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The Story of Iking Sylvain and Queen Himée







Then King Sylvain and Queen Aimée danced in the sunshine.

The Story of King Sylvain and Queen Himée by Margaret

Sherwood Whith Kllustrations and Decorations by Sarah S. Stillwell



New York

The Macmillan Company

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Set up, electrotyped, and published March, 1904.

Norwood Press J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith Co. Norwood, Mass., U.S.A. Dedicated to The Runaways in Spirit



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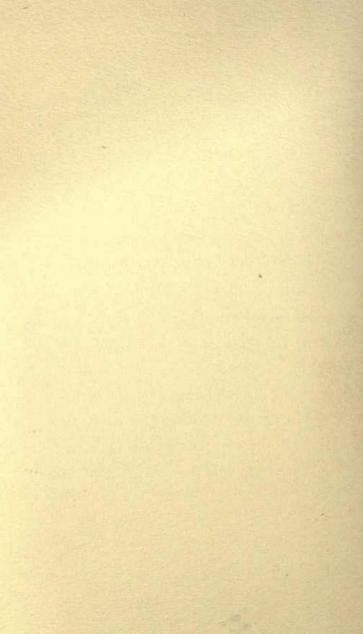
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CHAPTER I

How King Sylvain met Queen Aimée secretly in the Garden, and of Their Flight



THE STORY OF KING SYLVAIN AND QUEEN AIMÉE

CHAPTER I

how King Sylvain met Aueen Aimée secretly in the Garden, and of Their Flight

Now this is a story of something that happened when the world was young, but whether that was long ago or of late years I cannot say, for the world is always young so long as the feet of lovers go forth in the grass. On a day there were gathered together in the city of Wannamere many kings and queens, but whether it was for jousting or an holy feast I have forgot. There was King Jeannot of Lointerre, and Queen Jeanette, and the King and Queen of North

Gardenne, and the old King of Nemoland, and Queen Doraine of Wisterniss, and King Geoffrey of the Morasses, and Queen Elise of Villermé, and many other more. When their matter was finished, and some had already departed to their own homes, King Sylvain spake secretly unto Queen Aimée and begged her for pity to meet him by the acacias in the garden near the fountain when the moon should rise, and the Queen bowed her head and said nothing, but much she marvelled why he would have her go. More he spake not, for many were listening, to wit: two pages that held the Queen's train, and three ladies in waiting on the right hand and on the left, also the Warden of the Bedchamber, and the Seneschal, Sir Landis, with other knights and gentlewomen.

So when dusk was come, and or ever the stars were lighted, Queen Aimée stole

secretly forth from the castle and found her way by the trees of the garden to the trysting place, and King Sylvain stole forth also, and together they met by the fountain, and there was one star now in the sky.

"What wouldst thou?" asked the Queen. Then the King sighed a great sigh and stretched himself.

"I would have my liberty," said King Sylvain.

"Art not free," asked Queen Aimée, "and thou a King?"

"Nay, but a very bondslave," he made answer, as one wroth. "Watched am I by day and by night. Never may I go forth but many follow, never may I bide at home but all likewise stay. I may not read but one watcheth me, and if I would but write a verse, I must go for to sit in state. A morsel of food may I not take but all look

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on, nor may I draw on my own doublet. The veriest serf in my kingdom is happier than I, for he is free of his own hair, but mine may I not touch for one that combeth it for me."

"What wouldst thou then," said the Queen, "an thy lot liketh thee not?"

"I would have," said the King, and he stroked his beard, "a garden of my own where I might dig at my will. And there would I have none with me save one only, and rose and violet and quince and peach also would I grow for her in the sun."

Then Queen Aimée fell a-trembling, though she said no word, and in the dusk was the King ware of the beating of his own heart.

"And that one?" asked Queen Aimée.

"Is thyself," said the King, and he took her two hands in his and kissed

them many times. Then the King wished greatly that the moon were up, for though he needed not its light to tell him of her beauty he would fain have seen whether she was angered or no.

"Alas, that it may not be!" said the Queen.

"But wherefore?" asked King Sylvain.

"Art not thou also aweary, and wouldst thou not fain know the open road?"

"Of a truth," said Queen Aimée, "it is even so with me."

"Now am I glad," quoth King Sylvain.
"Hark, 'tis the nightingale!" And in truth one sang to them from the acacia tree near at hand.

It was the month when the young leaves come forth, and in the garden the air smelled freshly of many things that grew there. And for a time, till the moon

arose in the east, they stood and watched, for there was revelling in the castle, and lights moving to and fro, and from far they heard the music and knew that many feet danced thereto. Then the Queen found her voice and spake.

"It were wrong for us both," she said stoutly. "Thy kingdom is for thee to rule and not for another."

"Sweetheart," said the King, and he took her in his arms, "when in my life have I had in anything mine own way? Wish I one thing, the Archbishop vetoeth it, or wish I another, the Lords say it may not be. 'Tis but a painted figurehead I am on the prow of the ship of state."

Then the Queen was silent, for 'tis marvellous how the arms of a man may convince a woman when she loveth, however secretly, for Queen Aimée loved

King Sylvain, though he knew it not, and what he did in asking her thus away he only dared, knowing not the issue.

"And so," said the King, "this very night will we steal away."

"An thou wouldst be free of thy kingdom," said Queen Aimée, "why not call thy Lords and the Archbishop, and lay down thy crown and go in peace?"

"'Twould be but another ceremony," said the King, "and that may I not abide. Also must I win thee forth to wander with me, else miss I the joy of mine escape."

So it was agreed atween them, and they went back to the castle, he to his chamber and she to hers, and when all was quiet and the torches out, they met by the postern gate. It chanced that the King had with him a key, for it was his own castle and it hight Durance, and the

warden was asleep, so he fitted it into the lock, and breathed not, and it turned, and behold! they felt the grass beneath their feet. Then they looked and saw the castle standing dark with turret and tower against the sky, and were glad to be outside. The Queen had borrowed a gown from one of her waiting women and had left a jewel in its place, and the King was clad in a squire's dress.

"'Tis the first time I have clothed myself," said the King, "and my buckles be wrong."

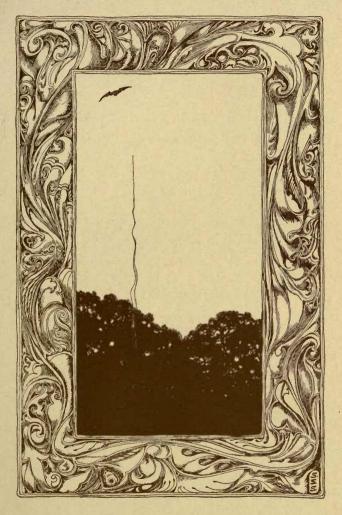
"I will right them for thee," said the Queen, so she felt and set right the buckles at his throat, but her hands trembled as for fear.

So King Sylvain and Queen Aimée went forth alone on the highway in the night, and by this the light of the moon had hidden the light of the stars.

CHAPTER II

how the King and the Queen went onward in the Pight, and how They rode with the Tarter







CHAPTER II

how the King and the Queen went onward in the Night, and how They rode with the Carter

"WHITHER fare we?" asked the Queen, when it was dawn, or ever the sun ariseth, and toward the east there was red in the sky.

"That know I not," said the King, merrily. "I would go as the leaf goeth, over the down afore the wind. Listen how the birds waken among the leaves!"

All that night had they travelled to one step on the highway, nor were they weary at the crowing of the cock. Nor King nor Queen had known afore the touch of the night wind under the stars, for they be

much shut within stone walls, and I have heard say that both windows and beds be heavily curtained with rich stuffs. Ever the King whistled as he went, and the Queen now and then sang a snatch of song.

"Now that I find that I have the legs of a man, I marvel much that I went so long through the motions of a puppet," said the King, and he stretched his legs upon the road.

How old they were I may not tell, but years enough had they known to see the wishes of their hearts go astray. For glad hours had they waited and had waited in vain. Children they were not, but if there were grey hairs at the King's temples, I dare not say it, nor would any other romancer, for all think that joy cometh but in youth, and though I wot better I put it not in my tales.

Anon sunlight came over the hill to east-ward, and fell on the Queen's face, and it was sudden sorrowful, and sorrow fitted not well upon it, for it was all too fair. To the King she spake, laying her hand upon his arm.

"Thou hast left all to go forth with me. Will it never repent thee?"

"Nay," said the King.

"But rich clothes and soft beds hast thou left behind thee, and a king's food, and thou hast nothing save only me."

"There be grass and sweet branches of pine for sleeping," said the King, "and my garments please me well, nor are stiff with buckram and with cloth of silk," but of her he said nothing, and the Queen marvelled thereat.

"Wilt thou not feel the lack of all bending before thee?" asked the Queen.

"There be many ceremonies at a king's court."

"Loathly to me be they all," said King Sylvain, "both crownings and christenings and the feasts of high days."

"There be fair ladies there a-many," said the Queen. "Shalt not miss them?"

Then the King laughed aloud.

"The fair ladies of my court and the peacocks of my garden can I spare," said the King, "both them and their voices, which be much alike."

"But thy jester and thy counsellor,"-

"Henceforward am I mine own jester and mine own counsellor," said King Sylvain. "Naught ask I save the charm of wandering feet, and the drip of summer rain on the leaves, and the warmth of summer sun. I would have in my nostrils the fragrance of roses that we pass but once and smell not

again. I would feel about me the touch and dip of wings that travel farther than we."

"Thou art a very poet," said the Queen. Now came one driving in a cart wherein he gathered grass that was fresh and green.

"God save ye," said the carter.

"And thee," said King and Queen.

"Do ye travel far?" asked the man.

"Ay," answered King Sylvain, "as far as the heart desireth."

"I could give ye a lift," said the man, for the woman is weary."

So King Sylvain and Queen Aimée clambered into the cart, and it was of blue colour, such as ye may see to-day. And ever the carter watched them, if that he might from their clothing make out their state. The King wore doublet and hose of scarlet, and he had also a mantle of grey lined with the same colour; and the Queen

had a dress of blue colour, and her mantle was deeper blue; also her bodice was sewn with pearls, and on her hair was a net, cunningly wrought of silver and set with emeralds.

"Whither wend ye?" asked the man.

"Friend," said the King, "we be running away."

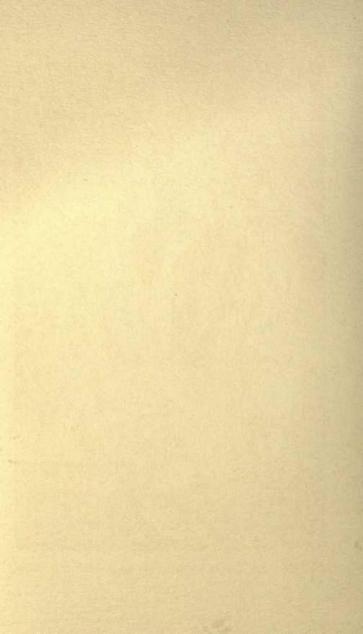
"So methought," he answered shrewdly; "ye go for to be wed?"

Then the King laughed aloud at his wit, and the Queen with him.

"Ay," said King Sylvain, "we go to be wed."

So they rode with the carter, and he took them to his own home, which was a small hut of grey stone. And they sat outside on a bench near a trellis of red roses, and did eat bread and drink ale which Moll, his wife, bare them.

CHAPTER III Of the Wooing of Queen Aimée





The King and Queen are refreshed by the Carter's Mife.



CHAPTER III

Of the Mooing of Queen Aimée

In the morning as they parted from the carter's house, they had great cheer, and he told them of an holy man that was an hermit and abode not far on the edge of a wood.

"Him may ye have to wed ye," said the man.

Then the King smiled not nor said a word, and when the Queen looked into his face he looked not at her again, but took the road with his head bent down as one who thinketh, but may not say. So they walked along by the wayside where the grass was green; and hard by the road was

a stream of water where white poplar trees grew all a-row, and their leaves made with the water a little sound. Then the Queen's heart was sad, though the birds sang.

"Go we to the holy man to be wed?" she asked of the King, and she smiled upon him.

"Nay," he answered, and he hove a great sigh, but answered not her smile.

"Sweetheart," said the Queen, "there is that troubleth thee, and I would fain know it."

"It is naught," said the King, and he fell a-jesting, but his jests came not from the heart but from the lips only, and the Queen knew it, as is the way of women when they love.

"Dost fear that they may come after us?" said the Queen; "for any minute may we be taken."

"That is truth," answered the King, "but I fear them not."

Then the Queen fell behind and trod after King Sylvain in the dust of the highway, and stepped where the print of his feet lay and pondered, but the King marked it not. And presently she went to him and laid her hand upon him, and stayed his steps.

"In what have I vexed thee?" asked the Queen, softly.

"Forsooth, in nothing," quoth the King.

"But thou art sad," said Queen Aimée, "and meseems the lot thou hast chosen liketh thee no better than that whereto thou wast born."

"Nay, and I like it dearly," answered the King.

"Then have I truly offended, for none other hath come a-nigh thee. Surely am I the cause of thy grief."

"Yea," said the King, "that art thou."

"Then tell me," said the Queen, "and I will mend my ways."

"Naught is there to mend in thee," answered the King. "It is I that have done thee wrong, and sore it repenteth me."

"Tell me thy meaning," said Queen Aimée, "for I am but a woman and understand not."

"I wot well," said the King, "that I have done thee a mischief in bringing thee away, for all have I taken from thee, and naught have I left."

Now the Queen's eyes were full of wonder, and they were grey eyes, and her face was very fair and fresh where the wind touched it.

"Thy hair is of ruddy gold," said the King of a sudden.

"More would I know," said the Queen, "of thy cause for sorrow. Came I not gladly after thee?"

"Nay, but I fear me,' answered the King. "Didst not come for my bidding and not for love?"

Then the Queen laughed out by the roadside.

"Of a truth there was short time for wooing," said Queen Aimée. "If thou wouldst know, sit we down here on this green bank."

