THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

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THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

STORIES OF KING ARTHUR AND THE HOLY GRAIL



"PERCIVALE SAW A SHIP COMING TOWARD THE LAND."

"PERCIVALE SAW A SHIP COMING TOWARD THE LAND."

BY
WILLIAM HENRY FROST

ILLUSTRATED BY SYDNEY RICHMOND BURLEIGH

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THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE
THE COURT OF KING ARTHUR
THE WAGNER STORY BOOK

To
MY FATHER
John Dudley Frost

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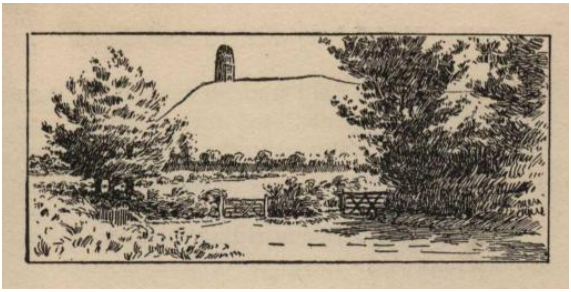
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SOME OLDER STORY-TELLERS

There is really no need, perhaps, for me to tell you that all these stories have been told before. But, though you know it already, I like to say it again, because I can never say often enough how grateful I am to those who told the world first of Arthur, of Guinevere, of Lancelot, and of Gawain; of Galahad, of Percivale, and of

Percivale's sister; of the Siege Perilous and of the Holy Grail. If you do not now count Sir Thomas Malory a dear friend, as I do, learn to do it, and you will be the better for it. I do not know who made those wonderful tales the Mabinogion, but I know who gave them to us in our own language—Lady Charlotte Guest. I wish that I knew whom to thank for "The Romance of Merlin" and for the story of "Gawain and the Green Knight." And there were many other noble story-tellers of the old time who passed away and left us no knowledge of themselves and not even their names to call them by. But they left us their stories, and if anything from us can reach them where they are, surely gratitude can, and that they must have from every one of us who loves a story. And the great poet of our own days, Lord Tennyson, must have it too, for teaching us how to read their stories.

Some time you may read these tales and others as they wrote them, and you cannot read them without thinking what a great and marvellous thing it was that they, who lived no longer than other men, could give delight to the people of so many centuries. But some of these stories are not easy to find, and some are not easy to read, when you have found them. I have tried to tell a few of them again in my own way, hoping that thus some might have the stories and know them, for whom the older books might be hard to get or hard to understand.



Glastonbury Tor

THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

CHAPTER I
ON GLASTONBURY TOR

It was when we were making a journey in the South of England one summer that we found ourselves in the midst of the old tales of King Arthur and of the Holy Grail. "We" means Helen, Helen's mother, and me. We wandered about the country, here and there and wherever our fancy led us, and everywhere the stories of King Arthur fell in our way. In this place he was born, in that place he was crowned; here he fought a battle, there he held a tournament. Everything could remind us, when we knew how to be reminded, of the stories of the King and the Queen and the knights of the Round Table.

It was I who told the stories and it was Helen who listened to them. Sometimes Helen's mother listened to them too, and sometimes she had other things to do that she cared about more.

One day we had been riding for many hours on the crooked railways of the Southwest, where you change cars so often that after a little while you cannot remember at all how many trains you have taken. And late in the afternoon, or perhaps early in the evening, we saw from the window of the carriage a big hill, lifting itself high up against the sky, with a lonely tower on the top of it. And that was Glastonbury Tor.

There was no time to try to see anything of Glastonbury that night after dinner, and we were too tired. But that big hill looked so inviting that we decided that we would see it the next day and climb up to the top of it, before we did anything else. I was a little disappointed with Glastonbury, as we walked through the streets on our way to the Tor. The place looked much too prosperous to please me, and not at all too neat.

I cheered up a little when we came to the Abbot's Kitchen. It stands in the middle of a big field, with a fence around it, and we had to borrow a key from a woman who kept it to lend so that we could go in and see it. We even spared a little time from the Tor to see it in. The Abbot's Kitchen belonged to the old abbey of Glastonbury. It is a small, square building, with a fireplace in each corner. It is still in such good repair that it is hardly fair to call it a ruin, but it is a part of old Glastonbury, and we carried back the key feeling glad that we had borrowed it.

It was a good, stiff climb up the side of the Tor, and we stopped more than once to look back at the town behind us and below us. It looked prettier from here. Down there in the streets there was the noise of a busy modern town. The ways were muddy and there were rather frowsy women and children about some of the doors. But up here we were out of sight and hearing of all that. From here

the town looked quiet and peaceful and beautiful—just its roofs and chimneys and towers showing through the wide, green masses of the trees, and the sound of a church chime, that rang every quarter of an hour, came to us softened and mellow.

"Down there," I said, "we saw nothing but Glastonbury—to-day's Glastonbury—but here we can see Avalon. That is Avalon down there below us, the Island of Apples, the happy country, the place where there was no sorrow, the place where fairies lived, the place where Joseph brought the Holy Grail and where he built his church. A wonderful old place it was, and it was a wonderful abbey that grew up where Joseph first made his little chapel. Our old friend St. Dunstan, who pinched the devil's nose, was the abbot there once. So was St. Patrick. When he came to Glastonbury he climbed up to the top of this hill where we are now and found, where this old tower is, the ruins of a church of St. Michael. They used to have a way of building churches to St. Michael on the tops of high hills. St. Patrick rebuilt this one and afterwards it was thrown down by an earthquake. I don't know whether St. Patrick built this tower that is here now or not.

"Did I say that fairies used to live here? Another abbot of Glastonbury found that out. He was St. Collen, and he must have lived when there was no church of St. Michael here on the top of the Tor. St. Collen was one of those men who think that they cannot serve God and live in comfort at the same time. When he had been abbot of Glastonbury for a time he thought that he was leading too easy a life, so he gave up his post and went about preaching. But even that did not please him, so he came back here and made a cell in the rock on the side of Glastonbury Tor, and lived in it as a hermit.

"One day he heard two men outside his cell talking about Gwyn, the son of Nudd. And one of them said: 'Gwyn, the son of Nudd, is the King of the Fairies.'

"Then Collen put his head out of the door of his cell and said to the two men: 'Do not talk of such wicked things. There are no fairies, or if there are they are devils. And there is no Gwyn, the son of Nudd. Hold your tongues about him.'

"'Hold your own tongue about him,' one of the men answered, 'or you will hear from him in some unpleasant way.'

"The men went away, and by and by Collen heard a knock at his door, and a voice asked if he were in his cell. 'I am here,' he answered; 'who is it that asks?'

"'I am a messenger from Gwyn, the son of Nudd, the King of the Fairies,' the voice said, 'and he has sent me to command you to come and speak with him on the top of the hill at noon.'

"Collen did not think that he ought to mind what the King of the Fairies said to him, if there really were any King of the Fairies, so he stayed in his cell all day.

The next day the messenger came again and said just what he had said before, and again St. Collen stayed in his cell all day. But the third day the messenger came again and said to Collen that he must come and speak with Gwyn, the son of Nudd, the King of the Fairies, on the top of the hill, at noon, or it would be the worse for him.

"Then Collen took a flask and filled it with holy water and fastened it at his waist, and at noon he went up the hill. For a long time Collen had been abbot of Glastonbury and for a long time he had been a hermit and lived in his cell on the side of this very hill, but never before had he seen the great castle that stood that day on the top of Glastonbury Tor. It did not look heavy, as if it were built for war, but it was wonderfully high and graceful and beautiful. It had tall towers, with banners of every color hung from the tops of them and lower down, and there were battlements where ladies and squires in rich dresses stood and looked down at other ladies and squires below. And those below were dancing and jousting and playing games, and all around there were soldiers, handsomely dressed too, guarding the place.

"When Collen came near, a dozen of the people met him and said to him: 'You must come with us to our King, Gwyn, the son of Nudd—he is waiting for you.'

"And they led him into the castle and into the great hall. In the middle of the hall was a table, spread with more delicious things to eat than poor St. Collen, who thought that it was wicked to eat good things, had ever dreamed of. And at the head of the table, on a gold chair, sat a man who wore a crown. 'Collen,' he said, 'I am the King of the Fairies, Gwyn, the son of Nudd. Do you believe in me now? Sit down and eat with me, and let us talk together. You are a learned man, but you did not believe in me. Perhaps I can tell you of other things that so wise a man as you ought to know.'

"But St. Collen only took the flask of holy water from his side and threw some of it upon Gwyn, the son of Nudd, and sprinkled some of it around, and in an instant there was no king there and there was no table. The hall was gone, and the castle. The dances and the games were done, and the squires and the ladies and the soldiers all had vanished. The whole of the fairy palace was gone, and Collen was left standing alone on the top of Glastonbury Tor.

"But Glastonbury has forgotten St. Collen, I suppose. The old town is prouder now of Joseph of Arimathæa than of anybody else—prouder than it is of King Arthur, I think, though King Arthur—but I won't tell you about that now. You know how Joseph of Arimathæa buried the Christ in his tomb after He was taken down from the cross. After He had risen again the Jews put Joseph in prison, because they said that he had stolen the body. But Joseph had with him the Holy Grail, the cup in which he had caught the blood of the Saviour, when He

was on the cross. It was the same cup, too, from which the Saviour had drunk at the Last Supper. It was a wonderful thing, that cup, and there are whole volumes of stories about it. The blood that Joseph had caught in it always stayed in it afterwards, and the cup and the blood seemed to have a strange sort of life and knowledge and the power of choosing. One of the wonderful things about the Holy Grail was that it could always give food to any one whom it chose, and those who were fed by the Holy Grail wanted no other food than what it gave them. And so Joseph wanted nothing while he was in prison.

"At last the Emperor had Joseph let out of his prison. And some one asked him how long it had been since he was put there, and he answered: 'I have been here in this prison for nearly three days.'

"Then they all stared at one another and whispered and looked at Joseph, and then they whispered together again. 'Why do you look at one another and at me so,' said Joseph, 'is it not three days, almost, since they put me here?'

"'It is wonderful,' said one of them; 'Joseph, you have been in this prison for forty-two years.'

"'Can it be?' said Joseph; 'it seems to me like only three days, and barely that, and I have never been so happy in my life as I have been for these three days—or these—can it be—forty-two years?'

"And this was because he had had the Holy Grail in the prison with him. Afterwards he came to England. He brought the Holy Grail here to Avalon, and the King of that time gave him some ground to build his church on. They say it was really the island of Avalon then, for it was all surrounded by marsh and water, and there was an opening, a waterway, out to the Bristol Channel. And since it ceased to be an island the sea has twice at least broken through and made it one again for a little while. But the last time was almost two hundred years ago.

"Well, when Joseph and those who were with him first came here, they rested on the hillside and Joseph stuck the staff that he carried into the ground. It was not this hill where we are, but another, Wearyall Hill. And Joseph's staff, where he had set it in the ground, began to bud, and then leaves and branches grew on it. It struck roots into the ground and became a tree. It was a thorn-tree, the Holy Thorn they called it, and always after that it blossomed twice a year, once in the time of other thorn-trees and again at Christmas. The tree was gone, of course, long ago, but other trees had grown from slips of it, and they say that descendants of it are still growing in Glastonbury gardens and that they still bloom at Christmas. I am sorry that we cannot stay here till Christmas to see if it is true.

"So, in the place that the King gave him, Joseph built his chapel of wood and woven twigs, and it was the first Christian church in England. Some of the

stories say that the Holy Grail, that Joseph brought here with him, was buried at last under one of these Glastonbury hills, but that is not the story that I like the best. One story says that it was not a cup at all that Joseph brought to Avalon, but two cruets. It says besides that these two cruets were buried with Joseph when he died, and that when his grave is found, and the two cruets in it, there will never again be any drought in England. But according to the story that I like best, Joseph did not die at all, as other men die, but was long kept alive by the Holy Grail, waiting for the best knight of the world, for it was foretold that he should never die till the best knight of the world should come.

"Since it was here that the Grail was brought, I think it must have been not far from here that King Pelles lived, before Balin gave him the wound that was never to heal till the best of all knights should come. And I fancy it was somewhere near here, too, that he lived after that. He was the keeper of the Grail, and he had a castle called Carbonek. When we talk of the Grail it seems to me that everything becomes mysterious and uncertain, so that it is hard to tell where this Castle of Carbonek was. At one time it seems to have been on the seashore and at another time it seems to have been inland. But for that very reason I think that Avalon is as likely a place for it as any, for this place was inland, just as it is now, but then the waters of the sea came in around it. Yet the land around King Pelles's old castle was all laid waste, and I have never heard that the land around Avalon was so. But you see that it is all uncertain and strange, and we cannot be sure of anything about it.

"I think I have told you the story about King Pelles and Balin before, but I will tell you a little of it again, because it fits in so well just here. King Pelles was descended from Joseph of Arimathæa, and, as I said, he was the keeper of the Holy Grail. Once Balin came to his castle, seeking for Garlon, a knight who had the power of riding invisible and who killed other knights, when they could not see him. Balin found him there and killed him, and King Pelles tried to avenge his death, because he was his brother.

"Balin had broken his sword and he fled from King Pelles and ran through the castle till he came to a chamber where Joseph of Arimathæa, who was kept alive by the power of the Holy Grail, was lying in a bed. And beside him was a spear, with drops of blood flowing from the point. It was the spear with which the Roman soldier wounded the side of the Christ when He was on the cross. Balin seized it and turned upon King Pelles and wounded him with it in the side.

"Then the whole castle fell down around them and all the country about it became waste and dry and desolate. Balin lay under the ruins for three days, and then Merlin, the great magician of King Arthur's court, came and woke him and gave him a horse and a sword and sent him on his way. Afterwards Balin met his brother Balan, and they fought, neither of them knowing who the other

was, till they killed each other. Then Merlin took the sword with which Balin had killed his brother and drove it into a great stone, up to the hilt, and set the stone floating on the river. And he wrote on the stone that no knight should ever draw this sword out of the stone except the one to whom it should belong, the best knight of the world.

"I cannot tell you how King Pelles got out of the ruins of his castle, but afterwards he had another castle, the one that was called Carbonek. He was still the keeper of the Grail. And it was foretold that the wound in the side that Balin had given to him with the spear would never be healed till the best knight of all the world should come. So for many years King Pelles lived in his castle and bore the pain of a wound that always seemed new and fresh, and waited for the coming of the best knight of the world.

"This is getting to be a rather rambling sort of story, and while we are rambling perhaps I may as well tell you about the adventure that Sir Bors had at the Castle of Carbonek. Bors was a knight of the Round Table. He was one of the best of all of them. He sat at the table in the next seat but one to the Siege Perilous. The Siege Perilous was the seat on the right of the King's. Merlin had made it when he made the Round Table, and he said that no one should ever sit in it without coming to harm, except the best knight of all the world. So for many years no one had sat in that seat. And no one sat in the one next to it either, but Bors sat in the one next to that. Next to him sat his cousin Lancelot. They were the sons of two kings who were brothers, Ban and Bors, who had helped King Arthur, when he first came to his throne.

"Lancelot was counted as the best of all King Arthur's knights. He was the strongest and the bravest of them all, people said, and the best fighter, and the King and the Queen loved him more than any of the others. Nobody could see why he should not sit in the Siege Perilous, but whenever a knight came to the Round Table his name appeared of itself, in gold letters, in the seat that he was to have; and nobody could sit in the Siege Perilous till his name came in it.

"But I set out to tell you about Sir Bors. Once Bors came to the Castle of Carbonek. A wandering knight, in those days, was always welcome in every castle, and so King Pelles welcomed Bors. The King was brought into the hall and Bors was placed at the table between him and his daughter. And there in the hall, too, Bors saw a beautiful child, a boy, with deep eyes and a bright, sweet face and golden hair. He was the son of King Pelles's daughter, and I will tell you more about him another time.

"It was a strange way of entertaining guests that they had here, Bors thought, for, though they were sitting at the table, there was nothing to eat on it. Just as Bors noticed this he saw a white dove fly into the room. It carried a little golden censer, by a chain which it held in its beak. The thin smoke from

the censer spread through the hall and filled it with a strange, sweet odor. And while the dove flew about the hall a girl came in, carrying something covered with white silk, which she held high up in her hands. Bors could not see what it was that she carried, but all who were in the hall knelt down and looked up toward it, and Bors did the same. But though the covering of silk hid the thing itself which was under it, there was something about it that it could not hide. For the white silk was all glowing with a rosy light that came from within it, and it shone through it and shed a rosy brightness all through the hall. The dove flew out of the room again and the girl went away too. And this was the Holy Grail that had passed, and Bors had not seen it.

"But when it was gone and Bors looked at the table again it was covered with food, finer and more delicious than Bors had ever tasted or seen before. 'There are strange things to see in your castle, King Pelles,' said Bors.

"'There are stranger things than you have seen yet,' King Pelles answered. 'It is a place of wonders and of danger for knights, and few of them leave here without coming to harm. Only for the best of them is it safe to stay all night in my castle. You, Sir Knight, may stay if you will, but it will be better for you to go, and so I warn you.'

"'It is not for me to say,' Bors answered, 'that I am better than other knights, and indeed I know some who are better than I. But I am not afraid to be in your castle for a night, and here I will stay.'

"'Do as you please,' said the King, 'but I have warned you.'

"So, when it was time to go to bed, Bors was led to a chamber and left alone in it. Nothing that the King had said had made him afraid, but he thought that it would be better not to take off his armor. And as soon as he had lain down in his armor a great beam of light shone upon him. He could not tell where it came from, but suddenly, along in the beam of light, came a spear, with no hand to hold it, and a little stream of blood flowed from the point of the spear. And before Bors could move the spear came upon him and went through his armor as if it had been a cobweb and made a deep wound in his side. The spear was drawn away again, but with the pain Bors fell back upon his pillow and did not see where it went.

"Then there came a knight, all armed, with his sword drawn, and the knight said: 'Sir Bors, arise and fight with me.'

"Bors was almost fainting, because of the wound in his side, but he arose and tried to fight. And when he tried he found that he could fight better than he thought. He fought the other knight till he gave ground before him, little by little, and at last Bors forced him out of the chamber. Then Bors lay down again to rest, and all at once the room was full of falling arrows. He could not see where they came from, any more than he could see where anything else came from, but

they fell all around him and upon him. They pierced his armor, just as the spear had done, as if there had been no armor, and they wounded him in many places. And these wounds and the wound that the spear had made burned and smarted more than before, and Bors felt weaker and fainter.

"Then a lion came into the chamber and sprang upon Bors and tore off his shield. But again Bors found that he could fight if he tried, and he struck the lion's head with his sword and killed it.

"And next there came an old man, who had a harp. He sat down and began to play on the harp and to sing, and as he played a storm began to rise outside the castle. At first it was only a rising of the wind that Bors heard, but it grew and grew, till it swept through the halls and the corridors of the castle and through the room where Bors lay. It caught at the curtains and the tapestries of the chamber and almost tore them from their places, and it shook the arms that hung on the walls, till they rattled together with a dull, ghostly clatter. Bors could hear the wind, too, rushing and roaring and screaming up over the towers. And then the rain came, and the thunder, with noises of splitting and crashing as if the hills around were breaking and rolling down into the valleys, and the very walls shuddered and trembled, and the lightning was so fierce that it seemed to shine through the walls, as if they had been made of glass.

"But all through the dreadful noise of the storm Bors could hear the soft voice of the old man who sang, as if there had been no other sound. He sang a song of how Joseph of Arimathæa had come to England and had brought the Holy Grail. When he had finished it he spoke to Bors, and, as he talked and as Bors answered him, the storm grew louder and more terrible. 'Bors,' said the old man, 'leave this place. You have done nobly here. There are few knights in the world who could bear all that you have borne to-night. Tell your cousin Lancelot all that you have seen, and tell him that it is he who should be here and should see these things and more, but that he is not so good a knight as to be allowed to see what you have seen. These things are only for the best of knights.'

"'It is well for you,' said Bors, 'that you are old. I am weary with fighting and I am faint and dizzy with many wounds, but in spite of all, if you were not old and weak, I would not hear you say such things of my cousin Sir Lancelot. Sir Lancelot is the best knight that lives, and what any good knight can do or see Lancelot can do or see.'

"'Bors, Bors,' said the old man again, 'do not think that you can frighten me with loud talk. In the strength of his arm and the sureness of his spear and the power of his sword, Lancelot is the best knight that lives, but, for all that, he is not so good a knight as you, Sir Bors. Bors, what did you, and what did Lancelot swear when King Arthur made you knights of his Round Table?'

"'We swore,' said Bors, 'that we would help the King to guard his people,



"AS HE PLAYED A STORM BEGAN TO RISE."

that we would do right and justice, that in all things we would be true and loyal to God and to the King.'

"'Yes, Bors,' said the old man, 'that was what you swore, and have you kept your oath, both by your deeds and in your heart?'

"'As far as God has given me power,' Bors answered, 'I have kept it.'

"'Yes,' said the old man, 'you have kept it well. But how has Lancelot kept it?'

"'Old man,' said Bors, 'do you dare to say to me, Lancelot's cousin and his friend, that he has not kept his oath?'

"'Bors, Bors,' said the old man again, 'do not try to frighten me. I dare to tell you anything that it is good for you to know. In all his deeds Lancelot has kept his oath, but how has he kept it in his heart? Go and ask him. Ask him if in his heart he has always been true and loyal to the King. Ask him if he has never grown proud of his strength. Ask him if he has not sometimes done his deeds for the Queen's praise, and not for the King's love and the King's glory. Ask him if he has never wished that he himself were such a king, with such a queen. Ask

him if that wish was all true and loyal to the King. Bors, Bors, out there in the world, where you and Lancelot live, the strongest knight is the best, and Lancelot is the best knight—out there in the world. But this is the castle of the Holy Grail, and the Holy Grail searches the hearts of men. Here, in this chamber, Sir Bors, Lancelot could not stay as you have stayed and see what you have seen and bear what you have borne.'

"As the old man ceased to speak it seemed to Bors that the burning of his wounds grew less. While he was thinking of this and of what the old man had said, the old man was gone, he could not tell where. Then, he could not tell from where, the white dove flew into the room. It was the same dove that he had seen in the hall, and it held the same little gold censer in its beak, and again there was the sweet odor through the room. And when the dove came the storm was ended. There was no more blinding lightning and the thunder sounded only a little and far off. The rain ceased and all the wind died down.

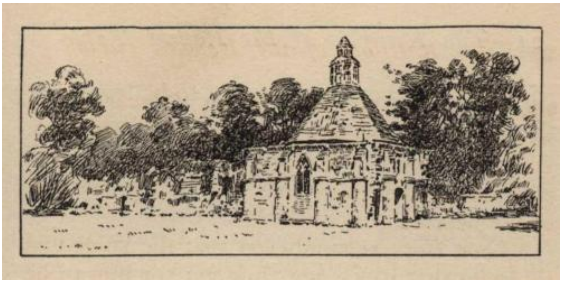
"Then Bors saw four children pass through the room, carrying four lighted tapers. With the four children was a figure like an old man. It wore a long, white robe, and a hood hung low down over the face, so that all that Bors could see of it was the end of a white beard. In the right hand was that spear, with the little stream of blood flowing from the point. There was no one to tell Bors who this was, but somehow he seemed to know that it was Joseph of Arimathæa.

"They passed through the room, but still Bors could see them in the next chamber. The children knelt around the old man and he held high up in his hands that wonderful thing with the covering of white silk. Again the soft, rosy brightness glowed through the silk, and Bors did not know why it was that when he saw it he felt so peaceful and glad. Then he heard a loud voice that said: 'Sir Bors, leave this place; it is not yet time for you to be here.'

"Then all at once the door was shut and Bors could not see the children or the old man or what he carried. The strange, bright light that had shone upon him all this time was gone. Outside the storm and the clouds were past, and a clear ray of moonlight shone through the chamber. All the pain of his wounds was gone and he sank back upon his pillow and slept.

"When he awoke in the morning it seemed to him that he had never felt so strong and fresh. The wounds that he had had from the spear and the arrows had left no scar. And when King Pelles saw him he said: 'Sir Bors, you have done here what few living knights could do, and I know that you will prove one of the best knights of the world.'

"Then Bors remembered that the voice had told him that it was not time yet for him to be in this place, so he took his horse and rode away toward Camelot, to find Lancelot and to tell him what he had seen."



The Abbot's Kitchen

CHAPTER II
HOW WE DISCOVERED CAMELOT

One of the strangest things about this kind of travel is to find how much more you know about the country than the people do who live in it. Before we came to England at all I had read in certain books that the real Camelot was in the county of Somerset. It was at Camelot that King Arthur lived more than anywhere else and where he had his finest castle. So of course we were anxious to see Camelot. Our trouble did not seem to be that we could not find it; it was that we found it in too many places. We had been to Camelford, a poor little village in Cornwall, earlier in our journey, and they had told us that that was Camelot. We did not really believe it, but neither did I feel quite sure that my books were right about the place in Somerset. We thought that it would be best to see all the Camelots, so that we could make up our minds which one we ought to believe in, or whether we ought to believe in any of them at all.

I had studied the books and I had studied the maps, till I almost felt that I could go straight to this Camelot, without any help. It was still called Camelot, it seemed, and it was a fortified hill, near a place called Queen Camel, some dozen miles to the south of Glastonbury.

It was lucky that I knew all this, because when we asked the people of the hotel in Glastonbury if they could give us a carriage and a driver to take us to Camelot they said that they had never heard of any such place. They had heard of Queen Camel. They did not know just where even that was, but they thought that it might be found. I felt so sure that the books and the maps and I were right about it that I told them that we would take the carriage and go to Queen Camel, and then we would see if we could find Camelot. No doubt they thought that we

were insane, but that made no difference to us, and as long as we paid for the carriage it made no difference to them.

Helen's mother is one of those dreadfully sensible people who always want you to take umbrellas and things with you. She was not going with us to discover Camelot, but she said that we must take umbrellas and mackintoshes with us, because it was going to rain. It is always hard to argue with these people, because they are so often right. This time we really had no excuse for not taking them, for they would simply be put in the bottom of the carriage and they would be no trouble. So we took them, and we were scarcely outside Glastonbury before we found that this was one of the times when Helen's mother was right. For then it began to rain. The driver had taken the way that he thought was toward Queen Camel, and we were riding across a great stretch of low, level land. The wind swept across it, and the rain came at us in sheets. We didn't mind it much, with our mackintoshes on, but I did think that it was fair to ask Helen what she thought of the poet who said that this Avalon was a place "Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow."

"Maybe it is," she answered, pulling her water-proof hood down so that scarcely a bit of her could be seen, except the tip of her nose; "this rain doesn't fall; it just comes against us sideways." So the poet's reputation was saved.

It could not rain so hard as this very long, and by and by it stopped altogether. Then it began again, and there were showers all day. Sometimes it looked as if it were going to stop for good, but we could scarcely get our waterproofs off before it began all over.

"Isn't it curious," I said, "that a storm coming up just here should remind me of a story? It is about a time when Gawain had to go out in bad weather. This is the right time to tell the story, too, while we are looking for this particular Camelot. For the story begins at Camelot, and the learned man who first dug it out of its old manuscript and printed it says that Camelot was in Somerset.

"King Arthur was keeping Christmas at Camelot with his knights. The feast lasted for many days. On New Year's Day, as they all sat in the hall, the King and the Queen and the knights, there rode in the most wonderful-looking man whom they had ever seen. He was dressed all in green, and the big horse that he rode was green. And that was not all, for the hair that hung down upon his shoulders was like long, waving grass, and the beard that spread over his breast was like a green bush. He wore no helmet and he carried no shield or spear. In one hand he held a branch of holly and in the other a battle-axe. It was sharp and polished so that it shone like silver. 'Who is the chief here?' he cried.

"'I am the chief,' Arthur answered; 'sit down with us and help us keep our feast.'

"'I have not come to eat and drink,' said the man in green. 'I have come to

see if it is true that you have brave knights in your court, King Arthur.'

"'Then sit and eat with us first,' Arthur answered, 'and afterwards you shall have as many good knights to joust with you as you can wish, and you shall see whether they are brave.'

"'It is not for jousting that I have come, either,' said the man in green. 'Do you see this axe of mine? I will lend it to any knight in this hall who dares to strike me one blow with it, only he must promise that afterwards I may strike him one blow with it, too. He shall strike me with the axe now, and I will strike him with it a year from this day.'

"This was such a new way of proving whether they were brave or not that for a minute none of the knights answered. Then the King himself rose and went toward the man in green. 'Give me your axe,' he said; 'none of us here is afraid of your big talk; I will strike you with the axe myself, and you shall strike me with it whenever you like.'

"Then Gawain sprang from his seat. Gawain was the King's nephew. And he cried: 'My lord, let me try this game with him! You are the King, and if any harm should come to you it would be the harm of all the country, but one knight more or less will count but little.'

"Then many other knights begged the King to do as Gawain had said, and the King thought of it a moment, and then gave the axe, which he had taken from the man in green, to Gawain.

"Sir Knight,' said the man in green, 'will you tell me who you are?'

"'I am Gawain,' he said, 'the nephew of King Arthur.'

"'I have heard of you,' said the other, 'and I am glad that I shall receive my blow from so great a knight. But will you promise that a year from now you will seek me and find me, so that I may give you your blow in return?'

"'I do not know who you are or where you live,' Gawain answered. 'If you will tell me your name and where to find you, I will come to you when the year is over.'

"'I will tell you those things,' said the man in green, 'after you have struck me. If I cannot tell you then, you will be free of your promise and you need not seek me.'

"Then the man in green came down from his horse, knelt on the floor before Gawain, put his long, green hair aside from his neck, and told Gawain to strike. Gawain swung the axe above his head and brought it down upon the neck of the man in green, and his head was cut cleanly off and rolled upon the floor. Instantly the green man sprang after it and caught it in his hands, by the long, green hair. He sprang upon his horse again and held up the head, with its face toward Gawain. 'Sir Gawain,' it said 'seek for me till you find me, a year from now, so that I may return your good blow. Bring the axe with you, and ask,

wherever you go, for the Knight of the Green Chapel.' Then he rode out of the hall and away, still carrying the head in his hands.

"Of course Gawain and the King and all the rest thought that this was the strangest adventure that they had ever seen. They were all sorry for Gawain and they all wondered what would become of him, but there was no danger for a year, and that always seems a long time, at the beginning of it. So, as the time went on, they almost forgot about the Knight of the Green Chapel, and even Gawain himself seemed to have no dread of him. And the year went past like other years. Yet Gawain was not forgetting his promise, and, as the time came near when he must keep it, he began to wonder more and more who this Knight of the Green Chapel could be and where he must go to look for him. 'It may take me a long time to find him,' he said to the King at last, 'and so I mean to leave the court and to begin my search on All Saints' Day.'

"'Yes,' said the King,' that will be best. And we know all the places and nearly all the knights here in the South and in the West of England, and over in the East, but we have never heard of this Knight of the Green Chapel, so it will be best for you to seek him in the North.'

"So, on All Saints' Day, King Arthur made a feast, that all the knights of the court might be together and bid Gawain good-by. They called it a feast, but there was no happiness in it. They were all sad at the parting and with the fear that Gawain would never come back.

"And when the time came they helped Gawain to put on the finest armor that could be found for him and he mounted his horse and left them. He rode slowly at first, and as soon as he came to places that he did not know he began to ask the people whom he met if they could tell him where to find the Green Chapel and the Knight of the Green Chapel. But no one had ever heard of such a place or of such a person.

"He went farther and farther into the North, and as his time grew shorter he tried to travel faster, for he felt that it would be a shame to him if he did not find the Knight of the Green Chapel by New Year's Day. Up great hills he went and down into deep valleys, across wide, lonely plains, with freezing winds sweeping over them, and through dark forests, where the wind cried up among the treetops and the trees groaned and sighed in answer. Often he met wild beasts, wolves that barked and leaped and sprang about him and tried to pull down his horse. But he killed them or beat them and drove them away. Then he came to plains where for many miles he saw no houses and no people. Often he had to sleep in his armor, lying on the ground. Often he had to go so long without food that he was faint with hunger, as well as weary.

"As the days went by the winter came on rougher and stormier and colder. Then the winds that swept across the plains were full of driving rain and sleet

and snow. They cut against his face and almost blinded him, and his horse could scarcely labor through the drifts and stand against the storm. The wet sleet found its way into the joints of his armor and froze there, and it froze into the chains of his mail and choked them up, so that it was all rigid and hard, and it was as if all that he wore were one solid piece of iron or ice. So terrible it was that he almost forgot why he had come, and all that he wanted was to find some place where he and his horse could rest and be warm. But at night he must get off his horse, though he could scarcely bend his limbs, in his frozen armor, and lie down in it, with no shelter but a tree, or perhaps a high rock, and try to sleep till the light came, so that he could go on again.

"Yet wherever he saw any people he asked them if they knew of the Knight of the Green Chapel, and always they answered no. Then he told them how the knight looked, but they all shook their heads or stared at him or laughed, and they all said that they had never seen such a knight. Some of them thought that he must be mad, to be wandering all by himself and asking for a knight with green hair and a green beard, and sometimes Gawain himself almost thought that he must be mad. Sometimes he thought: 'I will hunt for him only till New Year's Day. If I have not found him then it is his fault that he did not tell me where to come, and I shall be free of my promise.' And then at other times he thought: 'I will not count my promise as so small a thing; I will seek this knight as long as I live, if I do not find him, for the honor of King Arthur and the Round Table.'

