

YVAIN
OR THE KNIGHT OF THE LION



CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES

A Translation into English by

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POETRY IN TRANSLATION

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ABOUT THIS WORK

Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian Romances, written in the late 12th-century, provide a vital link between the Classical Roman poets, Ovid in particular, and the later medieval world of Dante and Chaucer. The five major verse tales, namely *Érec and Énide* (c1170), *Cligès* (c1176), *Yvain or the Knight of the Lion* (before 1181) *Lancelot or the Knight of the Cart* (before 1181), and *Perceval* (before 1190), introduce motifs and plot elements that recur frequently in later literature. Well-structured, lively, and witty the tales were written for a sophisticated courtly audience, and the five stories considered together gave expression to the reality and the deeper ideals of French chivalry. Chrétien appears to have used themes culled from French and British sources, while characters such as Lancelot, and features such as the Holy Grail appear for the first time in European literature in his work. Here translated in rhyming couplets to mirror the original, rather than in unrepresentative prose, is a fresh treatment of one of France's and Europe's major poets.



LINES 1-174 CALOGRENANT IS URGED TO RECITE A TALE,
AT ARTHUR'S COURT

ARTHUR of Britain, that true king
Whose worth declares: in everything
Be brave, and courteous, always,
Held royal court, on that feast-day
Of the descent of the Holy Ghost,
That is known to us as Pentecost.
The king was at Carduel in Wales;
After dinner, amid their wassails,
The noble knights took themselves
To wherever the fair damsels,
And fine ladies summoned them.
Some told stories to amuse them,
While others there spoke of Amor,
Of all the anguish and dolour,
And of the great joys, accorded
To the followers of his order,
To which, once rich and strong,
So few disciples now belong
That the order is nigh disgraced,
And Amor himself much abased.
For, once, those lovers among us
Deserved to be called courteous,
Brave, generous and honourable.
But now all that is turned to fable.
Those who know naught of it, say I,
Claim they love, but in that they lie;
True love seems fable to those I cite,
Who boast of love but lack the right.
Yet, to talk of those who once were,

Leave those to whom I now refer;
For worth more is dead courtesy,
To my mind, than live villainy.
Thus I take joy, now, in relating
Things indeed worth the hearing,
About that king of such great fame
That near and far they speak his name,
And, I concur here with the Bretons,
Shall do, as long as worth lives on;
And, through them, we remember,
His worthy knights who forever
Did labour in the court of love.
Yet, that day, wonderment moved
Them, at his rising from among them,
And some were troubled among them,
And on the subject spoke full more,
Since none had e'er seen him before
In mid-feast his apartments enter,
To rest or to sleep in his chamber.
But on this day, upon some whim,
The queen, it seems, detained him,
And he remained so long by her
He forgot himself in slumber.
Now, outside the chamber door,
Were Dodinel and Sagremor,
And there was my lord Gawain,
And nearby my lord Yvain,
And with them Calogrenant,
A handsome knight and elegant,
Who did, with a tale, a hearing claim,
One not to his honour, but his shame.
And as he commenced the story,
The Queen heard him and swiftly
Rising from beside the king, she
Came upon them all so secretly

That before ever she was seen
 She was amongst them, I ween;
 Calogrenant, but none other,
 Rose to his feet to greet her.
 Then Kay, who was divisive,
 Deadly, sharp, and abrasive,
 Cried: 'By God, Calogrenant
 I see you now, bold and gallant;
 Indeed, it greatly pleases me
 To see you outdo us in courtesy,
 And seek to show your excellence,
 Since you possess so little sense.
 Of course my lady will agree
 You exceed us all, as we see,
 In boldness, and in courtesy.
 Through boldness, mayhap did we
 Or sloth, fail to rise; or again
 'Twas that we did not so deign?
 In God's name, sir, twas not so
 But because we did not know
 My lady was here till you rose.'
 'Truly, Kay, I must suppose,
 On my honour,' said the Queen,
 That you are so full of spleen
 You would burst if you could not
 Pour out the venom that is your lot.
 You're a tiresome rascal, that I know,
 To scorn all your companions so.'
 'Lady, 'said Kay, 'if we gain naught
 Then indeed, let us not lose aught,
 By your presence; I have not said
 Aught of which I now stand in dread.
 I beg you to speak no more of this.
 Neither courtesy nor sense, I wist,
 Lies in chasing after vain dispute.

Let us not then maintain pursuit,
Nor any here advance the matter.
But demand you the tale, rather,
So as to quell all such nonsense,
That he was ready to commence.’
At these words, Calogrenant
Prepared to render his account:
‘Sir,’ he said, ‘I care but little
To pursue any such quarrel,
Little it is, and small the prize;
If it pleases you so to despise,
That will never do harm to me.
You have troubled, frequently,
Better and wiser men than I,
My Lord Kay, and them defy,
For such is your custom, I think;
The midden, it will ever stink,
Horseflies bite, and bees buzz,
And so doth a bore torment us.
But I’ll not now begin my story
With due leave from my lady,
For I beg her to ask no more,
Nor this thing that I now abhor
Demand of me, in her mercy.’
‘All those who are here, my lady,’
Said Kay, ‘shall be in your debt,
Who willingly would hear it yet;
But do not ask this thing for me:
By the faith you owe the king, he
Who is your sovereign and mine,
Demand this, for ’twould be fine.’
‘Calogrenant,’ declared the Queen,
‘Ignore all that’s unfair and mean
In this Sir Kay, our Seneschal;
His custom is to speak ill of all,
And not to punish him is best;

I command you, and I request
 You bear no anger in your heart
 Nor for him cease your fair art,
 A thing we would like to hear.
 If you desire my favour here,
 Begin again, and from the start.
 'Lady, it will break my heart
 To do as you order me to do;
 This eye of mine I'd rather lose
 Than tell more of my tale today,
 If I did not seek your ire to allay;
 So I will do what you ask of me
 However much it may grieve me.
 Who's pleased to do so, then, attend!
 Your heart and ears to me now lend,
 For soon it is forgot, the word,
 If by the heart it is not heard.
 There are those who all they hear
 Understand not, though they hear;
 They listen with the ears alone,
 While the heart is like a stone.
 On their ears the words do fall
 Like the wind that blows on all,
 Yet never for a moment stays
 And in an instant speeds away,
 Unless the heart is wide awake
 And the meaning thus doth take;
 For it may seize it when it comes
 And capture it and give it room.
 The ears are the path whereby
 A voice may enter, by and by,
 And the heart within the breast
 Seize the voice the ears accept.
 Now who wishes to hear me
 Must lend heart and ears to me,
 For I shall not serve you a dream,
 A fable, or some lying scheme,

As many another man would do,
But speak of what I know is true.'

**LINES 175-268 CALOGRENANT TELLS OF HOW
HE CAME TO A WOODEN TOWER**

IT chanced that seven years ago,
A lonely traveller on the road,
I was in search of fresh adventure,
Casting my net all at a venture,
Fully-armed, as the truest knight;
And came to a track on my right
Leading into the dense woodland.
The path was bad; on every hand,
Heged about with thorns and briars.
What trouble it was, and pain entire,
That woodland track, iniquitous!
And for nearly a whole day thus,
I rode along, as best I could,
Till at last I issued from the wood;
That was in Broceliande.
From the forest onto open land
I came, and saw a wooden tower
A Welsh league away, no more,
And a moat, below its palisade,
Deep and wide, that round it lay.
And on the bridge above it stood
The lord of all this tower of wood,
With a moulted falcon at his wrist.
No sooner had I reached its midst,
And saluted him, than he did lend
Me his aid, and helped me descend.
I descended; I could not deny

I would need shelter by and by.
 And he declared to me, at once,
 More than seven times, if once,
 That truly blessed was the way
 By which I had come that day.
 We passed beyond the bridge and gate
 Into the inner courtyard straight.
 Midst the court of this kind vavasor,
 To whom God owes joy and honour
 For all on me he bestowed that night,
 Hung a gong, and with never a sight
 Of iron or wood, for this I thought:
 All of copper the gong was wrought.
 And three times then did the master
 Strike at the gong with a hammer
 He had hung on a post nearby;
 And those who were waiting nigh
 High in the tower, heard the sound,
 And soon descended to the ground
 And came out into the yard below.
 Some attended my horse, I trow,
 Which the master was holding;
 While I saw, towards me, coming
 A right fair and noble maiden.
 And saw, as she came nearer, then,
 That she was tall, and slim, and true.
 And skilled with my armour too;
 She removed it swiftly and well,
 And wrapped me in a fine mantle,
 Green stuff with peacock feathers.
 We were abandoned by the others,
 She and I were left alone, quite,
 None remaining, to my delight,
 For I sought no more than her.
 And she led me to sit with her,

In the sweetest mead to be found
And ringed by a wall all round,
There I found her so educated,
So well-spoken and cultivated,
Of such manner and character,
I was delighted to sojourn there,
Never wishing to part from her,
Nor evermore be obliged to stir.
But twilight came eventually,
And my host came seeking me,
Since it was the hour for dinner,
Which meant I could not linger,
So I followed him right away.
Of the dinner I'll briefly say
That all was as I could wish it,
For the fair maid came to sit
Opposite where I was sitting.
After supper, we were talking;
My host confessed it must be
Who knows how long since he
Had welcomed a knight errant,
And one upon adventure bent,
To whom he'd shelter offered.
After which he then requested,
That as a favour, I promise him
On my return, to lodge with him.
And I replied: 'Willingly, sir,'
Thinking it shameful to demur.

LINES 269-580 CALOGRENANT'S ADVENTURE IN THE WOOD

NOW I was well lodged that night
And saw, with the morning light,

My steed all saddled, for the way,
 As I had sought the previous day,
 When we had ended our supper.
 My kind host, and his fair daughter,
 To the Holy Spirit I commended,
 Took my leave with none offended,
 And departed swiftly as I could.
 I'd not gone far, through the wood,
 When I came upon, in a clearing,
 Some savage bulls, freely roaming,
 And sparring, among themselves,
 With such loud roaring that I fell
 Back a little from them, in fear,
 For no beast fiercer doth appear,
 Nor is more dangerous, than a bull.
 A fellow, black as mulberry, full
 Hideous, massive beyond measure,
 And as thoroughly ugly a creature,
 More so than words could express,
 I beheld, on a stump, seated at rest,
 A mighty club gripped in his hand.
 I then approached the fellow, and
 Perceived that his head was bigger
 Than a horse, or any other creature;
 His brow below black tufts of hair,
 For more than two spans, was bare;
 His ears were mossy and full large,
 Like an elephant's as it doth charge;
 His eyebrows thick, his face flat,
 With owl's eyes, nose like a cat,
 And jaws like to a wolf, split so,
 Teeth, a wild boar's sharp and yellow;
 Beard black and tangled, as for the rest,
 His chin seemed merged with his chest,
 His backbone long, hunched, twisted.

Propped on his club, he sat and rested,
Dressed in a mighty strange garment
Neither of wool nor of linen blent,
But of two bull or ox hides made,
Hung round his neck, newly flayed.
When toward him I made my way,
The fellow leapt up straight away
Seeing me there, nearing slowly,
I knew not if he would strike me,
Nor whether he'd offer offence,
But I was readying my defence
When I saw him take his stand
On a tree-trunk close at hand,
Straight and tall, and motionless,
Seventeen feet; not a fraction less.
He gazed; never a word did yield,
No more than a beast of the field,
And I assumed he lacked reason,
And could not utter like a man.
Nevertheless I ventured boldly,
Saying to him: 'Come now, tell me
Whether thou art truly human!'
And he replied: 'I am a man.'
'What kind of man? 'Such as you see;
I am no more than I seem to be.'
'And what dost thou here; aught good?'
'I guard the cattle in this wood.'
'How, by Saint Peter of Rome?
Unless these cattle, as they roam,
Understand human speech, I know
In a wood you'll not guard them so.'
'I guard them so well and rightly,
They will scarcely stray from me.'
'How is that? Come tell me true.'
'When they see me come in view

They will not dare to move a yard.
 For whenever I grip one hard
 I give its horns such a wrench
 The others from fear do blench,
 For my grip is harsh and strong;
 Then all around me they throng
 As if they were crying mercy:
 And none can do this but me,
 For if it were another instead,
 Once among them, he'd be dead.
 So I am master of these beasts,
 And now you must tell me at least
 What you are and what you seek.'
 'I am,' said I, 'a knight, and seek
 A thing I cannot find, God wot;
 Long have sought it but found it not.'
 'And what is this you seek, say I?'
 'An adventure, to prove thereby
 My prowess, and my bravery.
 And now I request of you, tell me,
 If you know, give me true counsel,
 Of some adventure, or some marvel.'
 'Of that,' said he, 'you may report
 That of adventure I know naught,
 Nor have I e'er heard tell of any.
 But if you'd wish to go and see
 Some way from here, a fountain,
 Your return will cost you pain,
 If you fail to respect its power.
 Close by you'll find at any hour
 A path to lead you there, I say:
 Follow it true, on that true way,
 If you'd employ your steps aright,
 Or else you may end in sad plight;
 For, there, full many a path uncoils.

There lies the fountain that boils
Yet colder than marble is maybe.
'Tis shaded by the loveliest tree
That ever was formed by Nature,
And its leaves they last forever,
Never lost in the harshest winter.
An iron basin hangs there ever,
Attached it is to so long a chain
That it will reach to the fountain.
A stone you'll find, beside this spring
Such as you'll see but, here's the thing,
I cannot tell you what, I ween,
For it's like I have never seen.
On the other side stands a chapel,
Though small 'tis very beautiful.
From the basin take some water,
On the stone the droplets scatter,
Then comes a tempest in the sky,
And every creature hence will fly,
Each stag and doe, fawn and boar,
And not a bird will linger more;
For you will see such lightning fall
Such gales that roar among it all,
That if you turn, and so depart,
If you can that is, by whatever art,
Without great trouble and mischance,
You will be better served, perchance,
Than any knight ever was yet.'
I left the fellow, and soon was set
Upon the path that he did show.
Tierce was almost past, I know,
And it was near to noon, maybe,
When I saw the chapel and the tree.
That tree standing there, tis true,
Was the loveliest pine that grew,

Ever, upon this earth of ours.
Never was there so dense a shower
That even a drop of rain could pass,
Within; all fell without, en masse.
From a branch hung a basin of gold,
Made of the purest metal sold
In any marketplace anywhere;
While the fountain I saw there
Like boiling water it seethed;
The stone was emerald, I believe,
Pierced like a cask all through,
With four rubies beneath it too,
More radiant and a deeper red
Than the sun risen from its bed
And lighting all the eastern sky;
For, know that I would never lie
To you, or speak a word untrue.
The marvel now I wished to view
Of the tempest, and the gales,
Not wise to all that it entailed,
But would have repented though,
Gladly, if I could have done so,
Hearing the pierced stone stir
With the fall of the basin's water.
But I poured too much, I deem,
For straight I saw the heavens teem.
From far more than fourteen sides,
Blinding my eyes, the lightning rides,
And the clouds let fall, pell-mell,
Rain and hail, and snow as well.
It was so heavy, blew so strong
That I was almost dead and gone,
For the lightning struck all about,
And mighty trees were rooted out.
Know that it did me much dismay,

Until the clouds were snatched away.
For God then showed me such grace
That the tempest vanished apace,
And all the storm winds fell silent,
Not daring to counter God's intent.
On seeing the air clear and bright
I was filled again with delight,
For joy, as I have noted often,
Causes all pain to be forgotten.
As soon as the storm had passed,
I saw so many birds amassed,
Believe it or not, on the pine,
Not a branch there, thick or fine,
That was not cloaked with birds,
Such that the tree proved lovelier.
For all the birds sang in that tree
So as to meld in harmony,
Yet each was singing its own song,
So that I heard not a single one
Sing the song that another sung.
And I felt joy, their joy among,
Listening to them all sing anew
Until their orisons were through.
I never heard such joyousness,
No other ear could be so blessed
Unless it too were there to hear
What did so please and endear
That in true rapture I was lost.
I stayed thus till I heard a host
Of knights, as it seemed to me,
Full ten at least, approaching me,
Yet all that great noise was made,
By one knight entering the glade.
When I saw that he came alone
On his steed, I caught my own,

And mounted it without delay,
 While he still pursued his way
 With ill intent, as an eagle flies,
 And fierce as a lion, to my eyes.
 From as far off as I could hear
 His challenge floated to my ear,
 Crying: 'Vassal, you bring me
 Shame and harm, with no enmity
 Between us; if you would fight
 You should challenge me of right,
 Or seek the aid of justice before.
 Upon my life, you declare war.
 But, Sir Vassal, it is my intent
 That on you falls the punishment
 For all the harm that you dispense;
 And around me lies the evidence,
 Of my woods, and of their ruin.
 His the complaint who falls victim;
 And I have reason to complain
 For with lightning, wind and rain,
 You have driven me from my home.
 You bring ruin, and you alone,
 Cursed be he who thinks it well,
 Upon my woods, and my castle.
 You but now made such an attack
 That no aid is of use to me, alack,
 Men, nor arms, nor defensive wall,
 No safety is here for a man at all
 Whatever fortress may be his home
 Whether of wood or solid stone.
 From now on, 'tis war without cease
 Between us, neither truce nor peace.'
 At these words we rushed together,
 While each one himself did cover,
 Both grasping our shields full tight.
 His steed was fitting for a knight,

His lance true; he, without doubt,
Was a head taller, or thereabout.
Mine then the risk, being smaller
Since he was so much the taller,
And his horse stronger than mine.
Amidst the truth, I know that I'm
But seeking to hide my shame.
The strongest blow I can claim,
I dealt him, giving of my best,
On the top of his shield, I attest,
And struck home with such force,
My lance shattered in its course.
His lance as yet remained whole,
And a heavier and longer pole
Than his lance was, I know not,
For no knight's lance, God wot,
Not one, so massive, have I seen.
And the knight then struck at me
So hard he knocked me from my steed,
Over the crupper I flew, indeed,
And landed flat upon the ground;
He left me ashamed, I am bound
To say, and without another glance,
Took my horse, and off did prance,
Returning by the way he came:
And I, who scarcely knew my name,
Was left there, in anguished thought.
The fountain's brink then I sought,
And sat me there awhile, to rest.
As for the knight, I thought it best
Not to pursue him, for fear lest I
Commit some folly by and by.
Besides I knew not where he'd gone.
In the end, my thoughts dwelt on
The promise to my host I'd made
To return to his house in the glade.

As the thought pleased me, so I did.
 But of my armour myself I rid,
 So as to walk more easily,
 And thus returned, shamefacedly.
 When I came to my host's door
 I found my host was as before,
 Full of the same delight and joy,
 That he did previously employ.
 I observed not one thing, either
 From himself or from his daughter,
 To say they welcomed me less,
 And the same honour, I confess,
 Showed me as the previous night.
 And I give thanks, as is but right,
 For the honour all did me there.
 And, as far as they were aware,
 None before had escaped that strife,
 But he who went there lost his life,
 In that place, from which I came,
 Or was taken captive in that same.
 So I went, and so returned,
 With the fool's reward I earned.
 Now have I told you of my shame,
 Nor wish to speak of it again.'

LINES 581-648 YVAIN TAKES UP THE CHALLENGE

'BY my head', said my Lord Yvain,
 'You are my own cousin-germane,
 And we should love each other well,
 Yet I find you foolish not to tell
 Me of all this matter long ago.
 If I have called you foolish though

I pray that you'll take no offence,
For, if I win leave, I'll go thence,
And take revenge for your shame.'
'This is but an after-dinner game,'
Said Kay, who never went unheard.
'In a wine-jug there are more words,
Than in a whole barrel of beer.
The cat that's fed is full of cheer;
After dinner, and without stirring,
Every one of you would be fighting,
Wreaking vengeance on Nur ad-Din!
Are your saddle-bags full within,
And your greaves of steel shining,
And your banners yet unwinding?
Leave you tonight, in God's name,
Or is it tomorrow, my Lord Yvain?
Tell us now; let us know, dear sir,
When do you go to act the martyr?
We would wish to convey you there.
Never a provost who, in this affair,
Would not, willingly, escort you.
But whate'er may occur, I beg you,
Don't go without taking leave of us.
And if tonight some ominous
Dream you dream, then, do stay!
'The Devil take you, my Lord Kay,'
The Queen cried, 'must your tongue
Forever be running on and on?
Let that tongue of yours be cursed
That forever must speak the worst!
For sure, your tongue does you no
Good, or even worse, in doing so.
All say who hear that tongue of yours:
"That's the tongue that ever more
Goes speaking ill, may it be damned!"
Your tongue utters ill of every man;

It makes you disliked everywhere.
 No greater traitor to you is there
 Than it, and know, if it were mine
 I would it to some prison consign,
 Any man who can't be reformed
 To divine justice should conform,
 And be treated as one proven mad.'
 'Certain, my lady, never his bad
 Or sad jests anger me,' said Yvain,
 'Wit, wisdom, and worth, he claims,
 Such that in any court, Lord Kay
 Will ne'er be mute, but have his say.
 For he can reply with courtesy
 And good sense to every villainy,
 And never has done otherwise.
 Tell me if what I speak are lies.
 But I have no care to squabble
 Or begin some foolish quarrel.
 He does not always win the fight
 Who at first doth show his might,
 But he who his revenge savours.
 He should rather fight a stranger
 Who would his companions stir.
 I would not seem like some cur,
 That growls and bites, on whim,
 Because some other yaps at him.'

LINES 649-722 YVAIN DETERMINES TO ADVENTURE ALONE

WHILE they thus talked together,
 The king emerged from his chamber
 Where he'd been awhile dormant,
 Sleeping deeply, till this moment.

As soon as the knights saw him,
They leapt to their feet to greet him,
Though he told them to be seated.
He sat by the queen, who greeted
Him with Calogrenant's story,
Which she retold from memory
Recounting it all, word for word,
Skilled in retelling tales she heard.
The king, who listened willingly,
By his father's soul swore three
Great oaths; by Uther Pendragon's
That is, his mother's, and his son's,
That he would go see this fountain,
Before the next fortnight was done,
The storm and all the marvels there,
On St John the Baptist's eve, where
He intended then to spend the night,
And that any of them who might
Wish to view the chapel as well,
Could journey with him to that dell.
Now all the court approved the plan;
The lords and bachelors to a man
Wished to be party to the visit,
Since the king desired to see it.
But whoever was thus delighted
Yet my Lord Yvain felt slighted,
For he had thought to go alone.
He, grieving, to himself made moan,
Now that the king himself would go.
For this, especially, grieved also
That he knew well the encounter
Would fall to my Lord Kay rather
Than him, should Kay so request;
For the king would elect the best;
Or even to my Lord Gawain

Who, perchance, would first lay claim.
A request from either of those two
The king indeed could ne'er refuse;
Yet he would not wait to see,
Not requiring their company,
For to go alone was all his wish
Whether to his joy, or his anguish.
And, whoever might stay behind,
The third day himself would find
In Broceliande, and if he could
He'd seek and take, in that wood,
The narrow path, the harsh way
To the strong castle in the glade,
And find the gentle maiden there
Who was so charming and fair,
And at her side her worthy sire,
Who to grant honour did desire,
Being so true, and well-meaning.
And then the bulls in the clearing,
He'd see, and that giant fellow,
Guarding them; he longed to know
That fellow who was so hefty,
So vast, misshapen, and ugly,
Black as a smith; then he would
Come to the stone, if he but could,
And to the basin, and the fountain,
The tree of birds, and rouse the rain,
And cause the great winds to blow.
But of his purpose none must know,
For of his plan he'd make no boast,
Until from it he received the most
It might grant, of shame or honour;
Only then be it known to others.

LINES 723-746 YVAIN DEPARTS THE COURT SECRETLY

YVAIN from the court was gone
Without encountering anyone,
Then strode to his lodging house,
And his whole household roused,
Ordering them to saddle his steed.
Then a squire, privy to his needs,
He summoned up, immediately.
'Come now,' he said, 'follow me,
To the yard, and bring my armour;
I'll leave through that gate yonder,
On the palfrey, but have far to travel,
So ride my charger I've had saddled,
And then do you bring him after me,
Thus you can return on the palfrey.
But take good care, I now command,
When any my whereabouts demand,
That you offer them no news of me.
If you do, be sure, of a certainty,
You will have of me nothing good.
'Sire,' said he, 'twill be as it should,
And none will learn aught from me.
Lead on, I'll follow your palfrey!'

