

***LADY  
CHARLOTTE  
GUEST***



***THE MABINOGIION***

**Lady Charlotte Guest**

# **The Mabinogion**

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# Introduction

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Whilst engaged on the Translations contained in these volumes, and on the Notes appended to the various Tales, I have found myself led unavoidably into a much more extensive course of reading than I had originally contemplated, and one which in great measure bears directly upon the earlier Mediæval Romance.

Before commencing these labours, I was aware, generally, that there existed a connexion between the Welsh Mabinogion and the Romance of the Continent; but as I advanced, I became better acquainted with the closeness and extent of that connexion, its history, and the proofs by which it is supported.

At the same time, indeed, I became aware, and still strongly feel, that it is one thing to collect facts, and quite another to classify and draw from them their legitimate conclusions; and though I am loth that what has been collected with some pains, should be entirely thrown away, it is unwillingly, and with diffidence, that I trespass beyond the acknowledged province of a translator.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there arose into general notoriety in Europe, a body of "Romance," which in various forms retained its popularity till the Reformation. In it the plot, the incidents, the characters, were almost wholly those of Chivalry, that bond which united the warriors of France, Spain, and Italy, with those of pure Teutonic descent, and embraced more or less firmly all the nations of Europe, excepting only the Slavonic races, not yet risen to power, and the Celts, who had fallen from it. It is not difficult to account for this latter omission. The Celts, driven from

the plains into the mountains and islands, preserved their liberty, and hated their oppressors with fierce, and not causeless, hatred. A proud and free people, isolated both in country and language, were not likely to adopt customs which implied brotherhood with their foes.

Such being the case, it is remarkable that when the chief romances are examined, the name of many of the heroes and their scenes of action are found to be Celtic, and those of persons and places famous in the traditions of Wales and Brittany. Of this the romances of Ywaine and Gawaine, Sir Perceval de Galles, Eric and Enide, Mort d'Arthur, Sir Lancelot, Sir Tristan, the Graal, &c., may be cited as examples. In some cases a tendency to triads, and other matters of internal evidence, point in the same direction.

It may seem difficult to account for this. Although the ancient dominion of the Celts over Europe is not without enduring evidence in the names of the mountains and streams, the great features of a country, yet the loss of their prior language by the great mass of the Celtic nations in Southern Europe (if indeed their successors in territory be at all of their blood), prevents us from clearly seeing, and makes us wonder, how stories, originally embodied in the Celtic dialects of Great Britain and France, could so influence the literature of nations to whom the Celtic languages were utterly unknown. Whence then came these internal marks, and these proper names of persons and places, the features of a story usually of earliest date and least likely to change?

These romances were found in England, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and even Iceland, as early as the beginning of the thirteenth and end of the twelfth century. The Germans, who propagated them through the nations of the North, derived them certainly from France.

Robert Wace published his Anglo-Norman Romance of the Brut d'Angleterre about 1155. Sir Tristan was written in French prose in 1170; and The Chevalier au Lion, Chevalier de l'Epée, and Sir Lancelot du Lac, in metrical French, by Chrestien de Troyes, before 1200.

From these facts it is to be argued that the further back these romances are traced, the more clearly does it appear that they spread over the Continent from the North-west of France. The older versions, it may be remarked, are far more simple than the later corruptions. In them there is less allusion to the habits and usages of Chivalry, and the Welsh names and elements stand out in stronger relief. It is a great step to be able to trace the stocks of these romances back to Wace, or to his country and age. For Wace's work was not original. He himself, a native of Jersey, appears to have derived much of it from the "Historia Britonum" of Gruffydd ab Arthur, commonly known as "Geoffrey of Monmouth," born 1128, who himself professes to have translated from a British original. It is, however, very possible that Wace may have had access, like Geoffrey, to independent sources of information.