So they sat them down on the grass by the water side.

"Verily I know not the way of a man with a maiden," said the King, sorrowfully, being a puppet and no man. What doth one that would woo?"

"He singeth beneath her window," said the Queen.

"Here be no windows, Gesu be

praised," said the King, "but methinks I could make out to sing."

So he sang her sweet songs that were set in rhyme, and one was of a page that loved a king's daughter, and one of a prince that wooed a shepherd maid, and the birds that were building a nest in the tree above them sang with him, but Queen Aimée answered nothing.

"What else doth a lover if song availeth not?" asked the King.

"He writeth letters," said the Queen, "in which he telleth his love, and oft they be writ in verse."

"But an if he have no scroll?" said the King.

"He maketh one," said the Queen,
"from the bark of a tree, and writeth
upon it, and sendeth it, and despaireth
until the answer come."

The King had with him a knife that was used for hunting, and he rose, and stripped white bark from a birch tree that grew a-nigh; and for that he had no ink, he pricked letters in it with the point of the knife and gave it to the Queen, and when she had read it, her face grew all rosy like the sky of a morning; but what was there written I cannot tell, for the Queen thrust the roll into the bosom of her gown and no man hath ever seen it.

"Methinks thou writest swiftly for a poet," said the Queen.

"'Twas a verse I made long ago," answered the King.

"And for whom?" asked Queen Aimée, and she wore the look of one angered.

"For thyself," said the King, "but what answer?"

"An answer requireth waiting," said the Queen, and she looked not toward him.

"Now of what else to do make I no question," said the King, and he threw himself on the grass at the Queen's feet and kissed the hem of her robe. "An these means avail not, I must try others," and by this he kissed her hand.

"Nay, thou art a forward lover," said the Queen. "What wouldst thou?"

"I would know if thou didst come after me of thine own free will," he made answer.

"And if I did not?" asked Queen Aimée.

"Then tell me, and thou shalt go back to thy throne and thine own kingdom," said King Sylvain.

"Doth it greatly matter?" quoth the Queen.

"By my life but thou tormentest me!" cried the King. "An thou love me, tell

me, and if thou love me not, make it known; for my heart is set upon thee, and there is naught else in all the world of which it is ware."

Then the hands of the Queen touched the King's face and stroked it, and there was love in her fingers and the King knew.

"I have loved thee ever," said the Queen Aimée.

"Nay, but I knew it not," said the King. "And dost love me now of thine own free will and not of my compelling?"

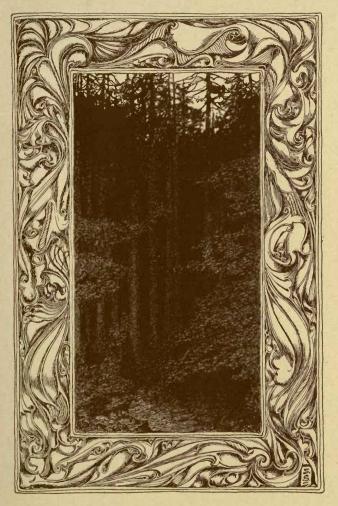
"Whose will should it be?" asked Queen Aimée. "None bade me love thee, and none bade me follow thee forth, but rather would I rags with thee and a crust to bite than all the rich clothing and the savoury morsels of Christendom."

"Now are we as free and as glad as the birds above us that choose as they will each one his mate," said the King, "and or night cometh go we to the holy man to be wed."

CHAPTER IV

how King Sylvain and Queen Aimée were wedded by the Holy Pan, and of the Pursuit







CHAPTER IV

how King Sylvain and Queen Aimée were wedded by the Holy Pan, and of the Pursuit

So they fared onward and at evensong were they ware of an hermitage by the side of a great wood, and they came upon an aged man who prayed at a cross hard by. And when he had finished and came toward them, they saw that his beard was long and white, for he was nigh fourscore winters old.

"Ye be welcome, fair sir and gentle lady," said the Hermit.

"Art not a priest of Holy Church?" asked King Sylvain, when he had given him greeting.

"Yea," answered the aged man, "that am I."

"We be fugitives," said the King, "and are man and woman that would be wed."

"God save ye," said the Hermit. "And whence came ye? Ye be people of the Court, as I guess by your apparel."

"That were we," answered the King, "but we be it no longer, for by God's grace will we seek out a spot where we may dig and delve for ourselves."

"Now by all the saints," quoth the holy man, and he spake in a little voice that was weak and thin, "I be more than threescore years and ten, and never yet did I see one that would dig an he were not constrained to do it. Or have ye done some wrong that ye be driven forth?"

"No wrong have we done," said the King.

"But an if ye will enter," said the Her-

mit, "I will wed ye fast together, for methinks it were better to do it than to let it go."

"And why not here?" said the King, "for the air smelleth right freshly and God wot I have had little enough of it since the day that I was born."

So the Hermit went to his lodge for his book, and he said the holy words over them under an oak tree, and it was eventide, and red light shone through the green leaves that were yet young and thin.

"Whither ye wend I know not," said the Hermit, "but bide ye here for the night, for my roof, though it be low, giveth shelter, and there be wild beasts abroad."

"That will we gladly," answered the King, "but first would we walk for a time in the forest, for the trees are such as I

have not seen, and the flowers underfoot are passing sweet."

So they went hand in hand into the forest.

"Of a truth," said King Sylvain, "it was not so when I wedded thee in the minster, nor wert thou half so fair, my Queen."

"And methought thou didst answer to-night more gladly," said Queen Aimée.

"What wouldst thou?" said the King; "for I knew thee not, and I wedded but thy train and thy peacock feathers. Now have I wedded thy very self."

"Hark to the chirping of the birds!" said the Queen, "and there be young things in the pools that call to one another. Methinks all things in the forest have been freshly wedded like to us."

And with that he bent and kissed her on the mouth.

"Now tell me," said the King. "What didst thou know of me in the years we have reigned together?"

"I knew that thy robe was furred, and that there were many jewels on thy breast," answered the Queen. "Also thy face said nothing, but was as the face of one that weareth a mask."

"Yet went my heart out to thee ever," quoth King Sylvain, "only, free speech could I never have of thee for them that guarded us and served our need. And whenever I would have come to thee was I constrained, for methought 'twas but the desire of the Lords and of the Archbishop that had brought us together, nor would I force my will upon thee, so have I ever left thee free."

When the Queen knew of his love, and how he had kept from her all those years

because of it, she was well-nigh to weeping.

"Therein wast thou a true knight and a courteous," said the Queen, "and yet hast thou done me great wrong, for long did I wait for thy footstep and it came not."

Now when all was known atween them they made much ado, for it was a tale of love such as no poet had sung, and none like to it have I ever heard, yet have I read all that ever was wrote. So they wandered in the forest till the stars were out, for they saw them between the leaved branches of the trees, and they went back to the hermitage, and as they drew near they heard the far sound of hoofs galloping, and the noise of bells.

"Hist!" said the King, and he listened with his finger on his lip. "But they go farther and come not near."

"They be horsemen," said the holy man, "from Wannamere, and they seek their King and Queen that be gone, and whether they have been stolen away or have fled of their own will none know."

"Prithee, why should King and Queen flee?" asked Queen Aimée, for the King was stricken dumb.

"So said I," answered the Hermit. "They inquired of me if I had seen aught of them, but I told them nay, for only one man and one woman had I seen this two month. 'Came they together?' they asked, and I answered, 'Yea.' 'Were they apparelled royally?' said they further. 'Nay,' I answered, 'but as them that serve.' Then said one knight that bare a red shield and a lion thereon: 'It could still be they in borrowed garments.' These twain came to be wedded,' I an-

swered. 'Ah!' said the knight, sorrowfully, ''tis not them we seek, for they be wedded already,' so they rode away."

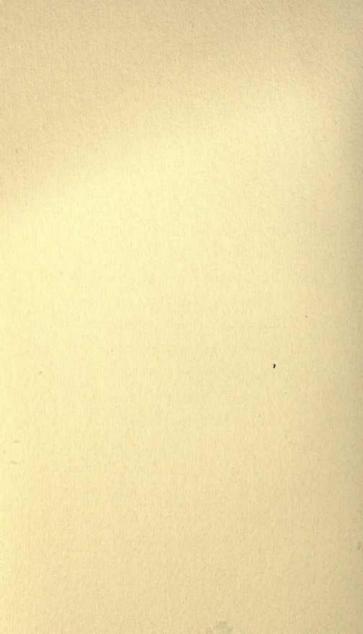
Then the Hermit bare them bread and meat, for he fasted not every day, but ever kept provision in the house, and as they ate by the light of a taper, he went secretly to a place in the ground and brought a bottle of red wine and set before them.

"'Tis a little that I keep for sickness," said the holy man. So they sat long, and told tales and were merry, and they slept that night where fern smelleth sweet.

CHAPTER V

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Of the Lion that came against Them in the Forest



CHAPTER V

Of the Lion that came against Them in the Forest

IT befell the next day that they went on their way through the forest, for it was a great wood, and exceeding dark, and there were paths here and there. Naught bare they with them save a wallet wherein the holy man had placed bread and wine, and the King had a great oaken staff that he had cut from a tree and had shaped while that the Hermit told them tales. They went gladly, for they were bound nowhither save to follow the joy of their feet, and to keep in hiding from them that followed, for they dread sore that they might be found. Green moss grew

soft under their feet, and the shadows of oak leaves and beech made a checkered shade, and it fell on the Queen's hair, and many sweet words passed between them.

When the shadows of the tree trunks showed that it was noon, for the King was an huntsman and learned in woodcraft, they sat them down and reposed them on the roots of a beech tree. Over them the beech leaves made a golden canopy where the sun shone through the green, and behind them the grey trunk was wondrous fair, flecked with silver moss. There is that about a beech trunk that differeth from all other, and I have ever thought there be strange and lovely tales writ thereon for one who could read. Right so as they sat there and did eat and drink, a fawn came to them from the wood and gazed at them

with great eyes. Its legs were all a-tremble, yet it was for eagerness and not for fear, for men it had never beheld, and it knew not King and Queen from friendly beast. Then the Queen called it to her and stroked it, and the King marked that its eyes were even as hers, but bread would it not eat for love of the young green leaves, nor would it follow. As they wandered they lost their path and were mazed in the tangle of hazel and oak, yet they cared not, for they set their feet where no man had ever been since the making of the world, and birds came freely to them and lighted on shoulder or hand, as the thrush and the song-sparrow, and other more that I know not, for never ran I loose in the wood. So it befell that they recked not that time was passing, and of a sudden

they heard a great roar. Very terrible it was, and the King, for all his hunting, had known naught like it, and he drew the Queen toward him, but knew not on which side to stand afore her, for the roaring was so loud they could not tell whence it came. Then they saw coming upon them a lioness that was great and fierce. Tawny were breast and back, and all shaggy, and the open mouth wherewith she roared was red. The King felt for his sword and cursed him for a fool in that he had left it at home and had fared forth with no weapon. Ever the beast came nearer with low growls and with roars, so that the Queen burst out weeping and cried, "Alack and well-a-day, we are as good as dead!"

"Nay," said the King, "go stand by yon tree and watch me," and the Queen

went. Then he gripped his oaken staff and stood ready, and eved the beast which came on toward him with eves glowing like coals. Straight on she came and at him, but the King slipped behind a tree, so that she well-nigh fastened her claws in it, whereat she was beside herself and came round it and gave a mighty spring. Then he held fast his staff, and as she came he gave her a great blow on the forehead, so that the woods echoed back the noise, and she was well-nigh stunned. But while she stood there was a noise of whimpering near at hand, and from the wood three cubs came to her, tawny like herself, and her senses came back, and she rose against the King with tenfold strength. Now I saw not the battle, nor if I had could I tell it as it was, but I have heard say that it was the mightiest

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E

battle ever fought atwixt man and beast. Naught had the King save his staff and his right arm, but when the lioness fastened upon him he beat her off, and with his hands round her neck would have choked the life out of her save that she gave a great wrench and pulled her head away and roared again, so that the Queen was well-nigh fainting. Then the beast fastened her claws in his shoulder and tore him, so that the blood ran down, and when she smelled it she was ten times fiercer than before, and would have finished him but that he got his right arm free, and held the staff in it, and gave a mighty stroke on the back of her neck where the head joins the body, and she fell back dead. Then the King sank down fainting from loss of blood and the Queen rushed to him, and

at first she thought life had gone out of him, but it was not so. So she hasted and brought water, for there was a spring hard by and water bubbling therein, and washed his face and his wound, and his eyes opened and he smiled at her, but no word could he say for a time. And ever the cubs whimpered over the body of their dead dam.

"Love, thou art sore wounded," said Queen Aimée, and she held his head upon her bosom.

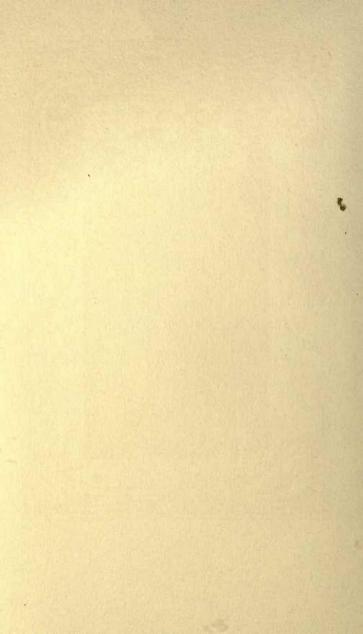
"Blessed be the wound that bringeth my head to its resting place," said King Sylvain.