**LINES 747-906 YVAIN REPEATS THE ADVENTURE
AND THE FIGHT**

MY Lord Yvain mounts; his plan
 To avenge the shame, if he but can
 Ere he returns, his cousin garnered.
 The squire runs to collect the armour,
 The steed, and is mounted straight,
 For his master will no longer wait;
 Nor doth he lack spare shoes and nails.
 Then he follows his master's trail,
 Until he sees him about to descend,
 And waiting for him, at the bend
 Of a track, far from the road, apart.
 His arms and armour he doth cart
 To his master, and so equips him.
 My Lord Yvain now dismissed him,
 And, once armed, made no delay,
 But swiftly journeyed on each day;
 Among the hills and dales did ride,
 Through the forests deep and wide,
 Places savage and most strange,
 Many a wilderness did range,
 Past many a peril, many a narrow,
 Till the true path he found to follow,
 Full of briars, and many a shadow;
 But, once assured of the way to go,
 Knowing he'd not wander astray,
 He forged ahead along the way,
 Nor would he halt until he gained
 The pine that shaded the fountain
 And saw the stone, knew the gale,

With all its thunder rain and hail.
That night, as you might know,
He had good lodging, though.
And greater grace and honour,
In his host, did he discover
Than he'd garnered from the story,
And a hundred times more beauty
Sense and charm in the maid,
Than Calogrenant had conveyed;
For one cannot rehearse the sum
Of what man or maid may become,
When either is intent on virtue;
And I could ne'er express to you
Nor could the tongue e'er relate
All the honour their deeds create.
My Lord Yvain found, that night,
Good lodging, much to his delight.
Moreover when the next day came
He saw the bulls and the villain,
Who showed him the path to take.
The sign of the cross he did make
A hundred times, viewing that monster,
Marvelling how Nature ever
Had made so ugly a person.
Then made his way to the fountain,
And saw all he had wished to see.
Without resting for a moment, he
Poured the basinful of water
Over the stone; from every quarter
The wind blew, down fell the rain,
As that tempest was roused again.
And when God calmed what stirred,
All the pine was covered with birds,
And sang with joy full marvellous,
Above the fountain perilous.



'The knight arrived through the trees'
The Book of Romance (p168, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

Before their joyful song had ceased
The knight arrived through the trees,
Ablaze like a fiery log, with anger,
As if chasing a lusty stag, but louder.
Then they charged, and clashed together,
While the signs, as each struck the other,
Of mortal hatred, they betrayed.
Each gripped a lance, stoutly made,
And did with blows the other assail
Piercing both shield and mail,
While the lances no better did fare
Scattering splinters through the air.
Then each the other doth assault
Attacking fiercely with the sword,
As the blades, in their swordplay,
Cut both their shield-straps away,
Slicing the shields, as they defend
From side to side, and end to end,
Till in the pieces, hanging down,
No useful cover can be found,
For they are now so torn by all
The blows, the bright blades fall
Upon their arms, along their sides,
Across the hips, and more besides.
Perilous now seems their attack,
But neither of them draws back,
Unyielding as two blocks of stone.
Never was such a battle known,
Each intent on the other's death,
Seeking to waste nor blow nor breath,
But still strike out, as best they may.
On their helmets the blows they lay
Dent the metal, likewise their mail,
The hot blood's drawn without fail,
And while the mail coats grow hot,
The defence they offer them is not

Much more help to them than cloth.
 A lunge at the face reveals their wrath.
 Wondrous it was, so fierce and strong
 Their blows, the fight could last so long.
 But both men were of such great heart
 That neither of them would, for aught,
 To the other yield a foot of ground,
 Till he had dealt him a mortal wound.
 Yet both from this did honour obtain:
 They did not try, nor would they deign
 To harm their mounts, in any way,
 Yet remained astride them alway;
 Not attacking their horses ever,
 With feet planted on earth never;
 Which rendered their conflict finer.
 At last, my Lord Yvain did hammer
 At the knight's helmet so fiercely,
 The blow stunned the knight wholly,
 Such that he fainted right away,
 He never having, until that day,
 Felt such a blow; his skull split
 With the tremendous force of it.
 And now the outflow from it stains
 His bright mail with blood and brains;
 And he with such pain doth meet,
 His heart almost neglects to beat.
 He fled then, gasping for breath,
 Being nigh wounded to death,
 Such that he lacked all defence.
 With that thought he rode hence,
 Towards his castle, at full speed;
 Its drawbridge is lowered at need,
 Its entrance gate is opened wide.
 Meanwhile my Lord Yvain doth ride,
 Spurring his steed on, in his train;



*'The blow stunned the knight wholly,
such that he fainted right away'*

The Book of Romance (p194, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

As a gerfalcon stoops on a crane,
 Seeing it afar, then drawing near,
 Seeking to seize, yet forced to veer,
 Thus doth Yvain his victim chase,
 So near he has him in his embrace;
 Yet cannot quite achieve his prey,
 Though so close he hears him pray
 And groan aloud in his distress,
 Yet ever onwards seeks to press,
 While Yvain pursues amain
 Yet fears his effort will be in vain,
 Unless he takes him alive or dead,
 While the words run in his head
 My Lord Kay spoke in mockery;
 Of his pledge he is not yet free,
 The promise made to his cousin,
 Nor will they believe his win,
 If no proof of it he can show.
 The knight leads him onward though
 From the drawbridge to the gate;
 Both enter, neither dare hesitate;
 No man or woman do they meet
 As they go swiftly down the street,
 Till both together terminate
 Their ride before the palace gate.

LINES 907-1054 YVAIN IS TRAPPED IN THE KNIGHT'S PALACE

THIS palace gate was high and wide,
 Yet the way proved so narrow inside
 That two knights astride their steeds
 Could not ride there, abreast, indeed
 Without encumbrance and great ill,

Nor two men pass each other at will.
This entrance way so narrow it was
A crossbow bolt could scarcely pass.
The gateway could be closed tight
By a mechanism, upon the knight,
With a blade above ready to fall
If but a lever were touched at all;
Beneath the way two levers set
Connected with a portcullis let
Into the stone, its sharpened teeth
Ready to mangle a man beneath;
If he to the lever weight did lend,
Then the portcullis would descend,
And capture or crush with a blow
Whoever was present there below.
And within this narrowest compass,
Lay the path that they must pass,
As a man pursues the beaten trail.
Along this straight and narrow vale,
Rode the knight most knowingly,
And Lord Yvain, most foolishly,
Hurtled after him at full speed,
So closely on his heels indeed
At the gate he seized him behind,
And was most fortunate to find
That bent forward, thus extended,
When the portcullis descended,
He escaped being cut in two,
His horse's rear legs, on cue,
On the hidden levers treading,
While the iron spikes falling,
Hellish devils, in their course
Struck the saddle and the horse
Behind, severing them cleanly;
But scarce harming, God a mercy,

My Lord Yvain, grazed slightly
 Where it touched his back lightly,
 Though it severed both his spurs
 Behind the heel, the tale avers.
 As unhorsed, he fell, dismayed,
 The other, wounded by his blade,
 Escaped him in this manner;
 Far ahead there was another
 Gate, like the one left behind;
 This gate the knight did find
 Open for him, by this he fled,
 After which it fell, like lead.
 So my Lord Yvain was caught,
 Greatly troubled and distraught,
 Enclosed there, within this vale
 Close studded with gilded nails,
 Its stone walls all painted over
 With fine work in precious colours.
 But nothing gave him such pain
 As not knowing where his bane,
 The wounded knight, had gone.
 The door of a chamber shone
 In the wall of the narrow way,
 As he stood there in dismay;
 Through it, there came a maid,
 Who beauty and charm displayed,
 Closing it after her again.
 When she saw my Lord Yvain
 She was also dismayed at first:
 'Surely, sir knight, this is the worst
 Time' she said, 'to enter here.
 If any other should appear
 You will be done to death,
 For my lord breathes his last breath,
 And you it is that wrought the deed.

My lady is filled with grief, indeed
And all her people round her cry,
Of sorrow and anger like to die,
They know you are prisoned here
But their sorrow so great appears,
They cannot deal with you as yet.
If they'd hang you by the neck
They'll be scarcely like to fail,
When these narrows they assail.'
And my Lord Yvain replied,
'They could never if they tried
Take or kill me, if God so will.'
'No,' she cried, 'for I have still
The power to protect you here.
He's no man who shows his fear;
So I take you to be full brave
Seeing that you are not dismayed.
And rest assured that I will do
All I can to serve and honour you,
As you would do the same for me.
To the royal court, my lady
Sent me once to carry a message;
I suppose I was not of an age
To be as practised in courtesy
As a maiden at court should be;
But never a knight took the care
To say a single word to me there,
Except for one, now standing here;
But out of kindness to a mere
Maid, you did me honour and service;
And, for your fair honour, in this
Place you shall now win your reward.
I know the name that they accord
To you, for I recognise you again,
You are the son of King Urien,

And go by the name of Yvain,
 And you may be sure and certain,
 That if you listen to my advice
 You'll ne'er be caught in their vice.
 So take now this ring from me,
 And return it later, if you please,
 Once I shall have delivered you.'
 She added further fair words too,
 As she handed him the ring:
 It would conceal him, this thing
 As sapwood by the bark of a tree
 Is hidden away, so none can see.
 But the ring must be worn aright,
 So the stone was hid from sight,
 For if the stone was so turned
 He need have no more concern.
 Even among his enemies
 He need not fear their enmity,
 For with the ring on his finger
 None there would see him linger
 However sharp their eye might be,
 Any more than the inner tree,
 Hid by the bark, showed plain.
 All this pleased my Lord Yvain.
 When her advice was complete,
 She led him to a niche, its seat
 Covered with a quilt more fair
 Than had the Duke of Austria;
 There she said that if he wished
 To dine, she'd bring him a dish
 Or two, he accepting her offer.
 She sped quickly to her chamber,
 And returned as swift as thought,
 And a roasted fowl she brought,
 And a cake and a napkin appear,

And wine then of a vintage year,
A full jar, capped by a drinking cup,
And last she invited him to sup.
And he who was in need of food,
Ate and drank, and found it good.

LINES 1055-1172 YVAIN IS RENDERED INVISIBLE BY THE RING

BY the time he'd finished eating,
The people within were stirring,
Searching for the knight, for they
Wished to avenge their lord that day,
Whom they'd laid now on his bier.
The maid said to him: 'Do you hear,
My friend, all now come seeking you;
And a great noise and stir doth brew;
But no matter who comes and goes,
Move you not, nor the noise oppose,
For they will never find you, sir,
If from this seat you do not stir;
Soon you will see this place full
Of angry and ill-disposed people,
Who will expect to find you here.
This very way they'll bring the bier
To bury his body on this day;
And they will begin to assay
The paving, walls, and this seat.
Such will prove a joy complete
To a knight who lacks all fear,
Watching them, searching near,
Yet blindly and in vain always,
So discomfited, and all astray,
They'll be awash with anger.

But here I can stay no longer,
 Thus I'll seek no more to say,
 But thank God who, this very day
 Has brought me to the only place
 Where I might serve your grace,
 As I so greatly wished to do.⁷
 Then the maid vanished from view.
 Even before she turned away,
 The host were all making their way,
 From beyond the gates, toward
 The place, gripping club and sword;
 Nearer and neared they pressed,
 Hostile and angry in their quest,
 And found the rear of his steed
 Beyond the portcullis. Indeed
 They also thought now to find
 With the gate full open, confined
 Within, the murderer they sought.
 And so they lifted that iron port,
 Which had brought a sudden end
 To the lives of a vast host of men;
 And as the levers were now unset,
 There remained no obstacle as yet,
 So they passed the gate two abreast.
 There they discovered all the rest
 Of Yvain's charger that had died,
 But never a searching eye espied
 My Lord Yvain, silent and still,
 Whom they gladly sought to kill.
 Yet he could see them, in their rage,
 Besides themselves, all engaged
 In calling out: 'How can this be?
 Not one opening can we see,
 By which a living being might
 Flee, larger than a bird in flight,

A squirrel, marmot or another
Kind of similar small creature.
The gate's a grid of iron bars,
And descended, where we are,
As soon as the master passed by.
Dead or alive, the man is nigh,
Since there's no sign of him outside.
More than half of his saddle lies
Here within, as we all can see,
But nothing of the man, yet he
Has left these mangled spurs behind,
Sheared at the heel, for us to find.
Come, all this talking is in vain,
Let us look everywhere again,
He must be here still, I believe,
Or we by enchantment deceived,
Or evil spirits whisked him away.'
Thus in a rage they make survey,
Seeking him all about the place.
About the stone walls they race,
Looking on and under the seats.
And yet my Lord Yvain's retreat
Remained free of all their blows,
Thus he remained unbeaten, though,
They thrashed around sufficiently,
And made as much noise as can be,
Laying about them with their clubs,
As a blind man pounds on his tub
Unable to see all the things inside.
As they were hunting, far and wide
And under the seats, uselessly
There entered the loveliest lady,
That any mortal man hath seen.
So fair a Christian dame, I mean,
Has ne'er been spoken of, although

She was nigh mad with sorrow,
 As if seeking the means to die.
 And suddenly she gave a cry,
 So loud no cry could be louder,
 Then fell forward with a shudder,
 And when roused from her faint,
 Like a madwoman made plaint,
 Clawing her face in deep despair
 And tearing fiercely at her hair;
 She tore at her hair and her clothes,
 And, at every step, fell then rose.
 Nor was there any comfort here,
 Forced to view her husband's bier
 Carried before her, and him dead,
 She could no more be comforted;
 Thus she cried loudly for her loss.
 The holy water and the cross
 And the tapers before him went,
 Borne by nuns from the convent,
 And the missal and the censers,
 And the priests to mutter there
 The absolution of the dead,
 At the poor soul's feet and head.

LINES 1173-1342 THE DEAD KNIGHT'S WOUNDS BLEED

MY Lord Yvain heard the cries
 Of a sorrow none could realise
 In words nor could e'er describe
 To see penned by some scribe.
 Thus the sad procession passed,
 But a large crowd were massed
 In the space around the bier,

For warm crimson blood appeared
Trickling from the dead man's wounds;
Thus the note of justice sounds,
Declaring present, without fail,
One whose actions had entailed
The dead man's death and defeat.
Thus, with their quest incomplete,
They searched again and again,
Till all of them were weary, drained
By all of this trouble and toil
Created by their fresh turmoil,
On seeing the warm crimson blood,
That from the corpse did flood.
And my Lord Yvain, he too
Was well-nigh beaten black and blue,
Yet did not stir, while the crowd
All took to wondering aloud
As to why those drops were shed,
That blood that trickled from the dead,
For they'd found naught, and cried:
'The murderer is still here, inside,
And yet no sign of him we see,
Here, then, is some strange devilry.'
At this the lady felt such pain
She fell in deathly faint again,
Then, as if she'd lost her mind,
Cried: God, why cannot they find
My good lord's killer, that traitor,
That vicious unknown murderer?
Good? The best of all good men!
I know none other I may blame,
For God, yours will be the fault,
If you let such escape this vault,
For you are hiding him from view.
Aught so strange none ever knew,

Nor such a wrong as you do me,
 In not permitting me to see
 One who must be lurking here.
 Well may I say, if he is near,
 That some phantom from hell,
 Among us, has cast its spell.
 A dire enemy of some kind.
 He's a coward, to my mind,
 And great cowardice he shows,
 For cowardice we must suppose
 In one so fearful of appearing.
 A phantom is a cowardly thing.
 Yet why so cowardly towards me,
 When with my lord you made free?
 A vain thing, and an empty thing,
 Why are you not a captive being?
 Why can I not grasp you now?
 And how could it be, I trow,
 That you could kill my lord
 Unless treachery were abroad?
 I doubt my lord would e'er have been
 Defeated, if your face he'd seen.
 Nor God nor man has met, I know,
 His like, or could his equal show,
 In this world now; if you indeed
 Were mortal, both in form and deed,
 With my lord you'd ne'er have dared
 To fight, for none with him compared.'
 Thus with herself she doth debate,
 Thus she struggles with her fate,
 Thus she exhausts herself anon,
 And the people with her move on,
 Showing the great grief felt by all,
 As they bear the corpse to its burial.
 After their efforts the crowd now rest,

Exhausted by their fruitless quest,
And leave off, in their weariness,
A search that brought no success,
In finding the miscreant, at least.
And now the nuns and the priests,
Having ended the funeral service,
All leave the church, and with this
Are on their way to the sepulchre.
But to all this not a moment's care
Doth the maid in the chamber give;
My Lord Yvain her thoughts are with;
And swiftly she runs to him now
And says: 'Fair sir, all that crowd,
Searching for you, are now at rest,
Having raised no small tempest,
And nosed about in every corner,
More closely than a setter ever
Searched for a partridge or a quail;
Fear then was yours, without fail.'
'By my faith,' said he, 'you say true.
I never felt such fear; but a view,
Through some opening, would I
Willingly have as it goes by,
If such were possible of course,
Of the procession and the corpse.'
Yet he's no interest to mention
In the corpse or the procession,
He'd gladly see them go up in sparks,
And happily pay a thousand marks.
A thousand marks? By God, three!
He speaks of them, but tis the lady,
That's where his true interest lies.
The maiden lets him feast his eyes,
He, from a little window, gazing,
She, as best she can, repaying

Him for his display of honour.
 From this window down upon her,
 The lady that is, my Lord Yvain
 Spies, as she cries aloud, in pain:
 ‘On your soul may God have mercy,
 My fair lord, for none did see
 A knight there in the saddle who,
 In any manner, equalled you.
 My dear lord, there was no other
 Who might rival you in honour,
 In courtesy, or chivalry;
 Your friend was generosity,
 And courage your companion.
 So may your soul now make one
 Among the saints, my fair sire!
 And then she tore at her attire
 And all she laid her hands upon.
 A hard thing when said and done
 It was then for my Lord Yvain
 Not to run, and her hands restrain.
 But the maiden at first requested,
 Then begged and, finally, insisted,
 Though courteously and with grace,
 That he not, rashly, show his face;
 ‘Here, all is well,’ said the maiden,
 ‘So move you not, for any reason,
 Till all their sorrow has abated.
 And all the turmoil they created,
 For presently they will depart.
 If you take my advice to heart,
 And can restrain yourself, I say,
 Good things may come your way.
 Tis best if you are seated here,
 And watch those who may appear,
 As they pass, whom you can view,

While they can see naught of you,
In that there is great advantage.
But take care to commit no outrage,
For he who fails in self-restraint,
And gives good reason for complaint,
When tis neither the time nor place,
Folly, not courage, doth embrace.
Take care that your foolish thought
To foolish deeds doth ne'er resort.
The wise their foolish thoughts do hide,
And see their wiser thoughts applied.
So take care not to risk your head,
But dwell among the wise instead.
Your head will ne'er win a ransom;
Let self be your consideration,
And from all my good counsel learn;
Rest quietly here, till I return,
For I must now join the throng,
I have lingered here too long,
And I fear they must suspect me
If they now should fail to see me
Mingling there with all the rest,
And it would harm me, I confess.'

**LINES 1343-1506 YVAIN FALLS IN LOVE WITH
THE DEAD KNIGHT'S LADY**

SHE then departs, while he remains
With naught to show for all his pains.
He's loath to see the corpse interred,
When he has naught but his own word
As evidence to prove aright
That he subdued and slew the knight,

Lacking a witness or guarantor
 He can present on reaching court.
 'I'll meet with scorn and mockery,
 For Kay is spiteful, and fell is he,
 Full of quips, scattered at whim;
 I shall ne'er have peace from him.
 He'll be forever laughing at me,
 With his taunts and his mockery,
 Just as he did the other day.'
 For the taunts from my Lord Kay
 Still have power to wound his heart.
 But Love a fresh quarry doth start;
 Wild in the chase, Love hunts anew,
 Stirring Yvain through and through,
 And seizes on the prey wholly,
 His heart snatched by his enemy.
 He loves her who hates him most.
 And the lady has avenged the loss
 Of her lord, though unknowingly,
 A vengeance far greater than she
 Could ever have wrought unless
 Love helped her to her success,
 Who took him softly, by surprise,
 The heart struck through the eyes,
 A wound that longer doth endure
 Than any dealt by lance or sword.
 A sword-cut is soon made sound
 Once a physician treats the wound,
 But love's wound is worse I fear
 Whene'er the physician is near.
 Such the wound of my Lord Yvain,
 Of which he'll ne'er be healed again,
 For Love now is ensconced within.
 All those places he once dwelt in,
 Love abandons, and lives there,

Nor lodging nor host doth prefer
Above this one, and is most wise
To leave the hovel where he lies,
And not some other lodging seek,
Who often haunts dire hostelries.
Shame it is that Love doth such,
And seeks vile places overmuch,
Conducts himself in so ill a manner
Choosing places lacking honour,
Ever the lowliest ones, to rest,
Just as readily as the best.
But here he is most welcome, for
He will be shown great honour;
In such a place tis well to stay.
Love should always act this way,
Who is of so noble a nature
That it is strange such a creature
Will lie where shame is, and harm.
He is like one who spreads his balm
Over the embers, amongst the ash,
Hates honour, and loves the brash,
Blending sugar with agrimony,
Mixing acrid soot with honey.
Yet this time he hath not done so
But lodged nobly, here where no
Man can reproach him, instead.
When they have buried the dead,
The crowd of people go their way.
And not a clerk or sergeant stays
Nor any lady, but only she,
Who doth not hide her misery.
But she alone remains behind,
Wrings her hands, un-resigned,
Clutches her throat, beats her palms,
Or from her psalter reads a psalm,

A psalter illumined in gold.
 All the while Yvain doth hold
 His position, and gazes at her,
 And the more that he regards her
 The more he loves her, in delight.
 He only wishes that she might
 Cease her weeping, leave her book,
 And yield him but a word or look.
 Love has brought about this longing
 There, at the window, Love found him.
 Yet of his wish he now despairs,
 For he neither thinks, nor dares
 To hope, it can be realised,
 And says: 'A fool I am, unwise
 To wish for that which cannot be;
 Her lord met his death through me,
 And yet I'd see us reconciled!
 By God, I know less than a child,
 If I know not she hates me now
 More than anything; yet, I trow,
 That I say 'now' shows wisdom,
 For though she has good reason
 A woman is of more than one mind,
 And her mood now I hope to find
 Altered, and alter it will, I'll dare
 To say, so I'd be mad to despair;
 And may God grant it alters soon,
 Since to be her slave I'm doomed
 Always, for such is Love's desire.
 Whoever's heart does not beat higher
 When Love appears to him, then he
 Commits a treason and felony.
 I say to him, and let all men hear,
 That he deserves no joy or cheer.
 And yet of that say naught to me,

Since I must love my enemy,
As indeed I must hate her not
Or to betray Love were my lot;
I must love as he doth intend.
Should she then call me friend?
Yes, truly, for her love I'd claim.
And I thus call myself the same,
Though she hate me, as of right,
Since I killed her beloved knight.
Must I then prove her enemy?
No, her friend, of a certainty,
For I ne'er wished so for love, I own;
At her lovely tresses, I make moan;
Brighter than gold shines each tress;
I fill with anguish and distress,
Seeing her at those tresses tear;
And none can staunch the tears there;
The tears that from her eyes do flow.
And all these things distress me so!
Although they are filled with tears,
Of which an endless stream appears,
Never were eyes so beautiful,
And her tears render my eyes full;
Nor aught causes me such distress
As her face, that her nails address;
Such treatment it has not merited;
I ne'er saw a face so finely tinted,
So fresh, or so delicately formed.
It pierces my heart to see it harmed.
And how she clutches at her throat!
Surely she does to herself the most
Hurt that any poor woman could do,
And yet no crystal or glass, tis true,
Is as smooth, or e'er as lovely,
As her throat, in all its beauty.