To the claims set up on behalf of Wace and Geoffrey, to be regarded as the channels by which the Cymric tales passed into the Continental Romance, may be added those of a third almost contemporary author. Layamon, a Saxon priest, dwelling, about 1200, upon the banks of the upper Severn, acknowledges for the source of his British history, the *English Bede*, the *Latin Albin*, and the *French Wace*. The last-named however is by very much his chief, and, for Welsh matters, his only avowed authority. His book, nevertheless, contains a number of names and stories relating to Wales, of which no traces appear in Wace, or indeed in Geoffrey, but which he was certainly in a very

favourable position to obtain for himself. Layamon, therefore, not only confirms Geoffrey in some points, but it is clear, that, professing to follow Wace, he had independent access to the great body of Welsh literature then current. Sir F. Madden has put this matter very clearly, in his recent edition of Layamon. The Abbé de la Rue, also, was of opinion that Gaimar, an Anglo-Norman, in the reign of Stephen, usually regarded as a translator of Geoffrey of Monmouth, had access to a Welsh independent authority.

In addition to these, is to be mentioned the English version of Sir Tristrem, which Sir Walter Scott considered to be derived from a distinct Celtic source, and not, like the later Amadis, Palmerin, and Lord Berners's Canon of Romance, imported into English literature by translation from the French. For the Aunts of Arthur, recently published by the Camden Society, their Editor, Mr. Robson, seems to hint at a similar claim.

Here then are various known channels, by which portions of Welsh and Armorican fiction crossed the Celtic border, and gave rise to the more ornate, and widely-spread romance of the Age of Chivalry. It is not improbable that there may have existed many others. It appears then that a large portion of the stocks of Mediæval Romance proceeded from Wales. We have next to see in what condition they are still found in that country.

That Wales possessed an ancient literature, containing various lyric compositions, and certain triads, in which are arranged historical facts or moral aphorisms, has been shown by Sharon Turner, who has established the high antiquity of many of these compositions.

The more strictly Romantic Literature of Wales has been less fortunate, though not less deserving of critical attention. Small portions only of it have hitherto appeared in



print, the remainder being still hidden in the obscurity of ancient Manuscripts: of these the chief is supposed to be the Red Book of Hergest, now in the Library of Jesus College, Oxford, and of the fourteenth century. This contains, besides poems, the prose romances known as Mabinogion. The Black Book of Caermarthen, preserved at Hengwrt, and considered not to be of later date than the twelfth century, is said to contain poems only.<sup>1</sup>

The Mabinogion, however, though thus early recorded in the Welsh tongue, are in their existing form by no means wholly Welsh. They are of two tolerably distinct classes. Of these, the older contains few allusions to Norman customs, manners, arts, arms, and luxuries. The other, and less ancient, are full of such allusions, and of ecclesiastical terms. Both classes, no doubt, are equally of Welsh root, but the former are not more overlaid or corrupted, than might have been expected, from the communication that so early took place between the Normans and the Welsh; whereas the latter probably migrated from Wales, and were brought back and re-translated after an absence of centuries, with a load of Norman additions. Kilhwch and Olwen, and the dream of Rhonabwy, may be cited as examples of the older and purer class; the Lady of the Fountain, Peredur, and Geraint ab Erbin, of the later, or decorated.

Besides these, indeed, there are a few tales, as Amlyn and Amic, Sir Bevis of Hamtoun, the Seven Wise Masters, and the story of Charlemagne, so obviously of foreign extraction, and of late introduction into Wales, not presenting even a Welsh name, or allusion, and of such very slender intrinsic merit, that although comprised in the Llyvr Coch, they have not a shadow of claim to form part of the Canon of Welsh Romance. Therefore, although I have



translated and examined them, I have given them no place in these volumes.

