

Pearl Poet



*Sir Gawain
and the Green
Knight*

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Published by Good Press, 2021

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066454074

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SIPEN þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at Troye, 1
þe bor3 brittened and brent to brondez and askez,
þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wro3t
Watz tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erþe:
Hit watz Ennias þe athel, and his highe kynde, 5
þat siþen depreced prouinces, and patrounes bicome
Welneze of al þe wele in þe west iles.
Fro riche Romulus to Rome ricchis hym swyþe,
With gret bobbaunce þat burze he biges vpon fyrst,
And neuenes hit his aune nome, as hit now hat; 10
Tirius to Tuskan and teldes bigynnes,
Langaberde in Lumbardie lyftes vp homes,
And fer ouer þe French flod Felix Brutus
On mony bonkkes ful brode Bretayn he settez
wyth wynne, 15
 Where werre and wrake and wonder
 Bi syþez hatz wont þerinne,
 And oft boþe blysse and blunder
 Ful skete hatz skyfted synne.
Ande quen þis Bretayn watz bigged bi þis burn rych, 20
Bolde bredden þerinne, baret þat lofden,
In mony turned tyme tene þat wro3ten.
Mo ferlyes on þis folde han fallen here oft
þen in any oþer þat I wot, syn þat ilk tyme.
Bot of alle þat here bult, of Bretaygne kynges, 25
Ay watz Arthur þe hendest, as I haf herde telle.

Forþi an aunter in erde I attle to schawe,
þat a selly in sizt summe men hit holden,
And an outrage awenture of Arthurez wonderez.
If 3e wyl lysten þis laye bot on littel quile, 30
I schal telle hit as-tit, as I in toun herde,
with tonge,

As hit is stad and stoken
In stori stif and stronge,
With lel letteres loken, 35
In londe so hatz ben longe.

þis kyng lay at Camylot vpon Krystmasse 37
With mony luflych lorde, ledez of þe best,
Rekenly of þe Rounde Table alle þo rich breþer,
With rych reuel oryzt and rechles merþes. 40
þer tournayed tulkes by tyme ful mony,
Justed ful jolilé þise gentyle kniztes,
Syþen kayred to þe court caroles to make.
For þer þe fest watz ilyche ful fiften dayes,
With alle þe mete and þe mirþe þat men couþe avyse; 45
Such glaum ande gle glorious to here,
Dere dyn vpon day, daunsyng on nyztes,
Al watz hap vpon heze in hallez and chambrez
With lordez and ladies, as leuest him þozt.
With all þe wele of þe worlde þay woned þer samen, 50
þe most kyd knyztez vnder Krystes seluen,
And þe louelokkest ladies þat euer lif haden,
And he þe comlokest kyng þat þe court haldes;
For al watz þis fayre folk in her first age,
on sille, 55

þe hapnest vnder heuen,

Kyng hyzest mon of wylle;
Hit were now gret nye to neuen
So hardy a here on hille.

Wyle Nw 3er watz so 3ep þat hit watz nwe cummen, 60
þat day double on þe dece watz þe douth serued.
Fro þe kyng watz cummen with kny3tes into þe halle,
þe chauntré of þe chapel cheued to an ende,
Loude crye watz þer kest of clerkez and oþer,
Nowel nayted onewe, neuened ful ofte; 65
And syþen riche forth runnen to reche hondeselle,
3ezed 3eres-3iftes on hiz, 3elde hem bi hond,
Debated busyly aboute þo giftes;
Ladies lazed ful loude, þo3 þay lost haden,
And he þat wan watz not wrothe, þat may 3e wel trawe.

70

Alle þis mirþe þay maden to þe mete tyme;
When þay had waschen worþyly þay wenten to sete,
þe best burne ay abof, as hit best semed,
Whene Guenore, ful gay, grayþed in þe myddes,
Dressed on þe dere des, dubbed al aboute, 75
Smal sendal bisides, a selure hir ouer
Of tryed tolouse, and tars tapites innoghe,
þat were enbrawdred and beten wyth þe best gemmes
þat my3t be preued of prys wyth penyes to bye,
in daye. 80

þe comlokest to discrye
þer glent with y3en gray,
A semloker þat euer he sy3e
Soth mo3t no mon say.