God! Why must she wound herself so?
 Wring her hands, and deal fresh blows
 To her breast thus, and scar her body?
 Would she not be a wonder to see,
 If she was filled with happiness,
 When she is so lovely in distress?
 Yes, in truth, for I would swear,
 That never has Nature anywhere
 So outdone her own art, for she
 Has passed beyond the boundary
 Of aught, I think, she ever wrought.
 How could such beauty be sought?
 Its presence here, how understand?
 God made her, with His naked hand,
 That Nature might look on amazed.
 For all her effort she would waste,
 Wishing to forge her likeness here,
 Since she could ne'er create her peer.
 Not God Himself, were he to try,
 Could know, tis my belief say I,
 How to create her likeness again,
 Whatever heights He might attain.'

LINES 1507-1588 THE MAIDEN PLANS TO FREE YVAIN

THUS my Lord Yvain spied upon
 She whom grief had nigh undone;
 Nor may it ever again occur
 That some man held prisoner,
 Should love in so strange a manner,
 That he is unable to speak to her
 On his own behalf or another do so.
 So he watched there, at the window,

Until he saw the lady depart,
While the others, for their part,
Lowered the twin portcullises.
Another might have felt distress,
One who preferred deliverance,
To long imprisonment, perchance,
But he was otherwise disposed,
Careless of gates, open or closed.
He'd not have departed, certainly,
If the passage had been left free,
Unless she'd granted him leave,
And her pardon he'd received,
Freely, for the death of her lord;
Then indeed he might go abroad,
Whom Honour and Shame detain,
On either hand him to arraign.
For he would be ashamed to leave,
Since none at court would believe
All the outcome of his adventure.
And in addition there was the lure
Of a further sighting of the lady.
If that were granted, and that only!
So captivity gives him scant concern.
He would rather die there than return.
But now the maiden doth reappear,
Wishing to offer him good cheer,
And company, and provide solace,
And fetch and carry to that place
Whatever was needful he desired.
But she found him pensive, tired
By a longing that caused him pain,
And said to him: 'My Lord Yvain,
How has it gone with you this day?'
'I spent the time in a pleasant way.'
'Pleasant? How can that be true?'

How may one hunted, such as you,
 Spend his time thus, pleasantly,
 Unless his death he desires to see?
 ‘Surely,’ he said, ‘my sweet friend,
 I have no desire to meet my end,
 What I saw has pleased me though,
 And, God’s my witness, still does so,
 And will please me, I know, forever.’
 ‘Now you may leave all that bother,’
 She said: ‘For indeed I know well
 Where such words lead; let me tell
 You now, I’m no foolish innocent,
 Ignorant of what those words meant.
 But you come along now, with me,
 For I shall find a way, presently,
 To release you from this prison.
 You shall soon have your freedom.’
 And he replied: ‘Be certain I
 Will not depart, though here I die,
 Like a vile thief and in secret.
 When all the people are met,
 In the narrow way outside,
 Then I can go, and need not hide,
 Rather than leave here secretly.’
 After these words then doth he
 Follow her to the little chamber.
 And the maiden, kindly as ever,
 Seeking to serve, doth dispense
 All there, for his convenience,
 Everything that he might need.
 And, as she does, reflects indeed,
 On all that he had told her before,
 All his delight with what he saw,
 When they sought for him outside,
 Intent on ensuring that he died.

LINES 1589-1652 THE MAIDEN SEEKS TO ADVISE THE LADY

THE maid was in such good standing
With the lady that there was nothing
She could not say to her, without
Regard to how it might turn out,
For she was her close companion.
Why then not give of her opinion,
In order to bring comfort to her,
If it might redound to her honour?
At first she says to her, privately:
'My lady, it is a wonder to me
To see you so wild with grief.
'Tis surely not, lady, your belief
You'll recover your lord by sighs?'
'No, I wished rather,' she replies,
'To die thus, of grief and sorrow '
'But why?' 'So that I might follow.'
'Follow? Why may God defend you,
And as fine a lord yet send you
As is consistent with His might.'
'What mischief is this you cite?
He could not send me one so fine.'
'A finer, if you'll make him thine,
He shall send you, as I will prove.'
'Be gone, there is none so, to love.'
'Such there is, if you wish, today.
For tell me now, if you can say,
Who it is will defend your land
When King Arthur is at hand,
Who in a week we'll see riding
To the stone beside the spring?

You have warning of his intent,
 For the Demoiselle Sauvage sent
 Letters to you, to that effect;
 Firm action now will you reject!
 You should be taking counsel how
 You might defend your fountain now.
 And yet your tears you will not stay!
 Now you ought not to delay,
 For all the knights you can show
 Are worth less, as well you know,
 Than a solitary chambermaid:
 If it please you, my lady,' says the maid,
 'The best of them will never wield
 To any purpose a lance or shield.
 Of cowards you have many here,
 Who are scarce brave enough I fear
 Even to dare to mount a horse;
 And the king comes in such force
 He will seize all, and none defend.'
 The lady knows it, and doth attend,
 Aware that this counsel is sincere,
 But to a foolishness doth adhere,
 That is present in other women,
 And seen in almost all of them,
 Who of folly themselves accuse,
 And what they truly wish, refuse.
 'Be gone,' she said, 'Spare me pain!
 If I hear you speak of this again,
 You will suffer, except you flee,
 So greatly your words weary me.'
 'Well, God be praised, then, Madame,
 Tis plain that you are a woman;
 Who is angered if she hears
 Good advice, when such appears.'

LINES 1653-1726 THE MAIDEN PROMOTES YVAIN'S INTERESTS

THEN the maiden went her way,
With the lady, having had her say,
Thinking she might be in error:
Wishing she could know moreover,
How, in truth, the maiden might
Show there lived a better knight
Than her lord had proved to be.
She'd listen now, and willingly,
But had forbidden her to speak,
No more advice could she seek,
Until the maid appeared again,
Whom no stricture could contain,
For she ran on in like manner:
'Oh my lady must you rather
Choose then to die of grief?
From modesty, tis my belief
And shame you should desist,
For tis not seemly, in the least,
To lament your lord so long.
Remember to whom you belong,
Your people and your noble birth,
Think you all virtue and all worth
Have died together with your lord?
There are a hundred knights abroad,
As good or better, this day, say I.'
'God confound you, if you lie!
Come name me but a single one
Thought to be as fine a man,
As my lord was all his days.'
'If I were to sound the praise

Of such a one, you'd be angry,
 And in less esteem hold me.'
 'I assure you, truly, I will not.'
 'Then may it brighten your lot,
 And good come to you always,
 That you let me sound his praise;
 May God incline to your wish!
 I see no reason to hide all this,
 For not a soul's listening to us.
 Doubtless I may appear audacious,
 But I will say how it seems to me:
 Now when two knights, in chivalry,
 Meet together, armed for the fight,
 Whom do you think the better knight,
 Should the one defeat the other?
 As for me, I'd honour the victor
 With the prize. Whom would you?'
 'It seems what you have in view
 Is to entrap me with your words.'
 'By my faith, truth will be heard,
 And my words shall prove true,
 For, indeed, I shall prove to you
 That much the better man is he
 Who slew your lord than was he:
 He undid your lord, then pursued
 Him furiously, and what ensued
 Was that he was then imprisoned.'
 'Now, hear the word of unreason,'
 Cried the lady, 'the wildest ever.
 Be gone, ill spirit, and forever.
 Be gone, you foolish, tiresome girl.
 Never such vain invective hurl,
 Nor show yourself here, again,
 Or speak out in defence of him.'
 'Indeed, my lady, I well knew

I should earn no thanks from you.
And I said as much ere I began.
Yet you declared, for so it ran,
That you would reveal no anger,
Nor think the less of me, ever.
Badly your promise you keep;
For your anger I surely reap,
And all your ire on me is spent,
Who lose, in failing to be silent.'

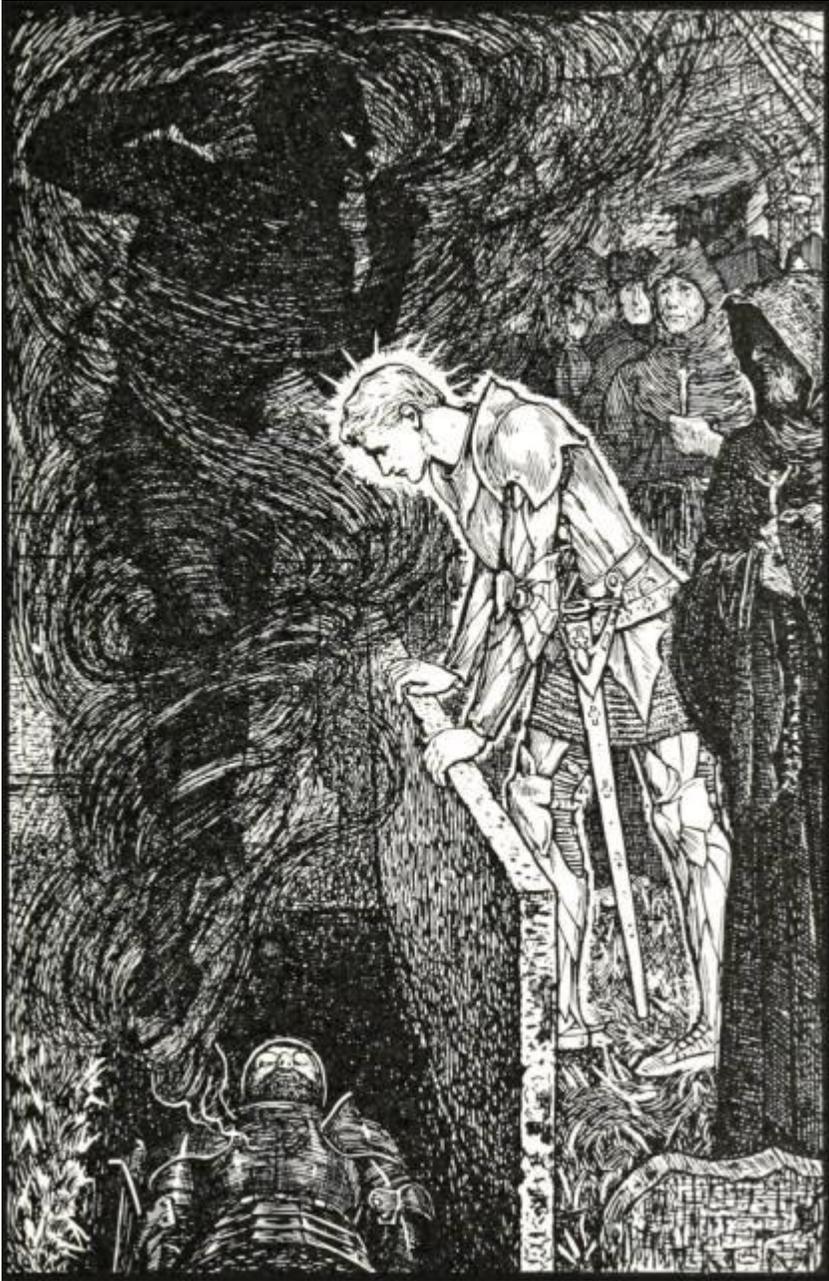
**LINES 1727-1942 THE LADY SENDS FOR YVAIN
THINKING HIM AT COURT**

THEN she returns to that chamber
Where my Lord Yvain awaits her,
Which has concealed him with ease.
But to him naught now doth please,
For the lady he can no longer see.
He hears not, and pays no heed,
To the news that the maiden tells.
And, all night, the lady as well
Is in a like state of distress,
Thinking, in her unhappiness,
Of how to defend the fountain,
And repenting of her action
In blaming the maiden who
She had treated harshly too,
For she is now perfectly sure
That never, for any reward
Nor for any love she bore him,
Would the maid have spoken of him;
And that she loves her lady more,
Nor would bring her shame, or

Annoy, or ill advice intend.
 For she is too much her friend.
 Thus the lady is quite altered,
 And as for her she has insulted,
 She fears the maid will never
 With a true devotion love her;
 And he whom she denied, she
 Now pardons, and most sincerely,
 And with right, and with reason,
 For he has done her no wrong.
 Thus she argues as if he were
 Now standing there before her;
 Yet with herself debates, say I:
 ‘Come,’ she says, ‘can you deny,
 That tis through you my lord died?
 ‘That,’ says he, ‘I’ve ne’er denied,
 And yes, I slew him.’ ‘Why? Tell me,
 Was this thing done to injure me,
 Out of hatred perhaps, or spite?’
 ‘May death hound me without respite,
 If I’ve done aught to injure you.’
 ‘Then you’ve done me no wrong, tis true,
 Nor him, for to slay you he would
 Have sought, and done so if he could.
 As regards this, it seems, sir knight,
 I judged well, and have judged aright.’
 So she proves that her own opinion
 Shows sense, and justice, and reason:
 And to hate him would not be wise;
 Thus what she wishes she justifies,
 And lights a fire within by the same
 Means which, like a bush when flame
 Is set beneath it, smokes on and on
 Till stirred a little or breathed upon.
 If the maiden came to her now,

She'd win the argument, I trow,
For which reproach she'd earned,
And by it had been badly burned.
And return she did, with the day,
Commencing again, in a like way,
From the point she had reached;
Again, to the lady, she preached,
Who knew she had acted wrongly
In attacking the maid so strongly.
Now she wished to make amends
And asked, now they were friends,
His name, nature, and ancestry,
Wise now in her humility,
Saying: 'I would cry you mercy,
In that I spoke so foolishly,
And hurt you, scorning, in my pride,
Advice that must not be denied.
But tell me now, all you know
Of the knight whom you have so
Praised to me, for I beg of thee,
What man is he, of what family?
If he is of such who might attain
Me, then the lord of my domain
I shall make him, I promise you,
If he, that is, will wed me too.
But he must act in such a way
None can reproach me and say:
'There, is a lady who has wed
One by whom her lord is dead.'
'In God's name, lady, so will he;
This knight is of high nobility,
More so than any, in the bible,
That issued from the line of Abel.
'How is he named?' 'My Lord Yvain.'
'By my faith, he is no mere thane,

But, as I know, is of noblemen,
 If he's the son of King Urien.'
 'Indeed, my lady, you speak true.'
 'And when shall we see him too?'
 'In five days' time.' 'Tis too long,
 I wish he were already among
 Us, say tomorrow, or tonight.'
 'Lady, not even a bird in flight
 Could fly so far in a single day,
 But I'll send a squire without delay,
 One who shall travel right swiftly,
 And by tomorrow night may be
 Arrived at King Arthur's court;
 At least, my lady, tis my thought
 That is the place where he will be.'
 'This is too slow, it seems to me.
 The days are long; tell him that he
 Must be back by tomorrow eve,
 And that he must brook no delay
 But swiftly hasten on his way,
 Swifter than he has ever done.
 Two days journey he'll make in one,
 If he tries his hardest, and then
 The moon shines bright again,
 So let him turn night into day,
 And when he returns I'll repay
 Him with whatever he might wish.'
 'Leave me then to take care of this,
 And you will find Yvain is here,
 As soon as ever he can appear.
 Meanwhile your people command,
 And of them counsel demand
 Regarding the coming of the king.
 To maintain that customary thing,
 The sole defence of your fountain,



*'The man who fears his shadow will, gladly, if he can,
forego any encounter with lance or spear'*
The Book of Romance (p96, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

You must seek their counsel again;
 Yet none will show himself so bold
 As to boast he will there uphold
 Its sole defence; then you may say
 That you must wed, straight away;
 A certain knight doth seek your hand,
 Most suitable; they must understand
 That you'll not wed if they disagree.
 And then the outcome you will see.
 I know they are such cowards all,
 That if on another man should fall
 A burden far too heavy for them,
 At your feet they will fall again,
 And offer up their thanks to you,
 For what's beyond their power to do.
 For the man who fears his shadow,
 Will, gladly, if he can, forego
 Any encounter with lance or spear,
 For that's a game that cowards fear.'
 'By my faith,' the lady replied,
 'Such is my wish; I so decide.
 Indeed, I had already thought
 Of this plan that you have wrought,
 And so that is what we will do.
 Why linger here? Be off with you,
 Whilst my people I'm gathering.'
 And when they finished speaking,
 The maid feigned to send a man
 To seek Yvain in his own land.
 Meanwhile, each day she sees that he
 Bathes and grooms himself, while she
 Prepares for him robes of crimson,
 Of good cloth, fine as any person's,
 New, and lined throughout with vair.
 There is nothing that he needs there

She fails to bring, his body to deck.
For a gold clasp gleams, at his neck,
Ornamented with precious stones,
Such lend grace to a man, I own,
And a belt and a wallet made
Of some kind of rich brocade.
She fits him out handsomely,
And then goes to tell her lady
That the messenger has returned,
And his reward has truly earned.
'So,' she cries, 'when doth he appear,
Your Lord Yvain? 'He's already here.'
'Already here!' Bring him to me,
Secretly, then, and in privacy,
For on me now no others attend;
And let no other this way wend,
There is no need here for a fourth.'
At this the maiden doth go forth,
And returns to her guest, apace,
But doth not reveal, in her face,
The joy that in her heart arose.
But feigns that her lady knows
She has concealed him somewhere.
And says to him: 'By God, fair sir,
There is no point in hiding now.
The thing's so widely known, I trow
That even my lady has heard.
She reproaches me, with every word,
And doubtless will blame me more;
And yet this she says, to reassure,
That I may still bring you before her,
Without harm, or risk, or danger.
No harm will come to you, I feel,
Except one thing I must reveal,
Or I'd commit an act of treason,

She'll wish to keep you in prison.'
 'That,' he said, 'indeed, I'd wish,
 Nor will it harm me in the least,
 For in such a prison I long to be.'
 'And, by this right hand you see,
 So you shall! But, swiftly, come,
 And my advice is this, in sum,
 You must act humbly before her;
 Thus captivity will prove easier.
 And as for that, feel no dismay,
 I think perhaps that prison may
 Not seem too tiresome to you.'
 Thus the maid leads him on anew,
 Now alarming, now reassuring,
 Speaking, as onward they are stealing,
 Of the prison to which he goes;
 For love is a prison, God knows,
 And they are right who so claim,
 For all who love do seek the same.

**LINES 1943-2036 YVAIN DECLARES HIS LOVE
 FOR THE LADY OF LANDUC**

TAKING him by the hand again,
 The maiden leads my Lord Yvain
 To where he will be dearly loved,
 Yet thinks he will be disapproved,
 And that he thinks so is no wonder.
 They came upon the lady yonder
 Seated upon a crimson cushion.
 Great fear was his first emotion,
 When our Yvain made his entry
 To the room, and saw the lady,

While she to him said not a word.
Thus he felt more deeply stirred,
And by fear was much dismayed,
Thinking he had been betrayed.
He stood mute so long before her
That the maiden cried, in anger:
'A thousand curses on this woman
Who leads a knight here, by the hand,
To a lovely lady's room, one who
Is motionless, and speechless too,
Without the sense to say his name!'
Then by the arm she seized the same,
Saying: 'Step forward now, sir knight,
Forget your fear that she may bite,
Though tis you that killed her lord,
And seek for peace now and accord.
And I will join with you in prayer
That she pardons you for that affair,
In which you slew Esclados the Red,
Who was her lord.' Yvain now said,
Like a true lover clasping his hands
While on his knees you understand:
'Lady, I will not ask for mercy,
But rather I must thank you humbly
For aught you would inflict on me.
Naught you do can me displease.'
'Truly? And if I have you killed?
'Lady, my thanks, if tis your will,
For from me you'll hear naught else.'
'Never,' said she, 'have I heard tell
Of aught like this; this very hour
You place yourself in my power,
Without my exercising force.'
'Lady, there doth exist no force,
In truth, as strong as that, I say,

Which commands me to obey
 All your pleasure, and wholly.
 I'll not hesitate to apply me
 To aught you are pleased to order.
 And if there were any way to alter
 The fact of your lord's death, I vow,
 Though not to blame, I'd do so now.'
 'What,' said she, 'do you address
 Me, thinking now to win forgiveness,
 And feign you were not in any way
 To blame for my lord's death that day?'
 'Lady' he said, 'pray you mercy,
 When your fair lord attacked me
 Was I wrong to offer stout defence?
 How does he commit an offence
 Who is at risk of capture or death,
 Should he deny the other breath?
 'He doth not, if we judge aright,
 What good would be served, sir knight,
 If your death were my sole concern?
 Yet now I would, willingly, learn
 From whence that great force may
 Arise, that compels you to obey
 My every wish, unquestioningly.
 Of all accusations you are free;
 But sit, so you may now explain
 What force renders you so tame.'
 'Lady,' he said, 'the force doth rise
 From my heart; for you it sighs,
 And the heart prompts my desire.'
 'And what prompts the heart, fair sire?'
 'The eyes, lady.' 'And the eyes?'
 'The beauty that in you they spy.'
 'And that beauty, how doth it err?'
 'Lady, it leads love to despair.'
 'Love? Of whom?' 'Of you, my dear.'

'I?' 'Truly.' 'Of what character?'
'A love that could ne'er be deeper,
One that seeks joy of you forever,
Joy it could never find elsewhere;
Such that no other thought I share;
Such that I wholly yield myself;
Such that I love you more than self;
Such that for your protection, I
As it please you, will live or die.'
'And would you dare to undertake
To defend the fountain for my sake?'
'Yes, truly, lady, 'gainst any lord.'
'Well then, we are truly in accord.'

**LINES 2037-2048 THE LADY CONSENTS TO TAKE
YVAIN AS HER LORD**

THUS they are fully reconciled,
And the lady, who hath beguiled
Her barons already, as we know,
Says: 'From here, now we will go,
And seek my people in the hall,
Who do advise, and counsel, all,
Because of the need that they see,
That I take a husband to me,
And, because of that need, so I do,
For here I give myself to you.
Nor should I refuse such a one,
A valiant knight and a king's son.'

**LINES 2049-2328 KING ARTHUR IS INVITED
TO THE LADY'S COURT**

Now has the maiden achieved
 All that she'd wished, I believe,
 And my Lord Yvain's mastery's
 More than he'd dared hope to see;
 For the lady, taking his hand,
 Leads him to the hall, where stand
 All her knights and all her people,
 And my Lord Yvain seems so noble
 That all gaze on him with wonder,
 And rising to their feet they render
 A bow, and thus all welcome, now,
 My Lord Yvain, and all avow:
 'This is he whom my lady fair
 Would wed, cursed be those who dare
 Object to such rare nobility.
 The Empress of Rome would be
 Nobly wed to this best of men.
 Well, if he has already spoken,
 And she him, with naked hand,
 Tomorrow takes and weds the man.'
 Thus they all murmured together.
 There, where they could see her;
 At the very top of the hall,
 She was seated before them all.
 And my Lord Yvain made as if
 To sit at her feet, against her wish,
 For she raised him, and did call,
 At once, upon her Seneschal
 To speak out, both loud and clear,

So that all her folk might hear.
No slow or ineloquent man,
Thus, the Seneschal began:
'My lords,' he said, 'war is coming.
Not a day goes past but the king
Prepares fresh forces to gather,
With all the speed he can muster.
Before this fortnight is over
All to ruin he will deliver,
Unless some champion appears.
When my lady, not seven years
Ago was wed, she did so freely
On your advice, and now that he
Her lord is dead, doth weep and moan.
Six feet of earth is all he owns,
Who was the lord of this country,
And glory of our nobility.
Tis a pity he his life did yield;
A woman cannot bear a shield,
Nor can she battle with a lance.
Marriage her role would enhance,
Marriage with some worthy lord.
Never was greater need or more
Pressing; advise that she wed again,
So that the custom might remain,
That which this castle has seen
For more than sixty years, I mean.'
At this the gathering proclaimed
That it was right she wed again.
And bowed to her accordingly,
Strengthening her desire indeed.
Yet as if despite herself, she lent
Her ear to them, and gave consent,
Speaking of her wishes, indeed,
As she would have if they'd not agreed:

'My lords, since it is your wish,
 Of the knight by me, I say this:
 He has sought and won my hand,
 He undertakes to defend the land,
 In my service and for my honour,
 For which I thank him, on your
 Behalf. True, I did not know him,
 Yet I had heard much talk of him.
 Know, he is of high lineage then
 The son of famed King Urien.
 Besides his noble parentage,
 He displays such great courage,
 Such wisdom, and such courtesy,
 That he is full worthy of me.
 Of a certain Lord Yvain, I know,
 You have heard all men speak so.
 And this is he, who seeks my hand,
 And I shall have, you understand,
 A nobler husband than I deserve,
 On the day this marriage occurs.'
 'Today,' they reply, 'if you are wise
 Your marriage shall be solemnised,
 For it would be folly to delay
 So fair a thing for e'en a day.'
 They so beg her she doth consent
 To that which was ever her intent,
 For Love himself doth her command,
 To do as the council doth demand;
 Yet more honour doth accrue
 If her people request it too;
 And their urging is no grief,
 Rather it strengthens her belief
 That her heart should win the day.
 The horse that's already on its way,
 Goes faster still for being spurred.