"And the cold and the storm and the long, rough journey seemed worst of all to Gawain on Christmas Eve, for then he thought most of the King and the Queen and the knights whom he had left at Camelot. He knew that they were all together in the great hall now, that the fires were blazing, that the minstrels were singing, and that a noble feast was spread upon the Round Table. He thought of his own place at that table, where he had sat a year ago, empty now. Did the others look at that seat and think of him and wonder where he was? It was a common thing, he knew, for Arthur's knights to be away from the hall seeking adventures, and he knew that those who were left behind went on with their feasting at such times as these, just as if all were there. No, it was a little thing to them that he was gone, he thought. They were laughing together and eating and drinking, and perhaps some one was telling them some strange old tale, and they were warm and happy; and the light of the fires and the torches was shining on the windows of the hall, so that the people of the country miles away could see it and could say: 'King Arthur and his knights are at Camelot to-night keeping the Christmas feast.' And here was he alone, cold, hungry, weary, riding over the rough ways and through the rough night, to find a man who was to kill him.

"Then there came another thought that made him stronger: 'The honor of the Round Table to-night is not all with those who sit about it; it is here with me

too. I am here because it was I who dared to come, for the King and for all of them. If I never go back the King and all of them will know that, and they will not forget. And now my time is short and I must not rest any more. I will ride all night and go as far as I can to find the Knight of the Green Chapel by New Year's Day.'

"So Gawain rode all night. In the morning he was in a great forest, where it would have been too dark for him to ride, but for the snow that lay everywhere, so that he could dimly see the black trunks of the trees against it. And before the first cold light of the late morning fell into the forest, he saw it touch the top of a high hill before him, and there he saw a castle. It was one of the greatest castles he had ever seen, with strong towers and thick walls and high ramparts. And as soon as he saw it, it seemed to him as if the last strength went out of him and his horse too, so that they could scarcely climb the hill to come to the gate and ask if they might come in.

"But they reached the gate and the porter said: 'Come in, Sir Knight; the lord of the castle will welcome you and you can stay as long as you will.' And the lord of the castle did welcome him and Gawain let his men lead him to a chamber, where they took off his armor and gave him a rich robe to wear. Then they led him back to the hall and placed him at the table with the lord and his wife and his daughter.

"They asked him who he was, and he told them that he was Gawain, a knight of the Round Table. 'It is a proud day for us,' said the lord, 'so far away up here in the North, when a knight comes to us from the court of King Arthur, and now you will stay with us and help us keep our Christmas.'

"'No,' said Gawain, 'I cannot stay, for I must go on and find the Knight of the Green Chapel,' and then he told them all that he knew about this knight and why he had made this journey.

"'Then you will stay with us,' said the lord, 'for the Green Chapel is only two miles from here, and on New Year's Day some one of my servants shall show you the way there.'

"So Gawain stayed, and, on the third day after he had come to the castle, the lord told him that on the next day he was going hunting and asked Gawain if he would go too. 'No,' Gawain answered, 'it is only four days now before I must go to the Knight of the Green Chapel. I have no magic, such as he has, to guard myself against him, and he will kill me. It is not a time now for me to think of hunting or of other pleasures. I must think of more solemn things.'

"'Then shall we make a bargain?' said the lord. 'I will go to the hunt tomorrow, and you shall stay here at the castle. When I come home I will give you all that I have got in the hunt, and you shall give me all that you have got by staying here.'

"'It shall be so, if you wish it,' said Gawain.

"The next morning the lord and his men were away early at the hunt. Gawain breakfasted with the lady of the castle and her daughter, and afterward they left him and he sat alone in the hall. Then the lord's daughter came back, without her mother, and sat on the seat beside him. 'Sir Knight,' she said, 'will you tell me about King Arthur's court?'

"'What shall I tell you?' he asked.

"'We are so far away from all the world here!' she said. 'We never see a town or a court or any people, except those who live here with us. But sometimes we hear strange things and beautiful things about Camelot and Caerleon and London and the court of King Arthur. They say that we cannot believe how grand it is, and they say that there are such feasts and tournaments, and that all the knights and the ladies are so happy there in King Arthur's court! And oh! will you tell me one thing! Is it true that every knight of King Arthur's has some lady whom he loves more than anybody else, and is it true that every lady has some knight whom she loves, who fights for her and wears something that she gave him, a sleeve or a chain or a jewel, and tells everybody that she is the most beautiful lady in the world?'

"'There are many knights,' Gawain answered, 'who have ladies whom they love and who love them, and they do all the things that you have said.'

"The girl looked at Gawain and was silent for a little while, and then she said: 'Sir Knight, is it too much that I am going to ask? I would not ask you to be my knight, for there must be many ladies in King Arthur's court more beautiful and more noble than I am. You would have to love some one of them, I suppose. Only do not tell me so, and I will not ask you. But after you have gone let me remember you and love you, and I will try not to think whether you love me or not.'

"'My child,' said Gawain, 'I am here in your father's castle and he trusts me, and it is not right that I should talk to you of such things without his leave. And besides that, it is not right for me to think of such things now. You know that I am going to find the Knight of the Green Chapel. Your father has promised that on New Year's Day he will send me to him. Then the Knight of the Green Chapel will kill me. I have only three days more to live, and it is no time for me to think of love.'

"'But why must you find this wicked Knight of the Green Chapel?' she asked. 'Go back to Camelot and tell the King and the knights that you fought him and that he could not hurt you. Nobody will know but us. We never go to court and we never would tell anybody what you had done.'

"'No, no,' said Gawain, 'I promised him that I would find him. Now I must find him or I never could go back to King Arthur's court or be one of his knights

again.'

"Then the girl started to go out of the hall, but when she was at the door she turned and came back to Gawain. 'Will you let me kiss you just once?' she said. And Gawain let her kiss him and she went away.

"At night, when the lord of the castle came home from the hunt, he brought with him a deer that he had killed. He gave it to Gawain and said: 'This is what I got in the hunt; now give me what you got by staying behind.'

"Then Gawain gave him a kiss. 'Indeed,' said the lord, 'I think that you have done better than I. Where did you get this?'

"'It was not in our bargain,' said Gawain, 'that I should tell you that.'

"'Very well, then,' said the lord, 'shall we make the same bargain for tomorrow?'

"'Yes,' said Gawain, 'if you wish it.'

"So the next day the lord rode to the hunt again and Gawain stayed behind, as he had done before. And again the lord's daughter came to him as he sat in the hall. 'Sir Knight,' she said, 'is it because you have some other lady whom you love that you will not let me be your lady? I do not ask you to love me, you know, only to let me love you.'

"'No,' Gawain answered, 'I have no lady, and if I might have any now, I could love you as well as any other, but I have only two more days to live and I must not think of such things.'

"Then the girl kissed him twice and went away. When the lord came back that evening he brought the head and the sides of a wild boar that he had killed. He gave these to Gawain and Gawain gave him two kisses. 'You always have better luck than I,' said the lord.

"Then they made the same bargain for the third day, and in the morning the lord rode to the hunt and Gawain stayed behind. As he sat in the hall the lord's daughter came to him again. 'Sir Knight,' she said, 'since you will do nothing else, will you not wear something of mine, as the knights at King Arthur's court do for their ladies? See, this is it, my girdle of green lace. And it is good for a knight to wear, for while you have this around your body you can never be wounded.'

"Then Gawain thought that such a girdle as this would indeed be of use to him, when the time came for the Knight of the Green Chapel to strike him with his axe. So he took the girdle and thanked her for it, and she kissed him three times and went away.

"That night the lord of the castle brought home the skin of a fox. He gave it to Gawain and Gawain gave him three kisses. 'Your luck grows better every day,' said the lord.

"Early the next morning Gawain rose and called for his armor and his horse. One of the lord's servants was to show him the way to the Green Chapel. The

snow was falling again and there was a fierce, cold wind. It was not daylight yet. They rode over rough hills and through deep valleys for a long time, and at last, when it had grown as light as it would be at all on such a dull, dreary day, the servant stopped. 'You are not far now,' he said, 'from the Green Chapel. I can go with you no farther. Ride on into this valley. When you are at the bottom of it look to your left and you will see the chapel.'

"Then the servant turned back and left Gawain alone. He rode to the bottom of the valley and looked about, but nothing like a chapel did he see. But at last he saw a hole in a great rock, a cave, with vines, loaded down with snow, almost hiding its mouth. Then it seemed to Gawain that he heard a sound inside the cave, and he called aloud: 'Is the Knight of the Green Chapel here? Gawain has come to keep his promise to him. He has brought his axe, so that he may pay back the blow that he received a year ago. Is the Knight of the Green Chapel here?'

"Then a voice from the cave said: 'I am here, Sir Gawain, and I am waiting for you. You have kept your time well.'

"And then out of the cave came the Green Knight. It seemed to Gawain that he looked stronger and fiercer than when he was at Arthur's court, and that his hair and beard were longer and of a brighter green. 'Give me my axe,' he cried, 'and take off your helmet and be ready for my stroke. Let us not delay!'

"'I want no delay,' said Gawain, and he took off his helmet, knelt down on the snow and bent his neck, ready for the knight to strike. The Green Knight raised his axe, and then, in spite of himself, Gawain drew a little away from him.

"'How is this?' said the Green Knight; 'are you afraid? I did not flinch when you struck me, a year ago.'

"'I shall not flinch again,' said Gawain; 'strike quickly.'

"Then the knight raised his axe a second time and Gawain was as still as a stone. But this time the axe did not fall. 'Now I must strike you,' said the Green Knight.

"'Strike, then, and do not talk about it,' said Gawain; 'I believe you yourself are losing heart.'

"This time the knight swung the axe quickly up over his head and brought it down with a mighty force upon Gawain's neck, and it made only a little scratch. The girdle of green lace would not let him be wounded. Then he sprang up and drew his sword and cried: 'Now, Knight of the Green Chapel, take care of yourself. I have kept my promise and let you strike me once, but I warn you that if you strike again I shall resist you.'

"'Put up your sword,' the Knight of the Green Chapel answered; 'I do not want to harm you. I could have used you much worse than I have, if I had wished. I tried only to prove you, and you are the bravest and the truest knight that I have

ever found. I am the lord of the castle where you have stayed for this last week. I knew where you got your kisses, for I myself sent my daughter to you to try you, and you would not do what you thought would not be right toward me, and you would not let any thoughts of love turn you aside from your promise to the Knight of the Green Chapel. You were well tried and you proved most true. It was because of that and because you kept your word to me on the first two days that I went to the hunt, that I did not strike you the first or the second time that I raised my axe. But the third time I did strike you, because you were untrue to me in one little thing. For you said that you would give me all that you got by staying in the castle, yet you did not give me the girdle of green lace. It was I who sent that to you by my daughter, too. But you kept it only to save your life, and so I forgive you, and to show you that I forgive you, you may keep it now always.'

"But Gawain tore off the girdle and threw it at the feet of the Knight of the Green Chapel. 'Take it back!' he cried, 'I do not deserve ever to be called an honorable knight again! I came here for the honor of the Round Table, and then I broke my promise to you. Tell me why you came to our court and why you brought me to this shame, and then I will go back to King Arthur and tell him that I am not worthy any longer to be one of his knights. He will ask me why you did this, so tell me and let me go away, for now I have lied to you and I cannot look you in the face.'

"'I did it,' said the Knight of the Green Chapel, 'because the great enchantress, Queen Morgan-le-Fay, King Arthur's sister, who hates him, told me that all his knights were cowards. She said that all who praised them lied or were themselves deceived and that some good knight ought to go and prove them to be the cowards that they were. So I went to try whether they were brave or not, and it was by the magic of Queen Morgan-le-Fay that I was not killed when you cut off my head. But now I see that what I did was wrong. It was Morgan-le-Fay, I see now, who hoped to bring shame on King Arthur's court, because she hated him. And you have shown me that Arthur's knights are brave and true, for you took my challenge and came up here into the North to find me and to let me kill you. Now come back with me to my castle and help us to keep the festival of the New Year. Take up your girdle and come.'

"But Gawain was still filled with shame and horror at what he had done. 'I will not go back with you,' he said, 'but I will keep the girdle to remind me of this time. If I ever feel that I am doing better things and if I ever begin to grow proud of them, I will look at this girdle and it will make me remember how I broke my word.'

"And Gawain would not listen to anything more that the knight said, but he mounted his horse and turned him toward the south and rode away. Gawain

never knew what happened to him on that journey back to Camelot. Perhaps the nights were as cold and the ways as rough as they had been before. Perhaps the wild beasts came against him again. Perhaps the storms still drove the snow and the sleet against him, so that they cut him in the face and froze into his armor. He cared for none of these things and he remembered none of them afterwards. His one thought was to get back to Camelot and tell the King that he was no longer worthy to be his knight, and then to go where no one who had known him should ever see him again.

"And so he rode on, as fast as he could, for he did not know how many days, and at last, in the early winter evening, he saw the glow in the windows of the castle at Camelot. Once more he hurried his horse till he reached the gate. He threw himself down from the saddle and hastened to the hall, where a great shout went up: 'Gawain is alive and he has come back!' and the knights and the ladies crowded around him to ask him where he had been and what he had seen and done. He pushed his way through them all and threw himself down upon the floor before the King. He told all of his story, how he had gone out for the honor of the Round Table and how he had broken his word and been shamed, and at the end he held up the girdle of green lace and said: 'My lord, I shall leave you now and I shall never see you again, for I am not worthy to be your knight, but I shall carry this with me, and shall always wear it, so that I never can forget my shame."

"And the King answered: 'Gawain, you are still among the best of my knights. You failed a little at last, but it was no coward and no false knight who went up there to seek his death and to keep a promise that he need not have kept. Wear your girdle, but it shall be no shame to you. And that it may be none all my knights shall wear girdles of green lace like it.

"So the story says that all of King Arthur's knights wore green lace girdles in honor of Gawain. I don't know what became of the girdles afterwards, but they cannot have worn them always, or at least Gawain cannot have worn his. For you know he could never be wounded while he had it on, and he certainly was wounded afterwards. But I will tell you about that when I get to it."

About the time that we got to the end of this story we came to a place which the driver said was as far from Glastonbury as he had ever been in this direction. We stopped at a little inn by the road, and the driver asked the way to Queen Camel. We also asked the man who told him if he had ever heard of a hill or of any sort of place about here called Camelot, but he never had. So we went on to find it for ourselves. After more riding and more asking of the way and more showers, we came to Queen Camel. It was past luncheon-time then, and, what was more to the point, it was past the horse's luncheon-time. So we decided that we would not go any farther till we had all had something to eat.

The Bell looked like the best hotel in the place, so we went there and astonished the proprietor and all the servants by asking for something to eat. But we got it, and while we were at luncheon the driver put the horse in the stable and then talked with the proprietor, to find out whether he knew anything about Camelot. Now the keeper of this bit of an hotel must have been a remarkably intelligent man, for he really did know something about it. He came in to see us and he said that he thought that it must be Cadbury Castle that we were looking for. Then a great light shone upon me and I remembered what I ought to have remembered before, that one of my books at home had said that it was called Cadbury Castle now. "But do they not call it Camelot too?" I asked him. I did not like to give up that name.

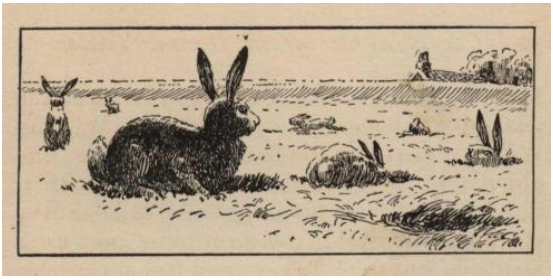
"Oh, yes, sir," he said, "they call it Camelot too."

"And do they say that King Arthur lived there?"

"No, sir, he didn't live there; he placed his army there."

Then the landlord went away and came back with a big book, a history of Somersetshire, or something of that sort, to show us what it had to say about Cadbury Castle. It did not say much that I did not know before, but it said enough to prove what I wanted to know most of all. And that was that this Cadbury Castle was without any doubt the place that we were looking for. We finished our luncheon, the landlord showed us our way, and we went on again.

It was only a little way now. We were to find a steep road that led up the side of the hill to Cadbury Castle. It was too steep, we were told, to take our carriage up, and we should have to leave it at the bottom and walk. And so it proved. We found the hill and the steep little track up its side. We got down from the carriage, and, while we waited for the driver to find a safe place to leave the horse, we gazed up the hill, along the rough little road, and knew that at last we were before the gates of Camelot.



"The city and the fortress of the rabbits"

CHAPTER III
THE BOY FROM THE FOREST

We walked up the steep road, and just before we came to the top of the hill the rain began again. There was one little house near the top and we decided to let Camelot wait for a few minutes longer and go into the house and stay till the rain stopped.

The woman of the house seemed to be glad to see us, and she asked us to write our names in her visitors' book. The names and the dates in the book showed that Camelot had some six or eight visitors a year. Of course we tried to get the woman to tell us something about the place, and of course we failed. She knew that it was called Cadbury Castle and sometimes Camelot and sometimes the Camp. She knew that the well close by her house was called King Arthur's Well, but she did not know why. The water in it was not good to drink, and in dry times they could not get water from it at all. She got drinking-water and in dry times all the water that she used from St. Anne's Wishing Well, a quarter of a mile around the hill. She did not know what that name meant either. She used to have a book that told all about the place, but she couldn't show it to us, because it had been lent to somebody and had never been returned. The vicar had studied a good deal about the place too, and he knew all about it. Could we find the vicar and get him to tell us about it? Oh, no, it wasn't the present vicar, it was the old vicar, and he was dead.

So we gave up learning anything and waited for the rain to stop, and then went out to see as much as we could for ourselves. The hilltop was broad and level. I can't tell just how broad, because I am no judge of acres, but I believe it was several. It had a low wall of earth around it, covered with grass, of course, like all the rest of the place. When we stood on the top of this wall and looked down, we saw that the ground sloped away from us till it made a sort of ditch, and then rose again and made another earth wall, a little way down the hillside. Then it did the same thing again, and yet once more. So in its time this hilltop must have had four strong walls around it. It really looked much more like a fort or camp than like a city. It seemed too small for a city, though it might have been a pretty big camp. If we had been looking for hard facts, I think we should have believed what the hotel-keeper had said, that this was not where King Arthur lived, but where he placed his army.

I remembered reading somewhere that the Britons and the Romans and the Saxons had all held this place at different times. I had read, too, I was sure, that parts of old walls, of a dusky blue stone, and old coins had been found here. It

was a fine place for a camp or a castle. It was so high and breezy and we could see for so many miles across the country, that we could understand how useful and pleasant it must have been for either or for both. It was pleasant enough now, this broad, grassy hilltop, with its four grassy walls and the woodland sloping away from it all around. But nobody lived here now to enjoy it—nobody, that is to say, but the rabbits. For the place is theirs now, and they dig holes in the ground and make their houses where King Arthur's castle stood, where he and his knights sat in the hall about the Round Table, and where all the greatest of the world came to see all that was richest and noblest and best for kings and knights to be and to enjoy.

The rabbits scuttled across our way, as we walked about, and leaped into their holes, when we came near, and then looked timidly out again, when we had gone past, and wondered what we were doing and what right we had here in their Camelot. There were only these holes now, where once there were palaces and churches, and no traces of old glories, but the walls of earth and turf. Yet it seemed better to me that Camelot should be left alone and forgotten, like this, the city and the fortress of the rabbits, but still high and open and fresh and free, than that it should be a poor little town, full of poor little people, like Camelford. Helen said that she thought so too, when I asked her, and she was willing that this should be Camelot, if I thought that it really was.

"Really and truly and honestly," I said, "I think that this is as likely to have been Camelot as any place that we have seen or shall see. It is lucky for us that we know more about it than the people who live about here do. If we did not I am afraid it would not interest us much. I think that I have read somewhere that the King and his knights were still here on the hilltop, kept here and made invisible by some enchantment, that at certain times they could be seen, and that some people had really seen them. I don't believe this story, but while we are here let us believe at least, with all our might, that we are really and truly in Camelot.

"Now here is a story, with Camelot in it, that you ought to hear. You must not mind if it makes you think of a story that we saw once in the fire. There are different ways of telling the same story, you know, and this is a different way of telling that same story.

"Once, when Arthur was first King of England, he had a good knight called Sir Percivale. He was killed in a tournament by a knight whom no one knew. Some who saw the fight said that it was not a fair one and that Sir Percivale was as good as murdered. The knight who killed him wore red armor, and once, when his visor was up, Arthur saw his face. No one knew where the knight went afterward and Arthur could never find him to make him answer for the death of Sir Percivale.

"Now this Sir Percivale had seven sons and a daughter, and six of his sons

were killed also, in tournaments or battles. But the youngest of the sons was not old enough yet to be a knight, and when his mother had lost her husband and all her sons but him, she resolved that he should never be a knight. His name was Percivale, like his father's. It was right, she thought, for her to keep this last son that she had safe and not to let him fight and be killed, as his father and his brother's had been. And she feared so much that when he grew up he would want to be a knight, like the others, that she resolved that he should never know anything about knights or tournaments or wars or arms.

"She took him far away from the place where they had lived, and made a home in the woods. It was far from the towns and the tournaments and the courts, and it was even away from the roads that led through the country. It was a lonely place that the mother chose, and she hoped that no one would ever come to it from the world that she had left. She brought her daughter with her, I suppose, though the story says nothing about her just here, and she brought nobody else but servants—women and boys and old men. Nobody in her house was ever allowed to speak of knights or arms or battles or anything that had to do with them. She would not even have any big, strong horses kept about the place, because they reminded her of the war horses that knights rode. She tried to bring up her boy so that he should know only of peaceful things. He should know the trees and the flowers of the woods, she thought; he should know the goats and the sheep and the cows that they kept, how the fruits grew in the orchard, how the birds lived in the trees and the bees in their hive; but he should never know the cruel ways of men out in the world. He should see the axe of the woodman, not the battle-axe; the scythe, not the sword; the crook of the shepherd, not the spear.

"So the boy grew up in the forest and ran about wherever he would and climbed the trees and followed the squirrels and studied the nests of the birds and knew all the plants that grew and all the animals that lived about him. If it had not been for many things that his mother taught him he would have been almost like one of the animals of the wood himself. He could run almost as fast as the deer and he could climb almost as well as the squirrel, and he could sing as well as some of the birds.

"When he grew a little older his mother let him have a bow and arrows to play with and shoot at marks, but nobody told him that men used bows and arrows to shoot at one another or that men ever wanted to harm one another. But he began to shoot at the birds with his arrows, and at last he hit one of them and killed it. Then he looked at the dead bird lying at his feet and he heard the other birds singing all around him. And he thought: 'I have done a dreadful thing; a little while ago this bird was singing too, and was as happy as the rest of them, and now it can never sing any more or be happy any more, because I have killed

it.' And he broke his bow and threw it away and he threw himself down on the ground beside the little dead bird and cried at what he had done. And when his mother saw how grieved he was she said that all the birds should be driven away, so that they should not trouble him. But Percivale begged her to let them stay. He liked to hear them sing, and to drive them off would be a crueler thing than he had done already. And his mother thought: 'The boy is right; I brought him here to find peace and safety for both of us, and why should I not let the poor birds stay in peace and safety too?'

"But it was foolish for the poor woman to think that she could keep her boy so that he would never know anything of the world. The world was all around him, no matter how far off, and it was sure some time to come where he was. And so, one day, as he was wandering in the wood, he saw three horses coming, larger and stronger and finer than any horses he had ever seen before. And on their backs, he thought, were three men, but he could not feel sure, for they did not look like any men whom he had ever seen. They seemed to be all covered with iron, which was polished so that it glistened where the light touched it, and they wore many gay and beautiful colors besides. He stood and looked at them till they came close to him, and then one of them said: 'My boy, have you seen a knight pass this way?'

"'I do not know what a knight is,' Percivale answered.

"'We are knights,' the man on the horse said; 'have you seen anyone like us?'

"But Percivale was wondering so much at what he saw that he could not answer. 'What is this?' he asked, touching the knight's shield.

"'That?' the knight answered, 'that is my shield.'

"'And what is it for?'

"'To keep other knights from hitting me with their spears or their swords.'

"'Spears? What are they?'

"'This is a spear,' the knight answered, showing him one.

"'And what is this?'

"'That is a saddle.'

"'And what is this?'

"'A sword.'

"And so Percivale asked the knights about everything that they wore and everything that they carried and all that was on their horses. 'And where did you get these things?' he asked. 'Did you always wear them?'

"'No,' the knight answered; 'King Arthur gave me these arms when he made me a knight.'

"'Then you were not always a knight?' Percivale asked again.

"'Why, no, I was a squire, a young man, like you, and King Arthur made

me a Knight and gave me these arms.'

"'Who is King Arthur, and where is he?'

"'He is the King of the country, and he lives at Camelot.'

"Then Percivale ran home as fast as he could and said to his mother: 'Mother, I saw some knights in the forest, and one of them told me that he was not a knight always, but King Arthur made him one, and before that he was a young man like me. And now I want to go to King Arthur, too, and ask him to make me a knight, so that I can wear bright iron things like them and ride on a big horse.'

"The instant that she heard the word 'knights' the mother knew that all her care was lost. The boy was a man now. He had seen what other men were like and she knew that he would never be happy again till he was like the rest of them. Before her mind, all at once, everything came back—the court, the field of the tournament, the men all dressed in steel, with their sharp, cruel spears, the gleaming lines charging against each other, the knights falling from their horses and rolling on the ground. Her brain whirled around as she thought of all this, and her one last son in the midst of it, to be killed, perhaps, as the rest had been. But she knew that he must go—that he would go—nothing could keep him with her now.

"'My son,' she said, 'if you will leave me and be a knight, like those that you have seen, go to King Arthur. His are the best of knights and among them you will learn all that you ought to know. Before you are a knight the King will make you swear that you will be always loyal and upright, that you will be faithful, gentle, and merciful, and that you will fight for the right of the poor and the weak. Percivale, some knights forget these things, after they have sworn them, but you will not forget. Remember them the more because I tell them to you now. Be ready always to help those who need help most, the poor and the weak and the old and children and women. Keep yourself in the company of wise men and talk with them and learn of them. Percivale, the King will make you swear, too, that you will fear shame more than death. And I tell you that. I have lost your father and your brothers, but I would rather lose you, too, than not to know that you feared shame more than death.'

"Then, from the horses that his mother had, Percivale chose the one he thought the best. It was not a war horse, of course, and it was not even a good saddle horse, but it would carry him. He put some old pieces of cloth on the horse's back, for a saddle, and with more of these, and bits of cord and woven twigs he tried to make something to look like the trappings that he had seen on the horses of the knights. Then he found a long pole and sharpened the end of it, to make it look like a spear. When he had done all that he could he got on the back of the horse, bade his mother good-by, and rode away to find the court of

King Arthur.

"The King and the Queen and their knights were in the great hall of the castle at Camelot, when a strange knight, dressed in red armor, came in and walked straight to where the King and the Queen sat. A page was just offering to the Queen a gold goblet of wine. The red knight seized the goblet and threw the wine in the Queen's face. Then he said: 'If there is any one here who is bold enough to avenge this insult to the Queen and to bring back this goblet, let him follow me and I will wait for him in the meadow near the castle!' Then he left the hall, took his horse, which he had left at the door, and went to the meadow.

"In the hall all the knights jumped from their places. But for an instant they only stood and stared at one another. They remembered the Green Knight, and they thought that this other knight would never dare to do what he had done, unless he had some magic to guard him against them. I am sure that in a moment some one of them would have gone after him, but just in that moment a strange-looking young man rode straight into the hall, on a poor, old, boney horse. He looked so queer, with his simple dress and the saddle and trappings that he had made himself, and his rough pole for a spear, that the knights almost forgot the insult to the Queen in looking at him, and some of them laughed as they saw him ride through the hall toward the King, with no more thought of fear than if he had been a king himself. He came to where Kay, King Arthur's seneschal, stood, and said to him: 'Tall man, is that King Arthur who sits there?'

"'What do you want with King Arthur?' said Kay.

"'My mother told me,' the young man answered, 'to come to King Arthur and be made a knight by him.'

"'You are not fit to be a knight,' said Kay; 'go back to your cows and your goats.' Kay was a rough sort of fellow and he was always saying unpleasant things without waiting to find out what he was talking about.

"Then a dwarf came close to the boy and cried out: 'Percivale, you are welcome here! I know that you will be one of the best of knights, for I knew your father and your brothers, and they were all good knights!'

"And Kay was so angry with the dwarf for speaking in this way that he struck him and knocked him down. Now when Arthur had seen the red knight come into the hall and insult the Queen and then go away again, he had been as much astonished as any of the knights, and he had thought, just as they had, that he must have some charm to protect him. But he had had another thought, and it was: 'Where have I seen the face of that knight before?' And when the young man had come into the hall he had thought again: 'I have seen that face, too, before.' But when he heard the dwarf call him by name he remembered it all. 'Young man,' he said, 'are you the son of my old knight, Sir Percivale? I know that you are, because you are so much like him, and the man who killed your

father was here just now and insulted the Queen and all of us.'

"'Yes, yes,' Kay shouted, 'go after him, boy, and avenge your father and avenge the Queen and bring back her golden goblet! And when you have killed him you can have his horse and his armor, and then you will look fit to be made a knight.'

"'I will do what you say,' the boy answered, and he turned his horse and rode out of the hall again. When he came to the meadow the red knight was there, riding up and down. 'Boy,' he said, 'do you know if anyone is coming from the hall to take this gold cup from me?'

"'I have come from the hall,' Percivale answered, 'to take that gold cup from you.'

"'Go back and tell the King,' said the red knight, 'to send a man, a knight, to take it. And tell him that I will not wait much longer.'

"'I mean to take it from you myself,' said Percivale again, 'so be ready for me.'

"Then Percivale made his poor old horse go as fast as it could, and he came against the red knight with his pointed pole. The knight tried to strike the pole aside with his spear, but Percivale hit him fairly with it and knocked him off his horse. And in falling he managed somehow to break his neck.

"All that had passed in the hall since the red knight had appeared there had passed so quickly that the King and the knights had scarcely had time to know what was going on at all till it was all over. But when Percivale had gone to find the red knight, Uwain, King Arthur's nephew, said: 'Kay, it was not right for you to send such a boy as that after a knight who is no doubt a hard fighter. The knight will kill him, and then a double disgrace will fall upon the court, that of letting the boy be killed and that of sending no good man to avenge the insult to the Queen. Now I will go and see if I am in time to save the boy and punish the knight.'

"So Uwain went to the meadow and there he found Percivale trying to take off the dead knight's armor. He could not do it, because he knew nothing about armor and did not know how it was fastened. So Uwain showed him how to take it off and then how to dress himself in it. 'And now,' said Uwain, 'come to King Arthur and I know that he will gladly make you a knight, for you have shown that you are worthy to be one.'

"'No, 'said Percivale, 'I will not go back now. But tell me, what is the name of the tall man who told me to follow this knight?'

"'He is Sir Kay,' Uwain answered, 'King Arthur's seneschal.'

"Then Percivale said: 'Take this gold cup back to the Queen and tell her that I have avenged the insult to her. Tell King Arthur that wherever I go I will be his servant and will try to do him what honor I can, but tell Sir Kay that I will

never come back to King Arthur's court till I have met him and punished him for striking the dwarf who greeted me when I came into the hall. My mother told me to fight for the poor and the weak, and I am sure that dwarf is weak and I ought to fight for him.'

"When Uwain went back to the hall with these messages Kay laughed, but I am not sure that he felt quite comfortable. He had had bad luck before in making fun of young men who turned out well in spite of their simple looks. Perhaps you may like to know how the dwarf knew who Percivale was. It was very simple. He used to live in Percivale's father's house, and he knew him because he was so much like his father.

"And Percivale was riding away from the court and did not know or care where he was going. But after awhile he met a knight who asked him whence he came. 'I come from the court of King Arthur,' he answered.

"And the knight said: 'I am the enemy of King Arthur and of all his men, and when I meet any of them I kill them, if I can, and so I will kill you now, if I can.'

"So they took their places and charged against each other with their spears. Percivale had a real spear now. And Percivale threw the knight off his horse and he begged for mercy. 'You shall have mercy,' Percivale said, 'if you will go to the court of King Arthur and tell him that Percivale sent you and that Percivale will never come to his court again till he has punished Sir Kay for striking the dwarf.'

"The knight did as Percivale bade him, and the story says that within a week he overcame sixteen knights and made every one of them go to the court and tell King Arthur that Percivale had sent him and that Percivale would never come back till he had met Sir Kay and punished him for striking the dwarf. Now you can imagine that, when these knights came into the hall, two or three of them a day, and brought always this same message, Kay kept getting more and more uncomfortable. Every new one who came proved over again what a tough fighter Percivale was and every one of them told the King and the court that Percivale was waiting for a chance to fight with Kay. And then the other knights began to blame Kay for making such a fine young man leave the court. For it was clear, they said, that he would some time be one of the best knights among them all. At last King Arthur said that he himself, with some of his best knights, would go to search for Percivale. And Kay, who was really no coward, went with them.

"And Percivale kept on his way. And one evening, when it was time for him to find a place to stay for the night, he saw a great castle before him. He knocked on the gate and a young man with a thin, pale face put his head through an opening in the battlement and looked at him. Then the young man came and opened the gate for Percivale and led him to the hall. There were eighteen young men there, all thin and with pale faces, like the first. They took off Percivale's

armor and they all sat down together. Then five young women came into the hall, and Percivale thought that one of them, who was the lady of the castle, was the most beautiful he had ever seen. Mind, I don't say that I think so; I say that Percivale thought so. For, as one of the beautiful, wonderful books that tells this story says, 'whiter was her skin than the bloom of crystal, and her hair and her two eyebrows were blacker than jet, and on her cheeks were two red spots, redder than whatever is reddest.' She was dressed in satin, but it was old and faded and worn.

