

CLASSICS TO GO

KNIGHTLY LEGENDS  
OF WALES  
OR THE BOY'S MABINOIGION



SIDNEY LANIER

# **Knightly Legends of Wales**

**or The Boy's Mabinogion**

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Kai and His Companions at the Castle of the Giant Gwrnach

## INTRODUCTION.

In the library of Jesus College, Oxford, is an ancient Welsh MS. called *Llyfr<sup>[1]</sup> Coch<sup>[2]</sup> O Hergest<sup>[3]</sup>* that is, *The Red Book of Hergest*. This MS. was written in the fourteenth century, though some of the compositions which it has collected are of a much earlier date. It contains a number of poems, together with a body of prose romances called *Mabinogion*.  
[4]

In the year 1838 Lady Charlotte Guest published a translation of these Mabinogion, accompanied by the text of their Welsh originals and a mass of useful and scholarly notes. Her work bore this gracious dedication:—

TO IVOR AND MERTHYR.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,—Infants as you yet are, I feel that I cannot dedicate more fitly than to you these venerable relics of ancient lore, and I do so in the hope of inciting you to cultivate the Literature of "Gwyllt Walia," in whose beautiful language you are being initiated, and amongst whose free mountains you were born.

May you become early imbued with the chivalric and exalted sense of honor, and the fervent patriotism for which its sons have ever been celebrated.

May you learn to emulate the noble qualities of Ivor Hael, and the firm attachment to your native country which distinguished that Ivor Bach, after whom the elder of you was named.

I am your affectionate mother,  
C. E. GUEST.

DOWLAI, Aug. 29, 1838.

Several considerations made me strongly desire to re-edit, upon the same plan with *The Boy's Froissart* and *The Boy's King Arthur*, the curious old products of Welsh fancy thus rendered available to scholars. The intrinsic charm of the stories themselves in the first place would easily have secured them a position in this series. Though not so rich as the *Arabian Nights*, they are more vigorous, and their fascination is of a more manful quality. Moreover, they are in comparison open-air tales, and do not move in that close, and, if one could think such a thing, gas-poisoned, temperature which often renders the atmosphere of the Eastern tales extremely unwholesome.

But in the second place the Mabinogion all centre, in one way or another, about the court of King Arthur, and present us with views of the domestic life going on in King Arthur's palace, as well as of the wild adventures of his warriors, which were conceived at a very much earlier and ruder period than that of Sir Thomas Malory's book; so that this collection of the earliest Arthurian legends seemed to make a peculiarly happy companion-book to *The Boy's King Arthur*, which was last published in this series. Indeed, it is probable that in these Mabinogion here following we have the original germs of that great growth of Arthurian romances which overspread Europe after Geoffrey of Monmouth published his *History of the Britons*, and of which I gave some account in the Introduction to *The Boy's King Arthur*. Readers of that Introduction will remember the statement there given, in which Geoffrey of Monmouth himself declares that his main material consisted of a Welsh book given him by a certain person since supposed to be Walter Map (or Mapes). Although several of the following

Mabinogion have probably received additions from foreign sources in the course of time—an original Welsh story, for example, would be carried by some traveller into other parts of Europe, would there be retold with additions and variations, would find its way back in the new form to Wales, and thus re-appear after a while in Welsh collections; yet others are in a nearly pure state. In order to bring these two classes into striking contrast, and to show how much a foreign admixture of this kind might smooth down the grotesque ruggedness of its Welsh original, I have changed the order of the Mabinogion as given in Lady Guest's arrangement, and have placed the story of *Kilhwch and Olwen*, which is almost hideous in many of its huge fancies and distortions and is pure Welsh, immediately next to the story of *The Lady of the Fountain*, whose daintiness, luxury, black savages, and the like, seem here and there to indicate foreign touches. The general tone and essential spirit, however, of the whole, are distinctly Welsh, and old Welsh. I think it curious indeed to note *how* curious those old romances, or Mabinogion, seem to us in spite of the long intimacy and nearness between Welsh and English. They impress most readers with a greater sense of foreignness, of a wholly different cultus, than even Chinese or other antipodal tales; and over and above this there is a glamour and sleep-walking mystery which often incline a man to rub his eyes in the midst of a Mabinogi, and to think of previous states of existence.

It is another feature of this same difference between Welsh and English modes of thought which forms a third, and to me the most weighty, reason for bringing these Mabinogion before my young countrymen at this particular time. I can illustrate this difference most vividly by asking you to consider the following group of Welsh conceits and notions which I have assembled from various sources, upon the single thread of their likeness in extravagance, in wildness

beyond all tolerance of reason, in lawlessness. Of course they are not to be taken as ordinary representative specimens; and I shall presently counterbalance them with some very beautiful, moderate, and wise examples of Welsh art. But they unquestionably show a tendency so characteristic as to be easily traceable.