*'And did not venture there alone
but brought with him his company'*
The Book of Romance (p160, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

Before them all she speaks the word,
 And gives herself to my Lord Yvain.
 And from the hand of her chaplain,
 He received the Lady of Landuc,
 (*Laudine, heir to Laudunet, the Duke*)
 And thus, without the least delay
 The two were wed, that very day;
 And the marriage, then celebrated,
 With mitres and croziers was sated,
 For the lady had in no way forgot
 To summon each bishop and abbot.
 Many were there, and great richness,
 And all folk full of happiness,
 More so than I'd know how to tell
 Though I thought long and well;
 Better be silent than court disaster.
 Now is my Lord Yvain the master,
 And the dead man is quite forgot;
 He who slew him his wife has got,
 And they have commerce together;
 And all men love their new master,
 More than they ever loved the dead.
 He is now their liege lord instead.
 They feasted till the eve of the day
 When King Arthur came to assay
 The wondrous fountain and the stone,
 And did not venture there alone,
 But brought with him his company,
 His whole household, to that country,
 Such that not one remained behind.
 And Lord Kay now spoke his mind:
 'Ay! What has become of Yvain
 Who at our dinner did maintain
 That he would avenge his cousin;
 For with us now he should be seen?'

Clearly twas the wine that spoke!
He has fled, like a puff of smoke,
Not daring to maintain it now.
He was foolish to boast, I trow.
He's bold who boasts of his prowess
With none to praise, and no witness,
To testify to his great deeds
Except some flatterer, indeed.
Take the cowardly and the brave,
How differently the two behave;
For the coward before the fire
Boasts of himself, like any liar,
And thinks us fools who know him not.
While the brave are distressed by what
Some other man has said of them
Praising the courage seen in them.
And yet the coward, I maintain,
Is not so wrong if he proclaims
His own prowess himself always;
No other will lie and sing his praise.
If he doth sing it not, who will?
Even the heralds keep silence still,
Who yet proclaim the brave aloud,
But lose the coward in the crowd.'
Thus did my Lord Kay men deride,
But then my Lord Gawain replied:
'Mercy, my Lord Kay, show mercy!
If Lord Yvain's absent, as I see,
You know not what duties he has,
Never so low has he stooped as
To accuse you of villainy,
But speaks of you with courtesy.'
'Sir,' said Kay, I'll hold my peace.
Today, I shall not dare to speak,
For I see that it gives you pain.'

And now the king, to view the rain,
 That basin of water did assign
 To the stone beneath the pine,
 And rain poured down from the sky.
 They waited there and, by and by,
 Fully armed, my Lord Yvain
 Entering the forest once again,
 Came at a mighty gallop indeed,
 Riding a fine and handsome steed,
 Strong and bold, on battle intent.
 And now my Lord Kay was bent
 On demanding the first assay;
 For he always, come what may,
 Wished to begin every melee,
 Every joust, or was out of temper.
 To the king he made his prayer,
 That this first battle might be his.
 'Kay,' said the king, 'if you so wish,
 And since you ask before the rest,
 Not to deny you, pleases me best.'
 'Kay thanks him, and takes the saddle.
 If he can now shame Kay a little,
 My Lord Yvain will be pleased,
 And gladly Kay's defeat he'd see.
 He knows it is Kay from his shield.
 Grasping his own, he takes the field
 As does Kay, and they meet together,
 Horses spur, and their lances lower,
 Holding them gripped in their hand.
 Then extend the lances a little and
 Grasp the butt, wrapped in leather,
 So that as they now clash together
 They deal each other such a blow
 That both the lances splinter so
 They are split down to the handle.

Kay is knocked from the saddle
By the force of Lord Yvain's blow,
Turns a somersault then, to follow,
And strikes the ground helmet first.
To harm him in some manner worse,
Is not my Lord Yvain's intent.
From his steed he makes descent,
And takes Kay's horse, pleasing many,
Who cannot help but say, gladly:
'Behold, behold where he now lies
He who others doth so despise!
Nevertheless it behoves us all
Rightly to pardon his downfall
For such ne'er befell him before.'
And approaching now they saw,
Before the king, my Lord Yvain,
Leading the war-horse by the rein.
Which to Arthur he would render.
'Sire, this steed I here surrender,
For I'd commit a wrong, I'm sure,
Should I withhold aught that's yours.'
'But who are you?' the king replied,
'I should not know you, except I
Heard your name freely uttered
Or saw you without your armour.'
'Yvain, am I, the very same.'
Then was Kay filled with shame,
Mortified, and discomfited,
For saying that Yvain had fled;
But the rest shared their delight,
At Kay's discomfort and the fight.
Even the king was quietly pleased,
And Lord Gawain, whole-heartedly,
Nay, a hundred times more than all,
That to Yvain doth the victory fall,

For he loved his company too,
More than any knight he knew.
And the king then asked Yvain,
If it so pleased him, to explain;
For Arthur had a great desire
To know all that had transpired,
What adventure Yvain was on,
And what honour he had won.
And so Yvain now tells the tale
Of how the maiden without fail
Hath done him loyal service;
Not passing over aught of this,
Nor forgetting a single thing.
And after that asks of the king
If he and all his band of knights
Would lodge with him that night,
For a joy and honour it would be
To offer him hospitality.
And Arthur says that he will stay
With Yvain for a week and a day,
And honour him with his company.
My Lord Yvain gave thanks, then he
Mounted, and without seeking rest
Led them along the very shortest
Road that ran towards the castle.
And in advance he sent a vassal
Bearing only a moulted falcon,
To reassure the lady, so not one
Of her folk is caught by surprise,
But, in readiness, to please all eyes,
Deck their houses to greet the king.
And when she heard of his coming
Then was in her great joy created,
And all the townsfolk were elated,
Hearing the news of Arthur's visit.

The lady asked her lords to submit
To her wish, and go and greet him,
And they as one agreed to meet him,
For they were all now anxious to do
Whatever their lady wished them to.

**LINES 2329-2414 KING ARTHUR AND HIS
COMPANY ENTER THE FORTIFIED TOWN**

HER people ride, on mounts from Spain,
To greet King Arthur, in her name,
Saluting first, most courteously,
The King of Britain, and secondly
All those who ride in his company.
'Welcome,' they cry, 'to all; for see
Here is a gathering of noble men.
Blessed be he who brings them then
And grants us such handsome guests.'
The town resounds, offering its best
For the arrival of the puissant king;
Silken drapes, now forthcoming,
All hung aloft, to deck the event;
Tapestries clothe the pavements;
And, in a further preparation,
Against the great heat of the sun,
They cover the streets with awnings.
Bells, horns, and trumpets blaring,
Make the castle walls to resound,
Louder than doth thunder sound.
And there, where girls are dancing,
Flutes and reed-pipes are playing,
Timbrel, kettle-drum, and tabor,
While the younger men do labour,

To leap about, as if in flight.
 All strive to show their delight,
 Showing their joy to the king,
 As is their duty, in everything.
 And now the lady doth appear,
 She her imperial garb doth wear,
 A robe of ermine, fresh and new,
 And on her brow a diadem too,
 That a wealth of rubies grace.
 There is no cloud upon her face,
 Smiling, she reveals her beauty,
 More beautiful, as all may see,
 Than was ever any goddess.
 Around her now the crowd do press,
 As they all cry, with one accord:
 ‘Welcome to the king and lord
 Of kings, and all earthly lords!’
 The king could not reply before
 He saw the lady fast approaching
 To hold his stirrup, so not waiting
 For her to reach him, God defend,
 He promptly hastened to descend,
 The moment that she hailed in sight,
 While she saluted him outright:
 ‘A hundred thousand greetings this day,
 To my Lord the King, and, I do pray,
 Blessed be his nephew, Lord Gawain,’
 ‘May joy and good fortune appertain
 Ever to your noble form and features,
 Is my wish for you, fair creature.’
 Cried the king, then about her waist,
 Gently and freely, his arm he placed,
 And she embraced the king, equally.
 You’ll win not another word from me,
 About the honour she thus conferred;

But never has any spoken or heard
Of a crowd of guests so well received,
So honoured or so well-served indeed.
I might tell you more of their delight,
Were it not it would weary you quite.
Yet you deserve some brief mention
Of a meeting twixt the moon and sun,
Which in private counsel occurred,
And of which I'd gladly say a word.
Do you know of whom I now indite?
He who was lord among the knights,
And greater than them all, in fame,
Must here the sun's position claim.
I speak of course of my Lord Gawain,
For chivalry does his form proclaim,
And he illumines it with his rays,
Just as the sun, at break of day,
Sheds his light, and illumines all
The places where his rays do fall.
And our damsel I call the moon,
For here there can be only one
Of such great aid and service.
I call her not so because of this
Merely, she so free from blame,
But because Lunete is her name.

**LINES 2415-2538 GAWAIN URGES YVAIN
TO ATTEND THE TOURNAMENT**

THE damsel's name then was Lunete,
A charming and most clever brunette,
With wisdom, kindness and courtesy.
As dearer to Lord Gawain grows she,

He prizes her and loves her dearly,
 And claims her for himself wholly,
 For from death did she not defend,
 His good companion and his friend.
 He grants her his service freely,
 While she tells of her difficulty
 In winning over her mistress
 To take in marriage no man less
 Than Lord Yvain as her new sire,
 And how she'd rescued him entire,
 From the hands of those who sought him,
 Though, among them, failed to see him!
 My Lord Gawain laughed profusely
 At her tale, and said, most gladly:
 'Mademoiselle, I commit to you,
 Whether needed or not, this true
 Knight, such that is as I may be;
 Do not, for another then, forsake me,
 Thinking you might well do better;
 For I am yours and so, forever,
 My demoiselle shall you be.'
 'I thank you kindly, sir,' said she.
 While they were meeting thus,
 Others there proved as flirtatious;
 More than sixty ladies were present
 And every one virtuous, prudent,
 Fair and courteous, of high worth,
 Each of them being of noble birth;
 So the knights could spend their day
 Embracing and kissing, all in play,
 Talking and gazing, occupied
 In sitting pleasantly by their side;
 So much at least might they gain.
 In festive mood is my Lord Yvain,
 Now the king is lodged with them,

While the lady so honours them,
Each separately, and all together,
That a foolish man might gather
That out of love she acted thus,
And with him seemed amorous.
But rightly he a fool is proved
Who thinks that he is truly loved,
Because a lady is courteous
And addresses the least of us,
Gives delight and doth us embrace;
A fool is lost to a lovely face,
And to fair words, completely.
All spent the time thus pleasantly,
Throughout the whole week entire,
For all might hunt as they desired,
Among the woods, along the rivers;
Or view what the realm delivers
That my Lord Yvain has won,
By marrying with such a one,
As his lady, for they might seek
Within a few leagues, that week,
One of his several castles, nearby.
When the king had fully satisfied
His curiosity, nor wished to stay,
He made ready to wend his way.
But all that week his knights sought
By argument and subtle thought,
Requests, and prayers, and demands,
And all the wit at their command,
To urge Yvain to return with them.
'Will you prove one of those men,'
He was asked by my Lord Gawain,
'Who with his wife must remain?
For cursed be they, by Saint Mary,
Who lose all worth when they marry.'

She should enhance a man's life
 A fair lady, as his lover or wife;
 And tis not right that she love on,
 If worth and reputation are gone.
 Surely you would regret her love
 If you a lesser man should prove.
 A woman will soon cease to prize,
 Rightly, a man she doth despise,
 Who, though become the lord of all,
 Through his love into sloth doth fall.
 Now your fame should see increase.
 Throw off the rein, break the leash,
 Come to the tournament with me,
 So none accuse you of jealousy.
 Now you should not hold back,
 But upon the tourney make attack,
 And in the lists the brave accost,
 Whatever to you may be the cost.
 He's lost in dream who will not stir.
 You must come, indeed, dear sir,
 And not another word from me.
 Fair companion, think carefully,
 Let not a friendship fail in you,
 That in my heart is ever true.
 A wonder it is how in nature
 What is deferred sinks deeper.
 Pleasure is sweeter through delay,
 And a little goodness, any day,
 Tastes richer if tis waited for,
 Than lost in devouring more.
 The joy in honour slow to arrive
 Is like green wood, better dried,
 Burning then with greater force,
 If to patience one has recourse,
 And yielding greater heat within.

One may grow so used to things
Tis less painful to yield than not,
And wishing to alter, one cannot.
And lest you mistake me, true,
If I had as lovely a lady, as you,
My dear companion, do possess,
Let God and his saints bear witness,
I too would find it hard to leave,
I too to her, in truth, would cleave.
Yet a man may advise someone
To do what he himself would shun.
Just as we see with the preachers,
Who are such deceitful creatures,
They proclaim what tis right to do,
But naught of what they say pursue!

**LINES 2539-2578 YVAIN SEEKS LEAVE OF HIS LADY TO
ACCOMPANY GAWAIN**

LORD Gawain spoke at such length,
Indeed with such force and strength,
That Yvain promised he would speak
To his wife, and her leave would seek
To accompany him, in some wise,
And whether it be foolish or wise,
Would not fail to seek permission
To return with Gawain to Britain.
She knew naught of what he sought
When with her he shared his thought,
Saying: 'My lady, my life's goal,
You who are my heart and soul,
My health, my joy, my happiness,
A favour I ask of you, no less,

For your honour, and for mine.’
The lady did her head incline
Though she knew naught of his wish,
Saying: ‘Fair sir, command me in this,
Whatever your request might be.’
Then my Lord Yvain asks her leave
To follow the king, and her consent
To attend the royal tournament:
‘That none there may think me idle.’
She replied: ‘Your leave I will
So grant, until a certain date,
But then my love will turn to hate,
That I bear you, you may be sure
If you should remain on that shore
Beyond the time that I shall set,
And I will keep my word yet;
Though you break yours, I will not.
So if for my love you care a jot,
If, above all, you hold me dear,
Think you to be once more here
Within a year from this very day,
A week after Saint John’s, I say,
For this is the eighth day since then.
And if you are not back again,
Restored to me, then by all above,
You can offer a mass for our love!’

LINES 2579-2638 THE LADY GIVES A MAGIC RING TO YVAIN

MY Lord Yvain now weeps and sighs
So bitterly that he scarce replies:
‘That, lady, is too long a wait.
If I could be with you, my fate,

Whene'er I wish your face to view,
Then I'd nigh always be with you.
And I pray God, if he so please
Not to detain me at his ease.
Yet we think to return often,
Ignorant of what will happen,
And I know not what may occur
That may act to keep me there,
Imprisonment perhaps or sickness.
You do me an injustice, no less,
In not granting exemption for
Some obstacle I cannot ignore.'
'My lord', she said, 'I will so do.
Nevertheless, I now promise you,
That, if God spare you from death,
And you recall me at every breath,
No obstacle will block your way.
This my ring, I give you, pray,
Wear it always on your finger,
And I ask you now, remember
All regarding the gem there set,
For no prison will hold you yet
If you love loyally and are true,
Nor will any harm come to you,
No wounds, and no bloodshed,
If you've heard what I've said;
Wear it ever, and hold it dear,
And remember your lady here.
Then it will protect you like steel,
To you it will be mail and shield;
Nor have I trusted this ring ever
To any knight before, however,
I lend it you now, out of love.'
Now Yvain has leave to remove,
But he weeps greatly at parting.

The king would not, for anything,
 Brook delay, rather he sought
 To have all the palfreys brought,
 And all saddled and equipped,
 And would not stop for a quip;
 For as he wished so it was done.
 The steeds were led forth at once,
 Thus it only remained to mount.
 I know not if I should recount
 My Lord Yvain's leave-taking,
 Or the kisses bestowed on him,
 Which were mingled so with tears,
 Bathed in sweetness it appears.
 And what shall I say of the king,
 How the lady took leave of him,
 Accompanied by her ladies all,
 And the knight, her Seneschal?
 Far too long would we tarry here.
 Seeing the lady bathed in tears,
 He begged her to return amain,
 And in her castle there remain,
 And he begged her so urgently,
 She returned with her company.

LINES 2639-2773 YVAIN BREAKS THE PROMISE TO HIS LADY

MY Lord Yvain is now so greatly
 Distressed at parting from his lady,
 His heart it can do naught but stay.
 The king may lead the body away,
 But not the heart, for she so chains
 And binds his heart, she who remains,
 Not even the king has the power

To draw it away for even an hour.
And if the body lacks its heart
How shall it live when they're apart?
Lacking its heart, a living body
Is a marvel no man e'er did see.
Yet this marvel has come about,
For he is still living, yet without
His heart, which once beat within,
And now no longer follows him.
In a fine place the heart doth dwell,
The body lives in hope, as well,
Of returning to the heart it left.
It fashions a heart, though bereft,
Out of hope, in a strange manner,
Hope that proves false traitor ever.
He will not be aware till later
Of the hour hope plays the traitor,
For if by a single day he exceed
The term of leave that he agreed,
It will be hard for him to win
His lady's pardon ever again.
And yet I think he'll not return,
For my Lord Gawain doth yearn
To retain him in his company,
And go together to the tourney
Wherever the joust holds sway.
And as the year now slipped away,
Such success had my Lord Yvain,
Everywhere, that my Lord Gawain
Greatly wished to do him honour,
And so caused him to malingering
That whole year was past and gone,
And sufficient part of another one
That the middle of August arrived
When the king at Chester did abide;

Having returned the previous eve,
From a tournament, I do believe,
At which my Lord Yvain made one,
And every single prize had won.
And, it seems, the tale tells how,
The two companions both did vow
Not to lodge there within the town,
But pitched their tents on level ground
Outside the walls, and there held court.
They went not to the king's own court,
But the king, instead, he went to them,
For his best knights were with them,
And were there in greatest number.
Among them all, sat King Arthur,
And it was then Yvain remembered
That he'd exceeded the time stated
His lady had given permission for,
And no thought surprised him more
Than this awareness of his delay,
The breaking of the pledge he'd made,
Regarding the promised day and year.
He could scarcely forgo his tears,
But held them back, for very shame.
He was thinking on it, all the same,
When he saw a maid approaching,
Towards him at speed, and riding
A piebald palfrey; before his tent,
None ran to assist in her descent,
Though she dismounted, in due course,
Nor did they come take her horse.
Seeing the king among them all,
She then allowed her mantle to fall,
And thus attired, and thus arrayed,
Entered Yvain's tent right away.
And came and stood before the king,

Saying her mistress gave greeting
To the king, and my Lord Gawain,
And all the others, except Yvain,
That disloyal knight, that traitor,
That foul liar, and oath-breaker,
Who'd deserted and deceived her.
Now she saw how he treated her,
Pretending that he loved her true,
Yet disloyal, through and through.
'My lady doth give witness here,
That no mischief did she fear,
For it never occurred to her
That he would prove a robber.
Lovers may steal a lady's heart,
But there are others, a race apart,
Thieves, that empty vessels prove,
Who, with deceit, go making love.
They are robbers and hypocrites,
Traitors who, caring not a whit,
Steal hearts that to them mean naught;
True lovers to hold them dear are taught,
And then restore them faithfully.
But Yvain has nigh killed my lady,
Telling her that he would guard her
Heart, and then would return it her
Before the promised year was out.
Forgetful of you, Yvain, to flout
Your pledge, clearly unconcerned
That you ought to have returned,
To my lady within that year gone.
For until the feast of Saint John
My mistress had granted you leave;
Yet you so lightly did conceive
Your pledge, you failed to remember.
While every night, within her chamber,

My lady counted the months and days;
 For when one loves, one frets always,
 And never a restful sleep did earn,
 And all night long tossed and turned.
 Through all the days that come and go
 What doth the lover? Doth thou know?
 Counts the months, tells the seasons,
 I am not here without good reason,
 Who disturb you making holiday,
 Nor to complain from vain display,
 But simply to say, we are betrayed,
 By you whom my lady wed that day.
 Yvain, my lady for you doth care
 No longer, and her message I bear
 Never return, and one further thing,
 Do not seek to retain her ring.
 I whom you now see before you
 She demands you render it to;
 Render it now, for so you must.'

**LINES 2774-3130 YVAIN LOSES HIS MIND BUT
 IS RESTORED TO HEALTH**

YVAIN, his tongue as dry as dust,
 Was stunned, and unable to reply,
 While the maid approached him nigh,
 And from his finger took the ring,
 Then to God commended the king
 And, but for Yvain, all the rest,
 Leaving that lord in great distress.
 And his sorrow is ever increasing,
 And all that he sees torments him.
 He would rather be exiled alone,

In deep seclusion, and all unknown,
Banished to some savage place,
Where none would ever see his face,
No man or woman of his country
Knowing more where he might be,
Than if he'd plunged in the abyss.
For he hates most the thing he is,
And knows not where to find relief
From himself who's his own grief.
He'd be a madman not to take
Vengeance now, for his dire mistake,
Upon himself, who his joy hath lost.
He removes himself from the host,
Fearing madness, if he remain,
And they ignore him, for it is plain,
As they watch him go on his way,
That he cares naught for aught they say,
Nor hath need of their company;
While he goes wandering, till he
Is far from tents and pavilions.
Then such a mad tempest rages on
Inside his head that all sense is lost,
He tears his flesh, and naked almost,
Flees through the fields and valleys,
And leaves his folk in perplexity,
As to where he might be found.
They search all the country round,
In among the knights' lodgings,
Gardens, hedges, and surroundings,
Seeking where he is no longer.
While he flees, further and further,
Till he comes upon, beside a park,
A lad with a bow, and doth mark
His quiver, with many an arrow,
Broad, sharp, and barbed also.

Sense enough, as yet, he had
To seize the bow from the lad,
And the arrows in their quiver,
And yet he would not remember
A single thing that he had done;
And in this way he wandered on.
He killed the deer, and then he ate
The venison in its raw state.
So he dwelt among the trees,
As madmen do or savages;
Till he came upon, one day,
A hermit's hut, beside the way,
And the hermit working near,
Who saw a naked man appear,
And thinking that perhaps he had
Thus to deal with a man run mad,
Soon ascertained that it was so;
Fearful and surprised, although
He entered his humble hut, he set
At the window, a little bread.
And there Yvain came in need
And on that morsel did feed.
He took the bread and of it ate,
And I doubt not that such bait,
So hard, he'd never had before,
The grain within not worth more
Than twenty sous, all bitter, sour
As yeast, made of a kind of flour,
Barley mixed with oaten straw,
So that the bread tasted more
Like bark, stale, dull with blight.
Yet hunger whets the appetite,
So the bread to him was sweet,
For hunger doth dress any meat,
Like to a sauce, mixed with art.