"Afterwards two nuns came into the hall. One of them carried a flask of wine and the other had six loaves of bread. 'Lady,' said one of the nuns, 'there is not so much bread and wine left in our convent as we have brought you here.' Then they all sat at a table, and Percivale saw that the lady of the castle was giving more of the bread and the wine to him than to any of the others. So he took all the bread and wine and divided them equally among all who were at the table. And when it was time they led Percivale to his chamber.

"And the rest still sat in the hall. Then one of the young men said to the lady of the castle: 'Sister, go to this young man and tell him that you will be his wife, if he will rescue you and the rest of us from our enemies.'

"'I cannot do that,' she answered. 'He may not want me for his wife; if he did he would ask me.'

"'Sister,' said the young man again, 'we have no more food and we cannot hold the castle any longer. This is the only hope we have. You must do this or we will leave you, and your enemies may do what they like with you and your castle.'

"So she left them and went to the door of Percivale's chamber and opened it. It was dark and he was asleep, but he heard her weeping and awoke. 'Who are you,' he asked, 'and why are you weeping? Can I help you?'

"'My lord,' she answered, 'if you do not help me nothing can ever help me. I am the lady of the castle. My father owned this castle and all the lands around it. There was a wicked knight, named Sir Mordred, who wanted me to be his wife, but I would not, and so, after my father died and left me the castle and the lands, Sir Mordred made war upon me. I had not men enough to fight with him, and so he has taken everything I had except this castle. But this castle is so strong that the few men whom you have seen were able to hold it as long as we had food. They are my foster brothers. Mordred and his men always watch the castle to see that no one goes out from it to bring food, and so at last all that we had was gone. Then the nuns, who are permitted to go wherever they like, brought us food, but now they have no more. And Mordred watches us so closely that he will know that we have no more food, and he will come against us at once and take the castle, unless you can help us. So the young men told me that I must

come to you and tell you that I would be your wife if you would save us, for there was no other way. Forgive me, Sir Knight, for doing what I must do, and help me and my brothers, if you can.'

"Then Percivale answered: 'I know that you do not say this because you want to be my wife, and so I will not ask it of you. Marry whomever you will. To-morrow, if this Sir Mordred comes, I will do my best to help you.'

"And so we have come to Mordred. I am almost sorry that I have to tell you about him, but I should have to tell you, some time, and it may as well be now. Mordred was the brother of Gawain, and so he was King Arthur's nephew. He was a knight of the Round Table, and he was the wickedest and most treacherous man who was ever in Arthur's court. When people tell you that they do not like King Arthur because he was too good—and somebody is sure to tell you that some time—ask them what they think of his letting such a creature as Mordred be a knight of his Round Table. Still, I suppose Arthur did not know how bad Mordred was. Good people are often slow to believe that there are any bad people, and Arthur was so.

"Well, in the morning, surely enough, there were Mordred's men all around the castle. There were tents set up and knights were riding up and down on horses, and banners were flying, and it all looked as if they had come to fight against a city, instead of against five women and eighteen starved young men. Breakfast did not take long that morning, because there was nothing in the castle to eat. So, as soon as he was up, Percivale put on his armor and called for his horse and rode out of the castle. He came near to some of the knights who were riding about and seemed to be so ready to fight, and called out that he wanted to see Sir Mordred and to talk with him.

"When Sir Mordred came, Percivale said to him: 'I challenge you alone, Sir Mordred to fight with me alone for the right of the lady of this castle. If you beat me you shall keep all that you have taken from her and you shall have the castle too. If I beat you she shall keep the castle and you shall give her back all that she had before. Do you agree to this?'

"And Mordred said: 'I agree.'

"It was a short battle. They charged against each other once, and Mordred's spear was broken against Percivale's shield, but Percivale's spear went through Mordred's shield and through his shoulder. Mordred could not fight any more after that, so he promised to give back to the lady of the castle all the lands and everything else that he had taken from her, if Percivale would not kill him. Percivale made him promise, too, that his men should take to the castle that very day enough food and drink for a hundred men and their horses. Then he sent Mordred himself to Camelot, to say to the King and the court that Percivale would never come back there till he had punished Sir Kay for striking the dwarf. But

when Mordred got to Camelot the King and Kay and a good many of the other knights had gone to hunt for Percivale, and there were not many left to hear the message.

"Then Percivale took his leave of the people of the castle and rode on his way. He rode all day, and in the evening he came to the cell of a hermit, who made him welcome, and he stayed with him all night. In the morning he left the cell to go on his way, but just in front of the door he saw something that made him stop to look at it. There had been a fall of snow in the night, and a little way from the hermit's cell a hawk had killed a wild fowl and the snow was stained with its blood. Something had frightened the hawk away and now a raven had lighted on the snow near the wild fowl. It was this that made Percivale stop to look, for the blackness of the raven and the whiteness of the snow and the red of the blood made him think of the black hair of the lady of the castle where he had stayed, and of her white skin, and of the red in her cheeks. This must have been a pleasant thought, for Percivale stood there thinking it and gazing at the blood on the snow for a long time.

"Now it happened that King Arthur's tent had been pitched for the night near this very place. And Arthur came out of his tent and saw some one leaning on a spear and looking upon the ground. And he told one of his young men to go and see who it was. So the young man rode to where Percivale stood and said: 'Who are you, and what are you doing here?'

"But Percivale was thinking so much of the raven and the snow and the blood and the lady of the castle that he gave no answer, and then the young man thrust at him with his spear. Then Percivale turned and struck the young man with his own spear and knocked him off his horse, and he went back to tell the King how he had fared. And Kay said: 'I will go and make him tell me who he is.'

"So Kay came and said and did very much as the young man had done, and Percivale knocked him off his horse too, and in the fall he broke his arm. Kay's horse galloped back alone to where the King and the knights were and Kay had to walk back. 'Now, I will go,' said Gawain. 'It is likely, Kay, that you spoke to him rudely, for you do speak rudely sometimes. The knight may be deep in some thoughts in which he does not like to be disturbed, but I will try to bring him back.'

**[Illustration: "Kay's horse galloped back alone"
(missing from book)]**

"It used to be said that Gawain could speak so well that nobody could ever refuse him anything that he asked. He went to Percivale and stood still beside him for a moment and then said to him: 'If I thought that it would be pleasant to you to hear it, I would give you a message from King Arthur. He wishes that you would come to his tent. Two others have come here before me to speak to you.'

"'Yes,' said Percivale, 'and they spoke to me rudely and attacked me. And it annoyed me, because I was looking at the snow and the raven and the blood, and I was thinking of the face and the hair and the cheeks of the lady whom I fought for yesterday. But tell me, is Sir Kay with King Arthur?'

"'Yes,' said Gawain, 'and he was the second of the men who came to speak to you, and the fall from his horse that you gave him broke his arm.'

"'Ah, then I am glad,' said Percivale, 'for now I have punished him for striking the dwarf.'

"'For striking the dwarf?' Gawain repeated, 'then you are Percivale! This is good news! Come back with me to the King, for he and all of us have left Camelot to seek for you.'

"'Yes,' Percivale answered, 'I can come back with you now, for I have met Sir Kay and have punished him for striking the dwarf.'

"So Gawain led Percivale back to the King, and Arthur and his knights welcomed him as one of the best among them all. Then they all went back to Camelot together, and as soon as they were there King Arthur made Percivale a knight. And he said to him, when he had touched his shoulders with his sword: 'Rise, Sir Percivale, and may God make you a good knight. I know that He will, Sir Percivale, for no young man who has ever come to my court has done so soon such noble things as you have done. For before you were a knight at all you fought many battles for right and justice, and you are worthy to be called God's own knight. And you are worthy, too, to be a knight of the Round Table. Kneel again, Sir Percivale, and take the oath of the Round Table.'

"Then Percivale knelt before the King again and the King said to him: 'Do you swear that you will help the King to guard his people and to keep peace and justice in his land; that you will be faithful to your fellows; that you will do right to poor and rich alike? Do you swear that in all things you will be true and loyal to God and to the King?'

"And Percivale answered: 'I swear it.'

"The King took Percivale's hand and turned toward the Round Table. All the knights looked eagerly to see where his place would be, for they thought: 'No man of us has ever done such deeds as his while he was still so young, and who knows but he may be that best knight of all the world, who is to sit in the Siege Perilous?'

"The King thought of that too, and he paused beside the Siege Perilous, to

see if there were any letters in it, but there were not. But in the next seat to it, where no one had ever sat since Arthur had been King, he saw new letters of gold, and the letters said: 'This is the seat of Percivale, God's knight.'"



The Tower of London

CHAPTER IV
THE QUEEN'S ROBING-ROOM

When we got back to the hotel at Glastonbury that night there was a surprise awaiting us. Helen's mother had a letter and she said: "We are going to London by the first train to-morrow morning, and then we are going straight to Paris."

Now you must know that before we started on this journey Helen's mother had said that she did not care in the least where we went, except that we must go to Paris. So it was agreed between us that she should be allowed to go to Paris just whenever she pleased and that I should arrange everything else just as I pleased. And so, when she said that we were going to Paris at once, she made exactly the one announcement that she had a perfect right to make, without asking me anything about it at all. Still, just at first, I was not at all pleased.

I said that of course we should do just as she liked about it, still we had thought that we were to have plenty of time in Glastonbury, and so we had not gone to see the ruins of the abbey yet, and it seemed a pity to have to leave Glastonbury without seeing them. Helen knew nothing about the ruins of the abbey, but she agreed with me. That made no difference to Helen's mother. She had a letter from somebody whom she knew, who was in Paris. That somebody

was to be there only for a week, and she must be there at the same time. We really had no right to object, and so I gave up objecting and tried to think of the best way out of it. "Couldn't we come back here again afterwards?" Helen suggested.

Now the notion of going to a little place like Glastonbury, so far off the usual lines of travel, twice in the same journey, is one that would never come into the head of any ordinary traveller. But Helen is not an ordinary traveller. And when I came to think of it I could not see the slightest reason in the world why we should not come back to Glastonbury after we had been to Paris. I looked at Helen's mother and said: "May we?"

"You know very well," she said, "that you can go and come wherever you like, as long as you let me go to Paris."

Here was another notion. "As long as I let you go to Paris," I repeated. "That is just what I will do. What do you want of me in Paris? All the time that you are there you women will be running about the city, seeing things that I don't care about and doing things that I don't care about, such as shopping, and I should only be in the way. You would get on better without me, and so why should I go to Paris at all? I will go to London with you to-morrow, and then I will wait there for you till you come back."

Helen's mother liked my plan so much that I almost felt hurt. "I don't see," she said, "how you could be of the least use in Paris. You will have a much better time in London, and I shall have you off my mind, and can do just what I like."

This almost took my breath away, but, as the plan was my own, of course I had to pretend that I liked it. I said that there were several things in London that I wanted to see again, and I wanted to look up two or three places not far from London that had stories about them. I was afraid I should not have time to go to them if I went to Paris too. When I said that Helen began to take an interest, as I had thought that perhaps she might. "Are there more stories in London?" she asked.

"If you and I," I said, "were to stay in London and find a story every day, we should not live long enough to find half of them."

"Oh!" said Helen.

"Now do you think?" I said, "when you come to think of it a second time, that you really need Helen in Paris any more than you do me? When she is a little older she will want to go there just as much as you do now, and then she can go. But now, don't you think that you should like to have her off your mind as well as me, and don't you think that she could do a good deal toward cheering me up there in London, while you are gone?"

Helen looked at her mother to see what she was going to say. She said nothing at all, but she looked at Helen in a way that meant that she might do just as she pleased about it, and Helen said: "If you don't mind very much, I think I

will stay in London."

Helen's mother did not mind very much, so I said: "Very well, then; this is what we will do. We will go all the way to Dover with you, and then we will come back to London and have as good a time as we can, till you come back from having the best time that ever was in the world, in Paris. And when you are with us again we will come back here to Glastonbury and go to some other good places."

Nobody could make the least objection to that. And so the next day but one Helen and I found that we were left quite to ourselves in London. We found plenty of things to amuse us. We went to see the Tower of London, as Americans do. We found the old armor and weapons that were there most interesting, and Helen made a discovery. "Did King Arthur's knights wear armors like those?" she asked.

"Yes," I said, "about like those."

"With all those chains and iron things?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"Then I know what became of the green lace girdles that Gawain and the rest of them had."

"Very well; what did become of them?"

"Why, don't you see? They all wore out. They wouldn't last a week, if they put them round their waists, with all those iron things on."

There was really no need of any better explanation than this, and so I gave up ever finding any.

"There is one curious little thing about this Tower," I said, "that is not in most of the books about it. It was here, you know, long before King Arthur's time. One of the old kings was called Bran the Blessed. And once he told his men that when he was dead they must cut off his head and bury it under the White Tower, in London, with the face toward France, and that as long as it stayed there England could never be harmed by any foe from abroad. Now I have never heard of any White Tower in London, except this big square one in the middle of the Tower of London, so that I have no doubt that it was here that the head of Bran the Blessed was buried, with the face toward France, to guard England from her foreign foes. But when Arthur came to be King he had the head dug up, for he said that it would be better for England to be guarded by the strength and the courage of Englishmen than by magic. You can look around you at the England of to-day and judge for yourself whether Arthur was right."

I had heard that there were pictures of some of the King Arthur stories in the Queen's robing-room, at the Palace of Westminster, and of course we wanted to see them. Now anybody who looks moderately respectable can walk through the Palace of Westminster any Saturday. The trouble is that the policemen who

are posted in the rooms will not let you stay in any one of them long enough to do more than take a glance at it and pass on to the next room. Of course this would not do for us, when there were pictures of King Arthur to be looked at. But we were very lucky. We knew somebody who knew somebody who knew somebody else, and I rather think that this last somebody was the secretary of the Lord Great Chamberlain. At any rate, there were some letters written about us, and we were told to go to the Palace of Westminster and ask for the inspector of police. So we went there when Saturday came around and saw the inspector and told him that we were the ones whom the letters had been written about. He was very glad to see us and he introduced us to somebody else. Once more I think that it was the secretary of the Lord Great Chamberlain, but I am not sure. Whoever he was, he was most polite, and when we told him what friends of King Arthur's we were he ordered the policemen on duty to let us stay in the Queen's robing-room as long as we liked.

Having all the time we wanted, we did not hurry, but stood for a few minutes at the windows, looking out across the Thames. "It was somewhere over there," I said, "not very far on the other side of the river, that there used to live one of the wickedest knights that were ever in King Arthur's court. His name was Meliagraunce. I don't know what made him so wicked, but I suppose he was so to start with. It occurred to him once that there could be no better way for him to make trouble than by stealing the Queen and carrying her off to his castle, over there across the Thames. King Arthur was holding his court just here at Westminster then, for it seems that there was a palace here as long ago as that.

"Meliagraunce had to watch a long time for his chance, for there were usually a good many people about the Queen, and Lancelot was likely to be among them, and somehow, wicked as he was, he did not care about doing anything to harm the Queen while Lancelot was with her. But one day he heard that the Queen was going maying, with some knights and ladies, and that Lancelot was not going. That, he thought, would be just his chance. Now, as the Queen did not mean to go far from Westminster, there was no thought of any danger. So the knights who rode with her wore swords at their sides, as they did almost everywhere, but they carried no spears or shields, and they wore no armor. There were only ten of them, with ten ladies and a few squires and pages. But Meliagraunce got ready twenty knights, fully armed, and a hundred archers on foot.

"Westminster and the country about it looked very different then from what they do now. Now there is nothing but city for miles around, but then there were fields, and a little farther off there were woods. So the Queen and her knights and ladies rode to the woods and gathered flowers and green branches, and decked themselves and their horses with them and started back toward Westminster. Then Meliagraunce and his armed men fell upon them. The Queen's

knights fought for her as well as they could, but they were so few and so poorly armed that they were no match for their enemies. In a little while they were all of them wounded, and the Queen saw that they would all be killed if the fight went on. So she called to Meliagraunce and begged him to stop the fight and promised that she would go with him to his castle, if he would let all her knights go too, for they were wounded and she must have them with her, so that she could take care of them.

"Meliagraunce agreed to this and they all set off toward his castle. But on the way the Queen whispered to a page who was on a swift horse, and told him to ride back to Westminster and tell Lancelot that she was a prisoner in the castle of Meliagraunce. So the page watched till nobody was looking, and then turned his horse suddenly and rode back. Of course Meliagraunce and his men saw in a moment what he was doing and what it was for, and they shot at him with arrows, but they missed him and he was soon beyond their reach.

"Now Meliagraunce and all those who were with him had to go slowly, because of the wounded knights, but the page who went to tell Lancelot rode fast. And when Lancelot heard what the page had to tell he rode fast too, so that he came to the castle of Meliagraunce not long after the others arrived there. And as soon as Meliagraunce heard that Lancelot had come he began to see what a silly thing he had done and to wish that he were well out of it. So he went to the Queen and begged her not to let Lancelot kill him. If she would promise that, he said, they would all go back to Westminster the next morning. So the Queen sent for Lancelot and told him that it would be better to do as Meliagraunce had said, for Meliagraunce was a knight of King Arthur's and it would be better that it should not be known what he had done as it would have to be if Lancelot fought with him and killed him. And of course Lancelot said that it should be as the Queen wished.

"But Meliagraunce had still other mischief in his mind. Now that he had found that he must send the Queen back to Westminster, he decided that he would charge her with treason to the King. That was as easy a charge to make against her as any, and it was as easy a way to harm her as any, since that was what he wanted to do. You know anybody could charge anybody else with anything, as long as he was ready to fight and risk his life to prove it. of course it did not take a minute for Lancelot to say that the charge that Meliagraunce made was a lie and that he would fight with him to prove that the Queen was not a traitor to the King, whenever and wherever Meliagraunce liked. And Meliagraunce said that it should be eight days from that day, at Westminster, before King Arthur.

"Now you may be sure that Meliagraunce would never have said a word against the Queen if he had thought that he should really have to fight with Lancelot about it. But he had still another trick to play, which he thought was a

good one. He pretended to be very friendly with Lancelot and asked him if he should like to see his castle. Then he led him about from room to room and at last he led him over a trap door. It gave way and Lancelot fell down into a dungeon and struck on a heap of straw. And there Meliagraunce meant to keep him till after the time for the fight. And so, as he expected, it would all be decided his way, because Lancelot would not be there to defend the Queen, or, at the worst, he would have to fight with some knight who was not so good as Lancelot.

"I suppose I ought to tell you just here that King Arthur himself could not fight for the Queen in such a case as this, because he had to sit and be the judge in all such fights. And Arthur always did justice to rich and poor and to great and small alike, and he would do the same justice, or he would try to, to the one whom he loved best of all the world as to the meanest man or woman who could be brought before him.

"When the rest were ready to go back to Westminster they were surprised, of course, that Lancelot was not with them. But they did not think that it was so very strange, for Lancelot often went away suddenly in search of adventures and told nobody that he was going. So they went back and told the King that Meliagraunce had charged the Queen with treason and that Lancelot was to defend her. And the King was not alarmed at all, for he knew that the Queen could not be guilty of such a thing, and he felt sure that Lancelot would be at hand when the time came to prove it.

"But the King felt more sure of Lancelot than Lancelot felt of himself, for all that week he was in prison. And on the eighth day Meliagraunce came to Westminster ready for the fight and called upon the King to give judgment against the Queen, because Lancelot was not there to defend her. Then Arthur said that he was sure that Lancelot must be dead or sick or else in prison, for he never failed to keep his promise before, and he asked if there was any other knight who would fight in his place to defend the Queen. Then a knight of the Round Table said that he was sure, too, that it was as the King had said and he would fight for the Queen instead of Lancelot.

"But Meliagraunce, as clever people sometimes do, had made a mistake. He did not know, perhaps, that there was a woman in his castle who was in love with Lancelot. But there were a good many such women scattered over England and he ought to have been careful about it. On the very morning when the battle was to be she came to Lancelot and told him that she would let him out of his prison if he would give her one kiss. Lancelot thought that this was not a large price to pay and he paid it. Then the woman let him out and found his armor for him and helped him to get a horse from the stable and he set off, as fast as he could go, for Westminster. And he arrived just as the knight who had promised to fight for him had taken his place ready to begin the battle.

"Lancelot rode straight up before the King and told him how Meliagraunce had trapped him and kept him in prison, and then he took the place of the other knight and was ready for the fight. Nobody had any doubt how the fight would go. Everybody felt that the right would win and that the right meant Lancelot. The King felt so sure of it that he had the Queen come and sit in her place beside him, though she was accused of treason. The heralds gave the signal, the knights charged together, and Meliagraunce was thrown from his horse. Lancelot dismounted then and they fought with swords, but it was only a few moments before Meliagraunce was disarmed and helpless and begging for mercy.

"Then Lancelot had a hard question to decide. In any ordinary fight it would be unknightly to refuse mercy to any knight who asked it, but Lancelot felt that such a cowardly, lying wretch as this had no right to live and that he had no right to let him live. He thought for a moment and then he said: 'Meliagraunce, take up your sword and let us go on with this fight to the end.'

"'I will not fight any more,' said Meliagraunce; 'you have beaten me and I ask your mercy, and you must give it, as you are a knight of the Round Table.'

"'Meliagraunce,' said Lancelot, 'I will take off my helmet and all the armor that I can from the left side of my body, and my left hand shall be tied behind me, and then I will fight with you.'

"Then Meliagraunce ran toward the King. 'My lord,' he cried, 'have you heard what he has said? I call upon you to make him keep his promise and fight me with his head and his left side uncovered.'

"'Meliagraunce,' said Lancelot, 'come back! I am not a liar, like you, and I need no one to make me keep my promises, even to traitors and cowards.'

"Then Lancelot's armor was taken off his left side, as much of it as could be, and his helmet was taken off. And his left hand was tied behind him, so that he could not use his shield. And in this way he stood ready for the fight again. Meliagraunce aimed a blow at his head, but Lancelot caught it with his sword and put it aside. Then he struck one great stroke and split Meliagraunce's helmet and laid him dead on the field. And everybody felt that the Round Table was better by the loss of Meliagraunce than it would be by the gain of three good knights. And now I think that it is about time for us to look at these pictures that we came to see."

The pictures were painted on the walls of two sides of the room. On the third side was a throne, with a canopy over it, and on the fourth side were the windows. The artist had painted scenes from the stories of King Arthur and he had made them represent the virtues that he thought ought to belong to a good knight. One of his pictures he called "Mercy," and it showed Sir Gawain kneeling before Queen Guinevere and swearing always to be merciful and never to be against ladies. The one next to this was "Hospitality," and in it King Arthur

was receiving Sir Tristram as a knight of the Round Table. Another picture was "Courtesy," and there Tristram was playing his harp to Isolt. For "Religion" there was "The Vision of Sir Galahad and his Company." Then there was one of "Generosity," with King Arthur thrown from his horse in battle and his life spared by Lancelot. "That seems a strange picture to you, no doubt," I said, "but some time I will tell you the story that it belongs to, and then it will not seem so strange."

All around under these pictures and on the side of the room where the throne was, there were carvings: "Arthur Delivered unto Merlin," "Arthur Crowned King," "How Arthur Gate His Sword Excalibur," "King Arthur Wedded to Guinevere," and many more.

"But of all these pictures," I said, "the one that reminds me of a story that I want to tell you just now is this one of 'The Admission of Sir Tristram to the Fellowship of the Round Table.' Tristram had been known as the best knight of the world, next to Lancelot, for a long time before he was a knight of the Round Table. King Arthur had long wished that Tristram might be one of his knights, and Lancelot had heard so much about him that he wanted to know him and to be his friend. So at last Lancelot and some of the other knights set out to hunt for Tristram and to try to bring him to the court.

"You remember that Tristram was in love with Isolt, the Princess of Ireland. There was another knight, Sir Palamides, who was in love with her too. I must tell you about this Palamides, for there never was a knight who belonged more to that dear, silly old time or fitted into it better than he did. He was a good and strong and brave knight, but Isolt did not care two straws for him and never would, and he knew it. But do you suppose that made any difference to him? Not a bit. He made it half of his business to love her year after year, though he knew that it would never do him or anybody else any good. It never came into his head that there were just as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. No, all he cared for was to sit on the shore of the sea, never trying to catch or even thinking of any other good fish, but only wishing and wishing that he might catch the one that he knew he never could. It was just like a good knight of those days.

"I said that he made it half of his business to love Isolt. The other half of his business was to hunt the questing beast. It was called the questing beast because of the questing or barking noise that came out of it. It was a wonderful animal altogether. It had a body like a leopard in front and like a lion behind, but its head was like a serpent's and its feet were like those of a deer. And it did not make this barking noise with its mouth, but the noise was inside the beast, and it was not like the barking of one dog, but of sixty dogs. I don't know why Palamides hunted it or what he was going to do with it if he ever caught it, but this again was just like a knight of those days.

"Now Palamides used often to feel very unfriendly toward Tristram, be-

cause Tristram loved Isolt. By nature I believe that he was a good fellow, but he was hot-tempered, and, like other hot-tempered people, he sometimes did things that he was afterward sorry for. And so, when he met Tristram, he often felt angry and wanted to fight with him. And Tristram beat him usually, but not always, for Palamides was such a good knight that he could give Tristram, or even Lancelot, a pretty hard battle. Then Palamides would be Tristram's friend for awhile, and then he would think more about Isolt and would grow to be his enemy again, and so would be ready for another fight.

"And once Tristram and Palamides had set a time and a place to fight together and settle everything between them. But when the day came Palamides was held in prison by some enemy and could not come. But Tristram was at the place, and as he waited he saw a knight riding toward him, with a closed helmet and a covered shield. Of course he thought that this was Palamides, ready for the fight, so he put his spear in rest and faced him, and the other knight, seeing him do that, got ready to defend himself. Now this other knight was Lancelot, and when the two had been fighting for a few minutes each began to wonder who the other could be. Tristram knew very well that he was fighting with a better knight than Palamides, and Lancelot knew that he had never fought with so good a knight before.

"And after a long time it came into their heads to stop fighting for a moment and ask each other who they were. And when each had told the other his name they saw what a mistake they had made in fighting at all. It was then that Lancelot made Tristram come to the court with him, and it was then that King Arthur welcomed him and gave him his seat at the Round Table, as the picture shows.

"And now, after all this bother, we have come to the story. Tristram had not been long a knight of the Round Table when King Arthur made a great tournament in his honor. It was at the Castle of Lonazep. I don't know just where that was, but it was somewhere up in the other end of England. As Tristram was on his way to the tournament he met Palamides, and they fought, as usual. And Tristram won, as usual, and then Palamides begged him to let him ride to the tournament with him and fight for him and do him service.

"So they rode together till they came to the River Humber, and there they saw a boat, all covered with canopies of purple silk, coming up the stream. It came to the shore close to them and lay there still. Then Tristram and Palamides went down into the boat and saw a strange sight. In the middle of it was a couch, all covered with silk and cloth of gold, and on the couch lay a dead knight, armed all but his head. As Tristram stood gazing and wondering at this he saw that there was a letter in the dead knight's hand. He took the letter and opened and read it, and this is what it said: 'To the knights of King Arthur: I who bring this letter was Hermance, King of the Red City. I was killed by two traitors, for my lands

and my crown. Now I pray that some one of King Arthur's knights will avenge my death and will take my city and my castles and my crown for his reward.'

"Then Palamides said: 'Sir Tristram, you must be at this tournament, for King Arthur has made it in your honor, and he and many others will wish to see you here. So let me go to avenge the death of this King, and whatever I do shall be done for you and in your name.'

"'You are right,' said Tristram, 'and you may go, but come back, if you can, for the tournament.'

"'If I live,' said Palamides, 'and the work that I find to do will let me, I will be with you again at the tournament.'

"Then Tristram went ashore from the boat and Palamides stayed in it, and the men turned the boat and it went away down the river. The men in the boat knew why Palamides stayed in it. He did not speak to them and they did not speak to him. He knew that they would take him where he ought to go, so he stood at the prow and watched the fields that they passed and the woods and the river, and waited to see and to know who these traitors were whom he must punish and what sort of task it was to be to avenge this dead King. And after a time the boat came to where the river widened out toward the sea, and the men steered it toward a castle that stood on the shore. Then they gave Palamides a horn and told him to blow it. And the people of the castle knew the sound of the horn, and when they heard it they came down to where the boat had landed and welcomed Palamides and led him up into the hall. There the lord of the castle met him and made him sit at the table and they brought him food and wine. And Palamides saw that the lord of the castle and all the others in it were dressed in black, and after he had eaten and drunk he asked why this was.

"'It is for the death of our King,' the lord of the castle answered. 'He was Hermance, the King of the Red City, and no truer king ever lived. He had two foster sons, whom he had brought up since they were children. He loved them as if they had been his own sons, but they were false and wicked. He meant when he died to give them everything he had, but they could not wait. So they watched their chance, and one day, when he had been hunting and had stopped to drink at a spring, they came behind him and stabbed him in the back. There, beside the spring, I found him, not yet dead. He made me put him in a boat and he made me write a letter and put it in his hand before he died. The boatmen were told to go up the Humber toward Lonazep, where all King Arthur's knights were soon to be, and the letter asked that some one of them would come to avenge the death of our good King. And you, Sir Knight—since you have come in this boat—I suppose that you have read this letter and have come to help us.'

"'One of the best knights of the world, Sir Tristram, read that letter,' Palamides said, 'and I have come for him and in his name to avenge the death of

your King. So tell me where I shall find these men.'

"'You must take your boat again,' said the lord, 'and go to the Delectable Isle. There is the Red City, and there you will find these two brothers, Helius and Helake. Go and conquer them and we shall pray for you and wait to hear what you have done.'

"Then Palamides went back to his boat, and just as he came to it he met a knight who said: 'Sir Knight, tell me who you are and where you are going.'

"'By what right,' said Palamides, 'do you command me so?'

"'If you are going to the Red City,' said the knight, 'to avenge the death of King Hermance, turn back and go no farther. It is for me, not for you, to avenge him. I am the brother of King Hermance.'

"'That may be true,' Palamides answered, 'but when the letter was taken out of the dead King's hand we did not know that there was any knight to avenge him. I promised then that I would do it, and I must do it now or I shall be false to my promise.'

"'That is true,' said the other knight, 'but now let us try a few strokes together, to see which of us is the better knight, and then that one shall avenge the King my brother.'

"So they drew their swords and struck a few strokes, and then the brother of the King said: 'You are the better; the adventure is yours. But I will go to the Red City too, so that I can fight with these traitors if they kill you.

"'Come with me, then,' said Palamides, 'but if they kill me go to my lord, Sir Tristram, and tell him of it, and I am sure that he or Sir Lancelot will come to avenge me and the King your brother.'

"So they both went on in the boat till they came to the Delectable Isle and the Red City. And there all the people welcomed them, for they all loved their King who was dead and hated the traitors who had killed him. And they sent messengers to the brothers to tell them that one of King Arthur's knights had come to fight with them, to avenge King Hermance. And the brothers sent back word that they would be ready for the fight the next morning.

"In the morning Palamides was ready in the lists and the people of the city came to see the battle. And when they saw what a bold and strong-looking man Palamides was they began to hope that they should be free of their tyrants and have another King as good as Hermance. Then the brothers came and took their places at the other end of the lists, and when the people looked at them they began to fear again that the one knight from King Arthur's court could never beat them.

"It was Helake who came first against Palamides, and Palamides ran him through with his spear at the first charge and he fell dead upon the field. But the battle with Helius was not so easy. At the first charge Palamides was thrown

from his saddle, and as he lay on the ground, before he could get up, Helius tried to drive his horse over him, to crush him. But Palamides sprang up and caught the bridle and cried: 'Come down and fight me fairly on foot or I will kill your horse and make you do it.'

"Then Helius got off his horse and they began to fight again with their swords. It was a fight for life and death, and it was a hard one. It lasted for a long time, with no rest, and Helius seemed never to lose any ground or any strength, but Palamides grew weaker and fainter and he was forced back and back across the field. The people saw it and a low, sad murmur ran through the crowd. And Palamides heard it, and for an instant he glanced away from his enemy and saw the anxious faces of the people and the tears in the eyes of some and the fear in the looks of many. Then he said to himself: 'Palamides, you are a knight of the Round Table. Will you let the news go back to King Arthur that you were beaten in a fight by a traitor and a murderer? And you are here for Tristram. Will you lose his battle for him?'

"And with that thought he gathered all his strength and struck Helius three great blows with his sword, one upon the other, and with the third he cut through his helmet and laid him dead upon the field with his brother.

"Then a great shout went up from all the people and some of them ran away to tell those who had not seen the fight how it had gone, and they built bonfires and set all the bells of the city ringing, and others crowded around the knight and cheered and shouted: 'Long live King Palamides!'

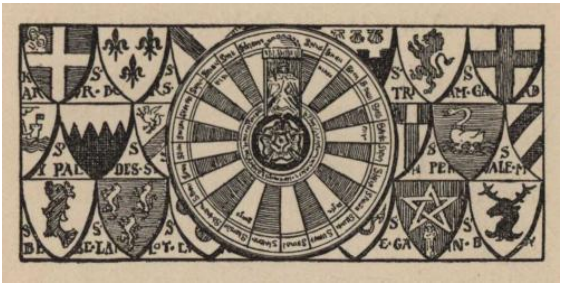
"But when they would let him speak to them Palamides said: 'You must not call me so; all that I have done was for my lord, Sir Tristram. If he could have come he would have fought this battle better than I. If you have any new king it is he, and now I must go back to him. But I leave here this good knight, the brother of your old King Hermance, and he shall rule you till Sir Tristram sends to tell you what else to do.'