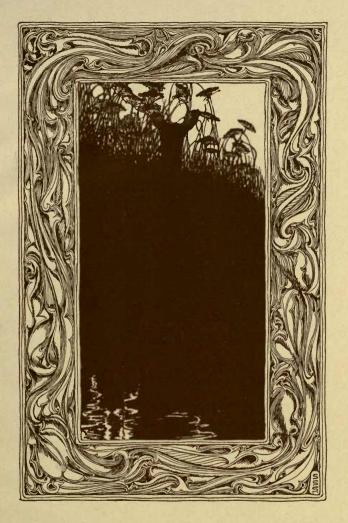
So they stayed that night there, and the Queen made a great fire with leaves and dry branches, and she struck a spark with a flint stone, and the King lay on a bed of moss, for he was weak yet and his wound

stinted not. Now the wood was full of wild creatures, but none came against them in the night, and mayhap it was the fire, for I have heard that this keepeth beasts away. But I have heard also, or read in an heathen book, and I dare say it, though I be one of Holy Church, that there is a god that doth naught save to watch over lovers, and I ween he kept all harm from these twain, for since the world began there were never lovers that loved as they.

CHAPTER VI

how the hound pursued and found Them, and of the Pantle that was made of the Lion's Skin.







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how the hound pursued and found Them, and of the Pantle that was made of the Lion's Skin.

WHILE Queen Aimée still slept on the moss, the King was wakened by one that licked his face and hands, and when he opened his eyes he saw his hound, Cœur d'Ami, which he loved as none other, and he gave a cry, so that the Queen wakened.

"Now beshrew me for a faithless knight that I ever left thee behind," said King Sylvain, as the dog leaped and barked for joy, and would fain lie on his breast save that the Queen restrained him.

"What lot did I think for myself that thou wouldst not share?" said the King,

and he stroked the hound. Then for a moment was he sorrowful, for he was loyal in least things as in great.

"Thou hast followed nor hast questioned if I wanted thee," said King Sylvain. "Of a truth thou art a very friend."

"Methinks he bringeth trouble," said the Queen.

"And how?" asked the King.

"Surely they knew he would follow thee and have watched him," said the Queen. "They will be upon us and find us, and will hale us back to shut us again within stone walls."

Then the King laughed aloud as he lay sick.

"Wit thou well they be but fools that think Cœur d'Ami will tell them aught that I wish not known," said he. "Even now he knoweth that we would be hid and will

make no sound. Dost not read it in his eyes? He is swifter than aught else that runneth on four legs, and hath long outstripped them all. He hath hastened to ask of me what is my will, and see, he promiseth with his tail that he will not betray us." And it was even as the King said.

No great store of food had they in the wallet, and the King and Queen talked thereof, and Cœur d'Ami listened. None knoweth what a dog may understand of human speech, but there be times when it seemeth as if they wist all and more. Anon the hound arose and left them, and or ever the sun was high he came back from the forest with a hare that he had slain and dropped it at the King's feet, and by biting it in the throat had he slain it, so that it had bled and was good for to eat. This is

passing strange, for all know that the hounds that pursue the prey will touch it not for eating, but that which a dog will not do for one that loveth him have I yet to learn. Then the King rose feebly and leaned on one arm and dressed it, and the Queen kindled the fire afresh and with a sharpened stick did she roast it over the coals, and laughed right merrily for that it was burnt in one spot. And her face grew right rosy on the left side and was cool on the other, so that the King must needs kiss them both. Cœur d'Ami lay by them as they ate, and he panted with his mouth held open, and with tail and eyes he told them how that he had pined after their going, nor would take food or drink, but kept by him in the kennel a gauntlet of the King's, and held it between his paws, and snuffed it ever, and would have sick-

ened but that they set him free to follow. Much, but not all, the King understood, for it is strange that man, with all his strength, hath not the understanding of a dog.

So all that day they abode there by the spring, and the King's strength came slowly to him, and much he slept, while the Queen held his head in her lap, and stroked brow and hair, so that the King dreamed he was in Paradise, and wore white with all the saints, but waked again, and liked it better so. Nor would Cœur d'Ami let the Queen come nearer the King than he, but stayed ever close with his paw on the King's breast, for though he had been long with them, he had never seen them thus together, and watched to see that all was well.

Another night they abode there by the spring, and ever the bright flame leaped

up against the soft, darkling shadow of the wood, and naught troubled them all the night through, but in the moments twixt drowsing and waking they heard the chirp of sleepy birds. In the morning Cœur d'Ami went and gat them a bird of the kind that runs along the ground, and it is hight partridge, and it tasted right savoury when it was cooked over the coals.

Now was the King's arm stronger, and he took his knife and skinned the lioness that he had slain, and spread before the Queen the great fell that was tawny of colour and liked her mightily.

"We have need of a carpet in the house that we shall make," said King Sylvain.

"And where may that be?" asked the Queen.

"Where God wills," he made answer.
"When we come to a place that pleaseth

thee and the hound and me, there bide we for the rest of our lives," and Cœur d'Ami listened and understood, as the sequel will show.

The King spread the lion skin on his shoulders, and took his staff in his hand, and the Queen followed after, but the hound ran on afore, and so they took their way through the forest till they found a path, and followed it, and it led to a clearing.

"Dare we go forth?" asked Queen Aimée, as they stood at the edge of the wood, and were loath to leave it. "There be that follow us."

"Ay, that dare we," answered the King, "for there be ways that we shall find to give them the slip."

Then the Queen laughed aloud as he went forth with the lion skin and the cudgel, for he looked like a wild man of the woods.



CHAPTER VII

how King Sylvain and Aucen Aimée ware Robes of Tinsel at the Humming, and of the Perriment thereof



CHAPTER VII

How King Sylvain and Ducen Aimée ware Robes of Tinsel at the Pumming, and of the Perriment thereof

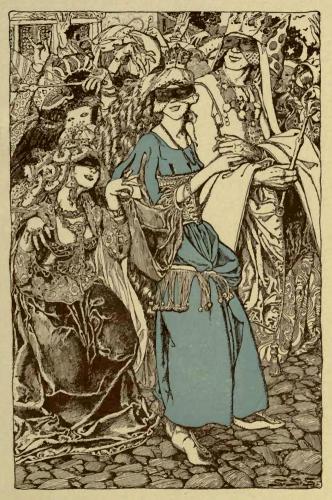
As they wended onward with their hound they saw in the distance a city that hight Saint Aleyn, and it lieth to the southward by the river Ulumere, for ever they walked with their faces toward the sun. Now, although they knew it not, they that pursued them had gone thither, and were lodged in an inn by the city gate to northward. Gaily they talked of what might await them and what fare they should have by field and inn, and how they might outwit them that pursued. Then the King sat him down on a stile that was in a fair hedge of hawthorn, and KING SYLVAIN AND QUEEN AIMÉE called the hound unto him, and spake to him thus:—

"Cœur d'Ami, leal friend and true, they that sent thee after us would have thee come again to tell them where we be, but I would have it not, and thou, if thou seest them, must e'en make as though thou knewest them not." Cœur d'Ami verily understood and laid his head on the King's knee, whimpering as one who promised somewhat. Onward they came to the north gate of the city, when of a sudden the hound stopped and sniffed the air. Then held he his nose to the ground, and anon laid hold of the King's doublet with his teeth and drew him away, and of a sudden was the King ware that he had some reason therefor. So they circled the walls and came in at the western gate as the sun went down, and the sky was all blood red, so that it

touched the grey walls and the passing people with colour of crimson.

That night at the inn where they lodged, and it was a fair inn and smelt freshly of rosemary and lavender, they heard talk of a merry-making for the morrow, for it was the month of May, and the city ever held carnival at the time of the springing of the grain. There were many knights and squires gathered together at the inn, and ever the King and Queen watched them, for never had they heard free converse of men, and it pleased them to see and to hear. All their talk was of the mumming and of the clothing they should wear, for all put on strange habits on this day and went masked in the streets. Then when Queen Aimée was safely lodged in her chamber, the King went forth and purchased apparel for them

both, giving in exchange a gold piece that he ware on his neck, and on the morrow, when all were ready, they dressed themselves and went out into the street for the mumming, and they went hand in hand as do children that play. The garments they had chosen were those of king and queen, "for we know no other parts," said King Sylvain. The Queen wore a dress of tinsel with jewels of glass in her hair, and the King had a crown of paper, and a bauble for a sceptre, and they mingled with the revellers and were exceeding gay. Afar their hound watched them and his eyes were as those of one that hath great care, for in that he was a dog he knew not how the mere covering of the face could conceal a man, and he wist there was danger nigh. Now the streets were full of strange creatures, wizards and



The King and Queen go to the Mumming.



enchanters, and Saracens, and fairies, and demons, and lords and ladies many, with jesters and jugglers, but king and queen were there none other, so when he of the paper crown appeared, there was a great shout and much laughter. Then were King Sylvain and Queen Aimée taken to the Palace of Justice and enthroned there on the stone steps, and all the revellers came and did them homage, mocking, and throwing flowers about them, and unwittingly many kissed in jest the hands they had kissed afore in earnest, for Saint Aleyn was the King's own city.

It befell as they sat there, that one who was a young squire and was attired as a jester came forward and spake to King Sylvain, and said:—

"I' faith, and thou playest the King's part but badly."

"That is truth," quoth King Sylvain, "and that have I ever."

"'Tis plain thou hast never seen a king," said the squire, and the King knew him for one that had been a page in his own court.

"If thou mightst teach me, perhaps —" said King Sylvain.

"That will I gladly," said the squire, and he gat him upon the steps and showed him.

"Thou must hold thy head high, thus, and must frown mightily, and so must thou fold thine arms."

"The face of a king showeth not from behind a mask," said King Sylvain, "but my head and mine arms will I hold even as thou sayest."

Then the young squire sware an oath of vexation that his teaching came so badly off, and the people laughed and jeered to see the fool teach the King what he must do.

"'Tis but poorly done," said the squire, and he shook his head so that the bells on his ears rang again.

"Henceforward will I play any part but that of the King," said King Sylvain. "'Tis a hard part."

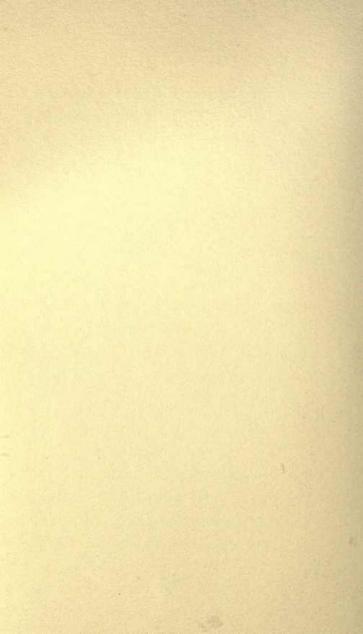
"That think not I," said the squire.
"I be one that would play it ever, an I could."

Right as they sat there, Cœur d'Ami pricked up his ears and ran and hid him in a doorway, and the King, looking up, saw Sir Leodoric and Sir Geoffrey, and Sir Gilles that ware the red shield, and Sir Bertrand, ride through the street, and with them the Archbishop. Then the King's heart beat a great thump, for he knew they searched for him and would carry him back to his throne an they found him alive, but they knew him not because of the mask.

The King watched and saw that the knights would have ridden past, but the people gat them, and with jeers and laughter made them come and do homage to their King and Queen of tinsel. So Sir Leodoric and Sir Geoffrey and Sir Gilles and Sir Bertrand and the Archbishop bent the knee before them and kissed their hands and made mock obeisance and rode on.

"'Tis a yokel, and no king they have there," said Sir Geoffrey, as he mounted his steed. "He giveth his left hand to be kissed and not his right," but the King had hidden his right hand behind him because of the signet ring. Then came the hound and leaped upon his master, and for joy with the licking of his tongue had wellnigh torn the covering from his face. So the merry-making lasted through the noonday, but when the time for unmasking came,

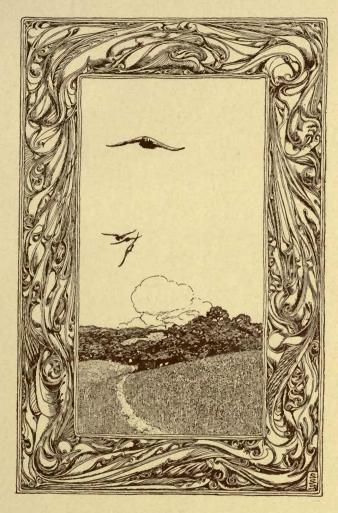
none could find the King and Queen, for they had stolen privily out of the southern gate and were walking along the highway that lay beaten white atween green fields.



CHAPTER VIII

Of how they went ever Southward and of the Aged Grandam







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Of how they went ever Southward and of the Aged Grandam

To southward lay a great plain that was fresh and green with young grass, and when they had left the highway they found no path, and there were no trees, only little hill and hollow stretched out softly under the sky. Cœur d'Ami led them, and they followed laughing and jesting, and were glad all the way save once when they saw a hind beating his ass with a stout cudgel. This would the King not endure by no manner of means, and he took the cudgel in his hands and brake it in two, and told the hind that he would lay his own oaken staff upon his back an he learned not to be

gentler with his beast. Then was the man afeared and went his way and beat his ass no more. As they walked onward now and then were they ware of a shepherd that kept his flock with the fold hard by, and one that was young as their joy would have them be fluted merrily to his silly sheep that could not dance. Then King Sylvain and Queen Aimée danced in the sunshine, and after, as they went their way, the music followed them and they stepped to it until they could catch it no longer, but ever it went on though they might not hear. Larks sang in the blue sky above them, and of the winds it seemed that there were those that travelled with them and those that met them on their way. Toward evensong, when their feet were well-nigh weary, and the sun was setting in golden light at the edge of the green earth, they came upon an

aged Grandam standing in her garden and knitting. There grew rose and gillyflower and hollyhock, and herbs that be sweet of savour, such as lavender, and those that be good for healing, as pennyroyal and rue. When the Dame lifted her eyes and saw them coming she spake to them, in right friendly wise, and called them to sit on her threshold and rest them.

"Ye be come far by your looks," said the Grandam. "Heard ye aught of the King and Queen that be carried away?"

"We have heard naught," said Queen Aimée. "Is it even so? And who do men say have taken them?"