There is one argument in favour of the high antiquity in Wales of many of the Mabinogion, which deserves to be mentioned here. This argument is founded on the topography of the country. It is found that Saxon names of places are very frequently definitions of the nature of the locality to which they are attached, as Clifton, Deepden, Bridge-ford, Thorpe, Ham, Wick, and the like; whereas those of Wales are more frequently commemorative of some event, real or supposed, said to have happened on or near the spot, or bearing allusion to some person renowned in the story of the country or district. Such are "Llyn y Morwynion," the Lake of the Maidens; "Rhyd y Bedd," the Ford of the Grave; "Bryn Cyfergyr," the Hill of Assault; and so on. But as these names could not have preceded the events to which they refer, the events themselves must be not unfrequently as old as the early settlement in the country. And as some of these events and fictions are the subjects of, and are explained by, existing Welsh legends, it follows that the legends must be, in some shape or other, of very remote antiquity. It will be observed that this argument supports *remote* antiquity only for such legends as are connected with the greater topographical features, as mountains, lakes, rivers, seas, which must have been named at an early period in the inhabitation of the country by man. But there exist, also, legends connected with the lesser features, as pools, hills, detached rocks, caves, fords, and the like, places not necessarily named by the earlier settlers, but the names of which are, nevertheless, probably very old, since the words of which they are composed are in many cases not retained in the colloquial tongue, in which they must once have been included, and are in some

instances lost from the language altogether, so much so as to be only partially explicable even by scholars. The argument applies likewise, in their degree, to camps, barrows, and other artificial earth-works.

Conclusions thus drawn, when established, rest upon a very firm basis. They depend upon the number and appositeness of the facts, and it would be very interesting to pursue this branch of evidence in detail. In following up this idea, the names to be sought for might thus be classed:—

I. Names of the great features, involving proper names and actions.

Cadair Idris and Cadair Arthur both involve more than a mere name. Idris and Arthur must have been invested with heroic qualifications to have been placed in such “seats.”

II. Names of lesser features, as “Bryn y Saeth,” Hill of the Dart; “Llyn Llyngclys,” Lake of the Engulphed Court; “Ceven y Bedd,” the Ridge of the Grave; “Rhyd y Saeson,” the Saxons’ Ford.

III. Names of mixed natural and artificial objects, as “Coeten Arthur,” Arthur’s Coit; “Cerrig y Drudion,” the Crag of the Heroes; which involve actions. And such as embody proper names only, as “Cerrig Howell,” the Crag of Howell; “Caer Arianrod,” the Camp of Arianrod; “Bron Goronwy,” the Breast (of the Hill) of Goronwy; “Castell mab Wynion,” the Castle of the son of Wynion; “Nant Gwrtheyrn,” the Rill of Vortigern.

The selection of names would demand much care and discretion. The translations should be indisputable, and, where known, the connexion of a name with a legend should be noted. Such a name as “Mochdrev,” Swine-town, would be valueless unless accompanied by a legend.

It is always valuable to find a place or work called after an individual, because it may help to support some tradition

of his existence or his actions. But it is requisite that care be taken not to push the etymological dissection too far. Thus, "Caer Arianrod" should be taken simply as the "Camp of Arianrod," and not rendered the "Camp of the silver circle," because the latter, though it might possibly have something to do with the reason for which the name was borne by Arianrod herself, had clearly no reference to its application to her camp.

It appears to me, then, looking back upon what has been advanced:—

I. That we have throughout Europe, at an early period, a great body of literature, known as Mediæval Romance, which, amidst much that is wholly of Teutonic origin and character, includes certain well-marked traces of an older Celtic nucleus.

II. Proceeding backwards in time, we find these romances, their ornaments falling away at each step, existing towards the twelfth century, of simpler structure, and with less encumbered Celtic features, in the works of Wace, and other Bards of the Langue d'Oil.

III. We find that Geoffrey of Monmouth, Layamon, and other early British and Anglo-Saxon historians, and minstrels, on the one hand, transmitted to Europe the rudiments of its after romance, much of which, on the other hand, they drew from Wales.

IV. Crossing into Wales we find, in the Mabinogion, the evident counterpart of the Celtic portion of the continental romance, mixed up, indeed, with various reflex additions from beyond the border, but still containing ample internal evidence of a Welsh original.

