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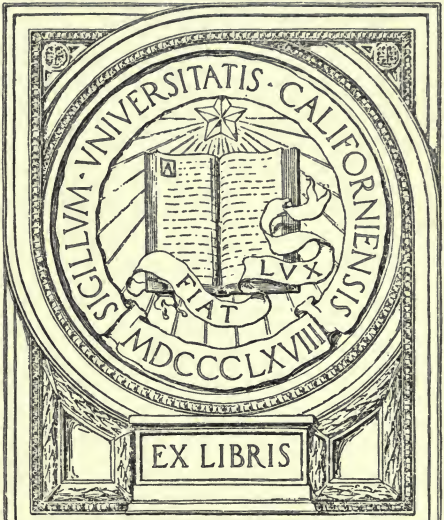

THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE

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Höllyer. Photo.

King Arthur's Tomb.
by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
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THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE AND OTHER POEMS BY WILLIAM MORRIS EDITED BY ROBERT STEELE

PHILADELPHIA
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PUBLISHERS

"... THE SAME THAT OFT-TIMES HATH
CHARM'D MAGIC CASEMENTS OPENING O'ER THE FOAM,
OF PERILOUS SEAS IN FAËRY LANDS FORLORN."

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INTRODUCTION

The Romantic Revival. Ossian.—The beginnings of the Romantic Revival in England stand out in marked contrast to the works which represent to us the triumphs of the eighteenth century. At a time when Goldsmith, Churchill, Young, Blair and Thomson, Falconer and Gray were the acknowledged exponents of English poetry the first notes of revolt against formal, classic, and conventional expression were sounded through Western Europe by an obscure Scottish clergyman. In *Ossian*, poor in ideas and limited in range as it was, the eighteenth century found something of the mystery lying round and underneath Nature, of the heroes of dim legend and the spirits of the mist and the wind, and from its revolt of unfettered lyricism, the Romantic reaction may be said to date its inception. The immediate and widespread success of *Ossian* is almost as inexplicable to those who have read it as to

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the rest of the world of to-day. Beneath its unfamiliar form and the glorification of an unknown mythology of bards and heroes there was little of solid value to be found in it, and its acceptance shows how ripe was time and opportunity for change. It was translated into nearly every European language, it influenced every great writer of the time, it was a favourite book of Napoleon, of Walter Scott, of Goethe, it produced Blake. But with ardent admirers it found bitter enemies. That Macpherson claimed to have made literal translations of existing Gaelic texts was made the pretext for an attack, not only on the authenticity of *Ossian*, but on its intrinsic worth; a new battle of the moderns and the ancients was fought over it, and the resulting controversy was long and bitter. In the midst of it appeared a second book destined to have an equal and more permanent influence on the literature of the nineteenth century.

The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.—Thomas Percy, an English clergyman, was already known as a writer of merit, who had translated from the Icelandic and other languages, when stimulated by the success of Macpherson, he published in 1765 his three small volumes of selections of English ballad poetry. The fortunate discovery some years earlier

in a cupboard of an old house at Shiffnal of a manuscript collection of ballads made before the Civil War, which was being used for fire-lighting, was the basis of his work, and on the publication of his proposals he had received much encouragement and assistance. Thomas Warton, one of the most learned English scholars of the eighteenth century, examined for him Pepys' collection at Cambridge, other scholars and poets gave him ballads taken from the lips of peasants. He altered and corrected the poems, it is true, to meet the taste of the century: yet, infelicitous as are his emendations, nothing can take from his work the commanding place it holds in the history of English poetry. As Wordsworth once said, there was not an able writer of his time who would not acknowledge, as he himself did, his obligations to the *Reliques*. Miss Mitford, in her *Literary Recollections*, says, "to that book . . . we owe the revival of the taste for romantic and lyrical poetry, which had lain dormant since the days of the Commonwealth." Scott put the *Reliques* beside *Ossian* and Spenser: "above all I then first became acquainted with Percy. . . . The first time I could scrape a few shillings together I bought unto myself a copy of these beloved volumes; nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently, or

with half the enthusiasm." One of the most important of the results of Percy's publication was the attention it directed to the old ballads—the most typical and distinctive form of English poetry.

Ballad Poetry.—No better description of it can be found than in some lines written by William Morris himself in 1887, when dealing with the poetry of feudal times. "Alongside of it (Chaucer's poetry) existed yet the ballad poetry of the people, wholly untouched by courtly elegance and classical pedantry; rude in art, but never coarse, true to the back-bone; instinct with indignation against wrong, and thereby expressing the hope that was in it; a protest of the poor against the rich, especially in those songs of the Foresters, which have been called the Medieval epic of revolt; no more gloomy than the gentleman's poetry, yet cheerful from courage, and not content. Half-a-dozen stanzas of it are worth a cart-load of the whining introspective lyrics of to-day; and he who, when he has mastered the slight differences of language from our own daily speech, is not moved by it, does not understand what true poetry means nor what its aim is." But there is another side to these poems. Simple and natural as they are, treating of . . .

"Old, forgotten far-off things
And battles long ago,"

they preserve, too, an essential element of the mental attitude of the Middle Age to its surroundings—the spirit of wonder. For these ballads are not only an epic of revolt and of sport and a popular history of the events which struck the popular imagination and were transformed by it, but they preserve the last handlings of medieval romance. In them we have the ultimate form in which Arthurian Romance appeared before the romantic revival, the popular rendering of the Norman-French fabliaux, and the popular fairy mythology of our English ancestors. Round the authorship of these ballads a long controversy has raged, principally due, it must be said, to the forgetfulness of the controversialists of medieval conditions. On the one side was the view that they were the work of the people themselves. On the other it has been said that "so far from its being a spontaneous product of popular imagination, it was a minstrels' adaptation from the romances of the educated classes. Everything in the ballad—matter, form and composition—is the work of the minstrel ; all that the people do is to remember and repeat it." But this view assumes the

immense intellectual difference *e. g.* between Tennyson and his middle-class audience, as existing in medieval times, as does the remark about "educated classes." As a matter of fact the "educated classes" of the Middle Age were not that public for whom romances were composed or recited, which was composed of the governing class, which was intellectually on the same footing as its inferiors. Moreover we have absolutely no evidence that the minstrels of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were authors in any sense, whereas there is universal evidence of the spontaneous outburst of songs of occasion, which, if they last, naturally attach themselves to ballad cycles. An exception to this might be taken in the case of Blind Harry the Minstrel who collected and recited the popular traditions about Wallace, and gained food and clothing thereby, but apart from the fact that he was a poet before his blindness, which caused him to become a minstrel, his remains are hardly ballads in the strict sense as regards form, being in the heroic couplet. Yet in matter they breathe the full spirit of the Middle Age—legend and fact inextricably mingled—heroism and wonder.

The Middle Age and Romance.—The spirit of wonder and of mystery lies deep in the very

being of the Middle Age. Whatever lay outside the narrow circle of every-day experience was strange and possible, and the limits of the known were so strait that no man dare discriminate between the possible and the probable, between the more or the less likely. Once past the boundaries of the native manor, a wanderer was in a foreign land, one's neighbour had seen the Wandering Jew at Micklegarth while on a pilgrimage to the Hallows, the cinnamon bought at St. James' Fair was, it was known, shot from the nest of the phœnix with leaden arrows, the silk of my lady's robe owed its crimson to a dragon's life-blood. And as the metes of the natural and the unnatural were not defined, so also was there no division of the natural and the supernatural. The life of this world and that which is to come were to medieval folk as continuous as the round world, and though death was among them the gateway from life to life, yet other lands might well have other laws, and folk dwell in some Secret Isle fearless of any change. The medieval non-reverence which so many take for irreverence is an expression of this sentiment. God and All Hallows were as near and as far as the King—sometimes terrible and inexplicable—sometimes gentle and debonair—but never inaccessible to those

who should seek them rightly. With all this too was a certain kind of symmetry of notion — a republic of Emperor, subjects, and rebel Kings and subjects,—God and His angels, the Devil and his Friends, and the spirits neither good nor bad who found a vague existence between them. Outside every man, then, in the Middle Age lay a mysterious Universe, on which his manly heart looked out with naïve wonder. It is this spirit in a new form, and on a different plane of knowledge and sentiment, that revived at the end of the eighteenth century.

The Rowley Poems of Chatterton.—Chatterton is almost the only predecessor of Scott in the Romantic movement of whom we have not yet traced the influence. An appreciation of his work should be left to a poet; Coleridge has written it in the Monody on his death, and Keats in the dedication of *Endymion*. The lines of Wordsworth,

> "The marvellous boy,
> The sleepless soul, that perished in his pride,"

describe his character to the core. His productions, said Campbell, recall those of an ungrown giant—incomplete, with the touch of an untaught master hand; the promise of a splendid maturity, side by side with commonplace imitations of magazine verse.

His true inspiration was not the verse of older poets but the remains of antiquity about him. St. Mary Redcliffe spoke to his inmost being from every stone and window, and created for him again the dead souls who had built it and filled it. The *Rowley Poems* were not unworthy to be edited by Thomas Tyrwhitt, and will go down to posterity as one of the landmarks of English Poetry, while even in the verse written on the accepted models of his day, the origins of some of the finest lines in "Kubla Khan" may be not obscurely discerned. He is one of the fathers of English Poetry, however, not alone because of his influence on poets greater than himself, but in right of the beauty and originality of his own production. "In one of the last and finest of his poems, the 'Ballad of Charitie,' he anticipates the peculiar manner and sensuous beauty of Keats, before Keats is even born. And more than this, Chatterton anticipates, by nearly a century, that phase of our more recent verse which Mr. Pater has designated 'the Æsthetic School of Poetry.' The charm of the *Rowley Poems* lies here; it is a charm of manner refined on manner; of a sensuous poetical temperament finding expression in its reveries of some poetical mode or figure, far removed by time, and

dimmed by the glamour of antique circumstance." His influence on his time was, too, important as an impulse to antiquarian research. The controversy round their genuineness, which in our days would not have lasted ten minutes, inspired inquiry into realms of literature utterly unknown even to professed students, and his tragic death ensured an audience for its results.

The history of English Poetry between Chatterton and Coleridge contains some great names, but none that have created a school or deeply influenced their successors. Among them are Cowper, Campbell, Blake, and Burns. But the consideration of these belongs to a general history of literature, and we must content ourselves with recalling that while they promise the sunrise, they are but the first glories of the dawn.

Lyrical Ballads (1798). Coleridge and Wordsworth.—The publication of this little work marks the beginning of the Romantic Revival. Like many other important books its publication attracted little attention, and the 500 copies sold resulted in a loss to the publisher, but a volume whose first piece is the "Ancient Mariner" and whose last is "Tintern Abbey" could hardly fail to

exert its influence on any mind open to change. It was the result of a friendship between two intensely original and creative intelligences at the critical point of their development. Both had written respectable verse, but during the years of constant association (1797–8) in the Quantocks, their enthusiasm was blown to a white heat, and "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan" were produced then as well as the pieces published in the *Lyrical Ballads*. The principles actuating the authors may be studied at length in the (1800) preface to the second edition—they underlie the whole romantic movement. The poets are curiously alike yet different. Each is master of the perfect phrase—yet the distinction made between the charm of Wordsworth and the magic of Coleridge is not merely verbal. "The Ancient Mariner" and "Genevieve" are among the most popular representatives of romantic poetry, and deservedly so. On the latter the poet has lavished all the graces of chivalry at its ideal exaltation, in the former he has touched the limits of invention and belief. He stands alone between Spenser and Rossetti.

Byron and Keats.—Before leaving this period a word must be said of the other great poets of the day—Keats, Shelley, and Byron. Byron, instinct

with the matter of poetry, hardly ever attained its form in any measure of perfection, and it is to this that he owes the Continental reputation he enjoys, and the partial oblivion in England he suffers, for this can never be translated, while of that he is amongst the richest in our literature. Shelley has had no successor till after the days when our study ends, and Keats, though in some immortal poems he has touched the very heart of romance, experimented in so many forms that it is difficult to foresee in what direction his muse would have ultimately tended. Southey, an early companion of Coleridge and his friends, rendered inestimable service to the progress of the movement by his edition of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*—a compendium of Arthurian romance whose sources are not as yet fully known, but which superseded in popular favour not only the ancient romances from which it was drawn, but the later ballad epic which was its rival.

Walter Scott.—We are in some danger, in these days, of under-estimating the place which Walter Scott will fill in the history, not only of our own, but of European literature. His influence on England any reader of ordinary cultivation may estimate if he will reflect for a few seconds,—but to quote the words

of a recent writer—"what is infinitely more startling —what gives us more impressively the measure of a genius as transcendent as it was unobtrusive—is the authority it almost simultaneously asserted over the thought and methods of the foreign schools of romance." Hugo and Balzac, de Vigny, Merimée, and Dumas were his imitators, Goethe and Chateaubriand his panegyrists; *Quentin Durward* made Ranke a historian, and inspired the *Annales des Condés*. His works were translated into French and German as they appeared, and were received with passionate approval.

We have already spoken of *Ossian* and Percy as early influences on Scott's development. He owed little to the writers of his time. His first book was a translation from Bürger and his second from Goethe. His first original work was published in conjunction with Lewis (who deserves mention here for the excellence of the ballads in his fantastic "Monk") in the *Tales of Wonder*, to which Scott contributed "William and Ellen," "The Eve of St. John," and some other pieces. The collaboration is thus commemorated by Byron (1809) just after the publication of "Marmion":—

> "All hail, M.P.! from whose infernal brain
> Thin sheeted phantoms glide, a grisly train;

> At whose command 'grim women' throng in crowds,
> And kings of fire, of water, and of clouds,
> With 'small gray men,' 'wild yagers' and what not,
> To crown with honour thee, and Walter Scott."

Scott's personal preparations for his work lay rather in his enormous historical reading, and his eagerness as a student. "He was as pleased with the capture of some fag-end of a song as his freebooting ancestors when they lifted cattle in Cumberland," said an old friend, and it was this determination to gather up all fragments of his heritage of song that marks him out as the heir in succession of the native and noble line of Romantic Poets. His *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802) is an inexhaustible storehouse of these remains, and one of the most potent influences in bringing about the success of the revival. Yet his preparation would have, one feels somehow, stopped short of achievement, if it had not been for the happy accident of a friend endowed with a memory Eastern in its retentiveness, who had heard the first part of "Christabel" read by Coleridge, and repeated it to him. He sat down under that inspiration and wrote "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," to the success of which we owe, implicitly, the whole of Scott's later work. His verse falls short of his inspiration by this, that he lacked something of the artistic conscience;

as Mr. Watts-Dunton says, "the distinctive quality of Scott is that he seems to be greater than his work—as much greater indeed, as a towering oak seems greater than the leaves it sheds."

The Romantic Movement in Germany and France. Carlyle.—It is no part of our scheme to give anything like an account of the growth of the movement in these countries. The Romantic School in France especially has had comparatively little influence on the development of our own literature. The political situation—the enmity between England and France in Napoleonic times, followed by the long years of the Restoration Monarchy—may account for this, but the fact remains that German Literature during the whole of that period was the most potent foreign influence on our own. We may quote from a somewhat unfriendly critic a characterisation of their work. "They introduce a new tone into German poetry, give their works a new colour, and in addition to this, revive both the spirit and the substance of the old fairy-tale, Volkslied, and legend. . . . Research in the domains of history, ethnography and jurisprudence, the study of German antiquity, Indian and Graeco-Latin philology, and the systems and dreams of the

Natur-philosophie, all received their first impulse from Romanticism. They widened the emotional range of German poetry, though the emotions to which they gave expression were more frequently morbid than healthy. As critics, they originally, and with success, aimed at enlarging the spiritual horizon . . . and vowed undying hatred to all dead conventionality in the relations between the sexes. The best among them in their youth laboured ardently for the intensification of that spiritual life which is based upon a belief in the supernatural" (Brandes, *Main Currents*). Starting from Herder and Goethe, the German Romanticists who have exercised most influence in English literature are Bürger, the Schlegels, Tieck, Musaeus, Richter, Fouqué, Arnim and Brentano, Hoffman, and the brothers Grimm.

Coleridge and Wordsworth had visited Germany after the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*, but their work shows little trace of any effect of the contemporary but independent movement of the German Romanticists.

The influence of this school was exercised most directly on Campbell, Scott and Carlyle. In Campbell it is apparent in his ballads, while the earliest literary work of the others was based on the writings of this

school, Carlyle in especial being deeply indebted to it. His life of Schiller was praised by Goethe, and his translations of Wilhelm Meister in 1824 and his specimens of German Romance (1827) show the direction in which his mind was at work, and the influences which formed his character. His later work carried him into other fields and his Romantic Puritanism became one of the primary forces of the Middle Victorian Era.

Tennyson.—With Shelley and Keats the production of fine poetry ceased till Tennyson came to his own with the publication of two volumes of his *Poems* in 1842. Here he is at the high-water mark of inspiration. The music of his verse, the homely simplicity and tenderness of his language, the nobility and aloofness of his themes produced an extraordinary effect on his time, deprived for years of the stimulus of great poetry. "The Princess" and "In Memoriam" served to mark the turning-point of his career, and "Maud" in 1855 was the last work of Tennyson's that mattered. Then came the transition into the "Idylls of the King," where romance was definitely abandoned for the presentment in verse of the ideal Englishman of the sixties. Such masterpieces as "The Lotos Eaters," "The Lady of Shalott," the "Morte

d'Arthur," "Sir Galahad," "Oriana," were not easily repeated. Canon Dixon gives a vivid account of the influence of Tennyson on the youth of his time, and more especially of Morris's attitude towards him, one of "defiant admiration." "We all had the feeling that after Tennyson no farther development was possible, we were at the end of all things in poetry."

Ruskin.—The other great force of the early fifties was John Ruskin. Scott had attracted him to the Middle Age—but almost exclusively on the side of the arts, with architecture as their crowning embodiment. Carlyle was his teacher, and his first work of importance, *Modern Painters*, appeared in 1843, the year of Carlyle's *Past and Present*. The second volume (1846) was devoted to medieval art, and in 1848 appeared *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. Three years later the first volume of his greatest work *The Stones of Venice* was published, followed in 1853 by the second and third. He then returned to the completion of *Modern Painters*, the third and fourth volumes appearing in 1856. His influence on his time is well described by Mr. Mackail. "As *The Stones of Venice* is Ruskin's greatest work, so one chapter in it, the sixth of the second volume, entitled 'On the Nature of Gothic,' is the central point of

his whole teaching. With the twentieth chapter of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, it is a confession of faith and a call to the higher life which may be called the most momentous utterance of their half-century of continuous utterance. In both cases the appeal is not to despair, but to labour and hope ; in both cases the voice of God speaking through the man was greater than the man himself, and the works of later years took on them the sombre splendour of a great tragedy, when the prophets outlived faith in their own prophecies." But this time was not in sight when Morris and his friends were in the first enthusiasm of youthful discipleship.

Rossetti.—Of the more immediate personal influence on the early poetry of William Morris, Rossetti is the most important. Not that Morris copied him, or even that the verse of the two poets is comparable, but that certain elements in the elder powerfully strengthened and confirmed the bent of the younger man. Rossetti was born in 1828, and in 1850 his first poems appeared, though written three years earlier. His youth had been spent in an atmosphere of mysticism, his father being a searcher after esoteric interpretations of Dante and the romances of chivalry : one of his father's friends and disciples going so far as

to see in the epic of Charlemagne a history of the Albigensian Church Synods, in the knights pastors, in the heroines church meetings, and in the impassioned love-lyrics of the troubadours, sermons disguised to pass current in a hostile world! Their folly had this of good, that Dante Gabriel Rossetti was familiar from his earliest youth with the romantic literature of the Middle Age, and that the mysticism of his father took with him a saner and deeper expression. "An original and subtile beauty of execution expresses a deep mysticism of thought both great in degree and passionate in kind. Nor in him has it any tendency to lose itself amid allegory or abstractions; indeed, instead of turning human life into symbols of things vague and not understood, it rather gives to the very symbols the personal life and variety of mankind. None of his poems is without the circle of this realizing mysticism, which deals wonderingly with all real things that can have poetic life given them by passion, and refuses to have to do with any invisible things that in the wide scope of its imagination cannot be made perfectly distinct and poetically real. In no poems is the spontaneous and habitual interpretation of matter and manner, which is the essence of poetry, more complete than in Rossetti's."

William Morris.—William Morris was born at Walthamstow, March 24, 1834. As a child his taste for reading developed early. He was deep in the Waverley Novels at four years old, and he never lost the habit of rapid reading he formed in his first boyhood. Mr. Mackail's *Life* gives a full account of his surroundings in youth and early manhood which may be consulted with profit. He was an omnivorous reader, revelling in wonder-stories and tales of adventure. I remember his disappointment one day in the later years of his life when he bought *The Three Midshipmen* on a railway journey and found it a sort of religious tract. But with this he was an ardent lover of nature; every bird, beast, and plant had a name for him. He never forgot what he had once seen or read, and fifty years later he described from memory a church he had visited only once when he was eight years old. When at fourteen he went to Marlborough the discipline of the school sat lightly on him; his holidays were spent in exploring the country round, and his working days in devouring the school library, rich in archæology and architecture. After leaving school, over a year was spent in the study of literature, classic and modern, before going up to Oxford in January 1852.

At Oxford, 1853.—Morris appears in the pupil-book of the tutor at Exeter College as "a rather rough and unpolished youth, who exhibited no special literary tastes or capacity, but had no difficulty in mastering the usual subjects of examination." Among his fellows he was regarded at first, simply as a very pleasant boy who was fond of talking. But his mental qualities soon came to the front. "I observed," says Canon Dixon, "how decisive he was, how accurate without any effort or formality: what an extraordinary power of observation lay at the base of many of his casual or incidental remarks, and how many things he knew that were quite out of the way." The day he entered he made the acquaintance of Burne-Jones, his life-long friend, and, when they came up, Burne-Jones introduced him to a small circle of Birmingham men at Pembroke, in whose society he spent most of his leisure. Tennyson and Ruskin—the Ruskin of *Modern Painters*—were the gods of his idolatry, till in that year the second volume of *The Stones of Venice* appeared, and set the seal on his devotion. With his friend he read through Neale, Milman, the *Acta Sanctorum*, and masses of medieval chronicles and Latin hymns, while Carlyle's *Past and Present* stood for absolute and inspired truth. Burne-Jones introduced him to

Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, where he first met the saga-tales he was to love so well. The Bodleian gave him the opportunity of studying form and colour in the glowing illuminations of the Middle Age, notably in a splendid Apocalypse of the thirteenth century.

At Oxford, 1854-5.—We owe to Canon Dixon a description of the attitude of Morris to Tennyson just then: "It was one of defiant admiration. He perceived his limitations, as I think, in a remarkable manner for a man of twenty or so. He said once, 'Tennyson's Sir Galahad is rather a mild youth!' Of 'Locksley Hall' he said, apostrophising the hero, 'My dear fellow, if you are going to make that row, get out of the room, that's all!' He perceived a certain rowdy or bullying element that runs through much of Tennyson's work: runs through 'The Princess,' 'Lady Clara Vere de Vere,' and 'Amphion.' On the other hand he understood Tennyson's greatness in a manner that we could not share. He understood it as if the poems represented substantial things that were to be considered out of the poems as well as in them. Of the worlds that Tennyson opened in his fragments he selected one, as I think the finest and most epical, for special admiration, namely, 'Oriana.'" In the Long

Vacation of 1854 he first went abroad, visiting Belgium and Northern France. Here he first saw Van Eyck and Memmling, Amiens, Beauvais and Chartres. In Paris he saw the Cluny Museum and the Louvre. His description of Rouen has been quoted elsewhere. The romanticism of Fouqué in *Sinntram* and his other works gave a more definite body and form to his thoughts. The publication of Ruskin's Edinburgh *Lectures* taught the little circle of friends of the existence of Rossetti, but they knew nothing of his work. That winter Morris wrote his first poem. It was called "The Willow and the Red Cliff," and was destroyed in 1858.