"Then Palamides went on board his boat again and it took him away toward the Humber and toward Lonazep to find Sir Tristram."

CHAPTER V

"CAMELOT, THAT IS IN ENGLISH WINCHESTER"

Even while we were at Camelford, and again while we were at Cadbury Castle,



The Round Table at Winchester

I had not forgotten the words of my favorite book, "Camelot, that is in English Winchester." If we were talking about hard history, I suppose that I should have to say that, if there ever was a real Camelot at all, it was probably that pleasant hill-top that we had seen in Somerset. Yet, when a story-teller whom I love as much as I do good old Sir Thomas says that Winchester was Camelot, it shall be Camelot for me, at least while I am there. So we went down from London to see if this third Camelot pleased us as much as the two that we had seen.

First we walked about the streets and aimed at nothing in particular. That is a good thing to do on the first day when you are in a strange city. "If I were to try to tell you," I said, "all the interesting and useful and delightful things that there are to tell about Winchester, I should have to go first and learn the most of them for myself. And then you would get tired of listening to them, for there would be enough of them to make a book as big as a dictionary. We are supposing, you know, while we stay, that King Arthur lived here, and, whether he did or not, other kings of England lived here more or less for I don't know how many hundred years. King Alfred lived here and King Canute lived here and William the Conqueror built a castle here, on the very spot, we will let ourselves believe, where King Arthur's castle stood."

If the first thing to be done in a town newly visited is to walk about the streets, the second is to go to the cathedral, if there is one. So the next thing that we did was to go to Winchester Cathedral. It is not much to look at from the outside, though it is pretty enough, with the trees and grass around it. It has only the lowest of towers. It had a higher one once, but when King William Rufus was killed, they buried him in the cathedral and seven years afterward the tower fell down. They thought that it must be because they had buried such a wicked man in the church. But I think that there are kings as bad as William Rufus buried under some English towers that have not fallen down. There are kings

and kings, good and bad, lying here in this cathedral. Canute is here, and it was here that he brought his crown and put it up over the cross, after he had found, down yonder at Southampton, that he could not rule the waves, as England has since been supposed to do. To be fair to the cathedral, I ought to say that, though it is unpromising outside, it is surely very beautiful inside. After that I think I do not need to say anything more about it at all, because there are so many people who can tell you about this cathedral and others so much better than I can.

We left it and walked up the street to find the castle. I think I forgot to say at the proper place that the whole town of Winchester that day was in a state of breathless excitement about a cricket match. The boys of Winchester College were playing against the boys from Eton, and pretty nearly everybody in town had gone to see the game. When we got to the castle, the man who ought to have been there to show it to us had gone to see the cricket match, like the rest. But his wife, who was a very pleasant elderly lady, said that she would show it to us.

They hold court in the castle still. Not the sort of court that King Arthur used to hold, but courts of justice for the County of Hants. The old woman took us into one room after another and told us about the trials that had taken place in them. We pretended to be greatly interested, but we were not a bit. But by and by she took us to a place where we were interested. It was the great hall of the castle. I should feel sorry for anybody who was not interested in the great hall of Winchester Castle. It belonged to the old castle that William the Conqueror built, where more kings and queens lived or were born or died or did other fascinating things than I should dare to try to remember. And this was the hall of Parliament for almost four hundred years. "And we may as well believe," I said, "that now we are standing in King Arthur's hall. If Winchester was Camelot there is no reason to suppose that his castle was not on this very spot, and there is no reason to suppose, either, that the great hall was not on this very spot. Henry VII. believed it, when his son was born here and he named him Arthur."

It is a beautiful room as it stands to-day. It is long and wide and high. It has fine arches and cluster columns and windows of stained glass. But what we gazed at most hung high up on the wall at the west end of the hall. The old woman told us that it was King Arthur's Round Table. Well, there was no doubt that it was round, and she said that there was no doubt that it had been a table once, because there were places at the back of it to fasten legs. We found a picture of the back of it afterwards in a book about Winchester, and it showed that she was right. The table is eighteen feet across, if you insist on my being exact. The table is painted in quite an elaborate style. There is a big rose in the middle of it, and then there is a border, and in the border are the words: "This is the round table of King Arthur and his twenty-four Knights." This did not make us believe in the table any the more, because we knew very well that twenty-four knights

would not make any show at all in King Arthur's hall. Above the rose, as the table hangs now, and with his feet resting on it, is a picture of King Arthur himself. The rest of the table, except the outer edge, is painted with broad stripes of dark and light, which run from the border around the rose to the larger border of the whole table. The old woman asked us to notice that the names of the knights were around the edge of the table.

We tried to make out the names and we did make out some of them. There were Lancelot and Lionel and Tristram and Gareth and Bedivere and Palamides and Bors and Kay and Mordred and others that we could not read. The old woman said that there were some of them that nobody had ever been able to read, and we were not so proud as to try to read what we were told that nobody could. It was King Henry VIII. who had this table painted in such a gorgeous way, and it seemed to us that the picture of King Arthur did not look quite unlike Henry. No, we could not quite believe in the table after all. King Arthur's Round Table had places, as we knew, for a hundred and fifty knights, and this had places for only twenty-four. Still we could not help being uncommonly interested in anything that had even been called King Arthur's Round Table for four hundred years at the very least, and probably for six hundred.

"You see," said the old woman, "the three pictures on the windows over the Round Table are King Arthur and King Alfred and King Canute, a Briton and a Saxon and a Dane."

We looked up at the three kings on the stained glass windows, and it was then that I made a dreadful mistake. It came into my mind that it would be a good plan to show off to this good lady who had so kindly shown us the hall, how much we knew about these three kings. Pride does sometimes go before a fall. "Helen," I said, "tell this lady something about King Arthur, just to show her how much we have learned."

"I don't want to tell about him," Helen answered, "I would rather you would tell a story about him."

"But I am not going to tell any story now," I said, "I want you to tell one—any one you like, just to show that you can do it."

"But I don't want to show that I can do it."

"Helen, if you do not tell us something about King Arthur at once, I will not tell you another story for a week."

And then what did this horrible child do but stand there and recite:

"When good King Arthur ruled this land
He was a goodly King;
He stole three pecks of barley meal
To make a bag-pudding.

A bag-pudding the king did make,
And stuffed it well with plums;
And in it put great lumps of fat,
As big as my two thumbs.
The King and Queen did eat thereof,
And noblemen beside;
And what they could not eat that night,
The Queen next morning fried."

I tried to look as sorrowful as I could. "You know very well," I said, "that that is not true at all. That was written by some enemy of King Arthur. There are plenty of good things that you know and might have told us; and so, to punish you for telling that, you shall tell us now about King Canute and his courtiers."

Now Helen did not like this any more than she liked telling about King Arthur, but she must have seen how very determined I looked, and she gave a little gasp and said: "King Canute's courtiers told him that he was the greatest King in the world, and that the sea would obey him if he told it to do anything. So he had his chair put on the sand and he ordered the tide not to come up and wet him, and it did come up and wet him. And he told his courtiers not to flatter him any more, and he never smiled again."

"You get worse every minute," I said. "You know very well that it was not Canute who never smiled again, and for telling that story wrong you shall tell us now about King Alfred and the cakes."

By this time Helen saw that it was getting serious and that it would not do any good to make any more mistakes, so she said: "King Alfred was hiding from his enemies, and he was in the house of a cowherd. And the cowherd's wife was baking some cakes, and King Alfred was sitting by the fire. And the cakes burned and he was so busy mending his bows and arrows that he didn't know it, so the cowherd's wife said: 'Can't you look at the cakes and not let them burn? You'll be ready to eat them fast enough when the time comes.' And she didn't know that he was the King."

"I can't say," I said, "that you have told that quite as well as you might, but it will do. And now, who was it that never smiled again?

"Henry I."

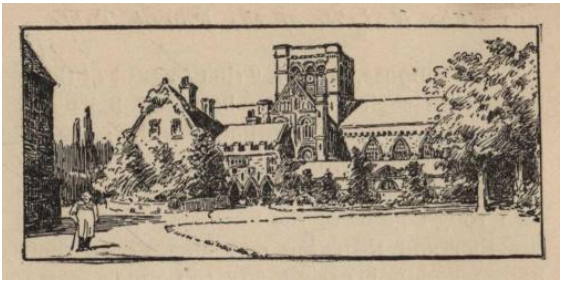
"And why?"

"Because his son William was drowned when the White Ship was lost."

"Very well. The first class in English history could sit down, if there was anything to sit on."

The old woman was quite speechless with astonishment by this time. I don't suppose anybody had ever come into this hall and tried to tell her so many

things about the kings who used to live in Winchester before. We thanked her for her trouble and said good-by, and she just managed to get back enough of her senses to say that we were welcome and to bid us good-by in turn. "And now," I said, "suppose we do what everybody else in town is doing and go and see the cricket match."



Winchester Cathedral

CHAPTER VI
THE BOAT ON THE RIVER

Neither Helen nor I knew enough about cricket to tell a wicket-keeper from a maiden over. But, whether we understood what was going on or not, the Winchester cricket-field that day was a pretty sight. The grass all over it was fresh and green, and around it were crowds of gayly dressed people, watching the game and talking and laughing and enjoying the warm, soft air and the bright sunshine. For a little while we walked around the edge of the field and looked at the people and the boys who were playing, running about and doing such absurd things as the players of a game you do not understand always do. Then we found a quiet place across the field from where the most of the people were, and there we sat down on the grass to rest and to try to make something out of the game. But that was hopeless, and we soon gave it up.

"Just suppose," I said, "that instead of these boys, with their harmless bats and balls and wickets, this field was filled with armored knights on horses, with long spears and great swords. Suppose that they were playing their own rough

game of the tournament, charging together and throwing one another off their horses and not caring any too much, sometimes, whether they killed one another or not. Suppose that the people from the town had all come out to see the tournament, just as they have come out to-day to see the game of cricket, and that we had come, too, just as we really have. And suppose that King Arthur was sitting over there in his high seat to judge the knights. If we can suppose all this, I think that wee shall see pretty clearly how one of King Arthur's tournaments looked when Winchester was Camelot. There is a story, very pretty and very sad, about a tournament that was held at this very Camelot, and for all I know it may have been on this very field.

"The court was at Westminster just then but the King had given out that this tournament was to be at Camelot, so, when the time came, he and his knights set out to ride here. The Queen was sick and said that she would not come with them, and Lancelot said that a wound that he had was not yet well and so he would stay behind too and would not fight in this tournament. Now, although Lancelot was usually honest, I am sorry to say that just now he was saying what was not quite true. The truth was that Lancelot wanted to be at the tournament without King Arthur or any of the knights knowing that he was there. He had won in so many tournaments and all the knights knew so well that he was sure to win if he fought, that none of them liked to fight against him, and tournaments where Lancelot was had come to be rather one-sided affairs. So he thought that he would wait till the others were gone and then come to Camelot by himself, in armor that they did not know and carrying some strange shield, and join in the tournament and fight with whom he pleased.

"It was early morning when the others went away. Lancelot waited till noon, so that he should not overtake them on the way, and then he mounted his horse and rode toward Camelot. Late in the day he came to a place called Astolat. There was a castle, and Lancelot thought it best to stay there for the night. The lord of the castle was an old knight, Sir Bernard of Astolat. He welcomed Lancelot and asked him who he was, but Lancelot said: 'If you will pardon me, I do not wish to tell my name. I am going to the tournament at Camelot, to try what I can do against the knights who will be there, and I do not wish that any of them shall know who I am.'

"When it was time for supper Lancelot sat at the table with Sir Bernard and his two sons, and Sir Bernard's daughter served them. Her name was Elaine. And wherever Elaine went and whatever she did, she was always looking at Lancelot. It seemed to her that there was something about him that was wonderful and new. She thought that she had never seen a man who looked so noble, and, as he talked with her father, she thought that she had never heard a man who spoke so well. They lived a quiet life there at Astolat, and this knight was telling her

father about the court and about battles and tournaments. He told things that were strange to her about many of the knights, and she listened to hear him say something about himself, but he did not say anything. 'Still,' she thought, 'when I look at him I know that he is the best of them all.' And she knew so little about knights that this was really a very good guess for her to make.

"But Lancelot scarcely saw Elaine at all. He knew that she was there, of course, and he knew that she was young and beautiful, and he knew that she was serving them, as they sat there. But Lancelot had seen many young girls serving at many tables—yes, and a good many of them had fallen in love with him, too, before this one, with or without his knowing it. And Lancelot asked the old man: 'Have you any plain shield here that you could lend to me for this tournament? I have told you that I do not want to be known at Camelot, but every knight would know my shield, if I should carry my own.' And when she heard that, Elaine thought: 'He is some famous knight, I knew he was!'

"And the old man answered: 'Here are my two sons, Torre and Lavaine; they are both new knights and their shields are plain and blank. It may be that Lavaine will like to go and see this tournament, but Torre cannot go, for he has a wound that is not well yet. You can have his shield.'

"'And may I leave my own shield here,' said Lancelot, 'till I come back?'

"'Surely,' said the old man, 'Elaine will take good care of it for you.'

"And when she heard that, Elaine blushed from her forehead down to her throat, and she stood still and gazed at Lancelot, and he looked up at her and said: 'If she will do that for me I shall be very grateful.'

"Lavaine had been listening to all that Lancelot said, almost as much as his sister, and now he said: 'Father, if this knight will let me, might I not ride with him to the tournament and see the knights, and perhaps try a joust with one of them?'

"'No, no," said his father, 'it would trouble the knight too much to have such a boy with him.'

"'It would not trouble me at all,' said Lancelot; 'let him come. He shall see everything, and if he wants to joust I will advise him and help him all I can. It would be a poor return for your kindness to me to do less than that.'

"Then Elaine, although she scarcely dared to speak to Lancelot, said: 'Sir Knight, if I am to keep your shield, could you not wear some token of mine at the tournament?'

"'My child,' said Lancelot, 'I have never done that for any lady, and it is against my rule.' And then he thought again: 'All my friends know that I never wear a token of any lady, and, if I do it now, it will be all the harder for them to know me.' So he said: 'Very well, then, I will wear something for you; what is it?'

"And Elaine blushed again with happiness, and she went away and brought him a sleeve of red silk, all embroidered over with pearls. And Lancelot bound it on his helmet. Then they all went to bed, and in the morning Lancelot and Lavaine rode away from Astolat together and came here to Camelot. And Elaine took Lancelot's shield to her own chamber, and from the tower of the castle she watched Lancelot and her brother till they were out of sight.

"I don't see why I should tell you about the tournament. I have told you about such things so many times that you know how the knights fought, and I am sure you do not care to hear it again. But I will tell you that Lancelot came to the tournament and nobody knew him, that he did better than any other knight there, that Lavaine did well, too, for so new a knight, and that Lancelot at last got a dreadful wound.

"Then he called to Lavaine to follow him and they rode away. Lancelot could scarcely sit on his horse, but they rode a little way from Camelot to a place that Lancelot knew, where a hermit lived. The hermit had been a knight of the Round Table long ago, and when he saw Lancelot he knew him, and he took him into his cell and took off his armor and dressed his wound and did all that he could to help him. And Lancelot was there with the hermit for a long time, and Lavaine stayed with him.

"Now when the tournament was over the King and all the knights wondered what had become of the knight who had worn the red sleeve, with the pearls, on his helmet. He had done better than any of them and the King wanted to find him, so that he could give him the prize. Some of the knights had seen that he was wounded, but none of them had seen which way he went. Then Gawain said that he would hunt for him, but he rode all around Camelot and could not find him, and then he went back to the King' and told him that he feared that the knight who wore the red sleeve was dead.

"So they all went back to Westminster. And at night Gawain came to Astolat and to the castle of old Sir Bernard. And as soon as he and his son and his daughter heard that Gawain had come from the tournament at Camelot, they asked him to tell them all about it and what had been done there and who had won the prize. 'The prize was won,' he said, 'by a knight whom nobody knew, and he carried a plain shield and wore a red sleeve, with pearls, on his helmet. I never saw a knight joust better, but he went away before the tournament was over and afterwards he could not be found.'

"Elaine was trembling with happiness that her knight had proved the best of them all. 'We know him,' she cried; 'he was here with us; it was my sleeve that he wore, and he is the knight that I love. I knew that he was the best of knights!'

"'You know him?' said Gawain. 'Then tell me who he was, so that I may tell the King.'

”Then Elaine told him that she did not know his name, and she told him all that she did know about him, how he had come there and how he had promised to wear her sleeve, and how he had taken her brother’s shield and had left his own with her.

”’Will you let me see his shield, then?’ Gawain asked. ’I know so many shields that I might tell who he was by that.’

”So Elaine brought the shield and showed it to Gawain, and said: ’do you know the knight by this?’

”’Yes, yes,’ said Gawain, ’indeed, indeed, I know him; I have known him for many years, and he is the best knight of the world. He is Sir Lancelot of the Lake.’

”And when she heard this, Elaine could not say anything, but could only stand before Gawain, blushing and trembling again, that the great Sir Lancelot had worn her token at the tournament.

”’But I fear,’ said Gawain, ’that we must all be sad for this, for the knight who wore that red sleeve with the pearls got a dreadful wound, and now he may be dead or dying.’

”Then Elaine begged her father to let her go to find Lancelot. And he saw that she loved him so much that it would be better for her to go and try to find him and help him, if he needed her, than to stay at home and fret about him, not knowing whether he was alive or dead. And so Elaine left Astolat to seek for Lancelot. She went first toward Camelot, and before she reached the city she met her brother, Lavaine. He did not see her at first, but she called to him, and she was in such haste that she would not wait to tell him how their father was, or why she had come, but asked him at once where Sir Lancelot was.

”’How do you know,’ he said, ’that he is Sir Lancelot?’

”’It was Sir Gawain that told us,’ she answered; ’he came to Astolat and saw his shield and knew it. Where is he?’

”’In a hermitage, not far from here.’

”’Then he is not dead?’

”’No,’ said Lavaine, ’he was wounded and almost killed, but the hermit is a skilful man and knows what to do with wounds, and he hopes that he will live.’

”’Take me to him, then,’ said Elaine.

”So Lavaine led her to the hermit’s cell. And when she saw Lancelot lying there, with his face thin and white, his eyes large and dark, and all his strength gone from him, she ran to him and fell upon her knees beside his bed and hid her face in the pillow, and for a few moments she could not see or speak or move. Then she rose and looked at him again and put her hand on his forehead, and then she went and spoke to the hermit and at last she came and sat down beside Lancelot. And after that she scarcely left the cell till he was well, and in all the

weary days that passed no one ever saw her tremble or shed a tear, and she never slept when Lancelot needed her, but she was always there to nurse him and care for him and help the hermit to cure him, and if he ever smiled at her or called her by her name or reached out his hand and touched hers she was happy.

"But Gawain had gone back to the court and had told the King and all the rest that the knight who wore the red sleeve was Lancelot. And then Bors had set off to find him too. And Lancelot knew that Bors would come to find him and he told Lavaine to watch for him in the town, and so he was soon brought to the cell. And when he and Lancelot had talked for a little while and Lancelot had asked him about the King and the Queen and all who were at court, Bors said: 'Is this girl whom I see about you the one whom they call Elaine of Astolat?'

"'Yes,' said Lancelot, 'and I cannot make her go away. I tell her that she keeps herself here too close, but she will not rest or leave me.'

"'Why should she leave you?' said Bors. 'She loves you, they say, and here she proves it; why can you not love her too?'

"'No,' Lancelot answered, 'I wish that it could be, but it never can. I shall be grateful to her always, she has done so much for me, and I shall always be her knight, but I can do no more.'

"'It is for you alone to say,' said Bors, 'but I am sorry for her and for you too.'

"They had spoken low, but Elaine was near and she could not help hearing a part of what they said. When Bors stole a glance at her he saw that her face was white, but there were no tears in her eyes, and when there was anything for her to do for Lancelot she did it just as before, and, just as before, she never wanted to sleep or to be away from him.

"So Lancelot grew slowly stronger, and after a long time he could sit upon a horse again, and at last the hermit told him that he needed no more of his care. Then it was agreed that Lancelot and Bors and Elaine and Lavaine should ride together to Astolat. There Lancelot was to rest and get his shield, which was still there, and then go on with Bors and Lavaine to Westminster. So they came to Astolat and spent the night, and in the morning Lancelot, Bors, and Lavaine were ready to ride on their way. Then Lancelot said to Elaine: 'You have done more for me than I can ever repay. I shall never forget you and always and everywhere that I go I shall be your knight, and anything that I can ever do for you I will do gladly.' And Elaine knew that Lancelot could never do the one thing that she wished him to do for her—to love her.

"And after they were gone her father saw that she grew paler and thinner, day by day. Her father and her brother Torre tried to amuse her and cheer her and make her think less of Lancelot, but she thought of him all day, and when she slept she dreamed of him. She did not sleep much. Every morning, before

the sun rose, she was up and was looking out from the tower. Sometimes she looked away toward London, where Lancelot was, or where she thought that he was, and sometimes she would look away toward Camelot, where she had been with him. But at last she could not get up to look out from her tower any more. She could not leave her bed, but she lay there awake all day and much of the night; she talked with her father or her brother a little, and for the rest of the time she thought and dreamed of Lancelot. And one day she told her father that she knew that she should live for only a little while more. 'And now,' she said, 'you must write a letter, just as I shall tell you. And when I am dead, dress me the best you can and lay me on a couch and put this letter in my hand. Then put the couch, and me upon it, into a boat, and let the boat be rowed down the river to Westminster, where Lancelot and the King and the Queen are.'

"All this she made her father promise to do. Then she told him what to write for her in the letter, and a little while after that she died. And her father did all that he had promised.

"One day King Arthur and Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot stood at a window of the palace at Westminster, looking out upon the Thames. And there they saw a little boat, all covered over with black and purple silk, and with only one man to row it. And the boat came straight on till it touched the shore near the palace. 'It is a strange-looking boat,' said the King; 'let us go down and see what it is.'

"So they all went down and looked into the boat, and there they saw the dead Elaine, lying on a couch covered with silk and cloth of gold. Then the Queen saw the letter in her hand and took it and opened it and saw that it was to Lancelot. But when she gave it to him Lancelot gave it to the King and asked him to read it. And the letter said? 'To the best knight of the world, Sir Lancelot of the Lake: I who bring you this letter was Elaine of Astolat. I have died, Sir Lancelot, because you could not love me. Now I beg that you will pray for my soul and will bury me as I ought to be buried.'

"When the King had read this letter none of them spoke at first. Then the Queen said: 'Lancelot, could you not do her some little kindness, to make her sorrow less, so that she might live?'

"'She would have nothing but my love,' said Lancelot. 'I could not give her that if I would, for true love, such as she should have had, must come of itself, and cannot be compelled.'

"So the next day Elaine was buried as if she had been a queen, and Lancelot and the King and the Queen and the knights of the Round Table were there to see it done. And the boat that had brought her down the river went back up the river toward Astolat."



Stonehenge

CHAPTER VII
THE GIANTS' DANCE

Instead of going from Winchester straight back to London, we took a little run across to Salisbury. It was not so much that we wanted to see Salisbury, though it is a pretty place and has a fine cathedral, but I wanted to go to Stonehenge. To look at Stonehenge, I think, brings one nearer to the history and the legend of ancient Britain than anything else that I have ever seen. And if Stonehenge were nothing at all it would still be worth going to, for the ride to it from Salisbury is one of the prettiest in all England. There is no such remarkable scenery, perhaps, as is to be found in many another place, but on that day when we rode out there the fields were fairly blazing with flowers, red and yellow and purple, and the little gardens were almost too full of them to hold them all without spilling. It was just a free, open, country ride, with everything around looking peaceful and sweet and beautiful and happy.

And when you take that ride, if you trust to a driver who knows the way and where you ought to go, he will bring you soon to Old Sarum. It is a hill, with a thick double wall of earth and a ditch around it, and it was a Roman town once. Perhaps it was a British town or stronghold before that. It reminded us a little of Cadbury Castle, but it is a good deal bigger. It had a cathedral in it once, but for some reason or other the people began to get tired of living in it and moved down and made the town of Salisbury, and there a new cathedral was built, and Old Sarum came to be nothing at all any more but a great hilltop, with its walls and its ditch around it.

From Old Sarum we went on to Amesbury. I told the driver that I wanted to stay there for a little while. I think he meant to make a little stay, whether I had

mentioned it or not, for he got ready to do it with less explanation than it usually takes to get a driver to do anything he is not used to. He stopped at the little hotel and gave the horse a drink, and we gave him enough to get something to drink for himself. Then we walked on toward the church and told him to follow us in a little while.

We had walked about in the churchyard for only a minute when we saw a man coming toward us. He proved to be the vicar, who had seen us and was coming to show us the church. He did show it to us and told us a great many interesting things about it which I cannot remember well enough to repeat them here. But I do remember that it was so old that I decided that there must have been a church here in King Arthur's time, and that perhaps some part of this very one was standing then.

"But where is the old abbey?" I asked. "Are there not some ruins of that left?"

We were outside the church now and were looking about at the fields and the trees. "Oh, no," the vicar said, "there is nothing left of the abbey now. It was very near where that large house is now. That is the house of Sir Edmund Antrobus. We can come nearer and look at it, if you like." So we went nearer and looked at it, and it was a handsome house, and then we went and stood on a little bridge across the Avon. It was a shady place and the water was clear, so that we could see the trout swimming in it, and we looked down the river under a green arch of trees that grew on the sides of the stream and sent their branches to meet above it. "I should like you to remember this place," I said, "because Queen Guinevere lived here for a long time. It is not time yet for me to tell you how or why, but I will tell you when the time comes, and till then I want you to remember how the place looks. Remember these fields and this river and these trees. I don't know, of course, whether they looked the same then, but they may have been not so very different. So think of Queen Guinevere sometimes standing on a bridge, just as we are now, or on the bank of the river, and looking down into just such clear water and up at just such cool, green, spreading trees. Remember that she lived over there where Sir Edmund Antrobus lives now, and that she walked many a morning, it is likely, across these very fields, to a church that stood where the church is now. That is all. Remember it till we come to the story about it."

By the time we came out to the road the driver was waiting for us and wondering what we had found to keep us so long. We got into the carriage and went on again, and nothing happened till we got to Stonehenge. Now I know that you don't want me to describe Stonehenge to you. If you want to know a great deal more than you do about it, you can find it in a good many big and learned books. What I wish I could do would be to make you see it, and I cannot

do that. It is not much to tell about, but it is a wonderful thing to see. It seems to me to mean so much, standing there, so lonely, in the middle of Salisbury Plain—that great circle of half-smoothed stones—grand, sad, silent, older than history—a solid, real, noble thing, left to us from a time out of which we have little else but fairy tales. It was a huge circle of stones once, square pillars set on end and big blocks laid across them. Now many of them are lying on the ground, where they fell so long ago that some of them are half buried in it. Some way off from the circle is another tall stone, that they say the devil once threw at a monk. He was such a good man that the devil could not hurt him, but it struck his foot and took the print of his heel, and the print is there now, to prove the story. In the morning of the day of the summer when the sun goes highest in the sky, people come here to see it rise. I have never been here then, but they say that on that morning, if you stand over across the circle and look through one of the great stone gateways, you will see the sun rise exactly over the point of this stone that the devil threw at the monk.

"I am sorry," I said, "that I cannot tell you the history of Stonehenge, but I can tell you the story of it, if you care to hear it."

To be sure Helen cared to hear it.

"We shall have to go back, then," I said, "to a time long before King Arthur was born. Lud was the King of England. It was for him that London was named. Perhaps the two names do not sound very much alike to you, but you know names will get a good deal twisted, the best you can do. Lud had a brother named Levelys, who had gone over to France and married a princess and had become King of France. And about that time King Lud and his people began to have a great deal of trouble. There were three things that troubled them especially. The first was a race of people called the Coranians. I don't know where these Coranians came from or what they did to make themselves so troublesome, but there is no doubt that, for some reason or other, they did not get on well with Lud's people. And the worst of it was that there seemed to be no way to get rid of them. The reason was that they had such good ears. For they could hear anything that was said anywhere on the island, no matter how softly it was spoken, if the wind was the right way. And so no plan against them could ever be talked over without their finding out all about it.

"And the second trouble was a noise, a horrible scream, that was heard in every house in England on the eve of every May Day. It was so loud and so fearful that it frightened people half to death, and it went through them like a knife, and it chilled their blood and filled them with horror, and some of them went mad because of it.

"And the third trouble was that the King never could keep anything to eat in the house. No matter how much provision there was at night, it was all gone

the next morning, and nobody could find out what became of it.

"Now, it occurred to King Lud that his brother Levelys was a very wise man, and that it would be worth while to go to France and see him and ask him if he could tell what ought to be done about all these troubles. So he got ready a fleet, very quietly, so that the Coranians should know as little as possible about it, and sailed toward France. And when his brother heard that he was coming he got ready a fleet too, and sailed from France to meet him. When they met they were very glad to see each other, and they got ready to talk about King Lud's troubles. Levelys was so wise that he knew just what Lud had come for, without being told, so he tried to find a way for them to talk without the Coranians hearing them. And he had a horn made of brass, and he thought that if they talked through that they could not be heard even by such ears as the Coranians had.

"But when they began to talk through it they found that whatever either of them said into it nothing would come out but angry and hostile words. Then Levelys knew that a demon had got into the horn. So he poured wine through the horn and drove the demon out. Then they found that they could hear through the horn much better. Levelys talked through the horn and told Lud that he would give him some insects that would kill the Coranians. He must put them in water and then he must call all the people of the island together and scatter the water over them. It would kill all the Coranians, he said, and it would not harm Lud's own people.

"As for the second trouble, that of the dreadful noise, Levelys said that it was caused by two dragons, that were fighting. 'When you go home,' he said, 'you must measure your island and find the exact middle of it. There you must dig a pit, and in the pit you must put a cauldron of the best mead, and you must cover the top of the cauldron with satin. Then you must watch till you see the two dragons flying in the air and fighting together. After a time they will grow weary with fighting and they will drop down upon the satin and sink into the cauldron. Then they will drink all the mead that there is in it and go to sleep. After that you must fold the covering of satin around them and bury them in the strongest place that you have.

"'And the third trouble,' Levelys went on, 'the disappearing of all your food, is caused by a great enchanter, who comes and carries it away. And the reason that nobody who watches ever sees him is that he casts spells over all of them and makes them sleep. But you yourself must watch, and you must have a cauldron filled with cold water beside you, and when you feel like sleeping you must get into the cauldron and the cold water will keep you awake.'

"When he had heard all this Lud went home. And the first thing that he did was to call all the people together, as his brother had told him. Then he sprinkled the water with the insects in it over all the people and it killed all the Coranians

and did no harm to his own people.

"Then he measured the island and found that the very middle of it was in Oxford. You can measure it yourself, on the map, if you want to find out whether the middle of it is really in Oxford. I don't say that it is, only that that was what Lud found. But I suppose he must have been right about it, for the rest of the experiment worked perfectly. That is to say, he dug the pit and put the cauldron in the pit and the mead in the cauldron, and the satin over the cauldron, and waited to see the fight of the dragons. And the dragons came and fought and fell down into the cauldron and drank up the mead and slept, and Lud covered them with the satin and buried them in Snowdon, which is a great mountain in Wales. I am sorry that we cannot go to Snowdon at present, for I know that it must be worth seeing.

"And finally Lud made such a great feast that there was sure to be a good deal of it left, and then he sat up to see what would become of it. He put on his armor and sat down and waited, and by and by he began to hear such sweet music that he could scarcely help going to sleep. But he got into the cauldron of cold water which he had ready, and that kept him awake. And at last there came a great man, dressed all in armor and carrying a big basket. He began to put the food into the basket and Lud began to wonder how he could do it, for it seemed to him that there was a great deal more of it than the basket could ever hold. But the man put it all in and then started to go away with it. Then Lud stopped him and made him fight with him. And Lud beat him and would not grant him mercy till he promised to be Lud's servant and to restore the value of all that he had ever taken from him.

"Now we come to the second part of the story. To get to it we have to come down a good many years, to the time when Merlin, the great magician and wise man of King Arthur's court, was a boy. We almost always think of him as an old man, with white hair and a long, white beard. But he was a boy once, just like anybody else. And a wonderful thing about it was that he knew just as much more than anybody else in the world when he was a boy as he did when he was an old man.

"There was a King of England named Vortigern. He had no right to be King of England, but he was. King Constantine had died not long ago, and had left three sons. They were Constans, Pendragon, and Uther. Vortigern, being very powerful at that time, had had Constans made King and he himself had become his chief adviser. Then he had contrived to get Constans killed and had been crowned as King himself. Pendragon and Uther were too young then to rule, and those who had the care of them had fled with them to France, because they knew that Vortigern would kill them too, if they stayed in England. And in France the princes lived and grew up to be young men.

"While they were doing that, Vortigern was having a good deal of trouble in trying to govern the kingdom that did not belong to him. He did it so badly that the people turned against him, and he had many enemies from abroad besides. At last he called his wise men together and they told him that there was nothing left for him to do but to build the strongest tower he could, in the safest place he could, and then stay in it and try to keep himself from his enemies.

"So Vortigern hunted all over the island to find the best place to build his tower, and he decided that the best place was Snowdon. But when his workmen began to build there was more trouble. No matter how much they built in a day, it all fell down in the night, and the next day they had to begin all over again. When that had gone on for awhile Vortigern called his wise men together again and asked them what was the matter.