V. Looking at the connexion between divers of the more ancient Mabinogion, and the topographical nomenclature of part of the country, we find evidence of the great, though

indefinite, antiquity of these tales, and of an origin, which, if not indigenous, is certainly derived from no European nation.

It was with a general belief in some of these conclusions, that I commenced my labours, and I end them with my impressions strongly confirmed. The subject is one not unworthy of the talents of a Llwyd or a Prichard. It might, I think, be shown, by pursuing the inquiry, that the Cymric nation is not only, as Dr. Prichard has proved it to be, an early offshoot of the Indo-European family, and a people of unmixed descent, but that when driven out of their conquests by the later nations, the names and exploits of their heroes, and the compositions of their bards, spread far and wide among the invaders, and affected intimately their tastes and literature for many centuries, and that it has strong claims to be considered the cradle of European Romance.

C. E. G.

*Dowlais, August 29th, 1848.*

# The Lady of the Fountain

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King Arthur was at Caerlleon upon Usk; and one day he sat in his chamber; and with him were Owain the son of Urien, and Kynon the son of Clydno, and Kai the son of Kyner; and Gwenhwyvar and her handmaidens at needlework 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 honour, 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-coloured 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. And Kynon the son of Clydno asked Kai for that which Arthur had promised them. "I, too, will have the good tale which he promised to me," said Kai. "Nay," answered Kynon, "fairer will it be for thee to fulfill Arthur's behest, in the first place, and then we will tell thee the best tale that we know." So Kai 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 armour; 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 wouldest 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-

favoured; 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 everything 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 can 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, 'Oh, 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 armour, 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 endeavour 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 awhile.”

“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 armour, 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 daggars 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 rose 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, head-piece 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 succour 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 colours; 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 Owain water to wash. Then she placed before him a silver table, inlaid with gold; upon which was a cloth of yellow linen; and she brought him food. And of a truth, Owain had never seen any kind of meat that was not there in abundance, but it was better cooked there than he had ever found it in any other place. Nor did he ever see so excellent a display of meat and drink, as there. And there was not one vessel from which he was served, that was not of gold or of silver. And Owain ate and drank, until late in the afternoon, when lo, they heard a mighty clamour in the Castle; and Owain asked the maiden what that outcry was. "They are administering extreme unction," said she, "to the Nobleman who owns the Castle." And Owain went to sleep.

The couch which the maiden had prepared for him was meet for Arthur himself; it was of scarlet, and fur, and satin, and sendal, and fine linen. In the middle of the night they heard a woful outcry. "What outcry again is this?" said Owain. "The Nobleman who owned the Castle is now dead," said the maiden. And a little after daybreak, they heard an exceeding loud clamour and wailing. And Owain asked the

maiden what was the cause of it. "They are bearing to the church the body of the Nobleman who owned the Castle."

And Owain rose up, and clothed himself, and opened a window of the chamber, and looked towards the Castle; and he could see neither the bounds, nor the extent of the hosts that filled the streets. And they were fully armed; and a vast number of women were with them, both on horseback and on foot; and all the ecclesiastics in the city, singing. And it seemed to Owain that the sky resounded with the vehemence of their cries, and with the noise of the trumpets, and with the singing of the ecclesiastics. In the midst of the throng, he beheld the bier, over which was a veil of white linen; and wax tapers were burning beside and around it, and none that supported the bier was lower in rank than a powerful Baron.

Never did Owain see an assemblage so gorgeous with satin, and silk, and sendal. And following the train, he beheld a lady with yellow hair falling over her shoulders, and stained with blood; and about her a dress of yellow satin, which was torn. Upon her feet were shoes of variegated leather. And it was a marvel that the ends of her fingers were not bruised, from the violence with which she smote her hands together. Truly she would have been the fairest lady Owain ever saw, had she been in her usual guise. And her cry was louder than the shout of the men, or the clamour of the trumpets. No sooner had he beheld the lady, than he became inflamed with her love, so that it took entire possession of him.