First Poems.—The description of these must be read at length in Mr. Mackail's *Life*. Canon Dixon, no mean poet himself, says of the first: "As he read it, I felt that it was something the like of which had never been heard before . . . perfectly original, whatever its value, and sounding truly striking and beautiful, extremely decisive and powerful in action. . . . He reached his perfection at once, and in my judgment he can scarcely be said to have much exceeded it afterwards. . . . I remember his remark, 'Well, if this is poetry, it is very easy to write!' From that time onward, for a term or two, he came to my

rooms almost every day with a new poem" (p. 52). Specimens of these poems are given by Mr. Mackail. In the summer of 1855 Morris began to write prose, as remarkable as his early poetry, and as beautiful. But other influences were crowding on the little group of friends. A copy of the "Germ" came into their hands, and "The Blessed Damozel" and "Hand and Soul" made them on the instant ardent worshippers of Rossetti. At the same time Morris read Chaucer for the first time with Burne-Jones. After a summer tour in France, the friends returned to Oxford eager to join in the movement at the head of which stood Carlyle, Ruskin and Tennyson, and with a plan for a new magazine, which appeared during 1856, at Morris's expense. In September Morris paid a visit to Burne-Jones, and there in Cornish's bookshop he was shown Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, which he immediately fastened on. "It at once became for both one of their most precious treasures; so precious that even among their intimates there was some shyness over it, till a year later they heard Rossetti speak of it and the Bible as the two greatest books of the world, and their tongues were unloosed by the sanction of his authority" (*Life*, p. 81).

The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine,

1856.—Only twelve numbers of this magazine appeared, and to all but one Morris was a contributor. Four poems afterwards included in "The Defence of Guenevere" appear among them, but the most noteworthy of his contributions are some prose tales, and his descriptions of Amiens. In these tales some exquisite fragments of lyrics are imbedded.

"Christ keep the Hollow Land
All the summer-tide;
Still we cannot understand
Where the waters glide;

Only dimly seeing them
Coldly slipping through
Many green-lipp'd cavern-mouths,
Where the hills are blue."

But while the magazine was running its course, important changes had been brought about. Burne-Jones had seen and been welcomed by Rossetti. Morris had signed articles as an architect with Street, meeting there Philip Webb, to whom the revolution in domestic architecture throughout England is, more than to any other, due. After Easter, when Burne-Jones was in London, Morris used to spend the week-ends with him, and as much as possible in the company of Rossetti, till, in August, Street came up to London, and Morris with him. At the end of the year he left architecture to study painting. The next

year was spent in almost daily contact with Rossetti, till in the autumn of 1857 he returned to Oxford, where he stayed for the greater part of 1858. His favourite reading at the time was Froissart and Monstrelet in Johnes' edition of Berners' translation.

The Defence of Guenevere.—It was during the closing months of 1857 that some of the finest poems in the book were written, under the combined influence of all the feelings which could exalt a young poet. "King Arthur's Tomb" was first read on October 30, 1857, and the "Praise of my Lady" dates from the same period. The Froissart group were written a little later. Early in 1858 the volume appeared, a little octavo of about 250 pages, which seemed to drop still-born from the press. Some few copies were disposed of, but the edition was not exhausted till thirteen years later. But if no popular appreciation welcomed it, yet that select circle of judges whose voices are the ultimate court of final appeal in literature felt that the new-comer had made good his claim to be heard—his work bore the hall-mark of beauty and romance. Swinburne some years later thus summed up the criticism it met with: "Here and there it met with eager recognition and earnest applause; nowhere, if I err not, with just praise or

blame worth heeding. It seems to have been now lauded and now decried as the result and expression of a school rather than a man, of a theory or tradition rather than a poet or student. Those who so judged were blind guides. Such things as were in this book are taught and learnt in no school but that of instinct. Upon no piece of work in the world was the impress of native character ever more distinctly stamped, more deeply branded." One phrase of an unfriendly critic lives in the memory—"things seen in an atmosphere of Brocken mist blended with incense smoke."

Pater, Swinburne, Watts.—Pater's essay in the *Westminster Review*, reprinted in his *Studies*, is familiar to every student of modern literature. Its justness is tempered by personal preferences, and it presents Morris too much as one of a school. Swinburne's essay in the *Fortnightly*, as befits a fellow-craftsman, goes to the root of the matter. He is most attracted by the Arthurian poems, and in them he finds the faults of inexperience, but the excellences of genius. Guenevere he describes as a figure of noble female passion, half senseless and half personal, half mad and half sane. Of "King Arthur's Tomb" he writes: "There is scarcely connection here, and scarcely composition. There is hardly a trace of

narrative power or mechanical arrangement. There is a perceptible want of tact and practice, which leaves the poem in parts indecorous and chaotic. But where among other and older poets of his time and country is one comparable for perception and experience of tragic truth, of subtle and noble, terrible and piteous things, where a touch of passion at once so broad and so sure ?" Going on to compare the work with Tennyson's later poems, he adds: "Little beyond dexterity, a rare eloquence, and a laborious patience of hand has been given the one, or denied the other." Mr. Morris's muse may be roughly clad, "but it is better to want clothes than limbs."

Influence of other Poets.—The direct influence of four poets may be readily traced in this volume—Tennyson, Rossetti, and the two Brownings. While it is difficult to say of any one poem in the book, "this is Tennyson," yet one feels that he made it possible. For two years Tennyson's *Poems* had been almost the daily companion of the circle of friends at Oxford. "Galahad" was their text-book, and the traces of that time are visible throughout the work, though Morris's poems are fresher and less conscious than Tennyson's. The influence of Rossetti appears in the choice of subjects, *e.g.* "The Blue Closet," "The

Tune of Seven Towers," etc., and in a sort of intensity of diction common to both, but beyond this there is little in common ; the two minds were essentially unlike. Some of the poems in the book were suggested indeed by Rossetti's water colours. Our frontispiece was the source of "King Arthur's Tomb," and other poems had a similar origin. The two Brownings were perhaps, as regards poetic method, those who exercised most influence upon him. At the end of 1855 *Men and Women* had appeared, and much of Morris's volume might have been printed as a supplement to it : "Shameful Death," "The Judgment of God," and "Old Love" are striking examples of this. Mrs. Browning's is an influence less obvious, but at first, stronger. When Morris began to write poetry she was at her best, and her faults were precisely those to which he was most lenient. We can trace her spirit in the title-poem of the book, and, with her husband's, in others such as "The Haystack in the Floods." But with all this Swinburne's criticism remains : "It needs no exceptional acuteness of ear or eye to see or hear that this poet held of none, stole from none, clung to none, as tenant, or as beggar, or as thief. Not yet a master, he was assuredly not a pupil."

The Sources of the Poems: Malory.—The whole atmosphere of the volume is medieval, some of them are definitely Arthurian, some are of the age of Froissart—the end of the fourteenth century, and some of an age of romance more indefinite even than that of Arthur, which for the purposes of illustration might well be placed in the early twelfth century, when the story took shape. The Arthurian poems owe their being to Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, a fifteenth-century compilation and abridgment of the great cycle of the Graal. The history of this legend is still very obscure. It seems to have taken its rise from two independent sources, the story of Arthur and Merlin, and the legend of Joseph of Arimathea, the reputed founder of Glastonbury, who preserved the sacred vessel in which Jesus Christ consecrated the Last Supper. The two legends touched each other by the parallel between the supernatural origin of Merlin, devil-born, with the Incarnation, and a third story naturally grew up to complete the cycle, that of the Redeemer of the Graal, Perceval, or Parsifal. Gauwaine, King Arthur's nephew, represented the adventurous knight of romance in this version. But this first cycle seems not to have attained wide popularity till, early in the

reign of Henry II., Walter Map invented the story of Lancelot and wrote his adventures, making him the lover of the queen and the very perfect knight—a manly and more constant Tristan. No piece of literary work has had greater success. Within a few years the most famous singer of the time was able to take an incident of the story, and in a poem which depends for its success on the fact that the audience knew of Lancelot's identity while the characters of the story were ignorant of it, wrote thousands of lines without mentioning his name, till at the critical point the prowess of the hero brings the crowd to the cry of "It is Lancelot!" The story penetrated even to Germany, where some distorted memory of it mingled with Eastern folk-tales in the *Lanzelet* of Ulrich.

The vogue of Lancelot led to the formation of a new version of the cycle. Merlin disappears from the tale, and the story of Vivien (to use Tennyson's name for her) was incorporated in it to account for him. Lancelot's valour seemed to point him out as the knight of the Graal, but his sins disqualified him for its service, hence the birth of Galahad, the predestined Graal-knight, whose mother was a daughter of the Guardian of the Graal. Later on, the legends of

Percival and Galahad were worked over, and two additional romances, the *Morte Artur* and the *Queste Sangreal*, were written. The cycle was now, at the end of the thirteenth century, complete. Malory's work is founded on it, and on later English versions and incidental poems. He died in 1471, and his work was printed by Caxton in 1485. William Morris at the time of writing these poems often consciously and deliberately set on one side Malory. The bringing of Guenevere as a bride by Lancelot to Arthur is his invention, the degradation of the character of Gauwaine is founded on late ballad poetry, Gauwaine appearing in Malory as a defender of Lancelot and the Queen and a counsellor of patience, while other Arthurian characters lend their names to the poems without entering deeply into them. Galahad owes nearly as much to Tennyson as to Malory, but with a strongly-marked personal note, accentuated in "The Chapel in Lyoness."

Froissart.—Jean Froissart was born at Valenciennes in 1338 and died about 1410. His first appearance in public was to serve as a clerk to Queen Philippa in London, where he was one of the court poets. He was already a student of history, learning here and there how events were shaped from the

mouths of persons who had taken part in the deeds of their time. At Berkeley he questions an "ancien écuyer" on the death of Edward II., in Scotland he learns of the Bruce, he studies in Brittany the true story of the wars there. On the death of Philippa he returned to Hainault, where he remained for some ten or a dozen years writing the first book of his History, and arriving at the preferment of Canon of Chimay. A second edition of this book was written later under French influence, embodying the stories of the prisoners at London with King John. Before 1388 his second book was written, and then he set out to learn from eye-witnesses the history of the war in the south of France. Every one he met furnished him with anecdotes, whether it be "Messire Espaing de Lyon," who for eight days together loaded him with stories which he wrote down in the evening, or Gaston Phoebus, or the English adventurers at his inn, who told him of the life of the freebooters. At last, after visiting Avignon, Lyon, and Paris, he returned to Chimay, having spent on his travels the equivalent of £2000, and finishing his third book, began the fourth (to which he never put the concluding strokes), while again recasting the first book.

Froissart's faults lie on the surface—he describes his period but does not understand it—but they can never destroy the pleasure felt by any reader of imagination when turning his pages. The impression of literal truth, even to the words used, produced by his narrative, testifies to a high degree of art, worthy to be named in a breath with that of Shakespeare,—witness Chandos provoking the Breton, or Aymerigot Marches regretting the good old times,—while his matter has for us the attraction of an English epic—the epic of Creçy and Poitiers. Morris's opinion of Froissart, written in later years, may be read in our notes (p. 247).

No writer has ever realised so completely as William Morris in this volume the ideal of chivalry which lay unconsciously in Froissart's mind when writing. The courage, the fidelity, the courtesy, are all there, and if one hesitates to put the Froissartian poems first in one's estimation, it is because of the doubt whether their special excellence may not be due to an element of analysis foreign to the medieval mind. Yet this applies only to the longer poems, "Sir Peter Harpdon," "Geffray Teste Noire," etc.; the shorter ones are simple and strong, lacking no quality of the old ballad poetry.

Poems of Fantasy.—It would be useless to seek for origins to the poems which make up this third division of the book. A phrase, a situation, a picture, a verse of a song germinated in the poet's mind, and we have the result. The discovery of a more or less exact analogue in the world's literature would carry us no further in our enjoyment of such a masterpiece as "The Wind," "Spell-bound," or "Golden Wings." Some of them show traces of a reading of Grimm, but in the greater part we recognise only the rare power of invention of a true poet—a maker. "The Blue Closet" was suggested by a water-colour of Rossetti's, as well as "King Arthur's Tomb."

Later Poems.—The next poem of William Morris was marked by a strange contrast of method and treatment, "The Life and Death of Jason" (1867). The poet had abandoned all the characteristics of his earlier volume and had taken a longer and deeper plunge into medieval life and literature. Unlike the "Guenevere" volume, its success was immediate and permanent. It was followed by "The Earthly Paradise" (1868–72), and "Love is Enough," a most lovely and delicate poem. "Sigurd the Volsung" (1876), the epic of the

North, was his own favourite among his poems. His last volume of verse, "Poems by the Way" (1891), contains some very noble poems, returning, in a certain sense, to the spirit of his first volume, but with marked difference.

Prose Works.—Apart from his translations and some juvenile work, his first original work in prose was "The Dream of John Ball" (1886). One knows not whether the magically effective scheme of this book, or its beautiful simplicity of treatment and language are the more to be admired. The scene in the church when the scholar of the nineteenth century tells an intelligible tale to the priest of the fourteenth is quite incomparable to anything of the kind ever written. A later Utopia, "News from Nowhere" (1891), the making of bricks for a new world with nineteenth-century midden, charms even the unconvinced. A series of prose romances dealing with Mr. Morris's favourite world of Northern antiquity follow, from "The House of the Wolfings" (1889) to "The Sundering Flood" (1896), of which the finest are "The Roots of the Mountains" (1890) and "The Well at the World's End" (1895). They are quite unlike anything that has ever been written, "a form of literary art so new that new

canons of criticism have to be formulated and applied to it." Their style has been bitterly attacked, "a theatrical prose which seems to derive from nowhere," or from "Wardour Street." But it was deliberate and well-chosen. His first necessity was to create his atmosphere, to prepare the mind for strange happenings and unaccustomed surroundings, and for this the use of archaic words and old-world phrases was the readiest means.

His life, 1861–96.—The main facts of William Morris's life lie on the surface. In 1861 the famous firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Co. came into existence, which has revolutionised the whole domestic decoration of England. Philip Webb, Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown, and Rossetti were the other partners. In connection with this firm, and when it dissolved in 1875, with its successor, his life-work was done. His visits to Iceland (1871 and 1873) lie at the root of much of his later literary work. In 1877 he founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, still happily vigorous, and in 1883 he joined the Socialist movement. The foundation of the Kelmscott Press in 1891 was the last work of his life, and when he died in October 1896, its most

magnificent production, *The Kelmscott Chaucer*, had just appeared.

The Progress of the Romantic Revival.—

Ossian	1762
Reliques of Ancient English Poetry .	1765
Chatterton *(Rowley Poems)* . .	1777
Lyrical Ballads	1798
Scott : *Lay of the Last Minstrel* .	1805
Tennyson : *Poems* . . .	1842
Carlyle : *Past and Present* . .	1843
Rossetti : *Germ*	1850
Ruskin : *Stones of Venice* . .	1851–3
Defence of Guenevere . . .	1858

The life of William Morris has been written by Mr. Mackail, 2 vols., 1899, and the history of the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century has been traced at length by Mr. Watts-Dunton in Chambers' *Encyclopedia of English Literature*, Vol. III.

TO MY FRIEND DANTE
GABRIEL ROSSETTI PAINTER
I DEDICATE THESE POEMS

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THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE

THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE

BUT, knowing now that they would have her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her brow
Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel ought but shame
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek burned so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last and said:
"O knights and lords, it seems but little skill
To talk of well-known things past now and dead.

"God wot I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right—such great lords—still

" Listen, suppose your time were come to die,
And you were quite alone and very weak ;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

" The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running well :
Suppose a hush should come, then some one speak

" ' One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell,
Now choose one cloth for ever, which they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

" ' Of your own strength and mightiness ; here, see ! '
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

" A great God's angel standing, with such dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings, and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner skies

" Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God's commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands ;

" And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red ;
No man could tell the better of the two.

"After a shivering half-hour you said,
'God help! heaven's colour, the blue;' and he said, 'hell.'
Perhaps you then would roll upon your bed,

"And cry to all good men that loved you well,
'Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known;'
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

"Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie."

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

"It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur's court: at Christmas-time
This happened; when the heralds sung his name,

"'Son of King Ban of Benwick,' seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O'er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme.

"Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea

"And in the Summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down—Autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same,

"However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick,

"To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

" Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold, my judges, then the cloths were brought:
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd,

" Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur's great name and his little love,
Must I give up for ever then, I thought,

" That which I deemed would ever round me move
Glorifying all things; for a little word,
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

" Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy and good?
I love God now a little, if this cord

" Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven.
So day by day it grew, as if one should

" Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping was there some small leaven

" Of stretched hands catching small stones by the way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

"Back, with the hair like sea-weed; yea all past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o'ercast

"In the lone sea, far off from any ships!
Do I not know now of a day in Spring?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

"From out my memory; I hear thrushes sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most fresh sting;

"I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

"I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

"Yea right through to my heart, grown very shy
With weary thoughts, it pierced, and made me glad;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

"A little thing just then had made me mad;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty; if I had

"Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darken'd fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see quite through,

"There, see you, where the soft still light yet lingers,
Round by the edges; what should I have done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted singers,

"And startling green drawn upward by the sun?
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my hair,
And trancedly stood watching the west wind run

"With faintest half-heard breathing sound—why there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;
But shortly listen—In that garden fair

"Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the kiss
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring day,
I scarce dare talk of the remember'd bliss,

"When both our mouths went wandering in one way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
Our hands being left behind strained far away.

"Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before—and now, so nigh!
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

"Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true? A great queen such as I
Having sinn'd this way, straight her conscience sears;

"And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps,—
Gauwaine, be friends now, speak me lovingly.

"Do I not see how God's dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in your mouth?
Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,

"Buried in some place far down in the south,
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;
By her head sever'd in that awful drouth

"Of pity that drew Agravaine's fell blow,
I pray your pity! let me not scream out
For ever after, when the shrill winds blow

"Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout
For ever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone! in battle-rout

"Let not my rusting tears make your sword light!
Ah! God of mercy how he turns away!
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

"So—let God's justice work! Gauwaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs: yea all men know
Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one day,

"One bitter day in *la Fausse Garde*, for so
All good knights held it after, saw—
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknightly outrage; though

"You, Gauwaine, held his word without a flaw,
This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my bed—
Whose blood then pray you? is there any law

"To make a queen say why some spots of red
Lie on her coverlet? or will you say,
'Your hands are white, lady, as when you wed,

"'Where did you bleed?' and must I stammer out—'Nay,
I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend
My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there lay

"'A knife-point last night:' so must I defend
The honour of the lady Guenevere?
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should end

"This very day, and you were judges here
Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce
When Launcelot stood by him? what white fear

"Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance,
His side sink in? as my knight cried and said,
'Slayer of unarm'd men, here is a chance!

"'Setter of traps, I pray you guard your head,
By God I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels lead

"'For driving weight; hurrah now! draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my beast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so.'

"He struck his hands together o'er the beast,
Who fell down flat, and grovell'd at his feet,
And groan'd at being slain so young—'at least.'

"My knight said, 'Rise you, sir, who are so fleet
At catching ladies, half-arm'd will I fight,
My left side all uncovered!' then I weet,

"Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
Upon his knave's face; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

"Along the lists look to my stake and pen
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

"The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

"And fast leapt caitiff's sword, until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it, and swung it; that was all the fight.

"Except a spout of blood on the hot land;
For it was hottest summer; and I know
I wonder'd how the fire, while I should stand,

"And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head; thus these matters went;
Which things were only warnings of the woe

"That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent

"With all this wickedness; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes,
Wept all away to grey, may bring some sword

"To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise,
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

"Yea also at my full heart's strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go up
In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

"The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvellously colour'd gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

"And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses: will you dare,
When you have looked a little on my brow,

"To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,
When you can see my face with no lie there

"For ever? am I not a gracious proof—
'But in your chamber Launcelot was found'—
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

"When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:
'O true as steel come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground

" ' Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

" ' The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear
To me in everything, come here to-night,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

" ' If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight;

" ' For no man cares now to know why I sigh;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

" ' So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs
To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

" ' Just for one night.' Did he not come to me?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said ' come ' ? there was one less than three

" In my quiet room that night, and we were gay;
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,
Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

"I looked at Launcelot's face and could not speak,
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,

"And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile
The stones they threw up rattled o'er my head,
And made me dizzier; till within a while

"My maids were all about me, and my head
On Launcelot's breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said—

"By God! I will not tell you more to-day,
Judge any way you will—what matters it?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

"How Launcelot still'd their bawling, the mad fit
That caught up Gauwaine—all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me; these things flit.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie!

"All I have said is truth, by Christ's dear tears."
She would not speak another word, but stood
Turn'd sideways; listening, like a man who hears

His brother's trumpet sounding through the wood
Of his foes' lances. She lean'd eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really ; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger drew all men to see,
The knight who came was Launcelot at good need.

KING ARTHUR'S TOMB

KING ARTHUR'S TOMB

HOT August noon—already on that day
Since sunrise through the Wiltshire downs, most sad
Of mouth and eye, he had gone leagues of way;
Ay and by night, till whether good or bad

He was, he knew not, though he knew perchance
That he was Launcelot, the bravest knight
Of all who since the world was, have borne lance,
Or swung their swords in wrong cause or in right.

Nay, he knew nothing now, except that where
The Glastonbury gilded towers shine,
A lady dwelt, whose name was Guenevere;
This he knew also; that some fingers twine,

Not only in a man's hair, even his heart,
(Making him good or bad I mean,) but in his life,

kies, earth, men's looks and deeds, all that has part,
Not being ourselves, in that half-sleep, half-strife,

(Strange sleep, strange strife,) that men call living; so
Was Launcelot most glad when the moon rose,
Because it brought new memories of her—"Lo,
Between the trees a large moon, the wind lows

"Not loud, but as a cow begins to low,
Wishing for strength to make the herdsman hear:
The ripe corn gathereth dew; yea, long ago,
In the old garden life, my Guenevere

"Loved to sit still among the flowers, till night
Had quite come on, hair loosen'd, for she said,
Smiling like heaven, that its fairness might
Draw up the wind sooner to cool her head.

"Now while I ride how quick the moon gets small,
As it did then—I tell myself a tale
That will not last beyond the whitewashed wall,
Thoughts of some joust must help me through the vale,

"Keep this till after—How Sir Gareth ran
A good course that day under my Queen's eyes,
And how she sway'd laughing at Dinadan—
No—back again, the other thoughts will rise,

" And yet I think so fast 'twill end right soon—
Verily then I think, that Guenevere,
Made sad by dew and wind, and tree-barred moon,
Did love me more than ever, was more dear

" To me than ever, she would let me lie
And kiss her feet, or, if I sat behind,
Would drop her hand and arm most tenderly,
And touch my mouth. And she would let me wind

" Her hair around my neck, so that it fell
Upon my red robe, strange in the twilight
With many unnamed colours, till the bell
Of her mouth on my cheek sent a delight

" Through all my ways of being ; like the stroke
Wherewith God threw all men upon the face
When he took Enoch, and when Enoch woke
With a changed body in the happy place.

" Once, I remember, as I sat beside,
She turn'd a little, and laid back her head,
And slept upon my breast: I almost died
In those night-watches with my love and dread.

" There lily-like she bow'd her head and slept,
And I breathed low, and did not dare to move,

But sat and quiver'd inwardly, thoughts crept,
And frighten'd me with pulses of my Love.

" The stars shone out above the doubtful green
Of her boddice, in the green sky overhead ;
Pale in the green sky were the stars I ween,
Because the moon shone like a star she shed

" When she dwelt up in heaven a while ago,
And ruled all things but God : the night went on,
The wind grew cold, and the white moon grew low,
One hand had fallen down, and now lay on

" My cold stiff palm ; there were no colours then
For near an hour, and I fell asleep
In spite of all my striving, even when
I held her whose name-letters make me leap.

" I did not sleep long, feeling that in sleep
I did some loved one wrong, so that the sun
Had only just arisen from the deep
Still land of colours, when before me one

" Stood whom I knew, but scarcely dared to touch,
She seemed to have changed so in the night ;
Moreover she held scarlet lilies, such
As Maiden Margaret bears upon the light

"Of the great church walls, natheless did I walk
Through the fresh wet woods, and the wheat that morn,
Touching her hair and hand and mouth, and talk
Of love we held, nigh hid among the corn.

"Back to the palace, ere the sun grew high,
We went, and in a cool green room all day
I gazed upon the arras giddily,
Where the wind set the silken kings a-sway.

"I could not hold her hand, or see her face;
For which may God forgive me! but I think,
Howsoever, that she was not in that place."
These memories Launcelot was quick to drink;

And when these fell, some paces past the wall,
There rose yet others, but they wearied more,
And tasted not so sweet; they did not fall
So soon, but vaguely wrenched his strained heart sore

In shadowy slipping from his grasp; these gone,
A longing followed; if he might but touch
That Gûenevere at once! Still night, the lone
Grey horse's head before him vex'd him much,

In steady nodding over the grey road—
Still night, and night, and night, and emptied heart

Of any stories ; what a dismal load
Time grew at last, yea, when the night did part,

And let the sun flame over all, still there
The horse's grey ears turn'd this way and that,
And still he watch'd them twitching in the glare
Of the morning sun, behind them still he sat,

Quite wearied out with all the wretched night,
Until about the dustiest of the day,
On the last down's brow he drew his rein in sight
Of the Glastonbury roofs that choke the way.