"The wise men did not know in the least, but they tried to look wiser than they had ever looked before in their lives, and they said that in a few days they would find out. Then they got together, away from the King, and talked it all over and tried to make up their minds why the King's tower would not stand. I don't know all the absurd ways that they had of thinking that they found out things, but the one that they believed in the most was studying the stars. So they studied the stars as hard as ever they could, but not a thing could they find out from them about the King's tower and why it would not stand. But they were dreadfully scared by something else that they thought they saw in the stars. This was that every one of them would finally be brought to his death by a child who never had a father. Then one of them, who was a little brighter than the others, said: 'If we cannot do anything for the King, perhaps we can do something for ourselves. Let us try to kill this child who never had a father, before he kills us. Let us tell the King that we have found out from the stars that his tower will stand, if he mixes the mortar with the blood of a child who never had a father. Then he will find the child and kill him and we shall be safe."

"They all thought that this was a good plan, so they went and told the King that he must find a child who never had a father and mix his blood into the mortar. So the King sent out messengers in every direction to hunt for a child who never had a father. As I told you at first, Merlin was a child then, and perhaps you remember that I told you a long time ago that nobody ever knew who Merlin's father was, unless, as some people said, he was the son of a devil. Well, one day two of Vortigern's messengers came to the town where Merlin lived, and Merlin and some other children were playing in the street.

"Just as the messengers came along Merlin struck one of his playmates. The boy cried out and asked Merlin how he dared to strike him, when he was the son of a great man and when Merlin never had any father. When the messengers heard that, of course they were interested at once. They asked about Merlin and

they found that the story was indeed that this boy never had any father, so they told him that the King wanted him and that he must come with them. 'I am ready to go with you,' Merlin said, 'and I am not afraid, though I know that the King means to kill me. You could never have found me if I had not been willing that you should. I knew that you were looking for me and I struck the other boy so that he would say just what he did, to tell you that I was the child that the King wanted. I shall not let the King kill me and I shall tell him what makes his tower fall down.'

"Then the messengers went back to the King and took Merlin with them. When he came before the King Merlin said: 'My lord, you mean to kill me because your wise men have told you that my blood will make your tower stand. But they know nothing about it. Call them and let me question them and prove to you that they know nothing about it.'

"So the King called his wise men and Merlin said to them: 'What is under the place where the King wants to build his tower?'

"The wise men studied and whispered together and tried to look wiser than ever, but at last they had to say that they did not know what was under the place. 'Then I will tell you,' said Merlin; 'there is water under it; my lord, have your workmen dig down and see.

"So the workmen were set to digging and after awhile they came to the water. 'Now what is under that?' said Merlin to the wise men.

"And again they could not tell. 'There are two great stones under it,' said Merlin; 'draw the water off and see.'

"So they drew off the water and there were the stones, just as Merlin said. 'Now,' said Merlin to the wise men, 'tell the King what is under these stones.'

"And the wise men, who were getting pretty well scared by this time, could not tell. 'There are two dragons under the stones,' said Merlin; 'one of them is red and the other is white; when the stones are lifted they will fight and the red dragon will kill the white one.'

"The wise men had not another word to say and the King told the workmen to take up the stones. They took them up and, surely enough, there were the dragons. And, just as Merlin had said, they began to fight. People were fond of fights in those days and there surely never was a better one of its kind than this. But everybody who saw it felt that it could be seen better a little way off. They were a good deal relieved when Merlin told them that the dragons would not hurt any of them and would only kill each other. And no doubt it was a fine fight to look at. The dragons were horrible creatures, with snaky bodies and wings like bats and long, sharp teeth and claws. And they flew above the heads of the people and struck at each other with their claws and twisted about each other and tore with their teeth and breathed fire out of their mouths, and roared and

shrieked till the air shook. And at last the red dragon killed the white one, and then he fell down to the ground, and in a little while he died too.

"'Now,' said Merlin, 'you can build your tower and it will stand. But what is to be done,' he went on, 'with these men who tried to make you kill me? Is it not fair, my lord, that you should give them to me and let me do whatever I like with them?'

"'That is fair,' said the King; 'take them and do with them what you like.'

"Of course the wise men were all begging Merlin for mercy now, and telling him that all they did was only because the stars had told them that he was to cause their death. 'That is true,' said Merlin; 'I know that you really thought that you saw that in the stars, but I know too that it was only because an evil spirit was deceiving you. He is a spirit who hates me and he made you see what you saw in the stars in the hope of destroying me. So it was not so much your fault, and I forgive you.'

"After that Vortigern built his tower and it stood. But he was not happy or safe in it long. The sons of the old King Constantine, Pendragon and Uther, who had been taken to France, were grown up by this time and they came over to England with an army, to get back from Vortigern the kingdom which belonged to them. To make a short story of it, they captured Vortigern's strong tower and killed him, and then Pendragon was King of England. But the country was not peaceful yet. The Saxons, who had come many times before, came still and tried to conquer the Britons. Then Merlin foretold that there would be a great battle on Salisbury Plain. There, he said, Pendragon and Uther and their army would fight with the Saxons and would beat them, but one of the brothers would be killed. He would not say which one, but he said that the one who lived must take his brother's name, besides his own, and be King of England, and he must build a monument to his brother on Salisbury Plain that should last forever.

"So the great battle was fought on Salisbury Plain, all around where we are now, and the Saxons were beaten. But when it was over, they found that many of the Britons had been killed, and that the King, Pendragon, was among them. So his brother Uther was made King and took his name and was called Uther Pendragon. Then the new King sent for Merlin and said to him: 'How shall I build the monument to my brother on Salisbury Plain, so that it shall last forever?'

"And Merlin answered: 'Send to Ireland and get the Giants' Dance, and set it up for a monument to your brother.'

"'What is the Giants' Dance?' the King asked.

"'It is a circle of great stones,' Merlin answered. 'The giants brought them long ago from Africa and set them up in Ireland.'

"'And how shall I bring them here?' the King asked.

"'Send ships and men to get them,' Merlin answered, 'and I will go to show them how.'

"So the ships were got ready and Merlin crossed over with the men into Ireland. He knew the place to go, and there stood the Giants' Dance, a great circle of upright stones, with other great stones lying across the tops of them. 'Now see if you can take them down,' said Merlin. And they tried. They brought timbers and ropes and made levers and pulled and pushed and did everything that they could think of. And they could no more move even one of the stones than they could move the mountain that they stood on. 'Now rest a little while,' said Merlin.

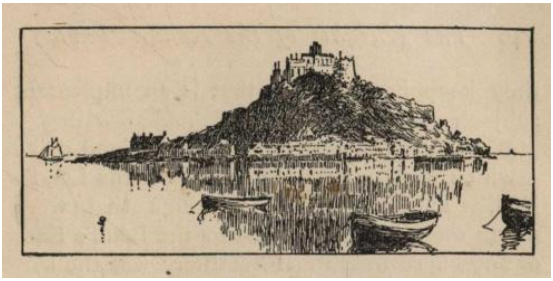
"Then Merlin, all alone, walked about the stones and in and out among them, and he seemed to be saying something or singing something, but nobody could understand what it was. 'Try again to move them,' he said.

"They tried again and this time it was as easy as if the stones had been bags filled with air. They put them on board the ships and they sailed back to England, and Merlin set them up, just as they had been in Ireland, here on Salisbury Plain, where Pendragon had been killed. And afterward, when Uther Pendragon died, he was buried here at Stonehenge, too.

"That is all of the story and here is Stonehenge to prove that it is true. If anybody cares to say that this story is not true, let him tell me how else these stones came here. Let him try to tell me how else they could come here. Merlin told King Uther Pendragon that he would build a monument that should stand forever. Forever is a long time. Many of the stones have fallen now, you see, but still many of them stand, and it is not for us to say that Merlin was wrong and that this monument will not be here always. All that we can know is that the stones, fallen or standing, are here where Merlin put them, that they still show us the place where the battle was and where Pendragon fell, and that the sun, on the longest day of the summer, still rises over the one stone away down there and looks through the gate that Merlin built, into the wonderful, old, mysterious, magic circle, where the two kings, Pendragon and Uther, are buried. And after all, I think that I would rather not know any more about Stonehenge than that."

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE EDGE OF LYONNESSE



St. Michael's Mount

We had meant, when Helen's mother should come from Paris, to go back to Glastonbury and begin our journey again where we had left off. But when she came we thought better of it. We decided that, since we were going to the Southwest of England again, we might as well go all the way and see the Land's End. Then, we thought, we could go to Glastonbury just as well on the way back.

So it happened that when Helen's mother was with us again, we took the longest railway ride that we had taken yet, and at the end of it we found ourselves in Penzance. Penzance is the place where the pirates were, you know. We had always supposed that that was a made-up story and that there never were really any pirates of Penzance. But we found that the pirates were there still. Only now they do not scuttle ships any more, if they ever did; they keep hotels. But that is an unpleasant subject.

We set off the next morning for a long drive—which was to be partly a walk—to the Land's End. There were many things that were worth seeing before we got to the Land's End, or anywhere near it. First there was the harbor of Penzance, one of the prettiest that I ever looked out upon. And over on the other side of it, stately and beautiful against the summer morning sky, stood St. Michael's Mount. St. Michael's Mount is a cone-shaped hill, rising high out of the water, with a castle on the top of it. It is one of those things that are so picturesque that they surprise you when you see them in a real scene, because they look too perfect to belong outside a painted picture.

"And who do you suppose used to live on the top of that hill?" I said. "Why, the old giant Cormoran, the one whom Jack the Giant-Killer knocked on the head with his pickaxe, the very first giant whom he killed. Of course I should not think of telling you that story, at your time of life; I only tell you that there is the place. But I might tell you about another giant, and let you try to straighten out his story, if you like, better than I can. Over across the channel from here, in France, there

is another St. Michael's Mount. I have never seen it, but the picture of it looks as much like this one as if it were its own brother. I think that I have told you before that the people of old days used to think that high hills belonged somehow to St. Michael. Well, over there on the other St. Michael's Mount lived another giant with whom King Arthur himself once had a little tussle. The giant's name was Ryence, and he had a mantle trimmed with kings' beards. You remember something, perhaps, that I told you once about a King named Ryence, who had a mantle trimmed with kings' beards. It is rather curious that there should be two of them.

"It was when King Arthur went over to France on his way to fight the Emperor of Rome that he heard of this giant. He was a terror to the whole country, for he killed hundreds of people and spoiled crops, and his favorite food was little boys. I don't know why he liked little boys so much better than little girls, but I suppose he knew more about which were the better to eat than I do.

"When Arthur heard about the giant he took Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere with him and went to the foot of the hill. There he told them to wait for him, and went up the hill alone. He found the giant sitting before a fire cooking a man for his supper. Arthur got close to him and wounded him with his sword before the giant knew that he was there. Then he sprang up and caught hold of Arthur, and they both fell and rolled over and over each other clear to the bottom of the hill, and Arthur managed to give the giant two or three more wounds on the way. Kay and Bedivere ran to see if the King was killed, and they found that he was scarcely hurt at all and that the giant was dead.

"I don't say that there is anything so very remarkable about that. It is just a plain sort of every-day giant story. But here are the strange points, I think. Here were two hills looking wonderfully alike and with the same name, and a giant lived and was killed on each of them. And here were two giants, both named Ryence, for King Ryence was a giant, too, and they both had mantles trimmed with kings' beards, and Arthur killed one and beat the other. It looks to me as if two stories, at least, had got a little mixed, or else one story twisted in two. How does it look to you?"

There is no reason, that I can see, why I should try to tell you all about the way from Penzance to the Land's End. It will not do you much good to know that it was grand and beautiful, as long as you were not there to see its grandeur and its beauty. We stopped at St. Buryan, and a very old woman showed us the church. It is a curious old place, and it has some fine carvings. But the old woman, who showed us everything and explained it to us, could not understand what there was about it that we found interesting. She had been showing this church to people, she said, for more than fifty years, and she had never been able to make out yet why they wanted to see it.

Then we went on to see the Logan Rock, and got a guide to find it for us. We could never have found it for ourselves, because it is so mixed up with so many other rocks. It is a huge rocking stone. It weighs I don't know how many tons, but a strong man can move it a little, if he knows just how and where to take hold of it and push. The guide rocked it for us, and he said that we did it ourselves when we tried, but I think he flattered us. He helped us to climb on the top of it—not an easy thing to do at all—and then he rocked it with us sitting on it. As he led the way back he took us through a narrow passage between two great rocks and told us that we must each of us make a wish as we passed through and never tell what it was, and then it would come true. "But we don't need to ask what the young ladies wish," he said, "they all wish the same thing." We wondered how many years he had been making that same joke over and over again. No doubt he must have got some pretty tips by it, when there were young women and young men both in the party.

We were going to walk from here to the Land's End, five miles, for it was one of the places where we had been told that we must walk, so as to see the scenery. We had already told the driver to go on to the Land's End and wait there for us. The guide showed us how to go and offered to go with us, but we thought that we did not need him. "You won't be able to see the Scillys to-day," he said. "Sometimes you can see them from the Land's End, but it isn't clear enough to-day. But you can be sure of a fine day to-morrow. When it is clear enough to see the Scillys it almost always rains the next day."

So we felt cheered at missing a sight that we had hoped to see, and went on our way. All the way the walk was up headlands and down ravines, with many grand and beautiful pictures—great crags and domes and pinnacles of rock and deep valleys and gorges and caves, and the sea always crashing and roaring down below us.

And when we came to the Land's End, of course that was the best of all. For there the sea seemed rougher than anywhere else, though it was not a rough day. It was no new thing for us to stand on a point of rock, with all the land behind us and nothing but boundless ocean before us. We did not need to come to the Land's End or to England for that. But there was something awful and solemn about these towers of stone that stood here to keep the sea from washing England away, and about the sea that was working at them while we looked, dashing up against them and slipping back and dashing up again, as it had been doing for thousands of years before we had come to look, and as it would do for thousands of years after we were gone. And after all these ages of work and struggle the waves seemed to be still angry, still fierce and full of wrath that the land should resist them so long. "Old rocks," they seemed to say, "you think that you are firm and steady and strong. But wait—and wait—there is much time before both of us

still. Stand against us as you will; we shall still clash and beat upon you, and at last, in spite of all your firmness, we shall wear and wash you away, and we shall cover you sometime as we covered old Lyonnesse."

Lyonnesse! That, after all, I believe, is the wonderful thing to think of at the Land's End. "Yes, now," I said, "we are looking straight out over Lyonnesse—Tristram's country, the country that is lost. This is where it began, and it stretched away out there where there is nothing now but ocean, away out to the Scilly Islands, which we are not to see to-day. For thirty miles old Lyonnesse reached out from here, and even now, they say, for all that way, the bottom of the ocean lies at an even depth, and not like the bottom in other places. And they say, too, that when the water had covered Lyonnesse for so long that people had almost forgotten that there ever was any land there, the fishermen used to think of it again, because they sometimes drew up their hooks with pieces of doors and windows caught upon them. And nothing more than these ever came back of a country that had its towns and its fields and its forests and its people, which were all lost under the water together.

"And I remember an old book which says that more than Lyonnesse was taken away from Cornwall by the sea. For the old book says that St. Michael's Mount, which we saw this morning, used to have another name, that meant 'the rock in the wood.' And from this it was thought that St. Michael's Mount stood in a forest once, and not in the sea, as it does now. And the book, which was written about three hundred years ago, says that even then, when the tides were low around St. Michael's Mount, the stumps and roots of great trees were sometimes seen half buried in the sand."

Perhaps this is all nothing but old fable, but the land of Cornwall and the sea of Cornwall look as if it were true. How could these terrible waves and tempests tear and beat and surge upon this country, even with its walls of rock, without taking something away? You can laugh at the old wives' tales—if it is your way to laugh at such things—it is not ours—while you are at home, but when you stand at the Land's End and look out to sea, if you have a bit of the love of a story in you, you must and you will believe in Lyonnesse.

CHAPTER IX

THE SIEGE PERILOUS



The Land's End

It does not matter just where we were when we told and heard these next few stories. Neither do I need to use quotation marks all through them. You will understand that we did tell them and hear them somewhere. They belong to no place. When King Arthur's knights set out from Camelot to seek the Holy Grail everything seemed at once to grow mysterious and marvellous and magical. Place and time were unknown and almost unthought of. Knights rode about without knowing or caring where they went. Sometimes they found more wonderful adventures than had ever been thought of before, and sometimes they rode for days and saw no house and no living thing. Friends met friends and did not know them; fathers fought with sons, and brothers with brothers. New knights won glory and knights who were old and tried were put to shame. Common men became prophets, and so prophets became common. The worst of men gave counsel to the best of knights, and the knights could scarcely tell whether the things that they were told to do were the best and the wisest or the most foolish and the worst. There were signs and omens and visions, and there were hard trials of courage and of faithfulness.

There are a hundred stories of what was seen and said and done. They are all different, and among them all much seems confused and dim and uncertain. But everywhere and through everything is seen, like a clear flash of fleeting flame, one perfect knight, the strongest, noblest, greatest knight who ever came to Arthur's court, the one best knight of all the world. Others wander and stray and are tempted and overcome and disheartened, and then there is a gleam of a fire-colored armor, and there is a swift stroke of a spear that never missed its aim, the wicked are overthrown, the helpless are rescued, and the knight has passed on toward his goal of the Holy Grail.

It all began on the night before the feast of Pentecost, when so many strange things happened. The King and the Queen and the knights were in the great hall

at Camelot, and a woman, whom no one knew, rode into the hall on horseback. She dismounted and came before the King and said: "My lord, tell me which is Sir Lancelot."

"That is Sir Lancelot," said the King, pointing to where he sat.

"Sir Lancelot," she said, "I am sent to you by King Pelles. He asks you to come with me to an abbey in a forest not far from here."

"And what am I to do there?" Lancelot asked.

"I am not to tell you that," she said; "I am only to bring you to the abbey."

"I will go with you, then," said Lancelot, "if it is to please King Pelles."

"Lancelot," said the Queen, "to-morrow is the feast of Pentecost; shall you not be with us then?"

"Madame," said the woman, "he shall be back here by dinner-time to-morrow."

So Lancelot put on his armor and rode with the woman till they came to the abbey in the forest. There, when he was unarmed, some nuns came to him, leading a young man. "Sir Lancelot," one of them said, "this young squire is the grandson of King Pelles. He is strong and brave and noble. He has learned much and it is time now for him to be made a knight. He asks you, and so does King Pelles and so do we, that you will make him a knight."

Then Lancelot looked at the young man. He was scarcely more than a boy in his years but he was tall and strong. Lancelot thought that he had never seen so beautiful a face besides its beauty there was courage in it, and freedom and hope and all the rich flush and glow of a bright, new manhood. And a strange feeling came to Lancelot as he looked, and a voice seemed to be saying in his ears: "He has come! He has come!" Lancelot could not have told what it meant. He only felt that there was something in this young man that made him different from any other he had ever seen, something without a name, by which he knew that he was greater and finer and truer than the rest. "To-night, then," said Lancelot, "let him watch his arms in your chapel, and to-morrow I will make him a knight."

And so it was done. The young man watched his arms in the chapel while the others slept, and in the morning Lancelot made him a knight. Then Lancelot begged the new knight to come to the court with him, but he answered: "No, it is not time for me to go to the court, but I shall be there with you soon."

"So Lancelot rode back to Camelot alone. And then began the most wonderful day of all King Arthur's reign. When Lancelot had come and all the knights were sitting in the hall a squire ran in and went to the King and said: 'My lord, I have just come up from the river, and down there a great stone is floating on the water and there is a sword sticking in it.'

"That is a wonderful thing, truly," said the King; "we will go and see it."

So the King and the Queen and all the knights left the hall and went down

to the river. And there, truly enough, was the stone, floating on the river, and there was the sword sticking in it, as the squire had said. And the King saw letters on the stone and he came near and read them: "No one shall ever draw this sword out of this stone except the one to whom it belongs, the best knight of the world."

"Surely," said the King, "I think that the best knights of the world are in my court; who will try to draw this sword?" and he looked toward Lancelot.

"I do not think," said Lancelot, "that the sword is mine, and I will not try to draw it."

But many of the other knights tried to draw the sword and could not, and the King looked at Lancelot again and said: "Will you not try to take this sword? Surely there is no better knight in the world than you."

"No," said Lancelot, "it is not for me. Remember, my lord, all the wonderful things that Merlin told long ago. The best knight of the world is not among us yet, but I believe that he is coming soon. Let us all go back to the hall, my lord, and keep our feast and wait for him."

And back they went to the hall, and they were scarcely in their places when there came another wonder. An old man came into the hall, leading a young man by the hand. They saw that he was an old man only by his figure and by his step and by the end of a white beard which they could see. For he wore a long, white robe, and a hood hung low down over his face, so that they could not see it. The young man was dressed all in flame-colored armor, and he had no shield or sword, but an empty scabbard hung by his side. They came and stood close to the throne and closer to the Siege Perilous. Bors sat near them, and it seemed to him that he knew, just as it had seemed to him once before, long ago, at the Castle of Carbonek, that this old man was Joseph of Arimathæa, who would have died hundreds of years ago, but that the power of the Holy Grail kept him alive. And he knew, too, that the young man was the beautiful child with the deep eyes and the bright, sweet face and the hair like gold, whom he had seen at the Castle of Carbonek. Percivale sat next to Bors, and it seemed to him too that he knew the old man, though how he could not tell. Next to Bors on the other side was Lancelot, and what he knew was that the young man was the one whom he had made a knight that morning at the abbey.

"King Arthur," said the old man, "I have brought you a new knight, Sir Galahad. You have waited for him long, for you were told of him before he was born, and his place at your Round Table was waiting for him before you yourself were born."

"He is welcome here," said the King, "and you are welcome too." But almost before he had spoken the old man was gone from the hall and the young knight in the flame-colored armor stood before him alone. Yes, there at last he stood,

Galahad, whose name had been spoken with wonder or with hope or with doubt so many times. Only the best knight of the world, Merlin had said, should sit in the Siege Perilous, and the best knight of the world should be Galahad. How many times Arthur had looked at that seat and wondered why his best knight, Lancelot, could not sit there, and what the knight could be like who should be better than Lancelot. And now here he stood—Galahad.

But there was something else for the best knight of the world to do. The knights who filled the hall were not thinking then of the Siege Perilous. They were thinking of the stone floating on the river, and the sword sticking in it. The King saw them whispering together and pointing that way and he said to the young man: "If you are indeed that Galahad whom we have waited for so long, you are more welcome than any other who has come here since Lancelot, my best knight till now, the son of my old friend King Ban. It you are that true Galahad who was promised, then you will be the best of all my knights—better than Lancelot. Will you come and prove to us whether you are so?"

Then the King took the young man's hand and led him down to the river and all the rest followed them to see. And the King said: "Try if you can draw that sword, for none of my other knights can draw it."

"See, my lord," said the young man, "I have brought no sword, only this empty scabbard, for I knew that I should find my sword here." And he took hold of the sword that stuck in the stone and drew it out and put it in his scabbard.

There was no doubt of it now; the knight whom they had waited for had come. Yet the King's face was sad as he led the way back to the hall, for it seemed to him that now there could be little to wait for and the days of the Round Table would not be many more. But other thoughts came to him a moment later, when the new knight knelt before him to take the oath that would make him a knight of the Round Table. For then, just for an instant, it seemed to him that the time had gone back to the beginning of his reign. There was a look in the young man's eyes that brought back the day when Lancelot had knelt before him like this and had sworn this oath and when he had believed that Lancelot would surely be the one perfect knight. Yes, it was the same clear light that he had seen for an instant that day in Lancelot's eyes, the glow of something great and wonderful, he knew not what. But there was more in the face of this new knight. There was something which told Arthur that, though he swore that in all things he would be true and loyal to God and to the King, yet, without the oath, he could never have a thought that would not be true and loyal.

And the King scarcely knew whether it was great joy or great sorrow that made him almost tremble before this boy. And when he took his hand again they all saw that his face was white as he turned toward the seat that was next the throne. And there at last in that Siege Perilous were the letters, more of fire than

of gold, as they seemed: "This is the seat of Galahad."

Those who could see whispered to those who could not and the word ran down the hall and then in an instant everyone was still. After all these years of waiting, after the wonders and the prophecies, would any one, even Galahad, dare to sit in that seat? They had feared that seat and had seen it empty so long that they could not believe it, and they all stood up in their places and strained their eyes and held their breaths in wonder and dread. And of all who were there Galahad alone had no fear and no dread. Only for an instant he stood there, with the eyes of all the rest upon him and his own upon the King's, and then he sat in the Siege Perilous.

Every seat at the Round Table was filled. For the first time since Merlin made that table for Uther Pendragon there were a hundred and fifty knights around it and no seat was empty. Then of a sudden the hall grew dark. Thick clouds seemed to have come over the sun and they heard a great wind outside. Then there was thunder that shook the castle and almost deafened them. It was over in a moment and through an upper window there shone one broad beam of sunlight. It slanted down from the top of the hall to near where Galahad sat, and still the rest of the hall was dark. And then came the strangest thing of all. They saw a soft, red glow of light, through the darkness of the hall, and it moved toward the place where the sunlight fell. They could not see what it was clearly, for it had a covering of white silk, and the red glow shone through this and filled the room. And the thing that shone was in the form of a goblet. It moved, as if someone were carrying it, but they could not see anyone. It moved till it came where the sun shone upon it, and then the hall was bright and the knights could see one another. And it seemed to each of them that the others looked greater and stronger and more beautiful than he had ever seen them look before. They knew, all of them, that this that they almost saw, but could not see, was the Holy Grail. It passed on again, away from the sunlight and across the hall, and the red glow was gone. The sunlight was gone too, and then the old light came slowly back and they all saw that the table had been covered with food.

At first they were all so full of wonder at the sight that none of them could speak. Then Gawain, who sat on King Arthur's left, rose and held up the cross-shaped hilt of his sword. "My lord," he said, "we know that it was the Holy Grail that passed before us just now. But we did not see it. So now I make this vow, my lord, that I will leave this court and seek the Holy Grail, that I may see it more openly than we have all seen it to-day. I will seek it for a year and a day, if I do not find it sooner, and if I have not found it then I will come back, believing that God does not wish that I should see it."

Then the knight who was next to Gawain held up the cross-shaped hilt of his sword, as Gawain had done, and made the same vow, that he would seek

the Holy Grail for a year and a day, unless he found it sooner. And so it went around the table, and they all made the vow, and last of all Lancelot and Bors and Percivale and Galahad.

And Arthur had listened to them all and had spoken no word, but his face was pale and troubled. For he knew that if his knights went away upon this quest many of them would not come back, and he should never see all the places at the Round Table full again, as he saw them now. And when they had all made the vow he said in a low voice to Gawain: "When will you leave us to go upon this quest?"

"At once, my lord," said Gawain; "to-morrow."

"Not so soon as that," said the King. "Let me see all my knights together for one more day. We will have a tournament to-morrow. You shall all meet before me once more in one fine field of combat and then you may go."

And the knights all saw how sad the King was at their leaving him, and they were all glad to do as he wished. But the King had another reason for the tournament that was to be the next day. He did want to see all his knights together for one last time, but there was more than that. For here on his right, in the Siege Perilous, sat Galahad. He was the best knight of all the world, or he could not sit in that seat. Arthur knew—he could not tell how, but he knew—that when Galahad left the court to seek the Holy Grail he would never come back. The best knight of the Round Table, the best knight who had ever been in his court, would go away forever, and he had never seen him in one knightly combat and would never know how he could fight, how he could ride, or how he bore his arms. And this was the reason, more than the other, why Arthur wished to see one great tournament of all his knights.

So in the morning the meadow at Camelot was thronged again with the people who came out to see the tournament, all the more eager because they had heard of the wonders of the day before and of Galahad, and because they knew that he would be there in the field. The King sat in the highest place, with the Queen beside him, and it was with sad faces, though they were proud too, that they looked down upon their knights striving together in the tournament. They could scarcely have told afterward what any other knight did, for it seemed to them all that day that they saw only one knight. Wherever they looked they saw those flame-colored arms of Galahad flashing up and down the field. His horse never faltered, his spear never failed, his arm never grew weary. He bore no shield, but every spear that touched his armor was shattered, and when he pointed his own spear at any other knight and charged against him that knight went down. But the King and the Queen saw that, while the others were all falling before him, he never came near to Lancelot or to Bors or to Percivale. He would not joust with them and so they all three did nobly in the tournament too.

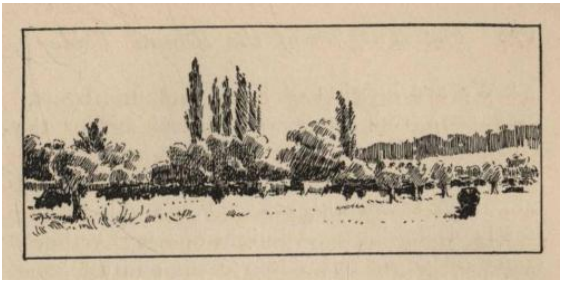
And the King was so filled with the wonder of all that he saw Galahad do that when it was over he could scarcely speak to him. But he held his hand and looked long at him and said, in a voice that sounded strange and uncertain: "Galahad, I have seen the best that a knight can do."

That was their last night all together in the great hall at Camelot. After it came a sad morning. The knights were ready early and the King was ready to see them go, though he could scarcely take the hand of each and say good-by, so great was his grief at their going. The knights all mounted together and rode through the streets of Camelot, between the lines of people who had come out of their houses to see them go, and so out through the gate and away from the city. And the King and the Queen stood on a tower of the castle to watch them as long as they could. At first they could pick out here an armor and there a banner and know that this was Galahad, this Lancelot, and that Gawain. But when they were farther off they could not do this any more; they could only see the big, bright spot upon the road where the morning sunlight struck upon the armors, and then their eyes were tired with looking and something came across them so that for a moment they could not see at all. The bright spot on the road grew smaller and smaller. It flashed and twinkled and shivered. Was it a cloud of dust that rose now behind the knights and hid the glimmer of their arms, or was there something in the King's eyes again so that he could not see it? Once more he saw the far-off flash, fainter now, and yet again, and then the dust rose and there was no more to see. And so the noble fellowship of the Round Table passed away from King Arthur and out of his sight like a setting star.

[Illustration: "The bright spot on the road grew smaller and smaller" (missing from book)]

CHAPTER X
GAWAIN

All that day the knights of the Round Table rode together, and in the evening they came to a city where they all lodged for the night. The next morning they parted and rode different ways. In the days and the weeks and the months that followed some of them had many and strange adventures and some of them had but few. I



"A pasture where a hundred and fifty bulls were feeding"

could not possibly tell you, or even remember for myself, all the wonderful things that happened to all of them, but I can tell you a part of the things that happened to a part of them.

Gawain rode for a long time alone, till at last, at an abbey where he stopped to spend the night, he found his brother Gareth and his cousin Uwain. The next day they went on their way together, and as they rode so they met seven knights, who called to them to stop and to tell who they were.

"We are knights of King Arthur's court," they answered, "and we are seeking for the Holy Grail."

"Then it is well that we have met you," said one of the seven knights. "We are from the Castle of Maidens. A knight of King Arthur's court drove us out of our castle and we have sworn to kill all of King Arthur's knights whom we meet. We will begin with you."

Then all seven of them put their spears in rest and charged against Gawain and Uwain and Gareth. But the three knights of the Round Table fought so well that they soon beat their seven enemies and wounded them and drove them away. The three knights parted then and rode different ways. And in the evening Gawain came to the cell of a hermit and asked him to let him stay for the night. They talked together and Gawain told the hermit who he was and that he was seeking the Holy Grail. The hermit knew, as everybody knew, all that Arthur's famous knights had done, and he said: "It is useless for you, Sir Gawain, to seek the Holy Grail. You will never find it. It shows itself only to the purest and the best. You have not been good enough and sound enough and true enough in your life ever to see the Holy Grail. Ah, Gawain, Gawain, do not think that you did such a great thing to-day, you and your two fellows, when you beat those seven knights from the Castle of Maidens. For one knight alone had beaten them all

only a little while before. They had taken the Castle of Maidens from the old lord who owned it, and they had killed him and had held the castle for a long time. They were tyrants and murderers, and Galahad came and drove them all out and gave the castle to the daughter of its old lord. Galahad did it alone, and now you three are proud because you beat the seven cowards. Knights like Galahad will see the Holy Grail, not knights like you, Gawain."

In the morning the hermit told Gawain that if he hoped ever to come near the Holy Grail he ought to do some penance for all the evils of his life. But Gawain answered: "No; we knights make long journeys and we fight dangerous battles. Our lives are hard enough without doing any other penance, and I will do no other." So he rode on his way.

And after that for weeks and months Gawain rode by lonely ways and through deep woods and over barren hills, and he met with no adventure and scarcely with a living man. Then he met another knight of the Round Table, Sir Ector. He was not the old Sir Ector, Arthur's foster father, but another, the brother of Lancelot. "I am tired of this quest of the Holy Grail," said Gawain. "I have ridden for months and I have found no adventure, and it seems to me that all the people of the country are dead."

"It is so with me," said Ector. "I used to find adventures enough, wherever I went, but there are no more of them now."

The two went on together for a time and everything seemed waste and deserted, as it had seemed to each of them before. They came at last to a chapel that stood by the road. It looked as sad and as deserted as the rest, and it was falling into ruin, but they left their horses and went into it and sat down to rest. And while they sat there they both fell asleep, and Gawain had a strange dream. It seemed to him that he saw a pasture where a hundred and fifty bulls were feeding. They were all black but three, and those were white. And while he looked they all went away, and afterward some of them came back, but many did not come back. Only one of the white ones came, and the black ones all looked lean and weak.

