud that Lancelot and Perceval might hear it, “an yonder two knights had known thee as well as I do they would not have encountered with thee.”

When Sir Galahad heard her say so he was adread to be known. Therewith he smote his horse with his spurs and rode a great pace froward them<sup>2</sup>. Then perceived they both that he was Galahad, and up they gat on their horses and rode fast after him, but in a while he was out of their sight. And then they turned again with heavy cheer. “Let us speer some tidings<sup>3</sup>,” said Perceval, “at yonder recluse.”

“Do as ye list,” said Sir Lancelot.

When Sir Perceval came to the recluse she knew him well enough and Sir Lancelot both. But Sir Lancelot rode overthwart and endlong in a wild forest and held no path but as wild adventure led him. And at the last he came to a stony cross which departed two ways in

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<sup>2</sup>frowardthem: away from them

<sup>3</sup>speer some tidings: ask for some news

waste land, and by the cross was a stone that was of marble, but it was so dark that Sir Lancelot might not wit what it was.

Then Sir Lancelot looked by him and saw an old chapel, and there he weened to have found people, and Sir Lancelot tied his horse till<sup>1</sup> a tree, and there he did off his shield and hung it upon a tree and then went to the chapel door and found it waste and broken. And within he found a fair altar, full richly arrayed with cloth of clean silk, and there stood a fair clean candlestick which bare six great candles, and the candlestick was of silver.

And when Sir Lancelot saw this light he had great will for to enter into the chapel, but he could find no place where he might enter. Then was he passing heavy and dismayed. Then he returned and came to his horse and did off his saddle and bridle and let him pasture and unlaced his helm and ungirt his sword and laid him down to sleep upon his shield to-fore the cross.

CHAPTER XVIII. *How Sir Lancelot, half sleeping and half waking, saw a sick man borne in a litter, and how he was healed with the Sangreal.*

AND SO HE fell asleep, and half waking and sleeping he saw come by him two palfreys all fair and white, the which bare a litter, therein lying a sick knight. And when he was nigh the cross he there abode still. All this Sir Lancelot saw and beheld, for he slept not verily, and he heard him say, "O sweet Lord, when shall this sorrow leave me, and when shall the holy vessel come by me wherethrough I shall be blessed? For I have endured thus long for little trespass."

A full great while complained the knight thus, and always Sir Lancelot heard it. With that, Sir Lancelot saw the candlestick with the six tapers come before the cross, and he saw nobody that brought

it. Also there came a table of silver and the holy vessel of the Sangreal, which Lancelot had seen aforetime in King Petchere's house.

And therewith the sick knight set him up and held up both his hands and said, "Fair sweet Lord, which is here within this holy vessel, take heed unto me that I may be whole of this malady."

And therewith on his hands and on his knees he went so nigh that he touched the holy vessel and kissed it, and anon he was whole, and then he said, "Lord God, I thank thee, for I am healed of this sickness."

So when the holy vessel had been there a great while it went unto the chapel with the chandelier and the light, so that Lancelot wist not where it was become, for he was overtaken with sin that he had no power to rise again<sup>2</sup> the holy vessel, wherefore, after that, many men said of him shame, but he took repentance after that.

Then the sick knight dressed him up and kissed the cross. Anon his squire brought him his arms and asked his lord how he did.

"Certes," said he, "I thank God right well. Through the holy vessel I am healed. But I have marvel of this sleeping knight that had no power to awake when this holy vessel was brought hither.

"I dare right well say," said the squire, "that he dwelleth in some deadly sin whereof he was never confessed."

"By my faith," said the knight, "whatsomever he be, he is unhappy, for as I deem he is of the fellowship of the Round Table, the which is entered into the quest of the Sangreal."

"Sir," said the squire, "here I have brought you all your arms save your helm and your sword, and therefore by mine assent now may ye take this knight's helm and his sword," and so he did. And when he was clean armed he took Sir Lancelot's horse, for he was better than his, and so departed they from the cross.

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<sup>1</sup>till: to

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<sup>2</sup>again: in front of

CHAPTER XIX. *How a voice spake to Sir Lancelot, and how he found his horse and his helm borne away and after went afoot.*

THEN ANON SIR LANCELOT waked and set him up and bethought him what he had seen there and whether it were dreams or not. Right so heard he a voice that said, "Sir Lancelot, more harder than is the stone and more bitter than is the wood and more naked and barer than is the leaf of the fig tree. Therefore go thou from hence, and withdraw thee from this holy place."

And when Sir Lancelot heard this he was passing heavy and wist not what to do and so departed sore weeping and cursed the time that he was born. For then he deemed never to have had worship more. For those words went to his heart, till that he knew wherefore he was called so.

Then Sir Lancelot went to the cross and found his helm, his sword, and his horse taken away. And then he called himself a very wretch and most unhappy of all knights, and there he said, "My sin and my wickedness have brought me unto great dishonour. For when I sought worldly adventures for worldly desires, I ever encheved them and had the better in every place, and never was I discomfit in no quarrel, were it right or wrong. And now I take upon me the adventures of holy things, and now I see and understand that mine old sin hindereth me and shameth me, so that I had no power to stir nor speak when the holy blood appeared afore me."

So thus he sorrowed till it was day and heard the fowls sing. Then somewhat he was comforted. But when Sir Lancelot missed his horse and his harness then he wist well God was displeased with him.

Then he departed from the cross on foot into a forest, and so by prime he came to an high hill and found an hermitage and a hermit therein which was going unto mass. And then Lancelot kneeled down and cried on Our Lord mercy for his wicked works. So when mass was done Lancelot called him and prayed him for charity for to hear his life.

"With a good will," said the good man. "Sir," said he, "be ye of King Arthur's court and of the fellowship of the Round Table?"

"Yea forsooth, and my name is Sir Lancelot du Lake, that hath been right well said of, and now my good fortune is changed, for I am the most wretch<sup>1</sup> of the world."

The hermit beheld him and had marvel how he was so abashed. "Sir," said the hermit, "ye ought to thank God more than any knight living, for He hath caused you to have more worldly worship than any knight that now liveth. And for your presumption to take upon you in deadly sin for to be in His presence, where His flesh and His blood was, that caused you ye might not see it with worldly eyes, for He will not appear where such sinners be but if it be unto their great hurt and unto their great shame, and there is no knight living now that ought to give God so great thank as ye, for He hath given you beauty, seemliness, and great strength above all other knights, and therefore ye are the more beholding unto God than any other man to love Him and dread Him, for your strength and manhood will little avail you an God be against you."

CHAPTER XX. *How Sir Lancelot was shriven, and what sorrow he made and of the good ensamples which were shewed him.*

THEN SIR LANCELOT wept with heavy cheer and said, "Now I know well ye say me sooth."

"Sir," said the good man, "hide none old sin from me."

"Truly," said Sir Lancelot, "that were me full loath to discover. For this fourteen year I never discovered one thing that I have used, and that may I now wit my shame and my disadvantage."

And then he told there that good man all his life, and how he had loved a queen unmeasurably and out of measure long. "And all my

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<sup>1</sup>wretch: miserable, deeply afflicted (OED)

great deeds of arms that I have done, I did for the most part for the queen's sake, and for her sake would I do battle were it right or wrong, and never did I battle alonely for God's sake, but for to win worship and to cause me to be the better beloved, and little or nought I thanked God of it."

Then Sir Lancelot said, "I pray you counsel me."

"I will counsel you," said the hermit, "if ye will ensure me that ye will never come in that queen's fellowship as much as ye may forbear."

And then Sir Lancelot promised him he nold, by the faith of his body.

"Look that your heart and your mouth accord," said the good man, "and I shall ensure you ye shall have more worship than ever ye had."

"Holy father," said Sir Lancelot, "I marvel of the voice that said to me marvellous words, as ye have heard to-forehand."

"Have ye no marvel," said the good man thereof, "for it seemeth well God loveth you, for men may understand a stone is hard of kind, and namely one more than another, and that is to understand by thee, Sir Lancelot, for thou wilt not leave thy sin for no goodness that God hath sent thee. Therefore thou art more than any stone and never wouldst thou be made nesh<sup>1</sup> nor by water nor by fire, and that is, the heat of the Holy Ghost may not enter in thee.

"Now take heed, in all the world men shall not find one knight to whom Our Lord hath given so much of grace as He hath given you, for He hath given you fairness with seemliness, He hath given thee wit, discretion to know good from evil, He hath given thee prowess and hardiness and given thee to work so largely that thou hast had at all days the better wheresomever thou came.

"And now Our Lord will suffer thee no longer, but that thou shalt know Him whether thou wilt or nilt. And why the voice called thee

bitterer than wood, for where overmuch sin dwelleth, there may be but little sweetness, wherefore thou art likened to an old rotten tree.

"Now have I shewed thee why thou art harder than the stone and bitterer than the tree. Now shall I shew thee why thou art more naked and barer than the fig tree.

"It befell that Our Lord on Palm Sunday preached in Jerusalem, and there He found in the people that all hardness was harboured in them, and there He found in all the town not one that would harbour him. And then He went without the town and found in midst of the way a fig tree, the which was right fair and well garnished of leaves, but fruit had it none. Then Our Lord cursed the tree that bare no fruit. That betokeneth the fig tree unto Jerusalem, that had leaves and no fruit.

"So thou, Sir Lancelot, when the Holy Grail was brought afore thee, He found in thee no fruit nor good thought nor good will and defouled with lechery."

"Certes," said Sir Lancelot, "all that you have said is true, and from henceforward I cast me, by the grace of God, never to be so wicked as I have been, but as to follow knighthood and to do feats of arms."

Then the good man enjoined Sir Lancelot such penance as he might do and to sue knighthood and so assoiled him and prayed Sir Lancelot to abide with him all that day.

"I will well," said Sir Lancelot, "for I have neither helm nor horse nor sword."

"As for that," said the good man, "I shall help you or to-morn at even<sup>2</sup> of an horse and all that longed unto you."

And then Sir Lancelot repented him greatly.

Here endeth of the history of Sir Lancelot. And here followeth of Sir Perceval de Galles, which is the fourteenth book.

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<sup>1</sup>nesh: mild, gentle, kind

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<sup>2</sup>or to-morn at even: before tomorrow evening

## BOOK XIV.

CHAPTER I. *How Sir Perceval came to a recluse and asked counsel, and how she told him that she was his aunt.*

NOW SAITH THE TALE that when Sir Lancelot was ridden after Sir Galahad, the which had all these adventures above said, Sir Perceval turned again unto the recluse, where he deemed to have tidings of that knight that Lancelot followed. And so he kneeled at her window, and the recluse opened it and asked Sir Perceval what he would. "Madam," he said, "I am a knight of King Arthur's court, and my name is Sir Perceval de Galles."

When the recluse heard his name she had great joy of him, for mickle she had loved him to-fore any other knight, for she ought to do so, for she was his aunt. And then she commanded the gates to be opened, and there he had all the cheer that she might make him, and all that was in her power was at his commandment.

So on the morn Sir Perceval went to the recluse and asked her if she knew that knight with the white shield.

"Sir," said she, "why would ye wit?"

"Truly, madam," said Sir Perceval, "I shall never be well at ease till that I know of that knight's fellowship and that I may fight with him, for I may not leave him so lightly, for I have the shame yet."

"Ah, Perceval," said she, "would ye fight with him? I see well ye have great will to be slain as your father was, through outrageousness."

"Madam," said Sir Perceval, "it seemeth by your words that ye know me."

"Yea," said she, "I well ought to know you, for I am your aunt, although I be in a priory place. For some called me sometime the Queen of the Waste Lands, and I was called the queen of most riches in the world, and it pleased me never my riches so much as doth my poverty."

Then Sir Perceval wept for very pity when that he knew it was his

aunt. "Ah, fair nephew," said she, "when heard ye tidings of your mother?"

"Truly," said he, "I heard none of her, but I dream of her much in my sleep, and therefore I wot not whether she be dead or alive."

"Certes, fair nephew," said she, "your mother is dead, for after your departing from her she took such a sorrow that anon, after she was confessed, she died."

"Now, God have mercy on her soul," said Sir Perceval, "it sore forthinketh me<sup>1</sup>, but all we must change the life.

"Now, fair aunt, tell me what is the knight? I deem it be he that bare the red arms on Whitsunday."

"Wit you well," said she, "that this is he, for otherwise ought he not to do, but to go in red arms, and that same knight hath no peer, for he worketh all by miracle, and he shall never be overcome of none earthly man's hand.

CHAPTER II. *How Merlin likened the Round Table to the world, and how the knights that should achieve the Sangreal should be known.*

"ALSO MERLIN MADE the Round Table in tokening of roundness of the world, for by the Round Table is the world signified by right, for all the world, Christian and heathen, repair unto the Round Table, and when they are chosen to be of the fellowship of the Round Table they think them more blessed and more in worship than if they had gotten half the world.

"And ye have seen that they have lost their fathers and their mothers and all their kin and their wives and their children for to be of your fellowship. It is well seen by you, for since ye have departed from your mother ye would never see her, ye found such fellowship at the Round Table.

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<sup>1</sup>it sore forthinketh me: I am deeply sorry

“When Merlin had ordained the Round Table he said, by them which should be fellows of the Round Table, the truth of the Sangreal should be well known. And men asked him how men might know them that should best do and to encheve the Sangreal. Then he said there should be three white bulls that should encheve it, and the two should be maidens, and the third should be chaste. And that one of the three should pass his father as much as the lion passeth the leopard, both of strength and hardiness.

“They that heard Merlin say so said thus unto Merlin: ‘Sithen there shall be such a knight, thou shouldest ordain by thy crafts a siege, that no man should sit in it but he alonely<sup>1</sup> that shall pass all other knights.’

“Then Merlin answered that he would do so. And then he made the Siege Perilous, in the which Galahad sat in at his meat on Whitsunday last past.”

“Now, madam,” said Sir Perceval, “so much have I heard of you that by my good will I will never have ado with Sir Galahad but by way of kindness, and for God’s love, fair aunt, can ye teach me some way where I may find him? For much would I love the fellowship of him.”

“Fair nephew,” said she, “ye must ride unto a castle the which is called Goothe, where he hath a cousin-germain, and there may ye be lodged this night. And as he teacheth you, sueth after as fast as ye can, and if he can tell you no tidings of him, ride straight unto the Castle of Carbonek, where the maimed king is there lying, for there shall ye hear true tidings of him.”

CHAPTER III. *How Sir Perceval came into a monastery, where he found King Evelake, which was an old man.*

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<sup>1</sup>alonely: only

THEN DEPARTED SIR PERCEVAL from his aunt, either making great sorrow, and so he rode till evensong time. And then he heard a clock smite, and then he was ware of an house closed well with walls and deep ditches, and there he knocked at the gate and was let in, and he alighted and was led unto a chamber, and soon he was unarmed.

And there he had right good cheer all that night, and on the morn he heard his mass, and in the monastery he found a priest ready at the altar. And on the right side he saw a pew closed with iron, and behind the altar he saw a rich bed and a fair, as of cloth of silk and gold. Then Sir Perceval espied that therein was a man or a woman, for the visage was covered. Then he left off his looking and heard his service.

And when it came to the sacring<sup>2</sup>, he that lay within that parclose<sup>3</sup> dressed him up and uncovered his head and then him beseemed a passing old man, and he had a crown of gold upon his head, and his shoulders were naked and unhilled<sup>4</sup> unto his navel. And then Sir Perceval espied his body was full of great wounds, both on the shoulders, arms, and visage. And ever he held up his hands against Our Lord’s body and cried, “Fair, sweet Father, Jesu Christ, forget not me.”

And so he lay down, but always he was in his prayers and orisons and him seemed to be of the age of three hundred winter. And when the mass was done the priest took Our Lord’s body and bare it to the sick king, and when he had used it he did off his crown and commanded the crown to be set on the altar.

Then Sir Perceval asked one of the brethren what he was. “Sir, said the good man, “ye have heard much of Joseph of Arimathaea, how he was sent by Jesu Christ into this land for to teach and preach the holy Christian faith, and therefor he suffered many persecutions

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<sup>2</sup>sacring: consecration of the bread and wine

<sup>3</sup>parclose: partition, screen, or railing (*OED*)

<sup>4</sup>unhilled: the covering taken off

the which the enemies of Christ did unto him, and in the city of Sarras he converted a king whose name was Evelake.

“And so this king came with Joseph into this land, and ever he was busy to be thereas the Sangreal was, and on a time he nighed it so nigh<sup>1</sup> that Our Lord was displeased with him, but ever he followed it more and more, till God struck him almost blind. Then this king cried mercy and said ‘Fair Lord, let me never die till the good knight of my blood of the ninth degree be come, that I may see him openly that he shall encheve the Sangreal, that I may kiss him.’”

CHAPTER IV. *How Sir Perceval saw many men of arms bearing a dead knight, and how he fought against them.*

WHEN THE KING thus had made his prayers he heard a voice that said, “Heard be thy prayers, for thou shalt not die till he have kissed thee. And when that knight shall come, the clearness of your eyes shall come again, and thou shalt see openly, and thy wounds shall be healed, and erst<sup>2</sup> shall they never close.” And this befell of King Evelake, and this same king hath lived this three hundred winters this holy life, and men say the knight is in the court that shall heal him.

“Sir,” said the good man, “I pray you tell me what knight that ye be, and if ye be of King Arthur’s court and of the Table Round.”

“Yea forsooth,” said he, “and my name is Sir Perceval de Galles.” And when the good man understood his name he made great joy of him.

And then Sir Perceval departed and rode till the hour of noon. And he met in a valley about a twenty men of arms, which bare in a bier a knight deadly slain. And when they saw Sir Perceval they

asked him of whence he was, and he answered, “Of the court of King Arthur.”

Then they cried all at once, “Slay him.”

Then Sir Perceval smote the first to the earth and his horse upon him. And then seven of the knights smote upon his shield all at once, and the remnant slew his horse so that he fell to the earth. So had they slain him or taken him had not the good knight, Sir Galahad, with the red arms come there by adventure into those parts. And when he saw all those knights upon one knight he cried, “Save me that knight’s life.”

And then he dressed him toward the twenty men of arms as fast as his horse might drive, with his spear in the rest, and smote the foremost horse and man to the earth. And when his spear was broken he set his hand to his sword and smote on the right hand and on the left hand that it was marvel to see, and at every stroke he smote one down or put him to a rebuke, so that they would fight no more but fled to a thick forest, and Sir Galahad followed them.

And when Sir Perceval saw him chase them so, he made great sorrow that his horse was away. And then he wist well it was Sir Galahad. And then he cried aloud, “Ah fair knight, abide and suffer me to do thankings unto thee, for much have ye done for me.”

But ever Sir Galahad rode so fast that at the last he passed out of his sight, and as fast as Sir Perceval might he went after him on foot, crying. And then he met with a yeoman riding upon an hackney, the which led in his hand a great steed blacker than any bear.

“Ah, fair friend,” said Sir Perceval, “as ever I may do for you and to be your true knight in the first place ye will require me, that ye will lend me that black steed, that I might overtake a knight the which rideth afore me.”

“Sir knight,” said the yeoman, “I pray you hold me excused of that, for that I may not do. For wit ye well, the horse is such a man’s horse that, an I lent it you or any man, that he would slay me.”

“Alas,” said Sir Perceval, “I had never so great sorrow as I have had for losing of yonder knight.”

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<sup>1</sup>nighed it so nigh: came so close to it

<sup>2</sup>erst: earlier, before

“Sir,” said the yeoman, “I am right heavy for you, for a good horse would beseem you well, but I dare not deliver you this horse but if ye would take him from me.”

“That will I not do,” said Sir Perceval. And so they departed, and Sir Perceval set him down under a tree and made sorrow out of measure. And as he was there, there came a knight riding on the horse that the yeoman led, and he was clean armed.

CHAPTER V. *How a yeoman desired him to get again an horse, and how Sir Perceval's hackney was slain, and how he gat an horse.*

AND ANON THE yeoman came pricking after as fast as ever he might and asked Sir Perceval if he saw any knight riding on his black steed.

“Yea, sir, forsooth,” said he. “Why, sir, ask ye me that?”

“Ah, sir, that steed he hath benome me<sup>1</sup> with strength, wherefore my lord will slay me in what place he findeth me.”