Then was the Dame glad that they knew not, so that she might be the first to tell, for I know not why it is, but women be made that way, and men too for that matter. So they listened while she told them

how it was found that King and Queen were missing, and how the hounds had been sent out on all sides if they might track them, and of the knights that rode hither and thither to search them out and find if an enemy had taken them.

"I have heard many tales," said the Grandam, "but this is the strangest that ever I heard. None knoweth whether they be taken by friend or by mortal foe."

"Be they much missed?" asked King Sylvain.

"Yea," said the woman, "that be they."

Then the King was silent and his heart smote him for that he had gone, and for the first time since he was set free of the castle he repented him of his flight.

"Yet 'tis not that we may not have a better," said the Dame. "Men say if the King be not found, his cousin Prince

Hughes shall come to the throne, and a right brave lord he is and one glad to rule."

"Was not King Sylvain?" asked Queen Aimée.

"Now what know I of the mind of a king?" asked the Dame. "But I have heard tell that the King looked often aweary and ware the face of one that thought of other things. 'Tis not so with Prince Hughes. Men say his hand is ever at his sword and his eye on them about him, also have I heard that he hath a terrible look and a fierce, for his beard is bushy and his eyebrows overhang."

"None was ever so brave in fight as King Sylvain," said the Queen, and the King laid his hand upon her for fear that the colour risen in her cheeks might betray them.

"Of a truth I have heard that too," said the Grandam; "but he loved not fighting for the fight, nor stirred up wars to bring him tribute, and all that shall Prince Hughes do better than he."

"And what of the Queen?" asked King Sylvain.

"How cometh it that ye know not?" said the woman. "She was King Luke's daughter from overseas, and a right fair lady, for I myself saw her in a gown of scarlet richly sewn with pearls, and a snood of gold thread with jewels therein. Yet she had no child, and the throne must have an heir. The lady of Prince Hughes hath seven sons."

Then the woman went to look after her pot that boiled over the fire, and the King followed and lifted it down for her, for it was full heavy.

"I warrant it is long since ye were at court," said the woman, "an ye do such service for one that is old and dwelleth in a hut."

King Sylvain went back and sat with Queen Aimée in the garden, and they were silent. In the eaves of the cottage were nests, and swallows flew about them twittering, and over the plain came soft calls of moor birds to their young. Anon the Dame spake to them from the doorway.

"Whither go ye afoot?" But afore she could hear any answer she added thereto, "Is it not to the fairing at Prèsville?"

"Yea," said the King, "'tis there."

"'Tis two days yet ere it beginneth," said the Dame. "Where rest ye for the night?"

"Where God inviteth," answered Queen Aimée.

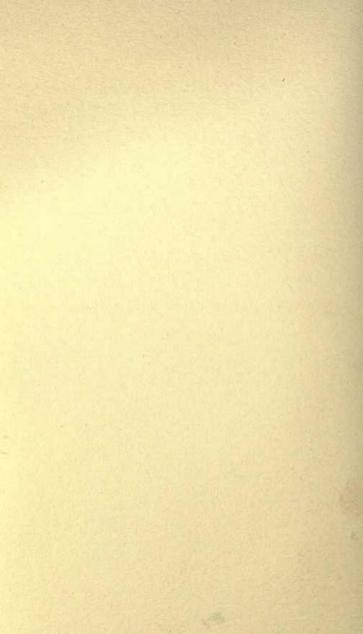
"If ye be honest folk and would bide here, that ye may," said the Dame; "but my grass lieth yonder and waiteth raking, for one cut it for me but might not stay. An ye will gather it ye may sleep under my roof, but enough must ye bring to make ye a bed."

"That will we," said the King.

So, though the sun was set, King Sylvain and Queen Aimée raked the hay into heaps, and the Queen gathered into her lap the flowers that had been mown down therewith, and well-nigh she wept to see them there. Then the Dame bare to them milk and cheese, and bread that she had baked, and it was dark of colour, and they sat upon the threshold and ate thereof. Enough was there for them and for the hound that lay stretched at their feet, but the Dame's cat came not nigh them for

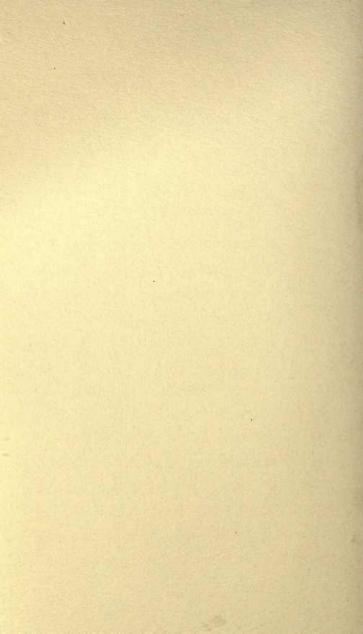
food or for caress, but waited upon the housetop and looked down, and her hair stood up along her back. The air was soft and sweet under the stars, and within, by her taper, the Dame spread the bed of grass, and anon she came to them in the doorway.

"Now kissing have I done also in my youth. I warrant ye be lovers," said the Grandam, and so they went to rest.



CHAPTER IX

Of the Forging of the King's Sword at the Smithy



CHAPTER IX

Of the Forging of the King's Sword at the Smithy

OF all that followed, and how they slept by blossoming hedgerows of sweetsmelling hawthorn, and how they wandered the paths by the water-ways may I not tell, else were my tale too long, nor know I all that happened, for much they kept to themselves. Oft the nightingale sang to their love, and the stars looked down on it. Came a day when rain fell heavily, and hedge and tree gave them no shelter. Then the King bethought him of his sword, and how he had no arms for the defence of his lady save the stout oak stick wherewith he slew the lion, so he found

a smithy which was within the town of Prèsville, and one that worked therein forging a suit of armour. Deftly he wrought out the fine rings of steel, holding the molten metal at the end of his iron rod and hammering thereon with all his might. Now the King stood and watched his right arm and the great muscles thereof with envy, but the Queen warmed her by the fire. All the walls were hung about with armour. There were swords and greaves and helmets and gauntlets, also shields curiously wrought and of great beauty with all manner of devices thereon, as the lion rampant, the tiger couchant, the broken spear of the house of Cairnguth, and the single star of the house of Wannamere with a hand reaching for it.

"'Tis the King's own device," said the smith, as King Sylvain fingered it.

"Ay," he answered, "many times have I followed it."

"Art a knight?" asked the smith.

"That am I," answered the King, "and would have me a sword, for mine own have I left behind."

"Here be many," said the smith.
"Choose to thy liking."

"Nay," quoth King Sylvain, "I would have one of my own forging."

Then the smith laughed loud and long, and he stirred his fire and sprinkled water thereon so that the sparks flew up and it burned more fiercely than ever.

"Yon standeth my molten steel in the crucible," said he. "An thou wilt fashion thee a sword, it shall cost thee nothing," and ever and anon as he hammered his armour he laughed again.

So King Sylvain gat him some of the

molten metal and spread it out on a great anvil, and as it cooled he touched it with his hammer, and then struck it softly, and anon he beat it a great blow. Then the sweat stood on his forehead, and he leaned upon his hammer that rested on the anvil.

"'Tis all awry," said the King. "Of a truth they have taught me nothing. These hands, made by him that fashioned the world, can fashion nothing for me," and there was shame in his face. So he cast the metal back into the crucible and sat him down by the Queen.

"Didst weary of the sword of thine own fashioning?" asked the smith. "Again I tell thee thou mayst have thy choice of mine, save that yonder which I have wrought for Prince Hughes, and which I will give him with mine own hands on

the day of his crowning an he cometh to the throne. Big is he and of dark countenance, and this great sword shall become him well."

"Wouldst liefer have him on the throne than King Sylvain that is lost?" asked the King.

"'Tis all one to me," answered the smith, so that they leave me hammer and tongs."

Now the King said nothing, but sat long with his head upon his hands, but anon he rose again, and took from the pot more metal and spread it out, and gently at first and then harder did he beat it, and presently fell great blows, so that the sparks rose in the air. Then the smith stopped his work and watched, and the Queen drew near with her face all gladness, for she saw that her love's joy was great in the blows that he gave. On his face were the veins knotted,

and the muscles stood out on his shoulders, but he stinted not nor rested, only now and then drew a great breath. Neither dared speak to him, for there was that in his eyes that forbade them. Soon could the shape of the blade be seen, and then the point was beaten, and anon the edges by slow strokes and long.

"Of a truth," said the man, as he watched him, "whatever they have made of thee they have spoiled a good smith, for never saw I one of gentle blood take hold of this work as thou."

Then the King paused for a while and breathed heavily and spake not, but soon lifted again the tool, and the sparks flew. Now the work was long, and or ever it was finished he was weary, but he said it not, and toiled till the sword was done. Smoothwrought was the handle, and the blade was

keen and thin, and he took it and laid it at the Queen's feet.

"Wilt not have thee a shield and a suit of armour?" asked the smith. "Perchance thou goest to tourney?"

"Never again," said the King.

"Or to war?" said the man.

"As God will," answered King Sylvain.

"Thou wert of the King's household?" said the smith.

"Ay," answered the King, "but I go not there again."

"God speed thee," said the smith, "and send thee whatsoever foe thou wilt for thy sword, for I see by the blows thou givest that thou art a fighting man."

Then the King chose for himself certain tools for to cut and to grave, for he weened he might have need of them some day, and with one of them he worked long, at the

inn where they lodged, on the blade of his sword, graving somewhat thereon. And when the Queen would look at it, he said her nay, for she might not see it until it was finished. Then he bare it to her, and on the blade she saw wrought a hand that held a star.

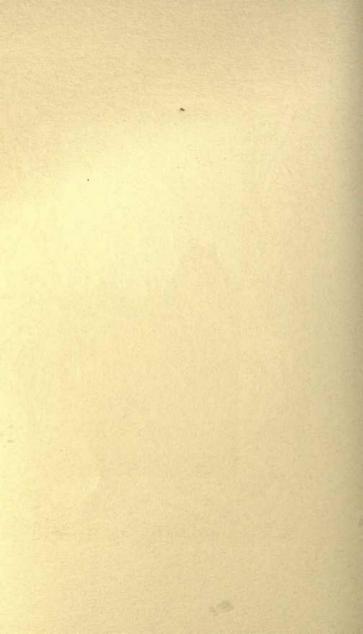
"I have changed the device of my house in changing my state," said the King.

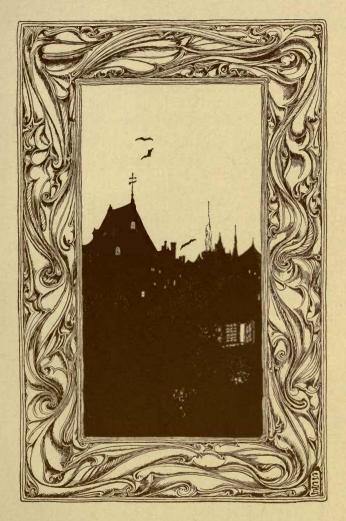
"Hast grasped thy star?" asked Queen Aimée.

"Ay, that have I," said King Sylvain, and he bent and kissed her face that was upturned toward him.

CHAPTER X

how They hid Themselves in the Oak Tree from Them that pursued, and of the Fight between Sir Gilles and Sir Bertrand







CHAPTER X

how They hid Themselves in the Oak Tree from Them that pursued, and of the Fight between Sir Gilles and Sir Bertrand

So they went to the fairing at Prèsville and already had it lasted many days, and gauds and trinkets without number were spread out there, but none they purchased for that they were weary of jewels and of silk also, and asked naught but a bit of homespun and quiet thereto. All that they carried away was two vessels of copper to set over the fire.

"For an hearth must we have, and that speedily," said the King, "as becometh two that be wed."

"And of the firing?" asked Queen Aimée.

"That will I cut with stout blows of

mine axe," answered King Sylvain. "There be trees enow in my kingdom."

The Queen ware a silver girdle about her gown of blue, and a white kerchief on her neck, and was fair to see, and a young hind that was there was greatly taken with her and stepped forward and would have kissed her, but the King struck him a great blow, so that he fell back, and there were more like him there.

"Now what aileth thee," said the yokel, "to lay thy blows on one that hath done thee no harm?"

Then the King drew out Stellifer, which was the sword that he had forged, and light flashed all its length.

"This waiteth for the next that layeth finger on my lady," said the King.

"These be court manners," said the hind, and was surly.

"They be true manners, be they of cot or of court," answered the King, "and I will make it good upon the bodies of one or of ten."

Then there was no more ado, but King and Queen passed onward in peace, and all made way for them, for there is that about blood royal that maketh itself felt no matter what the clothes be.

Now their way led them through the forest, for they followed where leaves were green, and anon into the open where sunshine fell on them unchecked by the shadow of leaf or stem, only afar where some river flowed saw they tall poplars and willow trees. Once as they journeyed were they ware on a sudden of the beating of hoofs, and Cœur d'Ami lifted up his voice in a long howl, for he remembered him well of the scent that the wind brought to him. Then they

knew that they were closely followed, and how to escape they saw not. Right near them grew a great oak tree so knotted and gnarled that God wot whether it were as old as the coming of our Lord or no, but men say there be that are. Then the King lifted Queen Aimée in his arms and swung her lightly up, and she rested on a thick branch that grew low and found her footing. Cœur d'Ami whimpered to go also, and him the King helped, and anon he sprang up after, and they stepped from branch to branch and were hidden from below by the leaves. 'Twas like a forest growing in air, and the light was wondrous soft where it came through the oak leaves, also were the branches deep with moss, so that they had a full fair cushion for to sit on. The hound stretched himself on a branch, and laid his head between his paws, and whined not, but though



The King and Queen hide in the Bak Tree.



he feigned sleeping he kept one eye ever open and watched. The King laid his hand on the hand of the Queen, and so they waited.

"Surely they will find and take us," said Queen Aimée.

"That will they not," he made answer.

"No slave will I be again, for God's freeman was I born, and none hath a right
to bind me in the fetters of a king."