Then he inquired of the maiden who the lady was. "Heaven knows," replied the maiden, "she may be said to be the fairest, and the most chaste, and the most liberal, and the wisest, and the most noble of women. And she is my mistress; and she is called the Countess of the Fountain,

the wife of him whom thou didst slay yesterday." "Verily," said Owain, "she is the woman that I love best." "Verily," said the maiden, "she shall also love thee not a little."

And with that the maid arose, and kindled a fire, and filled a pot with water, and placed it to warm; and she brought a towel of white linen, and placed it around Owain's neck; and she took a goblet of ivory, and a silver basin, and filled them with warm water, wherewith she washed Owain's head. Then she opened a wooden casket, and drew forth a razor, whose haft was of ivory, and upon which were two rivets of gold. And she shaved his beard, and she dried his head, and his throat, with the towel. Then she rose up from before Owain, and brought him to eat. And truly Owain had never so good a meal, nor was he ever so well served.

When he had finished his repast, the maiden arranged his couch. "Come here," said she, "and sleep, and I will go and woo for thee." And Owain went to sleep, and the maiden shut the door of the chamber after her, and went towards the Castle. When she came there, she found nothing but mourning, and sorrow; and the Countess in her chamber could not bear the sight of any one through grief. Luned came and saluted her, but the Countess answered her not. And the maiden bent down towards her, and said, "What aileth thee, that thou answerest no one to-day?" "Luned," said the Countess, "what change hath befallen thee, that thou hast not come to visit me in my grief? It was wrong in thee, and I having made thee rich; it was wrong in thee that thou didst not come to see me in my distress. That was wrong in thee." "Truly," said Luned, "I thought thy good sense was greater than I find it to be. Is it well for thee to mourn after that good man, or for anything else, that thou canst not have?" "I declare to heaven," said the Countess, "that in the whole world there is not a man equal to him."

“Not so,” said Luned, “for an ugly man would be as good as, or better than he.” “I declare to heaven,” said the Countess, “that were it not repugnant to me to cause to be put to death one whom I have brought up, I would have thee executed, for making such a comparison to me. As it is, I will banish thee.” “I am glad,” said Luned, “that thou hast no other cause to do so, than that I would have been of service to thee where thou didst not know what was to thine advantage. And henceforth evil betide whichever of us shall make the first advance towards reconciliation to the other; whether I should seek an invitation from thee, or thou of thine own accord shouldst send to invite me.”

With that Luned went forth: and the Countess arose and followed her to the door of the chamber, and began coughing loudly. And when Luned looked back, the Countess beckoned to her; and she returned to the Countess. “In truth,” said the Countess, “evil is thy disposition; but if thou knowest what is to my advantage, declare it to me.” “I will do so,” quoth she.

“Thou knowest that except by warfare and arms it is impossible for thee to preserve thy possessions; delay not, therefore, to seek some one who can defend them.” “And how can I do that?” said the Countess. “I will tell thee,” said Luned. “Unless thou canst defend the fountain, thou canst not maintain thy dominions; and no one can defend the fountain, except it be a knight of Arthur’s household; and I will go to Arthur’s Court, and ill betide me, if I return thence without a warrior who can guard the fountain as well as, or even better than, he who defended it formerly.” “That will be hard to perform,” said the Countess. “Go, however, and make proof of that which thou hast promised.”

Luned set out, under the pretence of going to Arthur’s Court; but she went back to the chamber where she had left

Owain; and she tarried there with him as long as it might have taken her to have travelled to the Court of King Arthur. And at the end of that time, she apparelled herself and went to visit the Countess. And the Countess was much rejoiced when she saw her, and inquired what news she brought from the Court. "I bring thee the best of news," said Luned, "for I have compassed the object of my mission. When wilt thou, that I should present to thee the chieftain who has come with me hither?" "Bring him here to visit me tomorrow, at mid-day," said the Countess, "and I will cause the town to be assembled by that time."