“Well,” said Sir Perceval, “what wouldst thou that I did? Thou seest well that I am on foot, but an I had a good horse I should bring him soon again.”

“Sir,” said the yeoman, “take mine hackney and do the best ye can, and I shall sue you on foot to wit how that ye shall speed.”

Then Sir Perceval alighted upon that hackney and rode as fast as he might, and at the last he saw that knight. And then he cried, “Knight, turn again,” and he turned and set his spear against Sir Perceval, and he smote the hackney in the midst of the breast that he fell down dead to the earth, and there he had a great fall, and the other rode his way.

And then Sir Perceval was wood wroth<sup>2</sup> and cried, “Abide, wicked knight, coward and false-hearted knight, turn again and fight with

me on foot.” But he answered not, but passed on his way. When Sir Perceval saw he would not turn he cast away his helm and sword and said, “Now am I a very wretch, cursed and most unhappy above all other knights.”

So in this sorrow he abode all that day till it was night, and then he was faint and laid him down and slept till it was midnight, and then he awaked and saw afore him a woman which said unto him right fiercely, “Sir Perceval, what dost thou here?”

He answered, “I do neither good nor great ill.”

“If thou wilt ensure me,” said she, “that thou wilt fulfil my will when I summon thee, I shall lend thee mine own horse, which shall bear thee whither thou wilt.”

Sir Perceval was glad of her proffer and ensured her to fulfil all her desire.

“Then abide me here, and I shall go and fetch you an horse.” And so she came soon again and brought an horse with her that was inky black. When Perceval beheld that horse he marvelled that it was so great and so well apparelled, and not for than<sup>3</sup> he was so hardy, and he leapt upon him and took none heed of himself.

And so anon as<sup>4</sup> he was upon him he thrust to him with his spurs, and so he rode by a forest, and the moon shone clear. And within an hour and less he bare him four days' journey thence, until he came to a rough water the which roared, and his horse would have borne him into it.

CHAPTER VI. *Of the great danger that Sir Perceval was in by his horse, and how he saw a serpent and a lion fight.*

AND WHEN SIR PERCEVAL came nigh the brim and saw the water so

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<sup>1</sup>he hath benome me: he has taken away from me

<sup>2</sup>wood wroth: out of his mind with rage

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<sup>3</sup>not for than: notwithstanding

<sup>4</sup>anon as: as soon as, once that

boistous<sup>1</sup>, he doubted to overpass it. And then he made a sign of the cross in his forehead. When the fiend felt him so charged he shook off Sir Perceval, and he went into the water crying and roaring, making great sorrow, and it seemed unto him that the water brent.

Then Sir Perceval perceived it was a fiend, the which would have brought him unto his perdition. Then he commended himself unto God and prayed Our Lord to keep him from all such temptations, and so he prayed all that night till on the morn that it was day. Then he saw that he was in a wild mountain, the which was closed with the sea nigh all about, that he might see no land about him which might relieve him, but wild beasts.

And then he went into a valley, and there he saw a young serpent bring a young lion by the neck, and so he came by Sir Perceval. With that came a great lion crying and roaring after the serpent. And as fast as Sir Perceval saw this, he marvelled and hied him thither, but anon<sup>2</sup> the lion had overtaken the serpent and began battle with him. And then Sir Perceval thought to help the lion, for he was the more natural beast of the two, and therewith he drew his sword and set his shield afore him, and there he gave the serpent such a buffet that he had a deadly wound. When the lion saw that, he made no resemblaunt to fight with him, but made him all the cheer that a beast might make a man.

Then Perceval perceived that and cast down his shield which was broken, and then he did off his helm for to gather wind, for he was greatly enchafed with the serpent, and the lion went alway about him fawning as a spaniel. And then he stroked him on the neck and on the shoulders. And then he thanked God of the fellowship of that beast. And about noon the lion took his little whelp and trussed him<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>boistous: rough, savage, fierce

<sup>2</sup>Originally *anon* meant, as it means here, *at once, straightaway*. Through a gradual process of misuse, it came to mean *by and by, in a moment*.

<sup>3</sup>When the lion trussed his whelp, he carried him off like a package.

and bare him there he came from.

Then was Sir Perceval alone. And as the tale telleth, he was one of the men of the world at that time which most believed in Our Lord Jesu Christ, for in those days there were but few folks that believed in God perfectly, for in those days the son spared not the father no more than a stranger. And so Sir Perceval comforted himself in our Lord Jesu and besought God no temptation should bring him out of God's service, but to endure as his true champion.

Thus when Sir Perceval had prayed he saw the lion come toward him, and then he couched down at his feet. And so all that night the lion and he slept together, and when Sir Perceval slept he dreamed a marvellous dream, that there two ladies met with him and that one sat upon a lion and that other sat upon a serpent and that one of them was young and the other was old, and the youngest him thought said, "Sir Perceval, my lord saluteth thee and sendeth thee word that thou array thee and make thee ready, for to-morn thou must fight with the strongest champion of the world. And if thou be overcome thou shall not be quit for losing of any of thy members, but thou shalt be shamed for ever to the world's end."

And then he asked her what was her lord. And she said, "The greatest lord of all the world." And so she departed suddenly that he wist not where.

CHAPTER VII. *Of the vision that Sir Perceval saw, and how his vision was expounded, and of his lion.*

THEN CAME FORTH the other lady that rode upon the serpent, and she said, "Sir Perceval, I complain me of you that<sup>4</sup> ye have done unto me and have not offended unto you."

"Certes, madam," he said, "unto you nor no lady I never

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<sup>4</sup>that: what

offended."

"Yes," said she, "I shall tell you why. I have nourished in this place a great while a serpent, which served me a great while, and yesterday ye slew him as he gat his prey. Say me for what cause ye slew him, for the lion was not yours."

"Madam," said Sir Perceval, "I know well the lion was not mine, but I did it for the lion is of more gentler nature than the serpent, and therefore I slew him. Meseemeth I did not amiss against you. Madam," said he, "what would ye that I did?"

"I would," said she, "for the amends of my beast that ye become my man."

And then he answered, "That will I not grant you."

"No," said she, "truly ye were never but my servant sin ye received the homage of Our Lord Jesu Christ. Therefore, I ensure you in what place I may find you without keeping, I shall take you as he that sometime was my man."

And so she departed from Sir Perceval and left him sleeping, the which was sore travailed of his advison. And on the morn he arose and blessed him, and he was passing feeble.

Then was Sir Perceval ware in the sea and saw a ship come sailing toward him, and Sir Perceval went unto the ship and found it covered within and without with white samite. And at the board stood an old man clothed in a surplice, in likeness of a priest.

"Sir," said Sir Perceval, "ye be welcome."

"God keep you," said the good man. "Sir," said the old man, "of whence be ye?"

"Sir," said Sir Perceval, "I am of King Arthur's court and a knight of the Table Round, the which am in the quest of the Sangreal, and here am I in great duress and never like to escape out of this wilderness."

"Doubt not," said the good man, "an ye be so true a knight as the order of chivalry requireth and of heart as ye ought to be, ye should not doubt that none enemy should slay you."

"What are ye?" said Sir Perceval.

"Sir," said the old man, "I am of a strange country<sup>1</sup>, and hither I come to comfort you."

"Sir," said Sir Perceval, "what signifieth my dream that I dreamed this night?"

And there he told him altogether: "She which rode upon the lion betokeneth the new law of holy church, that is to understand, faith, good hope, belief, and baptism, for she seemed younger than the other. It is great reason, for she was born in the resurrection and the passion of Our Lord Jesu Christ, and for great love she came to thee to warn thee of thy great battle that shall befall thee."

"With whom," said Sir Perceval, "shall I fight?"

"With the most champion of the world," said the old man, "for as the lady said, but if thou quit thee well thou shalt not be quit by losing of one member, but thou shalt be shamed to the world's end.

"And she that rode on the serpent signifieth the old law, and that serpent betokeneth a fiend. And why she blamed thee that thou slewest her servant, it betokeneth nothing. The serpent that thou slewest betokeneth the devil that thou rodest upon to the rock. And when thou madest a sign of the cross, there thou slewest him and put away his power. And when she asked thee amends and to become her man and thou saidst thou wouldst not, that was to make thee to believe on her and leave thy baptism."

So he commanded Sir Perceval to depart, and so he leapt over the board and the ship, and all went away he wist not whither. Then he went up unto the rock and found the lion which always kept him fellowship, and he stroked him upon the back and had great joy of him.

CHAPTER VIII. *How Sir Perceval saw a ship coming to him-ward,*

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<sup>1</sup>A strange country is a foreign country, and a *stranger* is often used to mean *foreigner*.

*and how the lady of the ship told him of her disheritance.*

BY THAT SIR PERCEVAL had abiden there till midday he saw a ship came rowing in the sea, as all the wind of the world had driven it, and so it drove under that rock. And when Sir Perceval saw this he hied him thither and found the ship covered with silk more blacker than any bear, and therein was a gentlewoman of great beauty, and she was clothed richly that none might be better. And when she saw Sir Perceval she said, "Who brought you in this wilderness, where ye be never like to pass hence, for ye shall die here for hunger and mischief?"

"Damosel," said Sir Perceval, "I serve the best man of the world, and in his service he will not suffer me to die, for who that knocketh shall enter, and who that asketh shall have, and who that seeketh him he hideth him not<sup>1</sup>."

But then she said, "Sir Perceval, wot ye what I am?"

"Yea," said he.

"Now who taught you my name?" said she.

"Now," said Sir Perceval, "I know you better than ye ween."

"And I came out of the waste forest where I found the Red Knight with the white shield," said the damosel.

"Ah, damosel," said he, "with that knight would I meet passing fain<sup>2</sup>."

"Sir knight," said she, "an ye will ensure me by the faith that ye owe unto knighthood that ye shall do my will what time I summon you, and I shall bring you unto that knight."

"Yea," said he, "I shall promise you to fulfil your desire."

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<sup>1</sup>An allusion to Matthew 7.7–8: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

<sup>2</sup>I would be exceedingly happy to meet with that knight.

"Well," said she, "now shall I tell you. I saw him in the forest chasing two knights unto a water, the which is called Mortaise, and they drove him into the water for dread of death, and the two knights passed over, and the Red Knight passed after, and there his horse was drenched, and he, through great strength, escaped unto the land."

Thus she told him, and Sir Perceval was passing glad thereof.

Then she asked him if he had ate any meat late.

"Nay, madam, truly I ate no meat nigh this three days, but late here I spake with a good man that fed me with his good words and holy and refreshed me greatly."

"Ah, sir knight," said she, "that same man is an enchanter and a multiplier of words. For an ye believe him ye shall plainly be shamed and die in this rock for pure hunger and be eaten with wild beasts. And ye be a young man and a goodly knight, and I shall help you an ye will."

"What are ye," said Sir Perceval, "that proffered me thus great kindness?"

"I am," said she, "a gentlewoman that am disherited, which was sometime the richest woman of the world."

"Damosel," said Sir Perceval, "who hath disherited you? For I have great pity of you."

"Sir," said she, "I dwelled with the greatest man of the world, and he made me so fair and clear that there was none like me, and of that great beauty I had a little pride more than I ought to have had. Also I said a word that pleased him not. And then he would not suffer me to be any longer in his company and so drove me from mine heritage and so disherited me, and he had never pity of me nor of none of my council nor of my court. And sithen, sir knight, it hath befallen me so, and through me and mine I have benome him many of his men<sup>3</sup> and made them to become my men—for they ask never

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<sup>3</sup>benome him many of his men: carried off many of his men

nothing of me but I give it them, that and much more. Thus I and all my servants were against him night and day. Therefore I know now no good knight, nor no good man, but I get them on my side an I may. And for that I know that thou art a good knight, I beseech you to help me, and for ye be a fellow of the Round Table, wherefor ye ought not to fail no gentlewoman which is disherited, an she besought you of help."

CHAPTER IX. *How Sir Perceval promised her help, and how he required her of love, and how he was saved from the fiend.*

THEN SIR PERCEVAL promised her all the help that he might, and then she thanked him. And at that time the weather was hot. Then she called unto her a gentlewoman and bade her bring forth a pavilion, and so she did and pight it upon the gravel.

"Sir," said she, "now may ye rest you in this heat of the day."

Then he thanked her, and she put off his helm and his shield, and there he slept a great while. And then he awoke and asked her if she had any meat, and she said, "Yea, also ye shall have enough."

And so there was set enough upon the table, and thereon so much that he had marvel, for there was all manner of meats that he could think on. Also he drank there the strongest wine that ever he drank, him thought, and therewith he was a little chafed more than he ought to be. With that he beheld the gentlewoman and him thought she was the fairest creature that ever he saw. And then Sir Perceval proffered her love and prayed her that she would be his.

Then she refused him, in a manner, when he required her, for the cause he should be the more ardent on her, and ever he ceased not to pray her of love.

And when she saw him well enchafed, then she said, "Sir Perceval, wit you well I shall not fulfil your will but if ye swear from henceforth ye shall be my true servant and to do nothing but that I shall command you. Will ye ensure me this as ye be a true knight?"

"Yea," said he, "fair lady, by the faith of my body.

"Well," said she, "now shall ye do with me whatso it please you, and now wit ye well ye are the knight in the world that I have most desire to."

And then two squires were commanded to make a bed in midst of the pavilion. And anon she was unclothed and laid therein.

And then Sir Perceval laid him down by her naked, and by adventure and grace he saw his sword lie on the ground naked, in whose pommel was a red cross and the sign of the crucifix therein and bethought him on his knighthood and his promise made toforehand unto the good man. Then he made a sign of the cross in his forehead, and therewith the pavilion turned up-so-down, and then it changed unto a smoke and a black cloud, and then he was adread and cried aloud.

CHAPTER X. *How Sir Perceval for penance rove himself through the thigh, and how she was known for the devil.*

"FAIR SWEET FATHER, Jesu Christ, ne let me not be shamed, the which was nigh lost had not thy good grace been."

And then he looked into a ship and saw her enter therein, which said, "Sir Perceval, ye have betrayed me." And so she went with the wind roaring and yelling, that it seemed all the water brent after her.

Then Sir Perceval made great sorrow and drew his sword unto him, saying, "Sithen my flesh will be my master I shall punish it, and therewith he rove himself through the thigh that the blood stert about him, and said, "O good Lord, take this in recompensation of that I have done against thee, my Lord."

So then he clothed him and armed him and called himself a wretch, saying, "How nigh was I lost, and to have lost that I should never have gotten again, that was my virginity, for that may never be recovered after it is once lost." And then he stopped his bleeding wound with a piece of his shirt.

Thus as he made his moan he saw the same ship come from Orient that the good man was in the day afore, and the noble knight was ashamed with himself and therewith he fell in a swoon. And when he awoke he went unto him weakly, and there he saluted this good man.

And then he asked Sir Perceval, "How hast thou done sith I departed?"

"Sir," said he, "here was a gentlewoman and led me into deadly sin." And there he told him altogether.

"Knew ye not the maid?" said the good man.

"Sir," said he, "nay, but well I wot the fiend sent her hither to shame me."

"O good knight," said he, "thou art a fool, for that gentlewoman was the master fiend of hell, the which hath power above all devils, and that was the old lady that thou sawest in thine advison riding on the serpent."

Then he told Sir Perceval how our Lord Jesu Christ beat him out of heaven for his sin, the which was the most brightest angel of heaven, and therefore he lost his heritage. "And that was the champion that thou foughtest withal, the which had overcome thee had not the grace of God been. Now beware Sir Perceval, and take this for an ensample." And then the good man vanished away.

Then Sir Perceval took his arms, and entered into the ship, and so departed from thence.

Here endeth the fourteenth book, which is of Sir Perceval. And here followeth of Sir Lancelot, which is the fifteenth book.

## BOOK XV.

CHAPTER I. *How Sir Lancelot came to a chapel, where he found dead, in a white shirt, a man of religion, of an hundred winter old.*

WHEN THE HERMIT had kept Sir Lancelot three days, the hermit gat

him an horse, an helm, and a sword. And then he departed about the hour of noon. And then he saw a little house, and when he came near he saw a chapel, and there beside he saw an old man that was clothed all in white full richly, and then Sir Lancelot said, "God save you."

"God keep you," said the good man, "and make you a good knight."

Then Sir Lancelot alighted and entered into the chapel, and there he saw an old man dead, in a white shirt of passing fine cloth.

"Sir," said the good man, "this man that is dead ought not to be in such clothing as ye see him in, for in that he brake the oath of his order, for he hath been more than an hundred winter a man of a religion."

And then the good man and Sir Lancelot went into the chapel, and the good man took a stole about his neck and a book, and then he conjured on that book, and with that they saw in an hideous figure and horrible, that there was no man so hard-hearted nor so hard but he should have been afraid.

Then said the fiend, "Thou hast travailed me greatly. Now tell me what thou wilt with me."

"I will," said the good man, "that thou tell me how my fellow became dead and whether he be saved or damned."

"Then he said with an horrible voice, "He is not lost but saved."

"How may that be?" said the good man. "It seemed to me that he lived not well, for he brake his order for to wear a shirt where he ought to wear none, and who that trespasseth against our order doth not well."

"Not so," said the fiend. "This man that lieth here dead was come of a great lineage. And there was a lord that hight the Earl de Vale that held great war against this man's nephew, the which hight Aguarus. And so this Aguarus saw the earl was bigger than he. Then he went for to take counsel of his uncle, the which lieth here dead as ye may see. And then he asked leave and went out of his hermitage for to maintain his nephew against the mighty earl, and so it happed

that this man that lieth here dead did so much by his wisdom and hardiness that the earl was taken and three of his lords by force of this dead man."

CHAPTER II. *Of a dead man, how men would have hewn him and it would not be, and how Sir Lancelot took the hair of the dead man.*

"THEN WAS THERE peace betwixt the earl and this Aguarus and great surety that the earl should never war against him. Then this dead man that here lieth came to this hermitage again, and then the earl made two of his nephews for to be avenged upon this man. So they came on a day and found this dead man at the sacring of his mass, and they abode him till he had said mass, and then they set upon him and drew out swords to have slain him, but there would no sword bite on him more than upon a gad<sup>1</sup> of steel, for the high Lord which he served He him preserved.

"Then made they a great fire and did off all his clothes and the hair<sup>2</sup> off his back. And then this dead man hermit said unto them, 'Ween you to burn me? It shall not lie in your power nor to perish me as much as a thread, an there were any on my body.'

"'No?' said one of them. It shall be assayed.'

"And then they despoiled him and put upon him this shirt and cast him in a fire, and there he lay all that night till it was day in that fire and was not dead, and so in the morn I came and found him dead, but I found neither thread nor skin tamed and so took him out of the fire with great fear and laid him here as ye may see.

"And now may ye suffer me to go my way, for I have said you the sooth." And then he departed with a great tempest.

Then was the good man and Sir Lancelot more gladder than they

were to-fore. And then Sir Lancelot dwelled with that good man that night.

"Sir," said the good man, "be ye not Sir Lancelot du Lake?"

"Yea, sir," said he.

"What seek ye in this country?"

"Sir," said Sir Lancelot, "I go to seek the adventures of the Sangreal."

"Well," said he, "seek it ye may well, but though it were here ye shall have no power to see it, no more than a blind man should see a bright sword, and that is long on<sup>3</sup> your sin, and else<sup>4</sup>, ye were more abler than any man living."

And then Sir Lancelot began to weep.

Then said the good man, "Were ye confessed sith ye entered into the quest of the Sangreal?"

"Yea, sir," said Sir Lancelot.

Then upon the morn, when the good man had sung his mass, then they buried the dead man. Then Sir Lancelot said, "Father, what shall I do?"

"Now," said the good man, "I require you take this hair that was this holy man's and put it next thy skin, and it shall prevail thee greatly."

"Sir, and I will do it," said Sir Lancelot.

"Also I charge you that ye eat no flesh as long as ye be in the quest of the Sangreal, nor ye shall drink no wine, and that ye hear mass daily an ye may do it." So he took the hair and put it upon him and so departed at evensong-time.

And so rode he into a forest, and there he met with a gentlewoman riding upon a white palfrey, and then she asked him, "Sir knight, whither ride ye?"

"Certes, damosel," said Lancelot, "I wot not whither I ride but as

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<sup>1</sup>gad: sharp spike

<sup>2</sup>hair: hairshirt

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<sup>3</sup>long on: owing to, because of

<sup>4</sup>else: otherwise

fortune leadeth me.”