Then the sound of hoofs came nearer, and it was as they had thought, for Sir Leodoric and Sir Gilles and Sir Bertrand and Sir Geoffrey and the Archbishop rode under the tree, but overhead saw they nothing but mossy branches and God's sunlight shining through the leaves of May.

"I' faith, I am aweary," said Sir Geoffrey.

"And I," said the Archbishop.

"'Twere a shady place to rest in," said Sir Leodoric.

Then lighted they all down and threw the reins over their chargers' necks, and the King drew Queen Aimée closer to him, but Cœur d'Ami said nothing, only held his right ear in the air.

"'Tis a bootless search," said the Archbishop. "Ride we back to Wannamere and greet Prince Hughes as King."

"Nay," said Sir Gilles, "for I know that our liege and his lady have not perished, but wait somewhere for our help."

"Then why find we them not?" asked Sir Bertrand, "for we have searched the earth through."

"They be hidden, mayhap," said Sir Geoffrey.

"But wherefore hide they from us?"

said the Archbishop. "Nay, I say they have been slain by the hand of some enemy, but a king we must have, so go we back to crown Prince Hughes."

"Mayhap they wander somewhere and are mad," said Sir Leodoric.

"Twain go not mad together," said Sir Geoffrey.

"'Tis a riddle hard to read," said Sir Gilles, and he hove a great sigh, and the hound in the tree above would have whimpered also, but that his master laid his hand upon his head.

"Methinks Prince Hughes will make a brave king," said Sir Bertrand. "Our King Sylvain museth too much. Dame Nature was thinking of a poet the day that she made him."

"Now by my soul but I call thee traitor," said Sir Gilles, with his hand on

his sword. "Leal and true was my lord to me, and leal and true will I be to him, for no ill word shall any say of him, and Prince Hughes shall go uncrowned till I touch my King's hand or else weep over his grave."

"Traitor am I not named by no man, were he my own brother," said Sir Bertrand, and therewith he threw down his glove of steel right afore the face of Sir Gilles.

"Fight we now or later?" asked Sir Gilles, taking up his helmet.

"Now," said Sir Bertrand, "and by the issue of this combat will we abide. An I come off victor, 'tis a judgment that Prince Hughes shall come to the throne, and if thou, then shall King Sylvain come back to us."

So they laced their helms and gat them ready and mounted their steeds and rode

at each other. Spear smote on shield and loud the armour rang, and in the intervals of the fight the chargers pawed the ground. Sir Leodoric and Sir Geoffrey and the Archbishop watched the combat from under the tree, but they that were in it could see nothing, only they heard always the noise and the din. Then the King mounted higher that he might look to see how the fight went, and he found a place where the leaves were thin, and there he stood and watched. Ever he dread sore to see the red shield of Sir Gilles with the lion thereon go down, for he was his friend; and ever he dread to see him fell the other to earth lest it should win him back to the throne. So they fought till the sun was two hours lower, and of a sudden there was silence, and Sir Gilles lay on the grass. And the King forgat his hiding and would

have gone to him for pity, but Sir Gilles arose and undid his helmet.

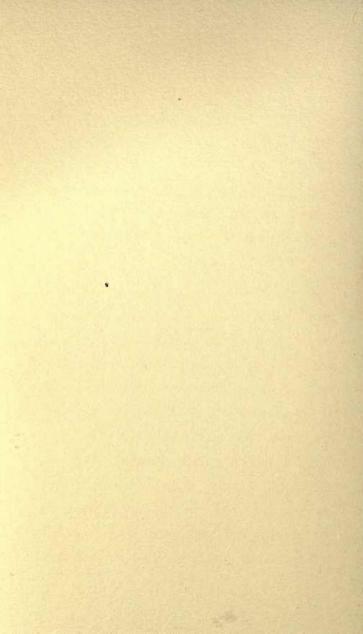
"Now King Sylvain cometh not again," he said.

"Art wounded?" said Sir Bertrand, coming to help him in friendly wise.

"Not in my body," answered Sir Gilles. So they rode away, and the King and the Queen and the hound alit safely from the tree, but there was sorrow in the King's laughter, for he thought of the wound of Sir Gilles.

CHAPTER XI

How Ling Sylvain and Dueen Aimée wandered the whole Summer through, and of the Play of Pary that They saw in the Pinster



CHAPTER XI

how King Sylvain and Aucen Aimée wandered the whole Summer through, and of the Play of Pary that They saw in the Pinster

ALL that summer King and Queen wandered free as the birds of the air. Ofttimes they lodged on the greensward, and oft in a shepherd's cot, and anon with a grandam that told them tales of ancient wars and old joustings, and of kings and queens long dead, and lying in white or in grey, with folded hands, upon their tombs. No two nights bided they in the same spot, but journeyed ever where desire led them, as the down of the thistle goeth afore the wind; and ever Cœur d'Ami guarded them as they

slept. Now it was milk that was given them to drink by some lad that guarded kine in the meadows, or curds and whey had they at a cottage door, and again they plucked for themselves berries and fruits of the woods, and laid them on green leaves, and ate thereof as gaily as the woodpecker bird eateth of what he findeth in the tree, and God knoweth what that may be. Lusty and strong of limb were they, and their faces waxed brown as his who worketh all day in the sun, and many a time and oft raked they hay with the yokels, or helped to harvest the golden wheat. Nor once their joy abated, but ever they waked of a morning with laughter on their lips; and once the King sang a strain of glad song in his sleep, for not even in dreams could he forget the happiness that had come upon him. Gone

were cares and vexations, and the thought of feast and of council, or if it came, 'twas but as the light passing of a summer cloud that leaveth the sun the brighter. Prince Hughes was happy on the throne, and King Sylvain by the wayside, and naught more was there to be said.

Now that they saw oft the carter by the wayside and the woman at her hearth and the shepherd lad that watched his sheep and spake with them, they found much that they had not known afore.

"Meliketh my folk of homespun better than my folk of silk," said the King once and again. Wroth was he when he found them that hungered because of a lord that levied unjust tithes, or went unclad for lack of pence. Many worshipful deeds he did by the way, for once he heard a hind making piteous cries and found him bound

fast hand and foot and left by the wayside to perish for slight offence. Then the King inquired the name of the lord that had done the deed, and sought him out and fought with him, and placed his sword at his throat until he gave promise that the hind should be forgiven and set at service once more. And again he found a woman that had been taken by a craven knight, and forthwithal he undertook a combat and won her and took her back to her kin. But now is the time too short to tell all the gentle deeds that he did.

Oft at eventide he sat at the door of inn or of cottage with a child on either knee, and told them tales, whereat their eyes grew large, and when they gat down they were loath to go as he was to have them. Of Siegfried and the dragon he told them, of Merlin and of Puck and all

their ways, of jötuns, and elves, and wizards, and enchanters of the East; and as they listened he bethought him of the days when he was but small, and he mourned for the difference that there is atween a child and a prince. Then Lisette ran from her kitchen, and Jeannot from the spit, and Robin from his horses, and gathered round for to hear the tales, and none knew that the story-teller was a king, but all wist that he knew well the telling of a tale.

On a day when the harvest was wellnigh done, they came by a river to a dim grey city, and a row of poplars led to it, and a bridge whereon now and then went a long line of light as one crossed with a torch, for it was nightfall. On the morrow they rose and went through the town and came upon the minster, which was monstrous large and high and stood in a

great square. Also it was grey of colour, and richly carved at the portals, for many saints wrought full fair in stone stood there in the niches, with palm branch or with harp, and with light about the hair. Then they went in, and, in the shadow, light fell on them of rose and of blue and of amethyst, for the windows were passing rich in colour and the sunshine fell through them. Now the mass was being said, and one robed in white censed the altar, and the two fell on their knees, and bowed their heads and prayed. There was a beggar on one side and a palmer on the other, and both King and Queen were glad to kneel so, and the music and the sound of voices were passing sweet.

That day at the mass they showed forth the life of Mary, the mother of our Lord, and by the altar she stood, as a little

child at the knee of Saint Anne, and learned words of wisdom. Anon there was another picture, and Mary sat alone, and there was a nimbus about her head, but she needed it not, for that the colours from the window fell on face and hair. Blue was her robe, and her head drooped down. Right so came a sudden rush of wings and one knelt to her, and men were ware that there stood Gabriel of the Annunciation. clad in white and in gold, and he held out to the maiden branching lilies, and her head drooped farther and her face prayed. Then came sudden music from them that chanted: -

" Py soul magnifieth the Lord, and my spirit hath gladed in God, mine health. For he hath beholden the meekness of his handmaid. Lo, for sooth, all generations shall call me blessed, for he that is mighty hath done great things to me,

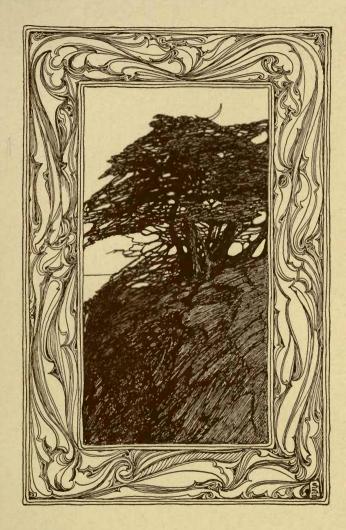
and his name is holy. And his mercy is from kindred unto kindred, to men dreading him.
... He put down mighty men from their seat, and enhanced the meek. He hath filled hungry men with good things, and he hath left rich men void."

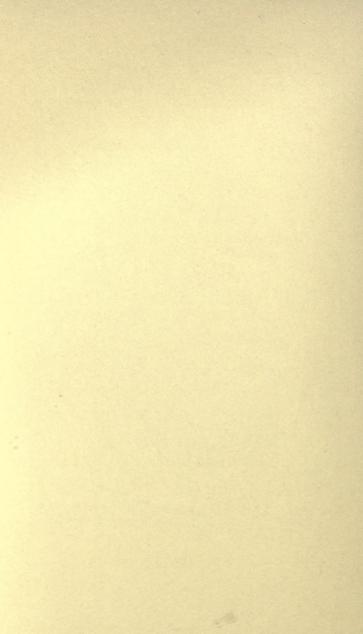
And when mass was ended, King Sylvain and Queen Aimée went forth from the minster but said nothing, for they pondered many things.

CHAPTER XII

Of the Lodge of Boughs that They made by the Sea







CHAPTER XII

Of the Lodge of Boughs that They made by the Sea

"I' FAITH," said King Sylvain to Queen Aimée, "'tis time that we began to build our nest, now that the birds leave theirs."

"And where shall that be?" asked the Queen.

"That have we not found," said the King.

That day as they walked, Cœur d'Ami came to them, for he had been a while away, and he took the King's doublet in his teeth and drew him after, and anon loosed his teeth and whimpered, as one that hath something to show. Then King and Queen followed through a narrow pass of rock, for

they were by the sea to southward, and came upon a spot by the blue water and knew it for home. There grass grew softly, and here and there oak trees made a pleasant shade, and others also whose names I know not, for they be not of my country; and there was an old forest thereby. Fern and brake grew there also, and deer fed in the openings nor were afraid, and it was high above the sea. Not far from the edge of rock grew two apple trees together, and there was a fair well near at hand, and the King laid him down on the grass.

"Here build I, with mine own hands, a home for us, that our joy may never have end," said he, and he stroked the head of Cœur d'Ami and praised him so that the dog went well-nigh mad for pride.

Now were there clear days that followed, and the air was sweet with the breath of

the sea. King Sylvain with an axe that he had fetched cut down saplings and large trees, and he digged holes and fitted them therein, heaving them up with great strength, and so he wrought the frame of his house. Cunningly were the logs fastened with spikes of wood driven through, and cunningly along the top he laid the saplings and pinned them to the roof tree. And an hearth on one side he fashioned out of flat stones that he carried thither, and the Queen helped him, for her arms were no longer faint of strength as becometh a queen. Then Cœur d'Ami begged with his eyes until gear was made for him from strips of the King's doublet, and he dragged stones for the hearth, none guiding him. When the lodge was done, there were two fair chambers therein, and the walls were hung with branches of pine

and of oak for tapestry, and these the Queen gathered with her own hands and carried home in her arms. Then the King wrought a great bed, and of split logs it was made, deftly fastened at the ends, and covered for sleeping with sweet-smelling leaves and branches, and the lion skin lay thereon, and never did king or queen sleep so soundly as these twain. Also he made a table and it stood afore the hearth, and it was naught save a great flat stone raised so that they might sit thereat.

Few folk they saw there, only now and then a squire or a knight from the castle that lay some leagues to eastward, or from the town on the other side. Ever they shared that they had with those that passed that way, but none asked them whence they came nor why they bided there, for these were days when men followed each



The King and Queen cook their Supper.



his own matter, nor meddled every man with other as now. Oft saw they a vessel with white sails far or near on the sea, and marvelled whither it went, but yearned not to go, for an if they were content when they wandered with no abiding-place, they were thousand fold more now. By day Queen Aimée sat at her work in the sun, for of reeds and rushes she wove for them household stuff, and King Sylvain wielded his axe hard by, and at eventide there was fire on the hearth within the lodge, and the sound of that cooking within the copper vessels was sweet in the ears of the King.

Once at evening, as they sat on two stones afore the hearth and did eat from one dish as became two that be wed, King Sylvain hove a great sigh.

"What aileth thee?" asked the Queen.

"By day 'tis very well," said he, "and all is merry as the blows of the axe in my hand; but each night come troubled dreams, and the same old fancy returneth to vex me."

"Now what may it be?" asked Queen Aimée.

"Forsooth, that I be a King again," he made answer, "and I may not bear it."

"Let trouble come when it cometh," said the Queen. "Now art thou a forester and a brave one, and must take the happiness that goeth therewith. But oft am I too troubled."

"What vexeth thee?" said the King, "for I will end it."

"I fear me that thou growest weary of only me," said the Queen. "Oft art thou silent, and I know not what it may mean."