And Luned returned home. And the next day, at noon, Owain arrayed himself in a coat, and a surcoat, and a mantle of yellow satin, upon which was a broad band of gold lace; and on his feet were high shoes of variegated leather, which were fastened by golden clasps, in the form of lions. And they proceeded to the chamber of the Countess.

Right glad was the Countess of their coming, and she gazed steadfastly upon Owain, and said, "Luned, this knight has not the look of a traveller." "What harm is there in that, lady?" said Luned. "I am certain," said the Countess, "that no other man than this chased the soul from the body of my lord." "So much the better for thee, lady," said Luned, "for had he not been stronger than thy lord he could not have deprived him of life. There is no remedy for that which is past, be it as it may." "Go back to thine abode," said the Countess, "and I will take counsel."

The next day the Countess caused all her subjects to assemble, and showed them that her earldom was left defenceless, and that it could not be protected but with horse and arms, and military skill. "Therefore," said she, "this is what I offer for your choice: either let one of you

take me, or give your consent for me to take a husband from elsewhere to defend my dominions.”

So they came to the determination that it was better that she should have permission to marry some one from elsewhere; and, thereupon, she sent for the bishops and archbishops to celebrate her nuptials with Owain. And the men of the earldom did Owain homage.

And Owain defended the Fountain with lance and sword. And this is the manner in which he defended it: Whensoever a knight came there he overthrew him, and sold him for his full worth, and what he thus gained he divided among his barons and his knights; and no man in the whole world could be more beloved than he was by his subjects. And it was thus for the space of three years.

It befell that as Gwalchmai went forth one day with King Arthur, he perceived him to be very sad and sorrowful. And Gwalchmai was much grieved to see Arthur in this state; and he questioned him, saying, “Oh, my lord! what has befallen thee?” “In sooth, Gwalchmai,” said Arthur, “I am grieved concerning Owain, whom I have lost these three years, and I shall certainly die if the fourth year passes without my seeing him. Now I am sure, that it is through the tale which Kynon the son of Clydno related, that I have lost Owain.” “There is no need for thee,” said Gwalchmai, “to summon to arms thy whole dominions on this account, for thou thyself and the men of thy household will be able to avenge Owain, if he be slain; or to set him free, if he be in prison; and, if alive, to bring him back with thee.” And it was settled according to what Gwalchmai had said.

Then Arthur and the men of his household prepared to go and seek Owain, and their number was three thousand, besides their attendants. And Kynon the son of Clydno acted as their guide. And Arthur came to the Castle where Kynon



had been before, and when he came there the youths were shooting in the same place, and the yellow man was standing hard by. When the yellow man saw Arthur he greeted him, and invited him to the Castle; and Arthur accepted his invitation, and they entered the Castle together. And great as was the number of his retinue, their presence was scarcely observed in the Castle, so vast was its extent. And the maidens rose up to wait on them, and the service of the maidens appeared to them all to excel any attendance they had ever met with; and even the pages who had charge of the horses were no worse served, that night, than Arthur himself would have been in his own palace.

The next morning Arthur set out thence, with Kynon for his guide, and came to the place where the black man was. And the stature of the black man was more surprising to Arthur than it had been represented to him. And they came to the top of the wooded steep, and traversed the valley till they reached the green tree, where they saw the fountain, and the bowl, and the slab. And upon that, Kai came to Arthur and spoke to him. "My lord," said he, "I know the meaning of all this, and my request is, that thou wilt permit me to throw the water on the slab, and to receive the first adventure that may befall." And Arthur gave him leave.

Then Kai threw a bowlful of water upon the slab, and immediately there came the thunder, and after the thunder the shower. And such a thunderstorm they had never known before, and many of the attendants who were in Arthur's train were killed by the shower. After the shower had ceased the sky became clear; and on looking at the tree they beheld it completely leafless. Then the birds descended upon the tree, and the song of the birds was far sweeter than any strain they had ever heard before. Then they