“Ah, Sir Lancelot,” said she, “I wot what adventure ye seek, for ye were afore time nearer than ye be now, and yet shall ye see it more openly than ever ye did, and that shall ye understand in short time.”

Then Sir Lancelot asked her where he might be harboured that night.

“Ye shall not find this day nor night, but to-morn ye shall find harbour good and ease of that ye be in doubt of.”

And then he commended her unto God. Then he rode till that he came to a Cross and took that for his host as for that night.

CHAPTER III. *Of an advision that Sir Lancelot had, and how he told it to an hermit and desired counsel of him.*

AND SO HE put his horse to pasture and did off his helm and his shield and made his prayers unto the Cross that he never fall in deadly sin again. And so he laid him down to sleep.

And anon as he was asleep it befell him there an advision that there came a man afore him all by compass of stars and that man had a crown of gold on his head and that man led in his fellowship seven kings and two knights. And all these worshipped the Cross, kneeling upon their knees, holding up their hands toward the heaven. And all they said, “Fair sweet Father of heaven come and visit us and yield unto us everych as we have deserved.”

Then looked Lancelot up to the heaven, and him seemed the clouds did open, and an old man came down with a company of angels and alighted among them and gave unto everych his blessing and called them his servants and good and true knights. And when this old man had said thus he came to one of those knights and said, “I have lost all that I have set in thee, for thou hast ruled thee against me as a warrior and used wrong wars with vain-glory, more for the pleasure of the world than to please me. Therefore thou shalt be confounded without thou yield me my treasure.” All this advision

saw Sir Lancelot at the Cross.

And on the morn he took his horse and rode till mid-day, and there by adventure he met with the same knight that took his horse, helm, and his sword when he slept when the Sangreal appeared afore the Cross. When Sir Lancelot saw him he saluted him not fair, but cried on high, “Knight, keep thee, for thou hast done to me great unkindness.”

And then they put afore them their spears, and Sir Lancelot came so fiercely upon him that he smote him and his horse down to the earth, that he had nigh broken his neck. Then Sir Lancelot took the knight’s horse that was his own aforehand and descended from the horse he sat upon and mounted upon his own horse and tied the knight’s own horse to a tree that he might find that horse when that he was arisen.

Then Sir Lancelot rode till night, and by adventure he met an hermit, and each of them saluted other, and there he rested with that good man all night and gave his horse such as he might get.

Then said the good man unto Lancelot, “Of whence be ye?”

“Sir,” said he, “I am of Arthur’s court, and my name is Sir Lancelot du Lake, that am in the quest of the Sangreal, and therefore I pray you to counsel me of a vision the which I had at the Cross.” And so he told him all.

CHAPTER IV. *How the hermit expounded to Sir Lancelot his advision and told him that Sir Galahad was his son.*

“LO, SIR LANCELOT, said the good man, there thou mightest understand the high lineage that thou art come of and thine advision betokeneth.

“After the passion of Jesu Christ forty year, Joseph of Arimathaea preached the victory of King Evelake, that he had in the battles the better of his enemies. And of the seven kings and the two knights: the first of them is called Nappus, an holy man, and the second high

Nacien, in remembrance of his grandsire, and in him dwelled our Lord Jesu Christ, and the third was called Helias le Grose, and the fourth hight Lisais, and the fifth hight Jonas—he departed out of his country and went into Wales and took there the daughter of Manuel, whereby he had the land of Gaul, and he came to dwell in this country.

“And of him came King Lancelot thy grandsire, the which there wedded the king’s daughter of Ireland, and he was as worthy a man as thou art, and of him came King Ban, thy father, the which was the last of the seven kings. And by thee, Sir Lancelot, it signifieth that the angels said thou were none of the seven fellowships.

“And the last was the ninth knight. He was signified to a lion, for he should pass all manner of earthly knights. That is Sir Galahad, the which thou gat on King Pelles’ daughter, and thou ought to thank God more than any other man living, for of a sinner earthly thou hast no peer as in knighthood, nor never shall be. But little thank hast thou given to God for all the great virtues that God hath lent thee.”

“Sir,” said Lancelot, “ye say that that good knight is my son.”

“That oughtest thou to know and no man better,” said the good man, “for thou knewest the daughter of King Pelles fleshly, and on her thou begattest Galahad, and that was he that at the feast of Pentecost sat in the Siege Perilous. And therefore make thou it known openly that he is one of thy begetting on King Pelles’ daughter, for that will be your worship and honour, and to all thy kindred. And I counsel you in no place press not upon him to have ado with him.”

“Well,” said Lancelot, “meseemeth that good knight should pray for me unto the High Father, that I fall not to sin again.”

“Trust thou well,” said the good man, “thou farest mickle<sup>1</sup> the better for his prayer, but the son shall not bear the wickedness of the father, nor the father shall not bear the wickedness of the son, but

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<sup>1</sup>mickle: much

everych shall bear his own burden. And therefore beseek thou only God, and He will help thee in all thy needs.”

And then Sir Lancelot and he went to supper and so laid him to rest, and the hair pricked so Sir Lancelot’s skin, which grieved him full sore, but he took it meekly and suffered the pain. And so on the morn he heard his mass and took his arms and so took his leave.

CHAPTER V. *How Sir Lancelot jousted with many knights, and how he was taken.*

AND THEN MOUNTED upon his horse and rode into a forest and held no highway<sup>2</sup>. And as he looked afore him he saw a fair plain and beside that a fair castle, and afore the castle were many pavilions of silk and of diverse hue. And him seemed that he saw there five hundred knights riding on horseback, and there were two parties: they that were of the castle were all on black horses and their trappings black, and they that were without were all on white horses and trappings. And everych hurtled to other that it marvelled Sir Lancelot. And at the last him thought they of the castle were put to the worse.

Then thought Sir Lancelot for to help there the weaker party in increasing of his chivalry. And so Sir Lancelot thrust in among the party of the castle and smote down a knight, horse and man, to the earth. And then he rashed<sup>3</sup> here and there and did marvellous deeds of arms. And then he drew out his sword and struck many knights to the earth, so that all those that saw him marvelled that ever one knight might do so great deeds of arms.

But always the white knights held them nigh about Sir Lancelot for to tire him and wind him. But at the last, as a man may not ever

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<sup>2</sup>If you hold no highway, you don’t keep to the beaten path.

<sup>3</sup>rashed: moved violently or suddenly, rushed, dashed

endure, Sir Lancelot waxed so faint of fighting and travailing and was so weary of his great deeds that he might not lift up his arms for to give one stroke, so that he weened never to have borne arms. And then they all took and led him away into a forest and there made him to alight and to rest him.

And then all the fellowship of the castle were overcome for the default of him. Then they said all unto Sir Lancelot, "Blessed be God that ye be now of our fellowship, for we shall hold you in our prison," and so they left him with few words.

And then Sir Lancelot made great sorrow, "For never or now was I never at tournament nor jousts but I had the best, and now I am shamed," and then he said, "Now I am sure that I am more sinfuller than ever I was."

Thus he rode sorrowing, and half a day he was out of despair, till that he came into a deep valley. And when Sir Lancelot saw he might not ride up into the mountain, he there alighted under an apple tree, and there he left his helm and his shield and put his horse unto pasture. And then he laid him down to sleep. And then him thought there came an old man afore him, the which said, "Ah, Lancelot of evil faith and poor belief, wherefor is thy will turned so lightly toward thy deadly sin?" And when he had said thus he vanished away, and Lancelot wist not where he was become. Then he took his horse and armed him, and as he rode by the way he saw a chapel where was a recluse, which had a window that she might see up to the altar. And all aloud she called Lancelot, for that he seemed a knight errant. And then he came, and she asked him what he was and of what place and where about he went to seek.

CHAPTER VI. *How Sir Lancelot told his advison to a woman, and how she expounded it to him.*

AND THEN HE told her altogether, word by word and the truth, how it befell him at the tournament and after told her his advison that he

had had that night in his sleep and prayed her to tell him what it might mean, for he was not well content with it.

"Ah, Lancelot," said she, "as long as ye were knight of earthly knighthood ye were the most marvellous man of the world and most adventurous. Now," said the lady, "sithen ye be set among the knights of heavenly adventures, if adventure fell thee contrary at that tournament have thou no marvel, for that tournament yesterday was but a tokening of Our Lord.

"And not for than there was none enchantment, for they at the tournament were earthly knights. The tournament was a token to see who should have most knights, either Eliazar, the son of King Pelles, or Argustus, the son of King Harlon. But Eliazar was all clothed in white, and Argustus was covered in black, the which were overcome.

"All what this betokeneth I shall tell you. The day of Pentecost, when King Arthur held his court, it befell that earthly kings and knights took a tournament together, that is to say the quest of the Sangreal. The earthly knights were they the which were clothed all in black, and the covering betokeneth the sins whereof they be not confessed. And they with the covering of white betokeneth virginity, and they that chose chastity. And thus was the quest begun in them.

"Then thou beheld the sinners and the good men, and when thou sawest the sinners overcome, thou inclinest to that party for bobounce<sup>1</sup> and pride of the world, and all that must be left in that quest, for in this quest thou shalt have many fellows and thy betters. For thou art so feeble of evil trust and good belief, this made it when thou were there where they took thee and led thee into the forest.

"And anon there appeared the Sangreal unto the white knights, but thou was so feeble of good belief and faith that thou mightest not abide it for all the teaching of the good man, but anon thou turnest to the sinners, and that caused thy misadventure that thou shouldst know good from evil and vain glory of the world, the which is not

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<sup>1</sup>bobounce: boasting, pride, pomp (*OED*)

worth a pear. And for great pride thou madest great sorrow that thou hadst not overcome all the white knights with the covering of white, by whom was betokened virginity and chastity, and therefore God was wroth with you, for God loveth no such deeds in this quest.

“And this advision signifieth that thou were of evil faith and of poor belief, the which will make thee to fall into the deep pit of hell if thou keep thee not. Now have I warned thee of thy vain glory and of thy pride, that thou hast many times erred against thy Maker. Beware of everlasting pain, for of all earthly knights I have most pity of thee, for I know well thou hast not thy peer of any earthly sinful man.”

And so she commended Sir Lancelot to dinner. And after dinner he took his horse and commended her to God and so rode into a deep valley, and there he saw a river and an high mountain. And through the water he must needs pass, the which was hideous, and then in the name of God he took it with good heart. And when he came over he saw an armed knight, horse and man black as any bear. Without any word he smote Sir Lancelot's horse to the earth, and so he passed on.

He wist not where he was become. And then he took his helm and his shield, and thanked God of his adventure.

Here leaveth off the story of Sir Lancelot, and speak we of Sir Gawain, the which is the sixteenth book.

## BOOK XVI.

CHAPTER I. *How Sir Gawain was nigh weary of the quest of the Sangreal, and of his marvellous dream.*

WHEN SIR GAWAIN was departed from his fellowship he rode long without any adventure. For he found not the tenth part of adventure as he was wont to do. For Sir Gawain rode from Whitsuntide until Michaelmas and found none adventure that pleased him.

So on a day it befell Gawain met with Sir Ector de Maris, and either made great joy of other that it were marvel to tell. And so they told everych other and complained them greatly that they could find none adventure.

“Truly,” said Sir Gawain unto Sir Ector, “I am nigh weary of this quest, and loath I am to follow further in strange countries.”

“One thing marvelled me,” said Sir Ector, “I have met with twenty knights, fellows of mine, and all they complain as I do.”

“I have marvel,” said Sir Gawain, “where that Sir Lancelot, your brother, is.”

“Truly,” said Sir Ector, “I cannot hear of him, nor of Sir Galahad, Perceval, nor Sir Bors.”

“Let them be,” said Sir Gawain, “for they four have no peers. And if one thing were not in Sir Lancelot he had no fellow of none earthly man, but he is as we be, but if he took more pain upon him. But an these four be met together they will be loath that any man meet with them, for an they fail of the Sangreal it is in waste of all the remnant to recover it.”

Thus Ector and Gawain rode more than eight days, and on a Saturday they found an old chapel, the which was wasted that there seemed no man thither repaired, and there they alighted and set their spears at the door, and in they entered into the chapel and there made their orisons a great while and set them down in the sieges of the chapel. And as they spake of one thing and other, for heaviness they fell asleep, and there befell them both marvellous adventures.

Sir Gawain him seemed he came into a meadow full of herbs and flowers, and there he saw a rack of bulls, an hundred and fifty, that were proud and black, save three of them were all white and one had a black spot and the other two were so fair and so white that they might be no whiter. And these three bulls which were so fair were tied with two strong cords. And the remnant of the bulls said among them, “Go we hence to seek better pasture.” And so some went, and some came again, but they were so lean that they might not stand

upright, and of the bulls that were so white, that one came again and no mo.

But when this white bull was come again among these other there rose up a great cry for lack of wind that failed them, and so they departed one here and another there. This advision befell Gawain that night.

CHAPTER II. *Of the advision of Sir Ector, and how he jousted with Sir Uwain les Avoutres, his sworn brother.*

BUT TO ECTOR DE MARIS befell another vision the contrary. For it seemed him that his brother, Sir Lancelot, and he alighted out of a chair and leapt upon two horses, and the one said to the other, "Go we seek that we shall not find."

And him thought that a man beat Sir Lancelot and despoiled him and clothed him in another array, the which was all full of knots, and set him upon an ass, and so he rode till he came to the fairest well that ever he saw, and Sir Lancelot alighted and would have drunk of that well. And when he stooped to drink of the water, the water sank from him. And when Sir Lancelot saw that, he turned and went thither as the head<sup>1</sup> came from.

And in the meanwhile he trowed<sup>2</sup> that himself and Sir Ector rode till that they came to a rich man's house where there was a wedding. And there he saw a king the which said, "Sir knight, here is no place for you." And then he turned again unto the chair that he came from.

Thus within a while both Gawain and Ector awaked, and either told other of their advision, the which marvelled them greatly. "Truly," said Ector, "I shall never be merry till I hear tidings of my brother Lancelot."

Now as they sat thus talking they saw an hand showing unto the elbow and was covered with red samite, and upon that hung a bridle not right rich, and held within the fist a great candle which burned right clear and so passed afore them and entered into the chapel and then vanished away, and they wist not where. And anon came down a voice which said, "Knights of full evil faith and of poor belief, these two things have failed you, and therefore ye may not come to the adventures of the Sangreal."

Then first spake Gawain and said, "Ector, have ye heard these words?"

"Yea truly," said Sir Ector, "I heard all."

"Now go we," said Sir Ector, "unto some hermit that will tell us of our advision, for it seemeth me we labour all in vain."

And so they departed and rode into a valley and there met with a squire which rode on an hackney, and they saluted him fair.

"Sir," said Gawain, "can thou teach us to any hermit?"

"Here is one in a little mountain, but it is so rough, there may no horse go thither, and therefore ye must go upon foot. There shall ye find a poor house, and there is Nacien the hermit, which is the holiest man in this country."

And so they departed either from other.

And then in a valley they met with a knight all armed, which proffered them to joust as far as he saw them.

"In the name of God," said Sir Gawain, "sith I departed from Camelot there was none proffered me to joust but once."

"And now, sir," said Ector, "let me joust with him."

"Nay," said Gawain, "ye shall not but if I be beat. It shall not forthink me<sup>3</sup> then if ye go after me."

And then either embraced other to joust and came together as fast as their horses might run and brast their shields and the mails<sup>4</sup>, and

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<sup>1</sup>head: source (of a river or stream)

<sup>2</sup>trowed: believed

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<sup>3</sup>forthink me: displease me

<sup>4</sup>mails: the metal rings of which mail-armour is made (OED)

the one more than the other, and Gawain was wounded in the left side, but the other knight was smitten through the breast, and the spear came out on the other side, and so they fell both out of their saddles, and in the falling they brake both their spears.

Anon Gawain arose and set his hand to his sword and cast his shield afore him. But all for naught was it, for the knight had no power to arise against him.

Then said Gawain, "Ye must yield you as an overcome man, or else I may slay you."

"Ah, sir knight," said he, "I am but dead. For God's sake and of your gentleness lead me here unto an abbey that I may receive my Creator."

"Sir," said Gawain, "I know no house of religion hereby."

"Sir," said the knight, "set me on an horse to-fore you, and I shall teach you."

Gawain set him up in the saddle, and he leapt up behind him for to sustain him and so came to an abbey where they were well received, and anon he was unarmed and received his Creator.

Then he prayed Gawain to draw out the truncheon of the spear out of his body. Then Gawain asked him what he was, that knew him not.

"I am," said he, "of King Arthur's court and was a fellow of the Round Table, and we were brethren sworn together, and now, Sir Gawain, thou hast slain me, and my name is Uwain les Avoutres, that sometime was son unto King Uriens and was in the quest of the Sangreal, and now forgive it thee God, for it shall ever be said that the one sworn brother hath slain the other.

CHAPTER III. *How Sir Gawain and Sir Ector came to an hermitage to be confessed, and how they told to the hermit their advisions.*

ALAS, SAID GAWAIN, that ever this misadventure is befallen me."

"No force<sup>1</sup>," said Uwain, "sith I shall die this death. Of a much more worshipfuller man's hand might I not die, but when ye come to the court recommend me unto my lord, King Arthur, and all those that be left alive, and for old brotherhood think on me."

Then began Gawain to weep, and Ector also, and then Uwain himself. And Sir Gawain drew out the truncheon of the spear, and anon departed the soul from the body. Then Sir Gawain and Sir Ector buried him as men ought to bury a king's son, and made write upon his name, and by whom he was slain.

Then departed Gawain and Ector, as heavy as they might for their misadventure, and so rode till that they came to the rough mountain, and there they tied their horses and went on foot to the hermitage. And when they were come up they saw a poor house and beside the chapel a little curtelage<sup>2</sup>, where Nacien the hermit gathered worts, as he which had tasted none other meat of a great while. And when he saw the errant knights he came toward them and saluted them, and they him again.

"Fair lords," said he, "what adventure brought you hither?"

"Sir," said Gawain, "to speak with you for to be confessed."

"Sir," said the hermit, "I am ready."

Then they told him so much that he wist well what they were. And then he thought to counsel them if he might.

Then began Gawain first and told him of his advision that he had had in the chapel, and Ector told him all as it is afore rehearsed.

"Sir," said the hermit unto Sir Gawain, the fair meadow and the rack therein ought to be understood the Round Table, and by the meadow ought to be understood humility and patience. Those be the things which be always green and quick, for men may no time overcome humility and patience. Therefor was the Round Table

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<sup>1</sup>no force: no matter

<sup>2</sup>curtelage: "A small court, yard, garth, or piece of ground attached to a dwelling-house, and forming one enclosure with it" (*OED*)

founded, and the chivalry hath been at all times so by the fraternity which was there that she might not be overcome, for men said she was founded in patience and in humility.

“At the rack ate an hundred and fifty bulls, but they ate not in the meadow, for their hearts should be set in humility and patience, and the bulls were proud and black save only three. By the bulls is to understand the fellowship of the Round Table, which for their sin and their wickedness be black. Blackness is to say without good or virtuous works.

“And the three bulls which were white save only one that was spotted: the two white betoken Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval, for they be maidens clean and without spot, and the third that had a spot signifieth Sir Bors de Ganis, which trespassed but once in his virginity, but sithen he kept himself so well in chastity that all is forgiven him and his misdeeds. And why those three were tied by the necks, they be three knights in virginity and chastity, and there is no pride smitten in them.

“And the black bulls which said ‘Go we hence,’ they were those which at Pentecost at the high feast took upon them to go in the quest of the Sangreal without confession: they might not enter in the meadow of humility and patience. And therefore they returned into waste countries, that signifieth death, for there shall die many of them. Everych of them shall slay other for sin, and they that shall escape shall be so lean that it shall be marvel to see them. And of the three bulls without spot, the one shall come again, and the other two never.”

#### CHAPTER IV. *How the hermit expounded their advison.*

THEN SPAKE NACIEN unto Ector, “Sooth it is that Lancelot and ye came down off one chair. The chair betokeneth mastership and lordship which ye came down from. But ye two knights,” said the hermit, “ye go to seek that ye shall never find, that is the Sangreal, for it is the

secret thing of our Lord Jesu Christ.