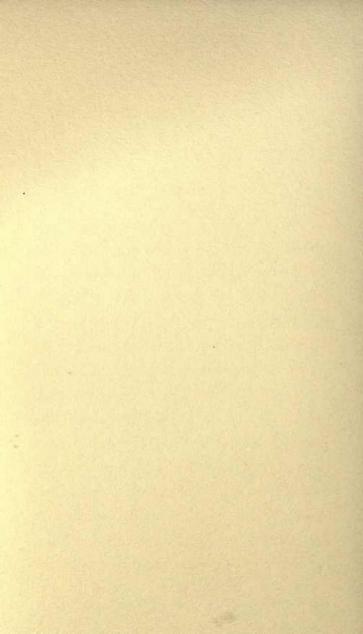
"What need is there of speech, for-

sooth?" said the King, and he took her in his arms. "Deeper than the understanding between my dog and myself, where no word is spoken, is the understanding betwixt thee and me. Naught else is there in all the world for me, and left I not my kingdom for that it gat atween us twain?"

Then was the Queen content. So lived they from day to day, and trouble came not to them, and the breath that they drew in was full of life, only they marvelled that time sped so fast, for they found not hours enough in the day; but their joy could no man comprehend save him to whom the sound of summer rain is sweet as it falleth on a low roof.



CHAPTER XIII Of the Coming of Sir Gilles



CHAPTER XIII

Of the Coming of Hir Gilles

WHEN winter came and from many trees the leaves were fallen, they had great cheer by the fire, for though in this country snow falleth never, oft at morn and at nightfall the cold cometh in. At eventime by taper light or torch the King sat and traced verses on the bark of the birch tree, and he gave them into the Queen's keeping, for they were all of her. Therein she learned the height and the depth of the love that a man may bear to his lady, and by night and by day was there deep gladness in her eyes. When the King was over-weary with the axe he had held in his hands all day, he lay prone on the lion's skin with the

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Queen's fingers on his face, and oft came sleep and blissful dreams.

Now it was a right fair land in winter, for there be no words that can tell the look of brown branches small and great against the sky when it is blue at noontide, or golden at the setting of the sun. Oft strayed they in the forest, and there were green holly branches and brown leaves that clung to the oaks, and oft by the water that was many days soft and unruffled and lay dusky with the shadow of trees along the shore, or bright where the light smote it beyond. It befell once at nightfall that they stood at their doorway and watched the moon that was great and round and dull yellow like the beaten gold of an old plate. Then were they ware that one drew near them, for they heard the crackling of boughs pressed underfoot, and a rustling

of dry leaves, also the hair of Cœur d'Ami stood up along his back and he growled, but his growling became unsure as of one who knoweth not whether to bite or to wag his tail. Then saw they a palmer standing before them, for his staff and his sandals they could see in the dim light, but his face was hid by his cowl, and he said no word, but stood, and watched the twain in the doorway. So the King gave him greeting and bade him enter, and the pilgrim came on with troubled steps and slow, and passed the threshold and seated himself by the fire. Then the Queen bent to set the copper kettle over the coals, but he gave a cry and held out his hand to stay her, and she stinted; but much she marvelled whether it were one that had taken a vow not to speak again. Also the hound was troubled and ran from his master to the

stranger and from the stranger back to the King, and anon he laid his head upon the palmer's knee. None heeded him, for all were busy with their own thoughts, and the face of the stranger was turned toward the King. Of a sudden King Sylvain spake and said, "These be the eyes of Gilles," and then was the hood thrown back, and a great sob came and Sir Gilles knelt and took the King's hand and kissed it, saying, "My Liege." After that there was silence and darkness, save only for the glowing of the coals and the flickering of the torch in the corner.

"How couldst thou thus leave them that loved thee?" said Sir Gilles.

"Now by my crown I knew not that there were any so," said the King. "An thou didst love me, why didst thou not tell me?"

"Thou wert the King," said Gilles.

Then the Queen fell a-weeping, and they were the first tears she had shed since she became a free woman, and the King raised Sir Gilles up and kissed him on the cheek, and they sat together on the settle.

"Was it an enemy that vexed thee?" asked Sir Gilles. "Why didst thou not make it known, and my sword had laid him low," and his hand went to his side.

"A palmer, and goest armed?" said the King, and he laughed out.

"My sword's point was for thy foe and for him only," said Sir Gilles, "for I thought some caitiff had taken thee. Did none constrain thee to leave thy crown?"

"None," said King Sylvain. "Naught but mine own heart, and the lust for the grass by the highway and free footsteps thereon."

Then Sir Gilles' eyes were full of wonder, for the King told him the tale of their escape, and of the life in field and forest, and of the home-coming, and of the building of the lodge.

"Here be my days all rain and shine," said the King, "nor hear I ever the crackling of silk. Dost not comprehend?"

Then Sir Gilles pondered long with his hand upon his face.

"Yea and nay," he made answer at length. "But now thou art refreshed and wilt come back to thine own. Mine arm fighteth for thee whenever that may be."

"Hath the land need of me?" asked the King. "Are not all content while King Hughes sitteth upon the throne?"

"Of a truth," the knight made answer.

"I have heard that men be for the most part."

"Is it not a brave man and one that liketh well to reign?"

"That it is," said Sir Gilles, "and I have heard say that he is passing glad to wear a crown."

"'Tis the less grief to me," said King Sylvain.

"Naught have I against Prince Hughes save that he sitteth in thy place," said Sir Gilles, "for all goeth well with the kingdom."

"Now God be praised!" said King Sylvain. "To my place is he welcome, for that I have found my own; and this thou wilt keep secret, Gilles, and betray us not?"

"Ay, that will I," said Sir Gilles.

"Said not the issue of the combat that I was to bide away?" asked the King.

"But how knowest thou that?" said the other.

"For that I was in the tree and watched thee," said the King, "and knew thee for a brave knight, and the one nearest mine own heart."

So they made great cheer, and Sir Gilles told them of his wanderings to seek them out, for in palmer's dress had he gone northward to Wisterniss by the sea, and eastward to Nemoland, and westward to the water again as far as Villermé, and nowhere could he find tidings of them.

"Then I vowed not to cut my hair nor to doff my palmer's dress till I had found ye," said Sir Gilles, "for I wist well, though I know not why, that ye were on life."

So in the morning Sir Gilles arose and made as though he would go away.

"Bide with us," said the King.

"Nay, but I should miss the fighting

KING SYLVAIN AND QUEEN AIMÉE and the jousting," said Sir Gilles, "and the straining of the muscles with lance

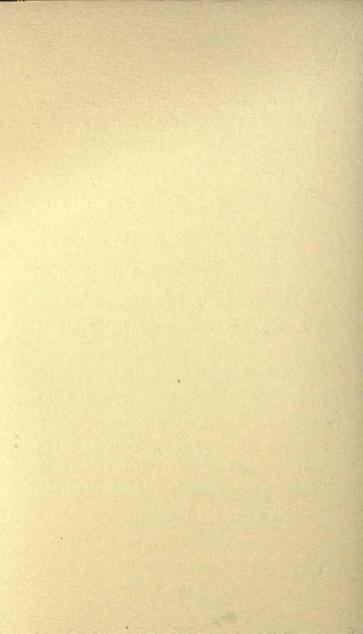
and sword."

"Here is enough of straining of muscle with hammer and with axe," said the King.

"Nay, but I must go farther," said Sir Gilles, and he bent to kiss the hand of the Queen. "My lady fared not forth with me, else had I been content as thou."

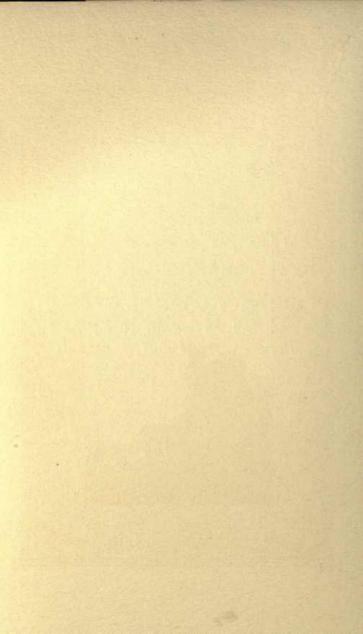
"Come to us again in the springtime," quoth King Sylvain, "for then make I my garden."

"That will I," said Sir Gilles. So he went his way in his palmer's weed of brown, and they watched him pass betwixt the blue water and the shore.



CHAPTER XIV

Of the Queen's Housewifery, and how the King carved All Panner of Things for to use







CHAPTER XIV

Of the Queen's Housewifery, and how the King carved All Panner of Things for to use

Now the Queen did all manner of things that never no queen afore her had done, for I ween few of blood royal have cooked over the coals. Merrily she went about it, and skillet and basin were washen by her hands, and all she did as became a queen. Then the King stood in need of a doublet and made great merriment one day over the rags that he ware.

"What an if I fashion thee a new one?" asked the Queen.

"Faith, and wilt thou?" said he.

"Ay," she made answer, "an thou wilt fetch me cloth thereto."

So the King went a day's journey to the town that lay to westward and fetched with him green cloth a plenty and gold thread also, and the Queen fashioned him a garment that was wondrous beautiful. And for that it was a task she had not done afore, she lay the cloth upon the King's back and cut it so that the shape was right, and for twelve days she broidered it, and on the twelfth it was done. Green it was and it fitted him bravely, and by throat and sleeve and on the bosom thereof were oak leaves wrought with gold thread, "As becometh a forester," said Queen Aimée. And a cap was with it of green cloth also, and in it an eagle's feather.

"In token that I fly free," said King Sylvain.

"And I with thee," answered the Queen.
"So must thou have a garment of the

"So must thou have a garment of the same cloth," said the King.

"Nay, I am a-weary," said Queen Aimée, and the King made great dole for that he had set her to the task.

"But I liked it dearly," said the Queen; "yet ever in the days of our imprisonment my broidering wearied me, for methought ever, 'Here place I one stitch and here another, and to what purpose save to wear out the hours from matins to the vesper bells?' But now with the drawing of each thread did I say, 'Tis the clothing of a king.'"

After that she made of the same cloth a garment for herself, and at the neck was it open and cut squarely so that her white throat showed, but the sleeves were flowing and had inner ones of fine white lawn. And

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ever, as she sewed it, the King watched the copper vessels over the coals and washed them after lest the Queen's strength fail.

But when the garments were done, the King turned again to his axe, for all manner of furnishings must he make for the house. First of the chest. Of oak he fashioned it, and he fitted back and sides cunningly together, and when the framework was done, and a cover wrought thereto, he took a knife and a tool and carved all manner of quaint devices on the sides. There were angels going their ways, and horses and riders, and Adam and Eve he made among the trees of the Garden, and the trees were patterned after them he saw; nor forgat he the serpent, but made him good and long and winding about the tree of knowledge ('twas an oak tree); but the Voice in the Garden

could he not grave. On the cover thereof he carved the arms of his house, and then was it ready for use, and it stood full on the floor so that they might sit thereon.

"'Tis thy marriage chest," said the King, gaily. "In it thou shalt keep all thou dost prize most highly, thy gowns and thy jewels, as women use."

"There will I keep thy verses," said Queen Aimée, "those that be writ and those that be not yet made."

Now King Sylvain grew wondrous skilful with his tools, and he carved two chairs that be still kept, and their like have I not seen. All over them runneth twig and branch and leaf, so woven that ye may not tell where one stoppeth and another beginneth, but one looking would think it were the forest itself and that his

eves were lifted to the trees. Then he fashioned beechen bowls for eating, and to the outside still clung the faint grey moss that groweth there, and he wrought plates whereon the vines of the forest ran lightly with flowers here and there. All manner of things that he needed at table he made, and all bore the look of one that joyed in the task. After, when the tale was known, the fame of them spread abroad through the land, and if any man would speak of something that showed skill, he said, "'Tis as the handiwork of King Sylvain."

Once on a time in the winter the King fell sick, for he had been much in wood and in water, and the Queen feared greatly. Drugs had she none, save only herbs that a wise woman who dwelt not far in the forest had given her, and these she min-

istered, and on the third day the fever abated and the King's eyes opened. Then the Queen knelt beside him as he lay on the bed that his own hands had fashioned.

"Sweetheart," said Queen Aimée, softly, "thou comest back to me. Much I feared me that thou wouldst die."

"Not while thou art on life," said King Sylvain, "for then is there for me no dying. Nor would I leave my life till I have finished you table, for there is good work therein."

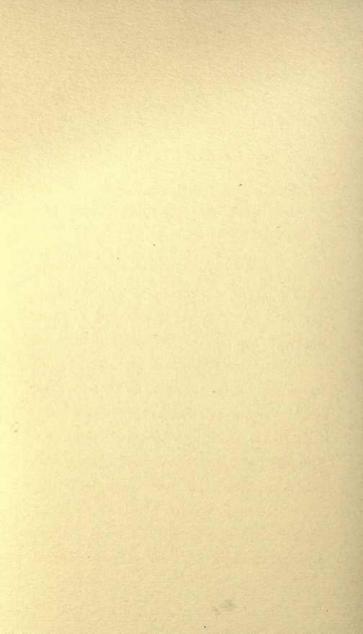
It befell the next day that the King waxed better.

"Ah," said King Sylvain, as he rose from his oaken bed, "but I breathe lightly lest the joy of it slip away. Now grey weather and pain and cold mean naught to me, for sweet to my taste be even the rough morsels of my life."

So King Sylvain went back to his handiwork, and made many things fair to see, and or ever spring came he was fashioning a cradle.