And he was now quite giddy as before,
When she slept by him, tired out and her hair
Was mingled with the rushes on the floor,
And he, being tired too, was scarce aware

Of her presence ; yet as he sat and gazed,
A shiver ran throughout him, and his breath
Came slower, he seem'd suddenly amazed,
As though he had not heard of Arthur's death.

This for a moment only, presently
He rode on giddy still, until he reach'd
A place of apple-trees, by the thorn-tree
Wherefrom St. Joseph in the days past preached.

Dazed there he laid his head upon a tomb,
Not knowing it was Arthur's, at which sight
One of her maidens told her, "he is come,"
And she went forth to meet him ; yet a blight

Had settled on her, all her robes were black,
With a long white veil only ; she went slow,
As one walks to be slain, her eyes did lack
Half her old glory, yea, alas ! the glow

Had left her face and hands ; this was because
As she lay last night on her purple bed,
Wishing for morning, grudging every pause
Of the palace clocks, until that Launcelot's head

Should lie on her breast, with all her golden hair
Each side—when suddenly the thing grew drear,
In morning twilight, when the grey downs bare
Grew into lumps of sin to Guenevere.

At first she said no word, but lay quite still,
Only her mouth was open, and her eyes
Gazed wretchedly about from hill to hill ;
As though she asked, not with so much surprise

As tired disgust, what made them stand up there
So cold and grey. After, a spasm took

Her face, and all her frame, she caught her hair,
All her hair, in both hands, terribly she shook,

And rose till she was sitting in the bed,
Set her teeth hard, and shut her eyes and seem'd
As though she would have torn it from her head,
Natheless she dropp'd it, lay down, as she deem'd

It matter'd not whatever she might do—
O Lord Christ! pity on her ghastly face!
Those dismal hours while the cloudless blue
Drew the sun higher—He did give her grace;

Because at last she rose up from her bed,
And put her raiment on, and knelt before
The blessed rood, and with her dry lips said,
Muttering the words against the marble floor:

"Unless you pardon, what shall I do, Lord,
But go to hell? and there see day by day
Foul deed on deed, hear foulest word on word,
For ever and ever, such as on the way

"To Camelot I heard once from a churl,
That curled me up upon my jennet's neck
With bitter shame; how then, Lord, should I curl
For ages and for ages? dost Thou reck

" That I am beautiful, Lord, even as You
And Your dear Mother? why did I forget
You were so beautiful, and good, and true,
That You loved me so, Guenevere? O yet

" If even I go hell, I cannot choose
But love You, Christ, yea, though I cannot keep
From loving Launcelot; O Christ! must I lose
My own heart's love? see, though I cannot weep,

" Yet am I very sorry for my sin;
Moreover, Christ, I cannot bear that hell,
I am most fain to love You, and to win
A place in heaven some time—I cannot tell—

" Speak to me, Christ! I kiss, kiss, kiss Your feet;
Ah! now I weep! "—The maid said, "By the tomb
He waiteth for you, lady," coming fleet,
Not knowing what woe filled up all the room.

So Guenevere rose and went to meet him there,
He did not hear her coming, as he lay
On Arthur's head, till some of her long hair
Brush'd on the new-cut stone—" Well done! to pray

" For Arthur, my dear lord, the greatest king
That ever lived." " Guenevere! Guenevere!

Do you not know me, are you gone mad? fling
Your arms and hair about me, lest I fear

"You are not Guenevere, but some other thing."
"Pray you forgive me, fair lord Launcelot!
I am not mad, but I am sick; they cling,
God's curses, unto such as I am; not

"Ever again shall we twine arms and lips."
"Yea, she is mad: Thy heavy law, O Lord,
Is very tight about her now, and grips
Her poor heart, so that no right word

"Can reach her mouth; so, Lord, forgive her now,
That she not knowing what she does, being mad,
Kills me in this way—Guenevere, bend low
And kiss me once! for God's love kiss me! sad

"Though your face is, you look much kinder now;
Yea once, once for the last time kiss me, lest I die."
"Christ! my hot lips are very near his brow,
Help me to save his soul!—Yea, verily,

"Across my husband's head, fair Launcelot!
Fair serpent mark'd with V upon the head!
This thing we did while yet he was alive,
Why not, O twisting knight, now he is dead?

" Yea, shake ! shake now and shiver ! if you can
Remember anything for agony,
Pray you remember how when the wind ran
One cool spring evening through fair aspen-tree,

" And elm and oak about the palace there,
The king came back from battle, and I stood
To meet him, with my ladies, on the stair,
My face made beautiful with my young blood."

" Will she lie now, Lord God ? " " Remember too,
Wrung heart, how first before the knights there came
A royal bier, hung round with green and blue,
About shone great tapers with sick flame.

" And thereupon Lucius, the Emperor,
Lay royal-robed, but stone-cold now and dead,
Not able to hold sword or sceptre more,
But not quite grim ; because his cloven head

" Bore no marks now of Launcelot's bitter sword,
Being by embalmers deftly solder'd up ;
So still it seem'd the face of a great lord,
Being mended as a craftsman mends a cup.

" Also the heralds sung rejoicingly
To their long trumpets ; ' Fallen under shield,

Here lieth Lucius, King of Italy,
Slain by Lord Launcelot in open field.'

"Thereat the people shouted 'Launcelot!'
And through the spears I saw you drawing nigh,
You and Lord Arthur—nay, I saw you not,
But rather Arthur, God would not let die,

"I hoped, these many years, he should grow great,
And in his great arms still encircle me,
Kissing my face, half blinded with the heat
Of king's love for the queen I used to be.

"Launcelot, Launcelot, why did he take your hand,
When he had kissed me in his kingly way?
Saying, 'This is the knight whom all the land
Calls Arthur's banner, sword, and shield to-day;

"'Cherish him, love.' Why did your long lips cleave
In such strange way unto my fingers then?
So eagerly glad to kiss, so loath to leave
When you rose up? Why among helmed men

"Could I always tell you by your long strong arms,
And sway like an angel's in your saddle there?
Why sicken'd I so often with alarms
Over the tilt-yard? Why were you more fair

" Than aspens in the autumn at their best?
Why did you fill all lands with your great fame,
So that Breuse even, as he rode, fear'd lest
At turning of the way your shield should flame?

" Was it nought then, my agony and strife?
When as day passed by day, year after year,
I found I could not live a righteous life?
Didst ever think that queens held their truth dear?

" O, but your lips say, ' Yea, but she was cold
Sometimes, always uncertain as the spring;
When I was sad she would be overbold,
Longing for kisses;' when war-bells did ring,

" The back-toll'd bells of noisy Camelot "—
" Now, Lord God, listen! listen, Guenevere,
Though I am weak just now, I think there's not
A man who dares to say, ' You hated her,

" ' And left her moaning while you fought your fill
In the daisied meadows;' lo you her thin hand,
That on the carven stone can not keep still,
Because she loves me against God's command,

" Has often been quite wet with tear on tear,
Tears Launcelot keeps somewhere, surely not

In his own heart, perhaps in Heaven, where
He will not be these ages "—" Launcelot!

"Loud lips, wrung heart! I say, when the bells rang,
The noisy back-toll'd bells of Camelot,
There were two spots on earth, the thrushes sang
In the lonely gardens where my love was not,

"Where I was almost weeping; I dared not
Weep quite in those days, lest one maid should say,
In tittering whispers; 'Where is Launcelot
To wipe with some kerchief those tears away?'

"Another answer sharply with brows knit,
And warning hand up, scarcely lower though,
'You speak too loud, see you, she heareth it,
This tigress fair has claws, as I well know,

"'As Launcelot knows too, the poor knight! well-a-day!
Why met he not with Iseult from the West,
Or, better still, Iseult of Brittany?
Perchance indeed quite ladyless were best.'

"Alas, my maids, you loved not overmuch
Queen Guenevere, uncertain as sunshine
In March; forgive me! for my sin being such,
About my whole life, all my deeds did twine,

"Made me quite wicked; as I found out then,
I think; in the lonely palace, where each morn
We went, my maids and I, to say prayers when
They sang mass in the chapel on the lawn.

"And every morn I scarce could pray at all,
For Launcelot's red-golden hair would play,
Instead of sunlight, on the painted wall,
Mingled with dreams of what the priest did say;

"Grim curses out of Peter and of Paul;
Judging of strange sins in Leviticus;
Another sort of writing on the wall,
Scored deep across the painted heads of us.

"Christ sitting with the woman at the well,
And Mary Magdalen repenting there,
Her dimmed eyes scorch'd and red at sight of hell
So hardly scaped, no gold light on her hair.

"And if the priest said anything that seem'd
To touch upon the sin they said we did,—
(This in their teeth) they look'd as if they deem'd
That I was spying what thoughts might be hid

"Under green-cover'd bosoms, heaving quick
Beneath quick thoughts; while they grew red with shame,

And gazed down at their feet—while I felt sick,
And almost shriek'd if one should call my name.

"The thrushes sang in the lone garden there—
But where you were the birds were scared I trow—
Clanging of arms about pavilions fair,
Mixed with the knights' laughs; there, as I well know,

"Rode Launcelot, the king of all the band,
And scowling Gauwaine, like the night in day,
And handsome Gareth, with his great white hand
Curl'd round the helm-crest, ere he join'd the fray;

"And merry Dinadan with sharp dark face,
All true knights loved to see; and in the fight
Great Tristram, and though helmed you could trace
In all his bearing the frank noble knight;

"And by him Palomydes, helmet off,
He fought, his face brush'd by his hair,
Red heavy swinging hair; he fear'd a scoff
So overmuch, though what true knight would dare

"To mock that face, fretted with useless care,
And bitter useless striving after love?
O Palomydes, with much honour bear
Beast Glatysaunt upon your shield, above

"Your helm that hides the swinging of your hair,
And think of Iseult, as your sword drives through
Much mail and plate—O God, let me be there
A little time, as I was long ago!

"Because stout Gareth lets his spear fall low,
Gauwaine, and Launcelot, and Dinadan
Are helm'd and waiting; let the trumpets go!
Bend over, ladies, to see all you can!

"Clench teeth, dames, yea, clasp hands, for Gareth's spear
Throws Kay from out his saddle, like a stone
From a castle-window when the foe draws near—
'Iseult!'—Sir Dinadan rolleth overthrown.

"'Iseult'—again—the pieces of each spear
Fly fathoms up, and both the great steeds reel;
'Tristram for Iseult!' 'Iseult' and 'Guenevere,'
The ladies' names bite verily like steel.

"They bite—bite me, Lord God!—I shall go mad,
Or else die kissing him, he is so pale,
He thinks me mad already, O bad! bad!
Let me lie down a little while and wail."

"No longer so, rise up, I pray you, love,
And slay me really, then we shall be heal'd,

Perchance, in the aftertime by God above."
" Banner of Arthur—with black-bended shield

" Sinister-wise across the fair gold ground !
Here let me tell you what a knight you are,
O sword and shield of Arthur ! you are found
A crooked sword, I think, that leaves a scar

" On the bearer's arm, so be he thinks it straight,
Twisted Malay's crease beautiful blue-grey,
Poison'd with sweet fruit ; as he found too late,
My husband Arthur, on some bitter day !

" O sickle cutting hemlock the day long !
That the husbandman across his shoulder hangs,
And, going homeward about evensong,
Dies the next morning, struck through by the fangs!

" Banner, and sword, and shield, you dare not pray to die,
Lest you meet Arthur in the other world,
And, knowing who you are, he pass you by,
Taking short turns that he may watch you curl'd.

" Body and face and limbs in agony,
Lest he weep presently and go away,
Saying, ' I loved him once,' with a sad sigh—
Now I have slain him, Lord, let me go too, I pray.
[Launcelot *falls*.

" Alas ! alas ! I know not what to do,
If I run fast it is perchance that I
May fall and stun myself, much better so,
Never, never again ! not even when I die."

LAUNCELOT, *on awaking.*

" I stretch'd my hands towards her and fell down,
How long I lay in swoon I cannot tell :
My head and hands were bleeding from the stone,
When I rose up, also I heard a bell."

SIR GALAHAD, A CHRISTMAS MYSTERY

SIR GALAHAD, A CHRISTMAS MYSTERY

IT is the longest night in all the year,
Near on the day when the Lord Christ was born;
Six hours ago I came and sat down here,
And ponder'd sadly, wearied and forlorn.

The winter wind that pass'd the chapel-door,
Sang out a moody tune, that went right well
With mine own thoughts: I look'd down on the floor,
Between my feet, until I heard a bell

Sound a long way off through the forest deep,
And toll on steadily; a drowsiness
Came on me, so that I fell half asleep,
As I sat there not moving: less and less

I saw the melted snow that hung in beads
Upon my steel-shoes; less and less I saw

Between the tiles the bunches of small weeds :
Heartless and stupid, with no touch of awe

Upon me, half-shut eyes upon the ground,
I thought ; O ! Galahad, the days go by,
Stop and cast up now that which you have found,
So sorely you have wrought and painfully.

Night after night your horse treads down alone
The sere damp fern, night after night you sit
Holding the bridle like a man of stone,
Dismal, unfriended, what thing comes of it.

And what if Palomydes also ride,
And over many a mountain and bare heath
Follow the questing beast with none beside ?
Is he not able still to hold his breath

With thoughts of Iseult ? doth he not grow pale
With weary striving, to seem best of all
To her, "as she is best," he saith ? to fail
Is nothing to him, he can never fall.

For unto such a man love-sorrow is
So dear a thing unto his constant heart,
That even if he never win one kiss,
Or touch from Iseult, it will never part.

And he will never know her to be worse
Than in his happiest dreams he thinks she is :
Good knight, and faithful, you have 'scaped the curse
In wonderful-wise ; you have great store of bliss.

Yea, what if Father Launcelot ride out,
Can he not think of Guenevere's arms, round,
Warm and lithe, about his neck, and shout
Till all the place grows joyful with the sound ?

And when he lists can often see her face,
And think, " Next month I kiss you, or next week,
And still you think of me : " therefore the place
Grows very pleasant, whatsoever he seek.

But me, who ride alone, some carle shall find
Dead in my arms in the half-melted snow,
When all unkindly with the shifting wind,
The thaw comes on at Candlemas : I know

Indeed that they will say : " This Galahad
If he had lived had been a right good knight ;
Ah ! poor chaste body ! " but they will be glad,
Not most alone, but all, when in their sight

That very evening in their scarlet sleeves
The gay-dress'd minstrels sing ; no maid will talk

Of sitting on my tomb, until the leaves,
Grown big upon the bushes of the walk,

East of the Palace-pleasaunce, make it hard
To see the minster therefrom: well-a-day!
Before the trees by autumn were well bared,
I saw a damozel with gentle play,

Within that very walk say last farewell
To her dear knight, just riding out to find
(Why should I choke to say it?) the Sangreal,
And their last kisses sunk into my mind,

Yea, for she stood lean'd forward on his breast,
Rather, scarce stood; the back of one dear hand,
That it might well be kiss'd, she held and press'd
Against his lips; long time they stood there, fann'd

By gentle gusts of quiet frosty wind,
Till Mador de la porte a-going by,
And my own horsehoofs roused them; they untwined,
And parted like a dream. In this way I,

With sleepy face bent to the chapel floor,
Kept musing half asleep, till suddenly
A sharp bell rang from close beside the door,
And I leapt up when something pass'd me by,

Shrill ringing going with it, still half blind
I stagger'd after, a great sense of awe
At every step kept gathering on my mind,
Thereat I have no marvel, for I saw

One sitting on the altar as a throne,
Whose face no man could say he did not know,
And though the bell still rang, He sat alone,
With raiment half blood-red, half white as snow.

Right so I fell upon the floor and knelt,
Not as one kneels in church when mass is said,
But in a heap, quite nerveless, for I felt
The first time what a thing was perfect dread.

But mightily the gentle voice came down:
"Rise up, and look and listen, Galahad,
Good knight of God, for you will see no frown
Upon My face; I come to make you glad.

"For that you say that you are all alone,
I will be with you always, and fear not
You are uncared for, though no maiden moan
Above your empty tomb; for Launcelot,

"He in good time shall be My servant too,
Meantime, take note whose sword first made him knight,

And who has loved him alway, yea, and who
Still trusts him alway, though in all men's sight,

"He is just what you know, O Galahad.
This love is happy even as you say,
But would you for a little time be glad,
To make ME sorry long day after day?

"Her warm arms round his neck half throttle Me,
The hot love-tears burn deep like spots of lead,
Yea, and the years pass quick: right dismally
Will Launcelot at one time hang his head;

"Yea, old and shrivell'd he shall win My love.
Poor Palomydes fretting out his soul!
Not always is he able, son, to move
His love, and do it honour: needs must roll

"The proudest destrier sometimes in the dust,
And then 'tis weary work; he strives beside
Seem better than he is, so that his trust
Is always on what chances may betide;

"And so he wears away, My servant, too,
When all these things are gone, and wretchedly
He sits and longs to moan for Iseult, who
Is no care now to Palomydes: see,

" O good son Galahad, upon this day,
Now even, all these things are on your side,
But these you fight not for ; look up, I say,
And see how I can love you, for no pride

" Closes your eyes, no vain lust keeps them down.
See now you have Me always ; following
That holy vision, Galahad, go on,
Until at last you come to Me to sing

" In Heaven always, and to walk around
The garden where I am : " He ceased, my face
And wretched body fell upon the ground ;
And when I look'd again, the holy place

Was empty ; but right so the bell again
Came to the chapel-door, there entered
Two angels first, in white, without a stain,
And scarlet wings, then after them a bed

Four ladies bore, and set it down beneath
The very altar-step, and while for fear
I scarcely dared to move or draw my breath,
Those holy ladies gently came a-near,

And quite unarm'd me, saying : " Galahad,
Rest here awhile and sleep, and take no thought

Of any other thing than being glad;
Hither the Sangreal will be shortly brought,

"Yet must you sleep the while it stayeth here."
Right so they went away, and I, being weary,
Slept long and dream'd of Heaven: the bell comes near,
I doubt it grows to morning. Miserere!

Enter Two Angels in white, with scarlet wings; also Four Ladies in gowns of red and green; also an Angel, bearing in his hands a surcoat of white, with a red cross.

An Angel.

O servant of the high God, Galahad!
Rise and be arm'd, the Sangreal is gone forth
Through the great forest, and you must be had
Unto the sea that lieth on the north:

There shall you find the wondrous ship wherein
The spindles of King Solomon are laid,
And the sword that no man draweth without sin,
But if he be most pure: and there is stay'd,

Hard by, Sir Launcelot, whom you will meet
In some short space upon that ship: first, though,

Will come here presently that lady sweet,
Sister of Percival, whom you well know,

And with her Bors and Percival: stand now,
These ladies will to arm you.

FIRST LADY, *putting on the hauberke.*

Galahad,
That I may stand so close beneath your brow,
I, Margaret of Antioch, am glad.

SECOND LADY, *girding him with the sword.*

That I may stand and touch you with my hand,
O Galahad, I, Cecily, am glad.

THIRD LADY, *buckling on the spurs.*

That I may kneel while up above you stand,
And gaze at me, O holy Galahad,
I, Lucy, am most glad.

FOURTH LADY, *putting on the basnet.*

O gentle knight,
That you bow down to us in reverence,
We are most glad, I, Katherine, with delight
Must needs fall trembling.

ANGEL, *putting on the crossed surcoat.*

Galahad, we go hence,

For here, amid the straying of the snow,
Come Percival's sister, Bors, and Percival.

[*The Four Ladies carry out the bed, and all go but* Galahad.

GALAHAD.

How still and quiet everything seems now:
They come, too, for I hear the horsehoofs fall.

Enter Sir Bors, Sir Percival, *and* his Sister.

Fair friends and gentle lady, God you save!
A many marvels have been here to-night;
Tell me what news of Launcelot you have,
And has God's body ever been in sight?

SIR BORS.

Why, as for seeing that same holy thing,
As we were riding slowly side by side,
An hour ago, we heard a sweet voice sing,
And through the bare twigs saw a great light glide,

With many-colour'd raiment, but far off,
And so pass'd quickly—from the court nought good;
Poor merry Dinadan, that with jape and scoff
Kept us all merry, in a little wood

Was found all hack'd and dead : Sir Lionel
And Gauwaine have come back from the great quest,
Just merely shamed ; and Lauvaine, who loved well
Your father Launcelot, at the king's behest

Went out to seek him, but was almost slain,
Perhaps is dead now ; everywhere
The knights come foil'd from the great quest, in vain ;
In vain they struggle for the vision fair.

THE CHAPEL IN LYONESS

THE CHAPEL IN LYONESS

Sir Ozana le cure Hardy. Sir Galahad. Sir Bors de Ganys.

Sir Ozana.

ALL day long and every day,
From Christmas-Eve to Whit-Sunday,
Within that Chapel-aisle I lay,
And no man came a-near.

Naked to the waist was I,
And deep within my breast did lie,
Though no man any blood could spy,
The truncheon of a spear.

No meat did ever pass my lips.
Those days—(Alas! the sunlight slips
From off the gilded parclose, dips,
And night comes on apace.)

My arms lay back behind my head;
Over my raised-up knees was spread
A samite cloth of white and red;
A rose lay on my face.

Many a time I tried to shout;
But as in dream of battle-rout,
My frozen speech would not well out;
I could not even weep.

With inward sigh I see the sun
Fade off the pillars one by one,
My heart faints when the day is done,
Because I cannot sleep.

Sometimes strange thoughts pass through my head;
Not like a tomb is this my bed,
Yet oft I think that I am dead;
That round my tomb is writ,

"Ozana of the hardy heart,
Knight of the Table Round,
Pray for his soul, lords, of your part;
A true knight he was found."

Ah! me, I cannot fathom it. [*He sleeps.*

All day long and every day,
Till his madness pass'd away,
I watch'd Ozana as he lay
Within the gilded screen.

All my singing moved him not;
As I sung my heart grew hot,
With the thought of Launcelot
Far away, I ween.

So I went a little space
From out the chapel, bathed my face
In the stream that runs apace
By the churchyard wall.

There I pluck'd a faint wild rose,
Hard by where the linden grows,
Sighing over silver rows
Of the lilies tall.

I laid the flower across his mouth;
The sparkling drops seem'd good for drouth;
He smiled, turn'd round toward the south,
Held up a golden tress.

The light smote on it from the west:
He drew the covering from his breast,
Against his heart that hair he prest;
Death him soon will bless.

Sir Bors.

I enter'd by the western door;
I saw a knight's helm lying there:
I raised my eyes from off the floor,
And caught the gleaming of his hair.

I stept full softly up to him;
I laid my chin upon his head;
I felt him smile; my eyes did swim,
I was so glad he was not dead.

I heard Ozana murmur low,
"There comes no sleep nor any love."
But Galahad stoop'd and kiss'd his brow:
He shiver'd; I saw his pale lips move.

Sir Ozana.

There comes no sleep nor any love;
Ah me! I shiver with delight.
I am so weak I cannot move;
God move me to thee, dear, to-night!

Christ help! I have but little wit:
My life went wrong; I see it writ,

"Ozana of the hardy heart,
Knight of the Table Round,
Pray for his soul, lords, on your part;
A good knight he was found."

Now I begin to fathom it. [*He dies.*

Sir Bors.

Galahad sits dreamily:
What strange things may his eyes see,
Great blue eyes fix'd full on me?
On his soul, Lord, have mercy.

Sir Galahad.

Ozana, shall I pray for thee?
Her cheek is laid to thine;
No long time hence, also I see
Thy wasted fingers twine

Within the tresses of her hair
That shineth gloriously,
Thinly outspread in the clear air
Against the jasper sea.

SIR PETER HARPDON'S END

SIR PETER HARPDON'S END

In an English castle in Poictou.

Sir Peter Harpdon, *a Gascon knight in the English service, and* John Curzon, *his lieutenant.*

JOHN CURZON.

OF those three prisoners, that before you came
We took down at St. John's hard by the mill,
Two are good masons; we have tools enough,
And you have skill to set them working.

SIR PETER.

So—
What are their names?

JOHN CURZON.

Why, Jacques Aquadent,
And Peter Plombiere, but—

SIR PETER.

What colour'd hair
Has Peter now? has Jacques got bow legs?

JOHN CURZON.

Why, sir, you jest—what matters Jacques' hair,
Or Peter's legs to us?

SIR PETER.

O! John, John, John!
Throw all your mason's tools down the deep well,
Hang Peter up and Jacques; they're no good,
We shall not build, man.

JOHN CURZON [*going*].

Shall I call the guard
To hang them, sir? and yet, sir, for the tools,
We'd better keep them still; sir, fare you well.

[*Muttering as he goes.*

What have I done that he should jape at me?
And why not build? the walls are weak enough,
And we've two masons and a heap of tools.

[*Goes, still muttering.*

SIR PETER.