“What is to mean that Sir Lancelot fell down off his horse? He hath left pride and taken him to humility, for he hath cried mercy loud for his sin and sore repented him, and our Lord hath clothed him in his clothing which is full of knots, that is the hair that he weareth daily. And the ass that he rode upon is a beast of humility, for God would not ride upon no steed, nor upon no palfrey, so in ensample that an ass betokeneth meekness, that thou sawest Sir Lancelot ride on in thy sleep.

“And the well whereas the water sank from him when he should have taken thereof, and, when he saw he might not have it, he returned thither from whence he came: for the well betokeneth the high grace of God, the more men desire it to take it, the more shall be their desire. So when he came nigh the Sangreal, he meeked him<sup>1</sup> that he held him not a man worthy to be so nigh the Holy Vessel, for he had been so defouled in deadly sin by the space of many years, yet when he kneeled to drink of the well, there he saw great providence of the Sangreal.

“And for he had served so long the devil, he shall have vengeance four-and-twenty days long, for that he hath been the devil’s servant four-and-twenty years. And then soon after he shall return unto Camelot out of this country, and he shall say a part of such things as he hath found.

“Now will I tell you what betokeneth the hand with the candle and the bridle: that is to understand the Holy Ghost where charity is ever, and the bridle signifieth abstinence. For when she is bridled in Christian man’s heart she holdeth him so short that he falleth not in deadly sin. And the candle, which sheweth clearness and sight, signifieth the right way of Jesu Christ. And when he went and said, ‘Knights of poor faith and of wicked belief, these three things failed: charity, abstinence, and truth,’ therefore ye may not attain that high

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<sup>1</sup>meeked him: humbled himself, abased himself

adventure of the Sangreal.”

CHAPTER V. *Of the good counsel that the hermit gave to them.*

“CERTES,” SAID GAWAIN, “soothly have ye said, that I see it openly. Now, I pray you, good man and holy father, tell me why we met not with so many adventures as we were wont to do and commonly have the better.”

“I shall tell you gladly,” said the good man. “The adventure of the Sangreal which ye and many other have undertaken the quest of it and find it not, the cause is for it appeareth not to sinners. Wherefore marvel not though ye fail thereof, and many other. For ye be an untrue knight and a great murderer, and to good, men signifieth other things than murder.

“For I dare say, as sinful as Sir Lancelot hath been sith that he went into the quest of the Sangreal, he slew never man, nor nought shall, till that he come unto Camelot again, for he hath taken upon him for to forsake sin. And ne’er that he nis not stable<sup>1</sup>, but by his thought he is likely to turn again, he should be next to encheve it save Galahad, his son.

“But God knoweth his thought and his unstableness, and yet shall he die right an holy man, and no doubt he hath no fellow of no earthly sinful man.”

“Sir,” said Gawain, “it seemeth me by your words that for our sins it will not avail us to travel in this quest.

“Truly,” said the good man, “there be an hundred such as ye be that never shall prevail but to have shame.” And when they had heard these voices they commended him unto God.

Then the good man called Gawain and said, “It is long time passed sith that ye were made knight, and never sithen thou servedst thy

Maker, and now thou art so old a tree that in thee is neither life nor fruit, wherefore bethink thee that thou yield to Our Lord the bare rind, sith the fiend hath the leaves and the fruit.”

“Sir,” said Gawain “an I had leisure I would speak with you, but my fellow here, Sir Ector, is gone and abideth me yonder beneath the hill.”

“Well,” said the good man, “thou were better to be counselled.”

Then departed Gawain and came to Ector and so took their horses and rode till they came to a forester’s house, which harboured them right well. And on the morn they departed from their host and rode long or they could find any adventure.

CHAPTER VI. *How Sir Bors met with an hermit, and how he was confessed to him, and of his penance enjoined to him.*

WHEN BORS WAS departed from Camelot he met with a religious man riding on an ass, and Sir Bors saluted him. Anon the good man knew him that he was one of the knights errant that was in the quest of the Sangreal.

“What are ye?” said the good man.

“Sir,” said he, “I am a knight that fain would be counselled in the quest of the Sangreal, for he shall have much earthly worship that may bring it to an end.”

“Certes,” said the good man, “that is sooth, for he shall be the best knight of the world and the fairest of all the fellowship. But wit you well there shall none attain it but by cleanness, that is pure confession.

So rode they together till that they came to an hermitage. And there he prayed Bors to dwell all that night with him. And so he alighted and put away his armour and prayed him that he might be confessed, and so they went into the chapel, and there he was clean confessed, and they ate bread and drank water together.

“Now,” said the good man, “I pray thee that thou eat none other

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<sup>1</sup>ne’er that he nis not stable: were it not that he is not secure against falling

till that thou sit at the table where the Sangreal shall be.”

“Sir,” said he, “I agree me thereto, but how wit ye that I shall sit there.”

“Yes,” said the good man, “that know I, but there shall be but few of your fellows with you.”

“All is welcome,” said Sir Bors, “that God sendeth me.”

“Also,” said the good man, “instead of a shirt, and in sign of chastisement, ye shall wear a garment. Therefore I pray you do off all your clothes and your shirt.” And so he did.

And then he took him a scarlet coat, so that should be instead of his shirt till he had fulfilled the quest of the Sangreal, and the good man found in him so marvellous a life and so stable, that he marvelled and felt that he was never corrupt in fleshly lusts, but in one time that he begat Elian le Blank.

Then he armed him and took his leave and so departed. And so a little from thence he looked up into a tree, and there he saw a passing great bird upon an old tree, and it was passing dry, without leaves, and the bird sat above and had birds, the which were dead for hunger. So smote he himself with his beak, the which was great and sharp. And so the great bird bled till that he died among his birds. And the young birds took the life by the blood of the great bird.

When Bors saw this he wist well it was a great tokening, for when he saw the great bird arose not, then he took his horse and yede his way<sup>1</sup>. So by evensong, by adventure he came to a strong tower and an high, and there was he lodged gladly.

CHAPTER VII. *How Sir Bors was lodged with a lady, and how he took upon him for to fight against a champion for her land.*

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<sup>1</sup>yede his way: went his way

AND WHEN HE was unarmed they led him into an high tower where was a lady, young, lusty, and fair. And she received him with great joy and made him to sit down by her, and so was he set to sup with flesh and many dainties. And when Sir Bors saw that, he bethought him on his penance and bade a squire to bring him water. And so he brought him, and he made sops therein and ate them.

“Ah,” said the lady, “I trow ye like not my meat.”

“Yes, truly,” said Sir Bors, “God thank you, madam, but I may eat none other meat this day.”

Then she spake no more as at that time, for she was loath to displeas him. Then after supper they spake of one thing and other.

With that came a squire and said, “Madam, ye must purvey you to-morn for a champion, for else your sister will have this castle and also your lands, except ye can find a knight that will fight to-morn in your quarrel against Pridam le Noire. Then she made sorrow and said, “Ah, Lord God, wherefore granted ye to hold my land, whereof I should now be disherited without reason and right?”

And when Sir Bors had heard her say thus, he said, “I shall comfort you.”

“Sir,” said she, “I shall tell you there was here a king that hight Aniause, which held all this land in his keeping. So it mishapped he loved a gentlewoman a great deal elder than I. So took he her all this land to her keeping and all his men to govern, and she brought up many evil customs whereby she put to death a great part of his kinsmen. And when he saw that, he let chase her out of this land and betook it me<sup>2</sup> and all this land in my demesnes.

“But anon as that worthy king was dead, this other lady began to war upon me and hath destroyed many of my men and turned them against me, that I have well-nigh no man left me, and I have nought else but this high tower that she left me. And yet she hath promised me to have this tower, without I can find a knight to fight with her

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<sup>2</sup>betook it me: placed it at my disposal

champion.”

“Now tell me,” said Sir Bors, “what is that Pridam le Noire?”

“Sir,” said she, “he is the most doubted man of this land.”

“Now may ye send her word that ye have found a knight that shall fight with that Pridam le Noire in God’s quarrel and yours.”

Then that lady was not a little glad and sent word that she was purveyed, and that night Bors had good cheer, but in no bed he would come but laid him on the floor nor never would do otherwise till that he had met with the quest of the Sangreal.

CHAPTER VIII. *Of an advision which Sir Bors had that night, and how he fought and overcame his adversary.*

AND ANON AS he was asleep him befell a vision, that there came to him two birds, the one as white as a swan and the other was marvellous black, but it was not so great as the other, but in the likeness of a raven. Then the white bird came to him and said, “An thou wouldst give me meat and serve me, I should give thee all the riches of the world, and I shall make thee as fair and as white as I am.”

So the white bird departed, and there came the black bird to him and said, “An thou wilt, serve me to-morrow and have me in no despite though I be black, for wit thou well that more availeth my blackness than the other’s whiteness.” And then he departed.

And he had another vision: him thought that he came to a great place which seemed a chapel, and there he found a chair set on the left side, which was worm-eaten and feeble. And on the right hand were two flowers like a lily, and the one would have benom<sup>1</sup> the other’s whiteness, but a good man departed them that the one touched not the other, and then out of every flower came out many

flowers and fruit great plenty.

Then him thought the good man said, “Should not he do great folly that would let these two flowers perish for to succour the rotten tree, that it fell not to the earth?”

“Sir,” said he, “it seemeth me that this wood might not avail.”

“Now keep thee,” said the good man, “that thou never see such adventure befall thee.”

Then he awaked and made a sign of the cross in midst of the forehead and so rose and clothed him. And there came the lady of the place, and she saluted him, and he her again and so went to a chapel and heard their service. And there came a company of knights that the lady had sent for, to lead Sir Bors unto battle.

Then asked he his arms. And when he was armed she prayed him to take a little morsel to dine. “Nay, madam,” said he, “that shall I not do till I have done my battle, by the grace of God.” And so he leapt upon his horse and departed, all the knights and men with him.

And as soon as these two ladies met together, she which Bors should fight for complained her and said, “Madam, ye have done me wrong to bereave me of my lands that King Aniause gave me, and full loath I am there should be any battle.”

“Ye shall not choose,” said the other lady, “or else your knight withdraw him.”

Then there was the cry made, which party had the better of the two knights, that his lady should rejoice all the land<sup>2</sup>.

Now departed the one knight here, and the other there. Then they came together with such a random<sup>3</sup> that they pierced their shields and their hauberks, and the spears flew in pieces, and they wounded either other sore. Then hurtled they together, so that they fell both to the earth, and their horses betwixt their legs, and anon they arose and set hands to their swords and smote each one other upon the

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<sup>1</sup>benom: taken away

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<sup>2</sup>rejoice all the land: enjoy the possession of all the land

<sup>3</sup>with such a random: with such a force

heads, that they made great wounds and deep, that the blood went out of their bodies.

For there found Sir Bors greater defence in that knight more than he weened. For that Pridam was a passing good knight, and he wounded Sir Bors full evil, and he him again, but ever this Pridam held the stour in like hard<sup>1</sup>. That perceived Sir Bors and suffered him till he was nigh attaint.

And then he ran upon him more and more, and the other went back for dread of death. So in his withdrawing he fell upright, and Sir Bors drew his helm so strongly that he rent it from his head and gave him great strokes with the flat of his sword upon the visage and bade him yield him or he should slay him.

Then he cried him mercy and said, "Fair knight, for God's love slay me not, and I shall ensure thee never to war against thy lady, but be alway toward her."

Then Bors let him be. Then the old lady fled with all her knights.

CHAPTER IX. *How the lady was returned to her lands by the battle of Sir Bors and of his departing, and how he met Sir Lionel taken and beaten with thorns and also of a maid which should have been devoured.*

SO THEN CAME BORS to all those that held lands of his lady and said he should destroy them but if they did such service unto her as longed to their lands. So they did their homage, and they that would not were chased out of their lands.

Then befell that young lady to come to her estate again by the mighty prowess of Sir Bors de Ganis. So when all the country was well set in peace, then Sir Bors took his leave and departed, and she thanked him greatly and would have given him great riches, but he

refused it.

Then he rode all that day till night and came to an harbour to a lady which knew him well enough and made of him great joy. Upon the morn, as soon as the day appeared, Bors departed from thence and so rode into a forest unto the hour of midday, and there befell him a marvellous adventure. So he met at the departing of the two ways two knights that led Lionel, his brother, all naked, bounden upon a strong hackney, and his hands bounden to-fore his breast. And everych of them held in his hands thorns wherewith they went beating him so sore that the blood trailed down more than in an hundred places of his body, so that he was all blood to-fore and behind, but he said never a word. As he which was great of heart, he suffered all that ever they did to him as though he had felt none anguish.

Anon Sir Bors dressed him to rescue him that was his brother, and so he looked upon the other side of him and saw a knight which brought a fair gentlewoman and would have set her in the thickest place of the forest for to have been the more surer out of the way from them that sought him. And she which was nothing assured cried with an high voice, "Saint Mary succour your maid."

And anon she espied where Sir Bors came riding. And when she came nigh him she deemed him a knight of the Round Table, whereof she hoped to have some comfort, and then she conjured him by the faith that he ought unto "Him in whose service thou art entered in and for the faith ye owe unto the high order of knighthood and for the noble King Arthur's sake, that I suppose made thee knight, that thou help me and suffer me not to be shamed of this knight."

"When Bors heard her say thus, he had so much sorrow there he nist not what to do. "For if I let my brother be in adventure he must be slain, and that would I not for all the earth. And if I help not the maid she is shamed for ever, and also she shall lose her virginity the which she shall never get again."

Then lift he up his eyes and said weeping, "Fair sweet Lord Jesu

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<sup>1</sup>held the stour in like hard: kept up the fight just as fiercely

Christ, whose liege man I am, keep Lionel, my brother, that these knights slay him not, and for pity of you and for Mary's sake, I shall succour this maid."

CHAPTER X. *How Sir Bors left to rescue his brother, and rescued the damosel, and how it was told him that Lionel was dead.*

THEN DRESSED HE him unto the knight the which had the gentlewoman, and then he cried, "Sir knight, let your hand off that maiden, or ye be but dead."

And then he set down the maiden and was armed at all pieces save he lacked his spear. Then he dressed his shield and drew out his sword, and Bors smote him so hard that it went through his shield and habergeon on the left shoulder. And through great strength he beat him down to the earth, and at the pulling out of Bors' spear there he swooned.

Then came Bors to the maid and said, "How seemeth it you of this knight ye be delivered at this time?"

"Now sir," said she, "I pray you lead me thereas this knight had me."

"So shall I do gladly," and took the horse of the wounded knight and set the gentlewoman upon him and so brought her as she desired.

"Sir knight," said she, "ye have better sped than ye weened, for an I had lost my maidenhead, five hundred men should have died for it."

"What knight was he that had you in the forest?"

"By my faith," said she, "he is my cousin. So wot I never with what engine the fiend enchafed him, for yesterday he took me from my father privily, for I, nor none of my father's men, mistrusted him not, and if he had had my maidenhead he should have died for the sin and his body shamed and dishonoured for ever."

Thus as she stood talking with him there came twelve knights

seeking after her, and anon she told them all how Bors had delivered her. Then they made great joy and besought him to come to her father, a great lord, and he should be right welcome.

"Truly," said Bors, "that may not be at this time, for I have a great adventure to do in this country." So he commended them unto God and departed.

Then Sir Bors rode after Lionel, his brother, by the trace of their horses. Thus he rode seeking a great while. Then he overtook a man clothed in a religious clothing and rode on a strong black horse blacker than a berry and said, "Sir knight, what seek you?"

"Sir," said he, "I seek my brother that I saw within a while beaten with two knights."

"Ah, Bors, discomfort you not, nor fall into no wanhope, for I shall tell you tidings such as they be, for truly he is dead."

Then showed he him a new slain body lying in a bush, and it seemed him well that it was the body of Lionel, and then he made such a sorrow that he fell to the earth all in a swoon and lay a great while there. And when he came to himself he said, "Fair brother, sith the company of you and me is departed shall I never have joy in my heart, and now He which I have taken unto my master, He be my help." And when he had said thus he took his body lightly in his arms and put it upon the arson of his saddle<sup>1</sup>. And then he said to the man, "Canst thou tell me unto some chapel where that I may bury this body?"

"Come on," said he. "Here is one fast by," and so long they rode till they saw a fair tower, and afore it there seemed an old feeble chapel. And then they alighted both and put him into a tomb of marble.

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<sup>1</sup>An arson is a saddle-bow, "a name given to two curved pieces of wood or metal, one of which was fixed to the front of the saddle, and another behind, to give the rider greater security in his seat" (*OED*).

CHAPTER XI. *How Sir Bors told his dream to a priest, which he had dreamed, and of the counsel that the priest gave to him.*

“NOW LEAVE WE him here,” said the good man, “and go we to our harbour till to-morrow. We will come here again to do him service.”

“Sir,” said Bors, “be ye a priest?”

“Yea forsooth,” said he.

“Then I pray you tell me a dream that befell to me the last night.”

“Say on,” said he.

Then he began so much to tell him of the great bird in the forest and after told him of his birds, one white, another black, and of the rotten tree and of the white flowers.

“Sir, I shall tell you a part now and the other deal to-morrow. The white fowl betokeneth a gentlewoman, fair and rich, which loved thee paramours and hath loved thee long, and if thou warn<sup>1</sup> her love she shall go die anon if thou have no pity on her. That signifieth the great bird, the which shall make thee to warn her.

“Now for no fear that thou hast, ne for no dread that thou hast of God, thou shalt not warn her, but thou wouldst not do it for to be holden chaste, for to conquer the los<sup>2</sup> of the vainglory of the world, for that shall befall thee now, an thou warn her, that Lancelot, the good knight, thy cousin, shall die. And therefore men shall now say that thou art a manslayer, both of thy brother, Sir Lionel, and of thy cousin, Sir Lancelot du Lake, the which thou mightest have saved and rescued easily, but thou weenedst to rescue a maid which pertaineth nothing to thee. Now look thou whether it had been greater harm of thy brother’s death, or else to have suffered her to have lost her maidenhood.”

Then asked he him, “Hast thou heard the tokens of thy dream the which I have told to you?”

“Yea forsooth,” said Sir Bors, “all your exposition and declaring of my dream I have well understood and heard.”

Then said the man in this black clothing, “Then is it in thy default if Sir Lancelot, thy cousin, die.”

“Sir,” said Bors, “that were me loath, for wit ye well there is nothing in the world but I had liefer do it than to see my lord, Sir Lancelot du Lake, to die in my default.”

“Choose ye now the one or the other,” said the good man.

And then he led Sir Bors into an high tower, and there he found knights and ladies. Those ladies said he was welcome, and so they unarmed him. And when he was in his doublet men brought him a mantle furred with ermine and put it about him, and then they made him such cheer that he had forgotten all his sorrow and anguish and only set his heart in these delights and dainties and took no thought more for his brother Sir Lionel, neither of Sir Lancelot du Lake his cousin.

And anon came out of a chamber to him the fairest lady than ever he saw, and more richer beseen than ever he saw Queen Guinevere or any other estate.

“Lo,” said they, “Sir Bors, here is the lady unto whom we owe all our service, and I trow she be the richest lady and the fairest of all the world, and the which loveth you best above all other knights, for she will have no knight but you.”

And when he understood that language he was abashed. Not for than she saluted him, and he her, and then they sat down together and spake of many things, in so much that she besought him to be her love, for she had loved him above all earthly men and she should make him richer than ever was man of his age.

When Bors understood her words he was right evil at ease, which in no manner would not break chastity, so wist not he how to answer her.

CHAPTER XII. *How the devil in a woman’s likeness would have had*

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<sup>1</sup>warn: refuse, deny

<sup>2</sup>los: praise

*Sir Bors to have lain by her, and how by god's grace he escaped.*

"ALAS, SAID SHE, Bors, shall ye not do my will?"

"Madam," said Bors, "there is no lady in the world whose will I will fulfil as of this thing, for my brother lieth dead which was slain right late."

"Ah Bors," said she, "I have loved you long for the great beauty I have seen in you and the great hardiness that I have heard of you, that needs ye must lie by me this night, and therefore I pray you grant it me."

"Truly," said he, "I shall not do it in no manner wise."

Then she made him such sorrow as though she would have died. "Well Bors," said she, "unto this have ye brought me, nigh to mine end." And therewith she took him by the hand and bade him behold her. "And ye shall see how I shall die for your love."