Take, for instance, the following story concerning the famous mantle of King Ryence. Readers of *King Arthur* will remember the young sovereign's manful defiance, when, soon after his elevation to the throne, a messenger came from King Ryence demanding King Arthur's beard (though, indeed, he must have been too young to have one) to complete a mantle which King Ryence was purfling (*bordering*) with kings' beards,—a demand which Arthur pronounced "the most villainous and lewdest message that ever man heard sent to a king." The following version shows what prodigiously different forms the same narrative may assume.

Once upon a time two kings of Old Britain were walking together at night. Their names were Nynniaw and Peibiaw.

"See," said Nynniaw, "what a beautiful and large field I own!"

"Where is it?" said Peibiaw.

"The whole firmament," said Nynniaw.

"And do thou see," said Peibiaw, "what countless herds of cattle and sheep I have, feeding in thy field!"

"Where are they?" said Nynniaw.

"Why, all the stars which thou seest," replied Peibiaw, "with the moon for their shepherdess."

"They shall not graze in my pasture," said Nynniaw.

"They *shall*," said Peibiaw.

"They shall *not*," cried Nynniaw.

And then words arose between these two kings so bitter that they summoned their soldiers and fell to war wherein they continued until the armies of both were nearly destroyed. Seeing that such was the fact, Rhitta the giant, King of Wales (who is Sir Thomas Malory's King Ryens of North Wales), levied war against both, as being madmen dangerous to all their neighbors; and, having defeated their forces, he cut off the beards of kings Nynniaw and Peibiaw. But at this time there were twenty-eight kings in the Island of Britain, and when the others heard of these things, they marched all together against King Rhitta to avenge the insult of the beard. In the battle which followed, however, Rhitta was again victor. "This field is mine," said he, and cut off the beards of *those* kings. These matters being told abroad, the kings of all the surrounding countries made common cause against Rhitta, and presently waged a great battle with him. Still, Rhitta conquered all these. "The great field is mine," he said again; "and," cutting off all their beards, "these are the herds that fed in my field; but I have driven them out." Then he made a mantle for himself out of all those beards, and although he was a giant twice as large as the largest man ever known, that mantle reached from his head to his heels.

Or take the exactions of a certain messenger called "The Little Peacock" (*Y Paun Bach*), who was sent by a certain David, Prince of North Wales, to fetch Gwgan (*Googan*, nearly) the bard to court. After a long journey, towards the close of the evening the Little Peacock heard sounds of the tuning of a harp from a house in a wooded valley where he had arrived. "The style of playing and the modulation" led him to suspect that this was Gwgan's house; and in order to be sure he advances and pours forth a high-flown speech to Gwgan, who replies in the like lofty vein, finally inquiring what he would have. "I want lodging," quoth Y Paun Bach,



"for to-night ... and that not better than I know how to ask for.... A lightsome hall, floored with tile, and swept, in which there has been neither flood nor raindrop for the last hundred years, dressed with fresh green rushes, laid so evenly that one rush be not higher than the other the height of a gnat's eye, so that my foot should not slip either backward or forward the space of a mote in the sunshine of June;" together with similar superb requirements as to the cushion beneath him, the pillow under each elbow, the fire, the supper, the servants' livery, and the quantity of his ale.

Or this itemized account of a monster, which, though not Welsh, is Gælic, and shows the general Keltic proclivity. "... they saw a couple approaching them,—a woman and a man; larger than the summit of ... a mountain was each ... of their members; sharper than a shaving-knife the edge of their shins; their heels and hams [were] in front of them; should a sackful of apples be thrown on their heads not one of them would fall to the ground, but would stick on the points of the strong, bristly hair which grew out of their heads; ... whiter than snow their eyes; a lock of the lower beard was carried round the back of the head, and a lock of the upper beard descended so as to cover the knees; the woman had whiskers, but the man was without whiskers."

Or the King Yspaddaden Penkawr, in the following story of *Kilhwch and Olwen*, whose eyebrows hung over his eyes to such a degree that they had to be propped up with forks; as well as the amazing qualifications of King Arthur's warriors, detailed in the same story,—such as of him whose dagger was so broad that King Arthur's army was accustomed to use it for a bridge in passing rivers; or him who could hear the touch of a gnat's foot on the ground at a great distance, or of him who could see a mote in a sunbeam at either of the four corners of the earth, or him whose red beard lay completely along the twenty-eight rafters of the king's hall, or of him whose lips were so large that he was accustomed