My Lord Yvain played his part,
Ate the bread, and found it good,
Drank cold water with his food,
Then was minded to disappear,
Into the woods, to seek the deer;
While the holy man, concerned,
Prayed to God, that if he returned,
His own self he'd protect alway,
And so preserve him on that day.
Nevertheless, whate'er may be,
A man will return, and willingly,
To a place where he's treated well.
Not a day passed, but to his cell,
In his wild fit, the madman came,
Bringing the hermit wild game,
Thus to repay him for the bread.
This was the life that Yvain led.
And thus the holy man within
Would the wild creatures skin,
And cook the venison, and ever
He would set the bread and water
At the window, so the madman
Might eat a meal, as others can;
With cooked meat, cold drink,
Water from the stream's brink,
Venison without salt or pepper;
And the hermit, so as the better
To provide bread, sold the hides,
And bought barley loaves besides,
So, Lord Yvain, from that time on,
Had bread aplenty and venison,
And this sufficed in every way.
Thus was he found asleep one day,
By two maidens in the forest,
Accompanying their mistress,

Whose servant they both were.
 On finding a naked creature there,
 One of them dismounted, and ran
 And looked closely at the man,
 But saw nothing by which to tell
 Who he was, though she might well
 Have recognised him, so carefully
 Did she gaze at him, if only he
 Had been dressed in rich attire,
 As before, that she might admire.
 Thus she was slow to know him
 Yet nonetheless she stared at him,
 Till her eyes rested, finally,
 On his face, and a scar did see;
 And such a scar she well knew
 Had Lord Yvain on his face too,
 She remembered to have seen,
 And so, by the scar, did glean
 That it was he, without a doubt,
 And wondered how it came about
 That she had found Yvain here,
 Who poor and naked did appear.
 She seeks not to touch or wake him,
 Though struck by the state he's in,
 But takes the bridle and remounts,
 Rides to the others, and recounts
 Her adventure, in floods of tears.
 I know not if I should pause here,
 To tell of her sorrow and distress;
 Weeping, she spoke to her mistress:
 'Lady, we have come upon Yvain,
 He who has proved, time and again,
 To be the truest knight in the world,
 And yet I know not what has hurled
 This nobleman from his great height,

For it seems he is now in evil plight,
From some misfortune, tis my belief.
For one may lose one's wits through grief.
And one can readily see that he
Has lost all sense, for it seems to me,
He would never act so strangely,
If he'd not lost his mind wholly,
And his senses were not askew.
Now may God his wits renew,
To the sanity that they once had,
And Yvain then be pleased to add
His aid to the cause of your castle,
And lodge there with you as well!
Count Alier who makes war on you
Would see the war between you two
End by bringing you great honour
If God would but show his favour
And his full wits to Yvain restore,
His true sense, and, furthermore,
Aid you then in your hour of need.'⁷
The lady replied: 'Now take heed,
Tis a certainly, if he doth not flee,
That we'll rid him of his insanity,
Clear the madness from his head,
The sorrow and the storm it bred.
But we must be off, swift as ever,
For there's a salve that I remember;
Margot the Wise gave it to me,
And said there was no malady
Of the mind it would not cure.'⁷
So off to the castle they venture,
Which is near, being no more
Than a half a league away, for,
As leagues go in their country,
Compared with ours, you see,

Two make one, and four make two.
Yvain sleeps on, now lost to view;
They're away to seek the ointment.
Now the lady to a chest she went,
Removed a box, and gave it to
The maid, telling her not to use
The ointment on him too freely,
Rubbing it into the temples only,
There being no need for it elsewhere.
She should anoint his brow with care,
But then keep all the rest by her;
For the only ill he had incurred
Was in his brain; there, the trouble.
A robe of vair, a coat and mantle
Of scarlet silk she finds for him;
The maid takes them, and to him
Leads a fine palfrey by the rein,
And from her own store adds again
A fresh shirt, with soft leggings
And new hose, well-cut and trim.
Taking all these, she rode away,
And finding Yvain, where he lay,
Still fast asleep, within the wood,
Tethered her horse where it stood,
Beside a clearing, among the trees.
Now, clothes and box she carries
To where the madman lies sleeping,
Then, slowly but with great daring,
Approaches Yvain, cautiously,
So she may tend him while asleep.
And thus the ointment she applies
Emptying the box despite its size,
So concerned for the man in her care,
She spreads the ointment everywhere.
With the salve she proves so reckless

She forgets the words of her mistress,
And uses more than is necessary,
Though, she thinks, most usefully:
She salves his brow and all his body,
So that from his brain, swiftly,
Will ebb all that raging madness;
Though using so much is foolishness,
For there is no need to anoint him so.
If she'd had five times more, though,
She'd have used it all, it seems to me.
She took the box, and thought to flee,
Reaching her steed, then hid behind,
But left the clothes for him to find,
Hoping that if God restored him
He would see the clothes around him,
And take them and swiftly dress.
Beside an oak tree she doth rest,
Till, after sleeping long, Yvain
Is cured and now himself again,
Regaining wits and memory;
Yet finds he's naked as ivory.
Although his shame were more
If he'd known what went before,
Yet knows no more than he is bare.
He sees the new robe lying there,
And marvels, immeasurably,
As to how that has come to be
And how the other clothes appeared.
His nakedness makes him afeared,
Ashamed and troubled as he is,
Thinking himself undone by this;
If any who know him have been,
And found him, naked, and seen.
Meanwhile rapidly he dressed,
And looked about in the forest,

To mark if anyone was in sight.
He thought to rise and stand upright,
But lacked the strength so to do;
He needed help to stand anew,
To help him walk, and sustain him,
His illness had so troubled him,
He scarce could rise to his feet.
The maiden seeing his defeat,
Could wait no longer, and so she
Mounted, and passed by quietly,
As if not knowing he was there;
And he, being so in need of care,
Indifferent as to who might bring
Aid to help him to some lodging,
Where he might gather his strength,
Called out to the maiden, at length;
While the maiden, for her part,
Looked about her, and gave a start,
As if she knew naught of all this.
At his call, it not being her wish
To go straight to him, she delayed,
And he began to call: "This way!
This way, demoiselle!" Thus she
Guided her palfrey to him slowly,
So he'd think by her manner there
Of proceeding, performed with care,
That she knew naught of the matter,
Nor had ever strayed any closer,
Being both wise and courteous.
When she arrived before him thus:
'Sir knight what do you wish of me,
To call so loud and long?' said she.
'Oh,' he replied, 'fair maid so wise,
I find myself, in curious guise,
Among these woods by some mischance;

For God's sake, would you, perchance,
Lend me, I pray, on word of honour,
Or give outright, if you may so offer,
That palfrey that you are leading.
'Willingly, sir; yet where I'm going
You shall also, and accompany me.'
'And where is that?' 'Beyond the trees,
To a castle that stands nearby.'
'Demoiselle, tell me then if I
Am needed at the castle there?'
'Yes' said she, 'and yet, I declare,
You are not in your full strength,
And must recuperate at length,
A fortnight at the least, I'd say.
Take this palfrey, and lead away,
And we will go find you lodging.'
And since that was all his longing,
He mounted and they went their way,
Until to a narrow bridge came they,
Over a swift and violent river.
Then the maid, into its waters,
The empty ointment box did toss,
Thinking to explain the loss
Of box, and all, to her mistress,
By pleading that in her distress
At crossing o'er that perilous river,
The box had fallen in the water;
For by some chance the palfrey
Had stumbled, and the box, sadly,
Had escaped her hands, and she
Had almost followed, willy-nilly;
So it might have been even worse!
This sad tale she would rehearse
When she came before her lady.
They continued on their journey,

Till they came to the castle wall,
 Where the following did befall.
 Within, the lady then detained
 Most pleasantly, my Lord Yvain,
 But her box, and her ointment,
 Demanded of the maid she'd sent,
 Privately. And then the maid
 Told the tale that I've relayed,
 Just as she had intended to,
 Not daring to repeat the truth.
 The lady was dismayed: 'This is
 A great loss, and certain it is
 That it will not be found again;
 Yet, since tis gone, I maintain,
 There's nothing more to be said.
 Often the good desired, instead,
 Turns to ill that no one wished.
 So from our noble knight, in this,
 I thought to have blessing and joy,
 But now have lost, in its employ,
 The possession I held most dear.
 Nevertheless, pray you, appear
 Ready to serve him in everything.'
 'Oh, my lady, tis wisdom speaking,
 For it would be a sad game, true,
 To make of one misfortune, two.'

**LINES 3131-3254 YVAIN DEFENDS THE LADY
 OF NOROISON'S CASTLE**

ABOUT the box, they keep silent,
 And thus to my Lord Yvain present
 Their services; with every care,



'Waiting in a narrow pass Yvain charged against the mass'
The Book of Romance (p232, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

They bathe him, and wash his hair,
 Shave him close, and trim his beard,
 For fistfuls of hair had now appeared
 On his face; now he lacks nothing:
 If he wants armour, arms they bring,
 If he desires to ride a while
 They bring a steed for him to trial,
 Handsome, spirited, strong as ten.
 Yvain is there, on a Tuesday, when
 Against the town comes Count Alier,
 With knights and foot in fine array,
 Burning, plundering, laying waste.
 The people arm themselves in haste,
 Ready to defend their castle.
 Whether armed or unarmed still,
 They issue forth to the attack,
 The enemy not turning back
 But waiting in a narrow pass.
 Yvain charged against the mass;
 For having rested for so long,
 He was now both fit and strong.
 On the shield he struck a knight,
 Fiercely downing him outright,
 Meeting him with mighty force
 Toppling the rider and his horse,
 Nor could the man arise again,
 For his heart had burst amain,
 And his very spine was broken.
 My Lord Yvain drew back a token,
 And took a moment to recover,
 Then, with the brief respite over,
 Spurred forward to clear the pass.
 One could scarce the numbers cast,
 One, and two, and three, and four;
 Four brave knights he doth floor,



*'The lady, she was in her tower,
watching from the castle height'*
The Book of Romance (p78, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

And to deliver more is ready,
Advancing fast and furiously;
While those fighting beside him
All take fresh courage from him;
As a man of faint and timid heart
When he sees the brave man dart
Towards the foe before his eyes,
Driven by shame, his fear defies,
Finds fresh heart, then doth flee
The former heart from his body;
So he brings them, for his part,
Each a noble and valiant heart.
Thus rendered brave and sound
In the melee, each stood his ground,
And in attack he found new power.
Now the lady, she was in her tower,
Watching from the castle height,
The whole battle, with the fight
To conquer and regain the pass;
And saw upon the ground, alas,
Dead and wounded full many,
Both her troops and the enemy,
But more of them than her own.
For my Lord Yvain, a man alone,
Courteous, brave, and excellent,
Stoops upon them, in his intent,
As doth the falcon on the teal.
And those within the walls feel
Heartened, man and maid alike,
And cry, as they see him strike:
'Ah! How bravely he doth reap!
How he makes the enemy weep!
How fiercely he thus terrifies!
For he appears no otherwise
Than as a lion among the deer,

Driven by hunger, doth appear.
And then every other knight
Is braver, fiercer in the fight,
For were it not for his bravery,
No shattered lance would we see,
Not a sword drawn, on our part.
One must love with all one's heart
A noble man when one is found.
See now how he holds his ground,
See how bravely he makes good,
See how he drenches in blood
His lance, and his naked sword,
See how he scatters them abroad,
See how boldly he doth attack,
Then wheels about, turning back!
See how he rests awhile, and then
Returns to the assault again,
The fresher for his brief sojourn;
See how lightly, on his return,
He holds the worth of his shield;
To piercing blows doth it yield.
How mercilessly he doth fight,
Returning blows left and right
In revenge for those undergone.
If all the forests of Argonne
Were felled, his lances to supply,
None would be left by night, say I,
For none they provide can endure,
He breaks them all, and asks for more;
And see what prowess is displayed
Whene'er he seeks to draw his blade.
Never with his sword, Durendal,
Did Roland once, at Roncesvalles,
Wreak more havoc, there in Spain
Against the Turks, and if Yvain

Had more good men in his company,
 The villain who's now our enemy
 Would this day, discomfited, retreat,
 Or stand his ground and meet defeat.⁷
 Then, they pray the heavens above
 Bless her to whom he gives his love,
 For he so puissant in arms is found,
 And above all others is renowned,
 As a taper midst candles shines afar,
 As the moon shines among the stars,
 As the sun doth outshine the moon,
 For he has all hearts there in a swoon,
 This one's here and that one's there,
 For all who regard him now declare
 They wish he had their lady's hand,
 And was the lord of all their land.

LINES 3255-3340 YVAIN DEFEATS COUNT ALIER

THUS was Yvain praised anew,
 And all that they said proved true,
 For so fierce an attack he led
 That one and all the enemy fled;
 But he presses hard on their heels,
 With his companions, who feel
 As safe there, as if they were all
 Enclosed behind some castle wall,
 High, and wrought of solid stone.
 The pursuit is long and hard, I own,
 Till those who flee, drained by fear,
 Are struck as their pursuers near,
 Their horses now disembowelled,
 The living stumbling o'er the dead,

As they deal fresh wounds and slay,
Destroying all things in their way.
Meanwhile the Count doth flee,
Followed by Lord Yvain, as he,
Count Alier, now feigns a wound,
Until by Yvain he is found
At the foot of a high hill, caught
Near to the entrance of a fort,
Which belongs to this Count;
Where he reigns in his mount,
With none there to lend him aid.
Now, with but little to be said,
Yvain accepted his surrender.
For once he had the Count closer,
And they were alone face to face,
Without the chance of escape,
The Count had no way to turn,
Or resist, and must thus return
To face the Lady of Noroison;
And there be held as if in prison,
And make peace mayhap with her.
Once he has so pledged his word,
He must then his helmet yield,
And from his neck loose his shield,
And render up his naked sword.
Then he doth the honour accord
To Yvain of leading him where he
May be handed to his enemies,
Who delight in it, and not a little.
The news was carried to the castle
Before they had arrived, and there
All met them, their delight to share,
Led by the lady of the land.
My Lord Yvain takes the hand
Of his prisoner, and presents him.

Of her demands she now tells him,
 The Count accedes most willingly,
 Swears by his faith such shall be;
 Thus she secures it upon oath,
 He gives his word and pledge, both.
 Pledges he gives to her and swears
 That he will live in peace with her,
 And all her losses will restore,
 All that she can prove and more,
 And rebuild where there is need.
 Once these things were all agreed
 As the lady wished, for his part,
 My Lord Yvain sought to depart.
 Nor would she have granted this
 If as his wife, and his mistress,
 He had taken her, thus to tarry
 There with her before they marry.
 But not one step would he allow
 Any man there to escort him now,
 But set himself to ride away,
 For naught could make him stay;
 Leaving the lady in sad plight,
 To whom he had brought delight.
 The greater the joy he brought her,
 The greater was her pain and deeper,
 When he no longer wished to stay.
 She'd wished to honour him that day,
 And make him, had it been his desire,
 Lord of all she possessed, entire;
 Or, if not that, to have granted him
 Wealth for his services, asking him
 To take as much as he might want.
 But to linger there was not his wont,
 He paid no heed to woman or man,
 But from her knights now was gone,



*'Thinking thus, my Lord Yvain
chose to kill the serpent first'*
The Book of Romance (p106, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

And the lady; though all might grieve,
Despite their pleas, he chose to leave.

LINES 3341-3484 YVAIN ENCOUNTERS THE LION

PENSIVELY, he took his way,
Until he came to a deep glade.
Among the trees, as he drew nigh,
He heard a loud and dismal cry,
And turned then towards the same,
To seek the spot from which it came,
And when he reached the very place
He saw a lion, in that open space,
And a serpent gripped it by the tail,
Striking its rear, like a fiery flail,
Scorching the beast with hot flame.
He spent no time, my Lord Yvain,
Watching this marvel rather took
Counsel with himself, at a look,
As to which of the two to aid.
The lion best deserved his aid,
For a venomous and treacherous
Creature should be slain by us,
And the serpent was venomous,
For from its throat fire burst,
So full it was of poisonous bane.
Thinking thus, my Lord Yvain
Chose to kill the serpent first,
Drew his sword, and then he durst
Advance, his shield before his face,
So as to bar the flames' embrace;
Foe from its throat the flames start,
A throat as wide as some great jar.

If the lion should then attack
It would ne'er an answer lack,
But, whatever might occur,
He would aid the lion first,
For pity urged him so to do,
To bring aid and succour to
A beast so grand and noble.
With a sharp and powerful
Blow of his blade, he first
Strikes the snake to the earth,
Then cuts it into separate parts,
Striking and slicing it apart,
Destroying it, piece by piece.
Yet, so that he might release
The lion, he is forced to cut
From its tail at least a foot,
Which the treacherous serpent's head
Has engulfed and on it fed;
Yet he cuts only what he must.
When the lion was freed at last,
He thought he would need to fight
And that it would attack outright,
Yet found it was not minded to.
Hear what the lion chose to do:
It acted nobly, for it bowed low,
And now began to act as though
It wished to surrender itself to him,
Extending its front paws towards him,
And lowering its head to the ground,
Kneeling, and fawning like a hound,
Hind legs raised; Yvain drew near,
To find its mask all wet with tears,
Moistened so, in humility.
My Lord Yvain, of a verity,
Knew the lion was thanking him,

Humbling itself there before him,
Because of the snake he had slain,
Delivering it from death, and pain.
He was pleased with his adventure,
He cleaned his sword of the ordure
And venom the snake left, and then
Sheathed his sword, now bright again,
And set off, to continue his ride,
With the lion walking by his side,
Unwilling to part from him ever,
Wishing to be his friend forever,
Eager now to serve and protect.
The lion walks on till it detects,
On the wind, the scent of prey.
Somewhere ahead, along the way,
A herd of wild deer are feeding,
And its nature then and breeding
Prompt the lion to seek its kill,
And secure itself food, at will;
Such is the nature of the beast.
It runs ahead, some way at least,
To show its master it has found
Spoor and scent upon the ground,
And halting, on encountering this,
Looks to its master, for its wish
Is to serve him in every way,
And not to wittingly disobey
His will, in any way whatever.
And Yvain sees from its manner
The lion awaits his command.
Yvain perceives and understands
That if he withdraws, it will too,
And if he follows it will pursue
The deer that it scented ahead.
So he cried out, and onward sped,

As if he were urging on a hound,
And then the lion, at the sound,
Set its nose to the deer's scent;
Nor did it err in its intent,
For within a bow-shot, in a vale,
It found its quarry without fail;
A deer was there feeding alone.
This the lion took, on its own,
Killing the deer at the first leap,
And of the hot blood drank deep.
Once it was dead, the lion laid
It on his back, and so conveyed
The warm carcase to his master,
Setting it down before him there.
Yvain now held him in deep affection,
For this display of true devotion.
Darkness fell, and it seemed good
To spend the night there in the wood,
And strip the deer of its venison,
Or of enough fine meat for one.
A cut along the rib he did make,
And from the loin carved a steak,
And striking a spark from his flint,
From dry brushwood flame did win,
Roasting his steak till it was done.
Yet the meal was a scanty one,
For he had neither salt nor bread
Nor knife nor cloth; yet he was fed.
While he was eating, the lion lay
By him, not stirring in any way,
But watched him steadily, as he
Took what he wished of the meat,
And ate till he could eat no more.
The lion the rest did then devour,
All the carcase down to the bone;

Then while Yvain slept all alone,
 His head resting on his shield,
 To win what rest that doth yield,
 The lion showed his intelligence,
 Lying awake, with every sense
 Alert, guarding Yvain's steed,
 That on the scanty grass did feed.

**LINES 3485-3562 YVAIN LAMENTS BREAKING
 HIS PROMISE TO HIS LADY**

AT dawn they both left together,
 And that life lived every other
 Single day of the next fortnight,
 Till chance led them to alight
 Upon the fount beneath the pine.
 There, nearing it a second time,
 Remembering all, my Lord Yvain
 Nigh on lost his wits again,
 On seeing the chapel and the stone.
 A thousand times he made moan,
 Then, grieving, fell into a swoon,
 And as he stumbled there, eftsoon
 His sword tumbled from its sheath,
 Striking the chain mail beneath
 The jaw, then entering his neck.
 The links split; naught could check
 The point which pierced, like a nail,
 The flesh beneath the shining mail,
 So that it caused hot blood to flow.
 The lion imagined that the blow
 Had killed its dear friend and master.
 You can ne'er have heard greater

Grief e'er written of or narrated,
Than that creature demonstrated.
He pawed the ground, and groaned,
Conceiving the wish, as he moaned,
Of pinning himself upon the sword
Which he thought had slain his lord.
Carrying the blade in his jaws, he
Lodged it against a fallen tree,
Pressed it against the trunk behind;
Thus it was firm and well-aligned,
To pierce him through the chest;
And so was nigh put to the test,
But Yvain emerged from his swoon,
And thus the lion escaped its doom,
When on the point of rushing upon
The blade as a wild boar has done,
Many a time, heedless of dying.
There my Lord Yvain was lying
Half in a swoon beside the stone.
Recovering, he made violent moan,
Blaming himself for returning late,
And thus incurring his lady's hate,
Crying: 'Why does he not choose
To die, who thus his joy doth lose?
Alas, for death should he not strive?
How then should I linger here, alive,
Viewing all this that my lady owns?
Why does a soul cling to these bones?
What does that soul do, dwelling here
In this sad flesh? Let it disappear,
And so be done with all its pain.
And so I should despise and blame
Myself, and tis true, for so I do.
Who loses all joy and comfort too
Through his own fault, he rightly

Should hate himself, and mortally.
 He ought to hate himself and die.
 Since none looks on, why should I
 Spare myself, and not die today?
 For, have I not seen this lion prey
 To such grief, for me, that it tried
 To kill itself, and well-nigh died
 By hurling itself upon my sword?
 Should I escape such death the more
 Who have turned delight to sorrow?
 Delight is far distant from me now.
 But of that I say naught: for, nay,
 There is, now, but naught to say.
 And all is but a foolish question.
 That joy I had in my possession
 Proved the greatest joy of mine,
 And yet endured such little time;
 Who ends his joy by his own hand,
 Good fortune should ne'er command.'