When he awoke he told Ector of his dream, and said: "It seems so strange to me that I believe it has some meaning, and if we can find some wise and holy man I shall tell it to him and ask him what it means."

And as they rode on they met a young squire and Gawain asked him if he knew of any man such as he wished to find. "Nacien, the hermit," said the squire, "is a wise and holy man. He was a knight of King Arthur's many years ago, and they say that he was one of the best of them. His cell is not far from here."

He showed them the way, and when they found the hermit Gawain told him his dream and asked him what it meant. And the hermit answered: "The pasture that you saw was the Round Table and the bulls were the knights of the

Round Table. They left the pasture, just as the knights went away to seek the Holy Grail. The three that were white were three knights who are so true and pure that they will see the Holy Grail at last, but only one of them will come back. And the other knights, the black bulls, will never see the Holy Grail, because of the evil in their lives. Many of them will not come back, but some will come, and they will be weary and worn with the quest."

Then Gawain said: "If what you say is true we shall never find the Holy Grail, for I fear that we must be counted among those who have too much evil in their lives."

"Gawain," the hermit answered, "there are a hundred knights of the Round Table as good as you, who will never see the Holy Grail."

And Gawain and Ector rode on till they came to a castle where there was a tournament. The knights of the castle were against a great crowd of other knights, and Gawain and Ector joined in the tournament against the knights of the castle. And Gawain and Ector fought so well that it was plain that their side was winning the day. Then of a sudden they saw a new knight among those of the castle. They had not seen how he came or from where. He carried a white shield, with a red cross upon it, and the rest of his arms were of the color of fire. Gawain charged against him first. His spear was broken against the white shield, but the other knight used no spear. He only raised his sword and struck Gawain so that he cut through his helmet and wounded his head and threw him from his horse. Ector drew Gawain out of the field and took off his helmet, and the knight with the white shield charged against more of the knights who were against those of the castle. And everywhere he overthrew them till the word was given that the knights of the castle had won the day. Then he went away again as he had come, and no one knew where.

The tournament was over and Gawain was taken into the castle and laid upon a bed. "Ector," he said, "do you know who the knight was who wounded me?"

"Yes," said Ector, "I know him. There is only one who could do such things as I saw him do. It was Galahad. His arms were like Galahad's too, only when we saw him last he had no shield."

"Ector," said Gawain, "it is Galahad who will find the Holy Grail. We are not like him, and we cannot do the things that he can do. We have gone far enough in this quest. I shall seek the Holy Grail no more."



"Through woods where there were scarcely any paths to follow"

CHAPTER XI
LANCELOT

When the knights of the Round Table parted, Lancelot, like the rest, rode for a time alone. Many times before now Lancelot had sought adventures by himself. For many years he had wandered over England and he thought that he knew the country well. But now, before he had ridden far, he was in places that seemed strange to him, and soon he could not tell at all where he was. He crossed rivers and rode over hills and plains and through woods where there were scarcely any paths to follow. He saw fewer people than he had been used to see, and many of the houses that he passed were deserted and ruined. Often wild beasts crossed his track and he had to fight with them. At night he slept where he could, sometimes in a ruined house or chapel, sometimes on the ground, with his horse tied to a tree near him.

And when he slept he had strange dreams. Often in these dreams he thought that the Holy Grail came near him. He saw the rosy light shine through the white covering, for that covering of silk was always over it, but he could never come close to it. He saw others who were wounded or sick come to it and touch it and go away again strong and well, but he had no strength to move or to speak. It came near to him and passed away and he lay before it helpless.

When he awoke he would ride on, over more of the hills and plains and rivers, fight again with the wild beasts and lie down to sleep again as he had done before. Sometimes he came to a hermit's cell. Then he stayed all night with the hermit and talked with him of the court, of the knights, of his long journey, and of the Holy Grail. Sometimes one of the hermits would say to him: "The

Holy Grail is not for such men as you to see. You have been counted long the best of knights, in your strength and your deeds, yet there has been evil in your life, too, and the Holy Grail will not show itself to you in the way that it will to others."

Then Lancelot would ride on his way feeling sad. He would remember the knight in the flame-colored arms, who had done better in that last tournament that they had than he had ever done. He would remember how that knight had sat in the Siege Perilous; how his own seat for all these years had been three places off from the Siege Perilous, and how those two other knights, Percivale and Bors, had sat nearer to it than he. And he would think: "This quest is for such knights as those; it is not for me."

Then some other wise man would say to him: "Lancelot, the Holy Grail will show itself to few, but you shall do better in this quest than many others." And then he rode on his way again with new hope, though he did not know of what, and with new heart.

One evening he was riding after the sun had set, and he was thinking that he must soon find a place to stay for the night. Then he came into a wood and all at once it was darker around him than it had been out on the open plain. And before him, then, he saw dimly the form of a knight coming toward him on a horse. "Sir Knight," he said, "I have ridden in strange paths for many days and I have met no knight, and I have almost felt that I was forgetting knightly ways. Will you try one joust with me?"

The knight did not answer, but he put his spear in the rest, and Lancelot did so too. They spurred their horses and rode together with a crash and Lancelot's spear struck full upon the shield of the other knight and was broken into splinters. But the other spear held, and it struck Lancelot's shield and threw him off his horse and he lay upon the ground. And so the great Lancelot, the glory of King Arthur's court, was overthrown by the first knight whom he met. The other knight was off his horse in an instant and Lancelot was on his feet. He drew his sword half out and then stayed his hand and let the blade slide back again into the sheath. He bowed his head before the other, who stood before him, and said: "I know you, Sir Knight. For these many years I have jousted with all the best knights of the world, and I know the stroke that every one of them can give. Tristram could never strike any blow like that of yours, or Gawain or Palamides or Percivale or Bors or Gareth. I have never felt it before, but I know that there is no other such certain spear in the world as this of yours, Galahad! Galahad!"

And the other answered: "I know you, too, for I have heard of you so long and of your knightly deeds. It is as if I had learned all that I know of knighthood from you. And it was you, too, who made me a knight, and I feel toward you, for all these things, as if you were my father, Lancelot! Lancelot!"

Then Lancelot said: "Galahad, I feel that it is such knights as you who will see the Holy Grail, and I feel that it would be better for me to be with you. May I go with you now, wherever you go, and try to find the Holy Grail with you?"

"No, Lancelot," Galahad answered, "no one can go with me yet, but I will tell you this: since we all parted I have talked with many good and wise men, and they have told me many things. Of all who are seeking the Holy Grail only three will see it openly, but of all the rest who seek it you will be nearer to it than any other."

Then Galahad mounted his horse again and rode away through the wood, and it seemed to Lancelot that a pale light shone back upon him for a moment from the flame-colored armor, and then he was gone. And as soon as Lancelot was alone a little breeze rustled the tops of the trees above him. They made only a low, sighing sound at first, and then it grew louder and clearer, and then it seemed to Lancelot that it grew into a voice, and he thought that the voice said: "Lancelot, go to the sea and go into the ship that you find there."

Then the voice and the rustling of the trees and the wind all died away, and Lancelot mounted and rode on through the wood. And he had scarcely started when he came out of the wood and saw the sea before him. Far out he could see great waves, with white crests that flashed in the moonlight, but close to him there was a little bay, with a rocky shore, and a ship lay close to the rocks, so that he could step on board.

Lancelot could see no one on the ship and it had no sail, but as soon as he was on board it left the rock and the bay and carried him out to sea. Then a feeling of strange rest and happiness came over him. He never knew how long he was in the ship or whether he slept there. But when he next saw anything clearly it was still night and the moon was still shining. The water was calm and there was land all around. The ship came to the shore and stopped, and before him Lancelot saw the gate of a castle.

He left the ship and went toward the gate, and there he saw two great lions guarding it. He drew his sword and kept on toward them, and when he was near the gate something struck his sword out of his hand. Yet he felt, he could not tell why, that there was no danger from the lions, and he went on through the gate. The lions sprang at him as he passed, but they did not touch him, and he went into the castle. He saw no people, but he went on from room to room, through open doors, till at last he came to one that was shut.

He tried to open the door, but he could not, and then he heard music on the other side of it. It was like the singing of a great choir, and the singing or something else seemed to tell Lancelot that the Holy Grail was in that room where he could not go, and he knelt down before the door and waited. Then the door opened of itself and a great light shone out and he could hear the music more

clearly. He looked into the chamber and in the middle of it he saw a table of gold and silver, inlaid in beautiful shapes, and on the table was the Holy Grail, still with that white covering of silk. Yet it seemed to Lancelot that the rosy glow from the Holy Grail that shone through the silk was brighter and clearer than it had been when he had seen it in the hall at Camelot, and brighter than it had ever seemed to him in his dreams. An old man stood beside the table and Lancelot knew that he was the same who had led Galahad into the hall that day when he had sat in the Siege Perilous.

Then, while Lancelot looked, the old man lifted up the Holy Grail, and at that Lancelot started up and came into the chamber to get nearer to it. But suddenly it seemed to him that a blast of fire struck him in the face. The burning air seemed all about him and through him and it took away his breath and his strength and he fell to the floor. Then he felt no more pain and he did not know where he was, but he felt hands that took him up and carried him away and put him in a bed.

The people of the Castle found that he was not dead and they took care of him, and it was twenty-four days before he awoke. Then he looked about him and asked them where he was. "Who are you?" they asked him.

"I am Lancelot of the Lake," he answered, "and I am seeking the Holy Grail."

"This is the Castle of Carbonek," they said, "and King Pelles, the keeper of the Grail, lives here. You have done well and nobly, Sir Lancelot, and now you must go back to King Arthur, for you will never see more of the Holy Grail than you have seen here."



"He saw the water before him and a ship"

CHAPTER XII
BORS

Bors left his fellows of the Round Table and rode all day alone. Toward evening he met a hermit. These Grail-seeking knights were always meeting hermits. The country seems to have been full of them. And this one asked Bors to come to his cell and rest there for the night. He had nothing to give to Bors to eat and drink except bread and water, and while they were making their supper of these the hermit asked the knight to tell him who he was and on what journey he was bound.

So Bors told him how the Holy Grail had come into the hall at Camelot, but covered, so that no one could see it. And he told him how all the knights had vowed that they would seek for the Grail and try to see it, how they had all left Camelot together, and how they had parted now, and were all riding different ways. Then the hermit said: "Sir Bors, do you know that this Holy Grail will not be found by any knight who is not brave and worthy in his deeds and pure and true in his life? Do you know that it will not show itself except to those who seek for it faithfully, thinking of nothing else, except such good and noble things as they can do, and never forgetting it because of any pleasure or of any gain?"

And Bors answered: "Yes, I know it."

"Then, Sir Bors," said the hermit, "will you promise me one thing, to help you to find the Holy Grail?"

"What shall I promise you?" said Bors.

"Promise me," said the hermit, "that you will eat nothing but bread and that you will drink nothing but water, till you see the Holy Grail."

"Is it right," said Bors, "for me to promise this? How do you know that I shall ever see the Holy Grail?"

"I know," the hermit answered, "that it is such knights as you who will see it, if they seek it in the right way."

"Then I will promise," said Bors.

In the morning Bors left the hermit and went on his way. And after a time he saw two knights coming toward him, leading a third knight as a prisoner. They had him bound upon a horse and they were beating him with thorns. And when they came nearer Bors saw that the knight who was a prisoner was his brother Lionel. Then, just as he was riding forward to help his brother, he saw, on the other side of him, a woman, and some robbers pursuing her. Bors stopped and for an instant did not know what to do. For, as a good knight, he ought to help the woman, yet he feared that if he did that his brother would be killed or

led away where he could not help him.

Yet it was only for a moment that Bors doubted. Then he remembered that his brother was a knight and that he should be ready always to suffer whatever came to him, and that the woman needed him more. So he turned against the robbers and fought with them and drove them away. When he had done that some knights came up who were the woman's friends, and they thanked him for saving her and begged him to come with them to the castle of her father, who was a great lord and lived near by. But Bors said that he must hasten now to help his brother, and he rode the way that he had seen his brother and the other two knights go.

He rode for a long time and saw nothing of them, and then he met a man dressed like a priest, riding on a black horse. "Knight," said the man, "where are you riding so fast?"

"I am trying," he said, "to find my brother, Sir Lionel, for I saw two knights leading him away as a prisoner, and I must help him."

"You need not go any farther," said the man, "and you must be brave to bear what I have to tell you. Your brother is dead. The knights whom you saw have killed him. Come with me now and I will bring you to a castle near here, where you can stay for the night, and longer if you will."

So Bors rode with him, and as they went along he asked him if he was a priest. He said that he was, and then Bors asked him if he had done right to help the woman instead of his brother. "No," the priest answered, "you did wrong. Your brother has been killed because of what you did, and that woman was nothing to you."

Then Bors was sadder than before, and he said no more till they came to the castle to which the priest was leading him. There a woman, young and beautiful, the lady of the castle, came down to meet him, followed by many others, all young and beautiful too. They welcomed him and led him to the hall, where a feast was spread on the table, and they begged him to eat and drink, and then to stay with them and join in their games and their dances and their feasts. But Bors answered: "I am one of the knights who are seeking the Holy Grail and I must not turn away from my quest for any pleasures, and I have promised to eat nothing but bread and to drink nothing but water till I see the Holy Grail."

"The Holy Grail?" said the priest. "Why are you seeking it? Do you know why, or shall I tell you? It is because you know that few will find it. It is because you wish for the glory of being thought better than other men. Is this a good or a noble wish? I tell you it is a proud and wicked one. Forget it and stay here with us and be happy and be like other men."

And the lady of the castle said: "Sir Bors, I knew that you were coming here and it was for you that I made this feast. Stay here with us now or I shall

kill myself, and my death will be by your fault, as your brother's was. Say that you will stay with us, or I will go up to the top of the castle tower and throw myself down."

And again Bors did not know what he ought to do. He could not forget that the hermit had told him that he must not think of pleasures while he was seeking the Holy Grail, and he could not forget that he had promised to eat nothing but bread and drink nothing but water till he should see it. And, as he cast down his eyes in thinking, he saw the cross-shaped hilt of his sword. And, as if he suddenly knew that that could help him, he caught it and held it up before him and before them all.

And as he held it up he heard a great cry among the women, and the priest screamed as if an arrow had struck him. And then, too, Bors heard a great wind sweep over the castle. It was only for an instant, and in that instant there was a crash of thunder and a blinding flash of lightning. The next instant the castle and the priest and the women were all gone. Bors was standing alone on a broad plain, holding up the cross-shaped hilt of his sword. The only living thing near him was his own horse. A cold wind was sweeping over the plain. In the west there was a dull, red glow of sunset and above it there was one pale star.

Bors mounted his horse and rode away to find a place to stay for the night. When he had ridden some way he heard a bell and came to an abbey. He knocked at the gate and a monk came and opened it. When the monk had let him in, Bors asked him if there was any wise man here who could tell him the meaning of all the adventures that he had had. "Our abbot is a wise man," the monk answered. "Perhaps he can tell you."

So he led Bors to the abbot and Bors told him everything that had befallen him since he left the knights of the Round Table. "And it has been so strange," he said, "that I do not know whether all that I have done has been right or wrong."

"You have done right, Sir Bors," the abbot answered. "It was right for you to leave your brother and save the woman from the robbers. Your brother is a man and a knight and he must take whatever adventure comes to him. It was your duty to help the woman who needed you, before you tried to help another knight, even though he was your brother. And your brother is not dead. Gawain met him and rescued him. The man in the dress of a priest, who told you that he was dead, was not a priest. He was a wicked enchanter. He told you that you had done wrong and he took you to the castle where the feasting was, to make you forget the Holy Grail. But you were too faithful to your promise and too firm for him, and I am sure, Sir Bors, that you will be one of those who will see the Holy Grail."

Bors went on his way again in the morning and soon he met a man who told him that there was to be a tournament at a castle not far off. So Bors went

toward the castle, for he thought that at the tournament he might find his brother or some of his other friends of the Round Table. And as he came near the castle he saw his brother sitting beside the road, and his horse standing near. Bors had not felt so glad since he left Camelot to seek the Holy Grail as he did now to see his brother alive and well. He got off his horse and went toward him, but Lionel only started up angrily and got on his horse and made ready his spear. "Bors," he cried, "you ran away from me to help some strange woman, and you would have let my enemies kill me. It was the unkindest thing that ever one brother did to another. Now get on your horse and defend yourself or I shall kill you where you stand."

But Bors would not move. He begged his brother not to do so wicked a thing as to murder him or to make him fight with him, but Lionel would not listen. When he saw that Bors would not defend himself he drove his horse against him and tried to throw him down and ride over him. But Bors caught the horse's bridle, and then Lionel dismounted and drew his sword and came against him. Then there was nothing for Bors to do but to draw his own sword and defend himself. But as he lifted his sword he heard, or it seemed to him that he heard, a strange voice, that rang in his ears and said: "Bors, do not strike your brother, for if you do you will kill him."

And then all at once they could not see each other, for there was a cloud between them, all of fire, as it seemed, and it scorched their faces and dazzled their eyes. And Bors heard the voice again, saying: "Bors, leave this place and go to the sea, for Percivale is there in a ship waiting for you."

So Bors turned away and took his horse and rode for a long way, and then he saw the water before him and a ship, all covered with canopies of white silk, lying beside the shore. And he went on board the ship, and as soon as he was there it left the shore and went swiftly out into the sea.



"'Knight,' she said, 'what are you doing here?'"

CHAPTER XIII
PERCIVALE

This was the adventure that Percivale had. When he had parted from his fellows and was riding alone he met a company of twenty knights. They stood across his path and asked him who he was and whence he came. "I am Sir Percivale," he answered, "and I come from the court of King Arthur."

"Then we will kill you," they cried, "for we are enemies of King Arthur and of all his knights."

Then they dropped the points of their spears and rushed upon him, and he struck down the first that came with his spear. But half a dozen of the others came upon him all at once, and some of the rest killed his horse, so that he was thrown down and was helpless among them. Then, when he thought that his last moment was surely come, he heard the sound of a horse's hoofs and then a shout, and then he saw the flash of a bright, flame-colored armor coming toward him. In an instant the knight who wore it was among them, and he had struck down some of them with his spear, and then he had drawn his sword and he was laying about him with it. No one who felt one stroke of that sword stayed to feel another. Some fell and could not rise, and others turned and fled, and soon there was none left to do any harm to Percivale. Then the knight in the flame-colored arms went away too, as fast as his horse could go, and all that Percivale saw of him was a last glimmer of his armor among the trees.

Percivale knew that this was Galahad, and he wished that he could follow him and go with him on his quest of the Holy Grail. But he had no horse and Galahad was out of sight, and he could do no more than go as fast as he could on foot the way that Galahad had gone. And so he went on, not hoping to overtake Galahad, and scarcely knowing what he did, till night came on and it grew so dark that he could not see his way, and he was so weary and so faint that he felt that he could go no farther. Then he sank down, just where he was, upon the ground, and slept.

When he awoke it was midnight. The moon was shining, and by the dim light he saw a girl standing beside him. It was she who had awakened him. "Knight," she said, "what are you doing here? Have you nothing better to do than to lie asleep beside the road? Where is your horse?"

"My horse was killed," he answered, "by some knights who fell upon me and nearly killed me too. Then I came so far without him and grew so weary that I sank down and slept here where you have found me."

"I will give you a horse," the girl said, "if you will take him from me."

"There is nothing that I need," said Percivale, "so much as a horse, and if you can find me one I shall be grateful to you."

The girl went away and soon she came back leading a great, black horse, with rich trappings, and she told Percivale to take him. The instant that Percivale was in the saddle the horse was away like the wind. Percivale could not stop him or turn him. He went where he liked, and Percivale was sure that in all his life he had never ridden so fast. No, nor a tenth part as fast, for sometimes, as this mad horse carried him along, he saw places that he knew, and within an hour he saw some that he knew were a day's journey apart. And all at once he heard a dull roar and saw the ocean before him. The horse was going straight into it, as it seemed, and when Percivale saw that, he drew his sword and held it by the blade and struck the horse's neck with the cross-shaped hilt. Then the horse gave a great leap and threw Percivale off his back. He fell on the very edge of the water and the horse plunged into it. And where he disappeared there sprang up a great flame, bright blue, and it went out and left a thick, black smoke behind it. The wind blew the smoke away, and there was nothing more to see but the great waves rolling toward the shore and dashing against the rocks.

Then the weariness and faintness came upon Percivale once more, and he lay down there on the rough rocks of the sea-shore and slept again. It was morning when he awoke. As he looked around him he saw that the rocks about him were so high that they made a mountain and the water seemed to be all around it, or nearly so. And as he was looking for a way to get back to the mainland he saw coming toward him a great serpent, carrying a young lion in its mouth. An old lion was following, and it came up and began to fight with the serpent, but it could not make it drop the young lion. Then Percivale thought that of the two beasts he liked the lion better, and that he would try to help it. So he drew his sword and put his shield before him and ran to the serpent and cut off its head.

And the old lion went to the cub and found that it was not much hurt, and then it came to Percivale and licked his hand, as a dog would, and tried to thank him for saving the cub. After that it carried the cub away, but in a little while it came back and stayed with Percivale all day, and at night, when Percivale lay down to sleep, the lion watched beside him.

The next morning Percivale saw a ship coming toward the land. It came close to the rock where he was and he could see no one in it but one old man, in the dress of a priest. It had been so long since Percivale had had any friend but the lion that he was glad to see the priest and he told him who he was and how he had come there, and that he did not know how to get away from the place.

"Do not try to find any more adventures now," the priest answered, "but come into this ship and wait in it for the adventures that will come to you."

So Percivale went on board the ship and at once it started out into the sea.

He did not see the priest again and he could not tell where he had gone, but he could see the lion still standing on the shore and looking after him, till the ship had gone so far that he could no longer make it out. And Percivale must have slept again in the ship, though he did not know how long. But he awoke and saw a man bending over him, and the man was Bors.



"'It was King Evelake's shield'"

CHAPTER XIV
GALAHAD

When Galahad left Camelot he had no shield. He had carried none in the tournament and he had done better without one than any of the other knights. He still had none when the knights parted. He rode alone for four days without any adventure. It was then that he came to an abbey and went in to spend the night. Another knight of the Round Table had come there before him, and as they sat talking together the monks told them of a shield that they had. It had been in the abbey for many years, they said, and it had been foretold that no one except the best knight of the world should ever carry it without coming to some harm.

"I will take that shield to-morrow morning," said the knight, "and see what comes of it. I do not think myself the best knight of the world, but I do not fear any adventure that may befall me. And you, Sir Galahad—if you will, you may wait here for a little while to know if I come to any harm, and then I am sure that you can bear this shield, if I cannot."

"It shall be as you say," said Galahad, "and I will wait to hear from you."

In the morning the knight asked for the shield, and the monks brought it to him. It was white, with a red cross upon it. The knight took it and rode away with his squire, and Galahad waited. He did not wait long, for before noon the knight was brought back to the abbey so badly wounded that they could scarcely tell at first whether he would live or die. The squire came with him and brought the shield. He brought it straight to Galahad and said: "Sir Galahad, we met a knight who fought with my lord and wounded him as you see. Then the knight told me to bring the shield to you and to say that no one but you ought to carry it."

"Then tell me," said Galahad to the monks, "what this shield is and why no one may use it but me."

"It was King Evelake's shield," one of the monks answered. "In the time of Joseph of Arimathæa, Evelake was King of the City of Sarras. He bore this shield in a great battle that he fought, and it was Joseph who made this red cross upon it for him. Afterward he came to England with Joseph. When he died the shield was left here in this abbey and Joseph foretold that it should never be borne with safety by anyone till the best knight of the world should come."

When Galahad heard that, he took the shield and made ready to go on his way. But first he asked the monks about his fellow of the Round Table, and they told him that he had been nearly killed, but that they could cure him.

I have told you already some of the things that Galahad did. You know how he overcame both Lancelot and Gawain, how he drove the murderers out of the Castle of Maidens, and how he saved Percivale from his enemies. It was after all these things that he was sleeping one night in the cell of a hermit, and a woman came to the door and called to him. The hermit opened the door and she said to him: "I must speak to the knight who is here with you."

Then the hermit awoke Galahad and told him that there was a woman at the door who said that she must speak to him. So Galahad went to the door and she told him that he must put on his armor and come with her. Galahad did not know who she was or what she wanted of him, but something made him feel sure that he ought to do what she said. He put on his armor and rode with her for the rest of the night and all the next day, and then, as it was getting toward night again, they came to a castle.

The lady of the castle welcomed them and told Galahad that he must eat and sleep a little and then be ready to ride again. It was still night when they came and woke him, and he put on his armor and rode again with the woman who had brought him to the castle. It was only a little way that they rode this time and then they came to the sea-side and saw a ship, all covered with canopies of white silk. They went on board and found Percivale and Bors. As soon as Galahad and the woman were in the ship it left the land and went straight out into the open

sea.

When the three knights had greeted one another and when each had told the others something of where he had been and what he had done since they had parted last, Galahad said: "I should never have found you here if this woman had not brought me and shown me the way, and I am sure that you must thank her as much as I for bringing us together."

Then the woman said: "Percivale, do you know who I am?"

"No," said Percivale, "I do not know you."

"I am your sister," she said, "whom you have not seen since you first went to King Arthur's court."

Then they all stood together, talking and looking out upon the dim sea, till slowly they began to see it more plainly and the sky grew lighter and the stars faded away in it, and a faint and then a brighter glow rose in the east and the day came. When it was fully light Percivale's sister said: "Come now and let me show you what there is in this ship that you have not seen."

She led them to another part of the ship and there they saw a sword in a scabbard. The hilt of the sword was set with jewels and the scabbard seemed to be of serpent's skin. It was all rich and beautiful except the girdle which was fastened to it, and that was of hemp and looked poor and weak. "Galahad," said Percivale's sister, "this sword is for you, and I must tell you how long it has been waiting for you. It was King David's sword, and his son, King Solomon, built this ship and put this sword in it and said that it should be for the best knight of the world and for no other. King Solomon was the wisest man that ever lived, yet he had a wife who in one thing was wiser than he. For she was to make a girdle for this sword, and she made this poor one of hemp that you see. When the King saw it he was angry and he told her that such a sword as this ought to have the best girdle in the world, not the worst. 'That is true, my lord,' she answered, 'but I had nothing that was fit for the best girdle in the world, and so I have made this one. And this one shall stay on the sword till it is time for the best knight of the world to come and take it. Then the sword shall have a new girdle. It shall be made by another woman, a young maiden, and she shall make it of what she loves best and is proudest of in all the world.' And when Solomon had built the ship and put the sword in it, and his wife had put the girdle of hemp on the sword, they saw the ship, all of itself, move out to sea, and it passed out of their sight and they never heard of it again. And ever since King Solomon's time this ship has floated on the sea, and now I have brought you to it, Galahad, to take this sword which is yours."

"This is a wonderful story that you have told us," Galahad said. "How have you learned these things?"

"I cannot tell you," she said. "It seems to me that I know them without

learning them. It is the Holy Grail, I think, that has given me the knowledge of them, but I cannot tell you how; only, when I have seen the Holy Grail, I have thought that all at once I knew many wonderful things that I did not know before."

"The Holy Grail?" said Galahad. "You have seen it then?"

"Yes," she answered, "many times. You knights go far to seek the Holy Grail, but it has come to me without my seeking it. Now, Galahad, take your sword, for soon we must leave this ship."

"But where is the new girdle for the sword?" said Galahad. "It seems to me that this old one of hemp will scarcely hold it. And who is the maiden who is to make the new girdle?"

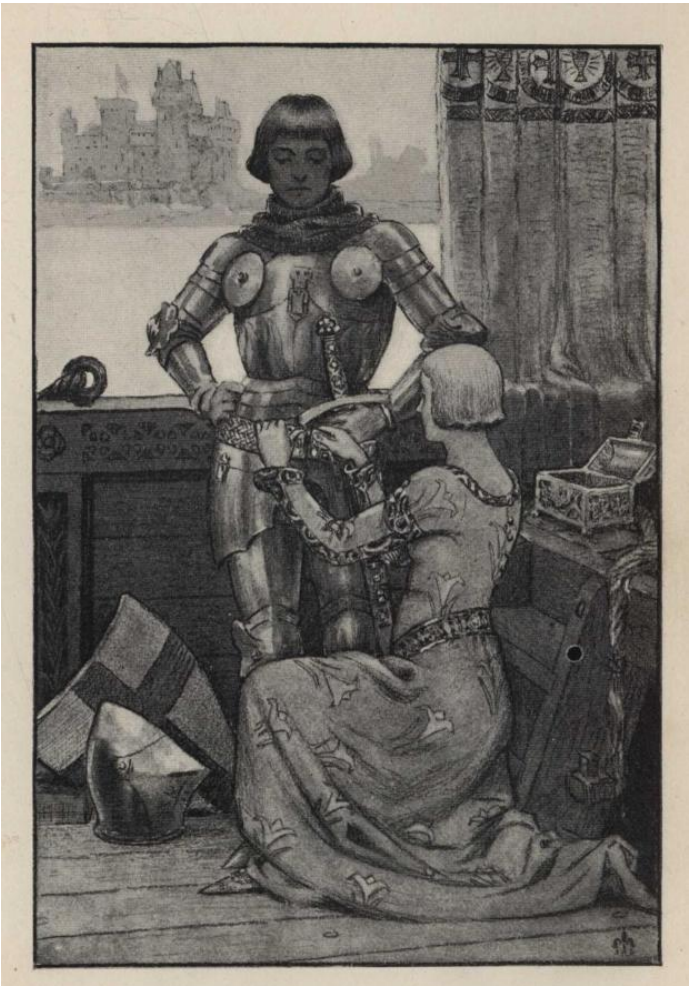
"I am she," said Percivale's sister, "and I have made the girdle and have brought it. It is made of my own hair. It was long and beautiful once, like fine threads of gold, and I was proud of it and loved it more than anything else in the world. But when I had seen the Holy Grail and when I knew of this sword and knew that it was I who must make the new girdle for it, then I cut off my hair and wove it into a girdle."

Then she took the girdle out of a casket that she had brought, and it was indeed like a broad band of soft gold. And she fastened it upon the sword and bound the sword upon Galahad's side.

They saw that the ship was coming near the land again and soon it touched the shore. They all went on shore, and, when they had gone a little way they saw a great castle before them. When the three knights and Percivale's sister came near the castle, men came out of it and told them that they could not pass till they had done the custom of the castle. And the custom of the castle was that the maiden must give a silver dish full of her blood to cure a sick lady. The three knights would have fought the men of the castle and tried to pass by force, but Percivale's sister would not let them do it. "The lady of the castle shall have my blood," she said, "and it will cure her."

"But if you lose so much blood," said Galahad, "you may die yourself."

"Yes," she answered, "I shall die, but it is no matter for that. All that I had to live for was to give you the sword that you have, to make the girdle for it of my hair, and to cure this lady. When I have done that I shall have done all that I had to do. Now let me tell you what to do when I am dead. When I am dead, do not bury me here, but put me in the ship that we have come in. Leave me in it alone and go on your way. You will see me again sooner than you think, but there is something still for you to do here. You must go to the Castle of Carbonek to heal King Pelles's wound. After that you three must bring the Holy Grail to the City of Sarras. I shall be there as soon as you and there you must bury me. And two of you will not live long after that, and you will be buried beside me. For you,



"I CUT OFF MY HAIR AND WOVE IT INTO A GIRDLE."

"I CUT OFF MY HAIR AND WOVE IT INTO A GIRDLE."

Galahad, and you, my brother Percivale, will stay there with me, and then you, Bors, must come back to England and tell the King and the rest all that we have seen and done. Now let us talk of it no more. The Holy Grail has shown me all that I must do and neither you nor I must try to change it."

All this, you may be sure, made the three knights very sad, but Percivale's sister had shown them and had told them so much that was wonderful that they did not dare to disobey her. They all stayed in the castle that night. In the morning Percivale's sister gave the silver dish full of her blood and it cured the lady of the castle, and soon after that Percivale's sister died.

The three knights carried her to the shore and put her into the ship again, as she had told them to do. As soon as they were on the shore again, the ship started out to sea and they stood and watched it. It went away from them swiftly and they looked till its canopies of white silk seemed no more than the wings of a sea-bird resting on the water, and then, with a last fading flash in the morning sunlight on the edge of the ocean and the sky, it was gone. Yet still they watched and they saw a little brown spot of mist rise up where the ship had vanished. It grew larger and came toward them and spread over the sky and shut off the water from their eyes and it wrapped them all around. They could scarcely see the path before them as they turned to go away. The cold, damp, sad mist cloud was over all the land and the ocean, only before them there was a pale, silvery shimmer of the sun still shining on the cloud.



The Dove with the golden censer

CHAPTER XV
THE CITY OF SARRAS

The knights went to the castle and found horses, and mounted and rode toward the Castle of Carbonek. The silvery shimmer of the sun upon the mist grew brighter. The mist itself grew thinner and lighter and at last it all melted away into the clear air, and the sun shone warmly upon the fields and the woods, which the morning mist had left cool and fresh and dewy. The knights did not speak much to one another. They were thinking too much of what had passed. And so they rode till late in the day, and then they saw the Castle of Carbonek before them.

Everything there was as if they had been expected. The porters opened the gate for them, King Pelles's men led them to chambers, where they took off their armor, and then to the great hall, and there they found places ready for them at the table and the table laid, though with no food upon it. When they had sat down, King Pelles was brought in and was placed at the table, too. "Galahad," he said, "no one could be more glad to see you than I am, for I know that you have come to cure my wound. I have suffered with it every day for all these many years; yes, since long before you were born. And all that time I have known that no one could cure it but you, and so I have waited and waited for you to grow up and be a knight and go out in the quest of the Holy Grail, for I knew that it was not till then that you could come to cure me. I have tried to be patient all these years, but now, Galahad, that you have come, it seems to me that I could not bear this wound another day."