to draw the lower down for an apron and to lift up the other for a hood; and others still more marvellously absurd. If we compare these with the wildest flights in Malory's *King Arthur*, nothing can be clearer than the constant presence in the latter of a certain reasonable restraint, a sober proportion, a sense of the supreme value of law, even in the most apparently lawless excursions. It would be going far beyond proper bounds to discuss here how this subtle feeling for the beauty of restraint, this underlying perception of the artistic necessity of law and order, has quietly reigned, not only over the advance of English literature, but has been also the moving spirit, the perpetual King Alfred, of the whole of English development in general. And, as hinted, I have thought this consideration particularly forcible at the present moment in our own country, where the making of statutes increases in exact proportion to the decrease in the popular esteem for them. Daily and endlessly our Legislatures multiply laws and murder Law. But—may I not add, if only as one of those utterances which a boy sometimes profitably remembers, though at first dimly understood—the love of Law beyond all laws would seem to be particularly vital in a republic; being a principle so comprehensive, that at one extreme, in contact with certain tendencies, it flowers into that sense of proportion, of the due relation of all parts of the universe to the whole, which is the artist's largest perception of beauty, and is the main outfit of genius in constructing Mabinogion, in literature, in all art; while at the other extreme, working with certain other tendencies of character, the same love of Law is at once the root of decorous behavior on the part of the private citizen, and of large statesmanship on the part of the public official.

But while this danger of extravagance certainly exists in the products of Welsh fancy, they possess many qualities which have wrought with fine influence upon general English life

and literature. Among the oldest remains of Welsh poetic wisdom that have come down to us are what were called *The Triads*, in which wise aphorisms and sayings are effectively grouped together by threes. The four following examples of this form of composition show an insight and breadth which render them instructive to the wisest readers of our own time.

I.

The three qualifications of poetry: Endowment of genius, judgment from experience, and happiness of mind.

II.

The three primary requisites of genius: An eye that can see nature, a heart that can feel nature, and boldness that dares follow nature.

III.

The three foundations of judgment: Bold design, constant practice, and frequent mistakes.

IV.

The three foundations of learning: Seeing much, suffering much, and studying much.

It would be difficult to find more wisdom in fewer words, or loftier thought in simpler terms; and any young reader of *The Mabinogion* will have done a good day's work if he will commit these words so thoroughly that they will say themselves over to him, day by day, as a noble and fruitful formula, alike stimulating in every line of life, from the ploughman's to the president's. Among the Welsh, indeed, as far back as history can pierce, we find an almost adoring reverence for the poet. To assume the function of a bard is to assume the function of the wisest man and best teacher

in society; and therefore the utmost pains are taken with the young bard's education, and he is held bound to know all that can be known. One supreme name stands out among ancient Welsh bards, which I will ask you to remember in this connection. This is TALIESIN, whose name signifies "Shining Brow." He is the hero of one of the following Mabinogion which bears his name for a title. Some specimens of his poetry will there be found; and a few facts as to his life are added in a footnote. The poet of next rank to him is perhaps Llywarch Hen, who, as well as Taliesin, belongs to the sixth century. The word "Hen" means *old*; and "Old Llywarch" seems a sort of expression of endearment. This is a specimen of his more pathetic song. His youngest son, Gwenn, had been slain in battle.

"Let the wave break noisily: let it cover the shore when the joined lances are in battle.... Let the wave break noisily: let it cover the plain when the lances join with a shock.... Gwenn has been slain at the ford of Morlas.... Here is the tomb of Gwenn, the son of the old Llywarch. Sweetly a bird sang on a pear-tree above the head of Gwenn, before they covered him with turf: that broke the heart of the old Llywarch."

I wish there were time to speak of Aneurin, the battle-singer; or to give the curious triad published among the Iolo Manuscripts, describing "The Nine Impulsive Stocks of the Baptismal Bards of Britain"; or to cite some brief beauties of still less-known poets,—such as the wild Hebrew outcry of the King Gwyddno Garanhir, which swept over the waste floods covering his plains and cities after the total destruction of his kingdom by the sea through the drunkenness of Seithenin, who had been left to watch the embankment on a night of revelry,—

"Stand forth, Seithenin, and behold the dwelling of heroes,—the plain of Gwyddno the ocean covers!  
Accursed be the sea guard, who after his carousal let loose the destroying fountain of the raging deep.  
Accursed be the watcher, who after his drunken revelry loosed the fountain of the desolating sea.  
A cry from the sea arises above the ramparts; even to heaven does its ascend,—after the fierce excess comes the long cessation!  
A cry from the sea ascends above the ramparts; even to heaven does the supplication come!—after the excess there ensues restraint!  
A cry from the sea awakens me this night!—  
A cry from the sea arises above the winds!  
A cry from the sea impels me from my place of rest this night!  
After excess comes the far extending death!"