To think a man should have a lump like that
For his lieutenant! I must call him back,
Or else, as surely as St. George is dead,
He'll hang our friends the masons—here, John! John!

JOHN CURZON.

At your good service, sir.

SIR PETER.

Come now, and talk
This weighty matter out; there—we've no stone
To mend our walls with,—neither brick nor stone.

JOHN CURZON.

There is a quarry, sir, some ten miles off.

SIR PETER.

We are not strong enough to send ten men
Ten miles to fetch us stone enough to build,
In three hours' time they would be taken or slain,
The cursed Frenchmen ride abroad so thick.

JOHN CURZON.

But we can send some villaynes to get stone.

Alas! John, that we cannot bring them back,
They would go off to Clisson or Sanxere,
And tell them we were weak in walls and men,
Then down go we; for, look you, times are changed,
And now no longer does the country shake
At sound of English names; our captains fade
From off our muster-rolls. At Lusac bridge
I daresay you may even yet see the hole
That Chandos beat in dying; far in Spain
Pembroke is prisoner; Phelton prisoner here;
Manny lies buried in the Charterhouse;
Oliver Clisson turn'd these years agone;
The Captal died in prison; and, over all,
Edward the prince lies underneath the ground,
Edward the king is dead, at Westminster
The carvers smooth the curls of his long beard.
Everything goes to rack—eh! and we too.
Now, Curzon, listen; if they come, these French,
Whom have I got to lean on here, but you?
A man can die but once, will you die then,
Your brave sword in your hand, thoughts in your heart
Of all the deeds we have done here in France—
And yet may do? So God will have your soul,
Whoever has your body.

JOHN CURZON.

Why, sir, I
Will fight till the last moment, until then
Will do whate'er you tell me. Now I see
We must e'en leave the walls; well, well, perhaps
They're stronger than I think for; pity, though!
For some few tons of stone, if Guesclin comes.

SIR PETER.

Farewell, John, pray you watch the Gascons well,
I doubt them.

JOHN CURZON.

Truly, sir, I will watch well. [*Goes.*

SIR PETER.

Farewell, good lump! and yet, when all is said,
'Tis a good lump. Why then, if Guesclin comes;
Some dozen stones from his petrariae,
And, under shelter of his crossbows, just
An hour's steady work with pickaxes,
Then a great noise—some dozen swords and glaives
A-playing on my basnet all at once,
And little more cross purposes on earth
For me.

Now this is hard: a month ago,
And a few minutes' talk had set things right
'Twixt me and Alice;—if she had a doubt,
As (may Heaven bless her!) I scarce think she had,
'Twas but their hammer, hammer in her ears,
Of "how Sir Peter fail'd at Lusac bridge:"
And "how he was grown moody of late days;"
And "how Sir Lambert," (think now!) "his dear friend,
His sweet, dear cousin, could not but confess
That Peter's talk tended towards the French,
Which he" (for instance Lambert) "was glad of,
Being" (Lambert, you see) "on the French side."
Well,
If I could but have seen her on that day,
Then, when they sent me off!
I like to think,
Although it hurts me, makes my head twist, what,
If I had seen her, what I should have said,
What she, my darling, would have said and done.
As thus perchance—
To find her sitting there,
In the window-seat, not looking well at all,
Crying perhaps, and I say quietly;
"Alice!" she looks up, chokes a sob, looks grave,

Changes from pale to red, but, ere she speaks,
Straightway I kneel down there on both my knees,
And say: "O lady, have I sinn'd, your knight?
That still you ever let me walk alone
In the rose garden, that you sing no songs
When I am by, that ever in the dance
You quietly walk away when I come near?
Now that I have you, will you go, think you?"

Ere she could answer I would speak again,
Still kneeling there.
"What! they have frighted you,
By hanging burs, and clumsily carven puppets,
Round my good name; but afterwards, my love,
I will say what this means; this moment, see!
Do I kneel here, and can you doubt me? Yea,"
(For she would put her hands upon my face,)
"Yea, that is best, yea feel, love, am I changed?"
And she would say: "Good knight, come, kiss my lips!"
And afterwards as I sat there would say:

"Please a poor silly girl by telling me
What all those things they talk of really were,
For it is true you did not help Chandos,

And true, poor love! you could not come to me
When I was in such peril."
I should say:
"I am like Balen, all things turn to blame—
I did not come to you? At Bergerath
The constable had held us close shut up,
If from the barriers I had made three steps,
I should have been but slain; at Lusac, too,
We struggled in a marish half the day,
And came too late at last: you know, my love,
How heavy men and horses are all arm'd.
All that Sir Lambert said was pure, unmix'd,
Quite groundless lies; as you can think, sweet love."

She, holding tight my hand as we sat there,
Started a little at Sir Lambert's name,
But otherwise she listen'd scarce at all
To what I said. Then with moist, weeping eyes,
And quivering lips, that scarcely let her speak,
She said, "I love you."
Other words were few,
The remnant of that hour; her hand smooth'd down
My foolish head; she kiss'd me all about
My face, and through the tangles of my beard
Her little fingers crept.

O! God, my Alice,
Not this good way: my lord but sent and said
That Lambert's sayings were taken at their worth,
Therefore that day I was to start, and keep
This hold against the French; and I am here,—
[*Looks out of the window.*
A sprawling lonely gard with rotten walls,
And no one to bring aid if Guesclin comes,
Or any other.
There's a pennon now!
At last.
But not the constables's—whose arms,
I wonder, does it bear? Three golden rings
On a red ground; my cousin's by the rood!
Well, I should like to kill him, certainly,
But to be kill'd by him— [*A trumpet sounds.*
That's for a herald;
I doubt this does not mean assaulting yet.

Enter John Curzon.

What says the herald of our cousin, sir?

John Curzon.

So please you, sir, concerning your estate,
He has good will to talk with you.

Sir Peter.

Outside,
I'll talk with him, close by the gate St. Ives.
Is he unarm'd ?

John Curzon.

Yea, sir, in a long gown.

Sir Peter.

Then bid them bring me hither my furr'd gown
With the long sleeves, and under it I'll wear,
By Lambert's leave, a secret coat of mail;
And will you lend me, John, your little axe ?
I mean the one with Paul wrought on the blade ?
And I will carry it inside my sleeve,
Good to be ready always—you, John, go
And bid them set up many suits of arms,
Bows, archgays, lances, in the base-court, and
Yourself, from the south postern setting out,
With twenty men, be ready to break through
Their unguarded rear when I cry out " St. George ! "

John Curzon.

How, sir ! will you attack him unawares,
And slay him unarm'd ?

Sir Peter.

Trust me, John, I know
The reason why he comes here with sleeved gown,
Fit to hide axes up. So, let us go. [*They go.*

Outside the castle by the great gate; Sir Lambert *and* Sir Peter *seated; guards attending each, the rest of* Sir Lambert's *men drawn up about a furlong off.*

SIR PETER.

AND if I choose to take the losing side
Still, does it hurt you?

SIR LAMBERT.

O! no hurt to me;
I see you sneering, "Why take trouble then,
Seeing you love me not?" look you, our house
(Which, taken altogether, I love much)
Had better be upon the right side now,
If, once for all, it wishes to bear rule
As such a house should: cousin, you're too wise
To feed your hope up fat, that this fair France
Will ever draw two ways again; this side
The French, wrong-headed, all a-jar

With envious longings; and the other side
The order'd English, orderly led on
By those two Edwards through all wrong and right,
And muddling right and wrong to a thick broth
With that long stick, their strength. This is all changed,
The true French win, on either side you have
Cool-headed men, good at a tilting-match,
And good at setting battles in array,
And good at squeezing taxes at due time;
Therefore by nature we French being here
Upon our own big land—

[Sir Peter *laughs aloud.*

Well Peter! well!
What makes you laugh?

Sir Peter.

Hearing you sweat to prove
All this I know so well; but you have read
The siege of Troy?

Sir Lambert.

O! yea, I know it well.

Sir Peter.

There! they were wrong, as wrong as men could be;
For, as I think, they found it such delight

To see fair Helen going through their town:
Yea, any little common thing she did
(As stooping to pick a flower) seem'd so strange,
So new in its great beauty, that they said;
"Here we will keep her living in this town,
Till all burns up together." And so, fought,
In a mad whirl of knowing they were wrong;
Yea, they fought well, and ever, like a man
That hangs, legs off the ground, by both his hands,
Over some great height, did they struggle sore,
Quite sure to slip at last; wherefore, take note
How almost all men, reading that sad siege,
Hold for the Trojans; as I did at least,
Thought Hector the best knight a long way:

Now

Why should I not do this thing that I think?
For even when I come to count the gains,
I have them my side: men will talk, you know,
(We talk of Hector, dead so long agone,)
When I am dead, of how this Peter clung
To what he thought the right; of how he died,
Perchance, at last, doing some desperate deed
Few men would care do now, and this is gain
To me, as ease and money is to you,
Moreover, too, I like the straining game

Of striving well to hold up things that fall ;
So one becomes great ; see you ! in good times
All men live well together, and you, too,
Live dull and happy—happy ? not so quick,
Suppose sharp thoughts begin to burn you up.
Why then, but just to fight as I do now,
A halter round my neck, would be great bliss.
O ! I am well off. [*Aside.*

Talk, and talk, and talk,
I know this man has come to murder me,
And yet I talk still.

SIR LAMBERT.

If your side were right,
You might be, though you lost ; but if I said,
" You are a traitor, being, as you are,
Born Frenchman." What are Edwards unto you,
Or Richards ?

SIR PETER.

Nay, hold there, my Lambert, hold !
For fear your zeal should bring you to some harm,
Don't call me traitor.

SIR LAMBERT.

Furthermore, my knight,
Men call you slippery on your losing side,

When at Bordeaux I was ambassador,
I heard them say so, and could scarce say "Nay."

[*He takes hold of something in his sleeve, and rises.*

SIR PETER, *rising.*

They lied—and you lie, not for the first time.
What have you got there, fumbling up your sleeve,
A stolen purse?

SIR LAMBERT.

Nay, liar in your teeth!
Dead liar too; St. Dennis and St. Lambert!

[*Strikes at* Sir Peter *with a dagger.*

SIR PETER, *striking him flatlings with his axe.*

How thief! thief! thief! so there, fair thief, so there,
St. George Guienne! glaives for the castellan!
You French, you are but dead, unless you lay
Your spears upon the earth. St. George Guienne!

Well done, John Curzon, how he has them now.

In the Castle.

JOHN CURZON.

WHAT shall we do with all these prisoners, sir?

SIR PETER.

Why put them all to ransom, those that can
Pay anything, but not too light though, John,
Seeing we have them on the hip: for those
That have no money, that being certified,
Why turn them out of doors before they spy;
But bring Sir Lambert guarded unto me.

JOHN CURZON.

I will, fair sir. [*He goes.*

SIR PETER.

I do not wish to kill him,
Although I think I ought; he shall go mark'd,
By all the saints, though!

Enter Lambert *guarded.*

Now, Sir Lambert, now!
What sort of death do you expect to get,
Being taken this way?

SIR LAMBERT.

Cousin! cousin! think!
I am your own blood; may God pardon me!
I am not fit to die; if you knew all,
All I have done since I was young and good.
O! you would give me yet another chance,
As God would, that I might wash all clear out,
By serving you and Him. Let me go now!
And I will pay you down more golden crowns
Of ransom than the king would!

SIR PETER.

Well, stand back,
And do not touch me! No, you shall not die,
Nor yet pay ransom. You, John Curzon, cause
Some carpenters to build a scaffold, high,
Outside the gate; when it is built, sound out
To all good folks, "Come, see a traitor punish'd!"
Take me my knight, and set him up thereon,
And let the hangman shave his head quite clean,
And cut his ears off close up to the head;

And cause the minstrels all the while to play
Soft music, and good singing ; for this day
Is my high day of triumph ; is it not,
Sir Lambert ?

Sir Lambert.

Ah ! on your own blood,
Own name, you heap this foul disgrace ? you dare,
With hands and fame thus sullied, to go back
And take the lady Alice—

Sir Peter.

Say her name
Again, and you are dead, slain here by me.
Why should I talk with you ? I'm master here,
And do not want your schooling ; is it not
My mercy that you are not dangling dead
There in the gateway with a broken neck ?

Sir Lambert.

Such mercy ! why not kill me then outright ?
To die is nothing ; but to live that all
May point their fingers ! yea, I'd rather die.

John Curzon.

Why, will it make you any uglier man
To lose your ears ? they're much too big for you,
You ugly Judas !

Sir Peter.

Hold, John! [*To* Lambert.
That's your choice,
To die, mind! Then you shall die—Lambert mine,
I thank you now for choosing this so well,
It saves me much perplexity and doubt;
Perchance an ill deed too, for half I count
This sparing traitors is an ill deed.
Well,
Lambert, die bravely, and we're almost friends.

Sir Lambert, *grovelling.*

O God! this is a fiend and not a man;
Will some one save me from him? help, help, help!
I will not die.

Sir Peter.

Why, what is this I see?
A man who is a knight, and bandied words
So well just now with me, is lying down,
Gone mad for fear like this! So, so, you thought
You knew the worst, and might say what you pleased.
I should have guess'd this from a man like you.
Eh! righteous Job would give up skin for skin,
Yea, all a man can have for simple life,

And we talk fine, yea, even a hound like this,
Who needs must know that when he dies, deep hell
Will hold him fast for ever—so fine we talk,
"Would rather die"—all that. Now sir, get up!
And choose again: shall it be head sans ears,
Or trunk sans head?

John Curzon, pull him up!
What, life then? go and build the scaffold, John.

Lambert, I hope that never on this earth
We meet again; that you'll turn out a monk,
And mend the life I give you, so, farewell,
I'm sorry you're a rascal. John, despatch.

In the French camp before the Castle.

Sir Peter *prisoner*, Guesclin, Clisson, Sir Lambert.

Sir Peter.

SO now is come the ending of my life ;
If I could clear this sickening lump away
That sticks in my dry throat, and say a word,
Guesclin might listen.

Guesclin.

Tell me, fair sir knight,
If you have been clean liver before God,
And then you need not fear much ; as for me,
I cannot say I hate you, yet my oath,
And cousin Lambert's ears here clench the thing.

Sir Peter.

I knew you could not hate me, therefore I
Am bold to pray for life ; 'twill harm your cause

To hang knights of good name, harm here in France
I have small doubt, at any rate hereafter
Men will remember you another way
Than I should care to be remember'd, ah!
Although hot lead runs through me for my blood,
All this falls cold as though I said, "Sweet lords,
Give back my falcon!"
See how young I am,
Do you care altogether more than France,
Say rather one French faction, than for all
The state of Christendom? a gallant knight,
As (yea, by God!) I have been, is more worth
Than many castles; will you bring this death,
For a mere act of justice, on my head?

Think how it ends all, death! all other things
Can somehow be retrieved, yea, send me forth
Naked and maimed, rather than slay me here;
Then somehow will I get me other clothes,
And somehow will I get me some poor horse,
And, somehow clad in poor old rusty arms,
Will ride and smite among the serried glaives,
Fear not death so; for I can tilt right well,
Let me not say "I could;" I know all tricks,
That sway the sharp sword cunningly; ah you,

You, my Lord Clisson, in the other days
Have seen me learning these, yea, call to mind,
How in the trodden corn by Chartrés town,
When you were nearly swooning from the back
Of your black horse, those three blades slid at once
From off my sword's edge; pray for me, my lord!

CLISSON.

Nay, this is pitiful, to see him die.
My Lord the Constable, I pray you note
That you are losing some few thousand crowns
By slaying this man; also think; his lands
Along the Garonne river lie for leagues,
And are right rich, a many mills he has,
Three abbeys of grey monks do hold of him,
Though wishing well for Clement, as we do;
I know the next heir, his old uncle, well,
Who does not care two derniers for the knight
As things go now, but slay him, and then see,
How he will bristle up like any perch,
With curves of spears. What! do not doubt, my lord,
You'll get the money, this man saved my life,
And I will buy him for two thousand crowns;
Well, five then—eh! what! "No" again? well then,
Ten thousand crowns?

GUESCLIN.

My sweet lord, much I grieve
I cannot please you, yea, good sooth, I grieve
This knight must die, as verily he must ;
For I have sworn it ; so, men, take him out,
Use him not roughly.

SIR LAMBERT, *coming forward.*

Music, do you know,
Music will suit you well, I think, because
You look so mild, like Laurence being grill'd ;
Or perhaps music soft and slow, because
This is high day of triumph unto me,
Is it not, Peter ?

You are frighten'd, though,
Eh ! you are pale, because this hurts you much,
Whose life was pleasant to you, not like mine,
You ruin'd wretch ! Men mock me in the streets,
Only in whispers loud, because I am
Friend of the constable ; will this please you,
Unhappy Peter ? once a-going home,
Without my servants, and a little drunk,
At midnight through the lone dim lamp-lit streets,
A whore came up and spat into my eyes,
(Rather to blind me than to make me see,)

But she was very drunk, and tottering back,
Even in the middle of her laughter, fell
And cut her head against the pointed stones,
While I lean'd on my staff, and look'd at her,
And cried, being drunk.
Girls would not spit at you,
You are so handsome, I think verily
Most ladies would be glad to kiss your eyes,
And yet you will be hung like a cur dog
Five minutes hence, and grow black in the face,
And curl your toes up. Therefore I am glad.

Guess why I stand and talk this nonsense now,
With Guesclin getting ready to play chess,
And Clisson doing something with his sword,
I can't see what, talking to Guesclin though,
I don't know what about, perhaps of you.
But, cousin Peter, while I stroke your beard,
Let me say this, I'd like to tell you now
That your life hung upon a game of chess,
That if, say, my squire Robert here should beat,
Why you should live, but hang if I beat him ;
Then guess, clever Peter, what I should do then ;
Well, give it up ? why, Peter, I should let
My squire Robert beat me, then you would think

That you were safe, you know ; Eh ? not at all,
But I should keep you three days in some hold,
Giving you salt to eat, which would be kind,
Considering the tax there is on salt ;
And afterwards should let you go, perhaps ?
No I should not, but I should hang you, sir,
With a red rope in lieu of mere grey rope.

But I forgot, you have not told me yet
If you can guess why I talk nonsense thus,
Instead of drinking wine while you are hang'd ?
You are not quick at guessing, give it up.
This is the reason ; here I hold your hand,
And watch you growing paler, see you writhe,
And this, my Peter, is a joy so dear,
I cannot by all striving tell you how
I love it, nor I think, good man, would you
Quite understand my great delight therein ;
You, when you had me underneath you once,
Spat as it were, and said, " Go take him out,"
(That they might do that thing to me whereat,
E'en now this long time off, I could well shriek,)
And then you tried forget I ever lived,
And sunk your hating into other things ;
While I—St. Dennis ! though, I think you'll faint,

Your lips are grey so; yes, you will, unless
You let it out and weep like a hurt child;
Hurrah! you do now. Do not go just yet,
For I am Alice, am right like her now;
Will you not kiss me on the lips, my love?—

CLISSON.

You filthy beast, stand back and let him go,
Or by God's eyes I'll choke you.

[*Kneeling to* Sir Peter.

Fair sir knight,
I kneel upon my knees and pray to you
That you would pardon me for this your death;
God knows how much I wish you still alive,
Also how heartily I strove to save
Your life at this time; yea, He knows quite well,
(I swear it, so forgive me!) how I would,
If it were possible, give up my life
Upon this grass for yours; fair knight, although,
He knowing all things knows this thing too, well,
Yet when you see His face some short time hence,
Tell Him I tried to save you.

SIR PETER.

O! my lord,
I cannot say this is as good as life,

But yet it makes me feel far happier now,
And if at all, after a thousand years,
I see God's face, I will speak loud and bold,
And tell Him you were kind, and like Himself;
Sir, may God bless you!
Did you note how I
Fell weeping just now? pray you, do not think
That Lambert's taunts did this, I hardly heard
The base things that he said, being deep in thought
Of all things that have happen'd since I was
A little child; and so at last I thought
Of my true lady: truly, sir, it seem'd
No longer gone than yesterday, that this
Was the sole reason God let me be born
Twenty-five years ago, that I might love
Her, my sweet lady, and be loved by her;
This seem'd so yesterday, to-day death comes,
And is so bitter strong, I cannot see
Why I was born.
But as a last request,
I pray you, O kind Clisson, send some man,
Some good man, mind you, to say how I died,
And take my last love to her: fare-you-well,
And may God keep you; I must go now, lest
I grow too sick with thinking on these things;

Likewise my feet are wearied of the earth,
From whence I shall be lifted up right soon.

[*As he goes.*

Ah me! shamed too, I wept at fear of death;
And yet not so, I only wept because
There was no beautiful lady to kiss me
Before I died, and sweetly wish good speed
From her dear lips. O for some lady, though
I saw her ne'er before; Alice, my love,
I do not ask for; Clisson was right kind,
If he had been a woman, I should die
Without this sickness: but I am all wrong,
So wrong and hopelessly afraid to die.
There, I will go.
My God! how sick I am,
If only she could come and kiss me now.

The Hôtel de la Barde, Bordeaux.

The Lady Alice de la Barde *looking out of a window into the street.*

NO news yet! surely, still he holds his own;
That garde stands well; I mind me passing it
Some months ago; God grant the walls are strong!
I heard some knights say something yestereve,
I tried hard to forget: words far apart
Struck on my heart; something like this; one said,
"What eh! a Gascon with an English name,
Harpdon?" then nought, but afterwards, "Poictou."
As one who answers to a question ask'd;
Then carelessly regretful came, "No, no."
Whereto in answer loud and eagerly,
One said, "Impossible? Christ, what foul play!"
And went off angrily; and while thenceforth
I hurried gaspingly afraid, I heard,

"Guesclin;" "Five thousand men-at-arms;"
"Clisson."
My heart misgives me it is all in vain
I send these succours; and in good time there!
Their trumpet sounds, ah! here they are; good knights,
God up in Heaven keep you.
If they come
And find him prisoner—for I can't believe
Guesclin will slay him, even though they storm—
(The last horse turns the corner.)
God in Heaven!
What have I got to thinking of at last!
That thief I will not name is with Guesclin,
Who loves him for his lands. My love! my love!
O, if I lose you after all the past,
What shall I do?
I cannot bear the noise
And light street out there, with this thought alive,
Like any curling snake within my brain;
Let me just hide my head within these soft
Deep cushions, there to try and think it out.
[*Lying in the window-seat.*
I cannot hear much noise now, and I think
That I shall go to sleep: it all sounds dim
And faint, and I shall soon forget most things;

Yea, almost that I am alive and here ;
It goes slow, comes slow, like a big mill-wheel
On some broad stream, with long green weeds a-sway,
And soft and slow it rises and it falls,
Still going onward.
Lying so, one kiss,
And I should be in Avalon asleep,
Among the poppies, and the yellow flowers :
And they should brush my cheek, my hair being spread
Far out among the stems ; soft mice and small
Eating and creeping all about my feet,
Red shod and tired ; and the flies should come
Creeping o'er my broad eyelids unafraid ;
And there should be a noise of water going,
Clear blue, fresh water breaking on the slates,
Likewise the flies should creep—God's eyes ! God help,
A trumpet ? I will run fast, leap adown
The slippery sea-stairs, where the crabs fight.
Ah !
I was half dreaming, but the trumpet's true,
He stops here at our house. The Clisson arms ?
Ah, now for news. But I must hold my heart,
And be quite gentle till he is gone out ;
And afterwards,—but he is still alive,
He must be still alive.

Enter a Squire *of* Clisson's.

Good day, fair sir,
I give you welcome, knowing whence you come.

SQUIRE.

My Lady Alice de la Barde, I come
From Oliver Clisson, knight and mighty lord,
Bringing you tidings : I make bold to hope
You will not count me villain, even if
They wring your heart ; nor hold me still in hate.
For I am but a mouthpiece after all,
A mouthpiece, too, of one who wishes well
To you and your's.

ALICE.

Can you talk faster, sir,
Get over all this quicker ? fix your eyes
On mine, I pray you, and whate'er you see,
Still go on talking fast, unless I fall,
Or bid you stop.

SQUIRE.

I pray your pardon then,
And, looking in your eyes, fair lady, say
I am unhappy that your knight is dead.
Take heart, and listen ! let me tell you all.
We were five thousand goodly men-at-arms,

And scant five hundred had he in that hold;
His rotten sand-stone walls were wet with rain,
And fell in lumps wherever a stone hit;
Yet for three days about the barrier there
The deadly glaives were gather'd, laid across,
And push'd and pull'd; the fourth our engines came;
But still amid the crash of falling walls,
And roar of lombards, rattle of hard bolts,
The steady bow-strings flash'd, and still stream'd out
St. George's banner, and the seven swords,
And still they cried, "St. George Guienne," until
Their walls were flat as Jericho's of old,
And our rush came, and cut them from the keep.