"Ah," said then he, "that shall I never see."

Then she departed and went up into an high battlement and led with her twelve gentlewomen, and when they were above, one of the gentlewomen cried and said, "Ah, Sir Bors, gentle knight, have mercy on us all, and suffer my lady to have her will, and if ye do not we must suffer death with our lady, for to fall down off this high tower. And if ye suffer us thus to die for so little a thing all ladies and gentlewomen will say of you dishonour."

Then looked he upward. They seemed all ladies of great estate and richly and well beseen. Then had he of them great pity, not for that he was uncounselled in himself that liefer he had they all had lost their souls than he his, and with that they fell adown all at once unto the earth. And when he saw that, he was all abashed and had thereof great marvel. With that he blessed his body and his visage.

And anon he heard a great noise and a great cry, as though all the fiends of hell had been about him, and therewith he saw neither tower nor lady nor gentlewoman nor no chapel where he brought his brother to. Then held he up both his hands to the heaven and said, "Fair Father God, I am grievously escaped," and then he took his

arms and his horse and rode on his way.

Then he heard a clock smite on his right hand, and thither he came to an abbey on his right hand closed with high walls and there was let in. Then they supposed that he was one of the quest of the Sangreal, so they led him into a chamber and unarmed him.

"Sirs," said Sir Bors, "if there be any holy man in this house I pray you let me speak with him."

Then one of them led him unto the abbot, which was in a chapel. And then Sir Bors saluted him, and he him again.

"Sir," said Bors, "I am a knight errant," and told him all the adventure which he had seen.

"Sir Knight," said the abbot, "I wot not what ye be, for I weened never that a knight of your age might have been so strong in the grace of our Lord Jesu Christ. Not for than ye shall go unto your rest, for I will not counsel you this day. It is too late. And to-morrow I shall counsel you as I can."

CHAPTER XIII. *Of the holy communication of an Abbot to Sir Bors, and how the Abbot counselled him.*

AND THAT NIGHT was Sir Bors served richly, and on the morn early he heard mass, and the Abbot came to him and bade him good morrow and Bors to him again. And then he told him he was a fellow of the quest of the Sangreal and how he had charge of the holy man to eat bread and water.

Then said the Abbot, "Our Lord Jesu Christ showed him unto you in the likeness of a soul that suffered great anguish for us, since He was put upon the cross and bled His heart-blood for mankind. There was the token and the likeness of the Sangreal that appeared afore you, for the blood that the great fowl bled revived the chickens<sup>1</sup> from

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<sup>1</sup>chickens: young birds of any species

death to life. And by the bare tree is betokened the world which is naked and without fruit but if it come of Our Lord.

“Also the lady for whom ye fought for and King Aniause, which was lord there-to-fore, betokeneth Jesu Christ which is the King of the world. And that ye fought with the champion for the lady, this it betokeneth: for when ye took the battle for the lady, by her shall ye understand the new law of Jesu Christ and Holy Church, and by the other lady ye shall understand the old law and the fiend, which all day warreth against Holy Church. Therefore, ye did your battle with right. For ye be Jesu Christ’s knights. Therefore ye ought to be defenders of Holy Church.

“And by the black bird might ye understand Holy Church, which sayeth ‘I am black,’ but he is fair. And by the white bird might men understand the fiend, and I shall tell you how the swan is white without-forth and black within: it is hypocrisy, which is without yellow or pale and seemeth without-forth the servants of Jesu Christ, but they be within so horrible of filth and sin and beguile the world evil.

“Also when the fiend appeared to thee in likeness of a man of religion and blamed thee that thou left thy brother for a lady, so led thee where thou seemed thy brother was slain, but he is yet alive, and all was for to put thee in error and bring thee unto wanhope and lechery, for he knew thou were tender-hearted, and all was for thou shouldst not find the blessed adventure of the Sangreal.

“And the third fowl betokeneth the strong battle against the fair ladies which were all devils. Also the dry tree and the white lily: the dry tree betokeneth thy brother Lionel, which is dry without virtue, and therefore many men ought to call him the rotten tree and the worm-eaten tree, for he is a murderer and doth contrary to the order of knighthood. And the two white flowers signify two maidens, the one is a knight which was wounded the other day, and the other is the gentlewoman which ye rescued. And why the other flower drew nigh the other, that was the knight which would have defouled her and himself both.

“And Sir Bors, ye had been a great fool and in great peril for to have seen those two flowers perish for to succour the rotten tree, for an they had sinned together they had been damned, and, for that ye rescued them both, men might call you a very knight and servant of Jesu Christ.”

CHAPTER XIV. *How Sir Bors met with his brother Sir Lionel, and how Sir Lionel would have slain Sir Bors.*

THEN WENT SIR BORS from thence and commended the Abbot unto God. And then he rode all that day and harboured with an old lady. And on the morn he rode to a castle in a valley, and there he met with a yeoman going a great pace toward a forest.

“Say me,” said Sir Bors, “canst thou tell me of any adventure?”

“Sir,” said he, “here shall be under this castle a great and a marvellous tournament.”

“Of what folks shall it be?” said Sir Bors.

“The Earl of Plains shall be in the one party and the lady’s nephew of Hervin on the other party.”

Then Bors thought to be there if he might meet with his brother Sir Lionel or any other of his fellowship which were in the quest of the Sangreal. And then he turned to an hermitage that was in the entry of the forest.

And when he was come thither he found there Sir Lionel, his brother, which sat all armed at the entry of the chapel door for to abide there harbour till on the morn that the tournament shall be. And when Sir Bors saw him he had great joy of him, that it were marvel to tell of his joy. And then he alighted off his horse and said, “Fair sweet brother, when came ye hither?”

Anon as Lionel saw him he said, “Ah Bors, ye may not make none

avaunt<sup>1</sup>, but as for you I might have been slain. When ye saw two knights leading me away beating me, ye left me for to succour a gentlewoman and suffered me in peril of death. For never erst ne did no brother to another so great an untruth, and for that misdeed now I ensure you but death, for well have ye deserved it. Therefore keep thee<sup>2</sup> from henceforward, and that shall ye find as soon as I am armed.”

When Sir Bors understood his brother's wrath he kneeled down to the earth and cried him mercy, holding up both his hands, and prayed him to forgive him his evil will.

“Nay,” said Lionel, “that shall never be an I may have the higher hand, that I make mine avow to God thou shalt have death for it, for it were pity ye lived any longer.”

Right so he went in and took his harness and mounted upon his horse and came to-fore him and said, “Bors, keep thee from me, for I shall do to thee as I would to a felon or a traitor, for ye be the untruest knight that ever came out of so worthy an house as was King Bors de Ganis, which was our father. Therefore start upon thy horse, and so shall ye be most at your advantage. And but if ye will I will run upon you thereas ye stand upon foot, and so the shame shall be mine and the harm yours, but of that shame ne reck I nought.”

When Sir Bors saw that he must fight with his brother or else to die, he nist what to do. Then his heart counselled him not thereto, inasmuch as Lionel was born or he, wherefore he ought to bear him reverence. Yet kneeled he down afore Lionel's horse's feet and said, “Fair sweet brother, have mercy upon me and slay me not, and have in remembrance the great love which ought to be between us twain.”

What Sir Bors said to Lionel, he rought not<sup>3</sup>, for the fiend had

brought him in such a will that he should slay him. Then when Lionel saw he would none other, and that he would not have risen to give him battle, he rashed over him so that he smote Bors with his horse, feet upward, to the earth and hurt him so sore that he swooned of distress, the which he felt in himself to have died without confession.

So when Lionel saw this, he alighted off his horse to have smitten off his head. And so he took him by the helm and would have rent it from his head. Then came the hermit running unto him, which was a good man and of great age and well had heard all the words that were between them and so fell down upon Sir Bors.

CHAPTER XV. *How Sir Colgrevaunce fought against Sir Lionel for to save Sir Bors, and how the hermit was slain.*

THEN HE SAID to Lionel, “Ah gentle knight, have mercy upon me and on thy brother, for if thou slay him thou shalt be dead of sin, and that were sorrowful, for he is one of the worthiest knights of the world and of the best conditions.”

“So God help me,” said Lionel, “sir priest, but if ye flee from him<sup>4</sup> I shall slay you, and he shall never the sooner be quit.”

“Certes,” said the good man, “I have liefer ye slay me than him, for my death shall not be great harm, not half so much as of his.”

“Well,” said Lionel, “I am agreed,” and set his hand to his sword and smote him so hard that his head yede backward. Not for that he restrained him of his evil will, but took his brother by the helm and unlaced it to have stricken off his head and had slain him without fail.

But so it happed Colgrevaunce, a fellow of the Round Table, came at that time thither as Our Lord's will was. And when he saw the

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<sup>1</sup>avaunt: boast

<sup>2</sup>keep thee: be on your guard

<sup>3</sup>he rought not: he took no notice of

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<sup>4</sup>but if ye flee from him: unless you flee from him, if you do not flee from him

good man slain he marvelled much what it might be. And then he beheld Lionel would have slain his brother and knew Sir Bors, which he loved right well.

Then stert he down and took Lionel by the shoulders and drew him strongly aback from Bors and said, "Lionel, will ye slay your brother, the worthiest knight one of the world<sup>1</sup>? That should no good man suffer."

"Why," said Lionel, "will ye let me<sup>2</sup>? Therefore if ye entermete you in this<sup>3</sup> I shall slay you, and him after."

"Why," said Colgrevaunce, "is this sooth that ye will slay him?"

"Slay him will I," said he, "whoso say the contrary, for he hath done so much against me that he hath well deserved it," and so ran upon him and would have smitten him through the head, and Sir Colgrevaunce ran betwixt them, and said, "An ye be so hardy to do so more, we two shall meddle together."

When Lionel understood his words he took his shield afore him and asked him what that he was. And he told him, Colgrevaunce, one of his fellows. Then Lionel defied him and gave him a great stroke through the helm.

Then he drew his sword, for he was a passing good knight, and defended him right manfully. So long dured the battle that Bors rose up all anguishly and beheld how Colgrevaunce, the good knight, fought with his brother for his quarrel. Then was he full sorry and heavy and thought if Colgrevaunce slew him that was his brother he should never have joy, and if his brother slew Colgrevaunce "the shame should ever be mine."

Then would he have risen to have departed them, but he had not so much might to stand on foot, so he abode him so long till

Colgrevaunce had the worse, for Lionel was of great chivalry and right hardy, for he had pierced the hauberk and the helm, that he abode but death, for he had lost much of his blood that it was marvel that he might stand upright.

Then beheld he Sir Bors which sat dressing him upward and said, "Ah, Bors, why come ye not to cast me out of peril of death, wherein I have put me to succour you, which were right now nigh the death?"

"Certes," said Lionel, "that shall not avail you, for none of you shall bear others' warrant, but that ye shall die both of my hand."

When Bors heard that he did so much, he rose and put on his helm. Then perceived he first the hermit-priest which was slain, then made he a marvellous sorrow upon him.

CHAPTER XVI. *How Sir Lionel slew Sir Colgrevaunce, and how after he would have slain Sir Bors.*

THEN OFT COLGREVAUNCE cried upon Sir Bors, "Why will ye let me die here for your sake? If it please you that I die for you the death, it will please me the better for to save a worthy man."

With that word Sir Lionel smote off the helm from his head. Then Colgrevaunce saw that he might not escape, then he said, "Fair sweet Jesu, that I have misdone have mercy upon my soul, for such sorrow that my heart suffereth for goodness and for alms deed that I would have done here, be to me a lygement<sup>4</sup> of penance unto my soul's health."

At these words Lionel smote him so sore that he bare<sup>5</sup> him to the earth. So when he had slain Colgrevaunce he ran upon his brother as a fiendly man and gave him such a stroke that he made him stoop.

And he that was full of humility prayed him for God's love to leave

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<sup>1</sup>the worthiest knight one of the world: one of the worthies knights of the world

<sup>2</sup>let me: prevent me

<sup>3</sup>entermete you in this: concern yourself with this

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<sup>4</sup>lygement: alleviation (Cowen)

<sup>5</sup>bare: thrust

this battle, "For an it befell, fair brother, that I slew you or ye me, we should be dead of that sin. Never God me help but if I have on you mercy, an I may have the better hand."

Then drew Bors his sword all weeping and said, "Fair brother, God knoweth mine intent. Ah, fair brother, ye have done full evil this day to slay such an holy priest the which never trespassed. Also ye have slain a gentle knight, and one of our fellows. And well wot ye that I am not afeard of you greatly, but I dread the wrath of God, and this is an unkindly war. Therefore God show miracle upon us both. Now God have mercy upon me though I defend my life against my brother. With that Bors lift up his hand and would have smitten his brother.

CHAPTER XVII. *How there came a voice which charged Sir Bors to touch him not and of a cloud that came between them.*

AND THEN HE heard a voice that said, "Flee, Bors, and touch him not, or else thou shalt slay him." Right so alighted a cloud betwixt them in likeness of a fire and a marvellous flame that both their two shields brent. Then were they sore afraid, that they fell both to the earth and lay there a great while in a swoon.

And when they came to themself, Bors saw that his brother had no harm. Then he held up both his hands, for he dread God had taken vengeance upon him. With that he heard a voice say, "Bors, go hence, and bear thy brother no longer fellowship, but take thy way anon right to the sea, for Sir Perceval abideth thee there."

Then he said to his brother, "Fair sweet brother, forgive me for God's love all that I have trespassed unto you."

Then he answered, "God forgive it thee, and I do gladly."

So Sir Bors departed from him and rode the next way to the sea. And at the last by fortune he came to an abbey which was nigh the sea. That night Bors rested him there, and in his sleep there came a voice to him and bade him go to the sea. Then he stert up and made

a sign of the cross in the midst of his forehead and took his harness and made ready his horse and mounted upon him, and at a broken wall he rode out and rode so long till that he came to the sea. And on the strand he found a ship covered all with white samite, and he alighted and betook him to Jesu Christ.

And as soon as he entered into the ship, the ship departed into the sea and went so fast that him seemed the ship went flying, but it was soon dark so that he might know no man, and so he slept till it was day. Then he awaked and saw in midst of the ship a knight lie all armed save his helm. Then knew he that it was Sir Perceval of Wales, and then he made of him right great joy, but Sir Perceval was abashed of him, and he asked him what he was.

"Ah, fair sir," said Bors, "know ye me not?"

"Certes," said he, "I marvel how ye came hither, but if Our Lord brought ye hither Himself."

Then Sir Bors smiled and did off his helm. Then Perceval knew him, and either made great joy of other, that it was marvel to hear. Then Bors told him how he came into the ship and by whose admonishment, and either told other of their temptations, as ye have heard to-forehand.

So went they downward in the sea, one while backward, another while forward, and everych comforted other, and oft were in their prayers. Then said Sir Perceval, "We lack nothing but Galahad, the good knight."

And thus endeth the sixteenth book, which is of Sir Gawain, Ector de Maris, and Sir Bors de Ganis, and Sir Perceval. And here followeth the seventeenth book, which is of the noble knight Sir Galahad.

## BOOK XVII.

CHAPTER I. *How Sir Galahad fought at a tournament, and how he was known of Sir Gawain and Sir Ector de Maris.*

NOW SAITH THIS story, when Galahad had rescued Perceval from the twenty knights, he yede tho<sup>1</sup> into a waste forest wherein he rode many journeys, and he found many adventures the which he brought to an end, whereof the story maketh here no mention. Then he took his way to the sea on a day, and it befell as he passed by a castle where was a wonder tournament, but they without had done so much that they within were put to the worse, yet were they within good knights enough.

When Galahad saw that those within were at so great a mischief that men slew them at the entry of the castle, then he thought to help them and put a spear forth and smote the first that he fell to the earth, and the spear brake to pieces. Then he drew his sword and smote thereas they were thickest, and so he did wonderful deeds of arms that all they marvelled.

Then it happed that Gawain and Sir Ector de Maris were with the knights without. But when they espied the white shield with the red cross the one said to the other, "Yonder is the good knight, Sir Galahad, the haut prince. Now he should be a great fool which should meet with him to fight."

So by adventure he came by Sir Gawain, and he smote him so hard that he clave his helm and the coif of iron unto his head, so that Gawain fell to the earth, but the stroke was so great that it slanted down to the earth and carved the horse's shoulder in two.

When Ector saw Gawain down he drew him aside and thought it no wisdom for to abide him<sup>2</sup>, and also for natural love, that he was his uncle. Thus through his great hardiness he beat aback all the knights without. And then they within came out and chased them all about. But when Galahad saw there would none turn again he stole away privily, so that none wist where he was become.

"Now by my head," said Gawain to Ector, "now are the wonders

true that were said of Lancelot du Lake, that the sword which stuck in the stone should give me such a buffet that I would not have it for the best castle in this world, and soothly now it is proved true, for never ere had I such a stroke of man's hand."

"Sir," said Ector, "meseemeth your quest is done."

"And yours is not done," said Gawain, "but mine is done, I shall seek no further."

Then Gawain was borne into a castle and unarmed him and laid him in a rich bed and a leech found that he might live and to be whole within a month. Thus Gawain and Ector abode together, for Sir Ector would not away till Gawain were whole.

And the good knight, Galahad, rode so long till he came that night to the Castle of Carbonek, and it befell him thus that he was benighted in an hermitage, so the good man was fain<sup>3</sup> when he saw he was a knight errant.

Tho when they were at rest there came a gentlewoman knocking at the door and called Galahad, and so the good man came to the door to wit what she would. Then she called the hermit, "Sir Ulfin, I am a gentlewoman that would speak with the knight which is with you."

Then the good man awaked Galahad and bade him arise "and speak with a gentlewoman that seemeth hath great need of you."

Then Galahad went to her and asked her what she would.

"Galahad," said she, "I will that ye arm you and mount upon your horse and follow me, for I shall show you within these three days the highest adventure that ever any knight saw."

Anon Galahad armed him and took his horse and commended him to God and bade the gentlewoman go, and he would follow thereas she liked.

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<sup>1</sup>yede tho: went then

<sup>2</sup>to abide him: to bring himself to a stop

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<sup>3</sup>fain: glad

CHAPTER II. *How Sir Galahad rode with a damosel and came to the ship whereas Sir Bors and Sir Perceval were in.*

SO SHE RODE as fast as her palfrey might bear her till that she came to the sea, the which was called Collibe. And at the night they came unto a castle in a valley, closed with a running water and with strong walls and high, and so she entered into the castle with Galahad, and there had he great cheer, for the lady of that castle was the damosel's lady.

So when he was unarmed, then said the damosel, "Madam, shall we abide here all this day?"

"Nay," said she, "but till he hath dined and till he hath slept a little."

So he ate and slept a while till that the maid called him and armed him by torchlight. And when the maid was horsed and he both, the lady took Galahad a fair child and rich, and so they departed from the castle till they came to the seaside, and there they found the ship where Bors and Perceval were in, the which cried on the ship's board, "Sir Galahad, ye be welcome. We have abiden you long."

And when he heard them he asked them what they were.

"Sir," said she, "leave your horse here, and I shall leave mine," and took their saddles and their bridles with them and made a cross on them and so entered into the ship. And the two knights received them both with great joy, and everych knew other.

And so the wind arose and drove them through the sea in a marvellous pace. And within a while it dawned. Then did Galahad off his helm and his sword and asked of his fellows from whence came that fair ship. "Truly," said they, "ye wot as well as we, but of God's grace," and then they told everych to other of all their hard adventures and of their great temptations.

"Truly," said Galahad, "ye are much bounden to God, for ye have escaped great adventures, and had not the gentlewoman been I had not come here, for as for you I weened never to have found you in these strange countries."

"Ah Galahad," said Bors, "if Lancelot your father were here, then were we well at ease, for then meseemed we failed nothing."

"That may not be," said Galahad, "but if it pleased Our Lord."

By then the ship went from the land of Logris<sup>1</sup>, and by adventure it arrived up betwixt two rocks passing great and marvellous, but there they might not land, for there was a swallow of the sea<sup>2</sup>, save there was another ship, and upon it they might go without danger.

"Go we thither," said the gentlewoman, "and there shall we see adventures, for so is Our Lord's will."