—or as the saying of Heinin Vardd, preserved in the fragment,—

"Hast thou heard the saying of Heinin,  
The Bard of the college of Llanveithan?  
*The brave is never cruel.*"

In this connection I will ask you to notice also the intense feeling for color, which, in some of the following Mabinogion, spreads an almost Oriental luxuriance of tint over the scenes. *The Lady of the Fountain* (the first Mabinogi of the following collection), for example, shows us King Arthur reclining upon green rushes, with a cushion of red satin under his elbow, Guenever and her ladies grouped at the other end of the hall, mantles of flame-colored satin, gilded bows, gold-headed arrows winged with peacocks' feathers, gold-banded garments, shoes of variegated leather, twenty-four youths with golden hair, rooms with all the panels

painted in gorgeous colors, the coal-black savage, white whalebone (ivory of the narwhal's tooth, probably), and the like. Or we have a quaint extravagant scene like that in the Mabinogi of *Peredur* (the modern Percival of the Arthur series): where, upon a certain occasion, Peredur was observed with his eyes fixed upon a certain spot, sunken in deep meditation. All attempts to get his attention failed; he was cuffed, boxed, even overthrown; until, after a final catastrophe (for which see the story), Peredur explains that he is studying certain effects of color produced by the following circumstances; after spending the night in a hermit's cell, "in the morning he arose, and, when he went forth, behold a shower of snow had fallen the night before, and a hawk had killed a wild fowl in front of the cell, and the noise of the horse scared the hawk away, and a raven alighted upon the bird. And Peredur stood and compared the blackness of the raven, and the whiteness of the snow, and the redness of the blood, to the hair of the lady that best he loved, which was blacker than jet, and to her skin, which was whiter than snow, and to the two red spots upon her cheeks, which were redder than the blood upon the snow appeared to be."

The glowing picture of the young knight starting for Arthur's court in *Kilhwch and Olwen*; the dainty composition of the maiden Blodeuwedd, who was constructed by magic out of certain flowers in order to be a bride for Gwyddion, who was cursed by Arianrod with the curse that he should never have a wife of the present human race,—these and many similar bright-colored passages in the Mabinogion will strike the most cursory reader in confirmation of the feeling for color alleged. While I am scarcely prepared to attribute so much weight to any foreign element as to agree with Mr. Henry Morley in believing that but for the Keltic influence England would not have produced a Shakespeare; or with Mr. Matthew Arnold, that English poetry got nearly all its turn for catching

and rendering the charm of nature in a wonderfully near and vivid way, beside possibly other qualities, from a Keltic source: yet I think we can safely say that our literature has certainly enriched itself with Bard's wisdom, has certainly warmed itself with the fire and color of Keltic fancy, and has perhaps spiritualized its feeling for nature with that subtle wood-loneliness which Mr. Arnold calls "the natural magic" of the Kelt.

The Welsh proper names are apt to make such an uncouth impression upon those unacquainted with their true sounds, that perhaps the most helpful matter to which I can devote the brief remainder of this Introduction is the pronunciation of Welsh. The following rules, in which of course all attempt at minute accuracy is sacrificed to brevity, and only approximate sounds are aimed at, will at least result in showing such names to be often musical and pleasing, even to the English ear. The letters which cause most perplexity are *w*, *ll*, *y*, and *ch*. *W* is usually sounded like *oo* in *pool*, as already explained under the name "Kilhwch," pronounced *Kilhooch*; though where it precedes a vowel this sound (*oo*) of course practically becomes the English consonantal *w*; for example, *oo-et*, rapidly pronounced, would merge into *wet*; and so in "Llywarch" or "Gwyddion," the *w* before the *a* or *y* may be considered as having simply the force of the English *w*. *Y*, if long, is like German *ü*, or French *u* in *une*; nearly English *ee* in *seen*. *Y* short, much like our short *u*, except in the last syllable of words, where it is more like our short *i*. *Ll* is like Spanish *ll* in *llanos*, but with an aspirated sound made by forcing the breath through the back teeth so vigorously as to impress the English ear with the sound of a strongly-lipped *s*. If the organs be arranged so as to pronounce the *y* in *yield*, and the sound *lh* vigorously forced upon that position, something like Welsh *ll* results. *Ch* is guttural, as in Scotch *loch*, German *ach*. The vowels *a*, *e*, *i*, mostly occur in the following names as short English *a*, *e*, *i*; *o*, as long *o*; and

*u*, as a rapidly pronounced French *u*. The often occurring *aw* is like *ou* in English *our*, or German *au* in *haus*. *Dd* is nearly *th* in *then*, only with more of *d* than *t* blended with the *h* sound. *C* is always *k*, *Cynon* equals *Kynon*; there is no soft *c* in Welsh. *F* is always *v*; it is only *ff* which sounds like our *f* in *fan*. *G* always hard, as in *get*. *Th* as in English *thanks*; never as in *then*.