ALICE.

Stop, sir, and tell me if you slew him then,
And where he died, if you can really mean
That Peter Harpdon, the good knight, is dead?

SQUIRE.

Fair lady, in the base-court—

ALICE.

What base-court?
What do you talk of? Nay, go on, go on;
'Twas only something gone within my head:
Do you not know, one turns one's head round quick,

And something cracks there with sore pain? go on,
And still look at my eyes.

SQUIRE.

Almost alone,
There in the base-court fought he with his sword,
Using his left hand much, more than the wont
Of most knights now-a-days; our men gave back,
For wheresoever he hit a downright blow,
Some one fell bleeding, for no plate could hold
Against the sway of body and great arm;
Till he grew tired, and some man (no! not I,
I swear not I, fair lady, as I live!)
Thrust at him with a glaive between the knees,
And threw him; down he fell, sword undermost;
Many fell on him, crying out their cries,
Tore his sword from him, tore his helm off, and—

ALICE.

Yea, slew him: I am much too young to live,
Fair God, so let me die.
You have done well,
Done all your message gently, pray you go,
Our knights will make you cheer; moreover, take
This bag of franks for your expenses.

[*The* Squire *kneels.*

But
You do not go; still looking at my face,
You kneel! what, squire, do you mock me then?
You need not tell me who has set you on,
But tell me only, 'tis a made-up tale.
You are some lover may-be, or his friend;
Sir, if you loved me once, or your friend loved,
Think, is it not enough that I kneel down
And kiss your feet, your jest will be right good
If you give in now, carry it too far,
And 'twill be cruel; not yet? but you weep
Almost, as though you loved me; love me then,
And go to Heaven by telling all your sport,
And I will kiss you, then with all my heart,
Upon the mouth; O! what can I do then
To move you?

SQUIRE.

Lady fair, forgive me still!
You know I am so sorry, but my tale
Is not yet finish'd:

So they bound his hands,
And brought him tall and pale to Guesclin's tent,
Who, seeing him, leant his head upon his hand,
And ponder'd somewhile, afterwards, looking up—
Fair dame, what shall I say?

ALICE.

Yea, I know now,
Good squire, you may go now with my thanks.

SQUIRE.

Yet, lady, for your own sake I say this,
Yea, for my own sake, too, and Clisson's sake.
When Guesclin told him he must be hanged soon,
Within a while he lifted up his head
And spoke for his own life; not crouching, though,
As abjectly afraid to die, nor yet
Sullenly brave as many a thief will die;
Nor yet as one that plays at japes with God:
Few words he spoke; not so much what he said
Moved us, I think, as saying it, there played
Strange tenderness from that big soldier there
About his pleading; eagerness to live
Because folk loved him, and he loved them back,
And many gallant plans unfinish'd now
For ever. Clisson's heart, which may God bless!
Was moved to pray for him, but all in vain;
Wherefore I bring this message:
That he waits,
Still loving you, within the little church
Whose windows, with the one eye of the light

Over the altar, every night behold
The great dim broken walls he strove to keep!

There my Lord Clisson did his burial well.
Now, lady, I will go; God give you rest!

ALICE.

Thank Clisson from me, squire, and farewell!
And now to keep myself from going mad.
Christ! I have been a many times to church,
And, ever since my mother taught me prayers,
Have used them daily, but to day I wish
To pray another way; come face to face,
O Christ, that I may clasp Your knees and pray,
I know not what, at any rate come now
From one of many places where You are;
Either in Heaven amid thick angel wings,
Or sitting on the altar strange with gems,
Or high up in the dustiness of the apse;
Let us go, You and I, a long way off,
To the little damp, dark, Poitevin church;
While You sit on the coffin in the dark,
Will I lie down, my face on the bare stone
Between Your feet, and chatter anything
I have heard long ago, what matters it

So I may keep You there, Your solemn face
And long hair even-flowing on each side,
Until You love me well enough to speak,
And give me comfort; yea, till o'er Your chin,
And cloven red beard the great tears roll down
In pity for my misery, and I die,
Kissed over by You.
Eh Guesclin! if I were
Like Countess Mountfort now, that kiss'd the knight,
Across the salt sea come to fight for her;
Ah! just to go about with many knights,
Wherever you went, and somehow on one day,
In a thick wood to catch you off your guard,
Let you find, you and your some fifty friends,
Nothing but arrows wheresoe'er you turn'd,
Yea, and red crosses, great spears over them;
And so, between a lane of my true men,
To walk up pale and stern and tall, and with
My arms on my surcoat, and his therewith,
And then to make you kneel, O knight Guesclin;
And then—alas! alas! when all is said,
What could I do but let you go again,
Being pitiful woman? I get no revenge,
Whatever happens; and I get no comfort,
I am but weak, and cannot move my feet,

But as men bid me.
Strange I do not die.
Suppose this has not happen'd after all?
I will lean out again and watch for news.

I wonder how long I can still feel thus,
As though I watch'd for news, feel as I did
Just half-an-hour ago, before this news.
How all the street is humming, some men sing,
And some men talk; some look up at the house,
Then lay their heads together and look grave;
Their laughter pains me sorely in the heart,
Their thoughtful talking makes my head turn round,
Yea, some men sing, what is it then they sing?
Eh Launcelot, and love and fate and death;
They ought to sing of him who was as wight
As Launcelot or Wade, and yet avail'd
Just nothing, but to fail and fail and fail,
And so at last to die and leave me here,
Alone and wretched; yea, perhaps they will,
When many years are past, make songs of us;
God help me, though, truly I never thought
That I should make a story in this way,
A story that his eyes can never see.

[*One sings from outside.*]

Therefore be it believed
Whatsoever he grieved,
Whan his horse was relieved,
This Launcelot,

Beat down on his knee,
Right valiant was he,
God's body to see,
Though he saw it not.

Right valiant to move,
But for his sad love
The high God above
Stinted his praise.

Yet so he was glad
That his son Lord Galahad
That high joyaunce had
All his life-days.

Sing we therefore then
Launcelot's praise again,
For he wan crownés ten,
If he wan not twelve.

To his death from his birth
He was muckle of worth,
Lay him in the cold earth,
A long grave ye may delve.

Omnes homines benedicite!
This last fitte ye may see
All men pray for me,
Who made this history
Cunning and fairly.

RAPUNZEL

RAPUNZEL

THE PRINCE, *being in the wood near the tower, in the evening.*

I COULD not even think
What made me weep that day,
When out of the council-hall
The courtiers pass'd away,—

THE WITCH.

Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your hair!

RAPUNZEL.

Is it not true that every day
She climbeth up the same strange way,
Her scarlet cloak spread broad and gay
Over my golden hair?

THE PRINCE.

And left me there alone,
To think on what they said;
"Thou art a king's own son,
'Tis fit that thou should'st wed."

THE WITCH.

Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your hair!

RAPUNZEL.

When I undo the knotted mass,
Fathoms below the shadows pass
Over my hair along the grass.
O my golden hair!

THE PRINCE.

I put my armour on,
Thinking on what they said;
"Thou art a king's own son,
'Tis fit that thou should'st wed."

THE WITCH.

Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your hair!

RAPUNZEL

See on the marble parapet
I lean my brow, strive to forget
That fathoms below my hair grows wet
With the dew, my golden hair.

THE PRINCE.

I rode throughout the town,
Men did not bow the head,
Though I was the king's own son;
"He rides to dream," they said.

THE WITCH.

Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Wind up your hair!

RAPUNZEL.

See, on the marble parapet
The faint red stains with tears are wet;
The long years pass, no help comes yet
To free my golden hair.

THE PRINCE.

For leagues and leagues I rode,
Till hot my armour grew,
Till underneath the leaves
I felt the evening dew.

THE WITCH.

Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Weep through your hair!

RAPUNZEL.

And yet—but I am growing old,
For want of love my heart is cold,
Years pass, the while I loose and fold
The fathoms of my hair.

THE PRINCE, *in the morning.*

I HAVE heard tales of men, who in the night
Saw paths of stars let down to earth from heaven,
Who follow'd them until they reach'd the light
Wherein they dwell, whose sins are all forgiven;

But who went backward when they saw the gate
Of diamond, nor dared to enter in;
All their life long they were content to wait,
Purging them patiently of every sin.

I must have had a dream of some such thing,
And now am just awaking from that dream;
For even in grey dawn those strange words ring
Through heart and brain, and still I see that gleam.

For in my dream at sunset-time I lay
Beneath these beeches, mail and helmet off,
Right full of joy that I had come away
From court; for I was patient of the scoff

That met me always there from day to day,
From any knave or coward of them all;
I was content to live that wretched way;
For truly till I left the council-hall,

And rode forth arm'd beneath the burning sun,
My gleams of happiness were faint and few,
But then I saw my real life had begun,
And that I should be strong quite well I knew.

For I was riding out to look for love,
Therefore the birds within the thickets sung,
Even in hot noontide, as I pass'd, above
The elms o'ersway'd with longing towards me hung.

Now some few fathoms from the place where I
Lay in the beech-wood, was a tower fair,
The marble corners faint against the sky;
And dreamily I wonder'd what lived there;

Because it seem'd a dwelling for a queen,
No belfry for the swinging of great bells;
No bolt or stone had ever crush'd the green
Shafts, amber and rose walls, no soot that tells

Of the Norse torches burning up the roofs,
On the flower-carven marble could [I] see;

But rather on all sides I saw the proofs
Of a great loneliness that sicken'd me;

Making me feel a doubt that was not fear,
Whether my whole life long had been a dream,
And I should wake up soon in some place, where
The piled-up arms of the fighting angels gleam;

Not born as yet, but going to be born,
No naked baby as I was at first,
But an armed knight, whom fire, hate, and scorn
Could turn from nothing: my heart almost burst

Beneath the beeches, as I lay a-dreaming,
I tried so hard to read this riddle through,
To catch some golden cord that I saw gleaming
Like gossamer against the autumn blue.

But while I ponder'd these things, from the wood
There came a black-hair'd woman, tall and bold,
Who strode straight up to where this tower stood,
And cried out shrilly words, whereon behold—

THE WITCH, *from the tower.*

Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your hair!

Ah Christ! it was no dream then, but there stood
(She comes again) a maiden passing fair,
Against the roof, with face turn'd to the wood,
Bearing within her arms waves of her yellow hair.

I read my riddle when I saw her stand,
Poor love! her face quite pale against her hair,
Praying to all the leagues of empty land
To save her from the woe she suffer'd there.

To think! they trod upon her golden hair
In the witches' sabbaths; it was a delight
For these foul things, while she, with thin feet bare,
Stood on the roof upon the winter night,

To plait her dear hair into many plaits,
And then, while God's eye look'd upon the thing,
In the very likenesses of Devil's bats,
Upon the ends of her long hair to swing.

And now she stood above the parapet,
And, spreading out her arms, let her hair flow,
Beneath that veil her smooth white forehead set
Upon the marble, more I do not know;

Because before my eyes a film of gold
Floated, as now it floats. O, unknown love,
Would that I could thy yellow stair behold,
If still thou standest with lead roof above!

THE WITCH, *as she passes.*

Is there any who will dare
To climb up the yellow stair,
Glorious Rapunzel's golden hair?

THE PRINCE.

If it would please God make you sing again,
I think that I might very sweetly die,
My soul somehow reach heaven in joyous pain,
My heavy body on the beech-nuts lie.

Now I remember; what a most strange year,
Most strange and awful, in the beechen wood
I have pass'd now; I still have a faint fear
It is a kind of dream not understood.

I have seen no one in this wood except
The witch and her; have heard no human tones,
But when the witches' revelry has crept
Between the very jointing of my bones.

Ah! I know now; I could not go away,
But needs must stop to hear her sing that song
She always sings at dawning of the day.
I am not happy here, for I am strong.

And every morning do I whet my sword,
Yet Rapunzel still weeps within the tower,
And still God ties me down to the green sward,
Because I cannot see the gold stair floating lower.

RAPUNZEL *sings from the tower.*

My mother taught me prayers
To say when I had need;
I have so many cares,
That I can take no heed
Of many words in them;
Christ, bring me to Thy bliss.
Mary, maid withouten wem,
Keep me! I am lone, I wis,
Yet besides I have made this
By myself; *Give me a kiss,*
Dear God, dwelling up in heaven,
Also: *Send me a true knight,*
Lord Christ, with a steel sword, bright,
Broad, and trenchant; yea, and seven

Spans from hilt to point, O Lord!
And let the handle of his sword
Be gold on silver, Lord in heaven!
Such a sword as I see gleam
Sometimes, when they let me dream.

Yea, besides, I have made this:
Lord, give Mary a dear kiss,
And let gold Michael, who look'd down,
When I was there, on Rouen town
From the spire, bring me that kiss
On a lily! Lord, do this!

These prayers on the dreadful nights,
When the witches plait my hair,
And the fearfullest of sights
On the earth and in the air,
Will not let me close my eyes,
I murmur often, mix'd with sighs,
That my weak heart will not hold
At some things that I behold.
Nay, not sighs, but quiet groans,
That swell out the little bones
Of my bosom; till a trance
God sends in middle of that dance,
And I behold the countenance

Of Michael, and can feel no more
The bitter east wind biting sore
My naked feet; can see no more
The crayfish on the leaden floor,
That mock with feeler and grim claw.

Yea, often in that happy trance,
Beside the blessed countenance
Of golden Michael, on the spire
Glowing all crimson in the fire
Of sunset, I behold a face,
Which some time, if God give me grace,
May kiss me in this very place.

Evening in the tower.

RAPUNZEL.

IT grows half-way between the dark and light;
Love, we have been six hours here alone,
I fear that she will come before the night,
And if she finds us thus we are undone.

THE PRINCE.

Nay, draw a little nearer, that your breath
May touch my lips, let my cheek feel your arm;
Now tell me, did you ever see a death,
Or ever see a man take mortal harm?

RAPUNZEL.

Once came two knights and fought with swords below,
And while they fought I scarce could look at all,
My head swam so, after a moaning low
Drew my eyes down; I saw against the wall

One knight lean dead, bleeding from head and breast,
Yet seem'd it like a line of poppies red
In the golden twilight, as he took his rest,
In the dusky time he scarcely seemed dead.

But the other, on his face six paces off,
Lay moaning, and the old familiar name
He mutter'd through the grass, seem'd like a scoff
Of some lost soul remembering his past fame.

His helm all dinted lay beside him there,
The visor-bars were twisted towards the face,
The crest, which was a lady very fair,
Wrought wonderfully, was shifted from its place.

The shower'd mail-rings on the speed-walk lay,
Perhaps my eyes were dazzled with the light
That blazed in the west, yet surely on that day
Some crimson thing had changed the grass from bright

Pure green I love so. But the knight who died
Lay there for days after the other went;
Until one day I heard a voice that cried,
"Fair knight, I see Sir Robert we were sent

"To carry dead or living to the king."
So the knights came and bore him straight away

On their lance-truncheons, such a batter'd thing,
His mother had not known him on that day,

But for his helm-crest, a gold lady fair
Wrought wonderfully.

THE PRINCE.

Ah, they were brothers then,
And often rode together, doubtless where
The swords were thickest, and were loyal men,

Until they fell in these same evil dreams.

RAPUNZEL.

Yea, love; but shall we not depart from hence?
The white moon groweth golden fast, and gleams
Between the aspen stems; I fear—and yet a sense

Of fluttering victory comes over me,
That will not let me fear aright; my heart—
Feel how it beats, love, strives to get to thee,
I breathe so fast that my lips needs must part;

Your breath swims round my mouth, but let us go.

THE PRINCE.

I, Sebald, also, pluck from off the staff

The crimson banner, let it lie below,
  Above it in the wind let grasses laugh.

Now let us go, love, down the winding stair,
  With fingers intertwined: ay, feel my sword!
I wrought it long ago, with golden hair
  Flowing about the hilts, because a word,

Sung by a minstrel old, had set me dreaming
  Of a sweet bow'd-down face with yellow hair,
Betwixt green leaves I used to see it gleaming,
  A half-smile on the lips, though lines of care

Had sunk the cheeks, and made the great eyes hollow;
  What other work in all the world had I,
But through all turns of fate that face to follow?
  But wars and business kept me there to die.

O child, I should have slain my brother, too,
  My brother, Love, lain moaning in the grass,
Had I not ridden out to look for you,
  When I had watch'd the gilded courtiers pass

From the golden hall. But it is strange your name
  Is not the same the minstrel sang of yore;
You call'd it Rapunzel, 'tis not the name.
  See, love, the stems shine through the open door.

Morning, in the woods.

RAPUNZEL.

O LOVE! me and my unknown name you have
well won;
The witch's name was Rapunzel; eh! not so sweet?
No!—but is this real grass, love, that I tread upon?
What call they these blue flowers that lean across
my feet?

THE PRINCE.

Dip down your dear face in the dewy grass, O love!
And ever let the sweet slim harebells, tenderly hung,
Kiss both your parted lips; and I will hang above,
And try to sing that song the dreamy harper sung.

He sings.

'Twixt the sunlight and the shade
Float up memories of my maid,
God, remember Guendolen!

Gold or gems she did not wear,
But her yellow rippled hair,
Like a veil, hid Guendolen!

'Twixt the sunlight and the shade,
My rough hands so strangely made,
Folded Golden Guendolen;

Hands used to grip the sword-hilt hard,
Framed her face, while on the sward
Tears fell down from Guendolen.

Guendolen now speaks no word,
Hands fold round about the sword.
Now no more of Guendolen.

Only 'twixt the light and shade
Floating memories of my maid
Make me pray for Guendolen.

GUENDOLEN.

I kiss thee, new-found name; but I will never go:
Your hands need never grip the hammer'd sword again,
But all my golden hair shall ever round you flow,
Between the light and shade from Golden Guendolen.

Afterwards, in the Palace.

KING SEBALD.

I TOOK my armour off,
Put on king's robes of gold,
Over her kirtle green
The gold fell fold on fold.

THE WITCH, *out of hell.*

Guendolen! Guendolen!
One lock of hair!

GUENDOLEN.

I am so glad, for every day
He kisses me much the same way
As in the tower; under the sway
Of all my golden hair.

KING SEBALD.

We rode throughout the town,
A gold crown on my head,
Through all the gold-hung streets,
"Praise God!" the people said.

THE WITCH.

Guendolen! Guendolen!
Lend me your hair!

GUENDOLEN.

Verily, I seem like one
Who, when day is almost done,
Through a thick wood meets the sun
That blazes in her hair.

KING SEBALD.

Yea, at the palace gates,
"Praise God!" the great knights said,
"For Sebald the high king,
And the lady's golden head."

THE WITCH.

Woe is me! Guendolen
Sweeps back her hair.

GUENDOLEN.

Nothing wretched now, no screams!
I was unhappy once in dreams
And even now a harsh voice seems
To hang about my hair.

THE WITCH.

WOE! THAT ANY MAN COULD DARE
TO CLIMB UP THE YELLOW STAIR,
GLORIOUS GUENDOLEN'S GOLDEN HAIR.

CONCERNING GEFFRAY TESTE NOIRE

CONCERNING GEFFRAY TESTE NOIRE

AND if you meet the Canon of Chimay,
As going to Ortaise you well may do,
Greet him from John of Castel Neuf, and say,
All that I tell you, for all this is true.

This Geffray Teste Noire was a Gascon thief,
Who, under shadow of the English name,
Pilled all such towns and countries as were lief
To King Charles and St. Dennis; thought it blame

If anything escaped him; so my lord,
The Duke of Berry, sent Sir John Bonne Lance,
And other knights, good players with the sword,
To check this thief, and give the land a chance.

Therefore we set our bastides round the tower
That Geffray held, the strong thief! like a king,

High perch'd upon the rock of Ventadour,
Hopelessly strong by Christ! it was mid-spring,

When first I joined the little army there
With ten good spears; Auvergne is hot, each day
We sweated armed before the barrier,
Good feats of arms were done there often—eh?

Your brother was slain there? I mind me now
A right good man-at-arms, God pardon him!
I think 'twas Geffray smote him on the brow
With some spiked axe, and while he totter'd, dim

About the eyes, the spear of Alleyne Roux
Slipped through his camaille and his throat; well,
well!
Alleyne is paid now; your name Alleyne too?
Mary! how strange—but this tale I would tell—

For spite of all our bastides, damned blackhead
Would ride abroad whene'er he chose to ride,
We could not stop him; many a burgher bled
Dear gold all round his girdle; far and wide

The villaynes dwelt in utter misery
'Twixt us and thief Sir Geffray; hauled this way

By Sir Bonne Lance at one time, he gone by,
Down comes this Teste Noire on another day.

And therefore they dig up the stone, grind corn,
Hew wood, draw water, yea, they lived, in short,
As I said just now, utterly forlorn,
Till this our knave and blackhead was out-fought.

So Bonne Lance fretted, thinking of some trap
Day after day, till on a time he said:
"John of Newcastle, if we have good hap,
We catch our thief in two days." "How?" I said.

"Why, Sir, to-day he rideth out again,
Hoping to take well certain sumpter mules
From Carcassone, going with little train,
Because, forsooth, he thinketh us mere fools;

"But if we set an ambush in some wood,
He is but dead; so, Sir, take thirty spears
To Verville forest, if it seem you good."
Then felt I like the horse in Job, who hears

The dancing trumpet sound, and we went forth;
And my red lion on the spear-head flapped,
As faster than the cool wind we rode North,
Towards the wood of Verville; thus it happed.

We rode a soft pace on that day while spies
  Got news about Sir Geoffrey; the red wine
Under the road-side bush was clear; the flies,
  The dragon-flies I mind me most, did shine

In brighter arms than ever I put on;
  So—"Geffray," said our spies, "would pass that way
Next day at sundown;" then he must be won;
  And so we enter'd Verville wood next day,

In the afternoon; through it the highway runs,
  'Twixt copses of green hazel, very thick,
And underneath, with glimmering of suns,
  The primroses are happy; the dews lick

The soft green moss. "Put cloths about your arms,
  Lest they should glitter; surely they will go
In a long thin line, watchful for alarms,
  With all their carriages of booty, so—

"Lay down my pennon in the grass—Lord God!
  What have we lying here? will they be cold,
I wonder, being so bare, above the sod,
  Instead of under? This was a knight too, fold

"Lying on fold of ancient rusted mail;
  No plate at all, gold rowels to the spurs,

And see the quiet gleam of turquoise pale
Along the ceinture; but the long time blurs

"Even the tinder of his coat to nought,
Except these scraps of leather; see how white
The skull is, loose within the coif! He fought
A good fight, maybe, ere he was slain quite.

"No armour on the legs too; strange in faith—
A little skeleton for a knight though—ah!
This one is bigger, truly without scathe
His enemies escaped not—ribs driven out far,—

"That must have reach'd the heart, I doubt—how now,
What say you, Aldovrand—a woman? why?"
"Under the coif a gold wreath on the brow,
Yea, see the hair not gone to powder, lie,

"Golden, no doubt, once—yea, and very small—
This for a knight; but for a dame, my lord,
These loose-hung bones seem shapely still, and tall,—
Didst ever see a woman's bones, my lord?"

Often, God help me! I remember when
I was a simple boy, fifteen years old,
The Jacquerie froze up the blood of men
With their fell deeds, not fit now to be told:

God help again! we enter'd Beauvais town,
Slaying them fast, whereto I helped, mere boy
As I was then; we gentles cut them down,
These burners and defilers, with great joy.

Reason for that, too, in the great church there
These fiends had lit a fire, that soon went out,
The church at Beauvais being so great and fair—
My father, who was by me, gave a shout

Between a beast's howl and a woman's scream,
Then, panting, chuckled to me: "John! look!
look!
Count the dames' skeletons!" from some bad dream
Like a man just awaked, my father shook;

And I, being faint with smelling the burnt bones,
And very hot with fighting down the street,
And sick of such a life, fell down, with groans
My head went weakly nodding to my feet.—

—An arrow had gone through her tender throat,
And her right wrist was broken; then I saw
The reason why she had on that war-coat,
Their story came out clear without a flaw;

For when he knew that they were being waylaid,
He threw it over her, yea, hood and all;

Whereby he was much hack'd, while they were stay'd
By those their murderers; many an one did fall

Beneath his arm, no doubt, so that he clear'd
Their circle, bore his death-wound out of it;
But as they rode, some archer least affear'd
Drew a strong bow, and thereby she was hit.

Still as he rode he knew not she was dead,
Thought her but fainted from her broken wrist,
He bound with his great leathern belt—she bled?
Who knows! he bled too, neither was there miss'd

The beating of her heart, his heart beat well
For both of them, till here, within this wood,
He died scarce sorry; easy this to tell;
After these years the flowers forget their blood.