And when they came thither they found the ship rich enough, but they found neither man nor woman therein. But they found in the end of the ship two fair letters written, which said a dreadful word and a marvellous: "Thou man which shall enter into this ship, beware thou be in steadfast belief, for I am Faith, and therefore beware how thou enterest, for an thou fail I shall not help thee."

Then said the gentlewoman, "Perceval, wot ye what I am?"

"Certes," said he, "nay, to my witting."

"Wit ye well," said she, "that I am thy sister, which am daughter of King Pellinor, and therefore wit ye well ye are the man in the world that I most love, and if ye be not in perfect belief of Jesu Christ enter not in no manner of wise, for then should ye perish<sup>3</sup> the ship, for he is so perfect he will suffer no sinner in him."

When Perceval understood that she was his very sister he was inwardly glad and said, "Fair sister, I shall enter therein, for if I be a miscreature or an untrue knight there shall I perish."

CHAPTER III. *How Sir Galahad entered into the ship and of a fair bed therein with other marvellous things and of a sword.*

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<sup>1</sup>Logris is the name of King Arthur's realm.

<sup>2</sup>swallow of the sea: whirlpool

<sup>3</sup>perish: destroy

IN THE MEANWHILE Galahad blessed him and entered therein, and then next the gentlewoman and then Sir Bors and Sir Perceval. And when they were in, it was so marvellous fair and rich that they marvelled.

And in midst of the ship was a fair bed, and Galahad went thereto and found there a crown of silk. And at the feet was a sword, rich and fair, and it was drawn out of the sheath half a foot and more, and the sword was of divers fashions, and the pommel was of stone, and there was in him all manner of colours that any man might find, and everych of the colours had divers virtues, and the scales of the haft were of two ribs of divers beasts. The one beast was a serpent, which was conversant in Calidone<sup>1</sup> and is called the serpent of the fiend, and the bone of him is of such a virtue that there is no hand that handleth him shall never be weary nor hurt. And the other beast is a fish which is not right great and haunteth the flood of Euphrates, and that fish is called Ertanax, and his bones be of such a manner of kind that who that handleth them shall have so much will that he shall never be weary, and he shall not think on joy nor sorrow that he hath had but only that thing that he beholdeth before him. And as for this sword there shall never man begrip him at the handles but one, but he shall pass all other.

“In the name of God,” said Perceval, “I shall assay to handle it.”

So he set his hand to the sword, but he might not begrip it.

“By my faith,” said he, “now have I failed.”

Bors set his hand thereto and failed.

Then Galahad beheld the sword and saw letters like blood that said, “Let see who shall assay to draw me out of my sheath, but if he be more hardier than any other, and who that draweth me, wit ye well that he shall never fail of shame of his body or to be wounded to the death.

“By my faith,” said Galahad, “I would draw this sword out of the sheath, but the offending is so great that I shall not set my hand thereto.”

“Now sirs,” said the gentlewoman, “wit ye well that the drawing of this sword is warned to all men save alonely to you. Also this ship arrived in the realm of Logris, and that time was deadly war between King Labor, which was father unto the maimed king, and King Hurlame, which was a Saracen. But then was he newly christened, so that men held him afterward one of the wittiest men of the world. And so upon a day it befell that King Labor and King Hurlame had assembled their folk upon the sea where this ship was arrived, and there King Hurlame was discomfit and his men slain, and he was afeard to be dead and fled to his ship and there found this sword and drew it and came out and found King Labor, the man in the world of all Christendom in whom was then the greatest faith. And when King Hurlame saw King Labor he dressed this sword and smote him upon the helm so hard that he clave him and his horse to the earth with the first stroke of his sword.

“And it was in the realm of Logris, and so befell great pestilence and great harm to both realms. For sithen increased neither corn nor grass nor well-nigh no fruit, nor in the water was no fish, wherefore men call it the lands of the two marches, the waste land, for that dolorous stroke.

“And when King Hurlame saw this sword so carving, he turned again to fetch the scabbard and so came into this ship and entered and put up the sword in the sheath. And as soon as he had done it he fell down dead afore the bed. Thus was the sword proved, that none ne drew it but he were dead or maimed. So lay he there till a maiden came into the ship and cast him out, for there was no man so hardy of the world to enter into that ship for the defence<sup>2</sup>.”

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<sup>1</sup>A serpent conversant in Calidone was a serpent that customarily dwelt in Calidone. Calidone may well be Caledonia, that is, Scotland.

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<sup>2</sup>for the defence: because of the prohibition

CHAPTER IV. *Of the marvels of the sword and of the scabbard.*

AND THEN BEHELD they the scabbard. It seemed to be of a serpent's skin and thereon were letters of gold and silver. And the girdle was but poorly to come to and not able to sustain such a rich sword. And the letters said, "He which shall wield me ought to be more harder than any other, if he bear me as truly as me ought to be borne. For the body of him which I ought to hang by, he shall not be shamed in no place while he is girt with this girdle, nor never none be so hardy to do away this girdle, for it ought not be done away but by the hands of a maid, and that she be a king's daughter and queen's, and she must be a maid all the days of her life, both in will and in deed. And if she break her virginity she shall die the most villainous death that ever died any woman."

"Sir," said Perceval, "turn this sword that we may see what is on the other side." And it was red as blood with black letters as any coal, which said, "He that shall praise me most, most shall he find me to blame at a great need, and to whom I should be most debonair shall I be most felon, and that shall be at one time."

"Fair brother," said she to Perceval, "it befell after a forty year after the passion of Jesu Christ that Nacien, the brother-in-law of King Mordrains, was borne into a town more than fourteen days' journey from his country, by the commandment of Our Lord, into an isle, into the parts of the West that men cleped the Isle of Turnance.

"So befell it that he found this ship at the entry of a rock, and he found the bed and this sword as we have heard now. Not for than he had not so much hardiness to draw it, and there he dwelled an eight days, and at the ninth day there fell a great wind which departed him out of the isle and brought him to another isle by a rock, and there he found the greatest giant that ever man might see.

"Therewith came that horrible giant to slay him, and then he looked about him and might not flee, and he had nothing to defend him with. So he ran to his sword, and when he saw it naked he praised it much, and then he shook it, and therewith he brake it in

the midst.

"Ah," said Nacien, 'the thing that I most praised ought I now most to blame,' and therewith he threw the pieces of his sword over his bed. And after he leapt over the board to fight with the giant and slew him.

"And anon he entered into the ship again and the wind arose and drove him through the sea, that by adventure he came to another ship where King Mordrains was, which had been tempted full evil with a fiend in the Port of Perilous Rock. And when that one saw the other they made great joy of other, and either told other of their adventure and how the sword failed him at his most need

"When Mordrains saw the sword he praised it much: 'But the breaking was not to do but by wickedness of thy selfward, for thou art in some sin.' And there he took the sword and set the pieces together, and they soldered as fair as ever they were to-fore, and there put he the sword in the sheath and laid it down on the bed.

"Then heard they a voice that said, 'Go out of this ship a little while and enter into the other, for dread ye fall in deadly sin, for an ye be found in deadly sin ye may not escape but perish,' and so they went into the other ship.

"And as Nacien went over the board he was smitten with a sword on the right foot, that he fell down noseling to the ship's board, and therewith he said, 'O God, how am I hurt.'

"And then there came a voice and said, 'Take thou that for thy forfeit that thou didst in drawing of this sword. Therefor thou receivest a wound, for thou were never worthy to handle it, as the writing maketh mention.'

"In the name of God," said Galahad, "ye are right wise of these works."

CHAPTER V. *How King Pelles was smitten through both thighs because he drew the sword, and other marvellous histories.*

“SIR, SAID SHE, “there was a king that hight Pelles, the maimed king. And while he might ride he supported much Christendom and Holy Church. So upon a day he hunted in a wood of his which lasted unto the sea, and at the last he lost his hounds and his knights save only one, and there he and his knight went till that they came toward Ireland, and there he found the ship. And when he saw the letters and understood them, yet he entered, for he was right perfect of his life, but his knight had none hardiness to enter.

“And there found he this sword and drew it out as much as ye may see. So therewith entered a spear wherewith he was smitten him through both the thighs, and never sith might he be healed, nor nought shall to-fore we come to him. Thus,” said she, “was not King Pelles, your grandsire, maimed for his hardiness?”

“In the name of God, damosel,” said Galahad.

So they went toward the bed to behold all about it, and above the head there hung two swords. Also there were two spindles which were as white as any snow, and other that were as red as blood, and other above green as any emerald. Of these three colours were the spindles, and of natural colour within, and without any painting.

“These spindles,” said the damosel, “were when sinful Eve came to gather fruit, for which Adam and she were put out of paradise. She took with her the bough on which the apple hung on. Then perceived she that the branch was fair and green, and she remembered her the loss which came from the tree. Then she thought to keep the branch as long as she might, and for she had no coffer to keep it in, she put it in the earth.

“So by the will of Our Lord the branch grew to a great tree within a little while and was as white as any snow, branches, boughs, and leaves. That was a token a maiden planted it. But after, God came to Adam and bade him know his wife fleshly as nature required. So lay Adam with his wife under the same tree, and anon the tree which was white was full green as any grass, and all that came out of it, and

in the same time that they meddled<sup>1</sup> together, there was Abel begotten. Thus was the tree long of green colour.

“And so it befell many days after, under the same tree Cain slew Abel, whereof befell great marvel. For anon as Abel had received the death under the green tree, it lost the green colour and became red, and that was in tokening of the blood. And anon all the plants died thereof, but the tree grew and waxed marvellously fair, and it was the fairest tree and the most delectable that any man might behold and see, and so died the plants that grew out of it to-fore that Abel was slain under it.

“So long dured the tree till that Solomon, King David’s son, reigned and held the land after his father. This Solomon was wise and knew all the virtues of stones and trees, and so he knew the course of the stars and many other divers things.

“This Solomon had an evil wife, wherethrough he weened that there had been no good woman, and so he despised them in his books. So answered a voice him once: ‘Solomon, if heaviness come to a man by a woman, ne reck thou never<sup>2</sup>, for yet shall there come a woman whereof there shall come greater joy to man an hundred times more than this heaviness giveth sorrow, and that woman shall be born of thy lineage.

“Tho when Solomon heard these words he held himself but a fool, and the truth he perceived by old books. Also the Holy Ghost showed him the coming of the glorious Virgin Mary. Then asked he of the voice if it should be in the yard<sup>3</sup> of his lineage.

“‘Nay,’ said the voice, ‘but there shall come a man which shall be a maid, and the last of your blood, and he shall be as good a knight as Duke Joshua, thy brother-in-law.’”

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<sup>1</sup>meddled: mixed, mingled

<sup>2</sup>ne reck thou never: never mind

<sup>3</sup>yard: branch, shoot

CHAPTER VI. *How Solomon took David's sword by the counsel of his wife, and of other matters marvellous.*

“NOW HAVE I certified thee of that thou stookest in doubt. Then was Solomon glad that there should come any such of his lineage, but ever he marvelled and studied who that should be and what his name might be. His wife perceived that he studied and thought she would know it at some season, and so she waited her time and asked of him the cause of his studying, and there he told her altogether how the voice told him.

“‘Well,’ said she, ‘I shall let make a ship of the best wood and most durable that men may find.’

So Solomon sent for all the carpenters of the land, and the best. And when they had made the ship the lady said to Solomon, ‘Sir,’ said she, ‘since it is so that this knight ought to pass all knights of chivalry which have been to-fore him and shall come after him, moreover I shall tell you,’ said she, ‘ye shall go into Our Lord’s temple, where is King David’s sword, your father, the which is the marvelloust and the sharpest that ever was taken in any knight’s hand.

“‘Therefore take that, and take off the pommel, and thereto make ye a pommel of precious stones, that it be so subtly made that no man perceive it but that they be all one, and after make there an hilt so marvellously and wonderly that no man may know it, and after make a marvellous sheath. And when ye have made all this I shall let make a girdle thereto, such as shall please me.’

“All this King Solomon did let make as she devised, both the ship and all the remnant. And when the ship was ready in the sea to sail, the lady let make a great bed and marvellous rich and set her upon the bed’s head, covered with silk, and laid the sword at the feet, and the girdles were of hemp, and therewith the king was angry.

“‘Sir, wit ye well,’ said she, ‘that I have none so high a thing which were worthy to sustain so high a sword, and a maid shall bring other

knights thereto, but I wot not when it shall be, nor what time.’ And there she let make a covering to the ship, of cloth of silk that should never rot for no manner of weather.

“Yet went that lady and made a carpenter to come to the tree which Abel was slain under. ‘Now,’ said she, ‘carve me out of this tree as much wood as will make me a spindle.’

“‘Ah madam,’ said he, ‘this is the tree the which our first mother planted.’

“‘Do it,’ said she, ‘or else I shall destroy thee.’

“Anon as he began to work there came out drops of blood, and then would he have left, but she would not suffer him, and so he took away as much wood as might make a spindle, and so she made him to take as much of the green tree and of the white tree. And when these three spindles were shapen she made them to be fastened upon the selar<sup>1</sup> of the bed.

“When Solomon saw this, he said to his wife, ‘Ye have done marvellously, for though all the world were here right now, he could not devise wherefore all this was made, but Our Lord Himself, and thou that hast done it wottest not what it shall betoken.’

“‘Now let it be,’ said she, ‘for ye shall hear tidings sooner than ye ween.’

“Now shall ye hear a wonderful tale of King Solomon and his wife.”

CHAPTER VII. *A wonderful tale of King Solomon and his wife.*

“THAT NIGHT LAY Solomon before the ship with little fellowship. And when he was asleep him thought there came from heaven a great company of angels and alighted into the ship and took water which

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<sup>1</sup>selar: canopy

was brought by an angel in a vessel of silver and sprent<sup>1</sup> all the ship. And after he came to the sword and drew letters on the hilt, and after went to the ship's board and wrote there other letters which said: 'Thou man that wilt enter within me, beware that thou be full within the faith, for I ne am but Faith and Belief.'

"When Solomon espied these letters he was abashed so that he durst not enter and so drew him aback, and the ship was anon shoven in the sea, and he went so fast that he lost sight of him within a little while.

"And then a little voice said, 'Solomon, the last knight of thy lineage shall rest in this bed.'

"Then went Solomon and awaked his wife and told her of the adventures of the ship."

Now saith the history that a great while the three fellows beheld the bed and the three spindles. Then they were at certain that they were of natural colours without painting. Then they lift up a cloth which was above the ground and there found a rich purse by seeming, and Perceval took it and found therein a writ, and so he read it and devised the manner of the spindles and of the ship, whence it came and by whom it was made.

"Now," said Galahad, "where shall we find the gentlewoman that shall make new girdles to the sword?"

"Fair sir," said Perceval's sister, "dismay you not, for by the leave of God I shall let make a girdle<sup>2</sup> to the sword, such one as shall long thereto." And then she opened a box and took out girdles which were seemly wrought with golden threads, and upon that were set full precious stones and a rich buckle of gold. "Lo, lords," said she, "here is a girdle that ought to be set about the sword. And wit ye well the greatest part of this girdle was made of my hair, which I loved well while that I was a woman of the world. But as soon as I wist that this

adventure was ordained me, I clipped off my hair and made this girdle in the name of God."

"Ye be well found," said Sir Bors, "for certes ye have put us out of great pain, wherein we should have entered ne had your tidings been."

Then went the gentlewoman and set it on the girdle of the sword. "Now," said the fellowship, "what is the name of the sword, and what shall we call it?"

"Truly," said she, "the name of the sword is the Sword with the Strange Girdles, and the sheath, Mover of Blood, for no man that hath blood in him ne shall never see the one part of the sheath which was made of the Tree of Life."

Then they said to Galahad, "In the name of Jesu Christ, and pray you that ye gird you with this sword, which hath been desired so much in the realm of Logris."<sup>3</sup>

"Now let me begin," said Galahad, "to grip this sword for to give you courage, but wit ye well it longeth no more to me than it doth to you."

And then he gripped about it with his fingers a great deal, and then she girt him about the middle with the sword.

"Now reck I not though I die, for now I hold me one of the blessed maidens of the world, which hath made the worthiest knight of the world."

"Damosel," said Galahad, "ye have done so much that I shall be your knight all the days of my life."

Then they went from that ship and went to the other. And anon the wind drove them into the sea a great pace, but they had no victuals, but it befell that they came on the morn to a castle that men call Carteloise, that was in the marches of Scotland. And when they

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<sup>1</sup>sprent: sprinkled

<sup>2</sup>If you let make a girdle, you cause a girdle to be made.

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<sup>3</sup>If the use of *and* in this sentence (and in several like it) has caught your interest, it answers to 11.a. of the *OED*'s definition of *and*: "Continuing a narration from a previous sentence, expressed or understood."

had passed the port, the gentlewoman said, "Lords, here be men arriven that, an they wist that ye were of King Arthur's court, ye should be assailed anon."

"Damosel," said Galahad, "He that cast us out of the rock shall deliver us from them."

CHAPTER VIII. *How Galahad and his fellows came to a castle and how they were fought withal and how they slew their adversaries, and other matters.*

SO IT BEFELL as they spoke thus there came a squire by them and asked what they were, and they said they were of King Arthur's house.

"Is that sooth?" said he. "Now by my head," said he, "ye be ill arrayed," and then turned he again unto the cliff fortress.

And within a while they heard an horn blow. Then a gentlewoman came to them and asked them of whence they were, and they told her. "Fair lords," said she, "for God's love turn again if ye may, for ye be come unto your death."

"Nay," they said, "we will not turn again, for He shall help us in whose service we be entered in."

Then as they stood talking there came knights well armed and bade them yield them or else to die. "That yielding," said they, "shall be noyous to you." And therewith they let their horses run, and Sir Perceval smote the foremost to the earth and took his horse and mounted thereupon, and the same did Galahad. Also Bors served another so, for they had no horses in that country, for they left their horses when they took their ship in other countries.

And so when they were horsed then began they to set upon them, and they of the castle fled into the strong fortress, and the three knights after them into the castle and so alighted on foot and with their swords slew them down and gat into the hall. Then when they beheld the great multitude of people that they had slain, they held

themselves great sinners. "Certes," said Bors, "I ween an God had loved them that we should not have had power to have slain them thus. But they have done so much against Our Lord that He would not suffer them to reign no longer."

"Say ye not so," said Galahad, "for if they misdid against God, the vengeance is not ours, but to Him which hath power thereof."

So came there out of a chamber a good man which was a priest and bare God's body in a cup. And when he saw them which lay dead in the hall he was all abashed, and Galahad did off his helm and kneeled down, and so did his two fellows. "Sir," said they, "have ye no dread of us, for we be of King Arthur's court."

Then asked the good man how they were slain so suddenly, and they told it him. "Truly," said the good man, "an ye might live as long as the world might endure, ne might ye have done so great an alms-deed<sup>1</sup> as this."

"Sir," said Galahad, "I repent me much, inasmuch as they were christened."

"Nay, repent you not," said he, "for they were not christened, and I shall tell you how that I wot of this castle. Here was Lord Earl Hernox not but one year, and he had three sons, good knights of arms, and a daughter, the fairest gentlewoman that men knew. So those three knights loved their sister so sore that they brent in love, and so they lay by her, maugre her head<sup>2</sup>. And for she cried to her father they slew her and took their father and put him in prison and wounded him nigh to the death, but a cousin of hers rescued him.

"And then did they great untruth: they slew clerks and priests and made beat down chapels<sup>3</sup>, that Our Lord's service might not be served nor said. And this same day her father sent to me for to be

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<sup>1</sup>alms-deed: act of charity

<sup>2</sup>maugre her head: notwithstanding who she was

<sup>3</sup>made beat down chapels: had chapels destroyed

confessed and houselled<sup>1</sup>, but such shame had never man as I had this day with the three brethren, but the earl bade me suffer, for he said they should not long endure, for three servants of Our Lord should destroy them, and now it is brought to an end. And by this may ye wit that Our Lord is not displeased with your deeds.”

“Certes,” said Galahad, “an it had not pleased Our Lord, never should we have slain so many men in so little a while.”

And then they brought the Earl Hernox out of prison into the midst of the hall, that knew Galahad anon, and yet he saw him never afore but by revelation of Our Lord.

CHAPTER IX. *How the three knights, with Perceval's sister, came unto the same forest and of an hart and four lions and other things.*

THEN BEGAN HE to weep right tenderly and said, “Long have I abiden your coming, but for God's love hold me in your arms, that my soul may depart out of my body in so good a man's arms as ye be.”