All other letters may be sounded as in English. It is possible, I should add, that even Welshmen may find theoretical fault with some of these directions; but they are given here as very nearly reproducing the practical impression made upon English ears by actual Welsh current talk. No one need go outside of his own experience to discover how greatly the sounds of current discourse differ from theoretical methods of pronunciation.

Such is the general sound of the Welsh tongue. It will be helpful if I add—in view of many books which are now appearing as results of the fresh interest lately aroused in old Gælic language and literature—that the sounds here given belong to the tongue of that special division of the Kelts known as the Cymric (pronounced Kymric) Kelts, in distinction from their neighbors of ancient Ireland and Scotland, known as the Gædhilic, or Gælic. The derivation of the names "Wales" and "Welsh" is much disputed, and may be regarded as unsettled. They are, at any rate, much later than "Cambria" and "Cymric," which all Welshmen claim to be the true names for their country and nation, building upon that ancient tradition perpetuated by Geoffrey of Monmouth, that after the death of Brutus, the original founder of Britain, his three sons divided the kingdom between them; the eldest, Locrinus, taking the part now known as England, but called after him "Locria" (or, variously, "Locgria," "Locris," &c.) in all old chronicles; the next son, Albanach (Albany), taking the parts north of the Humber; and the third son, Camber, taking the part



between the Irish seas and the rivers Severn and Dee, whence it was called after him, "Cambria," now known as Wales.

Hence the Welsh now call themselves "Cymru," usually reproduced in English by "Cymry," and their language "Cymraec," or "Cymraeg," usually reproduced in English by "Cymric."

The present work contains nearly all the Mabinogion originally given; and, as in the other works of this series, the original text is scrupulously preserved, except occasionally to hasten the long-lagging action of a story,—in which case the interpolation is always placed in brackets,—and except where the demands of modern reserve required excision. An Italicized word in brackets is always the meaning of the word immediately before it, as in the *Froissart* and the *King Arthur*.

In now leaving this beautiful book with my young countrymen, I find myself so sure of its charm as to feel no hesitation in taking authority to unite the earnest expression of their gratitude with that of my own to Lady Charlotte Guest, whose talents and scholarship have made these delights possible; and I can wish my young readers few pleasures of finer quality than that surprised sense of a whole new world of possession which came with my first reading of these Mabinogion, and made me remember Keats's

"... watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken."

SIDNEY LANIER

CAMP ROBIN, N.C., June, 1881.

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## THE LADY OF THE FOUNTAIN.

King Arthur was at Caerlleon-upon-Usk; and one day he sat in his chamber, and with him were Owain<sup>[5]</sup> the son of Urien, <sup>[5]</sup> and Kynon the son of Clydno, and Kai the son of Kyner, and Gwenhwyvar and her handmaidens at needle-work by the window. And if it should be said that there was a porter at Arthur's palace, there was none. Glewlwyd Gavaelvawr was there, acting as porter, to welcome guests and strangers, and to receive them with honor, and to inform them of the manners and customs of the court, and to direct those who came to the hall or to the presence-chamber, and those who came to take up their lodging.

In the centre of the chamber King Arthur sat upon a seat of green rushes, over which was spread a covering of flame-colored satin, and a cushion of red satin was under his elbow.

Then Arthur spoke. "If I thought you would not disparage me," said he, "I would sleep while I wait for my repast; and you can entertain one another with relating tales, and can obtain a flagon of mead and some meat from Kai."

And the king went to sleep. So Kai<sup>[6]</sup> went to the kitchen and to the mead-cellar, and returned bearing a flagon of mead, and a golden goblet, and a handful of skewers upon which were broiled collops of meat. Then they ate the collops, and began to drink the mead.

"Now," said Kai, "it is time for you to give me my story."

"Kynon," said Owain, "do thou pay to Kai the tale that is his due."

"Truly," said Kynon, "thou art older, and art a better teller of tales, and hast seen more marvellous things than I: do thou therefore pay Kai his tale."

"Begin thyself," quoth Owain, "with the best that thou knowest."

"I will do so," answered Kynon. "I was the only son of my mother and father, and I was exceedingly aspiring, and my daring was very great. I thought there was no enterprise in the world too mighty for me; and, after I had achieved all the adventures that were in my own country, I equipped myself, and set forth to journey through deserts and distant regions. And at length it chanced that I came to the fairest valley in the world, wherein were trees of equal growth; and a river ran through the valley, and a path was by the side of the river. And I followed the path until mid-day, and continued my journey along the remainder of the valley until the evening; and at the extremity of a plain I came to a large and lustrous castle, at the foot of which was a torrent. And I approached the castle; and there I beheld two youths with yellow, curling hair, each with a frontlet of gold upon his head, and clad in a garment of yellow satin, and they had gold clasps upon their insteps. In the hand of each of them was an ivory bow, strung with the sinews of the stag; and their arrows had shafts of the bone of the whale, and were winged with peacock's feathers; the shafts also had golden heads. And they had daggers with blades of gold, and with hilts of the bone of the whale. And they were shooting their daggers.