How could it be? never before that day,
However much a soldier I might be,
Could I look on a skeleton and say
I care not for it, shudder not—now see,

Over those bones I sat and pored for hours,
And thought, and dream'd, and still I scarce could see
The small white bones that lay upon the flowers,
But evermore I saw the lady; she

With her dear gentle walking leading in,
By a chain of silver twined about her wrists,
Her loving knight, mounted and arm'd to win
Great honour for her, fighting in the lists.

O most pale face, that brings such joy and sorrow
Into men's hearts—yea, too, so piercing sharp
That joy is, that it marcheth nigh to sorrow
For ever—like an overwinded harp.

Your face must hurt me always; pray you now,
Does it not hurt you too? seemeth some pain
To hold you always, pain to hold your brow
So smooth, unwrinkled ever; yea again,

Your long eyes where the lids seem like to drop,
Would you not, lady, were they shut fast, feel
Far merrier? there so high they will not stop,
They are most sly to glide forth and to steal

Into my heart; *I kiss their soft lids there,*
And in green gardens scarce can stop my lips
From wandering on your face, but that your hair
Falls down and tangles me, back my face slips.

Or say your mouth—I saw you drink red wine
Once at a feast; how slowly it sank in,

As though you fear'd that some wild fate might twine
Within that cup, and slay you for a sin.

And when you talk your lips do arch and move
In such wise that a language new I know
Besides their sound; they quiver, too, with love
When you are standing silent; know this, too,

I saw you kissing once, like a curved sword
That bites with all its edge, did your lips lie,
Curled gently, slowly, long time could afford
For caught-up breathings; like a dying sigh

They gather'd up their lines and went away,
And still kept twitching with a sort of smile,
As likely to be weeping presently,—
Your hands too—how I watch'd them all the while!

"Cry out St. Peter now," quoth Aldovrand;
I cried "St. Peter," broke out from the wood
With all my spears; we met them hand to hand
And shortly slew them; natheless, by the rood,

We caught not blackhead then, or any day;
Months after that he died at last in bed,
From a wound pick'd up at a barrier-fray
That same year's end; a steel bolt in the head,

And much bad living kill'd Teste Noire at last;
John Froissart knoweth he is dead by now,
No doubt, but knoweth not this tale just past;
Perchance then you can tell him what I show.

In my new castle, down beside the Eure,
There is a little chapel of squared stone,
Painted inside and out; in green nook pure
There did I lay them, every wearied bone;

And over it they lay, with stone-white hands
Clasped fast together, hair made bright with gold;
This Jaques Picard, known through many lands,
Wrought cunningly; he's dead now—I am old.

A GOOD KNIGHT IN PRISON

Sir Guy, *being in the court of a Pagan castle.*

THIS castle where I dwell, it stands
A long way off from Christian lands,
A long way off my lady's hands,
A long way off the aspen trees,
And murmur of the lime-tree bees.

But down the Valley of the Rose
My lady often hawking goes,
Heavy of cheer; oft turns behind,
Leaning towards the western wind,
Because it bringeth to her mind
Sad whisperings of happy times,
The face of him who sings these rhymes.

King Guilbert rides beside her there,
Bends low and calls her very fair,

And strives, by pulling down his hair,
To hide from my dear lady's ken
The grisly gash I gave him, when
I cut him down at Camelot;
However he strives, he hides it not,
That tourney will not be forgot,
Besides, it is King Guilbert's lot,
Whatever he says she answers not.

Now tell me, you that are in love,
From the king's son to the wood-dove,
Which is the better, he or I?

For this king means that I should die
In this lone Pagan castle, where
The flowers droop in the bad air
On the September evening.

Look, now I take mine ease and sing,
Counting as but a little thing
The foolish spite of a bad king.

For these vile things that hem me in,
These Pagan beasts who live in sin,
The sickly flowers pale and wan,
The grim blue-bearded castellan,

The stanchions half worn-out with rust,
Where to their banner vile they trust—
Why, all these things I hold them just
Like dragons in a missal-book,
Wherein, whenever we may look,
We see no horror, yea, delight
We have, the colours are so bright;
Likewise we note the specks of white,
And the great plates of burnish'd gold.

Just so this Pagan castle old,
And everything I can see there,
Sick-pining in the marshland air,
I note; I will go over now,
Like one who paints with knitted brow,
The flowers and all things one by one,
From the snail on the wall to the setting sun.

Four great walls, and a little one
That leads down to the barbican,
Which walls with many spears they man,
When news comes to the castellan
Of Launcelot being in the land.

And as I sit here, close at hand
Four spikes of sad sick sunflowers stand,

The castellan with a long wand
Cuts down their leaves as he goes by,
Ponderingly, with screw'd-up eye,
And fingers twisted in his beard—
Nay, was it a knight's shout I heard?
I have a hope makes me afeard:
It cannot be, but if some dream
Just for a minute made me deem
I saw among the flowers there
My lady's face with long red hair,
Pale, ivory-colour'd dear face come,
As I was wont to see her some
Fading September afternoon,
And kiss me, saying nothing, soon
To leave me by myself again;
Could I get this by longing: vain!

The castellan is gone: I see
On one broad yellow flower a bee
Drunk with much honey—
Christ! again,
Some distant knight's voice brings me pain,
I thought I had forgot to feel,
I never heard the blissful steel
These ten years past; year after year

Through all my hopeless sojourn here,
No Christian pennon has been near;
Laus Deo! the dragging wind draws on
Over the marshes, battle won,
Knights' shouts, and axes hammering,
Yea, quicker now the dint and ring
Of flying hoofs; ah! castellan,
When they come back count man for man,
Say whom you miss.

THE PAGANS, *from the battlements.*
Mahound to aid!
Why flee ye so like men dismay'd?

THE PAGANS, *from without.*
Nay, haste! for here is Launcelot,
Who follows quick upon us, hot
And shouting with his men-at-arms.

SIR GUY.
Also the Pagans raise alarms,
And ring the bells for fear; at last
My prison walls will be well past.

SIR LAUNCELOT, *from outside.*
Ho! in the name of the Trinity,
Let down the drawbridge quick to me,

And open doors, that I may see
Guy the good knight.

THE PAGANS, *from the battlements.*
Nay, Launcelot,
With mere big words ye win us not.

SIR LAUNCELOT.
Bid Miles bring up la perriere,
And archers clear the vile walls there,
Bring back the notches to the ear,
Shoot well together! God to aid!
These miscreants will be well paid.

Hurrah! all goes together; Miles
Is good to win my lady's smiles
For his good shooting—Launcelot!
On knights a-pace! this game is hot!

SIR GUY *sayeth afterwards.*
I said, I go to meet her now,
And saying so, I felt a blow
From some clench'd hand across my brow,
And fell down on the sunflowers
Just as a hammering smote my ears,
After which this I felt in sooth;
My bare hands throttling without ruth

The hairy-throated castellan ;
Then a grim fight with these that ran
To slay me, while I shouted, " God
For the Lady Mary ! " deep I trod
That evening in my own red blood ;
Nevertheless so stiff I stood,
That when the knights burst the old wood
Of the castle-doors, I was not dead.

I kiss the Lady Mary's head,
Her lips, and her hair golden red,
Because to-day we have been wed.

OLD LOVE

"YOU must be very old, Sir Giles,"
I said; he said: "Yea, very old:"
Whereat the mournfullest of smiles
Crossed his dry skin with many a fold.

"They hammer'd out my basnet point
Into a round salade," he said,
"The basnet being quite out of joint,
Natheless the salade rasps my head."

He gazed at the great fire awhile:
"And you are getting old, Sir John;"
(He said this with that cunning smile
That was most sad;) "we both wear on,

"Knights come to court and look at me,
With eyebrows up, except my lord,

And my dear lady, none I see
That know the ways of my old sword."

(My lady! at that word no pang
Stopp'd all my blood.) "But tell me, John,
Is it quite true that Pagans hang
So thick about the east, that on

"The eastern sea no Venice flag
Can fly unpaid for?" "True," I said.
"And in such way the miscreants drag
Christ's cross upon the ground, I dread

That Constantine must fall this year."
Within my heart; "These things are small;
This is not small, that things outwear
I thought were made for ever, yea, all,

"All things go soon or late;" I said—
I saw the duke in court next day;
Just as before, his grand great head
Above his gold robes dreaming lay,

Only his face was paler; there
I saw his duchess sit by him;
And she—she was changed more; her hair
Before my eyes that used to swim,

And make me dizzy with great bliss
  Once when I used to watch her sit—
Her hair is bright still, yet it is
  As though some dust were thrown on it.

Her eyes are shallower, as though
  Some grey glass were behind; her brow
And cheeks the straining bones show through,
  Are not so good for kissing now.

Her lips are drier now she is
  A great duke's wife these many years,
They will not shudder with a kiss
  As once they did, being moist with tears.

Also her hands have lost that way
  Of clinging that they used to have;
They look'd quite easy, as they lay
  Upon the silken cushions brave

With broidery of the apples green
  My Lord Duke bears upon his shield.
Her face, alas! that I have seen
  Look fresher than an April field,

This is all gone now; gone also
  Her tender walking; when she walks

She is most queenly I well know,
  And she is fair still—as the stalks

Of faded summer-lilies are,
  So is she grown now unto me
This spring-time, when the flowers star
  The meadows, birds sing wonderfully.

I warrant once she used to cling
  About his neck, and kiss'd him so,
And then his coming step would ring
  Joy-bells for her,—some time ago.

Ah! sometimes like an idle dream
  That hinders true life overmuch,
Sometimes like a lost heaven, these seem—
  This love is not so hard to smutch.

THE GILLIFLOWER OF GOLD

A GOLDEN gilliflower to-day
I wore upon my helm away,
And won the prize of this tourney.
Hah ! hah ! la belle jaune giroflée.

However well Sir Giles might sit,
His sun was weak to wither it,
Lord Miles's blood was dew on it:
Hah ! hah ! la belle jaune giroflée.

Although my spear in splinters flew
From John's steel-coat my eye was true ;
I wheel'd about, and cried for you,
Hah ! hah ! la belle jaune giroflée.

Yea, do not doubt my heart was good,
Though my sword flew like rotten wood,
To shout, although I scarcely stood,
Hah ! hah ! la belle jaune giroflée.

My hand was steady too, to take
My axe from round my neck, and break
John's steel-coat up for my love's sake.
Hah ! hah ! la belle jaune giroflée.

When I stood in my tent again,
Arming afresh, I felt a pain
Take hold of me, I was so fain—
Hah ! hah ! la belle jaune giroflée.

To hear : "*Honneur aux fils des preux !*"
Right in my ears again, and shew
The gilliflower blossom'd new,
Hah ! hah ! la belle jaune giroflée.

The Sieur Guillaume against me came,
His tabard bore three points of flame
From a red heart : with little blame—
Hah ! hah ! la belle jaune giroflée.

Our tough spears crackled up like straw ;
He was the first to turn and draw
His sword, that had nor speck nor flaw,—
Hah ! hah ! la belle jaune giroflée.

But I felt weaker than a maid,
And my brain, dizzied and afraid,

Within my helm a fierce tune play'd,—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Until I thought of your dear head,
Bow'd to the gilliflower bed,
The yellow flowers stain'd with red;—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Crash! how the swords met, "*giroflée!*"
The fierce tune in my helm would play,
"*La belle! la belle! jaune giroflée!*"
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Once more the great swords met again,
"*La belle! la belle!*" but who fell then?
Le Sieur Guillaume, who struck down ten—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

And as with mazed and unarm'd face,
Toward my own crown and the Queen's place,
They led me at a gentle pace—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

I almost saw your quiet head
Bow'd o'er the gilliflower bed,
The yellow flowers stain'd with red—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

SHAMEFUL DEATH

THERE were four of us about that bed ;
The mass-priest knelt at the side,
I and his mother stood at the head,
Over his feet lay the bride ;
We were quite sure that he was dead,
Though his eyes were open wide.

He did not die in the night,
He did not die in the day,
But in the morning twilight
His spirit pass'd away,
When neither sun nor moon was bright,
And the trees were merely grey.

He was not slain with the sword,
Knight's axe, or the knightly spear,
Yet spoke he never a word
After he came in here ;

I cut away the cord
From the neck of my brother dear.

He did not strike one blow,
For the recreants came behind,
In a place where the hornbeams grow,
A path right hard to find,
For the hornbeam boughs swing so,
That the twilight makes it blind.

They lighted a great torch then,
When his arms were pinion'd fast,
Sir John the knight of the Fen,
Sir Guy of the Dolorous Blast,
With knights threescore and ten,
Hung brave Lord Hugh at last.

I am threescore and ten,
And my hair is all turn'd grey,
But I met Sir John of the Fen
Long ago on a summer day,
And am glad to think of the moment when
I took his life away.

I am threescore and ten,
And my strength is mostly pass'd,

But long ago I and my men,
When the sky was overcast,
And the smoke roll'd over the reeds of the fen,
Slew Guy of the Dolorous Blast.

And now, knights all of you,
I pray you pray for Sir Hugh,
A good knight and a true,
And for Alice, his wife, pray too.

THE EVE OF CRECY

GOLD on her head, and gold on her feet,
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
And a golden girdle round my sweet ;—
Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Margaret's maids are fair to see,
Freshly dressed and pleasantly ;
Margaret's hair falls down to her knee ;—
Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
I would kiss the place where the gold hems meet,
And the golden girdle round my sweet—
Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Ah me ! I have never touch'd her hand ;
When the arriere-ban goes through the land,
Six basnets under my pennon stand ;—
Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And many an one grins under his hood:
"Sir Lambert de Bois, with all his men good,
Has neither food nor firewood;"—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
And the golden girdle of my sweet,
And thereabouts where the gold hems meet;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Yet even now it is good to think,
While my few poor varlets grumble and drink
In my desolate hall, where the fires sink,—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Of Margaret sitting glorious there,
In glory of gold and glory of hair,
And glory of glorious face most fair;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Likewise to-night I make good cheer,
Because this battle draweth near:
For what have I to lose or fear?—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

For, look you, my horse is good to prance,
A right fair measure in this war-dance,

Before the eyes of Philip of France;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And some time it may hap, perdie,
While my new towers stand up three and three,
And my hall gets painted fair to see—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

That folks say: "Times change, by the rood,
For Lambert, banneret of the wood,
Has heaps of food and firewood;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite;—

"And wonderful eyes, too, under the hood
Of a damsel of right noble blood:"
St. Ives, for Lambert of the wood!—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

"SWERVE to the left, son Roger," he said,
"When you catch his eyes through the helm
Swerve to the left, then out at his head,
And the Lord God give you joy of it!"

The blue owls on my father's hood
Were a little dimm'd as I turned away;
This giving up of blood for blood
Will finish here somehow to-day.

So—when I walk'd out from the tent,
Their howling almost blinded me;
Yet for all that I was not bent
By any shame. Hard by, the sea

Made a noise like the aspens where
We did that wrong, but now the place
Is very pleasant, and the air
Blows cool on any passer's face.

And all the wrong is gather'd now
Into the circle of these lists—
Yea, howl out, butchers! tell me how
His hands were cut off at the wrists;

And how Lord Roger bore his face
A league above his spear-point, high
Above the owls, to that strong place
Among the waters—yea, yea, cry:

"What a brave champion we have got!
Sir Oliver, the flower of all
The Hainault knights." The day being hot,
He sat beneath a broad white pall,

White linen over all his steel;
What a good knight he look'd! his sword
Laid thwart his knees; he liked to feel
Its steadfast edge clear as his word.

And he look'd solemn; how his love
Smiled whitely on him, sick with fear!
How all the ladies up above
Twisted their pretty hands! so near

The fighting was—Ellayne! Ellayne!
They cannot love like you can, who

Would burn your hands off, if that pain
  Could win a kiss—am I not true

To you for ever? therefore I
  Do not fear death or anything.
If I should limp home wounded, why,
  When I lay sick you would but sing,

And sooth me into quiet sleep.
  If they spat on the recreaunt knight,
Threw stones at him, and cursed him deep,
  Why then—what then; your hand would light

So gently on his drawn-up face,
  And you would kiss him, and in soft
Cool scented clothes would lap him, pace
  The quiet room and weep oft,—oft

Would turn and smile, and brush his cheek
  With your sweet chin and mouth; and in
The order'd garden you would seek
  The biggest roses—any sin.

And these say: "No more now my knight,
  Or God's knight any longer"—you,
Being than they so much more white,
  So much more pure and good and true,

Will cling to me for ever—there,
  Is not that wrong turn'd right at last
Through all these years, and I wash'd clean?
  Say, yea, Ellayne; the time is past,

Since on that Christmas-day last year
  Up to your feet the fire crept,
And the smoke through the brown leaves sere
  Blinded your dear eyes that you wept;

Was it not I that caught you then,
  And kiss'd you on the saddle-bow?
Did not the blue owl mark the men
  Whose spears stood like the corn a-row?

This Oliver is a right good knight,
  And must needs beat me, as I fear,
Unless I catch him in the fight,
  My father's crafty way—"John, here!

"Bring up the men from the south gate,
  To help me if I fall or win,
For even if I beat, their hate
  Will grow to more than this mere grin."

THE LITTLE TOWER

UP and away through the drifting rain!
Let us ride to the Little Tower again,

Up and away from the council-board!
Do on the hauberk, gird on the sword.

The king is blind with gnashing his teeth,
Change gilded scabbard to leather sheath:

Though our arms are wet with the slanting rain,
This is joy to ride to my love again:

I laugh in his face when he bids me yield;
Who knows one field from the other field,

For the grey rain driveth all astray?—
Which way through the floods, good carle, I pray?

"The left side yet! the left side yet!
Till your hand strikes on the bridge parapet."

"Yea so: the causeway holdeth good
Under the water?" "Hard as wood;

Right away to the uplands; speed, good knight."
Seven hours yet before the light.

Shake the wet off the upland road;
My taberd has grown a heavy load.

What matter? up and down hill after hill;
Dead grey night for five hours still.

The hill-road droppeth lower again,
Lower, down to the poplar plain.

No furlong farther for us to-night,
The Little Tower draweth in sight;

They are ringing the bells, and the torches glare,
Therefore the roofs of wet slate stare.

There she stands, and her yellow hair slantingly
Drifts the same way that the rain goes by.

Who will be faithful to us to-day,
With little but hard glaive-strokes for pay?

The grim king fumes at the council-board:
"Three more days, and then the sword;

Three more days, and my sword through his head;
And above his white brows, pale and dead,

A paper crown on the top of the spire;
And for her the stake and the witches' fire."

Therefore though it be long ere day,
Take axe and pick and spade, I pray.

Break the dams down all over the plain:
God send us three more days such rain:

Block all the upland roads with trees;
The Little Tower with no great ease

Is won, I warrant; bid them bring
Much sheep and oxen, everything

The spits are wont to turn with; wine
And wheaten bread, that we may dine

In plenty each day of the siege;
Good friends, ye know me no hard liege;

My lady is right fair, see ye!
Pray God to keep you frank and free.

Love Isabeau, keep goodly cheer;
The Little Tower will stand well here

Many a year when we are dead,
And over it our green and red,
Barred with the Lady's golden head ;
From mere old age when we are dead.

THE SAILING OF THE SWORD

ACROSS the empty garden-beds,
When the Sword went out to sea,
I scarcely saw my sisters' heads
Bowed each beside a tree.
I could not see the castle leads,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Alicia wore a scarlet gown,
When the Sword went out to sea,
But Ursula's was russet brown:
For the mist we could not see
The scarlet roofs of the good town,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Green holly in Alicia's hand,
When the Sword went out to sea;
With sere oak-leaves did Ursula stand;
O! yet alas for me!

I did but bear a peel'd white wand,
When the Sword went out to sea.

O, russet brown and scarlet bright,
When the Sword went out to sea,
My sisters wore ; I wore but white :
Red, brown, and white, are three ;
Three damozels ; each had a knight,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Sir Robert shouted loud, and said,
When the Sword went out to sea,
" Alicia, while I see thy head,
What shall I bring for thee ? "
" O, my sweet lord, a ruby red : "
The Sword went out to sea.

Sir Miles said, while the sails hung down,
When the Sword went out to sea,
" O, Ursula ! while I see the town,
What shall I bring for thee ? "
" Dear knight, bring back a falcon brown : "
The Sword went out to sea.

But my Roland, no word he said
When the Sword went out to sea;

But only turn'd away his head,—
A quick shriek came from me :
"Come back, dear lord, to your white maid ;"—
The Sword went out to sea.

The hot sun bit the garden-beds,
When the Sword came back from sea ;
Beneath an apple-tree our heads
Stretched out toward the sea ;
Grey gleam'd the thirsty castle leads,
When the Sword came back from sea.

Lord Robert brought a ruby red,
When the Sword came back from sea;
He kissed Alicia on the head :
"I am come back to thee ;
'Tis time, sweet love, that we were wed,
Now the Sword is back from sea !"

Sir Miles he bore a falcon brown,
When the Sword came back from sea ;
His arms went round tall Ursula's gown,—
"What joy, O love, but thee ?
Let us be wed in the good town,
Now the Sword is back from sea !"

My heart grew sick, no more afraid,
When the Sword came back from sea;
Upon the deck a tall white maid
Sat on Lord Roland's knee;
His chin was press'd upon her head,
When the Sword came back from sea!

SPELL-BOUND

HOW weary is it none can tell,
How dismally the days go by!
I hear the tinkling of the bell,
I see the cross against the sky.

The year wears round to autumn-tide,
Yet comes no reaper to the corn;
The golden land is like a bride
When first she knows herself forlorn—

She sits and weeps with all her hair
Laid downwards over tender hands;
For stained silk she hath no care,
No care for broken ivory wands;

The silver cups beside her stand;
The golden stars on the blue roof

Yet glitter, though against her hand
His cold sword presses for a proof

He is not dead, but gone away.
How many hours did she wait
For me, I wonder? Till the day
Had faded wholly, and the gate

Clanged to behind returning knights?
I wonder did she raise her head
And go away, fleeing the lights;
And lay the samite on her bed,

The wedding samite strewn with pearls:
Then sit with hands laid on her knees,
Shuddering at half-heard sound of girls
That chatter outside in the breeze?

I wonder did her poor heart throb
At distant tramp of coming knight?
How often did the choking sob
Raise up her head and lips? The light,

Did it come on her unawares,
And drag her sternly down before
People who loved her not? in prayers
Did she say one name and no more?

And once—all songs they ever sung,
All tales they ever told to me,
This only burden through them rung:
O! golden love that waitest me,

The days pass on, pass on apace,
Sometimes I have a little rest
In fairest dreams, when on thy face
My lips lie, or thy hands are prest

About my forehead, and thy lips
Draw near and nearer to mine own;
But when the vision from me slips,
In colourless dawn I lie and moan,

And wander forth with fever'd blood,
That makes me start at little things,
The blackbird screaming from the wood,
The sudden whirr of pheasants' wings.

O! dearest, scarcely seen by me—
But when that wild time had gone by,
And in these arms I folded thee,
Who ever thought those days could die?

Yet now I wait, and you wait too,
For what perchance may never come;

You think I have forgotten you,
  That I grew tired and went home.

But what if some day as I stood
  Against the wall with strained hands,
And turn'd my face toward the wood,
  Away from all the golden lands;

And saw you come with tired feet
  And pale face thin and wan with care,
And stained raiment no more neat,
  The white dust lying on your hair:—

Then I should say, I could not come;
  This land was my wide prison, dear;
I could not choose but go; at home
  There is a wizard whom I fear:

He bound me round with silken chains
  I could not break; he set me here
Above the golden-waving plains,
  Where never reaper cometh near.

And you have brought me my good sword,
  Wherewith in happy days of old
I won you well from knight and lord;
  My heart upswells and I grow bold.

But I shall die unless you stand,
—Half lying now, you are so weak,—
Within my arms, unless your hand
Pass to and fro across my cheek.

THE WIND

AH! no, no, it is nothing, surely nothing at all,
Only the wild-going wind round by the garden-wall,
For the dawn just now is breaking, the wind beginning to fall.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

So I will sit, and think and think of the days gone by,
Never moving my chair for fear the dogs should cry,
Making no noise at all while the flambeau burns awry.