“Gladly,” said Galahad.

And then one said on high, that all heard: “Galahad, well hast thou avenged me on God's enemies. Now behoveth thee to go to the Maimed King as soon as thou mayest, for he shall receive by thee health which he hath abiden so long.” And therewith the soul departed from the body, and Galahad made him to be buried as him ought to be.

Right so departed the three knights and Perceval's sister with them, and so they came into a waste forest, and there they saw afore them a white hart which four lions led. Then they took them to assent for to follow after<sup>2</sup> for to know whither they repaired, and so

they rode after a great pace till that they came to a valley, and thereby was an hermitage where a good man dwelled, and the hart and the lions entered also. So when they saw all this they turned to the chapel and saw the good man in a religious weed and in the armour of Our Lord, for he would sing mass of the Holy Ghost, and so they entered in and heard mass. And at the secrets of the mass they three saw the hart become a man, the which marvelled them, and set him upon the altar in a rich siege, and saw the four lions were changed, the one to the form of a man, the other to the form of a lion, and the third to an eagle, and the fourth was changed unto an ox.

Then took they their siege where the hart sat and went out through a glass window, and there was nothing perished nor broken, and they heard a voice say, “In such a manner entered the Son of God in the womb of a maid Mary, whose virginity ne was perished ne hurt.” And when they heard these words they fell down to the earth and were astonied, and therewith was a great clearness.

And when they were come to theirselves again they went to the good man and prayed him that he would say them truth. “What thing have ye seen?” said he. And they told him all that they had seen. “Ah lords,” said he, “ye be welcome. Now wot I well ye be the good knights the which shall bring the Sangreal to an end, for ye be they unto whom Our Lord shall shew great secrets.

“And well ought Our Lord be signified to an hart, for the hart when he is old he waxeth young again in his white skin. Right so cometh again Our Lord from death to life, for He lost earthly flesh that was the deadly flesh, which He had taken in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, and for that cause appeared Our Lord as a white hart without spot.

“And the four that were with Him is to understand the four evangelists which set in writing a part of Jesu Christ's deeds that He did sometime when He was among you an earthly man, for wit ye

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<sup>1</sup>houselled: given the Eucharist

<sup>2</sup>When they took them to assent for to follow, they applied themselves to agreeing to follow, or, as we would say it, they agreed to follow.

well never erst<sup>1</sup> ne might no knight know the truth, for ofttimes or this Our Lord showed Him unto good men and unto good knights in likeness of an hart, but I suppose from henceforth ye shall see no more."

And then they joyed much and dwelled there all that day. And upon the morrow when they had heard mass they departed and commended the good man to God. And so they came to a castle and passed by, so there came a knight armed after them and said, "Lords, hark what I shall say to you."

CHAPTER X. *How they were desired of a strange custom, the which they would not obey, wherefore they fought and slew many knights.*

"THIS GENTLEWOMAN THAT ye lead with you is a maid?"

"Sir," said she, "a maid I am."

Then he took her by the bridle and said, "By the Holy Cross, ye shall not escape me to-fore ye have yolden the custom of this castle."

"Let her go," said Perceval. "Ye be not wise, for a maid in what place she cometh is free."

So in the meanwhile there came out a ten or twelve knights armed out of the castle, and with them came gentlewomen which held a dish of silver. And then they said, "This gentlewoman must yield us the custom of this castle."

"Sir," said a knight, "what maid passeth hereby shall give this dish full of blood of her right arm."

"Blame have ye," said Galahad, "that brought up such customs, and so God me save, I ensure you of this gentlewoman ye shall fail while that I live."

"So God me help," said Perceval, "I had liefer<sup>2</sup> be slain."

"And I also," said Sir Bors.

"By my troth," said the knight, "then shall ye die, for ye may not endure against us though ye were the best knights of the world."

Then let they run each to other, and the three fellows beat the ten knights and then set their hands to their swords and beat them down and slew them.

Then there came out of the castle a threescore knights armed. "Fair lords," said the three fellows, "have mercy on yourself and have not ado with us."

"Nay, fair lords," said the knights of the castle, "we counsel you to withdraw you, for ye be the best knights of the world, and therefore do no more, for ye have done enough. We will let you go with this harm, but we must needs have the custom."

"Certes," said Galahad, "for nought speak ye."

"Well," said they, "will ye die?"

"We be not yet come thereto," said Galahad.

Then began they to meddle together, and Galahad, with the strange girdles, drew his sword and smote on the right hand and on the left hand and slew what that ever abode him and did such marvels that there was none that saw him but weened he had been none earthly man, but a monster. And his two fellows halp him passing well, and so they held the journey everych in like hard till it was night. Then must they needs depart.

So came in a good knight and said to the three fellows, "If ye will come in to-night and take such harbour as here is, ye shall be right welcome, and we shall ensure you, by the faith of our bodies and as we be true knights, to leave you in such estate to-morrow as we find you, without any falsehood. And as soon as ye know of the custom we dare say ye will accord therefore."

"For God's love," said the gentlewoman, "go thither and spare not for me.

"Go we," said Galahad, and so they entered into the chapel.

And when they were alighted they made great joy of them. So within a while the three knights asked the custom of the castle and

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<sup>1</sup>erst: before

<sup>2</sup>liefer: rather

wherefore it was.

“What it is,” said they, “we will say you sooth.”

CHAPTER XI. *How Sir Perceval's sister bled a dish full of blood for to heal a lady, wherefore she died, and how that the body was put in a ship.*

THERE IS IN this castle a gentlewoman which we and this castle is hers, and many other. So it befell many years agone there fell upon her a malady, and when she had lain a great while she fell unto a mesel<sup>1</sup>, and of no leech she could have no remedy. But at the last an old man said an she might have a dish full of blood of a maid and a clean virgin in will and in work, and a king's daughter, that blood should be her health and for to anoint her withal, and for this thing was this custom made.”

“Now,” said Perceval's sister, “fair knights, I see well that this gentlewoman is but dead.”

“Certes,” said Galahad, “an ye bleed so much ye may die.”

“Truly,” said she, “an I die for to heal her I shall get me great worship and soul's health and worship to my lineage, and better is one harm than twain. And therefore there shall be no more battle, but to-morn I shall yield you your custom of this castle.” And then there was great joy more than there was to-fore, for else had there been mortal war upon the morn. Notwithstanding, she would none other, whether they wold or nold.

That night were the three fellows eased with the best, and on the morn they heard mass, and Sir Perceval's sister bade bring forth the sick lady. So she was, the which was evil at ease. Then said she, “Who shall let me blood?”

So one came forth and let her blood, and she bled so much that the dish was full. Then she lift up her hand and blessed her, and then she said to the lady, “Madam, I am come to the death for to make you whole, for God's love pray for me.” With that she fell in a swoon.

Then Galahad and his two fellows start up to her and lift her up and staunched her, but she had bled so much that she might not live.

Then she said when she was awaked, “Fair brother Perceval, I die for the healing of this lady, so 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 let me go as adventure will lead me, and as soon as ye three come to the City of Sarras, there to encheve the Holy Grail, ye shall find me under a tower arrived, and there bury me in the spiritual place. For I say you so much: there Galahad shall be buried, and ye also, in the same place.

Then Perceval understood these words and granted it her, weeping. And then said a voice: “Lords and fellows, to-morrow at the hour of prime ye three shall depart everych from other, till the adventure bring you to the Maimed King.”

Then asked she her Saviour, and as soon as she had received it the soul departed from the body. So the same day was the lady healed, when she was anointed withal.

Then Sir Perceval made a letter of all that she had holpen them as in strange adventures and put it in her right hand and so laid her in a barge and covered it with black silk, and so the wind arose and drove the barge from the land, and all knights beheld it till it was out of their sight. Then they drew all to the castle, and so forthwith there fell a sudden tempest and a thunder, lightning, and rain, as all the earth would have broken. So half the castle turned up-so-down. So it passed evensong or the tempest was ceased.

Then they saw afore them a knight armed and wounded hard in the body and in the head, that said, “O God, succour me, for now it is need.”

After this knight came another knight and a dwarf, which cried to them afar, “Stand, ye may not escape.”

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<sup>1</sup>mesel: leprosy or a similarly disfiguring skin disease or, more generally, an affliction (*OED*)

"Then the wounded knight held up his hands to God that he should not die in such tribulation.

"Truly," said Galahad, "I shall succour him for His sake that he calleth upon."

"Sir," said Bors, "I shall do it, for it is not for you, for he is but one knight."

"Sir," said he, "I grant."

So Sir Bors took his horse and commended him to God and rode after to rescue the wounded knight. Now turn we to the two fellows.

CHAPTER XII. *How Galahad and Perceval found in a castle many tombs of maidens that had bled to death.*

NOW SAITH THE story that all night Galahad and Perceval were in a chapel in their prayers for to save Sir Bors. So on the morrow they dressed them in their harness toward the castle, to wit what was fallen of them therein.

And when they came there they found neither man nor woman that he ne was dead by the vengeance of Our Lord. With that they heard a voice that said: "This vengeance is for blood-shedding of maidens."

Also they found at the end of the chapel a churchyard, and therein might they see a three score fair tombs, and that place was so fair and so delectable that it seemed them there had been none tempest, for there lay the bodies of all the good maidens which were martyred for the sick lady's sake. Also they found the names of everych, and of what blood they were come, and all were of kings' blood, and twelve of them were kings' daughters.

Then they departed and went into a forest. "Now," said Perceval unto Galahad, "we must depart, so pray we Our Lord that we may meet together in short time." Then they did off their helms and kissed together and wept at their departing.

CHAPTER XIII. *How Sir Lancelot entered into the ship where Sir Perceval's sister lay dead, and how he met with Sir Galahad, his son.*

NOW SAITH THE history that when Lancelot was come to the water of Mortoise, as it is rehearsed before, he was in great peril, and so he laid him down and slept and took the adventure that God would send him. So when he was asleep there came a vision unto him and said, "Lancelot, arise up and take thine armour, and enter into the first ship that thou shalt find."

And when he heard these words he start up and saw great clearness about him. And then he lift up his hand and blessed him and so took his arms and made him ready, and so by adventure he came by a strand and found a ship the which was without sail or oar. And as soon as he was within the ship there he felt the most sweetness that ever he felt, and he was fulfilled with all thing that he thought on or desired. Then he said, "Fair sweet Father, Jesu Christ, I wot not in what joy I am, for this joy passeth all earthly joys that ever I was in."

And so in this joy he laid him down to the ship's board and slept till day. And when he awoke he found there a fair bed and therein lying a gentlewoman dead, the which was Sir Perceval's sister. And as Lancelot devised her, he espied in her right hand a writ, the which he read, the which told him all the adventures that ye have heard tofore and of what lineage she was come. So with this gentlewoman Sir Lancelot was a month and more. If ye would ask how he lived, He that fed the people of Israel with manna in the desert, so was he fed, for every day when he had said his prayers he was sustained with the grace of the Holy Ghost.

So on a night he went to play him by the water side, for he was somewhat weary of the ship. And then he listened and heard an horse come, and one riding upon him. And when he came nigh he seemed a knight. And so he let him pass and went thereas the ship was, and there he alighted and took the saddle and the bridle and put the horse from him and went into the ship.

And then Lancelot dressed unto him and said, "Ye be welcome."

And he answered and saluted him again and asked him, "What is your name? For much my heart giveth unto you."

"Truly," said he, "my name is Lancelot du Lake."

"Sir," said he, "then be ye welcome, for ye were the beginner of me in this world."

"Ah," said he, "are ye Galahad?"

"Yea, forsooth," said he, and so he kneeled down and asked him his blessing and after took off his helm and kissed him. And there was great joy between them, for there is no tongue can tell the joy that they made either of other, and many a friendly word spoken between, as kin would, the which is no need here to be rehearsed. And there everych told other of their adventures and marvels that were befallen to them in many journeys sith that they departed from the court.

Anon, as Galahad saw the gentlewoman dead in the bed, he knew her well enough and told great worship of her, that she was the best maid living, and it was great pity of her death.

But when Lancelot heard how the marvellous sword was gotten and who made it and all the marvels rehearsed afore, then he prayed Galahad, his son, that he would show him the sword, and so he did, and anon he kissed the pommel and the hilt and the scabbard. "Truly," said Lancelot, "never erst knew I of so high adventures done and so marvellous and strange."

So dwelt Lancelot and Galahad within that ship half a year and served God daily and nightly with all their power, and often they arrived in isles far from folk where there repaired none but wild beasts, and there they found many strange adventures and perilous, which they brought to an end. But for those adventures were with wild beasts, and not in the quest of the Sangreal, therefore the tale maketh here no mention thereof, for it would be too long to tell of all those adventures that befell them.

CHAPTER XIV. *How a knight brought unto Sir Galahad a horse and bade him come from his father, Sir Lancelot.*

SO AFTER, ON a Monday, it befell that they arrived in the edge of a forest to-fore a cross, and then saw they a knight armed all in white and was richly horsed and led in his right hand a white horse, and so he came to the ship and saluted the two knights on the High Lord's behalf and said, "Galahad, sir, ye have been long enough with your father, come out of the ship, and start upon this horse, and go where the adventures shall lead thee in the quest of the Sangreal."

Then he went to his father and kissed him sweetly and said, "Fair sweet father, I wot not when I shall see you more till I see the body of Jesu Christ."

"I pray you," said Lancelot, "pray ye to the High Father that He hold me in His service."

And so he took his horse, and there they heard a voice that said, "Think for to do well, for the one shall never see the other before the dreadful day of doom."

"Now, son Galahad," said Lancelot, "since we shall depart and never see other, I pray to the High Father to conserve me and you both."

"Sir," said Galahad, "no prayer availeth so much as yours. And therewith Galahad entered into the forest.

And the wind arose and drove Lancelot more than a month throughout the sea, where he slept but little, but prayed to God that he might see some tidings of the Sangreal. So it befell on a night, at midnight, he arrived afore a castle, on the back side, which was rich and fair, and there was a postern opened toward the sea and was open without any keeping, save two lions kept the entry, and the moon shone clear. Anon Sir Lancelot heard a voice that said, "Lancelot, go out of this ship and enter into the castle, where thou shalt see a great part of thy desire."

Then he ran to his arms and so armed him and so went to the gate and saw the lions. Then set he hand to his sword and drew it. Then

there came a dwarf suddenly and smote him on the arm so sore that the sword fell out of his hand. Then heard he a voice say, "O man of evil faith and poor belief, wherefore trowest thou more on thy harness than in thy Maker, for He might more avail thee than thine armour, in whose service that thou art set."

Then said Lancelot, "Fair Father, Jesu Christ, I thank thee of Thy great mercy that Thou reprovest me of my misdeed. Now see I well that Ye hold me for Your servant."

Then took he again his sword and put it up in his sheath and made a cross in his forehead and came to the lions, and they made semblaunt to do him harm. Notwithstanding, he passed by them without hurt and entered into the castle to the chief fortress, and there were they all at rest.

Then Lancelot entered in so armed, for he found no gate nor door but it was open. And at the last he found a chamber whereof the door was shut, and he set his hand thereto to have opened it, but he might not.

CHAPTER XV. *How Sir Lancelot was to-fore the door of the chamber wherein the Holy Sangreal was.*

THEN HE ENFORCED him mickle to undo the door. Then he listened and heard a voice which sang so sweetly that it seemed none earthly thing, and him thought the voice said, "Joy and honour be to the Father of Heaven."

Then Lancelot kneeled down to-fore the chamber, for well wist he that there was the Sangreal within that chamber. Then said he, "Fair sweet Father, Jesu Christ, if ever I did thing that pleased Thee, Lord, for Thy pity never have me not in despite for my sins done aforetime, and that Thou show me something of that I seek."

And with that he saw the chamber door open, and there came out a great clearness, that the house was as bright as all the torches of the world had been there. So came he to the chamber door and

would have entered. And anon a voice said to him: "Flee, Lancelot, and enter not, for thou oughtest not to do it, and if thou enter thou shalt forthink it."

Then he withdrew him aback right heavy. Then looked he up in the midst of the chamber and saw a table of silver and the Holy Vessel, covered with red samite, and many angels about it, whereof one held a candle of wax burning and the other held a cross and the ornaments of an altar. And before the Holy Vessel he saw a good man clothed as a priest, and it seemed that he was at the sacring of the mass.

And it seemed to Lancelot that above the priest's hands were three men, whereof the two put the youngest by likeness between the priest's hands, and so he lift it up right high, and it seemed to show so to the people. And then Lancelot marvelled not a little, for him thought the priest was so greatly charged of the figure that him seemed that he should fall to the earth.

And when he saw none about him that would help him, then came he to the door a great pace, and said, "Fair Father, Jesu Christ, ne take it for no sin though I help the good man which hath great need of help."

Right so entered he into the chamber and came toward the table of silver, and when he came nigh he felt a breath that him thought it was intermeddled with fire, which smote him so sore in the visage that him thought it brent his visage, and therewith he fell to the earth and had no power to arise, as he that was so araged<sup>1</sup> that had lost the power of his body and his hearing and his seeing.

Then felt he many hands about him, which took him up and bare him out of the chamber door without any amending of his swoon and left him there, seeming dead to all people.

So upon the morrow when it was fair day they within were arisen and found Lancelot lying afore the chamber door. All they marvelled

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<sup>1</sup>araged: enraged

how that he came in, and so they looked upon him and felt his pulse to wit whether there were any life in him, and so they found life in him, but he might not stand nor stir no member that he had.

And so they took him by every part of the body and bare him into a chamber and laid him in a rich bed, far from all folk, and so he lay four days. Then the one said he was alive and the other said, "Nay."

"In the name of God," said an old man, "for I do you verily to wit he is not dead, but he is so full of life as the mightiest of you all, and therefore I counsel you that he be well kept till God send him life again."

CHAPTER XVI. *How Sir Lancelot had lain four-and-twenty days and as many nights as a dead man and other divers matters.*

IN SUCH MANNER they kept Lancelot four-and-twenty days and all so many nights, that ever he lay still as a dead man, and at the twenty-fifth day befell him after midday that he opened his eyes. And when he saw folk he made great sorrow and said, "Why have ye awaked me, for I was more at ease than I am now. O Jesu Christ, who might be so blessed that might see openly thy great marvels of secretness there where no sinner may be!"

"What have ye seen?" said they about him.

"I have seen," said he, "so great marvels that no tongue may tell and more than any heart can think, and had not my son been here afore me I had seen much more."

Then they told him how he had lain there four-and-twenty days and nights. Then him thought it was punishment for the four-and-twenty years that he had been a sinner, wherefore Our Lord put him in penance four-and-twenty days and nights. Then looked Sir Lancelot afore him and saw the hair which he had borne nigh a year, for that he for-thought him right much that he had broken his promise unto the hermit, which he had avowed to do.

Then they asked how it stood with him. "Forsooth," said he, "I am

whole of body, thanked be Our Lord. Therefore, sirs, for God's love tell me where I am."

Then said they all that he was in the castle of Carbonek.

Therewith came a gentlewoman and brought him a shirt of small linen cloth, but he changed not there, but took the hair to him again. "Sir," said they, "the quest of the Sangreal is achieved now right in you, that never shall ye see of the Sangreal no more than ye have seen."

"Now I thank God," said Lancelot, "of His great mercy of that I have seen, for it sufficeth me, for as I suppose no man in this world hath lived better than I have done to encheve that I have done." And therewith he took the hair and clothed him in it, and above that he put a linen shirt and after a robe of scarlet, fresh and new. And when he was so arrayed they marvelled all, for they knew him that he was Lancelot, the good knight. And then they said all, "O my lord Sir Lancelot, be that ye?"

And he said, "Truly I am he."

Then came word to King Pelles that the knight that had lain so long dead was Sir Lancelot. Then was the king right glad and went to see him. And when Lancelot saw him come he dressed him against him, and there made the king great joy of him.

And there the king told him tidings that his fair daughter was dead. Then Lancelot was right heavy of it and said, "Sir, me forthinketh the death of your daughter, for she was a full fair lady, fresh and young. And well I wot she bare the best knight that is now on the earth, or that ever was sith God was born."

So the king held him there four days, and on the morrow he took his leave at King Pelles and at all the fellowship and thanked them of their great labour.