CHAPTER XV

Of the Churlish knight that stole away the Queen, and how the king fleshed his Sword Stellifer



CHAPTER XV

Of the Churlish Unight that stole away the Queen, and how the Using steshed his Sword Stellifer

Now the Queen's gown worked trouble for her, as ye shall see. It fell that on a day she went into the forest when the sun was high, and for that it was warm and the air soft; and no path was there, only dried leaves that made a carpet, so that she lost her way and was all for-wandered, and knew not how to face toward home. Gone was the sea that might serve for guidance, and the trees about her were none that she knew. So the Queen sat her down to rest, for she was a-weary, and was nothing afraid, and slept, and her garment showed

green against the brown covering of the earth, and her fair hair shone where it rested against the trunk of a beech tree. Right so as she slept she opened her eyes, and was ware that one stood near her, and looked down from his steed, and he was armed from head to toe in black armour that gave him a grisly look. Also he bare a black shield, and on it an eagle volant, and the motto above it was "None Else."

"Now, by Saint George, thou choosest a strange place for thy sleeping," said the Knight.

"And thou for thy gazing," said the Queen, and she stood now upon her feet.

"What meanest thou by that?" said the Knight, and through his helmet she saw his eyes glare like hot coals.

"An thou wert a knight courteous, thou wouldst need no answer," said the

Queen, and she made as to go from him. "Never yet saw I one that bare shield that would do so ungentle a deed as thou hast done in standing to watch a lady sleeping."

Then the Knight swore a great oath, and turned his steed toward her and spake.

"Or ever thou hast breathed thrice, thou shalt answer for this to me."

"Dost fight women?" asked the Queen, and she stood to look, and though she wore but a forest woman's dress, it seemed her royal state had come back to her. "Must thou wear armour therefor when they wear none? Draw back thy steed that I may pass."

Then the Knight gnashed his teeth for rage, and the Queen heard the clicking through the mouthpiece of the helmet, and he rode at her, but the Queen gat behind

the beech tree, and her face looked at him from behind its grey trunk.

"I will thrust thee through with my sword," said the Knight, and he lighted from his horse for to do it.

"Now, verily, I understand the motto of thy house," said Queen Aimée. "'None Else' in Christendom doth such unknightly deeds as thou."

Then the Knight's arm dropped, and his charger went loose, and he gazed long at the Queen's face, for never had he seen none other like unto it, and at length he spake.

"I would have thee to my wife," said the Churlish Knight.

"And I would have thee not to my husband," said the Queen. "I know not from what part of heathendom thou comest, but in Christian land is a woman ever asked if she will be wed."

Then the Knight seized her in his arms.

"By fair means or foul will I have thee," he said, and he bare her away and caught the bridle of his steed. As he made ready and looked not at her, the Queen took from her bosom a whistle that her lord had made for her. 'Twas of a willow stem and curiously carved. Thrice she blew it, and the call was as the call of a bird. Then the Churlish Knight looked up into the branches.

"There be strange birds in this forest," said he.

"Ay," said the Queen, "and that that thou bearest is the strangest of all, for never yet have I seen or heard tell of a craven eagle."

"An thou stintest not I will strangle thee," roared the Knight.

"I' faith," said Queen Aimée, sadly, "that is the only hope I have left."

So he put her ahead of him on the steed and rode away, and ever as they went the Queen bethought her of her dear lord and of the gladness they had had of each other in the forest, and the tears ran down her cheeks.

"Now was I ever afraid that our joy was too great to last," said the Queen, "for with happiness first cometh peril."

Far in the forest the King heard the whistle and Cœur d'Ami also, and the hound pricked up his ears, and it blew three times as the King had said it should do if danger came. So he dropped his axe and laid his hand on his sword and the hound led him, and anon, after much winding, they came upon the spot where the Queen had lain asleep. There the King saw the print of

the horse's hoofs and he gave a great cry and stood, and there was death in his face. Then the hound followed fast on the tracks of the steed and the King ran after as one mad; and about the middle of the afternoon they came upon an open space, and saw the Caitiff Knight resting on the ground, and his helmet was off, but his harness he had on him. Not far the Queen sat under a tree and watched him and he her. Then the King took his sword Stellifer in his hand and leaped forward, and Queen Aimée gave a glad cry; and the Churlish Knight hastily donned his helmet and took his sword, and the King said never a word. No armour had he, but a brave heart goeth ever well armed, and a craven may not be safe behind any coat of mail that ever was wrought. Now the Churlish Knight came on and drave at the

King, but the King parried and the sword missed its stroke. Then he came at the Knight, but the stroke fell on his shield and availed not.

"Soon will I hang thy limbs up on you tree for the birds," swore the Caitiff.

"Thou shouldst carry the device of the cock and not the eagle," said the King, "for he is the bird that boasteth."

So for an hour they fought and stinted not, nor did the King's arm wax weary, for not oft did he strike but waited ever his chance and avoided the other's strokes. And the Queen ran and gat the spear of the churl and held it, for she was minded if her lord fell to thrust it into her own heart before the black Knight could do her harm. All the while Cœur d'Ami grieved mightily that he might not partake of the fight, and he sat afore the

Queen for her safety. Now the Churlish Knight waxed more and more wroth, and his blows grew heavier and heavier, and he took little heed for his defence, for he knew that he ware the coat of mail. Then the King saw that his time had come, and he held his good sword Stellifer in his hand, and with all his might came on; and or ever the other was ware he had plunged his sword through his armour, there where the heart was, and it cut through the rings of steel as they had been silk, so that the blood burst out and the Knight lay dead. Then King Sylvain went and took the Queen in his arms, and they sat down together and reposed them, for he was forspent. Anon came the Knight's steed and watched them, and soon stepped to them and laid his nose on the King's hand, and the King knew

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that the steed was glad of a new master. So he rode toward home, and the Queen afore him on the horse, and the shield and armour of the dead knight behind, and they made great joy of the issue of the fight.

CHAPTER XVI

Of the Paking of the Ling's Garden







CHAPTER XVI

Of the Paking of the King's Garden

IT befell on a day that the grass began to grow again, and young green shoots sprang up in the forest and showed among the brown leaves. Also the naked branches and the twigs ware another colour where they stood against the sky, and I know not how to name it, yet was there faint red therein of the kind the clouds to eastward have afore the dawn. Now the birds came back with their singing and began to make new nests, both merle and mavis and song-sparrow and nightingale, and two swallows came and builded on the eaves of the King's roof. Then King Sylvain's heart stirred within him, as hearts stir ever

in spring, and he used his axe no more, but walked to and fro among the trees when the buds were bursting into green leaf, and his head was bent. Cœur d'Ami watched him, and followed, but knew not whether to be glad or sad, for ever the dog's mood fitted his master's, and the King bent down and stroked him on the head, and spake:—

"Cœur d'Ami, now is my joy so great that I may not bear it," and then was the hound glad, for though he knew not the words, he perceived that that lay behind them.

Warm winds blew from the south, and the sun shone, and they waited, and behold! the blossoming of the trees. Almond and peach showed first on the slopes to southward, and then the apple trees about the house were as one flower,

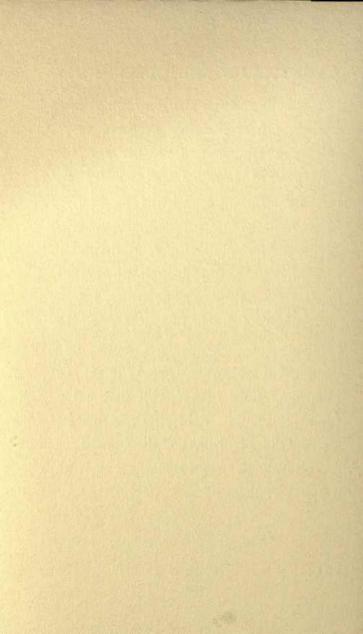
and the fragrance made sweet all the air as far as the sea.

Then the King knew that the lust of the axe had left him, and the desire for the spade had come, so he digged him a garden facing the blue water, and set there in the dark earth yellow daffodils and such other plants as he could find in forest or in meadow. First came the crocus that he planted in clusters, and it cared not that its place was changed, but blossomed bravely into purple and white and the colour of gold. Now in that country be blood-red tulips that open in the earliest grass of spring, and these the King put here and there in the sward before the lodge, that the Queen might see one whenever she passed, for she liked them dearly. One was by the grey stone where she was wont to sit, and one hard by the

door, but none in the shade, for they love the sun. Also primroses grew there, and the flowers that be hight anemone, of full many colours, as purple and scarlet, whereas, here by the north, they be but pale, but there as here be they slender of stem. King Sylvain worked mightily at his gardening, and oft the sweat poured from his face more than it had ever done at the tourney. Far and wide he travelled for to find his flowers, and some the gardener at the castle gave him, to wit, lilies that be small and white and wondrous sweet and droop from a stem, and roses many kinds. These open early in that country, and or ever it was the month of May there were golden and white and red that made fair blooming in the garden, but most the Queen loved the vine that began to climb the wall of the house and

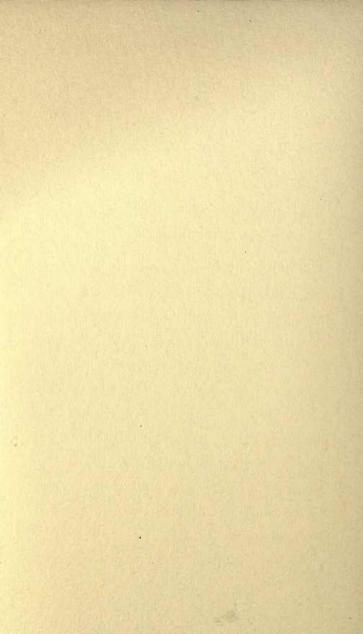
bare small roses a-many growing in a cluster. Oft as the King wandered an old wife gave him roots from her store, so that he had in a corner rosemary and lavender a-growing, and herbs that be good for to heal.

Queen Aimée walked often in the garden with him, nor could she tell whether her lord's handiwork were liefer to her indoors or out. And he had great joy of her beauty as she stood among the flowers, for though I have wrote tales of many fair women, of none have I told that was so fair as she. One light shone in her face and one in her hair, and it may be her great loveliness was because she was the happiest of them all.



CHAPTER XVII

Of the Return of Sir Gilles and what befell thereafter



CHAPTER XVII

Of the Return of Sir Gilles and what befell thereafter

WHEN it was midsummer, Sir Gilles returned again unto them, but this time came he not as a palmer but bravely apparelled and well armed. And he saw the King's garden set with roses and red summer lilies, and in it the wise woman of the woods with the Prince upon her knee, and he marvelled much of the sight.

"Ye be right welcome," said King Sylvain, going forth to meet him, so Sir Gilles alit from his horse and turned him away to graze.

"Thou wearest a favour that I have not

seen afore," said the King, for there was a knot of blue on the arm of Sir Gilles.

"Ay," he made answer. "I be come hither from the tourney, and now no longer envy I thee thy lot."

Then the Queen came forth to greet him, and Sir Gilles knelt before her, and he thought in his mind that never no queen like to this would sit again on the throne.

"Hast seen my son?" asked Queen Aimée.

"Nay," answered Sir Gilles, "for I feared me of the wise woman."

So the Queen took the child and gave him to the knight, and he was not affrighted of the helmet nor of arms of steel, but lay and smiled.

"So doth he ever," said the Queen, "and for that we have called him Léon

the Glad, for well-nigh since the May day when he was born hath he smiled, and the name was given for that he lay first on a lion's skin."

Then Sir Gilles bent and kissed the child's hand and said:—

"I give thee greeting, Least Sovereign, and may I be there the day that thou art crowned."

Now he spake jestingly, but he looked up and saw that the Queen's face was clouded.

Then King Sylvain drew near and laid his hand upon the child, and Cœur d'Ami whined piteously.

"What aileth the hound?" asked Sir Gilles.

"He will not that I have a new friend," said the King. "Watch and ward keepeth he well over the babe when none else

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is at hand, but if ever I draw near, he grieveth sore."

Right so as they sat in the garden after they had eaten, the King spake to Gilles.

"How goeth my kingdom?" he asked.

"Bravely," answered Sir Gilles.

"Is it peace or war?" said King Sylvain.

"Now one and now another," said Sir Gilles. "My Lord Hughes and his seven sons have won Orcagnie, and the king thereof sendeth tribute, and Prestenne also hath been taken by arms."

Then was the King silent, but Sir Gilles could see, for it was betwixt daylight and dark, that his face was set and stern, and he heard a great sigh.

"Art weary of thy lot?" asked the knight.

"Nay, so God me help!" quoth the

King, in a passion. "Wit thou well, Gilles, that I count out its minutes as they were precious stones and I feared to lose one and not find it again."

"Then what aileth thee?" said Sir Gilles.

"'Tis my little son," answered the King "Art not glad of him?" said Gilles.

"Ay, that be I," said King Sylvain, "even to the dividing asunder of soul and body, but I fear me I have done him a wrong. He was heir to a throne, and I have taken it away."

Then was Sir Gilles silent, for he deemed the King had spoken truth. Then the Queen drew near them and said never a word, but her face was sad also, and within the lodge they heard the wise woman singing to the child afore it slept.

"He is thy son," said Sir Gilles, "and

perchance would liefer be without a kingdom."

"We have left him no choice," said Queen Aimée, "and it may be that the measure of our joy is the measure of his loss."

"Wouldst fain come to thine own again?" asked Sir Gilles.

"I could bear all," answered King Sylvain, "for the sake of the child. My roses and my lilies be blooming, yet would I go back within stone walls an it were well for the lad."

"And thou?" said Sir Gilles to the Queen.

"I care not what pain may come to me henceforward," said Queen Aimée, "an it vantageth my son; and wherever I dwell hereafter in body, my soul will bide here by the sea."

"'Tis but idle talk," said the King, "for Hughes ruleth by mine own choice. The boy shall bide here with me, and the use of tools will I teach him, for my hand hath grown cunning, Gilles."

"That have I seen," said the knight; "that and thy pride therein. But methinks thou hast spoken truth, and it is shame that the true prince should grow up like a lion's cub in the forest nor know the training to knightly deeds."

"Gentle deeds come where dwell gentle hearts, Gilles," said Queen Aimée, "and I ween I can teach the child manners that become a king's son."