"And a little way from them I saw a man in the prime of life, with his beard newly shorn, clad in a robe and a mantle of yellow satin; and round the top of his mantle was a band of gold lace. On his feet were shoes of variegated leather, fastened by two bosses of gold. When I saw him, I went towards him and saluted him; and such was his courtesy that he no sooner received my greeting than he returned it. And he went with me towards the castle. Now, there were no dwellers in the castle, except those who were in one hall. And there I saw four and twenty damsels embroidering satin

at a window. And this I tell thee, Kai, that the least fair of them was fairer than the fairest maid thou hast ever beheld in the Island of Britain; and the least lovely of them was more lovely than Gwenhwyvar, the wife of Arthur, when she has appeared loveliest at the Offering, on the day of the Nativity, or at the feast of Easter. They rose up at my coming, and six of them took my horse and divested me of my armor. And six others took my arms and washed them in a vessel until they were perfectly bright. And the third six spread cloths upon the tables and prepared meat. And the fourth six took off my soiled garments and placed others upon me; namely, an under-vest and a doublet of fine linen, and a robe, and a surcoat, and a mantle of yellow satin with a broad gold band upon the mantle. And they placed cushions, both beneath and around me, with coverings of red linen; and I sat down. Now, the six maidens who had taken my horse unharnessed him as well as if they had been the best squires in the Island of Britain. Then, behold, they brought bowls of silver wherein was water to wash, and towels of linen, some green, and some white; and I washed. And in a little while the man sat down to the table. And I sat next to him; and below me sat all the maidens, except those who waited on us. And the table was of silver, and the cloths upon the table were of linen; and no vessel was served upon the table that was not either of gold, or of silver, or of buffalo-horn. And our meat was brought to us. And verily, Kai, I saw there every sort of meat and every sort of liquor that I have ever seen elsewhere; but the meat and the liquor were better served there than I have ever seen them in any other place.

"Until the repast was half over, neither the man nor any one of the damsels spoke a single word to me; but, when the man perceived that it would be more agreeable to me to converse than to eat any more, he began to inquire of me who I was. I said I was glad to find that there was some one

who would discourse with me, and that it was not considered so great a crime at that court for people to hold converse together.

"'Chieftain,' said the man, 'we would have talked to thee sooner, but we feared to disturb thee during thy repast: now, however, we will discourse.'

"Then I told the man who I was, and what was the cause of my journey, and said that I was seeking whether any one was superior to me, or whether I could gain the mastery over all. The man looked upon me; and he smiled, and said, 'If I did not fear to distress thee too much, I would show thee that which thou seekest.'

"Upon this I became anxious and sorrowful; and, when the man perceived it, he said, 'If thou wouldst rather that I should show thee thy disadvantage than thine advantage, I will do so. Sleep here to-night, and in the morning arise early, and take the road upwards through the valley until thou reachest the wood through which thou camest hither. A little way within the wood thou wilt meet with a road branching off to the right, by which thou must proceed until thou comest to a large sheltered glade with a mound in the centre. And thou wilt see a black man of great stature on the top of the mound. He is not smaller in size than two of the men of this world. He has but one foot, and one eye in the middle of his forehead. And he has a club of iron; and it is certain that there are no two men in the world who would not find their burden in that club. And he is not a comely man, but, on the contrary, he is exceedingly ill-favored; and he is the woodward of that wood. And thou wilt see a thousand wild animals grazing around him. Inquire of him the way out of the glade; and he will reply to thee briefly, and will point out the road by which thou shalt find that which thou art in quest of.'

"And long seemed that night to me. And the next morning I arose and equipped myself, and mounted my horse, and proceeded straight through the valley to the wood; and I followed the cross-road which the man had pointed out to me, till at length I arrived at the glade. And there was I three times more astonished at the number of wild animals that I beheld than the man had said I should be. And the black man was there, sitting upon the top of the mound. Huge of stature as the man had told me that he was, I found him to exceed by far the description he had given me of him. As for the iron club which the man had told me was a burden for two men, I am certain, Kai, that it would be a heavy weight for four warriors to lift; and this was in the black man's hand. And he only spoke to me in answer to my questions. Then I asked him what power he held over those animals.

"I will show thee, little man,' said he.

"And he took his club in his hand, and with it he struck a stag a great blow, so that he brayed vehemently; and at his braying the animals came together, as numerous as the stars in the sky, so that it was difficult for me to find room in the glade to stand among them. There were serpents, and dragons, and divers sorts of animals. And he looked at them, and bade them go and feed; and they bowed their heads, and did him homage as vassals to their lord.

"Then the black man said to me, 'Seest thou now, little man, what power I hold over these animals?'