LINES 3563-3898 YVAIN PROMISES TO RESCUE LUNETE

WHILE Yvain bemoaned his fate
 Our poor Lunete, in wretched state,
 Imprisoned in the chapel there,
 Heard, and saw this whole affair,
 Through a crevice in the wall.
 And as soon as Yvain was all
 Recovered from his swoon, she cried:
 'Now tell me, who is this outside?
 Who is it who complaineth so?'
 He said: 'Who is it who would know?'
 'I am,' she said, 'a wretched thing,

For I'm the saddest person living.'
And he replied: 'Ah, fool, be silent!
Your grief is joy, your ill content.
Those who by great joy are won,
Are more saddened and more stunned
By grief than others, when it comes;
The weaker one, by use and custom,
May bear more weight than can another,
Though of greater strength, moreover,
Despite all that the latter would do.'
'By my faith,' she said, 'tis true,
These words you utter I believe,
Yet tis no reason to conceive
That your ills are worse than mine,
And as for that, though you repine,
It seems to me that you are free
To go where'er you wish to be,
While I remain imprisoned here;
Such is my fate, it would appear,
Thus I shall be seized tomorrow,
And must to mortal justice bow.'
'My God,' said he, 'for what misdeed?
'Sir knight,' she said, 'let God indeed
Ne'er have mercy on my poor soul
If I have ever deserved such woe!
Nonetheless I'll explain to you,
And every word I speak is true,
Why it should be I lie in prison:
I am here, then, accused of treason,
And to defend me can find none;
Tomorrow, I'll be burned or hung.'
'Well then,' he replied, 'I still say,
That my grief and sorrow outweigh
This grief and woe of yours, for you
Might be delivered by one who knew

Of the danger in which you lay.
 Might that be so?' 'Why yes, I say!
 But who that might be I know not,
 There are only two men, God wot,
 Who would dare to so defend me,
 By warring against three enemies.'
 'What,' said he, 'then there are three?'
 'Yes, sir knight, 'by my faith, there be
 Three who call me a traitor, I know'
 'Who are the two who love you so,
 That either would be daring enough
 To go against these three, for love,
 And save and protect you, say I?'
 'I will tell you, and speak no lie,
 For the one is my Lord Gawain,
 And the other is my Lord Yvain,
 Through whom, unjustly, I shall be
 Martyred tomorrow; tis death to me.'
 'Through whom? What say you?' said he,
 'Sire,' she said, 'May God defend me,
 Through the son of King Urien.'
 'And now,' he said, 'I comprehend!
 You'll not die except he dies too,
 For I am Yvain, through whom you
 Are now prisoned, in deep distress.
 And you indeed must be, no less,
 Than that Lunete who, most bravely,
 Guarded and preserved my body
 And life, twixt those portcullises,
 When I was troubled and in distress,
 Well-dismayed at being so caught.
 I should have been killed for sport
 Or taken then, if not for your aid.
 So tell me then, my sweet maid,
 Who is it accuses you of treason,

And keeps you here in this prison,
In such secluded confines too?’
‘Sire,’ she said, ‘I’ll hide naught from you,
Since you would have me tell you all;
Nor was I slow, as I recall,
To assist you in all good faith;
’Twas upon my advice i’faith,
My lady took you as her sire,
And by my counsel did so desire;
And, by the sacred Paternoster,
I believed it was for her, rather
Than you, indeed, that I did so;
In all of this I’d have you know.
It was her honour and your desire
I served; God knows I am no liar.
But when it came about that you
Had not returned when you were due,
Within the year that you agreed,
My lady was furious with me,
And said that she had been deceived
By all I’d said, that she’d believed.
And once she’d told her Seneschal,
A cunning and a faithless rascal,
Who towards me bore great envy;
For on many a matter, you see,
She trusted him far less than me.
He knew to pursue his enmity
Against me, and claimed ere long,
In open court, all looking on,
I treacherously favoured you;
Nor had I aid or counsel true,
Except mine own, and yet I knew
Never had I sought to pursue
Treachery in deed, or thought.
So I answered, before the court,

Without taking counsel myself,
 That I would be defended well,
 By one who'd battle any three.
 He was so lacking in courtesy
 That he disdained to refuse,
 Nor could I retreat, or excuse
 Myself whate'er might happen.
 At my word had I been taken;
 So I was forced to furnish bail,
 And in forty days, without fail,
 Must find a knight to battle three.
 Many courts I journeyed to see;
 I travelled to King Arthur's court,
 But found no aid, nor what I sought,
 Nor were there any there who could
 Tell aught of you, for ill or good,
 For of yourself they had no news.'
 'Where then was that kind and true,
 And honest knight, my Lord Gawain?
 Any maid that to him complained
 On approaching him, her distress
 He'd ne'er fail thus to address.'
 'If I had found Gawain at court,
 Whatever it was that I now sought
 He would ne'er have denied it me,
 But some knight, so they told me,
 Had lately carried off the Queen,
 The King having, quite foolishly,
 Let her abroad, in his company;
 The King, I believe, sent Gawain
 After the knight, and he was fain
 To seek her, in his great distress.
 Nor will he know a moment's rest,
 Until he again restores the lady.
 Now have I, and in verity,

Told the whole of my adventure.
Yet tomorrow I'll live no longer,
For a shameful death, I'll meet,
All through you and your deceit.'
'May God forbid,' Yvain replied,
'That e'er, for me, you should die!
Nor shall you yet, while I am here.
Tomorrow, then, will I appear,
Prepared, with all my strength,
To employ my body, at length,
For your deliverance, as I ought.
Take care, if my name is sought,
To tell all those present naught!
And when the battle has been fought,
Still utter not a word of me.'
'There's no torment, of a certainty,
Would make me reveal your name,
Since you charge me with the same;
Sire, I would rather suffer death.
Yet I pray that you, nonetheless,
Do not battle thus for my sake.
I would not have you undertake
Such a desperate fight as this.
I thank you too for your promise
That you would willingly do so;
Think yourself free of it, though,
For better it is that I die alone
Than witness the pleasure shown
At your fate, as well as mine;
For to death they'll me consign
Once they have seen you killed;
'Tis better that you live on still,
Than that both encounter death.'
'Now' said Yvain, 'I feel the breath
Of your despair, my dear friend;

I fear that either you intend
 To seek death and not be saved,
 Or do despise the willing aid
 I bring to your deliverance.
 Cease such pleas to advance,
 For you have wrought so much for me
 I shall not fail, of a surety,
 To bring you aid, come what may.
 Though I witness your dismay;
 If it please God, in whom I trust
 All three shall lie there in the dust.
 Now no more, for now I should
 Seek some shelter in that wood,
 Since there can be no lodging here.’
 ‘She replied, ‘May God, my dear,
 Give you good shelter and good night,
 And, as I wish, keep you outright
 From every danger there might be!’
 My Lord Yvain, went guardedly
 On his way, and the lion after.
 They went on, a little further,
 Reaching the castle of a baron,
 Both well-fortified and strong,
 Its walls high, with nary a fault;
 Thus the castle feared no assault,
 From catapult or mangonel,
 Nor could it be stormed at will;
 And outside the walls the ground
 Had been cleared all around,
 With never a hut or dwelling.
 And you may hear at some fitting
 Time the reason why that was so.
 Now, my Lord Gawain did go
 The shortest way to the castle,
 And seven pages forth did amble,

Once the bridge had been lowered,
To meet him, and yet they covered
When they had sight of the lion,
All being most afear'd of him;
So they asked him, if he pleased,
Whether the lion, for their ease,
Might wait outside, before the gate.
Yvain replied: 'No more! I state
That I'll not enter without him;
Either we find lodgings within,
Or I'll remain outside, myself,
For he is as dear as my own self.
Nonetheless you need fear him not,
For I will keep him close, God wot,
So all of you may be reassured.'
They answered: 'Be it so, my lord!
Then the castle they do enter,
And pass on till they encounter
Many a knight and fair lady,
Many a maid of high degree,
Who salute him with honour,
Helping him remove his armour,
Saying: 'Welcome be yours, fair sir,
Who enter now among us here,
And God grant that you may stay
Until you leave us, on a day,
Rich in honour, and content.'
This, high and low, is their intent;
Their pleasure in him to display,
As they to the castle lead away.
But when their first joy is over,
A deep sadness they remember,
Which makes them forget their joy;
Tears and cries they now employ,
And begin themselves to cudgel.

Thus for a long while they mingle
 Tears with joy, joy with sadness;
 Joy still in honouring their guest,
 Yet their thoughts are elsewhere,
 For an event fills them with care
 That they expect on the morrow,
 Certain they are that it will follow;
 Happening, indeed, before midday.
 My Lord Yvain was so amazed
 At all these frequent changes of tack,
 From joyousness to grief, and back,
 That he advanced that very question,
 Asking the castle's lord the reason:
 'Fair, dear and gentle sir,' said he,
 'By God in heaven, please tell me
 Why you all have honoured me so,
 And thus mix your joy with sorrow?'
 'Yes, if such should be your pleasure,
 Yet to know naught of the matter,
 Would yet prove far wiser a wish;
 To sadden you by speaking of this,
 Is what I would ne'er seek to do,
 For it can only bring grief to you.'
 'I must not do naught, leave all be,
 And fail to hear the truth,' said he,
 'For I wish greatly now to know,
 What trial tis I must undergo.'
 'Well then, I'll seek to tell you all.
 A giant doth this realm appal,
 By seeking after my daughter,
 Who is more lovely, and by far,
 Than any maiden to be found.
 This fell giant, whom God confound,
 Is named Harpin of the Mountain,
 Who, every day, doth cause me pain,

By seizing, from me, all he can.
Better right than I hath no man
To complain, lament, and grieve;
I shall go mad, ah, I do believe,
For had not I six knightly sons,
In all the world the fairest ones,
And the giant has seized all six;
Before my eyes, two he picked
To kill, and the rest, tomorrow,
He will slay, to my great sorrow,
Except I can find one who might
For the lives of my four sons fight,
Or surrender my daughter to him,
Whom he says that he will ruin,
And give to the vilest of his court
The basest fellows, for their sport,
Since he himself loves her no longer.
Such the grief tomorrow offers,
If you or God deny me aid.
So tis not any wonder today
Fair sir, that we are full of sorrow;
Yet, for you, we try to borrow,
For a moment, a cheerful face,
And honour you in this place.
For he's a fool who has as guest
A nobleman, and fails of his best,
And a noble man you seem to be.
Now have I explained wholly,
The whole cause of our distress;
For in neither town nor fortress
Has this giant left for us aught
Except all that here we brought.
If you have taken a look around,
Then indeed you'll have found
He has scarce left an egg or two,

But for the walls which are new;
For he has almost razed the place.
When he has taken or defaced
All he wishes, the rest he fires,
And torments me as he desires.’

**LINES 3899-3956 YVAIN AGREES TO FIGHT
THE GIANT, HARPIN**

MY Lord Yvain attention paid
To all that his host had to say;
When he had heard everything,
He was pleased to answer him:
‘Sire,’ said he, ‘your unhappiness
Yields me much sorrow and distress,
And yet to me it seems a marvel,
That you have ne’er sought counsel
At the court of good King Arthur,
For there’s no man of such power
That at his court he could not find
Many a knight who’d feel inclined
To prove themselves against him.’
Then this man of wealth tells him
That, at the court, indeed, he would
Have found true aid if any could
Have told him where to find Gawain.
‘Nor would I have asked in vain,
For my wife is his cousin germain:
But a foreign knight had been fain
To lead away the wife of the king,
Whom at the court he’d gone seeking,
Nor would he have succeeded too,
Not by any means that he knew,

Had not Kay beguiled King Arthur
Such that the king had placed her
In the man's charge, in all innocence;
He a fool, she lacking prudence.
Great the harm and great the loss,
And great the both to me because
Tis certain that my Lord Gawain
Would have hastened here again
For his niece and for his nephews,
If of this matter he'd heard news;
But he knows naught, and so I grieve,
Enough to break one's heart, I believe;
For he's gone chasing after that same
Knight, to whom may God grant shame
And woe, for leading the Queen away.'
Hearing all this, my Lord Yvain
Doth frequently yield up a sigh,
And, driven by pity, doth reply:
'Fair noble sir, right willingly
Will I, instead, take upon me,
This adventure, and its peril,
If the giant and your sons will
Only arrive tomorrow in time,
Delaying me but little, for I'm
Bound to be away, and soon;
Tomorrow at the hour of noon,
A promise I uttered I must keep.'
'Fair sir, my thanks you shall reap,
A hundred thousand times indeed,'
Said the nobleman, 'for this deed.'
And all the good folk in his castle,
They thank my Lord Yvain as well.

**LINES 3957-4384 YVAIN SLAYS THE GIANT,
THEN HASTENS TO SAVE LUNETE**

THEN came forth from her chamber,
 A lovely maiden, his fair daughter,
 Her form graceful, her face pleasing.
 She was simple, quiet, and grieving,
 For her sorrow appeared endless;
 Her head was inclined, in sadness.
 And then her mother entered too,
 For the host had summoned the two
 To come to him, and meet his guest;
 Both held their mantles to their heads
 In order to conceal their tears,
 But he urged them to calm their fears,
 And uncover their faces straight,
 Saying: 'You should not hesitate,
 To do as I now command you to;
 God and good fortune have, today,
 Brought you this noble man, I say,
 And he will fight the giant for us.
 Now give thanks to the courageous,
 And throw yourselves at his feet!
 'May God forbid, it is not meet;
 Tis no way fitting for me to see
 These ladies offer such courtesies,
 Sister and niece to my Lord Gawain,'
 In protest cried, my Lord Yvain.
 And may God Himself defend me
 From such pride as could ever see
 Them humbling themselves at my name,
 For I could never forget the shame.

But I would yet give thanks if they
Were comforted a little this day;
And then tomorrow they will see
If God Himself will grant them mercy.
Yet now I have no other prayer
But that the giant will be there,
And in good time, that I may not
Break my true word, for I must not
Fail to be present at noon elsewhere
Tomorrow, at a mighty affair,
The worst business I must say
I've undertaken for many a day.'
Thus doth Yvain show unwilling
To reassure them quite, knowing
That if the giant fails to appear,
In ample time, he must, he fears,
Still rescue Lunete, the maiden,
In the chapel as yet imprisoned.
Nevertheless what he doth promise
Leaves them full of hopefulness;
And he is thanked by one and all,
For his prowess, that men recall,
And think him a true nobleman
Seeing his lion, like a lamb,
As confident in man's company
As any creature e'er might be.
The hope that they place in him
Comforts and brings joy to them,
And they lay aside their sadness.
And when the hour arrived for rest,
They led him to a fine chamber.
Both the maiden and her mother
Escorted him to a room, quite near,
For they already held him dear,
And a hundred thousand times more

Would have done so, I am sure,
 If they'd known all his courtesy
 And prowess; and the lion and he
 Both lay down, and fell asleep.
 But the others all feared the beast,
 And shut the door up tight so they
 Could not emerge, come what may;
 Till the next day, when in the morn,
 The door was opened wide at dawn.
 Yvain arose, and next heard Mass,
 And then, as promised, he let pass
 The hour of prime, ere summoning
 In the hearing of all, his host to him,
 Then he addressed him, with honour:
 'Sire,' he said, 'I can wait no longer,
 Let me leave, though you wish it not,
 For though I linger here, I must not.
 But I would have you know that I
 Would gladly have stayed to defy
 The giant, and I will, awhile at least,
 For the sake of the nephews and niece
 Of my Lord Gawain, whom I do love.'
 At this the maiden is sorely moved,
 Her every vein trembles in fear;
 The lady and her lord appear
 As moved, fearing he will depart,
 Wishing from the depths of their hearts
 That they might stoop there at his feet,
 Yet knowing he'd think it not meet,
 Deeming it neither well nor good.
 So then his host offered him goods,
 Either in land, or some other guise,
 Could he but agree, in any wise,
 That he with them might so remain.
 'God forbid,' cried my Lord Yvain,



*'By the Queen of Heaven she begs,
by the angels, and the Lord above'*
The Book of Romance (p352, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

‘That I should accept aught of yours!
 From the maiden the tears do pour;
 Greatly she grieves, in her dismay,
 Begging him thus that he might stay.
 A maid distraught and in distress,
 By the Queen of Heaven she begs,
 By the angels, and the Lord above,
 That he will elect not to remove,
 And for a little while might wait,
 For her and for her uncle’s sake,
 Whom he doth know, love and prize.
 Then doth great pity within him rise,
 On hearing her proffer her request,
 In the name of the man he loves best,
 And in that of the Queen of Heaven,
 And God Himself, the sweet leaven,
 The honey of mercy none may deny.
 Full of anguish he heaves a sigh;
 For the kingdom of Tarsus, he
 Would not see Lunete, cruelly,
 Burned at the stake, she to whom
 He gave his promise, for his doom
 Would be death, or madness again,
 If too late to her help he came;
 Yet, on the other hand, to recall
 The great kindnesses, above all,
 Of his dear friend, Lord Gawain,
 Near breaks his heart in two again,
 He knowing that he cannot stay.
 And yet he doth not ride away,
 But so delays and lingers near,
 The giant doth suddenly appear,
 Driving, in front of him, the knights,
 And hanging there at neck-height,
 He carries a stake, big and square,

Point before, spurring them there.
Nor were they clothed in aught
Worth a straw, dressed in naught
But torn shirts, filthy and soiled;
Hands and feet tied, they toiled
To stay aloft, on four tired hacks
Weak and thin, with broken backs,
That limped on, as best they could.
As they advanced, beside the wood,
A dwarf, hunchbacked and swollen,
Who'd knotted the horses' tails in one,
Beat the knights, remorselessly
With a four-tailed scourge, till he
Had marred them from head to toe,
As though some prize for doing so
Were his. He beat them till they bled,
Thus were they shamefully sped,
Betwixt the giant and the dwarf.
The giant cried out to the lord,
Before the gate there, in the plain,
That his four sons would now be slain,
If he did not produce his daughter,
So as to avoid their slaughter;
Then the daughter he would offer
To his lads, to make sport of her,
For he'd not love, or have her, ever;
She'd have a thousand lads about her,
Often enough, and repeatedly,
Naked wretches, vile and lousy,
Scullery boys, scum from the kitchen,
Who'd all grant her their attention.
At this the lord was sore dismayed,
Listening to this fellow portray
What fate his daughter would face,
Or, should he save her from disgrace,

Hearing how his four sons would die.
 And such distress is his, say I,
 That he would rather die than live.
 Full often a deep sigh he doth give,
 And weeps and bemoans the day.
 Then to him Lord Yvain doth say:
 ‘Sire, most vile, most insolent,
 Boastful, indeed, is this giant.
 Yet God above will ne’er suffer
 Your daughter to be in his power!’
 So says my frank and noble Yvain.
 ‘He insults her, and shows disdain.
 Dire would be the misadventure,
 If indeed so lovely a creature,
 And one of such high import,
 Were given to vile lads in sport.
 Come, my armour, and my steed!
 Lower the drawbridge now, with speed,
 And let me forth, for forth I must.
 One will be left here in the dust,
 Whether he or I, I do not know;
 Yet can I but humiliate, though,
 This cruel felon at your gate
 Who comes against you straight,
 Such that he renders you your sons,
 And, for his insults, have him come
 And make amends to you, then I
 May commend you to God on high,
 And go about my own affairs.’
 His horse was led to him there,
 And a squire his armour brought,
 And to arm him swiftly sought,
 So that he was soon equipped.
 In doing so they let naught slip,
 Taking as little time as they might.



*'Against the giant now made assay,
struck the giant a trenchant blow'*

The Book of Romance (p260, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

Once they had fully armed the knight,
 There was naught remained but, lo,
 To lower the bridge and let him go.
 They lowered it and away he went
 Nor was the lion, his friend, content
 By any means, to remain behind;
 While those who were so left, I find,
 Commended him to Our Saviour,
 For they greatly feared the power
 Of that miscreant, their enemy,
 Who'd conquered and slain so many,
 On that field, before their eyes,
 Anxious lest this end likewise.
 So they pray God might defend
 From death and save their friend,
 And grant he might kill the giant.
 And each man prays, as best he can,
 Most silently to his God above.
 For now the giant made a move,
 A fierce advance, threatening too,
 Crying: 'The man who hath sent you
 Loves you but little, by my eyes!
 And for certain he could realise
 Vengeance on you in no better way.
 He wreaks his revenge well, I say,
 For whatever wrong you've done.'
 But Yvain, who was afraid of none,
 Replied: 'Mere empty speech I find.
 Now do your best and I will mine,
 You weary me with words in vain.'
 And thereupon my Lord Yvain,
 Now anxious to be on his way,
 Struck the giant, in fierce assay,
 Whose breast a bear-skin covered.
 Though the giant soon recovered,

And ran towards him, full pelt,
My Lord Yvain a fresh blow dealt,
On his breast, that broke the skin,
And the tip of his lance drove in,
And tasted hot blood in its course.
Yet, wielding the stake with force,
The giant forced him to bow low.
Yvain drew his sword, fierce blows
Of which he could swiftly deal,
Knowing the giant lacked a shield,
Reliant on brute force instead,
Scorning armour, helm for his head;
Thus he, who had drawn his blade,
Against the giant now made assay,
Struck the giant a trenchant blow,
Not with the flat, but slicing so
As to cut from his cheek a steak,
While the other, wielding his stake,
Dealt Yvain such a blow he fell
Over his horse's neck, as well.
At the blow, the lion, unafraid,
Rose up, to bring its master aid,
And leapt in anger, tooth and claw
Shredding the pelt the giant wore,
In its rage, like the bark of a tree.
Thus it tore away a massive piece
Of the thigh, with its layer of skin,
Flesh and sinew embedded within.
The giant fought free, with a fierce pull,
Roaring and bellowing, like a bull,
For the lion had wounded him badly.
Wielding his stake in both hands, madly,
He thought to strike the lion but failed,
For the cunning lion swift turned tail,
The giant's blow was dealt in vain,

And he fell beside my Lord Yvain,
But without either of them touching.
Now did my Lord Yvain, wielding
His sharp sword, land two great blows,
Dealt quickly, before the giant rose,
And with the trenchant edge cut free
The arm and shoulder from the body;
With his next blow he drove the rest
Through the liver, below the chest,
Driving home the whole of his blade;
The giant fell; with his life he paid.
And if a massive oak were to fall,
Twould make no greater sound at all,
Than that giant made when he fell.
All those upon the wall were well
Pleased at seeing that mighty blow.
Then were the speediest seen below,
Longing to be first at the kill,
Like hounds in the chase that will
Run till they seize upon the deer;
So the men and women ran here,
Towards the giant without delay,
Where he now, face downward, lay.
And the lord hastened there as well,
And all the nobles from the castle,
And the daughter, and her mother;
While joy reigned among the brothers,
After the woe those four had suffered.
But though their services they offered,
They saw they could no longer detain,
Despite their prayers, my Lord Yvain;
And yet they beseeched him to return,
To stay and enjoy the rest he'd earned,
As soon as he'd done with the affair
That was summoning him elsewhere.

And he replied that he did not dare
To promise them aught for, once there,
He could say naught for certain, till
He knew if fate meant him good or ill;
But this much he did ask of the lord,
That his four sons seize the dwarf,
And with his daughter ride, amain,
To the court, to my Lord Gawain,
Once they knew of that knight's return;
And all that happened, there, confirm,
And relate what he had done, alone;
For good deeds should be widely known.
The lord replied: 'I would not be right
To hide such kindness from the light,
And,' he added 'be sure we shall do
Whatever it is you'd wish us to;
But tell me now what should we say,
Sire, when we meet with Lord Gawain;
To whom should we grant the fame,
Having no knowledge of your name?'
And he replied: 'This shall you say
When you stand afore him that day,
The Knight of the Lion is my name,
And that I told you to state the same.'
And I now make a request, that you
Convey, from me to him, this truth:
If he knows not then who I may be,
Yet I know him well as he doth me.
There is naught else I require of you,
And thus I must bid you all adieu;
That which doth me most dismay
Is that too long I extend my stay;
For ere the hour of noon is past,
I face elsewhere an ample task,
If I can indeed outrun the hour.'

Then swiftly he rode from the tower,
 Though, before he went, his host
 Begged him, to the very utmost,
 To take with him his four sons,
 For of the four there was not one
 Would fail to serve him if he wished.
 It pleases him not, though they insist,
 That any should keep him company;
 Forth he goes, that place doth leave,
 And, careless of both life and limb,
 As fast as his horse can carry him,
 He now returns to the distant chapel.
 The way ran straight toward the dell,
 And he knew how to keep the road;
 Before he reached the chapel though
 They had dragged Lunete outside;
 Already the pyre was raised on high,
 On which she'd die in short shrift.
 And there, naked but for her shift,
 Bound before the pyre they held her,
 All those who did her guilt infer,
 Based on a plot that she denied.
 And now it was that Yvain arrived,
 Saw to what they would bring her,
 And was thus consumed by anger;
 For neither courteous nor wise
 Are any who'd think him otherwise.
 Indeed his anger proves immense,
 But he trusts in God, and hence
 That God and the right will see
 Him right, they being of his party.
 For in their company he will fight,
 And no less trusts the lion's might.
 On the crowd he advances swiftly,
 Crying: 'Now, let the maid go free,

You sinful folk, as I do command!
It is not right that she should stand
Within the flames, though innocent.’
And on either side they now relent,
And part to leave him passage way,
Neither will he brook more delay,
Until his own eyes gaze on, there,
She whom he must aid, where’er
She might be, with all his heart;
So his eyes seek her, for his part,
Until he finds her, yet restrains
His heart, as one grasps the reins,
And holds in check, a lively steed.
Nonetheless, he is glad, indeed,
To see her, and sighs so to see,
Although he sighs not openly,
That none might see he does so,
Stifling all, that none might know.
And he is seized with pity also
When he sees, hears, and knows
The grief of the ladies, who cry,
With many a sad tear and sigh:
‘Ah God, thus, you forget us now,
Leave us in deep despair, we trow,
We who shall lose so dear a friend,
Who such good counsel us did lend,
And did intercede for us at court!
She it was for our comfort besought
My lady to clothe us in robes of vair;
All altered now will be our affairs,
For there’ll be none to speak for us.
Cursed be he who caused our loss,
For great is the harm he has brought.
There will be none to say at court:
“Dear lady, give that cloak of vair,

That surcoat and that fine gown there,
 To such and such an honest maid,"
 For so her charity she displayed,
 "Truly, right well will you employ,
 These things with which you toy,
 For she is in need of them today."
 Such words as these none will say,
 For none are so true and courteous;
 Rather than helping others thus,
 Each seeks their own to secure,
 Though they need nothing more.'