For my chair is heavy and carved, and with sweeping green behind
It is hung, and the dragons thereon grin out in the gusts of the wind;
On its folds an orange lies, with a deep gash cut in the rind.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

If I move my chair it will scream, and the orange will
roll out far,
And the faint yellow juice ooze out like blood from a
wizard's jar;
And the dogs will howl for those who went last
month to the war.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

So I will sit and think of love that is over and past,
O! so long ago—yes, I will be quiet at last;
Whether I like it or not, a grim half-slumber is cast

Over my worn old brains, that touches the roots of my
heart,
And above my half-shut eyes the blue roof 'gins to
part,
And show the blue spring sky, till I am ready to
start

From out of the green-hung chair; but something keeps me still,
And I fall in a dream that I walk'd with her on the side of a hill,
Dotted—for was it not spring?—with tufts of the daffodil.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

And Margaret as she walk'd held a painted book in her hand;
Her finger kept the place; I caught her, we both did stand
Face to face, on the top of the highest hill in the land.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

I held to her long bare arms, but she shuddered away from me,
While the flush went out of her face as her head fell back on a tree,
And a spasm caught her mouth, fearful for me to see;

And still I held to her arms till her shoulder touch'd
my mail,
Weeping she totter'd forward, so glad that I should
prevail,
And her hair went over my robe, like a gold flag over
a sail.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

I kiss'd her hard by the ear, and she kiss'd me on the
brow,
And then lay down on the grass, where the mark on
the moss is now,
And spread her arms out wide while I went down
below.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

And then I walk'd for a space to and fro on the side
of the hill,
Till I gather'd and held in my arms great sheaves of
the daffodil,
And when I came again my Margaret lay there still.

I piled them high and high above her heaving breast,
How they were caught and held in her loose ungirded vest!
But one beneath her arm died, happy so to be prest!

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

Again I turn'd my back and went away for an hour;
She said no word when I came again, so, flower by flower,
I counted the daffodils over, and cast them languidly lower.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

My dry hands shook and shook as the green gown show'd again,
Clear'd from the yellow flowers, and I grew hollow with pain,
And on to us both there fell from the sun-shower drops of rain.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

Alas! alas! there was blood on the very quiet breast,
Blood lay in the many folds of the loose ungirded vest,
Blood lay upon her arm where the flower had been prest.

I shriek'd and leapt from my chair, and the orange roll'd out far,
The faint yellow juice oozed out like blood from a wizard's jar;
And then in march'd the ghosts of those that had gone to the war.

I knew them by the arms that I was used to paint
Upon their long thin shields; but the colours were all grown faint,
And faint upon their banner was Olaf, king and saint.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

THE BLUE CLOSET

THE DAMOZELS.

LADY Alice, lady Louise,
Between the wash of the tumbling seas
We are ready to sing, if so ye please;
So lay your long hands on the keys;
Sing, "*Laudate pueri.*"

And ever the great bell overhead
Boom'd in the wind a knell for the dead,
Though no one toll'd it, a knell for the dead.

LADY LOUISE.

Sister, let the measure swell
Not too loud; for you sing not well
If you drown the faint boom of the bell;
He is weary, so am I.

And ever the chevron overhead
Flapped on the banner of the dead ;
(Was he asleep, or was he dead ?)

Lady Alice.

Alice the Queen, and Louise the Queen,
Two damozels wearing purple and green,
Four lone ladies dwelling here
From day to day and year to year ;
And there is none to let us go ;
To break the locks of the doors below,
Or shovel away the heaped-up snow ;
And when we die no man will know
That we are dead ; but they give us leave,
Once every year on Christmas-eve,
To sing in the Closet Blue one song ;
And we should be so long, so long,
If we dared, in singing ; for dream on dream,
They float on in a happy stream ;
Float from the gold strings, float from the keys,
Float from the open'd lips of Louise ;
But, alas ! the sea-salt oozes through
The chinks of the tiles of the Closet Blue ;
And ever the great bell overhead

Booms in the wind a knell for the dead,
The wind plays on it a knell for the dead.

(*They sing all together.*)

How long ago was it, how long ago,
He came to this tower with hands full of snow?

"Kneel down, O love Louise, kneel down," he said,
And sprinkled the dusty snow over my head.

He watch'd the snow melting, it ran through my hair,
Ran over my shoulders, white shoulders and bare.

"I cannot weep for thee, poor love Louise,
For my tears are all hidden deep under the seas;

"In a gold and blue casket she keeps all my tears,
But my eyes are no longer blue, as in old years;

"Yea, they grow grey with time, grow small and dry,
I am so feeble now, would I might die."

And in truth the great bell overhead
Left off his pealing for the dead,
Perchance, because the wind was dead.

Will he come back again, or is he dead?
O! is he sleeping, my scarf round his head?

Or did they strangle him as he lay there,
With the long scarlet scarf I used to wear?

Only I pray thee, Lord, let him come here!
Both his soul and his body to me are most dear.

Dear Lord, that loves me, I wait to receive
Either body or spirit this wild Christmas-eve.

Through the floor shot up a lily red,
With a patch of earth from the land of the dead,
For he was strong in the land of the dead.

What matter that his cheeks were pale,
His kind kiss'd lips all grey?
"O, love Louise, have you waited long?"
"O, my lord Arthur, yea."

What if his hair that brush'd her cheek
Was stiff with frozen rime?
His eyes were grown quite blue again,
As in the happy time.

"O, love Louise, this is the key
Of the happy golden land!"
O, sisters, cross the bridge with me,
My eyes are full of sand.

What matter that I cannot see,
If ye take me by the hand?

And ever the great bell overhead,
And the tumbling seas mourn'd for the dead;
For their song ceased, and they were dead.

THE TUNE OF SEVEN TOWERS

NO one goes there now ;
For what is left to fetch away
From the desolate battlements all arow,
And the lead roof heavy and grey ?
"*Therefore,*" *said fair Yoland of the flowers,*
"*This is the tune of Seven Towers.*"

No one walks there now ;
Except in the white moonlight
The white ghosts walk in a row ;
If one could see it, an awful sight,—
"*Listen !*" *said fair Yoland of the flowers,*
"*This is the tune of Seven Towers.*"

But none can see them now,
Though they sit by the side of the moat,
Feet half in the water, there in a row,
Long hair in the wind afloat.

"*Therefore,*" *said fair Yoland of the flowers,*
"*This is the tune of Seven Towers.*"

If any will go to it now,
He must go to it all alone,
Its gates will not open to any row
Of glittering spears—will *you* go alone?
"*Listen!*" *said fair Yoland of the flowers,*
"*This is the tune of Seven Towers.*"

By my love go there now,
To fetch me my coif away,
My coif and my kirtle, with pearls arow,
Oliver, go to-day!
"*Therefore,*" *said fair Yoland of the flowers,*
"*This is the tune of Seven Towers.*"

I am unhappy now,
I cannot tell you why;
If you go, the priests and I in a row
Will pray that you may not die.
"*Listen!*" *said fair Yoland of the flowers,*
"*This is the tune of Seven Towers.*"

If you will go for me now,
I will kiss your mouth at last;

[*She sayeth inwardly.*]

(*The graves stand grey in a row,*)

Oliver, hold me fast!

"*Therefore,*" *said fair Yoland of the flowers,*

"*This is the tune of Seven Towers.*"

GOLDEN WINGS

MIDWAYS of a walled garden,
In the happy poplar land,
Did an ancient castle stand,
With an old knight for a warden.

Many scarlet bricks there were
In its walls, and old grey stone ;
Over which red apples shone
At the right time of the year.

On the bricks the green moss grew,
Yellow lichen on the stone,
Over which red apples shone ;
Little war that castle knew.

Deep green water fill'd the moat,
Each side had a red-brick lip,
Green and mossy with the drip
Of dew and rain ; there was a boat

Of carven wood, with hangings green
About the stern; it was great bliss
For lovers to sit there and kiss
In the hot summer noons, not seen.

Across the moat the fresh west wind
In very little ripples went;
The way the heavy aspens bent
Towards it, was a thing to mind.

The painted drawbridge over it
Went up and down with gilded chains,
'Twas pleasant in the summer rains
Within the bridge-house there to sit.

There were five swans that ne'er did eat
The water-weeds, for ladies came
Each day, and young knights did the same,
And gave them cakes and bread for meat.

They had a house of painted wood,
A red roof gold-spiked over it,
Wherein upon their eggs to sit
Week after week; no drop of blood,

Drawn from men's bodies by sword-blows,
Came ever there, or any tear;
Most certainly from year to year
'Twas pleasant as a Provence rose.

The banners seem'd quite full of ease,
That over the turret-roofs hung down;
The battlements could get no frown
From the flower-moulded cornices.

Who walked in that garden there?
Miles and Giles and Isabeau,
Tall Jehane du Castel beau,
Alice of the golden hair,

Big Sir Gervaise, the good knight,
Fair Ellayne le Violet,
Mary, Constance fille de fay,
Many dames with footfall light.

Whosoever wander'd there,
Whether it be dame or knight,
Half of scarlet, half of white
Their raiment was; of roses fair

Each wore a garland on the head,
  At Ladies' Gard the way was so:
  Fair Jehane du Castel beau
Wore her wreath till it was dead.

Little joy she had of it,
  Of the raiment white and red,
  Or the garland on her head,
She had none with whom to sit

In the carven boat at noon;
  None the more did Jehane weep,
  She would only stand and keep
Saying, "He will be here soon."

Many times in the long day
  Miles and Giles and Gervaise past,
  Holding each some white hand fast,
Every time they heard her say:

"Summer cometh to an end,
  Undern cometh after noon;
  Golden wings will be here soon,
What if I some token send?"

Wherefore that night within the hall,
With open mouth and open eyes,
Like some one listening with surprise,
She sat before the sight of all.

Stoop'd down a little she sat there,
With neck stretch'd out and chin thrown up,
One hand around a golden cup;
And strangely with her fingers fair

She beat some tune upon the gold;
The minstrels in the gallery
Sung: "Arthur, who will never die,
In Avallon he groweth old."

And when the song was ended, she
Rose and caught up her gown and ran;
None stopp'd her eager face and wan
Of all that pleasant company.

Right so within her own chamber
Upon her bed she sat; and drew
Her breath in quick gasps; till she knew
That no man follow'd after her:

She took the garland from her head,
Loosed all her hair, and let it lie
Upon the coverlit; thereby
She laid the gown of white and red;

And she took off her scarlet shoon,
And bared her feet; still more and more
Her sweet face redden'd; evermore
She murmur'd: "He will be here soon;

"Truly he cannot fail to know
My tender body waits him here;
And if he knows, I have no fear
For poor Jehane du Castel beau."

She took a sword within her hand,
Whose hilts were silver, and she sung,
Somehow like this, wild words that rung
A long way over the moonlit land:—

Gold wings across the sea!
Grey light from tree to tree,
Gold hair beside my knee,
I pray thee come to me,
Gold wings!

The water slips,
The red-bill'd moor-hen dips
Sweet kisses on red lips;
Alas! the red rust grips,
And the blood-red dagger rips,
Yet, O knight, come to me!

Are not my blue eyes sweet?
The west wind from the wheat
Blows cold across my feet;
Is it not time to meet
Gold wings across the sea?

White swans on the green moat,
Small feathers left afloat
By the blue-painted boat;
Swift running of the stoat;
Sweet gurgling note by note
Of sweet music.

O gold wings,
Listen how gold hair sings,
And the Ladies' Castle rings,
Gold wings across the sea.

I sit on a purple bed,
Outside, the wall is red,

Thereby the apple hangs,
And the wasp, caught by the fangs,

Dies in the autumn night.
And the bat flits till light,
And the love-crazed knight

Kisses the long wet grass :
The weary days pass,—
Gold wings across the sea !

Gold wings across the sea !
Moonlight from tree to tree,
Sweet hair laid on my knee,
O, sweet knight, come to me !

Gold wings, the short night slips,
The white swan's long neck drips,
I pray thee, kiss my lips,
Gold wings across the sea.

No answer through the moonlit night ;
No answer in the cold grey dawn ;
No answer when the shaven lawn
Grows green, and all the roses bright.

Her tired feet look'd cold and thin,
Her lips were twitched, and wretched tears,
Some, as she lay, roll'd past her ears,
Some fell from off her quivering chin.

Her long throat, stretch'd to its full length,
Rose up and fell right brokenly;
As though the unhappy heart was nigh
Striving to break with all its strength.

And when she slipp'd from off the bed,
Her cramped feet would not hold her; she
Sank down and crept on hand and knee,
On the window-sill she laid her head.

There, with crooked arm upon the sill,
She look'd out, muttering dismally:
"There is no sail upon the sea,
No pennon on the empty hill.

"I cannot stay here all alone,
Or meet their happy faces here,
And wretchedly I have no fear;
A little while, and I am gone."

Therewith she rose upon her feet,
And totter'd; cold and misery
Still made the deep sobs come, till she
At last stretch'd out her fingers sweet,

And caught the great sword in her hand;
And, stealing down the silent stair,
Barefooted in the morning air,
And only in her smock did stand

Upright upon the green lawn grass;
And hope grew in her as she said;
"I have thrown off the white and red,
And pray God it may come to pass

"I meet him; if ten years go by
Before I meet him; if, indeed,
Meanwhile both soul and body bleed,
Yet there is end of misery,

"And I have hope. He could not come,
But I can go to him and show
These new things I have got to know,
And make him speak, who has been dumb."

O Jehane! the red morning sun
  Changed her white feet to glowing gold,
  Upon her smock, on crease and fold,
Changed that to gold which had been dun.

Oh Miles, and Giles, and Isabeau,
  Fair Ellayne le Violet,
  Mary, Constance fille de fay!
Where is Jehane du Castel beau?

O big Gervaise ride apace!
  Down to the hard yellow sand,
  Where the water meets the land.
This is Jehane by her face;

Why has she a broken sword?
  Mary! she is slain outright;
  Verily a piteous sight;
Take her up without a word!

Giles and Miles and Gervaise there,
  Ladies' Gard must meet the war;
  Whatsoever knights these are,
Man the walls withouten fear!

Axes to the apple-trees,
Axes to the aspens tall!
Barriers without the wall
May be lightly made of these.

O poor shivering Isabeau;
Poor Ellayne le Violet,
Bent with fear! we miss to-day
Brave Jehane du Castel beau.

O poor Mary, weeping so!
Wretched Constance fille de fay!
Verily we miss to-day
Fair Jehane du Castel beau.

The apples now grow green and sour
Upon the mouldering castle-wall,
Before they ripen there they fall:
There are no banners on the tower.

The draggled swans most eagerly eat
The green weeds trailing in the moat!
Inside the rotting leaky boat
You see a slain man's stiffen'd feet.

THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS

HAD she come all the way for this,
To part at last without a kiss?
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain
That her own eyes might see him slain
Beside the haystack in the floods?

Along the dripping leafless woods,
The stirrup touching either shoe,
She rode astride as troopers do;
With kirtle kilted to her knee,
To which the mud splash'd wretchedly;
And the wet dripp'd from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair;
The tears and rain ran down her face.

By fits and starts they rode apace,
And very often was his place

Far off from her ; he had to ride
Ahead, to see what might betide
When the roads cross'd ; and sometimes, when
There rose a murmuring from his men,
Had to turn back with promises ;
Ah me ! she had but little ease ;
And often for pure doubt and dread
She sobb'd, made giddy in the head
By the swift riding ; while, for cold,
Her slender fingers scarce could hold
The wet reins ; yea, and scarcely, too,
She felt the foot within her shoe
Against the stirrup : all for this,
To part at last without a kiss
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they near'd that old soak'd hay,
They saw across the only way
That Judas, Godmar, and the three
Red running lions dismally
Grinn'd from his pennon, under which,
In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads.

So then,
While Robert turn'd round to his men,

She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,
And hid her eyes; while Robert said:
"Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one,
At Poictiers, where we made them run
So fast—why, sweet my love, good cheer,
The Gascon frontier is so near,
Nought after this."

But, "O," she said,
"My God! my God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the Chatelet;
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last.
Would God that this next hour were past!"

He answer'd not, but cried his cry,
"St. George for Marny!" cheerily;

And laid his hand upon her rein.
Alas! no man of all his train
Gave back that cheery cry again;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilts, some one cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.

Then they went along
To Godmar; who said: "Now, Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off—
Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and scoff,
Sir Robert, or I slay you now."

She laid her hand upon her brow,
Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and—"No,"
She said, and turn'd her head away,
As there were nothing else to say,
And everything were settled: red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:
"Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands:

What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do
To your fair wilful body, while
Your knight lies dead? "

A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:
"You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God's help—ah!" she said,
"Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in,
I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens: yet I think
They could not make me eat and drink,
And so should I just reach my rest."

"Nay, if you do not my behest,
O Jehane! though I love you well,"
Said Godmar, "would I fail to tell
All that I know." "Foul lies," she said.
"Eh? lies, my Jehane? by God's head,
At Paris folks would deem them true!
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you,

'Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!'—
Eh—gag me Robert—Sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet;
An end that few men would forget
That saw it—So, an hour yet:
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death!"

So, scarce awake,
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards: with her face
Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And fell asleep: and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept
Round to the twelve again; but she,
Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,
And strangely child-like came, and said:
"I will not." Straightway Godmar's head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd
Most sharply round, and his face burn'd.

For Robert—both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep, but gloomily
He seem'd to watch the rain; yea, too,
His lips were firm; he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reach'd out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor grey lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brush'd them.

With a start
Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;
From Robert's throat he loosed the bands
Of silk and mail; with empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out, from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head; she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moan'd as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.

Then Godmar turn'd again and said :
" So, Jehane, the first fitte is read !
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet ! "
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
As though this thing had made her mad.

This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

TWO RED ROSES ACROSS THE MOON

THERE was a lady lived in a hall,
Large in the eyes, and slim and tall;
And ever she sang from noon to noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

There was a knight came riding by
In early spring, when the roads were dry;
And he heard that lady sing at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Yet none the more he stopp'd at all,
But he rode a-gallop past the hall;
And left that lady singing at noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Because, forsooth, the battle was set,
And the scarlet and blue had got to be met,
He rode on the spur till the next warm noon;—
Two red roses across the moon.

But the battle was scattered from hill to hill,
From the windmill to the watermill;
And he said to himself, as it near'd the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

You scarce could see for the scarlet and blue,
A golden helm or a golden shoe;
So he cried, as the fight grew thick at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Verily then the gold bore through
The huddled spears of the scarlet and blue;
And they cried, as they cut them down at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

I trow he stopp'd when he rode again
By the hall, though draggled sore with the rain;
And his lips were pinch'd to kiss at the noon
Two red roses across the moon.

Under the may she stoop'd to the crown,
All was gold, there was nothing of brown;
And the horns blew up the hall at noon
Two red roses across the moon.

WELLAND RIVER

FAIR Ellayne she walk'd by Welland river,
Across the lily lee:
O, gentle Sir Robert, ye are not kind
To stay so long at sea.

Over the marshland none can see
Your scarlet pennon fair;
O, leave the Easterlings alone,
Because of my golden hair.

The day when over Stamford bridge
That dear pennon I see
Go up toward the goodly street,
'Twill be a fair day for me.

O, let the bonny pennon bide
At Stamford, the good town,
And let the Easterlings go free,
And their ships go up and down.

For every day that passes by
I wax both pale and green,
From gold to gold of my girdle
There is an inch between.

I sew'd it up with scarlet silk
Last night upon my knee,
And my heart grew sad and sore to think
Thy face I'd never see.

I sew'd it up with scarlet silk,
As I lay upon my bed:
Sorrow! the man I'll never see
That had my maidenhead.

But as Ellayne sat on her window-seat
And comb'd her yellow hair,
She saw come over Stamford bridge
The scarlet pennon fair.

As Ellayne lay and sicken'd sore,
The gold shoes on her feet,
She saw Sir Robert and his men
Ride up the Stamford street.

He had a coat of fine red gold,
And a bascinet of steel;
Take note his goodly Collayne sword
Smote the spur upon his heel.

And by his side, on a grey jennet,
There rode a fair lady,
For every ruby Ellayne wore,
I count she carried three.

Say, was not Ellayne's gold hair fine,
That fell to her middle free?
But that lady's hair down in the street,
Fell lower than her knee.

Fair Ellayne's face, from sorrow and grief,
Was waxen pale and green;
That lady's face was goodly red,
She had but little tene.

But as he pass'd by her window
He grew a little wroth:
O, why does yon pale face look at me
From out the golden cloth?

It is some burd, the fair dame said
That aye rode him beside,
Has come to see your bonny face
This merry summer-tide.

But Ellayne let a lily-flower
Light on his cap of steel:
O, I have gotten two hounds, fair knight,
The one has served me well.

But the other, just an hour agone,
Has come from over the sea,
And all his fell is sleek and fine,
But little he knows of me.

Now which shall I let go, fair knight,
And which shall bide with me?
O, lady, have no doubt to keep
The one that best loveth thee.

O, Robert, see how sick I am!
Ye do not so by me.
Lie still, fair love! have ye gotten harm
While I was on the sea?

Of one gift, Robert, that ye gave,
I sicken to the death,
I pray you nurse-tend me, my knight,
Whiles that I have my breath.

Six fathoms from the Stamford bridge
He left that dame to stand,
And whiles she wept, and whiles she cursed
That she had ever taken land,

He has kiss'd sweet Ellayne on the mouth,
And fair she fell asleep,
And long and long days after that
Sir Robert's house she did keep.

RIDING TOGETHER

FOR many, many days together
The wind blew steady from the East;
For many days hot grew the weather,
About the time of our Lady's Feast.

For many days we rode together,
Yet met we neither friend nor foe;
Hotter and clearer grew the weather,
Steadily did the East wind blow.

We saw the trees in the hot, bright weather
Clear-cut, with shadows very black,
As freely we rode on together
With helms unlaced and bridles slack.

And often as we rode together,
We, looking down the green-bank'd stream,
Saw flowers in the sunny weather,
And saw the bubble-making bream.

And in the night lay down together,
And hung above our heads the rood,
Or watch'd night-long in the dewy weather,
The while the moon did watch the wood.

Our spears stood bright and thick together,
Straight out the banners stream'd behind,
As we gallop'd on in the sunny weather,
With faces turn'd towards the wind.

Down sank our threescore spears together,
As thick we saw the pagans ride;
His eager face in the clear fresh weather,
Shone out that last time by my side.

Up the sweep of the bridge we dash'd together,
It rock'd to the crash of the meeting spears,
Down rain'd the buds of the dear spring weather,
The elm-tree flowers fell like tears.

There, as we roll'd and writhed together,
I threw my arms above my head,
For close by my side, in the lovely weather,
I saw him reel and fall back dead.

I and the slayer met together,
He waited the death-stroke there in his place,

With thoughts of death, in the lovely weather,
Gapingly mazed at my madden'd face.

Madly I fought as we fought together;
In vain: the little Christian band
The pagans drown'd, as in stormy weather,
The river drowns low-lying land.

They bound my blood-stain'd hands together,
They bound his corpse to nod by my side:
Then on we rode, in the bright March weather,
With clash of cymbals did we ride.

We ride no more, no more together;
My prison-bars are thick and strong,
I take no heed of any weather,
The sweet Saints grant I live not long.

FATHER JOHN'S WAR-SONG

The Reapers.

SO many reapers, Father John,
So many reapers and no little son,
To meet you when the day is done,
With little stiff legs to waddle and run?
Pray you beg, borrow, or steal one son.
Hurrah for the corn-sheaves of Father John!

Father John.

O maiden Mary, be wary, be wary!
And go not down to the river,
Lest the kingfisher, your evil wisher,
Lure you down to the river,
Lest your white feet grow muddy,
Your red hair too ruddy
With the river-mud so red:
But when you are wed

Go down to the river;
O maiden Mary, be very wary,
And dwell among the corn!
See, this dame Alice, maiden Mary,
Her hair is thin and white,
But she is a housewife good and wary,
And a great steel key hangs bright
From her gown, as red as the flowers in corn;
She is good and old like the autumn corn.

MAIDEN MARY.

This is knight Roland, Father John,
Stark in his arms from a field half-won;
Ask him if he has seen your son:
Roland, lay your sword on the corn,
The piled-up sheaves of the golden corn.

KNIGHT ROLAND.

Why does she kiss me, Father John?
She is my true love truly won;
Under my helm is room for one,
But the molten lead-streams trickle and run
From my roof-tree, burning under the sun;
No corn to burn, we had eaten the corn,
There was no waste of the golden corn.

FATHER JOHN.

Ho, you reapers, away from the corn,
To march with the banner of Father John!

THE REAPERS.

We will win a house for Roland his son,
And for maiden Mary, with hair like corn,
As red as the reddest of golden corn.

OMNES.

Father John, you have got you a son,
Seven feet high when his helm is on!
Pennon of Roland, banner of John,
Star of Mary, march well on.

SIR GILES' WAR-SONG

HO! is there any will ride with me,
Sir Giles, le bon des barrières?

The clink of arms is good to hear,
The flap of pennons fair to see;
Ho! is there any will ride with me,
Sir Giles, le bon des barrières?

The leopards and lilies are fair to see,
"St. George Guienne" right good to hear;
Ho! is there any will ride with me,
Sir Giles, le bon des barrières?

I stood by the barrier,
My coat being blazon'd fair to see;
Ho! is there any will ride with me,
Sir Giles, le bon des barrières?