"Ay, that canst thou," answered Sir Gilles, "but his birthright canst thou not give him here in the forest."

"What wouldst thou have us to do?" asked the King.

"Go back to thy own," said Sir Gilles, "thou and the Queen and the Prince thy son."

"But 'tis no longer mine, for all longeth to Hughes, and the people be content," said King Sylvain.

"'Tis thine while thou art on life," said Sir Gilles, stoutly, "for none can take away aught from an anointed king. Go thou back to Wannamere and say to Prince Hughes thou wouldst have back thy kingdom that was but lent him."

"And if he say nay?" asked the King.
"Hast a sword?" said Sir Gilles.

"Ay," said the King, "'tis mine own handiwork and passing sharp."

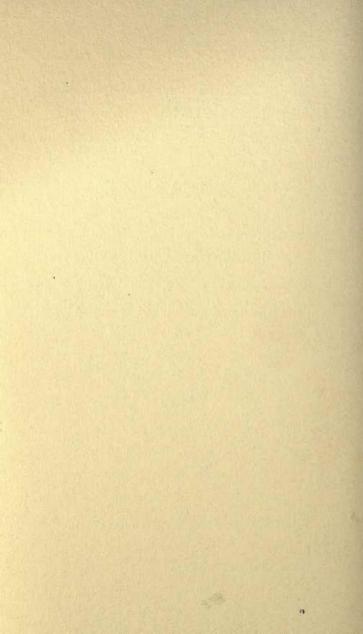
"A sword have I also," said the Knight, "and henceforward as heretofore draw I it for no man but thee. Canst get thee a steed?"

"A good steed have I," said King Sylvain, "and I won him in fair fight."

"To-morrow fare we forth," said Sir Gilles.

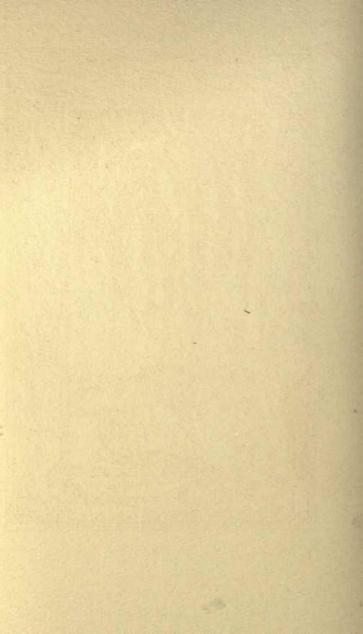
"So be it," said the King, "but I fear me that we do wrong to Hughes, for meseemeth now is all his by right."

That night was the fragrance of the roses sweeter than ever before, and the Queen wept for that she should not smell it again.

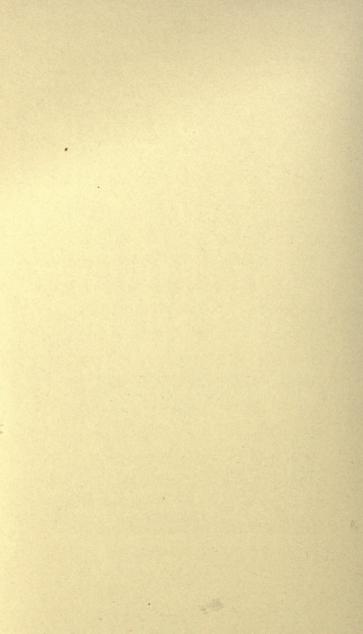


CHAPTER XVIII

Of how King Sylvain and Ducen Aimee went back to their Kingdom, and of Prince Hughes







CHAPTER XVIII

Of how King Sylvain and Dueen Aimée went back to their Kingdom, and of Prince Hughes

So the King and Queen and the Prince and Sir Gilles went forth from the lodge and journeyed to Wannamere. King and Queen ware the forest suits of green that Queen Aimée had wrought, and the King rode on the steed of the Churlish Knight, but the Queen had a white palfrey that they purchased for a jewel of a knight that they met by the way, for it had longed to his lady and she was dead. Sir Gilles would ever carry with him the Prince, and the child lay on his left arm, and he guided his charger with the other,

and the folk that they met marvelled much of the sight, for never yet saw they mailed knight that journeyed with a babe on his arm. Some weened that it was Merlin, and that he bore Arthur again to them, for all waited that King Arthur should come back one day; and a woman, when she saw these pass, asked why he might not come as a child, and all granted her that it might be so, though they had looked for him as a grown man. None knew them for what they were, for Sir Gilles bare no shield, and the King had with him the black shield of the Churlish Knight, but the device of the eagle had he rubbed away with his tools. Both ware armour, for themthought Prince Hughes might be of hostile intent, and "it were well to be ready," said Sir Gilles; so they halted at the smithy where the King had forged

his sword, and gat armour for the King, and the smith remembered him well.

"'Tis the armour I was working while ye were with me," said the smith.

"So much the better," said King Sylvain, "for I know that it is well made." Then he put it on, and it became him bravely.

"Hast a spear?" asked the smith.

"Nay," said the King.

"Then will I give thee one to thy liking," said the man, "for thou art a brave fellow and shouldst have been a smith."

Then the King gave him thanks and they went their way, and rode, what by hill, what by dale, till they came to Wannamere.

"Now go thou in," said Sir Gilles, afore the castle gate, "and make thy

cause known to my Lord Hughes. Keep thy sword by thee, for it may be he will lay hand on thee even when the lady and the child be with thee. I go throughout the city to tell thy tale, and within an hour am I here again and with me many trusty blades that will make good thy cause an thy Cousin Hughes listen not to it."

So the Queen took her son in her arms and they went to the castle gate, and the warden met them, and he was a stranger.

"Who reigneth here?" asked King Sylvain.

"King Hughes and his lady Isobel," said the warden.

"Marry, and is it so?" quoth King Sylvain, for he wist not what to say.

"Ay, and 'tis a good king and a war-

like," said the warden. "Wherever he may be is deeds of arms a-doing. Men say he hath a great stroke with his weapon, and for mine own part should I not be glad of finding myself at the point of his spear. He loveth fighting more than did King Sylvain."

"Ay, but I be a good gardener," said King Sylvain, and the man looked at him and weened that he was mad.

"And I be a good warden," he made answer, "but that is neither here nor there."

Then King Sylvain made known his desire, and the seneschal came and was one that they knew not, for Sir Landis was dead, and him they followed to the presence chamber of Prince Hughes. He sat high on a dais, and he was richly clad in purple and ware a crown of gold. Black were hair and beard and red his face, and

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many foes had found it terrible. Over him was a canopy hung with cloth of silk, and about him stood many in waiting.

Then King Sylvain and Queen Aimée entered, and the Queen trembled as she came, but they knelt not nor made obeisance, and Prince Hughes looked at them and frowned, and his face was frightful to see.

"What be ye that bend not the knee to the true king?" he asked, and his voice was as thunder. Then looked he again, and the blood rushed to face and eyes.

"So God me help," he said, "'tis my cousin Sylvain, the King," and he rose and came hastily down from the dais toward them. Then King Sylvain laid his hand on his sword, for he knew not what might befall, and the Queen gathered her child in her arms and bent to shield it with her

bosom, but Prince Hughes came and laid his hands on King Sylvain, and kissed him on either cheek.

"But an if thou be a living man and no sprite," he said, "tell me where thou hast been since the day that we lost thee."

"I' the forest," said King Sylvain.

"Mad, I trow," said Prince Hughes.
"Many run mad in the forest."

"Ay," said the King, "that was I."

"And the Queen?" said Prince Hughes, and he bent to kiss her hand.

"Mad was I also, Hughes," said Queen Aimée. "See, 'tis my son," and she gave the child into his arms, and it smiled up at him. Then Prince Hughes looked from one to another, and of a sudden he took the babe, and King and Queen started, for they feared some harm; but Prince Hughes mounted up on the dais and laid him

lengthwise upon the throne and bent the knee afore him. Then were the eyes of King Sylvain wet, and all them in waiting stood and watched and breathed not.

"Wit thou well, Sylvain, that I am glad of thy coming," said Prince Hughes. "Far and wide have we sought thee, and I have but held thine own until thou came, and now will I give thee back thy crown."

"Nay," said King Sylvain, "that would I not have at no price, but I have a son."

"He shall sit there," said Prince Hughes, "where he now lieth."

"But thou hast seven sons," said King Sylvain.

"Now what be my seven sons in the presence of the true King," said Prince Hughes, "save loyal subjects? Call them hither all, that I may see them bend afore the child and thee, and if any hath a mind

to wear a crown that longeth to another, let him deal with me," and his hand went to his sword, but he had none.

So King Sylvain and Queen Aimée stood side by side on the dais and the Prince lay atween them, and the seven sons of Prince Hughes came and kneeled afore them, and they were goodly youths all, each taller than other. Anon came Sir Gilles, for he was troubled in mind and thought the matter had gone wrong, so he entered and twelve trusty knights with him, all armed. Then Prince Hughes looked at them and at the King and knew their purpose.

"That was the first unknightly thought that thou hast had, Sylvain," said Prince Hughes. "Didst think I would lay hand on mine own anointed King?"

"Now I crave thee right heartily of thy pardon, Cousin," said King Sylvain, "for

I should have known that no knight in Christendom would deal so courteously as thou." Then spake Sir Gilles:—

"'Twas my thought and not the King's," and all was forgotten.

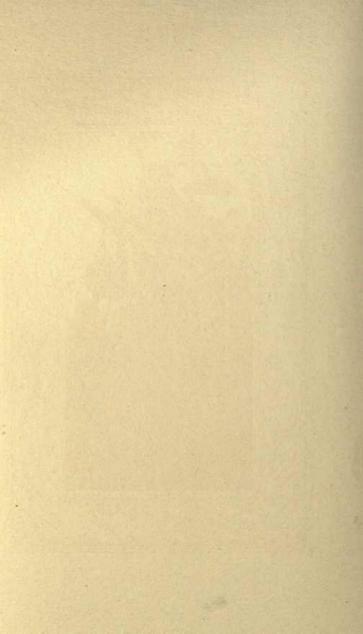
That night was there great cheer and rejoicing at the castle, and harpers made music, and the feet of many dancers moved thereto. Then came one with a torch to guide King Sylvain and Queen Aimée to their chamber.

"I have done thee wrong in my flight and my return," said King Sylvain to Prince Hughes.

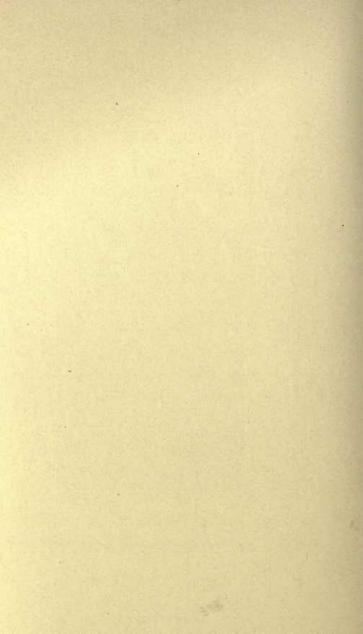
"Nay, and that hast thou not," said the other, "for I have had good fighting."

CHAPTER XIX

Of how King Sylvain and Aucen Aimée returned to the Forest for to stay







CHAPTER XIX

Of how king Sylvain and Queen Aimée returned to the Forest for to stay

THE next day when they came together, Prince Hughes said to King Sylvain:—

"In what part of the forest wast thou?"

"In Paradise," answered King Sylvain.

Then Prince Hughes laughed loud and long.

"Hadst a serpent?" he inquired.

"Nay, none," said King Sylvain, "and here may I not bide longer, for I have need of the place that I return."

"But thy throne and thy sceptre and thy crown?" said Prince Hughes.

"Them mayst thou have an thou wilt leave me axe and spade," said King Sylvain.

"My roses be in need of water and I must back."

"Then leave here the Prince, thy son," said Prince Hughes. "Him will we rear and train, and when the time is come he shall sit upon thy throne, Till then will I hold it in trust, an thou dost wish, for thou art my sovereign and thy will is my law."

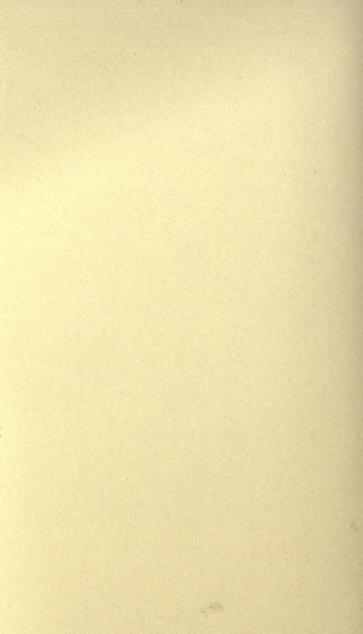
"Nay, but the lad needeth the forest," said King Sylvain, "for he was born where there was fresh air for his nostrils, and unless he have it he may not thrive."

Queen Aimée said nothing, but her face was wan with longing for the lodge in the wood.

"Then take the babe and go back to the forest," said Prince Hughes, "and when he is grown, send him hither, and the Archbishop shall crown him and he shall sit on the throne."



The Queen and the Prince



So he called his sons and his lords, and they all sware on the Holy Book that the day wherein Léon the Glad came to them from the forest he should be anointed and wear the King's crown. Then King Sylvain and Queen Aimée made much ado for the gentleness and courtesy of their cousin, Prince Hughes, and each kissed other many times.

Now they of the court went out with the King and the Queen to speed them on their way. By them rode Sir Gilles with the Prince upon his arm as afore, and after them came knights a-many in shining armour and with waving plumes, and there were many ladies richly clad in cloth of silk, as rose-coloured and yellow and blue. There was one on a black jennet that looked long after Sir Gilles, and he turned his eyes many times to her and smiled. So at the

brow of the hill they all halted, and saw King and Queen and Sir Gilles and the child with the great hound after them go forward on the road atween green fields that led to the forest, and all were half minded to follow.