When the King had said this, the dove that carried the little golden censer in its peak flew into the hall, as it had done when Bors was there before, long ago. The thin smoke floated through the room and it was filled again with that sweet odor that Bors remembered. Then a door of the hall opened and an old man—the same whom Bors had seen before, the same who had brought Galahad to the Siege Perilous—came in. He carried the Holy Grail itself, and this time there was no covering of silk upon it. It was not the old rosy glow that came from the cup now. The blood that was in it shone like one clear, red gem, resting in the pure crystal of the cup. It shone brighter, the knights thought, than any light they had ever seen before, yet it did not hurt their eyes when they looked at it. The beams that came from it made a broad halo of beautiful colors all about it, and the light that it shed through the room was like the light of day, only brighter and clearer, and everything that was seen in it looked finer and more beautiful.

The old man held the Holy Grail high up above his head for them to see it better, and then he put it on the little table of gold and silver that was in the room. Another door of the hall was opened and four boys came in and brought the spear with the drops of blood flowing from the point. They came and stood with it before the old man and he looked at the spear and then he looked at Galahad. Galahad rose from the table and went to the spear and touched the

blood on the point of it with his fingers. Then he went to the King and touched the wound in his side with the blood, and at once the wound was healed. The King stood up for a moment and felt that his strength and his health had come back to him, and then he sank down again in his place and scarcely moved, but gazed at the Holy Grail and at the spear and at Galahad.

"Galahad," said the old man, "you have done now all that you had to do here. You have seen the Holy Grail and you have healed the King's wound. To-morrow you must leave this land, and the Holy Grail will leave it too. Go to-morrow, with your two fellows, to the sea. There you will find your ship. You must go in it to the City of Sarras and you must take the Holy Grail with you. When you are there, you will know what more you have to do."

The old man lifted the Holy Grail again and went out of the hall with it, and the boys who carried the spear followed him. The table was covered with food and wine now and they all ate and drank, and then they all left the hall and slept till morning.

In the morning Galahad and Percivale and Bors left the Castle of Carbonek and went to the shore. And there, as the old man had said, they found a ship. As soon as they were on board they saw that the Holy Grail was there before them. It stood on the table of gold and silver and the covering of white silk was over it again.

The knights did not know how long they were in that magic ship, or what way or how far they went. They were moving swiftly always, they slept and they awoke, and they saw sunlight and moonlight and starlight. The Holy Grail was always with them and they never felt hunger or cold or weariness. And while they were in the ship Galahad told Percivale and Bors that he had prayed that he might leave this world whenever he wished it, and he knew that his prayer would be answered. And one morning, just as the sun was rising, they saw a low bank of white mist far before them, and above the mist they could see the pale, silvery lines of spires and towers and domes, and they knew that this was the City of Sarras. The ship brought them quickly nearer and nearer, and as they came into the harbor they saw another ship going in before them. It was all covered with white, and they knew that it was the ship that carried Percivale's sister.

When they came to the shore they took hold of the table with the Holy Grail upon it to carry it out of the ship. But it was too heavy for them and they looked about to find some one to help them. The nearest man was an old cripple who sat begging. Galahad called to him and told him to come and help them carry the table. "I cannot help you," he said; "it is many years since I could even stand, except with crutches."

"No matter for that," said Galahad, "come and do your best." And the old cripple came and helped them, and he was as strong and as well as any man.

They carried the table and the Holy Grail to the cathedral and left them before the altar, and then they came back to the shore and brought Percivale's sister out of the ship and up to the cathedral too, and buried her there.

When the King of Sarras heard of the strange knights who had come and of the cripple who had been healed, he sent for the knights and asked them who they were and whence they came. Now this King was a tyrant, and when Galahad had told him all about the Holy Grail he began to be afraid of these knights, for he feared that they would have more power over the people than he had himself. So he sent all three of them to prison. But as soon as they were in prison the Holy Grail came to them of itself, and it stayed with them and fed them, as it had fed Joseph of Arimathæa, when he was in prison. And, like him, they scarcely knew how long they were there. But when they had been in prison for a year the King was sick and felt that he was going to die, and then he began to have worse fears than before.

So he sent for the three knights again and told them that he had done wrong in putting them in prison and begged them to forgive him. "We forgive you," Galahad answered; "you had no power to harm us, for the Holy Grail was always with us."

Then the King said to Galahad: "I am sure that I shall die soon and I wish that you might be King here after me, for I know that my people could have no better king than you."

So it was agreed, and soon after that the King died and Galahad was crowned in his place. When Galahad was King the Holy Grail was put before the altar in the cathedral again and Galahad had a chest made to cover it. And every day he and Percivale and Bors went to the cathedral to pray before it.

And one day, when Galahad had been King of Sarras for a year, he told Percivale and Bors that the time had come for him to leave this world, and they must come with him to the cathedral now for the last time. So they went to the cathedral together and they saw an old man kneeling at the altar. He was the same old man whom they had seen so many times before, who had been made to live so far beyond his time by the power of the Holy Grail, Joseph of Arimathæa. On the altar before him lay the spear with the drops of blood flowing from its point.

The three knights knelt before the altar, Galahad nearer to it than the others, and they were there for a long time. Then the old man rose and came to the chest where the Grail was and took it out and held it up before them, and the light that shone from the blood that was in it, through the crystal of the cup, was greater and stronger than ever. The whole cathedral was bright with it. It streamed up among the arches of the roof and lighted old pictures that were painted there. For years before they had scarcely been seen, they were so dim

with time and with dust and with the smoke of incense. Now, with the light of the Holy Grail upon it, the place was again a piece of Heaven, filled with wonderful forms. There was Elijah, in his chariot of fire; there were saints and angels; and all about them and among them there were little stars of gold, that glowed and twinkled in the new brightness like the stars of the real Heaven.

The old man set the Grail upon the altar and came to Galahad and touched his hand and kissed him. Then all at once the church grew dark and Percivale and Bors could see nothing but the Grail and the spear upon the altar and the old man who stood before it. He took the Grail and the spear and then he seemed to rise and to go farther from them, though they could not see how he went. It seemed to them, too, that Galahad was with him, and they did not see that the form of Galahad still lay before them on the steps of the altar.

In this way they watched for a long time and then Percivale said to Bors: "Do you not see, far off there in the sky, as it seems, Galahad himself, with his crown and his royal robes, holding the Holy Grail in his hands?"

"I cannot see that," Bors answered; "the window of the choir is open, but the air outside is growing darker. I see a little cloud that the setting sun has turned all to crimson and to gold, and that is all."

After a time Percivale said again: "Bors, do you not see now? He is farther away, but still I can see the shining of the Holy Grail."

And Bors answered: "Even the little cloud is gone now, and where it was a bright star is shining. I can see no more."

And again Percivale said: "I hear music—trumpets and harps and voices—and I see Galahad still, and plainer than I saw him before, holding up the Holy Grail. Do you hear nothing, Bors, and see nothing?"

"I heard a loud wind," Bors answered. "It passed us and blew against the window of the choir and shut it. I cannot see the sky any more, but in the colored glass of the window I see Joseph of Arimathæa, holding up the Holy Grail, but I cannot see him clearly, it is growing so dark outside."

And still, though they did not see it then, the form of Galahad lay before them on the steps of the altar. And again there was no King of Sarras. They buried him, Percivale and Bors, in the cathedral, beside Percivale's sister. And after that Percivale found a cell outside the city and lived there as a hermit for a time, and then he died. Bors stayed with him till then, and he buried him in the cathedral, with his sister and Galahad. And when he had done that Bors left the City of Sarras and went on his way back toward England, to tell King Arthur the last of the story of the Holy Grail.



The Cheesewring

CHAPTER XVI
STORIES OF STRANGE STONES

What I wanted to find was Dozmare Pool. I had heard about it and I had read about it, and I wanted to see it. I studied the maps and the time-tables. We had to go from Penzance to Exeter, and I thought that if we got off the train at Liskeard we could find a carriage to take us to Dozmare Pool and back in time to catch another train and get to Exeter before night. Then it turned out that Helen's mother did not care about going to Dozmare Pool at all.

You may never have noticed it, but one of the best ways in the world for two people to get along together is for each of them to have his own way always. So it took us less than a minute to settle that Helen's mother should just stay in the train till it got to Exeter and wait there for us. Helen was young enough to feel an ambition to see and do as much as possible, instead of as little as possible, and she said that she would go to see Dozmare Pool too. And so Helen and I got off the train at Liskeard and stood on the platform and saw it go on and watched it till it was out of sight. Then we felt that we were alone in a strange land, for we knew almost as little about Liskeard as we did about the moon, and how could we tell that we should be able to get to Dozmare Pool at all? We left the station and began to look around. We did not have to look far. Just across the road there was a little hotel called the Stag. We went in and the landlord did not seem quite so surprised to see us as some of the hotel keepers we had met before. We asked him if we could have luncheon and he said we could. Then we asked him if he knew where Dozmare Pool was. That made him stare a little, but he said he did. Next we asked him if he could find a carriage and a driver to take us there. "Yes," he said, "and I suppose you will want to go to the Cheesewring too."

"What is the Cheesewring?"

"It's some very curious stones, sir; visitors almost always go to see it, sir."

"Is it near Dozmare Pool?"

"Oh, it's a matter of three miles, sir."

"Shall we have time to go to both places and get back so as to catch a train for Exeter?"

"Oh, yes, sir; you'll have plenty of time, I think."

"Very well, then, we will go to the Cheesewring."

That is the way with hotel keepers in such places. They have certain sights that they expect everybody to go to see, but they never can understand why you want to see anything else. And of course it doesn't really matter whether they understand or not. Still I was willing to take the landlord's advice. I had read something about the Cheesewring before and I was glad to find that we had such a good chance to see it.

When we had finished luncheon the carriage and the driver were ready, and in a few minutes Liskeard was behind us. The country was of the same pretty sort that we had seen so many times before, with tall trees, that hung over the road, and fields and high hedges. They were not wonderful scenes that we were riding through, but just fresh and bright and lovely scenes.

There was a place where, for a short way, we rode along beside a little brook, and even from the carriage, as we passed, we could see the trout swimming in it. The driver told us that the boys of a school near-by often caught the trout by letting down wide-mouthed bottles, with bait in them, into the water. The fish would go into the bottles and the boys would pull them up by the strings. This was a way of catching trout that I had never heard of, but it seemed likely enough that it might be done, with a stream so full of them as this one was.

I tried, as usual, to get the driver to tell us stories. "What sort of place is this Dozmare Pool, where we are going?" I said. "I have heard that there are some very wonderful stories about it."

"I can't say, sir," he answered; "I never heard any stories about it in particular."

This was just the answer that I expected. It is not at all easy to get people to tell you the stories about the places where they live, even when they know them. I don't know why it is. Perhaps they are afraid of being laughed at, if the stories happen to be a little hard to believe, and perhaps they feel that the stories belong to them and to their neighbors, and they do not like to give them to strangers.

But one of the best ways to get them to tell you a story is to tell them one. I thought that this way was worth trying, so I said: "I am surprised at that. I thought everybody about here must know stories about Dozmare Pool. Why, I was reading only the other day about a giant named Tregagle, who lived about

the pool and had a great deal of trouble. He was once a wicked steward, I think, who killed his master and mistress and got the property that belonged to their child, and for that he was condemned to empty Dozmare Pool with a limpet shell. Of course he never could do it, but he had to keep working at it forever. And then, as if that was not enough, the story said that sometimes the devil used to come after him, and the only way that he could get away from the devil was to run fifteen miles to the Roche Rocks and put his head in at the window of a chapel there, and then the devil could not harm him. And when the devil got tired of waiting and went away, poor old Tregagle had to come back and go to work again at emptying the pool with his limpet shell."

"I never heard of Tregagle," said the driver, "but the way I heard the story was that it was the devil himself who had to empty the pool with a limpet shell, and he did it. Then he was condemned to bind the sand and mike the binds of the sime, and that he couldn't do."

So the driver did know a story after all. I must tell you just here that this driver had a very queer way of speaking, as it seemed to us. I am not quite sure whether it was a Cornish way or not. It was harder to understand than any other speech that we had heard in Cornwall. Liskeard is almost on the edge of Devonshire and this man's talk, too, had something that sounded like London in it. I try to tell you the things that he said in every-day English, and not just the way he said them. But I have tried, too, to give you a few words just as they sounded, to show you what they were like. But I feel that I have not quite done it. When the driver told us that the devil was condemned to "bind the sand and mike the binds of the sime," Helen and I stared at each other and could not make out what he meant at first. But we soon thought it out. The words that he had tried to say were "bind the sand and make the binds of the same," and what he meant was, that the devil was to make the sand into bundles and make ropes out of the sand to bind them around. Making ropes out of sand has always been counted a hard thing to do, and it is really no wonder that the devil could not do it.

After he had told us this one story the driver was much better company, and I think he tried to tell us all that he could about all that we saw. "The well of St. Keyne is not far from here," he said. "Perhaps you may have heard of it, sir. They tell the story about it that when a man and a woman are married, the one of them that drinks from the well of St. Keyne first will always be the ruler of the house. And the story tells how there was a man who was married, and he wanted to be sure to drink first. So as soon as the marriage was over he left his wife in the church and ran and drank from the well. But his wife was before him after all, for she had brought a bottle of the water to church with her. There was a piece of poetry made about it. I don't remember who did it."

"Southey?" I suggested.

"Yes, sir; I think so, sir."

The driver showed us two curious stones in a field that we passed and waited while we went to look at them more closely. They stood on end and were rather higher than a man's head, as I remember. They were square at the bottom, but smaller at the top, and one of them had somewhat the form of a chair. There was some rough carving on the sides. The driver said that he had heard that some old King of Cornwall was buried there. Since then I have read more about these stones in a very old book about Cornwall. The writer does not seem to know much more than we as to how they came there, but he says that they are called "the Other Half Stone." I think that you will say that that is as curious a name as you ever heard. The old writer seems to think so too, and he does not know anything about the one half stone of which these are "the other half." But he says that they are just half way between Exeter and the Land's End.

The driver decided that he would take us to the Cheesewring before Dozmare Pool, and by and by he said that we were as near to it as we could go with the carriage. He pointed it out to us, on a hill, a long way off, as it seemed. Then he drove along to a poor little village, where we left the horse and carriage at a house that called itself an hotel, and from there we walked to the Cheesewring. The way was across a broad stretch of rough ground and it was not at all easy walking. We had not gone far before the driver had some more stones to show us. They were not very large, but there were a good many of them, and they stood on end, as usual. They had stood in two great circles once, as if they were little stones trying to look like Stonehenge, but now some of them had fallen down, and of course that was a part of their game of Stonehenge too.

"They call these the Hurlers," said the driver, "and they tell the story that they were men, who were turned into stone for playing quoits on Sunday." (He pronounced it "kites.") Then he pointed to two stones that stood by themselves, a little way from the circles, and said: "I suppose those two were men who were only looking on, and not playing."

We resolved that we would never play quoits on Sunday, or so much as look at anybody playing quoits on Sunday, and then we went on toward the Cheesewring. We had to climb a little way up the hillside to get to it, and then we stood almost on the edge of a precipice, looking down into a great quarry, where there were men at work cutting out stone. The Cheesewring itself was almost on the edge of the precipice too. It was a great pile of stones—a great pile, but few stones, for they were huge ones. They were skilfully fitted and balanced, one upon the other, and the top one was much the largest of them all, so that the whole pile had somewhat the shape of a rude anvil. The whole pile was perhaps four times as high as our heads. I think I have forgotten to say till now

that "Cheesewring" means "cheese-press," and surely a very large and very stiff cheese might be well flattened out by having that pile of stones set upon it.

The puzzle of it, as usual, is how the stones got there. The machinery that they are using down below there in the quarry to-day would be none too good to move such stones as these. Yet there they are, and there is no history of the time when they were put there. "What do you think of them," I said, "and whoever do you suppose knew how to pile them up there?"

"I don't know," Helen answered, "but when there are any big stones anywhere you generally say that Merlin put them there."

"Well, I am not going to say so this time, though these stones do somehow remind me of Merlin. Did I ever tell you what became of him at last?"

"No," said Helen, "of course you didn't."

"Why, here we are," I said, "telling stories about the very end of King Arthur's reign, and nobody had seen or heard anything of Merlin since almost the very beginning of it. And do you mean to tell me that I have never told you what became of him?"

"Why, you know you never did; what was it?"

"Well, to be sure, if I have never told you that, we ought not to lose another minute about it. But you must forget everything that you have heard lately and go away back, for that is where this story begins. After Merlin had taken good care of King Vortigern and of King Pendragon, King Arthur's uncle; and King Uther Pendragon, Arthur's father; and of King Arthur himself; after he had set him on his throne and had helped him to win battles and to get his sword Excalibur, what do you think Merlin did? You would think that he was old enough to know better, only I believe nobody is ever old enough to know better. He fell in love.

"Merlin knew everything, and so he knew that he was going to fall in love. He knew, too, that because of his falling in love he should go away from the court and away from the King and away from all the world, and that after that he should never be of any use again to the King or to England or to the world. Merlin knew, and yet he could not help it. Merlin could rule kingdoms and set up and cast down kings, yet there was one power in the world that he could not rule and could not resist. He could not save himself from the end that he knew was coming. He told King Arthur that he should leave him soon and should never see him again, and King Arthur tried to reason with him and to make him use his magic against his fate. But Merlin said that no magic could do any good; in this one thing he was helpless; when the time came he must go, and the time was coming soon.

"And who was it, do you suppose, that Merlin was in love with? It was Nimue, the Lady of the Lake, Lancelot's Fairy Mother. He met her in a forest over in France, where she had her home. He taught her magic and he made a

splendid palace by magic and filled it with knights and ladies for her, and there they had feasts and dances and games. One day she asked him to show her how she could put to sleep any one whom she chose, so that he could not awake till she should let him awake. And Merlin knew that it was himself whom she wished to put to sleep so, yet he knew that it was fate that he should tell her, and so he told her.

"They used to meet in the forest near a spring that was famous afterward, for the water of the spring used to bubble up when anything of iron or copper or brass was thrown into it, and the children who knew the spring threw pins into it and said: 'Laugh, spring, and I will give you a pin,' and then the spring would laugh for them. Merlin sat often beside the spring with Nimue and taught her magic. He taught her so much that at last there was nobody in the world who knew so much of it as she, except himself and perhaps King Arthur's sister, Queen Morgan-le-Fay.

"Then another time Nimue begged Merlin to teach her how one man or woman could be shut up by another, so that he never could get away again, so that no one could ever come to him but the one who had worked the spell, so that he could never see any but that one, and no one could break the spell but the one who made it. Then Merlin was sad again, for he knew that Nimue loved him so much that she wanted to keep him all to herself and never to let any one else see him or hear of him. And he knew, too, that she must have her way in this. 'I know,' he said, 'what it is that you wish, and I love you so much that I know that I must do what you ask.'

"'If you know what it is that I wish,' she said, 'you know that I want a place where we can be together always, only we two, where nobody else can ever come to us and where I shall never see any one but you and you will never see anyone but me. Surely, when I love you so much as you know I do, you should love me enough for that.'

"And still Merlin was sad, knowing that this was to be the end of all his work for the King and for the world, but he answered: 'I will do what you ask. I will make a place where we two can be and no one else can ever come to us or see us or know of us.'

"But Nimue said: 'I do not wish it so; you must teach me the magic, so that I can do it myself. Then I will make the enchantment when I please.'

"So Merlin, knowing that it was fate and that there was no other way, taught her all the charms by which she could do what she wished. He taught her how to walk about in circles and how to wave her hands and what words to say. And she learned it and remembered it all. Then they left France and came over into Cornwall and wandered together about the hills and the woods. And one day, when they had gone a long way, they sat down to rest. And Nimue took

Merlin's head in her lap and put him to sleep with the charm that he had taught her. When he was asleep she rose and walked around him nine times and waved her hands and began to say the words that he had taught her. And as she worked the charm Merlin slept more soundly, and then the ground opened and he sank down into it. She sank down too, and when they were deep enough the ground closed above them. But still she went on with the charm and great stones were moved by the magic words and piled themselves high above the place where they had sunk.

"When Merlin awoke he knew that the spell was done. He was in a beautiful place and Nimue was with him. She could go out and come in when she chose, and she often did so, but he could never go out till the spell was broken. And nobody could ever break the spell but Nimue, who had made it. Merlin himself, with all his magic, could not break it, for it was one of his own spells and the strongest of them, and it was planned so that it could never be undone by anyone, even the greatest magician of the world, except the one who had done it. And Nimue never undid the spell.

"Now I am not sure where all this happened, and you know I would not tell you anything that I was not sure of. Some say that it was here in Cornwall and some say that it was over in France, and that Merlin and Nimue did not come back to England at all. Some say, too, that there was another Cornwall in France. But if they did come to England again, and if the place was in this very Cornwall, then why might not this be the very place where we are? Here is this great pile of stones and neither we nor anybody else can tell how they came here or how they could come here. Why might they not be the very ones that Nimue piled up over Merlin by the enchantment that he taught her? I don't say that they are, but I do say that I cannot see why they might not be, so let us believe that they are."

Helen looked over the edge of the hill, down into the quarry. "If those men down there dig out the rock a little more over this way," she said, "they will let Merlin out, if he is still there."

"They will do nothing of the sort," I answered; "do you think that Merlin's charms were worth no more than that? No one can ever let Merlin out of his prison but Nimue, and she never did and never will. If those men down there should dig to where Merlin was, you may be sure that he would sink again, down and down through the earth, so that no quarriers in the world could ever reach him. Merlin's charms were charms that were made to last, and Merlin will never be seen again on the earth as long as Stonehenge is on Salisbury Plain."



St. Joseph's Chapel, Glastonbury Abbey

CHAPTER XVII

"AND ON THE MERE THE WAILING DIED AWAY"

It was only a short drive from the place where we had left the carriage to Dozmare Pool. That is, it was a short drive to the nearest place to it where we could get with the carriage. The carriage could not go close to it, any more than it could to the Cheesewring. The driver began to remember still more about Dozmare Pool, as we got nearer to it. The water was salt, like the sea, he had heard, and in stormy times it had great waves like the sea.

This reminded me of some things that I had heard and read about it myself. The name "Dozmare," I had been told somewhere, meant "drop of the sea." I had been told somewhere else that the name was made up of two Cornish words that meant "come" and "great," and that the name was given to it because it had tides, like the ocean. Long ago it had no outlet that anybody could see, but it was said that something that was thrown onto it was found many miles off, on the seashore. So it was believed that a passage under ground led from it to the sea. It was said, too, that it was so deep that no plummet had ever reached its bottom.

We came at last to the foot of a steep hill and the driver said that we could not go any farther with the carriage. He would stay here and attend to the horse, and we must go straight up this hill and we should find Dozmare Pool. Up the hill we went, a good, long climb, and when we got to the top, though we knew what we had come to see, we were surprised to see it. For all of a sudden there it was before us, the broad lake on the top of the hill, just where we should expect to find the downward slope of the other side of the hill. It did not look like a stormy sea to-day, but a fresh breeze was blowing over it and drove the little waves before it against the bank, where they made a plashing noise at our feet.

The pool seemed to be at the very top of everything, except that far away across it we could see a mountain, with two peaks.

There was one little house near us and no other in sight. Near the house a man was at work piling up turf, cut in long, square strips, for winter fires. A little boy was playing about, or trying to help the man, and a woman was driving a cart that brought the turf from somewhere down below. We asked the man what mountain that was with the two peaks.

"Brown Gilly, sir," he said.

"Is the water of this lake salt?" we asked again.

"No, sir, it's fresh."

"Is it good to drink?"

"We don't drink it ourselves, sir, but it's good for washing and the cattle drink it."

"How big is the lake?"

"It's about a mile and a quarter round, sir."

"And is there any outlet?"

"Yes, sir, down at the other end there's one."

"It was not always there, was it? When was it made?"

"I couldn't say, sir; it was there before my time."

We left the man to pile his turf and wonder what strange sort of people we could be who wanted to know so many useless things. "Well, there is so much of our story spoiled," I said. "It is not salt and it probably does not have waves like the ocean, and an outlet has been made for it. Still, as you stand and look over it, do you not feel that there is something lonely and solemn and mysterious and magical about it? When you think of its being here at the top of a hill, instead of down in a valley, like a common lake, and when you see no higher hill around it, except that one mountain over there, and when you think of the stories about it, do you not get a little of what our old friend of the Alice books calls the 'eerie' feeling? Have you guessed that the reason why I brought you here was that this was the lake where King Arthur found his sword Excalibur? Well, it was. And now I have another story to tell you about it. It is rather a sad story. The most of our stories are getting to be rather sad now, but there are not many more of them."

I had told Helen long before how King Arthur got his sword Excalibur. His sword had been broken in a fight one day, and Merlin led him to the shore of a little lake—this very lake where we stood now—and out in the middle of it he had seen an arm rising out of the water. The arm was covered with white silk and the hand held a sword, the most beautiful that Arthur had ever seen. Merlin and Arthur went out to it in a boat and the King took the sword and kept it. That was the wonderful sword Excalibur. Merlin told Arthur strange things about the

sword. No one else ever knew what they were, and it may be that we do not know, even yet, of all the wonders of that sword.

But now for the story. "You know," I said, "that I do not often throw morals at you in these stories. As a general thing, I hate to see morals hung up on the ends of stories as much as you do. If the moral cannot make itself felt as the story goes along, it isn't of much use, usually, to drag it out and hold it up at the end. But this story has such a good and sound and useful moral that I can't help pointing it out to you. But I will put it here at the beginning, instead of at the end, and have it over with. It is that when a lie has been told about anybody, no matter how wicked and silly it is, no matter how clearly it may have been proved to be a lie, it will always stick to him, it will never be forgotten, and there will always be people who will half believe it.

"You remember how once Meliagraunce charged Queen Guinevere with treason against King Arthur. Everybody knew that Meliagraunce himself was a traitor and a liar and that he got killed for telling that one lie. Still it never was forgotten and there were some who never had quite the trust in the Queen again that they had had before. And since it was Lancelot who had fought for the Queen then and at other times, they looked at him just as they did at her, and shook their heads and whispered to one another that they wondered if Lancelot was quite as true to the King as he ought to be. There were some who said, too, that Lancelot and the Queen both cared too much about honors and glory for themselves and not enough about the honor of the King. And I am afraid that was not a lie.

"Still all this thinking and talking counted for little for a long time. And then there came a time when they counted for much. It was after the quest of the Holy Grail. Lancelot had come back to the court and Bors had come back from the City of Sarras, and all had come back who were ever coming. Then, all at once, as it has always seemed to me, without any reason, half the people in King Arthur's court went mad. The first and the worst of them was Mordred, King Arthur's nephew, Gawain's brother. He was always all but mad with jealousy and envy and hatred of all who were greater than himself. And now he thought that nothing less could please him than to overthrow King Arthur and to be King of England.

"There are some people who cannot think of any better way of helping themselves than by doing all the harm that they can to those who stand in their way. Mordred was of this sort. He looked about him to see who there was whom he could harm, and he thought of this old lie about the Queen and of these new doubts about Lancelot. Then he went to the King and told him that he had found that Lancelot and the Queen were plotting treason together and forming some plan against the King. If the King wanted proof of it, Mordred said, let him go

hunting the next day, and while he was gone, Mordred and some others would find Lancelot and the Queen together.

"Now Lancelot and the Queen had always been the best of friends and what in the world was supposed to be proved by their being seen together I am sure I don't know. But just at this time it seems to me that it was the King who went mad, and he said that he would do as Mordred advised him.

"The next day the King went hunting. Now Bors and some of Lancelot's other friends had heard these whispers about the court and they had told Lancelot of them. They had decided that it might stop the chatter, about Lancelot at least, if he were to leave the court for a time. It happened that Lancelot had meant to go this very day, and so he went to say good-by to the Queen. Bors knew what a mischief-maker Mordred was; he had seen that he dif not go to the hunt with the King, and he feared that something was wrong. He begged Lancelot not to go to see the Queen, but Lancelot laughed at the notion that there was anything to fear and went. And Mordred and some other knights whom he had got on his side were watching, and the minute that Lancelot and the Queen were together they were upon them.

"Lancelot had come only to see the Queen and to bid her good-by; he had not expected any fighting, and so he wore no armor. Mordred and his knights meant to fall upon Lancelot all at once and kill him or take him prisoner. But Lancelot was quick enough to shut the door of the room and keep them out for a few minutes. Then he drew his sword and opened the door just enough to let one of the knights come in. He struck that one with his sword and wounded him so that he fell inside the room, and then he shut the door again. Lancelot quickly took off the armor of the wounded knight and dressed himself in it. Then he threw the door wide open and rushed at the crowd of knights striking about him as he went and wounding more of them.

"Many as they were they could not stand against Lancelot and he escaped from them and went back to his friends. I suppose I ought to say just here that there was scarcely ever a man in the world who had such friends as Lancelot. There were his brother Ector, his cousins Bors and Lionel, Lavaine, and many others who were ready to give their very lives for Lancelot at any time. And now, after this terrible thing had happened, they all left the city with him, as quickly as they could, and then they waited near to see what would be done with the Queen.

"When the King came back Mordred told him about what had happened, in his own lying way, I suppose. And the King, it seems, had not got over his fit of madness yet, for surely nobody in his senses could think that what Mordred had to tell proved anything. But of course we don't know just how much Mordred lied, and I wonder if the King believed him just because he was his own nephew.

Such things happen sometimes, though for my own part I don't see why any man should be believed because he is another man's nephew. Bad men have uncles, as well as good men. But it seems that the King did believe him, for some reason or other, and did believe that the Queen and Lancelot were guilty of treason. And he said that the Queen should have the punishment of treason, and so should Lancelot, if he could get him. Now the punishment of treason in those days was burning.

"Now, mad as the King seems to have been, I no more believe that he would have the Queen burnt than I believe that he would have himself burnt. I don't know why he pretended that he would. Perhaps he thought that he could make her confess something, or perhaps he thought that Mordred, when he saw how far things were going, would confess that he was wrong. But the King declared that the punishment of the Queen should be the next morning and he ordered some of his knights, and among them Gareth and his brother Gaheris, to be present and see it done. They and some of the others told the King plainly that they thought that what he was doing was wrong and that they would have nothing to do with it. Since he commanded them to be present, they said, they would be there only to look on, and they would wear no armor.

"And now it came Lancelot's turn to go mad. For he believed that the King would really do all that he said. So he resolved that he would save the Queen. The King himself would have saved her, I am sure, before any harm could come to her. But Lancelot heard what was to be done and in the morning he took some of his friends, all fully armed, and they rode to the place where the Queen was led out for her punishment. Lancelot and his men dashed through the crowd of King Arthur's knights, the most of whom wore no armor, laying about them with their swords, killing some and wounding others, and came to where the Queen stood. Lancelot lifted her and put her on his horse behind him, and he and his knights rode away again. They did not stop near the city this time, but they rode straight to a castle of Lancelot's own, called Joyous Gard, and there they all shut themselves in and fortified the town.

"But in the saving of the Queen another terrible thing had happened. As Lancelot dashed through the crowd of King Arthur's knights to come where she was, some of them struck at him, and in return he layed about him with his sword and could not see who was in his way, and so, not knowing who they were, he struck Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris, who wore no armor, and killed them both. And now it was Gawain who went mad. When he heard that Lancelot had killed his brothers he would not believe that it was by accident and he swore that he would always follow Lancelot and try to find chances to fight with him, till one of them should kill the other. He urged the King to make war at once upon Lancelot, and the King and his army marched to Joyous Gard and besieged the castle and the

town.

"Lancelot had many friends, as I said before, and many of the lords and knights of the country, when they heard what had happened, thought that Lancelot was right and came to help him. By the time that the King and his army came to Joyous Gard Lancelot had a good army of his own there. But Lancelot did not want to fight the King, and for many days he kept all his men inside the town. He sent messages to the King and to Gawain. He told the King that neither he nor the Queen had ever thought of doing him any wrong, and he begged him to let the Queen come back to him and to leave off this war. He told Gawain that he had loved his brother Gareth as if he had been his own brother and that he would as soon have killed his own brother as Gareth or Gaheris, if he had known who they were. And the King was so sad at all that had been done that he wanted to give up the whole war, but Gawain would not hear of it. He would never forgive Lancelot for killing his brothers, he said, till one of them should kill the other.

"Then Lancelot's friends urged him to fight. Gawain would never let the King give up the war, they said, and it would be best to end it now. And Lancelot felt that they were right, and at last he yielded and said that he would go out to battle the next morning. In the morning Lancelot's army marched out of the city and the army of the King came to meet it. Lancelot had ordered all his men that whatever they did they should do no harm to the King or to Gawain. As for himself, he scarcely fought at all. He rode about the field and saw others fight. He saw many of his own men wounded and killed, but he had no heart to strike a blow against King Arthur or any knight of his. At last he saw the King himself charging against his cousin Bors. Bors met the charge with his spear and threw King Arthur from his horse. When Lancelot saw that he rode to where the King was and got off his horse. 'Here, my lord,' he said, 'take this horse; you and your knights fight against me and have no mercy, but I cannot fight against my King or see him overthrown and not try to help him.'

"And the King took Lancelot's horse and rode away from the field and called all his men away too, and Lancelot's men went back to the town.