Right so as they sat at their dinner in the chief salle, then was so befallen that the Sangreal had fulfilled the table with all manner of meats that any heart might think, so as they sat they saw all the doors and the windows of the place were shut without man's hand, whereof they were all abashed, and none wist what to do. And then

it happed suddenly a knight came to the chief door and knocked and cried, "Undo the door." But they would not. And ever he cried, "Undo," but they would not.

And at last it noyed them so much that the king himself arose and came to a window there where the knight called. Then he said, "Sir knight, ye shall not enter at this time while the Sangreal is here, and therefore go into another, for certes ye be none of the knights of the quest, but one of them which hath served the fiend and hast left the service of Our Lord."

And he was passing wroth at the king's words.

"Sir knight," said the king, "sith ye would so fain enter, say me of what country ye be."

"Sir," said he, "I am of the realm of Logris, and my name is Ector de Maris, and brother unto my lord, Sir Lancelot."

"In the name of God," said the king, "me forthinketh of what I have said, for your brother is here within."

And when Ector de Maris understood that his brother was there, for he was the man in the world that he most dread and loved, and then he said, "Ah God, now doubleth my sorrow and shame. Full truly said the good man of the hill unto Gawain and to me of our dreams."

Then went he out of the court as fast as his horse might and so throughout the castle.

CHAPTER XVII. *How Sir Lancelot returned towards Logris and of other adventures which he saw in the way.*

THEN KING PELLÉS came to Sir Lancelot and told him tidings of his brother, whereof he was sorry, that he wist not what to do. So Sir Lancelot departed and took his arms and said he would go see the realm of Logris, "which I have not seen in twelve months." And therewith he commended the king to God and so rode through many realms.

And at the last he came to a white abbey, and there they made him that night great cheer, and on the morn he rose and heard mass. And afore an altar he found a rich tomb which was newly made, and then he took heed and saw the sides written with gold which said, "Here lieth King Bagdemagus of Gore, which King Arthur's nephew slew," and named him Sir Gawain.

Then was not he a little sorry, for Lancelot loved him much more than any other, and had it been any other than Gawain he should not have escaped from death to life, and said to himself, "Ah Lord God, this is a great hurt unto King Arthur's court, the loss of such a man."

And then he departed and came to the abbey where Galahad did the adventure of the tombs and won the white shield with the red cross, and there had he great cheer all that night.

And on the morn he turned unto Camelot, where he found King Arthur and the queen, but many of the knights of the Round Table were slain and destroyed, more than half. And so three were come home, Ector, Gawain, and Lionel, and many other that need not to be rehearsed. And all the court was passing glad of Sir Lancelot, and the king asked him many tidings of his son Galahad. And there Lancelot told the king of his adventures that had befallen him since he departed. And also he told him of the adventures of Galahad, Perceval, and Bors, which that he knew by the letter of the dead damosel and as Galahad had told him.

"Now God would," said the king, "that they were all three here."

"That shall never be," said Lancelot, "for two of them shall ye never see, but one of them shall come again."

Now leave we this story and speak of Galahad.

CHAPTER XVIII. *How Galahad came to King Mordrains and of other matters and adventures.*

NOW, SAITH THE story, Galahad rode many journeys in vain, and at the last he came to the abbey where King Mordrains was, and when he heard that, he thought he would abide to see him. And upon the

morn, when he had heard mass, Galahad came unto King Mordrains, and anon the king saw him, which had lain blind of long time.

And then he dressed him against him and said, "Galahad, the servant of Jesu Christ, whose coming I have abiden so long, now embrace me and let me rest on thy breast, so that I may rest between thine arms, for thou art a clean virgin above all knights, as the flower of the lily in whom virginity is signified, and thou art the rose the which is the flower of all good virtues, and in colour of fire. For the fire of the Holy Ghost is taken so in thee that my flesh which was all dead of oldness is become young again." Then Galahad heard his words. Then he embraced him and all his body. Then said he, "Fair Lord Jesu Christ, now I have my will. Now I require thee, in this point that I am in, thou come and visit me." And anon Our Lord heard his prayer. Therewith the soul departed from the body.

And then Galahad put him in the earth as a king ought to be and so departed and so came into a perilous forest where he found the well the which boileth with great waves, as the tale telleth to-fore. And as soon as Galahad set his hand thereto it ceased, so that it brent no more, and the heat departed. For that it brent, it was a sign of lechery, the which was that time much used, but that heat might not abide his pure virginity, and this was taken in the country for a miracle, and so ever after was it called Galahad's well.

Then by adventure he came into the country of Gore and into the abbey where Lancelot had been to-forehand and found the tomb of King Bagdemagus, but he was founder thereof, Joseph of Arimathaea's son, and the tomb of Simeon where Lancelot had failed. Then he looked into a croft under the minster, and there he saw a tomb which brent full marvellously. Then asked he the brethren what it was.

"Sir," said they, "a marvellous adventure that may not be brought unto none end but by him that passeth of bounty and of knighthood all them of the Round Table."

"I would," said Galahad, "that ye would lead me thereto."

"Gladly," said they and so led him till a cave.

And he went down upon greces<sup>1</sup> and came nigh the tomb. And then the flaming failed, and the fire stanchd, the which many a day had been great. Then came there a voice that said, "Much are ye beholden to thank Our Lord, the which hath given you a good hour, that ye may draw out the souls of earthly pain and to put them into the joys of paradise. I am of your kindred, the which hath dwelled in this heat this three hundred winter and four-and-fifty to be purged of the sin that I did against Joseph of Arimathaea."

Then Galahad took the body in his arms and bare it into the minster. And that night lay Galahad in the abbey, and on the morn he gave him service and put him in the earth afore the high altar.

CHAPTER XIX. *How Sir Perceval and Sir Bors met with Sir Galahad, and how they came to the castle of Carbonek and other matters.*

SO DEPARTED HE from thence and commended the brethren to God, and so he rode five days till that he came to the Maimed King. And ever followed Perceval the five days, asking where he had been, and so one told him how the adventures of Logris were encheved.

So on a day it befell that they came out of a great forest, and there they met at traverse with Sir Bors, the which rode alone. It is none need to tell if they were glad, and then he saluted, and they yielded him honour and good adventure, and everych told other. Then said Bors, "It is mo than a year and an half that I ne lay ten times where men dwelled, but in wild forests and in mountains, but God was ever my comfort."

Then rode they a great while till that they came to the castle of Carbonek. And when they were entered within the castle King Pelles knew them. Then there was great joy, for they wist well by their coming that they had fulfilled the quest of the Sangreal. Then

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<sup>1</sup>greces: steps, stairs

Eliazar, King Pelles' son, brought to-fore them the broken sword wherewith Joseph was stricken through the thigh. Then Bors set his hand thereto, if that he might have soldered it again, but it would not be. Then he took it to Perceval, but he had no more power thereto than he.

"Now have ye it again," said Perceval to Galahad, "for an it be ever encheved by any bodily man, ye must do it."

And then he took the pieces and set them together and they seemed that they had never been broken, and as well as it had been first forged. And when they within espied that the adventure of the sword was encheved, then they gave the sword to Bors, for it might not be better set, for he was a good knight and a worthy man. And a little afore even the sword arose great and marvellous and was full of great heat that many men fell for dread. And anon alighted a voice among them and said, "They that ought not to sit at the table of Jesu Christ arise, for now shall very knights be fed."

So they went thence, all save King Pelles and Eliazar, his son, the which were holy men, and a maid which was his niece, and so these three fellows and they three were there, no mo. Anon they saw knights all armed came in at the hall door and did off their helms and their arms and said unto Galahad, "Sir, we have hied right much for to be with you at this table where the holy meat shall be departed."

Then said he, "Ye be welcome, but of whence be ye?"

So three of them said they were of Gaul, and other three said they were of Ireland, and the other three said they were of Denmark.

So as they sat thus there came out a bed of tree, of a chamber, the which four gentlewomen brought, and in the bed lay a good man sick and a crown of gold upon his head, and there in the midst of the place they set him down and went again their way.

Then he lift up his head, and said, "Galahad, knight, ye be welcome, for much have I desired your coming, for in such pain and in such anguish I have been long, but now I trust to God the term is come that my pain shall be allayed, that I shall pass out of this world

so as it was promised me long ago."

Therewith a voice said, "There be two among you that be not in the quest of the Sangreal, and therefore depart ye."

CHAPTER XX *How Galahad and his fellows were fed of the Holy Sangreal, and how Our Lord appeared to them, and other things.*

THEN KING PELLEs and his son departed. And therewithal beseemed them that there came a man and four angels from heaven, clothed in likeness of a bishop, and had a cross in his hand, and these four angels bare him up in a chair and set him down before the table of silver whereupon the Sangreal was, and it seemed that he had in midst of his forehead letters the which said, "See ye here Joseph, the first bishop of Christendom, the same which Our Lord succoured in the city of Sarras in the spiritual place."

Then the knights marvelled, for that bishop was dead more than three hundred year to-fore.

"O knights," said he, marvel not, for I was sometime an earthly man."

With that they heard the chamber door open, and there they saw angels, and two bare candles of wax and the third a towel and the fourth a spear which bled marvellously, that three drops fell within a box which he held with his other hand. And they set the candles upon the table and the third the towel upon the vessel and the fourth the holy spear even upright upon the vessel.

And then the bishop made semblaunt as though he would have gone to the sacring of the mass. And then he took an obley<sup>1</sup>, which was made in likeness of bread. And at the lifting up there came a figure in likeness of a child, and the visage was as red and as bright as any fire, and smote himself into the bread, so that they all saw it

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<sup>1</sup>obley: wafer

that the bread was formed of a fleshly man, and then he put it into the Holy Vessel again, and then he did that longed to a priest to do to a mass. And then he went to Galahad and kissed him, and bade him go and kiss his fellows, and so he did anon. "Now," said he, "servants of Jesu Christ, ye shall be fed afore this table with sweet meats that never knights tasted." And when he had said, he vanished away. And they set them at the table in great dread, and made their prayers.

Then looked they and saw a man come out of the Holy Vessel, that had all the signs of the passion of Jesu Christ, bleeding all openly, and said, "My knights and my servants and my true children, which be come out of deadly life into spiritual life, I will now no longer hide me from you, but ye shall see now a part of my secrets and of my hidden things. Now hold and receive the high meat which ye have so much desired." Then took he himself the Holy Vessel and came to Galahad, and he kneeled down, and there he received his Saviour, and after him so received all his fellows, and they thought it so sweet that it was marvellous to tell. Then said he to Galahad, "Son, wottest thou what I hold betwixt my hands?"

"Nay," said he, "but if ye will tell me."

"This is," said he, "the holy dish wherein I ate the lamb on Sheer-Thursday. And now hast thou seen that thou most desired to see, but yet hast thou not seen it so openly as thou shalt see it in the city of Sarras in the spiritual place. Therefore thou must go hence and bear with thee this Holy Vessel, for this night it shall depart from the realm of Logris, that it shall never be seen more here. And wottest thou wherefore? For he is not served nor worshipped to his right by them of this land, for they be turned to evil living. Therefore I shall disherit them of the honour which I have done them.

"And therefore go ye three to-morrow unto the sea, where ye shall find your ship ready, and with you take the sword with the strange girdles, and no more with you but Sir Perceval and Sir Bors. Also I will that ye take with you of the blood of this spear for to anoint the Maimed King, both his legs and all his body, and he shall have his

health."

"Sir, said Galahad, "why shall not these other fellows go with us?"

"For this cause: for right as I departed my apostles one here and another there, so I will that ye depart, and two of you shall die in my service, but one of you shall come again and tell tidings."

Then gave he them his blessing and vanished away.

CHAPTER XXI. *How Galahad anointed with the blood of the spear the Maimed King and of other adventures.*

AND GALAHAD WENT anon to the spear which lay upon the table and touched the blood with his fingers and came after to the Maimed King and anointed his legs. And therewith he clothed him anon and start upon his feet out of his bed as an whole man and thanked Our Lord that He had healed him. And that was not to the worldward, for anon he yielded him to a place of religion of white monks and was a full holy man.

That same night about midnight came a voice among them which said, "My sons and not my chief sons, my friends and not my warriors, go ye hence where ye hope best to do and as I bade you."

"Ah, thanked be Thou, Lord, that Thou wilt vouchsafe to call us, Thy sinners. Now may we well prove that we have not lost our pains."

And anon in all haste they took their harness and departed. But the three knights of Gaul, one of them hight Claudine, King Claudas' son, and the other two were great gentlemen. Then prayed Galahad to everych of them, that if they come to King Arthur's court that "they should salute my lord, Sir Lancelot, my father, and all the fellowship of the Round Table," and prayed them if that they came on that part that they should not forget it.

Right so departed Galahad, Perceval and Bors with him, and so they rode three days, and then they came to a rivage and found the ship whereof the tale speaketh of to-fore. And when they came to the

board they found in the midst the table of silver which they had left with the Maimed King and the Sangreal, which was covered with red samite. Then were they glad to have such things in their fellowship, and so they entered and made great reverence thereto, and Galahad fell in his prayer long time to Our Lord, that at what time he asked, that he should pass out of this world. So much he prayed till a voice said to him: "Galahad, thou shalt have thy request, and when thou askest the death of thy body thou shalt have it, and then shalt thou find the life of the soul."

Perceval heard this and prayed him, of fellowship that was between them, to tell him wherefore he asked such things. "That shall I tell you," said Galahad. "The other day when we saw a part of the adventures of the Sangreal, I was in such a joy of heart that I trow never man was that was earthly. And therefore I wot well, when my body is dead my soul shall be in great joy to see the blessed Trinity every day and the majesty of Our Lord, Jesu Christ."

So long were they in the ship that they said to Galahad, "Sir, in this bed ought ye to lie, for so saith the scripture." And so he laid him down and slept a great while, and when he awaked he looked afore him and saw the city of Sarras. And as they would have landed they saw the ship wherein Perceval had put his sister in.

"Truly," said Perceval, "in the name of God, well hath my sister holden us covenant."

Then took they out of the ship the table of silver, and he took it to Perceval and to Bors, to go to-fore, and Galahad came behind. And right so they went to the city, and at the gate of the city they saw an old man crooked. Then Galahad called him and bade him help to bear this heavy thing. "Truly," said the old man, "it is ten year ago that I might not go but with crutches."

"Care thou not," said Galahad, "and arise up and shew thy good will." And so he assayed and found himself as whole as ever he was. Then ran he to the table and took one part against Galahad. And anon arose there great noise in the city that a cripple was made whole by knights marvellous that entered into the city.

Then anon after, the three knights went to the water and brought up into the palace Perceval's sister and buried her as richly as a king's daughter ought to be. And when the king of the city, which was cleped Estorause, saw the fellowship, he asked them of whence they were and what thing it was that they had brought upon the table of silver. And they told him the truth of the Sangreal and the power which that God had sent there.

Then the king was a tyrant and was come of the line of paynims and took them and put them in prison in a deep hole.

CHAPTER XXII. *How they were fed with the Sangreal while they were in prison, and how Galahad was made king.*

BUT AS SOON as they were there Our Lord sent them the Sangreal, through whose grace they were always fulfilled while that they were in prison. So at the year's end it befell that this King Estorause lay sick and felt that he should die. Then he sent for the three knights, and they came afore him, and he cried them mercy of that he had done to them, and they forgave it him goodly, and he died anon.

When the king was dead all the city was dismayed and wist not who might be their king. Right so as they were in counsel there came a voice among them and bade them choose the youngest knight of them three to be their king, "For he shall well maintain you and all yours."

So they made Galahad king by all the assent of the holy city, and else they would have slain him. And when he was come to behold the land, he let make above the table of silver a chest of gold and of precious stones, that hilled<sup>1</sup> the Holy Vessel. And every day early the three fellows would come afore it and make their prayers.

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<sup>1</sup>hilled: covered, covered up, protected

Now at the year's end and the self<sup>1</sup> day after Galahad had borne the crown of gold, he arose up early, and his fellows, and came to the palace and saw to-fore them the Holy Vessel and a man kneeling on his knees in likeness of a bishop, that had about him a great fellowship of angels, as it had been Jesu Christ himself, and then he arose and began a mass of Our Lady.

And when he came to the sacrament of the mass, and had done, anon he called Galahad and said to him, "Come forth, the servant of Jesu Christ, and thou shalt see that thou hast much desired to see."

And then he began to tremble right hard when the deadly flesh began to behold the spiritual things. Then he held up his hands toward heaven and said, "Lord, I thank thee, for now I see that that hath been my desire many a day. Now, blessed Lord, would I not longer live, if it might please thee, Lord."

And therewith the good man took Our Lord's body betwixt his hands and proffered it to Galahad, and he received it right gladly and meekly.

"Now wottest thou what I am?" said the good man.

"Nay," said Galahad.

"I am Joseph of Arimathaea, the which Our Lord hath sent here to thee to bear thee fellowship, and wottest thou wherefore that he hath sent me more than any other? For thou hast resembled me in two things, in that thou hast seen the marvels of the Sangreal, in that thou hast been a clean maiden, as I have been and am."

And when he had said these words Galahad went to Perceval and kissed him and commended him to God, and so he went to Sir Bors and kissed him and commended him to God and said, "Fair lord, salute me to my lord, Sir Lancelot, my father, and as soon as ye see him, bid him remember of this unstable world."

And therewith he kneeled down to-fore the table and made his prayers, and then suddenly his soul departed to Jesu Christ, and a

great multitude of angels bare his soul up to heaven, that the two fellows might well behold it. Also the two fellows saw come from heaven an hand, but they saw not the body. And then it came right to the Vessel and took it and the spear and so bare it up to heaven. Sithen was there never man so hardy to say that he had seen the Sangreal.

CHAPTER XXIII. *Of the sorrow that Perceval and Bors made when Galahad was dead and of Perceval, how he died, and other matters.*

WHEN PERCEVAL AND Bors saw Galahad dead they made as much sorrow as ever did two men. And if they had not been good men they might lightly have fallen in despair. And the people of the country and of the city were right heavy. And then he was buried, and as soon as he was buried Sir Perceval yielded him to an hermitage out of the city and took a religious clothing, and Bors was alway with him, but never changed he his secular clothing, for that he purposed him to go again into the realm of Logris. Thus a year and two months lived Sir Perceval in the hermitage a full holy life and then passed out of this world, and Bors let bury him by his sister and by Galahad in the spiritualities.

When Bors saw that he was in so far countries as in the parts of Babylon, he departed from Sarras and armed him and came to the sea and entered into a ship, and so it befell him in good adventure he came into the realm of Logris, and he rode so fast till he came to Camelot where the king was. And then was there great joy made of him in the court, for they weened all he had been dead, forasmuch as he had been so long out of the country.

And when they had eaten, the king made great clerks to come afore him, that they should chronicle of the high adventures of the good knights. When Bors had told him of the adventures of the Sangreal such as had befallen him and his three fellows, that was Lancelot, Perceval, Galahad, and himself, there Lancelot told the

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<sup>1</sup>self: same

adventures of the Sangreal that he had seen. All this was made in great books and put up in almeries<sup>1</sup> at Salisbury.

And anon Sir Bors said to Sir Lancelot, "Galahad, your own son, saluted you by me, and after you King Arthur and all the court, and so did Sir Perceval, for I buried them with mine own hands in the city of Sarras. Also, Sir Lancelot, Galahad prayed you to remember of this unsiker<sup>2</sup> world as ye behight<sup>3</sup> him when ye were together more than half a year."

"This is true," said Lancelot. Now I trust to God his prayer shall avail me."

Then Lancelot took Sir Bors in his arms and said, "Gentle cousin, ye are right welcome to me, and all that ever I may do for you and for yours ye shall find my poor body ready at all times, while the spirit is in it, and that I promise you faithfully and never to fail. And wit ye well, gentle cousin, Sir Bors, that ye and I will never depart asunder whilst our lives may last."

"Sir," said he, "I will as ye will."

Thus endeth the history of the Sangreal, that was briefly drawn out of French into English, the which is a story chronicled for one of the truest and the holiest that is in this world, the which is the seventeenth book.

And here followeth the eighteenth book.

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<sup>1</sup>almeries: lockers, cupboards

<sup>2</sup>unsiker: uncertain

<sup>3</sup>behight: promised