"Then I inquired of him the way, and he became very rough in his manner to me: however, he asked me whither I would go. And when I told him who I was, and what I sought, he directed me.

"Take,' said he, 'that path that leads towards the head of the glade, and ascend the wooded steep until thou comest to its summit; and there thou wilt find an open space like to a large valley, and in the midst of it a tall tree, whose branches



are greener than the greenest pine-trees. Under this tree is a fountain, and by the side of the fountain a marble slab, and on the marble slab a silver bowl attached by a chain of silver so that it may not be carried away. Take the bowl and throw a bowlful of water upon the slab, and thou wilt hear a mighty peal of thunder, so that thou wilt think that heaven and earth are trembling with its fury. With the thunder there will come a shower so severe, that it will be scarce possible for thee to endure it and live. And the shower will be of hailstones; and after the shower the weather will become fair, but every leaf that was upon the tree will have been carried away by the shower. Then a flight of birds will come and alight upon the tree; and in thine own country thou didst never hear a strain so sweet as that which they will sing. And, at the moment thou art most delighted with the song of the birds, thou wilt hear a murmuring and complaining coming towards thee along the valley. And thou wilt see a knight upon a coal-black horse, clothed in black velvet, and with a pennon of black linen upon his lance; and he will ride unto thee to encounter thee with the utmost speed. If thou fleest from him, he will overtake thee; and, if thou abidest there, as sure as thou art a mounted knight he will leave thee on foot. And if thou dost not find trouble in that adventure thou needest not seek it during the rest of thy life.'

"So I journeyed on until I reached the summit of the steep, and there I found every thing as the black man had described it to me. And I went up to the tree, and beneath it I saw the fountain, and by its side the marble slab, and the silver bowl fastened by the chain. Then I took the bowl, and cast a bowlful of water upon the slab; and thereupon, behold, the thunder came, much more violent than the black man had led me to expect. And after the thunder came the shower: and of a truth I tell thee, Kai, that there is neither man nor beast that could endure that shower and live; for not one of those hailstones would be stopped, either by the

flesh or by the skin, until it had reached the bone. I turned my horse's flank towards the shower, and placed the beak of my shield over his head and neck, while I held the upper part of it over my own head. And thus I withstood the shower. When I looked on the tree, there was not a single leaf upon it; and then the sky became clear, and with that, behold the birds lighted upon the tree, and sang. And truly, Kai, I never heard any melody equal to that, either before or since. And, when I was most charmed with listening to the birds, lo, a murmuring voice was heard through the valley, approaching me, and saying, 'O knight! what has brought thee hither? What evil have I done to thee, that thou shouldst act towards me and my possessions as thou hast this day? Dost thou not know that the shower to-day has left in my dominions neither man nor beast alive that was exposed to it?'

"And thereupon, behold, a knight on a black horse appeared, clothed in jet-black velvet, and with a tabard of black linen about him. And we charged each other; and, as the onset was furious, it was not long before I was overthrown. Then the knight passed the shaft of his lance through the bridle-rein of my horse, and rode off with the two horses, leaving me where I was. And he did not even bestow so much notice upon me as to imprison me, nor did he despoil me of my arms. So I returned along the road by which I had come. And, when I reached the glade where the black man was, I confess to thee, Kai, it is a marvel that I did not melt down into a liquid pool, through the shame that I felt at the black man's derision. And that night I came to the same castle where I had spent the night preceding. And I was more agreeably entertained that night than I had been the night before; and I was better feasted, and I conversed freely with the inmates of the castle, and none of them alluded to my expedition to the fountain, neither did I mention it to any; and I remained there that night. When I arose on the morrow, I found ready saddled a dark-bay palfrey, with

nostrils as red as scarlet; and, after putting on my armor and leaving there my blessing, I returned to my own court. And that horse I still possess, and he is in the stable yonder; and I declare that I would not part with him for the best palfrey in the Island of Britain.

"Now of a truth, Kai, no man ever before confessed to an adventure so much to his own discredit; and verily it seems strange to me that neither before nor since have I heard of any person besides myself who knew of this adventure, and that the subject of it should exist within King Arthur's dominions without any other person lighting upon it."

"Now," quoth Owain, "would it not be well to go and endeavor to discover that place?"

"By the hand of my friend," said Kai, "often dost thou utter that with thy tongue which thou wouldst not make good with thy deeds."

"In very truth," said Gwenhwyvar, "it were better thou wert hanged, Kai, than to use such uncourteous speech towards a man like Owain."

"By the hand of my friend, good lady," said Kai, "thy praise of Owain is not greater than mine."

With that Arthur awoke, and asked if he had not been sleeping a little.

"Yes, lord," answered Owain, "thou hast slept a while."

"Is it time for us to go to meat?"

"It is, lord," said Owain.