"The next day Lancelot sent messengers to King Arthur again to ask him to let the Queen come back, to promise that she should not be harmed, and to end the war. And the King would have done everything that Lancelot asked, but again Gawain would not hear of it. 'Let the Queen come back if you like,' said Gawain; 'that is nothing to me. But I will not forgive Lancelot for killing my brothers and I will always follow him and fight with him till I kill him or he kills me.'

"You know I told you long ago of the old story that Gawain could speak so well that nobody could ever refuse him anything that he asked. I think that

must have been why the King let him have his own way all through this war with Lancelot. I am sure that the King himself must have got back his senses now, and I almost think, after all, that he never really believed that the Queen or Lancelot could wish to do any wrong to him. How could he let her come back at all if he believed that? And he did let her come back, but still Gawain was firm against Lancelot, and the King would not make peace with him till Gawain wished it.

"When Lancelot had sent the Queen back to King Arthur he thought that it was of no use to stay in England any longer, so he took all his knights and his army with him and crossed over into France. He went to Benwick, his father's old city and his own city now, because his father was dead long ago. And soon King Arthur and Gawain followed him with their army, for Gawain still vowed that he would go where Lancelot went and would not leave him till one of them had killed the other. In these last dreadful days of King Arthur's reign it seems as if no one ever missed a chance of making a mistake, and now Arthur made another. For when he went over to France he left Mordred in his place to rule England till he came back, and he left the Queen in Mordred's care too.

"So the King and Gawain and their army came to Benwick and besieged it, as they had besieged Joyous Gard. Lancelot sent a message to them again. He would do anything if they would end the war and not make him fight against the King and his old friend. He would give up his city to them, if they would take it, and let all the world think that he was beaten, when he was not beaten at all, or that he was a coward and did not dare to fight. Still Gawain would be content with nothing but that Lancelot must fight with him. But he sent back word that if Lancelot alone would come out and fight with him alone, till one of them should kill the other, that one fight should end the war.

"When this message was brought to Lancelot his friends told him that it was of no use any longer to hope for peace. Gawain would never yield, and it must be as he said at last. It would be better for Lancelot to fight with him now than to wait. Lancelot knew that they were right, and he sent word that the next morning he would meet Gawain outside the city and fight with him.

"They met the next morning, in the space between the city walls and King Arthur's army. Both the knights were thrown from their horses at the first charge, and then it was the old story of a sword fight that I have told you so many times before. But Gawain had the gift of growing stronger every day, from nine o'clock till noon, and then he had three times his natural strength. This had been given to him by a magician long ago, and nobody knew that he had it except himself and King Arthur. Lancelot knew nothing about it, but he had not been fighting long before he knew that there was something strange about Gawain's fighting. He felt him growing so strong that he scarcely tried to strike at Gawain at all, but used all his strength in defending himself. And so for a long time nei-

ther of them was much harmed, but when noon came, all at once Lancelot felt that Gawain had grown weaker. Then he said: 'Gawain, I do not know with what magic you have fought till now. But, whatever it was, I feel now that it has left you and you are like any other man. Now I must begin to fight.'

"Then he struck Gawain a great blow on the head and wounded him, so that he fell, and Lancelot stood still beside him, resting on his sword. 'Why do you stop your fight?' Gawain cried. 'You have beaten me; finish it now and kill me.'

"'You know,' said Lancelot, 'that I cannot kill any knight who is wounded and helpless, and least of all you, who have been my friend so long. Our fight is over.'

"'Kill me and make an end to it,' Gawain said again, 'or as soon as I am cured of this wound I shall come and fight you again.'

"'If I must fight with you again," said Lancelot, 'I shall be ready; I can do no more now.'

"So Gawain was carried back to his tent and was kept there for many days, while his wound was healing. And as soon as he was strong enough he sent word to Lancelot that he must fight him again. There is no need of making a long story of it. Gawain and Lancelot fought again and the fight ended exactly as the first one had done. Lancelot wounded Gawain in the very same place where he had wounded him before, and Gawain was carried back to his tent, vowing that he would still fight with Lancelot as soon as his wound should heal.

"And what do you suppose had been going on in England all this time? You might almost guess. You would think that Mordred could not possibly keep out of mischief so long, and you would be quite right. King Arthur had not had much more than time to get to Benwick before Mordred began to tell people that the King was dead. He showed some letters, which he had written himself, but he pretended that they had come from France, and they said that the King had been killed in a battle against Lancelot. Of course the only thing to do in such a case was to crown Mordred himself as King, and Mordred took care that it should be done in a hurry. Then, to make everything as sure as possible, he gave notice that he was going to marry Queen Guinevere. Of course he did not trouble himself to ask Queen Guinevere whether or not it suited her to be married to him. He had begun to have his own way and he was resolved to go on. The Queen saw that it would not do any good to pretend that she did not want to be married to him, so she let Mordred think that there was nothing that would please her better than to be his wife. But she said that if she was to be married she should have to go to London to get some new gowns. Mordred saw nothing wrong about that and he let her go. Then, as soon as she got to London, she shut herself up in the Tower and found men who were friendly to her to guard it, and waited for Mordred to

come and try to get her out of it.

"He came, you may be sure, as soon as he heard where she was, and he laid siege to the Tower, but it was so strong, and Queen Guinevere's men fought so well, that he could not take it. He kept up the siege till he heard that King Arthur and all his men were coming back from France and Lancelot and his men were coming with them. When he heard that he drew his army away from London and marched to Dover to meet the King and to keep him from getting England away from him.

"It was true that the King and his men were coming back from France, but it was not true that Lancelot was coming. Lancelot did not know why King Arthur and his army had so suddenly left Benwick. It was because the King had heard of the mischief that Mordred had done and of the more mischief that he was trying to do. Even Gawain could not ask the King to make war upon Lancelot any longer, when England itself was likely to be lost. Gawain had been acting in a mad fashion enough for a long time, but the news from England brought him back to his senses. His wound was nearly healed and he was beginning again to want to fight with Lancelot, but now he saw all at once what harm his wild anger against Lancelot had done. He was filled with shame and grief at the thought of it. 'It is I,' he said to the King, 'who have done all this. I see it now. It is Lancelot who has always been your truest and best friend, and it is I who have been your enemy. I fear that I have done too much for you to forgive, but there is hope still, for I know that Lancelot will still be your friend. Send for him; tell him that I was wrong in everything—that I confess it—and ask him to go with you and help you to win back England from Mordred.'

"If the King had ever doubted Lancelot he doubted him no longer now. Gawain, who had been against him so long, was for him now. But the King looked sadly at Gawain and shook his head. 'Gawain, Gawain,' he said, 'we have gone too far. We have wronged Lancelot too much. We cannot ask him to help us now. We must fight our battles and win them or lose them by ourselves.'

"So the King and Gawain and their army left Lancelot and Benwick and crossed into England. As soon as they landed at Dover Mordred met them and there was a hard battle. Many were killed and wounded on both sides and at last Mordred was driven back. But when the battle was over Gawain had been wounded again just where Lancelot had wounded him twice before.

"And this time he felt that he could not live. Then Gawain thought: 'If the King could not ask Lancelot to help him, yet surely I can ask him, now that I am dying. It was I who wronged him and I who was his enemy. But when he comes I shall not be here any more, and I know that he always loved the King and that he loves him still.'

"And Gawain told those who were about him to bring him pen and paper,

and he wrote a letter to Lancelot. The letter said: 'Sir Lancelot, I am dying from a wound that I got in battle to-day, just where you wounded me twice. I have been blind and deaf and mad all this while. I would not see or hear the truth, and the truth is, Lancelot, that it is you who have been always the King's friend and that it is I who, in these last days, have been his enemy. My pride and my selfishness and my anger have almost ruined the King, but it may be that your true love and your strength can save him yet. Come and help him, Lancelot. I have given you cause to hate me, but do not stay away from the King for that, for when you come to him I shall be dead.'

"This letter Gawain gave to a messenger and ordered him to cross with it to France and to ride as fast as he could to Benwick and give it to Lancelot. And a little while after that Gawain died.

"The next day King Arthur marched against Mordred. Mordred, with his army, fell back before him and day after day the King pushed him farther and farther into the West, till at last the two armies were here in Cornwall. They had both been gathering strength as they marched, for many knights and many other men joined them as they passed through the country. Some joined Mordred because they were friends to Lancelot, not knowing, they were so little and so narrow themselves, that Lancelot was great enough to be the King's friend still.

"At last Mordred and his army halted and would retreat no farther. Then it seemed that the great battle must come the next day. But that night King Arthur had a dream. He dreamed that Gawain came and stood before him, and Gawain said: 'My lord, do not fight with Mordred to-morrow. If you fight with him to-morrow you will be killed. But put off the battle for a little while and Lancelot and all his knights and all his men will come to help you.'

"In the morning, when the King awoke, he sent messengers to Mordred to ask him to meet him between the lines of the two armies and agree upon a truce. So it was arranged that Arthur and Mordred should each bring fourteen knights and that they should meet half-way between the two armies. Then Arthur said to his knights whom he left behind: 'I do not trust Mordred. I fear that he will try some treachery. So watch us when we meet and while we talk, and if you see any sword drawn among the men on either side, do not wait for any more, but charge forward and begin the battle.' And Mordred, before he went to meet the King, gave just the same command to his knights who stayed behind.

"All the knights who went with the King and with Mordred were told that this was to be a peaceful meeting and that no sword must be drawn. But after the King and Mordred had met and while they were talking, a little snake came out from under a bush and stung the foot of one of the knights. The knight forgot the order that had been given and drew his sword to kill the snake. But the men of the armies were too far away to see the snake and to know why the sword was

drawn. They saw only the flash of the drawn sword and that was the signal of battle. It was of no use for Arthur or for Mordred to try to stop them or to delay the battle then. The trumpets blew, the knights charged forward, the two great waves of horses and men broke upon each other with a harsh rattle and jangle and clash of arms all along the field, and the battle was joined.



"THE TWO GREAT WAVES BROKE UPON EACH OTHER."

"The two great waves broke upon each other"

"In all his long reign, King Arthur had never fought such a battle as this before. There were thousands of men on each side and they were all men who had learned to fight in King Arthur's own battles and tournaments. They were men who had learned from him to fight and to fight and to go on fighting and never to stop till they had won. With men like that on both sides there was only one way that the battle could end. The battle went on all day. Slowly the knights on each side grew fewer and fewer and all who saw them knew that the fight would go on till there was none at all on one side or the other. Arthur's men were faithful to him to their last breath, and Mordred's men felt that they should be ruined if they were beaten. Once Arthur saw one of his old knights

surrounded by enemies, and the old knight's son was close beside the King. The King and those around him had as much fighting as they could do, but Arthur said to the young knight: 'Do you not see your father there in danger? Why do you not go to help him?'

"And the young knight answered: 'My lord, my father told me this morning to stay beside you all day and to let nothing draw me away from you. My father is a good knight and he must fight for himself.' And the old knight was killed, and afterward the son was killed, too.

"When the evening came there were few left to fight. It may be that some had run away, but the most were dead or wounded. King Arthur stood with only two of his knights beside him. They were Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere. The King looked all about him and saw only one other man near. And that was Mordred. The King spoke under his breath: 'The end is come, I fear, for all of us, but before I die that man there shall die, who has brought this end to all of us.'

"Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere tried to hold him back. 'My lord,' said Sir Bedivere, 'do not try to fight any more with him to-day, or he may kill you. Remember what Gawain said to you in your dream. Mordred has no friends left now. Leave him for to-night, and to-morrow we can do justice upon him.'

"'No,' said the King, 'that traitor shall not live any longer, and I will kill him myself.'

"Arthur had his sword Excalibur in his hand. He rushed upon Mordred with it and struck him one blow upon the head, and Mordred fell down dead. But Arthur had been so eager against Mordred that he had not thought to defend himself. Mordred had struck too at the same time and had struck well and Arthur had a great wound on his head. Lucan and Bedivere went to him and he tried to stand, but he could not. 'You must help me,' he said, 'to some place of shelter; I cannot help myself any more.'

"They tried to lift him up, but Lucan, who had been wounded in the battle, suddenly fell down beside the King and died. Then Arthur said: 'Bedivere, you are the last one left to me and there is only a little more that you can do. Take my sword Excalibur and go up this hill here before us. At the top of it there is a lake. Throw my sword into the lake, as far out into the middle of it as you can, and then come back and tell me what you see.'

"Bedivere took the sword and climbed the hill and came to this very spot where we are standing. But on the way he looked at the sword and at the jewels in the hilt and he thought: 'It would be wrong to throw away this beautiful sword. I will hide it here, instead of throwing it into the lake. Then, if the King is cured of his wound, he will be glad to have his sword again, and if he dies, someone else can have it.'

"So he hid the sword among the reeds that grew by the side of the lake and

went back to the King. 'Did you throw my sword into the lake?' the King asked.

"'Yes, my lord,' said Bedivere.

"'And what did you see or hear?' said the King.

"'Nothing,' said Bedivere, 'but the water and the wind.'

"'Then you did not throw it in,' the King answered. 'Go back now and throw it in, as I told you, and come back and tell me what you see.'

"Then Bedivere went up the hill again to the lake and took the sword out from where he had hidden it. He held it up in the moonlight and saw the shining of the rich jewels and the gleam of the long blade and again he thought: 'It would be a sin to lose such a wonderful thing as this. The King is wounded and weak and he is wandering in his mind, or else he would not tell me to do it. I will tell him again that I have thrown it in.'

"He hid the sword again and went back to the King, and the King said: 'Did you throw my sword into the lake?'

"'Yes, my lord,' said Bedivere, 'I threw it in.'

"'And what did you see or hear?' said Arthur.

"'I saw nothing but the water,' said Bedivere, 'and I heard nothing but the wind and the waves.'

"'Oh, Bedivere,' said Arthur, 'you are the last of my knights and you will not obey me. Go now once more and throw my sword as far as you can out into the lake. And if you do not obey me this time, when you come again, wounded as I am, I will rise up and kill you, if I can, with my hands.'

"Then Bedivere went as fast as he could up the hill again and found the sword and took it and swung it above his head and threw it as far as he could out over the lake. He watched it as it whirled through the air, and when it was near the water he saw an arm, covered with white silk, come up out of the water. The hand caught the sword as it fell and brandished it three times in a circle, and then the hand and the arm went down under the water, and Bedivere went back and told the King. 'And now, Bedivere,' said Arthur, 'help me to go to the lake too.'

"But the King could not stand at all, so Bedivere took him on his back and carried him up the hill to the side of the lake. And there they saw a boat lying close to the shore. It was filled with women, all dressed in black, and three, who stood in the midst of them, were queens and wore crowns. 'Put me in the boat,' said Arthur, and Bedivere carried him to the boat and the three queens received him, and all the women in the boat wept when they saw him. The three queens laid him down and one of them took his head in her lap and said: 'My dear brother, why did you wait so long? You should have come here to us as soon as you had this wound.'

"And this woman was King Arthur's sister, Queen Morgan-le-Fay. I don't know when or why she had ceased to be his enemy and had become his friend,

but she was his friend now and she did all that she could to help him and to cure his wound.

"Then Bedivere saw that the boat was moving from the shore, and he cried: 'My lord—my King—where shall I go and what shall I do without you? Let me go with you where you go and die with you, if you are to die.'

"But Arthur answered: 'Do not be grieved for me, Bedivere, but go your own way. Perhaps you may hear of me again, but now I can do no more for you or for my people. I am going to the Valley of Avalon, to be cured of my wound, and some time, perhaps, when my wound is well, I shall come again.'

"Then the boat moved farther and farther away along the lake. The King did not speak again, but Bedivere could hear Queen Morgan-le-Fay speaking softly to him, and he could hear the other women weeping. Only for a little while he could hear them, and then he strained his eyes to see the boat as long as he could. But the light was dim and soon the dark shape of the boat mixed with the dark shadows and was lost.

"And so King Arthur floated away to Avalon. You know that Avalon was Glastonbury, and you do not see, perhaps, how any boat could go from this mountain lake, all shut in by the land, out to the sea and inland again to that island with the marsh around it. You must think of the magic of Queen Morgan-le-Fay. Where she wanted her boat to go I am sure that water-ways would open of themselves to let her pass. A ship with her upon it would go as fast and as far as she would have it go. And then, one of the old stories says, they had a pilot who knew all the seas and all the stars of the heavens.

"Sir Bedivere looked after the boat till it had been gone from his sight for a long time. Then he turned away from the lake, went down the hill, and wandered away through the woods. He did not know where he was going and he did not care. He scarcely saw what places he passed. He was thinking of his King who had been taken away from him. He thought of the bright old days when Arthur won his crown in the battles with the rebel Kings, when his own knights learned to love his strength and his truth and his nobleness. He thought of the happy days when the greatest knights of the world gathered at the Round Table in Camelot. He thought of how they had helped the King to bring peace and plenty and content to the land. He thought of the sad later days and of these last days of all and he wished that he might have died before they came. He could not think at all yet of what he was still to do or how he was to live without his King.

"So, deep in these sad thoughts, he went on and on, stopped now and then, where he could, to eat or drink, because he knew he must, or lay down in the forest to sleep, but never thought and never knew how long he had been on the way or how weary he was. At last he heard a bell and saw an abbey before him.

He went into the chapel and saw a man kneeling upon a tomb. The man rose and came to meet him. He was the abbot. 'Sir,' said Bedivere, 'whose tomb is that where I saw you praying?'

"'I do not know,' said the abbot. 'Last night a great company of ladies came here and brought a dead man and begged me to bury him. And I buried him in that tomb there before the altar, but they did not tell me who he was.'

"'Then I will tell you,' said Bedivere. 'If a company of ladies brought him, it was King Arthur.'

"Then Bedivere asked the hermit to let him stay there and live with him. And he stayed for a long time there in the Abbey of Glastonbury, and visited the poor and the sick, and at last he became a priest.

"And that was all that was known of how King Arthur passed away from the battle, of how he came to Avalon, and of how he was buried. The abbot did not know who the man was whom he had buried, till Bedivere told him, and Bedivere thought that he was King Arthur only because a company of ladies had brought him. But Arthur himself had told Bedivere that he was going to Avalon to be cured of his wound, and that some time he might come again. And so, on a stone over the grave at Glastonbury, they put the words:

hic jacet Arthurus,
Rex quondam Rexque futurus.

That is Latin and it means: 'Here lies Arthur, King that was and King that shall be.' And so it was long believed that some time King Arthur would come back to conquer the foes of England and to save the people. Some said that he was taken away in the boat to some happy island, to be cured of his wound and to wait for the time when England should need him most. Some said that he was sleeping down under the ground, with his knights, at Caerleon-upon-Usk, and others that he was in the enchanted castle on the hill at Camelot. Some believed that he was a raven, flying around the Cornish coast, and some that he was dead like other men, and in his grave in the Abbey of Glastonbury."

CHAPTER XVIII
THE ABBESS AND THE MONK



The Choir, Glastonbury Abbey

We did get back to Glastonbury at last, and this time we did not miss seeing the abbey. We spent some time in tracing it all out from its ruins. It was a great and beautiful church in its time. Now it has been crumbling and falling for many years. Worse than that, the people of the country about here, when they wanted stone for building, instead of finding new stone, used to come and take some from the old abbey. But, after all that time and men could do to it, much of it still stands, and it is full of that sad, sweet beauty and stateliness that nothing but a ruin ever has. The walls of St. Joseph's chapel still remain, all covered with ivy, there is a good deal of the choir left, and there are two of the great, tall piers that held the tower. Then, some way off, there is the abbot's kitchen, still all but perfect.

We found the place, or thought we did, where Joseph of Arimathæa first built his little church of wood and woven twigs. We tried to find the spot where King Arthur was buried. That is not easy, but we hit upon a place at last where we thought it must have been. When Henry II was King a search was made for King Arthur's grave by his order. They found it, they said, and Henry had a monument put over it. The monument is gone now, probably carried away, like so much of the abbey, to build stables, or something else just as noble and important, and there is nothing left to show where it stood. If we were talking of history instead of stories I might have something to say about this one of Henry II. But, as it is, it may as well stand with the rest of them.

"There is one more story," I said, "that I must tell you while we are here among these ruins. Then I shall have told you all that I set out to tell, and we shall have made the journey that we set out to make.

"When the letter that Gawain wrote was brought to Lancelot he lost no time in calling his knights and his army together and starting toward England to help King Arthur. If the King could only have delayed that last great battle, as he tried to do, Lancelot would have been with him and all would have been well. But

when Lancelot landed at Dover the people told him that he had come too late. They told him of the battle that had been fought there, in which Gawain was killed, and of the greater battle that had been fought afterward far away in the West. All that they could tell him of the King was that he was gone. Some said that he was dead, and some that he had been carried away to Fairyland, where he would live till his people needed him.

"Then Lancelot asked: 'Where is the Queen?'

"'She shut herself up in the Tower of London,' some one answered, 'to save herself from Mordred. Then, when Mordred left London and came here to meet the King, she left the Tower, too, and they say that she went to some abbey and is living with the nuns.'

"Then Lancelot told Bors and the other knights who were with him to wait at Dover while he went to find the Queen. He rode alone through the country, asking at all the abbeys that he found, and at last he came to Almesbury, the place that is now called Amesbury, where we went, you know, on our way to Stonehenge. And at the abbey there he saw the Queen walking in the cloister. She saw him too and came to meet him.

"'I have come,' Lancelot said, 'to take you from this place. The King is gone from us now, and we shall never see him in this world again. Come with me now to my own city. While the King was with us I did not care whether I had a city. I thought it grander and nobler to be his knight than to be King of all the world but England. You know, my Queen, that I am King of Benwick. Come with me now and be my Queen still, more my Queen than ever, the Queen of Benwick. It is a little place, but my people love me, and they will love you, too.'

"'Lancelot,' said the Queen, 'we must not think of such things—I must not. You must go back and rule your people well and make them happy—yes, and be happy yourself, if you can—but I must stay here and try to do a little good to the poor, and fast and pray, so that God will forgive me and so that he will forgive you and let us see our Arthur in another world, since we cannot in this. For, Lancelot, do you know that it is because of us—because of me and of you—that our Arthur has gone from us?'

"'No, no,' said Lancelot, 'it is not true. I will not let you say such things of yourself, even though you say them of me. We did nothing that was wrong, you and I. They charged us with some plot—I do not know what it was, and they did not know themselves. Then I saved you and I saved myself, as it was right that I should do. The King made war on me. I made no war on him. I only guarded my knights and my people. I would not even have fought with Gawain, only he would have it so. And when I heard that the King needed me here in England I came back to help him, and it was too late. But it was the traitors who brought all this death and ruin.'

"'It was not that we did any wrong, Lancelot,' said the Queen, 'it was that we did not do all that was right. You would rather be Arthur's knight, you said, than to be King of all the world but England. Ah, yes, but what of England? Did you never wish, even in your heart, that you were King of that? Arthur had noble thoughts for the good of his country and of his people, and you swore to be faithful in everything to him and to help him. And so your thoughts, Lancelot, should have been all for the King and for his people, and so should mine. And were they so? Did you never forget these things and work and fight for your own name and your own glory, instead of for the glory of the King and for the good of England? You fought, too, many times, for my name and for my glory, and I was foolish and let you do it, when my thoughts, too, should have been all for him and for England. But here alone, since we were all parted, I have had time to think, and I have seen more clearly than I ever saw before. Lancelot, it is not the great sins of the wicked people that bring ruin to the world; it is the follies and the failings of those who should be most true and most faithful, and so help and save the world, but do not do it. We were the nearest to the King, I his Queen and you his greatest knight. We should have been as strong and as firm in our faithfulness to him as he was to himself. If we ever had selfish and vain thoughts, thoughts that were not for the King, for a single hour, it was a worse wrong in us than the wrongs that those poor, weak knights did when they let Mordred persuade them and lead them against the King. Do you not know why you could not see the Holy Grail, as Galahad and Percivale and Bors saw it? This was why. And they could see it because in every thought and wish they were true to what they and all of the Round Table swore to the King. And so, Lancelot, my own best knight, as there is work for you to do among your people, go and do it, but I must stay here and do a little good, if I can, and pray for you and for myself, so that some time we may be nearer to the King than we have ever been.'

"'If you are right,' said Lancelot, 'and you must be right—if you are right in staying here and doing what you say that you will do, then it is right for me, too. I will not go back to France. I will find some peaceful place and some good man, some hermit perhaps, and ask him to let me stay with him and do as you are doing. Pray for me sometimes, my Queen, and I will pray for you always.'

"Now I can guess just what you think of all this. You think that Lancelot had not done any wrong at all and that the Queen was a great deal too hard on him. But I know that the Queen was right. Think over all that she said again and you will know it too. The Queen and Lancelot had stood next to the King for all these years. They had been proud of him and proud that they were so near to him, and if they had been steadfast in all that they did and said and thought, nothing could ever have harmed him or his country while they all lived. But sometimes they were weak and thoughtless, and then the King was left to work

alone. Though this was all that they had done amiss, it was enough.

"So Lancelot left the Queen and went on his way. And Guinevere stayed there at Almesbury and lived with the nuns. She never left the abbey except to walk a little way among the fields, in the woods, and along the river that we saw when we were at Amesbury, or, more often, to carry help or comfort to the poor or the sick.

"After she had been with the nuns for a time she became one of them, and no one among them worked more than she for the people near who needed help, and no one among them was loved more than she. And no one, even of those who knew her best, could tell whether she was happy. But they all knew that she was always gentle and patient, that she never said that her work was hard, that she never seemed to wish for her old life, and that the sick people watched for her and the poor people prayed for her. And when the old abbess died they were all sure that no one could take her place so well as Guinevere. And so, for what was left of her life, Guinevere was abbess at Almesbury.

"When Lancelot rode away from Almesbury he felt that it was nothing to him where he went. He felt that he hated courts and tournaments and battle-fields now, and he wished only to find some place away from the busy and noisy world, where he could live as the Queen was living. And so he wandered here to Glastonbury. And when he found Bedivere here, when Bedivere had told him all about the great battle, and when he had shown him the grave in the chapel where he believed that King Arthur was buried, then Lancelot begged the abbot to let him stay here and be a monk with the rest of them as long as he lived. And the abbot and Bedivere were both glad to have him stay. So Lancelot, too, lived his life among his brother monks and among the poor and the sick, and they all learned to love him, as, long ago, all the good knights in Arthur's court had learned to love him.

"Bors and his fellows waited for Lancelot at Dover for a long time. At last Bors sent the army back to France, with all the knights except a few who were the best friends of Lancelot. With these he set out through England to search for him. They searched for a long time and at last they found him. And when they saw that he was a monk they said that they would all stay at Glastonbury and be monks too.

"When Lancelot had been at Glastonbury for a long time he had a dream one night. He dreamed that an angel stood beside him and said to him: 'Lancelot, take all your fellows here who were knights of the Round Table to-morrow and go to Almesbury. When you come there the abbess, Queen Guinevere, will be dead. Bring her here and bury her in the chapel beside the King.' And twice more that same night Lancelot had this dream.

"In the morning Lancelot told the abbot of his dream, and the abbot said

that it would be best for him to take his fellows with him and go to Almesbury, as he had been told to do. So they all set out, and when they came to the abbey at Almesbury the nuns knew who they were and why they had come, without being told. For they said: 'Our abbess died not an hour ago, and she told us that after she was dead the monk who used to be Sir Lancelot of the Lake would come for her and would bury her at Glastonbury, beside the King. She had been told of it in a dream.'

"So Lancelot and his fellows took the body of the Queen back with them to Glastonbury. There they made another grave before the altar in the chapel, beside the grave of King Arthur, and buried Queen Guinevere in it.

"And after this was done Lancelot would scarcely leave that chapel. He was there for nearly all of every day and much of every night, kneeling over the graves of the King and the Queen and praying. He would eat scarcely anything and he slept but little. And so he grew thin and pale and weak. The abbot and his friends could not comfort him or make him eat, and at last he told them that he should live only a little longer. 'When I am dead,' he said, 'take me and bury me in the chapel of my own old castle of Joyous Gard. I would far rather lie here in your chapel, near my King and my Queen, but years ago I made a vow that I would be buried in Joyous Gard, and I must keep that vow, so take me there.'

"That night the abbot awoke some of the monks by laughing aloud in his sleep. They went to the abbot's bed and he awoke and said: 'I have had the most beautiful dream that I have ever had in my life.'

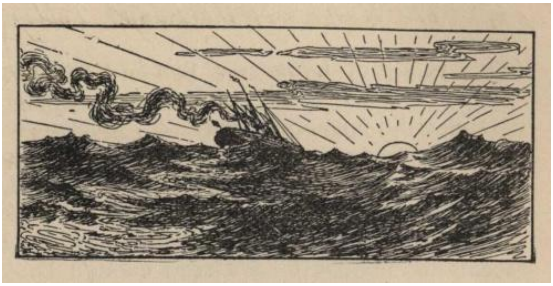
"'What was it?' said Bors.

"'I dreamed,' the abbot said, 'that I saw Lancelot in the midst of a great company of angels. More angels there were than I ever saw of men in an army. Some of them lifted Lancelot up and they all rose to Heaven. I could see Lancelot's face as they went, and it was full of peace and gladness. They came near the gates of Heaven and the gates were opened for them and they all passed in. And as they passed I could see the great light that shone out and I could hear voices singing, and the gates were closed and then I awoke.'

"Then they all went to Lancelot's bed. He did not awake when they came to him, as the abbot had done. He lay still and his face was full of peace and gladness and he was dead.

"They took him the next day, all his friends and the abbot with them, and they journeyed slowly till they came to Joyous Gard. There they buried him and then they journeyed slowly back again to Glastonbury. They did not talk much as they went, but now and then they spoke a little, sadly, as people will at such times, of the older and happier days. To Bors and to some of the others it seemed only a little while since a hundred and fifty knights sat at the Round Table in the hall at Camelot. Here were some of the knights of the Round Table still, but the

glory of it had passed away with the King and Galahad and Gawain and Lancelot."



"On toward the gold and the purple in the west"

CHAPTER XIX
"REXQUE FUTURUS"

We were at sea on our way home. We had left Southampton, where Arthur embarked when he went to fight the Emperor of Rome, and all day we had made our swift way west through the British Channel. When we came up on deck after dinner we had just passed the Scilly Islands. Dark and rough and hard they stood up out of the sea behind us, and a pale mist was just beginning to wrap them around and hide them a little from sight. Before us all the air was clear. The sun was just setting and was filling the sky with a dozen lovely hues of rose and violet and turning the water into tossing and tumbling gold.

"See," I said, "there are the Scilly Islands. They are all that is left of that lost land of Lyonnesse, Tristram's country, that used to reach from here back to the Land's End. The rest of it is sunk deep down under the water. This is all of Lyonnesse that we can ever see."

Helen did not seem to care very greatly even for this. She was thinking of the last of our stories. "Was King Arthur really buried," she said, "there in the Abbey of Glastonbury?"

"It is not easy to answer that," I said. "It seems to me that I have read enough books about King Arthur to fill this ship, yet I never could see that the writers of them had settled among themselves whether he was buried there or not. If we

care to believe that he was, I think we may as well believe it."

"But do you believe it?"

"Yes, I believe it."

"Then he never came back, the way he said he would, and the way the people believed he would?"

"No, he never came back."

"And he never will come back, the way the stories said?"

"Oh, yes, I think he will."

For a few minutes Helen watched the water that was whirling by the side of the ship and I looked at the colors of the sea and the sky, that were growing brighter still. Then she said: "But if King Arthur really died and really was buried at Glastonbury and the three Queens didn't cure his wound at all, how can he come back?"

"I don't know whether I can make you see it quite as I do," I said, "but I will try. You know what it was that King Arthur tried to do. I have told you all these stories very badly, if you do not. He tried to save his people from the harms and the wrongs that they suffered. He tried to make all of them, the rich and the poor, the lords and the common people, good and brave and strong, true and gentle and noble. And he did make them better and happier than they were before. But the time had not come for all that he wished. After he passed away things got to be as bad almost, as they had been before. Some people, here in our own time, think that the world is not growing any better. That is because they look back only a few years, perhaps a hundred, and they do not see any change. There has been a change, though they do not see it. But they would see it, if they would look back to those fearful old days before Arthur came, yes, or half way back, for there were days then that were not much better. They would see then how selfish and how cruel men were and what wicked and heartless things they would do for a little power or a little gain.

"This was what Arthur tried to change, and he did change it partly, for a little while. But it was too soon to change it altogether. When he was gone everything soon came to be nearly as it was before. Yet it was never quite the same again, perhaps. Other good men came, not with the strength of Arthur, yet with a strength of their own. And they passed away too and left England and the world a little better than they had found them. Slowly and slowly, yet surely and surely, men have thought more, learned more, worked more, and so, slowly and slowly, yet surely and surely, they have grown wiser and juster and stronger, and so, too, they have grown freer and better and happier.

"The men of England and of our own country and of all the world are not yet what Arthur would have had them. They are still far from it, perhaps, yet they are nearer to it, and they are always getting nearer still. The way is long

and it seems hopeless, sometimes, but it is not hopeless. And in some great, good time, far off, when this England and our own country and all the world come to be as just and noble and happy as Arthur tried to make his people—then cannot men say: 'King Arthur is not dead any more; he has come back and is among us again, for it is his will that guides us and it is his law that rules us now?' Do you see now how Arthur did not die, but only passed away, to come again? And do you see how he may come again, even though they buried him there at Glastonbury?"

"I don't know," Helen said, after she had thought for a minute. "I don't think I quite understand it, and any way, I would rather you would tell stories than talk like that."

But I had no more stories to tell just then, and so we only stood and watched the water and the sky, while the ship carried us along, farther and farther away from the dim, dark rocks, with the fog around them, and on toward the gold and the purple in the west.

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