Clisson put out his head to see,
And lifted his basnet up to hear;
I pull'd him through the bars to ME,
Sir Giles, le bon des barrières.

NEAR AVALON

A SHIP with shields before the sun,
Six maidens round the mast,
A red-gold crown on every one,
A green gown on the last.

The fluttering green banners there
Are wrought with ladies' heads most fair,
And a portraiture of Guenevere
The middle of each sail doth bear.

A ship with sails before the wind,
And round the helm six knights,
Their heaumes are on, whereby, half blind,
They pass by many sights.

The tatter'd scarlet banners there,
Right soon will leave the spear-heads bare,
Those six knights sorrowfully bear
In all their heaumes some yellow hair.

PRAISE OF MY LADY

MY lady seems of ivory
Forehead, straight nose, and cheeks that be
Hollow'd a little mournfully.
Beata mea Domina !

Her forehead, overshadow'd much
By bows of hair, has a wave such
As God was good to make for me,
Beata mea Domina !

Not greatly long my lady's hair,
Nor yet with yellow colour fair,
But thick and crisped wonderfully :
Beata mea Domina !

Heavy to make the pale face sad,
And dark, but dead as though it had
Been forged by God most wonderfully
—Beata mea Domina !—

Of some strange metal, thread by thread,
To stand out from my lady's head,
Not moving much to tangle me.
Beata mea Domina!

Beneath her brows the lids fall slow,
The lashes a clear shadow throw
Where I would wish my lips to be.
Beata mea Domina!

Her great eyes, standing far apart,
Draw up some memory from her heart,
And gaze out very mournfully;
—Beata mea Domina!—

So beautiful and kind they are,
But most times looking out afar,
Waiting for something, not for me.
Beata mea Domina!

I wonder if the lashes long
Are those that do her bright eyes wrong,
For always half tears seem to be
—Beata mea Domina!—

Lurking below the underlid,
Darkening the place where they lie hid—
If they should rise and flow for me!
Beata mea Domina!

Her full lips being made to kiss,
Curl'd up and pensive each one is;
This makes me faint to stand and see.
Beata mea Domina!

Her lips are not contented now,
Because the hours pass so slow
Towards a sweet time: (pray for me),
—Beata mea Domina!—

Nay, hold thy peace! for who can tell;
But this at least I know full well,
Her lips are parted longingly,
—Beata mea Domina!—

So passionate and swift to move,
To pluck at any flying love,
That I grow faint to stand and see.
Beata mea Domina!

Yea! there beneath them is her chin,
So fine and round, it were a sin
To feel no weaker when I see
—Beata mea Domina!—

God's dealings; for with so much care,
And troublous, faint lines wrought in there,
He finishes her face for me.
Beata mea Domina!

Of her long neck what shall I say?
What things about her body's sway,
Like a knight's pennon or slim tree
—Beata mea Domina!—

Set gently waving in the wind;
Or her long hands that I may find
On some day sweet to move o'er me?
Beata mea Domina!

God pity me though, if I miss'd
The telling, how along her wrist
The veins creep, dying languidly
—Beata mea Domina!—

Inside her tender palm and thin.
Now give me pardon, dear, wherein
My voice is weak and vexes thee.
Beata mea Domina !

All men that see her any time,
I charge you straightly in this rhyme,
What, and wherever you may be,
—Beata mea Domina !—

To kneel before her ; as for me,
I choke and grow quite faint to see
My lady moving graciously.
Beata mea Domina !

SUMMER DAWN

PRAY but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips,
Think but one thought of me up in the stars.
The summer night waneth, the morning light slips,
Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspen, betwixt the cloud-bars,
That are patiently waiting there for the dawn:
Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold
Waits to float through them along with the sun.
Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,
The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold
The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn,
Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.
Speak but one word to me over the corn,
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

IN PRISON

WEARILY, drearily,
Half the day long,
Flap the great banners
High over the stone;
Strangely and eerily
Sounds the wind's song,
Bending the banner-poles.

While, all alone,
Watching the loophole's spark,
Lie I, with life all dark,
Feet tether'd, hands fetter'd
Fast to the stone,
The grim walls, square letter'd
With prison'd men's groan.

Still strain the banner-poles
Through the wind's song,
Westward the banner rolls
Over my wrong.

NOTES

NOTES

Page 1. "*Gauwaine.*" Morris has here substituted Gauwaine for his brother Agravaine, who is the accuser and judge of Guinevere both in Malory and in the French prose *Morte d'Artur.* In Malory, Gauwaine makes an eloquent appeal on her behalf to Arthur (Book xx. c. vii., p. 808, ed. Sommer).

Page 4. "*at Christmas-time This happenea.*" This account of Launcelot's coming to Arthur's court is entirely of Morris's invention, as Malory brings Launcelot into his story without any preliminary introduction.

Page 7. "*Came Launcelot walking.*" Malory omits also the first declaration of love between Launcelot and Guinevere —one of the most charming passages in medieval prose. Galehault, his intimate friend, having guessed his secret, brings about a meeting in the presence of the Dame de Malehault, who gives the warning cough familiar to readers of Dante.

Page 8. "*Remember in what grave your mother sleeps.*" Morgause, wife of King Lot, was Arthur's sister, and mother of Gauwaine, Agravaine, Gaheriet, Gareth, and afterwards of Mordred. Her death is another of Morris's inventions.

Page 9. "*Mellyagraunce.*" Launcelot, coming to see the queen one day in her chamber, dropped some blood on the coverlet. Kay was lying wounded in the room, and Mellyagraunce, her captor, accused them of misconduct, and met his death at the hands of Launcelot ultimately, though not in the judicial battle which attested Guinevere's innocence. The story of the battle is taken from Malory (Book xix. c. 9, p. 786, ed. Sommer).

Page 9. "*la Fausse Garde.*" Mellyagraunce's castle.

Page 20. "*I tell myself a tale.*" Morris once said to the writer, "I never walk behind a man in the street, or sit opposite him in a railway carriage, without making up a story about him and his doings."

Page 20. "*Gareth.*" Brother of Sir Gauwaine. He was compared by King Arthur to an eager wolf. *See* p. 34, &c.

Page 20. "*Dinadan.*" Sir Dinadan was a knight of sportive mind, who had occasional gleams of common-sense, which being incomprehensible to them, were the joy of Arthur's court. He figures often in the Tristram stories.

Page 21. "*the stroke Wherewith Goa threw all men upon the face, &c.*" A rabbinical story, also found in Mohammedan legend.

Page 22. "*boddice.*" This legitimate and etymologically correct spelling is altered in the later editions to "bodice."

Page 22. "*there were no colours then.*" In moonlight one cannot distinguish colour.

Page 22. "*Maiden Margaret.*" This is probably not St. Margaret of Antioch but St. Margaret Pelagian, who for the love of virginity ran away on her wedding night, and taking the name of Pelagian became a monk. Being appointed prior of a convent of nuns, she fell under suspicion of unchastity with one of them and was immured for life. On the point of death she confessed her sex, and was buried

in honour. "Insomuch as she was named Margaret, she is always likened to a flower, for she had in her flower of her virginity" (Caxton, *Golden Legend*). But the scarlet lilies would also be appropriate to St. Margaret of Antioch as a virgin martyr. *See* note to p. 49.

Page 24. "*by the thorn-tree Wherefrom St. Joseph in the days past preached.*" Joseph of Arimathea is said to have introduced Christianity into Britain and to have founded the Abbey of Glastonbury. His staff miraculously budded there, and grew into a thorn-tree, which blossomed at Christmas each year. A full account of the legend may be found in Skeat's *Joseph of Arithmathie* (E.E.T.S.).

Page 27. "*If even I go hell, I cannot choose.*" The Kelmscott Press edition inserts "to" before "hell."

Page 28. "*Fair serpent mark'd with V upon the head.*" The line refers to the markings on the head of poisonous snakes.

Page 29. "*Lucius, the Emperor.*" In Malory, it was Arthur who killed Lucius, who was sent embalmed to Rome.

Page. 31. "*Breuse even, as he rode, fear'd lest, &c.*" Breuse *sans pitie*, the brown knight without pity, was a felon knight whose name often occurs in Malory as an antagonist of the Round Table. He was slain by Gareth.

Page 32. "*Iseult from the West, Or, better still, Iseult of Brittany.*" The two loves of Tristram, the latter—Iseult of the White Hands—was the sister of his companion and his wife. Swinburne's splendid poem should be read for the story.

Page 34. "*And by him Palomydes.*" Palomydes, the good knight, was the unsuccessful lover of Iseult and rival of Tristram. Beast Glatysaunt, or the Questing Beast, "had in shape a head like a leopard, buttocks like a lion, and footed like a hart, and in its body was such a noise as if it had been the noise of thirty couple of hounds questing." This beast was continually pursued by Palomydes who was

a heathen, but at the last was reconciled to Tristram and baptized. Palomydes adopted the beast as his device. *See* also pp. 42, 46.

Page 35. "*Kay.*" Kay, the son of Sir Ector, was the seneschal of Arthur's court. In the stories he continually undertakes tasks he is unable to perform, and suffers defeat in the combats he wages.

Page 36. "*Malay's crease.*" Cf. Tennyson (1847), "The cursed Malayan crease."

Page 41. "*Sir Galahad.*" Galahad was the only son of Launcelot. His mother was Elaine, daughter of King Pelles, guardian of the Holy Grail. He was the ideal of knightly purity, a Launcelot without his faults. It is not without interest that Launcelot's own name was at first Galahad.

Page 43. "*Candlemas.*" February 2nd. The Feast of the Purification of the Virgin.

Page 44. "*the Sangreal.*" The Holy Graal is in the legend a vessel in which some drops of the Redeemer's blood were preserved. It appeared from time to time, and its legend was early in the 13th century incorporated in an immense cycle of tales best read in Paulin Paris's abridgment, *Legendes de la Table Ronde.* Malory gives a good account of the latter part of its history in the Quest of the Holy Grail.

Page 44. "*Mador de la porte.*" One of the best knights of the Round Table. He is mentioned by Malory as mistakenly accusing Guinevere of poisoning his cousin Patrice, when she was rescued by Launcelot in a judicial combat, and again as one of the twelve knights, who accompanied Mordred in his attempt to seize Launcelot in the queen's chamber, and were slain there.

Page 45. "*whose sword first made him knight.*" *i.e.* Arthur, who knighted Launcelot, still loves and trusts him, and this treachery wounds the High God.

Page 46. "*destrier.*" A war-horse or charger, so called because led by the squire with his right hand.

Page 46. "*Palomyaes.*" *See* note to p. 34.

Page 48. "*the wondrous ship wherein The spindles of King Solomon are laid, &c.*" A full account of these marvels is found in Malory, Book xviii. c. v,–vii., p. 696, &c., ed. Sommer. The spindles were made of a tree brought from Paradise by Eve, originally white, green at the first birth, and red at the first murder. Solomon's wife, who was an evil woman, made three spindles from the wood of this tree, which with David's sword were put in a ship and set afloat. No one but a true believer could enter the ship, and if the sword were handled by any one but the destined knight, evil came to him.

Page 49. "*Margaret of Antioch.*" Margaret was the daughter of Theodosius, High Priest of Antioch, and was beloved by Olybrius the Prefect. She suffered martyrdom for her refusal to sacrifice or to marry him, after many tortures and temptations of the devil, in one of which a dragon essayed to swallow her, but she making the sign of the cross, he "brake asunder, and so she issued out all whole and sound." This incident often appears in frescoes.

Page 49. "*Cecily.*" St. Cecily was the daughter of a noble Roman, who, betrothed and married to Valerian, persuaded him to join her in a life of perpetual virginity. They were martyred at Rome.

Page 49. "*Lucy.*" St. Lucy was born at Syracuse of a noble lineage. She sold her patrimony and gave it to the poor, whereon her betrothed lodged a complaint against her before Paschasius, who finally ordered her to be the sport of ribalds, and finding them unable to come near her, caused her to be martyred. She was the patron saint of Syracuse.

NOTES

Page 49. "*Katherine.*" St. Katherine was Queen of Alexandria, and refusing an earthly spouse was mystically married to Christ. Maxentius the Emperor came to Alexandria, and at his orders fifty philosophers tried to convert her to paganism. Her reasonings converted them, and they were martyred, she being imprisoned without food for twelve days. After this she was set between wheels armed with knives, and when these could not harm her she was beheaded. Her memory survives in the Catherine wheels of childhood.

Page 50. "*Poor merry Dinaaan.*" The death of Dinadan is not recorded in Malory.

Page 51. "*Lauvaine.*" Lauvaine was the brother of Elaine of Astolat. He was one of the first to come after Launcelot in his attempted rescue of Guinevere from Mellyagraunce.

Page 55. "*The Chapel in Lyoness.*" This first appeared in the September number of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 1856.

Page 55. "*Sir Ozana le cure Hardy.*" The whole of this story is entirely of the poet's invention, as no germ of it exists in Malory—though other knights lay wounded as here described. Sir Ozana was a well-known figure in Malory.

Page 55. "*parclose.*" A parclose is a screen or railing made to separate or inclose any object or place, such as a tomb or an altar in a church.

Page 56. "*samite.*" Originally a heavy silk material of which each thread was supposed to contain six fibres (*hexamitum*), it came to mean any rich heavy silk, especially that with a satin-like gloss.

Page 58. "*Sir Bors.*" Bors was a cousin of Launcelot, and one of his most trusted friends.

NOTES

Page 63. "*Sir Peter Harpdon.*" The name was probably suggested to the poet by John Harpeden who married a cousin of Clisson's. Sir Peter is, of course, a creature of fiction.

Page 66. "*Clisson or Sanxere.*" Oliver de Clisson first fought on the English side but joined the French in 1367, became brother-in-arms of Du Guesclin in 1369, Constable of France in 1380. He has been surnamed "the Butcher." Louis de Sancerre was one of the French leaders, Maréchal in 1369, and Constable in 1397. One of the brothers-in-arms of Du Guesclin.

Page 66. "*At Lusac bridge, &c.*" Lusac-les-Chateaux, on the Vienne, nine miles from Montmorillon. Here Chandos was killed. *See* Froissart, vol. xvii. p. 493, ed. Lettenhove.

Page 67. "*Guesclin.*" Bertrand du Guesclin, 1320–1380, a Breton gentleman, Constable of France, was one of the bravest soldiers and tacticians of his period. His career was one long series of combats and adventures, but he only resembled the knights of chivalry in his courage and respect for his word.

Page 67. "*petrariae.*" Large catapults for hurling stones in war.

Page 70. "*Balen.*" Balen, the knight with two swords, goes through a number of adventures in Malory, but is always unfortunate even in success. He finally kills his brother unwittingly, and dies of the wounds received.

Page 70. "*Bergerath.*" Bergerac, on the Dordogne, was long a subject of contention between the Kings of England and France. In 1367 it was in French hands, but in 1375 it seems to have been besieged by Du Guesclin. *See* Froissart, vol. xxiv. p. 89, ed. Lettenhove.

Page 72. "*archgays.*" An iron-pointed wooden spear. The word is always spelt in three syllables, archegay.

NOTES

Page 85. "*Do you care altogether more than France.*" "Than" is an obvious misprint for "for."

Page 85. "*And, somehow clad in poor old rusty arms.*" A reference to an early legendary adventure of Du Guesclin's when shut out from a tournament on account of his youth.

Page 86. "*grey monks.*" "*Wishing well for Clement.*" Grey monks are Cistercians, who, having large possessions in England, were, in general, sympathisers with its rule. Clement VII. (1378–94) was the French anti-pope at the time, while the English recognised Urban VI., and a change of allegiance necessitated a change of Pope, though many of the religious orders refused to declare themselves in favour of one or the other candidate.

Page 87. "*Friend of the constable.*" Bertrand du Guesclin was Constable of France, 2nd Oct., 1370. He was the brother-in-arms of Olivier de Clisson from Oct. 1369.

Page 97. "*lombards.*" Cannon of heavy calibre, firing stone balls.

Page 97. "*base-court.*" The lower or outer court of a castle or mansion, occupied by the servants.

Page 101. "*Or high up in the dustiness of the apse.*" This was altered later to "duskness."

Page 102. "*Countess Mountfort.*" The fortunate knight was Sir Walter de Manny, who had ridden into Brittany to her rescue.

Page 103. "*Launcelot or Wade.*" This comparison is taken from Malory when Lynet is mocking Gareth after his encounter with the Green Knight. "Were thou as wight as ever was Wade or Launcelot," &c. Wade is a mythical Teutonic hero, belonging to the cycle of Weyland, the Smith.

Page 105. "*muckle.*" This is altered later to "mickle," both meaning the same thing; but "muckle" is a northern form.

NOTES

Page 114. "*On the flower-carven marble could see.*" "I" has evidently dropped out before "see." It was replaced in the Kelmscott Press edition.

Page 119. "*And let gold Michael, who look'a down, When I was there, on Rouen town.*" "Less than forty years ago [in 1854] I first saw the city of Rouen, then still in its outward aspect a piece of the Middle Ages: no words can tell you how its mingled beauty, history, and romance took hold on me: I can only say that, looking back on my past life, I find it was the greatest pleasure I have ever had: and now it is a pleasure which no one can ever have again: it is lost to the world for ever" (W. Morris, *The Aims of Art*).

Page 122. "*The shower'd mail-rings on the speed-walk lay.*" In the Kelmscott Press edition "speedwell" was substituted for "speed-walk."

Page 125. *The Prince's Song.* This song, under the title of "Hands," first appeared in the July number of the *Oxford and Cambriage Magazine*, 1856.

Page 133. "*Geſfray Teste Noire.*" This freebooter was a Breton leader of free companions, and his doings with those of Sir John Bonne Lance and others may be read in Froissart (vol. xiii. p. 45, &c., ed. Lettenhove).

Page 133. "*And if you meet the Canon of Chimay.*" The Canon of Chimay was John Froissart. Here is Morris's own account of him. "As the tale is here told, its incidents, often the very words of them, are taken from the writings of one of those men who make past times live before our eyes for ever. John Froissart, Canon of Chimay, in Hainault, was indeed but a hanger-on of the aristocracy . . . but class-lying was not the fine art which it has since become; and the simpler habits of thought of Froissart's days gave people intense delight in the stories of deeds done, and developed in them what has been called epic impartiality . . . Englishman, Scotchman, Fleming, Spaniard, Frenchman,

Gascon, Breton are treated by John Froissart as men capable of valiancy, their deeds to be told of and listened to with little comment of blame or discrimination: and I think you will say before you have done with him, that he could even see the good side of the revolutionary characters of his time, so long as they were not slack in noble deeds. . . . John Froissart has given *me* at least as much pleasure as he did to any one of the lords, ladies, knights, squires, and sergeants who first heard him read."

Page 133. "*bastides*." Temporary huts or towers erected for besieging purposes.

Page 134. "*Ventadour*." The ruins of the castle can still be seen at Moustier-Ventadour (Corrèze). A full account of it is given in Froissart (ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove), and a curious deposition of one of Geffray Teste Noire's servants, Guillaume de Bouc, is preserved in the Registers of the Châtelet.

Page 134. "*camaille*." A mailed defence of chain armour for the neck and shoulders. It was covered by a plate which formed part of the basinet.

Page 135. "*Carcassone*." "One of the strong cities of the world, for it is placed high and all on a rock, and well closed with towers and walls and gates of grey stone."—Froissart. It was one of the principal cities of France, but suffered much in the Black Death, and from the English in 1356. "Verville" is an invented name.

Page 135. "*horse in Job*." "He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, Ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting" (Job xxxix. 24).

Page 137. "*The Jacquerie*." "After the victory of the English at Poitiers, an outburst of patriotic anger and revolt

brought about the Jacquerie. 'They could no longer support the ills which oppressed them, and seeing that their lords, far from defending them, used them worse than their enemies, the peasants thought they had a right to rebel, taking their vengeance into their own hands.' A certain Guillaume Caillet led the mob: his nickname, Jacques Bonhomme, has stuck to the French peasant ever since. Soon he had a following of a hundred thousand men as fierce, ignorant, untrained as a hundred thousand gorillas, and great were their excesses. How the King of Navarre and the Count of Foix rode across France, killing the villainous Jacques 'in great heaps, like beasts'; hunting them down, in a battue; driving them into the Marne to drown; burning wholesale them and their villages—all this, is it not written in the chronicles of Froissart?" (Mme. Duclaux). On the other hand, M. Coville, the most recent historian of the period, is disposed to minimise the excesses of the rebels. They burnt the chateaux and chased the nobles, but only thirty victims of the insurrection are known, the rapes and murders reported being hearsay, and against them may be put the thousands of Jacques destroyed in reprisal. *See* Colville, *Histoire de France* (ed. Lavisse), vol. 4, 2, 2, for a full account.

Page 138. "*Beauvais.*" Beauvais was the centre of the Jacquerie and one of the last places to be subdued. The "great church" is the wonderful cathedral of Beauvais, always a special object of love to the poet.

Page 142. "*John Froissart.*" *See* note p. 133.

Page 142. "*Jaques Picard.*" A name of the poet's invention. There is a famous sculptor of the time mentioned in Froissart of another name.

Page 148. "*la perriere.*" The perrier is the same as the petrary, a military catapult.

Page 150. "*They hammer'd out my basnet-point Into a round salade, &c.*" The basinet was a small, light, steel headpiece,

in shape somewhat globular, terminating in a point raised slightly above the head, and closed in front with a ventail or visor. The salade (or sallet) has rounded surfaces everywhere, and is distinguished by a fixed projection behind.

Page 151. "*no Venice flag Can fly unpaia for.*" Venice was in the habit of paying an annual tribute to the Sultan for trading privileges. In 1478 this amounted to 10,000 ducats, but this was a century later. At the time of the poem Venice was engaged in its death-struggle with Genoa.

Page 155. "*Honneur aux fils des preux!*" The cry of the heralds in the intervals of the tourney.

Page 162. "*Lambert, banneret of the wood.*" The distinction between knight and banneret was made by the king cutting off the tails of the knight's pennon on the field of battle after a victory.

Page 168. "*taberd.*" This is the old spelling for "tabard."

Page 180. "*The wind.*" This is perhaps the most remarkable phrase of the volume for its success in reproducing the emotional effect of music independently of thought or the story told.

Page 187. "*chevron.*" A chevron on a banner is a device consisting of a bar bent like two meeting rafters. The device is here the principal thing seen, and the rest of the banner is neglected, as we say "the lions of England floated in the breeze."

Page 195. "*a thing to mind.*" A thing to remember, to bear in mind.

Page 197. "*Undern.*" Tierce, nine o'clock in the morning, or the period from that hour to noon. It is here probably used as a derived word for the afternoon, in the same way as "undermeal" was used by Elizabethan writers for the afternoon's refreshment, though it refers to the undern meal.

NOTES

Page 214. "*Two red roses across the moon.*" The knight's arms—as the poet on one occasion remarked to the writer.

Page 218. "*bascinet.*" "*Collayne sword.*" Bascinet is basinet. Collayne is Cologne. The best steel at the time was reputed to come from Cologne, as in the ballad of *Otterburnn* and in the *Percy Ballads*. *See* note to p. 150.

Page 218. "*tene.*" Grief, sorrow, trouble. *See* Chaucer:

> Almighty and al merciable Quene,
> To whom that al this world fleeth for socour,
> To have relees of sinne, sorwe, and tene.
>
> *A*, *B*, *C*, l. 3.

Page 219. "*burd.*" Young lady, maiden.

Page 219. "*fell.*" The skin with its hair, &c.

Page 221. "*Riding Together.*" This poem first appeared in the May number of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 1836. A very beautiful and somewhat similar one "Winter Weather" is in the January number.

Page 227. "*Sir Giles' War-Song.*" There is extant a letter from Browning to Morris, congratulating him on the *Earthly Paradise* and mentioning this little poem. "It is a double delight to me to read such poetry, and know *you* of all the world wrote it,—you whose songs I used to sing while galloping by Fiesole in old days,—'Ho, is there any will ride with me?'"

Page 227. "*leopards and lilies.*" The arms of England and France quartered worn by the English king.

Page 229. "*A ship with sails before the wind.*" This has been altered, without improving it, by substituting "which" for "with."

NOTES

Page 230. "*Praise of My Lady.*" Written at Manchester in 1857 while on a visit to Canon Dixon.

Page 235. "*Summer Dawn.*" This poem first appeared, under the title of "Pray but One Prayer for Me," in the October number of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 1856.

Page 235. "*Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn.*" In the Kelmscott Press edition the poet avoids the Cockney rhyme of "dawn" and "corn" by altering his line into "They pray the long gloom through for daylight new born," but he evidently did not notice that the same rhyme is used three lines before. The new line is hardly an improvement.

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