LINES 4385-4474 YVAIN CHAMPIONS LUNETE

THUS did they lament their fate,
 And my Lord Yvain, as I do state,
 Among them all, heard their plaint,
 Which was neither false nor faint:
 He saw Lunete there, on her knees,
 In her shift, as the law doth please;
 She had already made confession,
 Besought God's mercy for her sins,
 And summoned up her punishment.
 Yvain, who'd loved her deeply, went
 Towards her, raised her to her feet,
 And said: 'Dear maid, where may I meet,
 Those who've accused you from afar?
 Let them come from where'er they are,
 And, here and now, do battle with me.'
 And she who'd neither sought to see,
 Nor look at, him said: 'Sire, indeed,
 You come now in my hour of need,
 On God's behalf, for so it must be!



'He saw Lunete there, on her knees'
The Book of Romance (p132, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

Those who bore false testimony,
 They stand all about me here.
 If you'd arrived much later, I fear,
 I'd have been but ash and cinder.
 But you are here, as my defender,
 And may God grant you strength,
 In accord with my innocence,
 As regards the charge against me.'
 The Seneschal listened to this speech,
 With his two brothers by his side,
 'Ah, woman, truth averse,' they cried,
 'But full ready with many a lie!
 That knight's a fool who seeks to die,
 On your account, in this affair.
 That knight is a sad rascal there,
 Who comes now to challenge me,
 When he is one, and we are three.
 My advice to him is: retreat,
 Before your downfall proves complete.'
 Yvain replied, now angered quite:
 'Let those flee who fear, sir knight!
 I'm not so scared of your three shields,
 That without a blow I'd yield.
 I would prove a rascal indeed,
 Did I the field to you concede,
 Body intact, without a wound!
 As long as I am whole and sound,
 I'll not flee for all your threats.
 But I'd advise you to forget
 Your claim now, and free this maid,
 Whom you unjustly have waylaid;
 She has said, and I believe her,
 For on her faith she doth swear,
 On peril of her soul, that she
 Hath never committed treachery

Against her lady, in word or deed,
Or thought; to all that I accede,
Thus I'll defend her as best I can,
For innocence will aid a man.
Hear, if you would, the truth, sir knight,
God ever holds to what is right.
For God and Justice they are friends,
And if to me their aid they send,
Then I am in worthy company,
And worthier aid is granted me.'
Then the other foolishly replies
That he may try him in any wise,
As he should please, or as he can,
So long as the lion is banned.
And Yvain replies that the lion
Will not fight as his companion,
And that he needs no other there.
But should the lion attack, beware,
Let him defend himself full well,
For more than that he cannot tell.
'Whate'er you say,' said the Seneschal,
'If your lion you will not call,
And keep it quiet on one side,
You shall no longer here abide.
Be gone at once, and be wise,
For, in this country, all realise
How this girl betrayed her lady;
'Tis right that she suffer swiftly
The punishment she doth merit.'
'Not so, by the Holy Spirit,'
Cried Yvain, who knew the truth.
'Let God deny me joy, forsooth,
If I should fail to deliver her!'
Then he told the lion to defer,
Retreat, and lie down silently,
And as requested, so did he.

**LINES 4475-4532 YVAIN FIGHTS THE SENESCHAL
AND HIS BROTHERS**

THE lion withdrew completely;
 And the dispute and the parley
 Being ended both retreated;
 Then all three Yvain greeted,
 As he rode towards them slowly,
 Not wishing to be beaten wholly,
 Or toppled at the very first blow.
 Thus keeping his own lance whole
 He let the three their lances wield,
 Making a target of his shield,
 Against which each man broke his lance;
 Yvain withdrew, better to advance,
 And halted eighty yards away,
 But then, not wishing to delay,
 Returned to confront them all.
 Attacking, he met the Seneschal
 Before he ever reached his kin,
 Splintering a lance upon him,
 Despite the shield, laying him low,
 Giving him such a mighty blow,
 Long he lay stunned, disarmed,
 Without the means to work harm.
 And then the two brothers attacked;
 With bare blades, they dealt no lack
 Of mighty blows, both together,
 But greater blows he doth deliver,
 For every one of his compares
 In power to any two of theirs.
 Thus he defends himself so well

They fail to make their strength tell,
Until the Seneschal now recovered
Adds his weight to his two brothers';
And all three then make their stand,
Thus slowly gaining the upper hand.
The lion, watching Yvain defend,
No longer waits to aid his friend;
Yvain needs him, now or never;
While the ladies, gathered together,
Who are all devoted to Lunete,
Call upon God to help him yet,
Begging Him, most earnestly,
Not to grant those three victory,
Nor let Yvain be killed that day,
Who for her doth enter the fray.
The ladies aid him with their prayers,
The only weapons that are theirs.
And the lion assists also
Such that with its very first blow
It strikes so at the Seneschal,
Who has risen after his fall,
That links fly from his chain mail
Like loose straw blown in a gale;
With such force it bowls him over,
Tearing the flesh from his shoulder,
And all down his left flank beside.
Whatever it touches it tears aside,
So that his innards are laid bare;
While his brothers, vengeance dare.



*'Yvain, to deter the creature,
menaced it with threats and blows'*
The Book of Romance (p122, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

**LINES 4533-4634 YVAIN IS VICTORIOUS,
AND GOES TO SEEK HIS LADY**

Now their numbers are both equal,
For the Seneschal's wound is mortal,
As he twists, and writhes, and claws
Through a wave of blood that pours,
In a crimson stream, from his body.
While he thus did suffer greatly,
The lion now attacked the brothers.
Though Yvain, to deter the creature,
Menaced it with threats and blows,
He failed to drive it backwards so.
And the lion doubtless knew,
Its master set no slight value
On its aid, but loved it the more;
So it attacked with greater force,
Till the brothers bent to its blows,
And it was wounded by its foes.
Yvain seeing the lion wounded,
Is pained to the heart, angered
By its treatment, and rightly so;
And in revenge strikes such blows
And presses them so hard that they
Are beaten back, and held at bay;
Till they are so weak defensively,
They throw themselves on his mercy;
Due most to the lion's fierce attack,
Which had taken them so aback,
Though the beast was sore dismayed,
Wounded all over, by their blades.
Nor for his part was my Lord Yvain

In any the less distress and pain,
 With many a wound to his body.
 Though for his own self his worry
 Is less than for the wounded lion.
 And now has he deliverance won
 For the maiden, as he has wished,
 And the lady has now dismissed
 The charge against her, of her grace.
 And those are burned in her place,
 Who for her had built the pyre.
 For tis right and just we require
 Those who accuse the innocent
 To receive the very punishment
 That they themselves pronounce.
 Now her joy doth Lunete announce,
 Being reconciled with her mistress;
 And they enjoy such happiness
 As never did any two such before.
 And all now offered to their lord,
 While they lived, loyal service,
 Without recognising him, that is.
 Even the lady, she who had got
 His heart, and yet knew him not,
 Begged him to stay if he pleased
 Until he was once more at ease,
 And he and his lion recovered.
 He replied: 'Lady, I could never
 Remain a moment in this place,
 Until I am no more in disgrace
 And my lady free of her anger;
 That alone can end my labour.'
 'Indeed,' she said, 'that troubles me.
 That lady must fail in courtesy,
 Who shows anger toward you.
 She should not close her door to

A knight who is so valorous,
Unless he has proven traitorous.’
‘Lady’ he said, ‘though it hurts me,
What e’er she wishes pleases me;
But speak no more of the matter,
For the reason, or the crime rather,
I will say naught of, but to those
Who know how the affair arose.’
‘Does any know of it but you two?’
‘Yes, truly, lady.’ ‘Well, your name
Fair sir, now tell me that very same,
And then you are quite free to leave.’
‘Quite free, lady? I must say nay,
For I owe more than I can pay.
Yet I ought not to hide, I own,
The name by which I may be known.
Word of the knight of the lion
You may hear, tis of me alone.
By that title I would be called.’
‘By God, fair sir, I cannot recall
That I have e’er seen you before,
Nor heard this name of yours?’
‘Lady, from that you may see,
It is not widely known indeed.’
The lady returned to her theme:
‘Once more, if it doth not seem
Displeasing to you, please stay.’
‘Lady, I’d dare not linger a day,
Unless I knew, of a certainty,
Her goodwill encompassed me.’
‘Then may God grant, fair sir,
That all you endure and suffer,
He of His grace may turn to joy!’
‘Lady, God hear, and thus employ
Such grace!’ he said. Then silently:

'Lady, tis you that holds the key.
You possess though you know it not
The casket wherein my joy is locked.'

**LINES 4635-4674 YVAIN DEPARTS CARRYING THE LION
INSIDE HIS SHIELD**

THEN he departed in great distress,
None knowing who he was, unless
We except Lunete, for she alone
Rode with him some way on her own.
Lunete alone kept him company,
And he requested her, frequently,
Not to reveal whom he might be
The champion who'd set her free.
'Sire,' she replied, 'I never would.'
Then he requested that she should
Remember him and strive that he
Be thought of kindly by his lady,
Whene'er, that is, she had the chance.
She says that, in that circumstance,
She will, and she will not forget,
But work for him as loyally yet.
He thanks in her a thousand ways,
Then, pensively, he rides away,
Concerned for his lion which he,
As it cannot walk, must carry.
Of his shield he makes a litter,
Employing moss, fern, and other
Fronds, in which he lays the lion
Just as gently as ever he can,
And carries him half-concealed,
Within the inmost of his shield.



'She alone, rode with him some way on her own'
The Book of Romance (p10, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

Thus he goes to seek his fate,
 Until he stops before the gate
 Of a mansion, strong and fair.
 Finding it shut, he halted there,
 And called, upon which a porter
 Opened the gate in short order,
 Requiring no second command,
 But seized the reins in his hand,
 Saying to him: 'Fair sir, enter,
 My master's greetings I proffer;
 May it please you to descend.'
 'A lodging I would welcome, friend,'
 Yvain replied, 'for I'm in need
 Of his hospitality, indeed.'

**LINES 4675-4702 YVAIN AND THE LION ARE CURED
 OF THEIR WOUNDS**

THUS through the gate he passed,
 And saw the household, en masse,
 Running forward there to meet him,
 Help him dismount, and greet him.
 On the ground a space they made
 For his shield where the lion lay,
 Then took his horse by the bridle
 And led it quietly to the stable,
 While, as was their duty, others
 Relieved him of arms and armour.
 The master having heard the news
 Came, just as soon as he knew,
 To greet him there in the court,
 And then his lady he had brought,
 And his sons and daughters all,

And a host of others, from the hall,
Who offer him lodging, in delight.
They gave him a room, full quiet,
For they saw that he was wounded,
And showed kindness unbounded
By placing the lion at his side,
Who silently did there abide;
And to minister to him two maids
Well versed in surgery, now stayed
By his side, daughters of the lord,
Remaining there till he was cured.
But just how long he was there,
Whether a long or brief affair,
Before he and the lion were well,
And went away, I could not tell.

**LINES 4703-4736 THE TWO DAUGHTERS OF
THE LORD OF BLACKTHORN**

BUT, within that time, it appears
The Lord of Blackthorn, old in years,
Was set to have it out with death,
Death so robbing him of breath,
That he was thus obliged to die.
After his death it seems, say I,
That of the lord's two daughters
The claim was made by the elder
That she would now rule the land
For all the days at her command;
The younger would take no share.
She would go, cried the younger,
To the court of good King Arthur,
And there pursue her claim further.

And when the elder sister saw
 The younger would not withdraw
 Her rightful claim on the estate
 She was in a most dreadful state,
 Thinking, if possible, she ought
 To be the first to arrive at court.
 So she prepared for the journey,
 And once equipped did not tarry,
 But rode till to the court she came.
 Her sister followed, but in vain,
 For though after her she chased,
 And at full speed she did haste,
 The elder had already gained
 A hearing with my Lord Gawain,
 And he had quickly promised her
 That upon which they did confer.
 But between them they agreed
 If she said aught of it, then he'd
 Not take up arms for her again;
 And she swore thus to Gawain.

**LINES 4737-4758 THE YOUNGER DAUGHTER ARRIVES
AT ARTHUR'S COURT**

Now the younger arrived at court,
 And she was attired in a short
 Mantle of scarlet cloth and ermine.
 Twas the third day since the Queen
 Had returned from the prison where
 Maleagant had been holding her,
 With many another, in captivity,
 And Lancelot, through treachery
 In that tower was forced to stay.

And upon that very same day
That the younger came to court
News of the vile Harpin was brought,
That giant, that monstrous felon
Whom the brave knight of the lion
Had mortally wounded and defeated.
In his name, Gawain was greeted
By the nephew, and the niece, who
Told him all that they both knew
Of the knight's service and prowess
In aiding them in their distress.
And said Gawain knew him well,
Though who he was none could tell.

**LINES 4759-4820 THE YOUNGER DAUGHTER
REQUESTS A CHAMPION**

OF this the younger was aware,
Such that she knew great despair,
And sadness and deep dejection,
For she'd find scant protection
At the court, and little assistance,
If its finest knight was absent.
She had appealed frequently
And insistently but lovingly
For aid to my Lord Gawain,
Yet he replied: 'My dear, tis vain
To beg for my involvement there,
For I have at hand another affair,
Which in no way dare I neglect.'
So the maiden left him, to direct
Her steps at once towards the king.
'King,' she said, 'I come seeking,

Counsel, at court, and yet I find
 None, and wonder in my mind,
 Why I can win no counsel so.
 But it would not be right to go,
 Without taking my leave of you.
 My sister should know, for tis true,
 She could obtain by being kind,
 Whatever she wished of mine,
 But I shall never bow to force,
 And lose my inheritance because
 Of her; never, while I seek aid.
 ‘You speak wisely,’ the king said,
 ‘And since she is here I advise
 And urge and beg her to be wise,
 And grant to you what is your right.’
 But the elder, sure of that knight
 Who was the finest one could see,
 Replied: ‘Sire, God punish me
 If I ever divest of aught, to her,
 Town or castle or glade confer,
 Woods or fields, or aught at all.
 But if some knight answers her call,
 Who e’er he may be, and would fight,
 Such that he might assert her right,
 Well, let him step forward now.’
 ‘That is no fair offer, I avow,’
 Said the king, ‘if she doth wish
 To seek out a champion in this,
 Forty days is what she ought
 To be awarded by any court.’
 Then the elder replied; ‘Sire,
 The king makes law as he doth desire,
 As he so pleases, and it is good,
 It is not for me, it is understood,
 To contradict him in any way,

So I must bow to what you say,
And grant her leave, if she so wish.⁷
The younger says that indeed it is
Her wish, she demands this thing,
Then to God commends the king,
And thus from the court departs,
Thinking to seek in every part
Through all the world, ceaselessly,
For the Knight of the Lion, for he
Devotes himself to bringing aid
To women in need, and afraid.

**LINES 4821-4928 THE MAIDEN SEEKS THE KNIGHT
OF THE LION**

THUS she entered upon her quest;
Through many a land she progressed,
Without news of him, by dale and hill;
And felt such sorrow that she fell ill.
But from that ill good came to her,
For the house of a friend of hers,
She attained, who loved her well.
Clearly from her face they could tell
That she was sick and ill did fare.
They insisted she rested there,
And when she told them of her plight
Another maid went to seek the knight;
In her place, the quest she entered on,
Sent forth to find where he had gone.
So the one stayed and took her rest,
While the other started on the quest.
Riding alone all day, she wandered
Until the darkness drew upon her.

Night brought her great anxiety
And her ills were doubled indeed;
The heavens oped in a cloudburst
As if God sought to do His worst,
And she there, deep in the woods;
They at night brought her no good.
But worse than the woods at night
Was the rain deepening her plight.
And the path was so poor indeed
That many a time her weary steed
Was steeped, up to its girth, in mud,
Now any maid, alone in a wood,
Would be dismayed without escort
At night, and by bad weather caught.
In such darkness she could not see
Her horse beneath her, so that she
Called to God first, then her mother
Then all the saints, one and another;
And offered up many a prayer
God would lead her to safety there,
And reveal the path from the wood.
While in prayer, she thought she could
Hear a horn-cry, which gave her joy,
For whoe'er that horn did so employ
Might offer her shelter, she bethought,
If she could but find what she sought.
So then she turned towards the sound,
And came to a stretch of paved ground,
And this paved causeway led her on
Towards the cry of the distant horn;
For three times, both loud and clear,
Sounded the horn's call to her ear.
So she followed the road straight
And travelled, at her quickest gait,
Towards it till she came across,

As she rode on, a wayside cross,
Standing before her, on her right;
And she thought that way might
Lie both the horn and its owner.
So she gave her horse the spur,
Till she came to a bridge and saw
The barbican and the blank walls
Of a castle, of a circular nature.
For she'd arrived, peradventure,
At the castle by following
The sound of that horn calling,
A horn that it appears was blown
By a watchman stationed alone,
On the heights of the castle wall.
When he saw her he gave a call
To greet her, and then descended,
And the key of the gate then did
He take, and oped the gate, and said:
'Welcome who e'er you be, fair maid,
For tonight you'll be lodged well'
'And I ask no more, truth to tell,'
Said the maid; and he showed her in.
After the trouble and the pain
She had encountered that day,
Now happy to find a place to stay,
She enjoyed much comfort there.
After dinner her host addressed her,
And was pleased to enquire, in short,
Where she went and what she sought.
'I seek a knight in arms whom I've
'Never seen,' the maid replied,
'To my knowledge, and never known.
A lion goes with him, and doth own
Him as its master, and they say
That I may trust in him alway.'

'I bear witness to that,' he said,
 'For he struck my enemy dead,
 The other day, so avenging me;
 Before my eyes, and delighting me.
 And there tomorrow you may see
 Beyond the gate, the mortal body
 Of the monstrous giant he slew,
 So easily he scarce changed hue.'
 'For God's sake, sir,' said the maid,
 'Give me fresh news of him, i'faith,
 Whether he lodges here at present,
 Or if you know which way he went!'
 'I know not, as God is my witness,
 But tomorrow, on the road no less
 By which he departed, I'll start you.'
 'May God,' she said, 'lead me to
 A place where I'll have news of him,
 For great is my joy if I can find him!'

**LINES 4929-4964 THE MAIDEN APPROACHES
 THE MAGIC FOUNTAIN**

THUS they conversed, as I have said,
 Till the hour came to retire to bed.
 When dawn broke the following day
 The maiden arose to go her way,
 Anxious, not wishing to stay for aught
 Till she had found the one she sought.
 And the master of that mansion
 Arose, and all his companions,
 And pointed the road to the shrine,
 By the fountain beneath the pine.
 Then she promptly hastened away

To the castle, by that straight way;
And when she arrived, within sound
Of it, asked the first folk she found
If they'd at any time had sight
Of the lion and of the knight,
Travelling there in company.
And they told her that they did see
Him conquer three other knights
And in that very place, outright.
And she responded, instantly:
'For God's sake hide naught from me,
Since you've already spoken freely,
If you know more you must tell me.'
'No,' they said, 'we know no more
Than we have spoken of before.
We know nothing of what became
Of him; if she, for whom he came,
Can give you no further news,
None here can enlighten you,
And if you wish to speak to her,
You need not go much further,
For she's in prayer to God quite near,
And to that church has gone to hear
The Mass, and has been there so long,
Prolonged must be her orisons.'

**LINES 4965-5106 YVAIN AGREES TO CHAMPION THE
YOUNGER DAUGHTER**

WHILE they were in conversation,
Lunete returned from her devotions.
'Now,' they cried, 'you shall meet her.'
So the maiden ran to greet her;

And after greeting one another,
 The maiden promptly asked her
 For news of the knight she sought.
 So Lunete asked to have brought,
 And saddled, her own fair palfrey;
 She'd keep the maiden company,
 To where she'd last had sight,
 In a meadow there, of the knight.
 The maiden thanked her profusely,
 And as soon as Lunete's palfrey
 Had been brought she mounted.
 As they rode, Lunete recounted
 How she'd been accused of treason
 And imprisoned, without reason;
 And how the fire had then been lit,
 To which they'd have her submit;
 And how he'd brought aid indeed
 In that, her hour of greatest need.
 And speaking thus Lunete led her
 Along the road to the mead where
 She'd parted from my Lord Yvain.
 On reaching that same spot again,
 She said to her: 'Now take this road,
 Until you come to a place I know
 Were you'll hear fresher news, if it
 Pleases God and the Holy Spirit,
 Than I can give to you, in truth.
 I know I left him here, forsooth,
 But know not where he was bound.
 He needed dressings for his wounds,
 When he parted thus from me.
 I send you after him, you see;
 If God wills you'll find him well,
 Tonight, tomorrow, I cannot tell.
 Now go; to God I commend you,

For no longer may I ride with you,
Lest my lady's displeased with me.'
Then the two parted company;
Lunete turned back, the maid rode on
Alone, till she reached the mansion,
Where Yvain sought bed and board,
Until his health was quite restored.
There, before the gate, she sees
Men-at-arms, and knights and ladies,
And the lord of the manse, also.
She greets them, and would know
If they have any news to tell
And can inform her, as well,
Concerning the knight she seeks.
'What knight?' they ask, 'It is he
Whom a lion accompanies, they say.'
'Fair maid,' the lord says, 'by my faith,
He hath parted but now from us.
By eve, if such be your purpose,
And you follow him without delay,
You may overtake him on his way.'
She says: 'God save me from delay,
But tell me now, Sire, which way
I should follow.' And he replies:
'That road, ahead, he took, say I.'
Then they ask her to pass on
Their greetings to him, but she is gone,
Without heeding their courtesy,
Galloping away, at full speed.
Now the time passed all too slow,
It seemed, to her, even though
The palfrey's pace was fast and good.
Thus she galloped through the mud,
And where the road ran flat and true,
Until the brave knight came in view,

With the lion in his company.
 Then, in delight: 'Thank God!' cried she.
 'Now I see him who was long hidden!
 Well have I sought, as I was bidden.
 Yet, if I find him but naught attain,
 In meeting him where is the gain?
 Little, or nothing, that I can see;
 For if he fails to return with me,
 Then I have wasted all my pains.'
 So saying, she pressed on again,
 Such that her palfrey was all a-sweat.
 At last she neared him, and they met,
 And he replied, to her greeting:
 'God save you, fair maid, in meeting,
 And deliver you from grief and woe!
 'And you, sire, who, or I hope so,
 Will now deliver me of my task.'
 Then she drew near, his aid to ask:
 'Sire, I have long sought for you.
 For your renown and worth I knew,
 Such that I've followed tirelessly
 Many a long mile of this country.
 So hard I followed, God of his grace
 Hath led me to you in this place.
 And whatever ill kept me company,
 I no longer feel its malaise in me,
 Nor complain of it, nor remember.
 I feel lightness in every member,
 For my sorrow has flown away,
 On meeting here with you this day.
 The need I speak of is not mine,
 For I am sent by one more fine;
 A woman nobler, more excellent.
 But if her hope in you is spent,
 And your renown is traitor to her,



'God save you, fair maid, in meeting'
The Book of Romance (p70, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

She expects aid from no other.
 For through you she seeks to end
 Her sister's suit, and so defend
 Her right to her inheritance.
 And she desires no other lance,
 For none at all can persuade her
 That any other knight could aid her.
 By securing what is her share,
 You would win, in this affair,
 Honour, and love, sir knight,
 By asserting her lawful right.
 She herself was seeking you,
 To ask all she hoped of you,
 And here would be no other,
 Had sickness not detained her,
 Forcing her to take to her bed.
 Now tell me, if you please,' she said,
 'Whether you'll dare to appear,
 Or whether you will idle here.'
 'No,' said he, 'no man wins praise
 By idling away his days.
 Nor will I to idleness lend
 Myself; I'll follow you, sweet friend,
 Willingly, where'er you please.
 And if she has great need of me,
 She for whom this knight you sought,
 Banish all fear from your thought,
 That I might fail in this, my duty.
 Now God, of His good grace, grant me
 Both the courage and the might
 To thus defend her lawful right!'