Bot Arthure wolde not ete til al were serued, 85
He watz so joly of his joyfnes, and sumquat childgered:
His lif liked hym lyzt, he louied þe lasse
Auþer to longe lye or to longe sitte,
So bisied him his zonge blod and his brayn wylde.
And also an oþer maner meued him eke 90
Þat he þurz nobelay had nomen, he wolde neuer ete
Vpon such a dere day er hym deuised were
Of sum auenturus þyng an vncouþe tale,
Of sum mayn meruayle, þat he myzt trawe,
Of alderes, of armes, of oþer auenturus, 95
Oþer sum segg hym bisozt of sum siker knyzt
To joyne wyth hym in iustyng, in jopardé to lay,
Lede, lif for lyf, leue vchon oþer,
As fortune wolde fulsun hom, þe fayrer to haue.
Dis watz þe kynges countenaunce where he in court were,
100
At vch farand fest among his fre meny
in halle.

Perfore of face so fere
He stiztlez stif in stalle,
Ful zep in þat Nw zere 105
Much mirthe he mas withalle.

Thus þer stondes in stale þe stif kyng hisseluen, 107
Talkkande bifore þe hyze table of trifles ful hende.
There gode Gawan watz grayped Gwenore bisyde,
And Agrauayn a la dure mayn on þat oþer syde sittes, 110
Boþe þe kynges sistersunes and ful siker kniztes;
Bisshop Bawdewyn abof biginez þe table,
And Ywan, Vryn son, ette with hymself.

Þise were dizt on þe des and derworþly serued,
And siþen mony siker segge at þe sidbordez. 115

Þen þe first cors come with crakkyng of trumpes,
Wyth mony baner ful bryzt þat þerbi henced;
Nwe nakryn noyse with þe noble pipes,
Wylde werbles and wyzt wakned lote,
Þat mony hert ful hiþe hef at her towches. 120

Dayntés dryuen þerwyth of ful dere metes,
Foyoun of þe fresche, and on so fele disches
Þat pine to fynde þe place þe peple biforne
For to sette þe sylueren þat sere sewes halden
on clothe. 125

Iche lede as he loued hymselfe
Þer laght withouten loþe;
Ay two had disches twelue,
Good þer and bryzt wyn boþe.

Now wyl I of þor seruise say yow no more, 130
For vch wyþe may wel wit no wont þat þer were.
An oþer noyse ful newe neþed biliue,
Þat þe lude myzt haf leue liflode to cach;
For vneþe watz þe noyce not a whyle sesed,
And þe fyrst cource in þe court kyndely serued, 135
Þer hales in at þe halle dor an aghlich mayster,
On þe most on þe molde on mesure hyghe;
Fro þe swyre to þe swange so sware and so þik,
And his lyndes and his lymes so longe and so grete,
Half etayn in erde I hope þat he were, 140

Bot mon most I algate mynn hym to bene,
And þat þe myriest in his muckel þat myzt ride;
For of bak and of brest al were his bodi sturne,

Both his wombe and his wast were worthily smale,
And alle his fetures folzande, in forme þat he hade, 145
ful clene;

For wonder of his hwe men hade,
Set in his semblaunt sene;
He ferde as freke were fade,
And oueral enker-grene. 150

Ande al grayped in grene þis gome and his wedes: 151
A strayte cote ful strezt, þat stek on his sides,
A meré mantile abof, mensked withinne
With pelure pured apert, þe pane ful clene
With blyþe blaunner ful bryzt, and his hod boþe, 155
þat watz lazt fro his lokkez and layde on his schulderes;
Heme wel-haled hose of þat same,
þat spenet on his sparlyr, and clene spures vnder
Of bryzt golde, vpon silk bordes barred ful ryche,
And scholes vnder schankes þere þe schalk rides; 160
And alle his vesture uerayly watz clene verdure,
Boþe þe barres of his belt and oþer blyþe stones,
þat were richely rayled in his aray clene
Aboutte hymself and his sadel, vpon silk werkez.
þat were to tor for to telle of tryfles þe halue 165
þat were enbrauded abof, wyth bryddes and flyzes,
With gay gaudi of grene, þe golde ay inmyddes.
þe pendauntes of his payttrure, þe proude cropure,
His molaynes, and alle þe metail anamayld was þenne,
þe steropes þat he stod on stayned of þe same, 170
And his arsounz al after and his apel skyrtes,
þat euer glemered and glent al of grene stones;
þe fole þat he ferkkes on fyn of þat ilke,