Then the horn for washing was sounded, and the king and all his household sat down to eat. And when the meal was ended Owain withdrew to his lodging and made ready his horse and his arms.

On the morrow, with the dawn of day, he put on his armor, and mounted his charger, and travelled through distant lands and over desert mountains. And at length he arrived at the valley which Kynon had described to him; and he was certain that it was the same that he sought. And, journeying along the valley by the side of the river, he followed its course till he came to the plain and within sight of the castle. When he approached the castle, he saw the youths shooting their daggers in the place where Kynon had seen them, and the yellow man, to whom the castle belonged, standing hard by. And no sooner had Owain saluted the yellow man than he was saluted by him in return.

And he went forward towards the castle, and there he saw the chamber; and when he had entered the chamber he beheld the maidens working at satin embroidery, in chairs of gold. And their beauty and their comeliness seemed to Owain far greater than Kynon had represented to him. And they arose to wait upon Owain, as they had done to Kynon; and the meal which they set before him gave more satisfaction to Owain than it had done to Kynon.

About the middle of the repast, the yellow man asked Owain the object of his journey. And Owain made it known to him, and said, "I am in quest of the knight who guards the fountain."

Upon this the yellow man smiled, and said that he was as loth to point out that adventure to Owain as he had been to Kynon. However, he described the whole to Owain, and they retired to rest.

The next morning Owain found his horse made ready for him by the damsels; and he set forward, and came to the glade where the black man was. And the stature of the black man seemed more wonderful to Owain than it had done to Kynon; and Owain asked of him his road, and he showed it to him. And Owain followed the road, as Kynon had done, till he

came to the green tree; and he beheld the fountain, and the slab beside the fountain with the bowl upon it. And Owain took the bowl, and threw a bowlful of water upon the slab. And, lo, the thunder was heard; and after the thunder came the shower, much more violent than Kynon had described; and after the shower the sky became bright. And when Owain looked at the tree there was not one leaf upon it. And immediately the birds came, and settled upon the tree, and sang. And, when their song was most pleasing to Owain, he beheld a knight coming towards him through the valley; and he prepared to receive him and encountered him violently. Having broken both their lances, they drew their swords and fought blade to blade. Then Owain struck the knight a blow through his helmet, headpiece, and visor, and through the skin, and the flesh, and the bone, until it wounded the very brain. Then the black knight felt that he had received a mortal wound, upon which he turned his horse's head and fled. And Owain pursued him, and followed close upon him, although he was not near enough to strike him with his sword. Thereupon Owain descried a vast and resplendent castle. And they came to the castle-gate. And the black knight was allowed to enter, and the portcullis was let fall upon Owain; and it struck his horse behind the saddle, and cut him in two and carried away the rowels of the spurs that were upon Owain's heels. And the portcullis descended to the floor. And the rowels of the spurs and part of the horse were without; and Owain, with the other part of the horse, remained between the two gates, and the inner gate was closed, so that Owain could not go thence; and Owain was in a perplexing situation. And, while he was in this state, he could see through an aperture in the gate a street facing him, with a row of houses on each side. And he beheld a maiden, with yellow curling hair, and a frontlet of gold upon her head; and she was clad in a dress of yellow satin, and on her feet were shoes of variegated leather. And she approached the gate, and desired that it should be opened.

"Heaven knows, lady," said Owain, "it is no more possible for me to open to thee from hence than it is for thee to set me free."

"Truly," said the damsel, "it is very sad that thou canst not be released, and every woman ought to succor thee; for I never saw one more faithful in the service of ladies than thou. As a friend thou art the most sincere, and as a lover the most devoted. Therefore," quoth she, "whatever is in my power to do for thy release, I will do it. Take this ring, and put it on thy finger with the stone inside thy hand, and close thy hand upon the stone. And as long as thou concealest it it will conceal thee. When they have consulted together, they will come forth to fetch thee in order to put thee to death; and they will be much grieved that they cannot find thee. And I will await thee on the horseblock yonder; and thou wilt be able to see me, though I cannot see thee: therefore come and place thy hand upon my shoulder, that I may know that thou art near me. And by the way that I go hence do thou accompany me."

Then she went away from Owain, and he did all that the maiden had told him. And the people of the castle came to seek Owain to put him to death; and, when they found nothing but the half of his horse, they were sorely grieved.

And Owain vanished from among them, and went to the maiden, and placed his hand upon her shoulder; whereupon she set off. And Owain followed her until they came to the door of a large and beautiful chamber; and the maiden opened it, and they went in and closed the door. And Owain looked around the chamber; and behold there was not even a single nail in it that was not painted with gorgeous colors; and there was not a single panel that had not sundry images in gold portrayed upon it.

The maiden kindled a fire, and took water in a silver bowl, and put a towel of white linen on her shoulder, and gave