LINES 5107-5184 THE CASTLE OF ILL ADVENTURE

AND so, conversing together,
They ride, till they encounter
The Castle of Ill Adventure.
They've no wish then to ride further,
For the day is fast declining.
To the castle they come riding,
And the folk, seeing them come,
Call out to the knight, as one:
'Ill-come here, sir, ill-come here!
This lodging doth to you appear
That you might suffer ill and shame:
An abbot e'en would swear the same!
'Ah, foolish folk and villainous,
Are you so vile and mischievous,
Are you so lacking in all pride;
Why assail me thus?' he cried.
'Why? That, you'll soon discover,
If you advance a little further;
Yet you'll learn nothing more
Until you do ascend the tower;
So climb you up to the fortress.'
Now doth my Lord Yvain address
The steep; and the folk cry out,
All as one, and loud they shout:
'Ah! Wretch, where will you climb?
If ever, in life, there was a time
You found aught that brought you woe
And shame, whither you now go
Such, there, will be done to you
You'll ne'er tell of what ensues.'

'You folk, lacking honour or pity,
 You folk, filled with audacity,
 Why must you assail me like this?
 What seek you? What is your wish,
 That after me you yap this way?'
 'Friend, keep you your anger at bay.'
 Cried a woman, wrinkled with age,
 Who seemed most courteous and sage.'
 'They mean no harm by what they say,
 They are merely warning you away;
 And if you grasp what you hear aright,
 You'll not choose to stay the night.
 Though they dare not tell you why,
 They give fair warning with their cry,
 Because they wish to rouse your fear.
 And this they do for all who appear,
 All who to the tower would climb,
 To give them warning in due time.
 The custom is that we outside
 Grant no lodging, whate'er betide,
 To any gentleman riding by,
 Who would outside the tower lie.
 What happens now be on your head,
 None will thwart you, as I have said:
 Should you wish it, you may ascend,
 But take my advice, and turn again.'
 'Lady,' said he, 'were I to take
 That path, twould be a dire mistake,
 By which I might honour forego,
 And furthermore I do not know
 What other lodging I could find.'
 'By my faith, tis no concern of mine,'
 She said: 'and now I'll silent be.
 You may go where'er you please.
 Nevertheless twould give me joy

Should you return again, my boy,
Without incurring too much shame,
Though tis unlikely,' said the dame.
'Lady, God grant your wish,' said he,
'In thrall my errant heart holds me,
I must do what my heart desires.'
And so to the gate he now retires,
The lion and maid in company;
And the porter calls full loudly,
Crying: 'Come, and come apace,
Now are you destined for a place
Where you'll be lodged with care,
And ill shall be your visit there.'

LINES 5185-5346 THE THREE HUNDRED MAIDENS

THUS the porter made an end,
And hastening then to ascend,
After his ill speech, gave a sigh.
My Lord Yvain, without reply,
Passed straight on, and there he found
A great hall, both fine and sound;
Before it, was a walled courtyard,
By long and pointed stakes marred.
Seated amongst the stakes he saw
Three hundred maidens, and no more,
Upon the diverse cloths there spread;
With golden and with silken thread,
Each embroidered as best she knew.
Yet such was their wretchedness too,
That, hair unbound and loosely clad,
Full poor they looked, humble and sad.
And their garments were torn at best,

About the elbow and the breast,
 About their necks the cloth was stale;
 Their necks were slender, faces pale
 With hunger, and with deprivation.
 They looked at him, and he at them,
 They bowed their heads low, and wept;
 A long while motionless they kept,
 Unable to attend to aught,
 With their eyes the ground they sought,
 So bowed down were they with woe.
 When he awhile has viewed them so,
 My Lord Yvain then turns about,
 Towards the door that leads without,
 But now the porter bars the way:
 ‘Wish not for that,’ he doth say,
 ‘You may not depart,’ fair master.
 ‘Now you wish you’d not entered,
 Yet, upon my life, you wish in vain,
 Before you go you’ll know such shame
 More than you can ever have known.
 You were not wise to enter though,
 When you chose to venture here,
 For you shall not depart, I fear.’
 ‘Nor do I seek to, fair brother,
 But by the soul of my dear father,’
 Says Lord Yvain, ‘now tell me
 Whence came those maids I see,
 Weaving cloths of silk and gold?
 The work they do is fine, I hold,
 Yet it distresses me to see
 Them so thin in face and body,
 Their skin so pale, and they so sad.
 It seems to me if they but had
 Everything they might desire,
 They would be ladies to admire.’

'I'll not tell you,' says he, 'go play,
Go find some other who might say.'
'So shall I, for I can do no more.'
Then he searched and found the door
Into the courtyard where the maids
At their embroidery were arrayed,
Greeted them all, and saw the flow
Of tears that from their eyes so
Poured down, as they did weep,
That their eyes more tears did reap.
Then he said: 'May God be pleased
To lift from your hearts this grief,
Its cause I know not, and bring joy.'
And one replied: 'May God employ
His grace, and so hear your prayer!
From you we shall not hide where
'Tis we come from, and who we are,
Hoping such brought you from afar.'
'For that,' he said, 'I'm here indeed.'
'Sire, a great while ago, you see,
The King of the Isle of Maidens,
Went to seek fresh information
From every country, every court,
Until, like a born fool, in short,
He came upon this perilous place,
In an evil hour, for we now face,
We wretched maids, who are here,
The shame and misery and tears
We ourselves have not deserved.
And rest assured you'll be served
With like shame, and such receive
Unless, ransomed, you may leave.
Regardless of that, twould appear
That our king indeed came here,
Where live two sons of the devil,

And do not think this all a fable,
 For he begot them on a woman.
 To fight the king was all their plan,
 Whose terror was great indeed for he
 Was aged but eighteen years, you see;
 So they might easily dismember
 One like a lamb and just as tender.
 Now the king, but a fearful knight,
 Escaped from them as best he might,
 Swearing an oath that he would pay
 Every year, on that very same day,
 A tribute to them of thirty maids;
 Thus was he freed, if he so paid;
 And he swore to them this forfeit
 Would last for just as long as it
 Was the case that they still lived;
 But on the day that they might give
 Battle and die, or meet defeat,
 He would be quit of it complete,
 And all of us would then be free,
 And relieved of all our misery,
 And all this labour and distress.
 We shall never know happiness,
 For I spoke folly of this mischance,
 Who talked of our deliverance,
 We who will never leave this place;
 We will weave cloth all our days,
 Though we will ne'er be better clad;
 We will always be bare and sad,
 And ever hunger and ever thirst;
 For we are poor, and we are cursed
 Never to win ourselves better food.
 We have bread, but scarcely good,
 A little at morn and less at eve,
 For none may earn, you may believe,

By her work, so much as to give
Four pence a pound on which to live,
And that is not enough we've found
To buy enough food all round,
For in a week not one shall gain
Twenty shillings despite her pains.
Yet each of us you may be sure
Turns out twenty shillings or more
Of well-sewn work for sale, which
Would any less than a duke enrich!
While we exist in great poverty
Rich from our labour grows he
For whom we thus toil each day.
Much of the night we work away,
And all the day for sordid gain,
For they forever threaten pain
To our bodies whene'er we rest,
And rest we dare not, I confess.
What more do you wish to hear?
All the shame and ill found here,
I could not tell you a fifth of it.
But what angers us most is this,
That we witness the deaths often,
Of armed knights, fine gentlemen,
Who with these two devils do fight.
He pays a high price, doth the knight
Who battles them, as you tomorrow,
Who must fight them to your sorrow
In single combat, willing or no;
Fight, and lose your fair name so,
Against these two known devils.'
'May God, the true and spiritual,
Defend me,' said my Lord Yvain,
'And joy and honour grant you again,
If it is His will that such He'll do!

Now it seems I must part from you
And seek those who dwell within,
And find what cheer I may win.
'Go sire, and pray He fortune brings,
Who gives and takes away all things!'

**LINES 5347-5456 YVAIN RECEIVES AN INITIAL
WELCOME IN THE CASTLE**

HE went on till he came to the hall,
Where he found no one at all,
Either good or bad, so he,
Passed on with his company,
Till they came to a garden, fair.
None spoke of stabling horses there,
Yet they were stabled readily,
By those who seemed to believe
That they were now theirs to own.
I know not why they thought it so,
For their master was still alive!
Yet the horses were set to thrive,
For they had their oats and hay.
Into the garden he made his way,
With all his company, and they
Saw there a gentleman reclining
On a silk rug, and a maiden reading
To him there, from, I assume,
Some romance, I know not by whom.
And to hear this romance through,
Recline, and gaze, and listen too,
A lady had come, who was her mother,
And a gentleman, who was her father,
For the two of them much enjoyed

Seeing and hearing her thus employed,
For no other child had they between
Them; she was not yet seventeen,
And so lovely, such grace within her,
The God of Love, if he had seen her,
Would have felt obliged to serve her;
Nor would he ever have made her
Love anyone, unless twas he.
He'd have doffed his divinity,
Becoming human, his own heart
Struck by a blow from that cruel dart
The wound from which is healed never,
Except through a treacherous doctor.
For it is wrong if we recover,
Unless treachery we suffer;
Who's cured by other ministry
Ne'er loved his lover loyally.
Of such a wound I could speak
And still not finish in a week,
If, that is, you wished to list.
Though some indeed would insist,
My tale was merely tedious,
For folk are not now amorous,
Nor do they love as once they did,
And they would rather keep it hid.
But hear now with what courtesy
What manner of hospitality,
My Lord Yvain they did greet.
All of them rose to their feet,
All who in the garden were,
As soon as they saw him there,
Called to him: 'Fair sir, this way;
With all that God may do or say
May he indeed bless all below,
Both you, and all you love also!'

Mayhap they sought to deceive him,
 But with great joy they received him.
 And made as if twould greatly please
 Should he be lodged all at his ease.
 And even the lord's daughter
 Treated him with great honour,
 As one should treat a noble guest,
 Helped him of his armour divest,
 And nor was that the most she did,
 For with her own hands she bid
 Fair to bathe all his neck and face;
 The lord wished that in that place
 They might show him every honour;
 So they did, and she did offer
 A folded shirt from out a chest,
 And white leggings, of the best,
 Then with needle and thread she
 To the shirt attached new sleeves,
 Thus clothing him most carefully.
 God pray it prove not too costly
 All this service and attention!
 Over his shirt, I should mention,
 She dressed him in a fine surcoat,
 With a mantle, up to his throat,
 Scarlet and vair, good and new.
 She takes such pains to serve him too
 He feels embarrassed before her,
 But so courteous is the daughter
 So open-hearted and debonair,
 Little she thought she did there,
 Knowing it pleased her mother
 To leave no service to another
 That might win the knight's praise.
 That night, in as many ways,
 He was so well served at dinner,

Those who carried in the platters
Were tired, there were so many.
That night they showed him any
Amount of courtesy; shown to
A comfortable bed, and left to
Rest his weary head, all replete.
And there the lion lay at his feet,
As was its habit so to do.
In the dawn when God renewed
His great light throughout the world,
As He would see all things unfurled,
Who hath all things in His command,
Yvain, once risen, took by the hand
The daughter, and accompanied her
To the chapel, and there they heard
A Mass said for them, as was fit,
To honour there the Holy Spirit.

LINES 5457-5770 YVAIN DEFEATS THE TWO DEVILS

AFTER the Mass, my Lord Yvain,
In view of the warning, was fain
To leave, still believing naught
Would a swift departure thwart:
It happened not as he desired.
On saying: 'I shall go now, sire,
If you please, and by your leave.'
'As yet I cannot grant you leave,
My friend,' the lord to him replied.
'The reason you must be denied
Is that we practice here, you see,
A piece of violent devilry,
To which I'm bound to adhere.

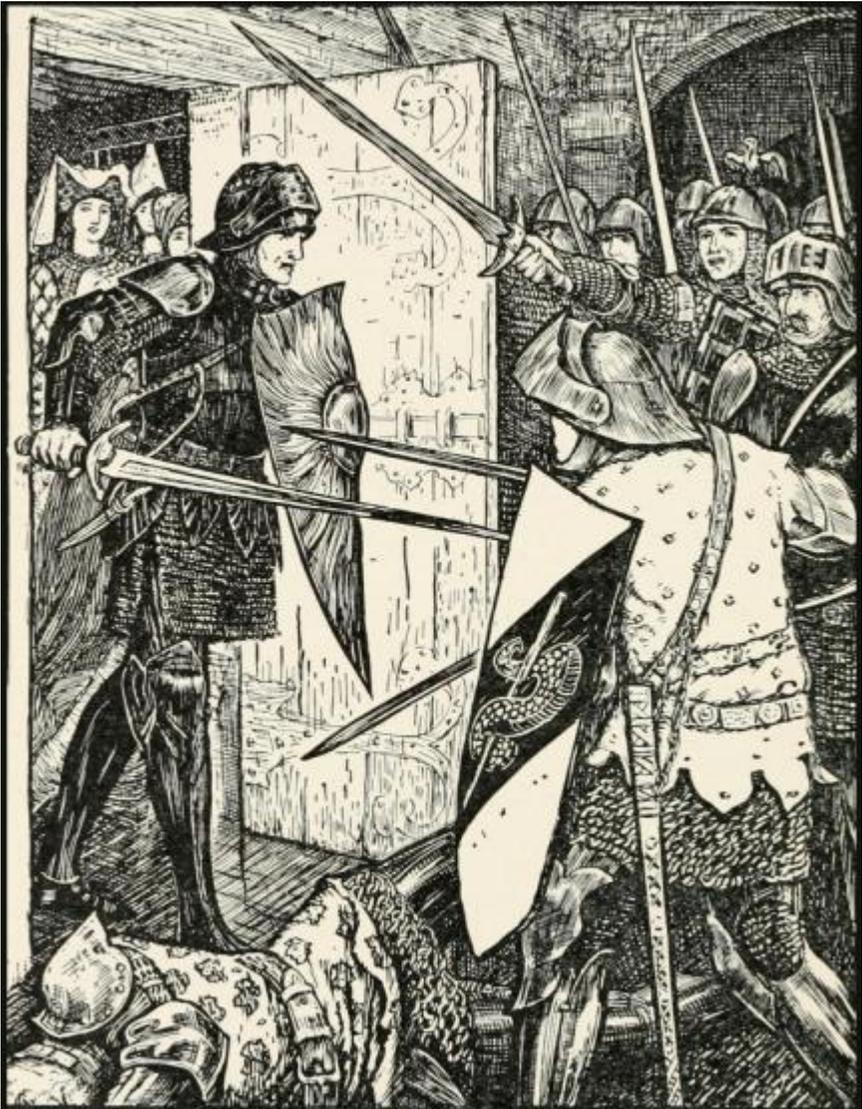
For I'll now summon to appear
 Two great fellows, fierce and strong,
 To whom, whether right or wrong,
 A challenge you must now extend;
 And if you can your life defend,
 And defeat, and slay these two,
 My daughter shall wed with you,
 And of this castle you will win
 The lordship, and thus all within.'
 'Sire,' said he, 'I wish for neither.
 God grant me not your daughter,
 And by your side may she remain;
 The German Emperor would fain
 Marry with her she is so lovely.'
 'Let me hear no more,' said he,
 'Since there's no escape for you,
 My castle and my daughter too
 He must have, with all my land,
 Who defeats the two who stand
 Full ready to assail you now.
 You'll not evade a fight, I vow,
 Nor can renounce it any wise;
 From sheer cowardice, I surmise
 You would refuse my daughter,
 Thinking that in such a manner
 You might well escape the fight;
 But know this as true, sir knight,
 That contend with them you must.
 For no knight escapes their thrust,
 Who lodges in this perilous place.
 Established custom now you face,
 A custom which will long endure;
 My daughter shall not wed before
 I've seen them go down to defeat,
 The two that you have yet to meet.'

‘Despite myself then, I must fight,
Though willingly, and with delight,
I assure you, I’d renounce the same.
And yet that honour I shall claim,
Reluctantly, since it must be so.’
Then there appeared, black as woe,
Those two sons, beloved of night,
Both of them bearing for the fight
A crooked club of cornel wood
Which they had clad, to draw hot blood,
In copper, and had bound with brass.
From the shoulder each one was
Armoured right down to the knee,
But the head and face were free,
And their legs were wholly bare,
Of which each had a brawny pair.
Armed thus they came towards him,
Bearing round shields, light and trim
Yet sturdy enough for the fight.
The lion quivered at the sight,
For from the weapons it could see,
And understand, most readily,
That, as enemies, they’d appeared
To fight its master, or so it feared.
It roused and bristled in a moment,
Shaking with rage and brave intent,
Thrashing the ground with its tail,
Thinking its efforts might avail
To rescue its master ere he die.
And, on seeing the lion, they cry:
‘Fellow, remove that lion from hence
That, menacing us, doth give offence.
Surrender yourself as our prisoner,
Or otherwise, we hereby declare,
You must set it where it can do

No harm to us, or give aid to you;
 Where it cannot take part, in short.
 You must come alone to our sport.
 For there's no doubt the lion would
 Willingly aid you, if it could.'
 'Move him yourselves, if you fear,'
 Said my Lord Yvain, loud and clear,
 'For I would be well-satisfied
 If it came about that he terrified
 Both of you, and gave aid to me.'
 'Indeed,' they said, 'it shall not be!
 Do the very best you can alone;
 Of other aid, you shall have none.
 Single-handed, free of all others,
 You must fight us both together.
 If that lion kept you company
 Two against two that would be,
 For if his aid we should condone,
 Then you'd not be fighting alone,
 So you must, you'll understand,
 Remove the lion, as we demand,
 However much you may object.'
 'Where then do you want him kept?
 Where then would you have him be?'
 Pointing to a room all could see,
 They said: 'Let the lion stay there.'
 'It shall be done, tis your affair,'
 He said, and led the lion away.
 When tis done, they send away
 For armour to protect his body,
 And his horse, saddled and ready,
 They bring to him, and he mounts.
 Then the two open their account
 By riding at him to do him harm,
 Since now the lion fails to alarm,

Being imprisoned in that room.
With their maces they seek his doom,
Landing such blows on helm and shield
That scant protection do they yield.
For, striking his helm, they begin
To beat and drive the metal in,
And his shield too they shatter
Like glass; the holes they batter
Are wide enough to insert a fist,
Since all their strength they enlist.
What can he do against these devils?
Urged on by shame, dreading evil,
He defends fiercely with all his might,
And, steeling himself to the fight,
Deals powerful and weighty blows;
They lose nothing for he bestows
Two blows for every gift of theirs.
But now the lion is in despair,
Grieved at heart, in his prison,
For he recalls the kindness done
Him by his master's brave deed
Who must surely have great need
Now of his service and his aid.
His master might now be repaid,
In full measure, the whole amount
Of his kindness, with no discount,
If he could but escape from there.
So he searches the room with care;
Still he can find no clear way out,
Hearing the noise of blows without,
The fight being perilous and dire;
And rages, fuelled by his desire;
Yet his great grief pains him more,
So he revisits the well-worn door;
The thing is rotten about the sill,

He tears away at the wood until
 He is through up to his haunches.
 Meanwhile my Lord Yvain launches
 Blow on blow, toiling and sweating.
 Now these two devils he was finding
 Strong and fell, to blows inured.
 And many a blow had he endured,
 And repaid them as best he could,
 Yet every blow they withstood
 Being well-skilled in the fight,
 While their shields, unlike the knight's,
 Were such they resisted every blade,
 However sharp twas and well-made.
 So strong were the two, Lord Yvain
 Knew that he now faced death again,
 Yet he contrived to fight on alone
 Till the lion escaped, on its own,
 By tearing away at the door's sill.
 If these devils they cannot kill
 Between them now, they never will,
 For the lion will attack them till
 He or they die, while it still lives.
 It launches at one and doth give
 Him such a blow, he falls like a tree.
 The wretch himself, in terror is he,
 But there is no man in that place
 Without a look of joy on his face;
 For the devil will ne'er rise again
 Unless the other doth him sustain,
 The lion having laid him full low.
 The second devil seeing the blow
 Runs to help, and himself defend
 Lest the lion doth turn and rend
 Him, once it has the other killed,
 Whom to the earth it has spilled;



'Yvain launches blow on blow, toiling and sweating'
The Book of Romance (p177, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

For he suffers from greater fear
 Of the lion than its master here.
 My Lord Yvain were now a fool
 Seeing the back now of the ghoul,
 Bare-necked, as his arm's stronger,
 If he spares his life much longer,
 For the moment serves him well.
 The neck bared, the head as well,
 The villain was open to his blow,
 And such a one now did follow
 He beheaded him, like a shot,
 So smoothly that he knew it not.
 Then to the ground he descended
 By the other, the lion had up-ended,
 Wishing to assist and save him,
 But in vain, for the lion had him,
 Such that no doctor was of use.
 It had attacked him, once twas loose,
 Quite furiously, and wounding him
 Had left him in the plight he was in.
 Yet Yvain dragged the lion back,
 And saw the shoulder had, alack,
 Been torn from its socket clear.
 Of the fellow he had lost all fear,
 His club had fallen from his hand,
 While he lay there like a dead man,
 Who might neither move nor stir;
 Yet he had strength to utter a word,
 And said, as clearly as he could:
 'Remove your lion, if you would,
 Fair sire, lest he work further harm;
 You may do, without more alarm,
 With myself whate'er you desire.
 He who mercy asks and requires,
 Should not be denied that grace,

Unless one pitiless he doth face.
I will defend myself no more,
Nor from here can I rise I'm sure,
For I'd have need of aid so to do,
And thus I entrust myself to you.'
'Say then,' said he, 'that you render
Yourself defeated, and thus surrender.'
'Sire,' he replied, 'the battle is lost.
Despite my efforts, I paid the cost.
And my submission I here tender.'
'Then you need fear me no longer;
The lion will harm you no more.'
Onto the field a crowd now pour,
And they surround him, anew;
And the lord, and his lady too,
Embrace him joyfully, and seek
Of their daughter now to speak,
Saying to him: 'You shall be
Lord and master of all that we
Possess, and wed our daughter,
For upon you we bestow her.'
'Yet I hereby restore her to you.
Let those who have her keep her too.
I care not, though tis not disdain,
For your daughter,' said Lord Yvain.
'I cannot, and I must not, take her.
But deliver to me, at your pleasure,
The wretched women held here yet;
For the right of it is, lest you forget,
The terms dictate that go they may.'
'Tis true,' he said, 'tis as you say,
And I surrender them, willingly,
For an end to all of it let there be.
But you will take, or so I advise,
My wealthy daughter, if you are wise,

For she is charming, prudent, fair;
 Never so rich a marriage, I swear,
 Shall you find if you take her not.
 'Sir,' he replied 'you know naught
 Of my commitments and my affairs,
 Nor to explain them do I dare;
 But know you this, if I refuse
 What no man would e'er refuse,
 Whose heart and will were free
 To settle on a girl such as she,
 I would willingly marry her,
 If I could, and no harm incur.
 But I cannot; nor your daughter
 Nor, if truth be told, any other.
 And so let me depart in peace,
 For the demoiselle awaits me,
 Who did accompany me here.
 As she held to me, tis clear
 I should seek to hold to her,
 Whate'er to me might occur.'
 'You wish to go, fair sir, but how?
 Never, unless I so allow,
 And my judgement tells me to.
 My gate will not open to you,
 And you remain my prisoner.
 You are prey to pride and error
 If I ask that you, to your gain,
 Wed my daughter and you disdain.'
 'Disdain, sir? No, upon my soul,
 I can take none to have and hold,
 Nor linger here, on any account.
 I can do naught else but mount,
 And ride with the maiden now,
 But, by my right hand, I vow,
 And swear to you, if you agree,

That I'll return, plain as you see
Me now; that is, if ever I can,
And receive your daughter's hand,
Whenever that seems good to you.
'Fool be he who seeks from you
Pledge, or oath, or word, or promise!
If my daughter had pleased, I wist
'Tis soon enough that you'd be back.
But you'll return no sooner, alack,
For swearing that you will come;
So go now, I release you from
All pledges, oaths and promises;
Naught you do will me distress,
For I care not where'er you go!
My opinion of her is not so low
I'd bestow my daughter anywhere.
Now be you about your own affairs,
'Tis all the same to me, this day,
If you go now, or if you stay.'

LINES 5771-5871 YVAIN RETURNS TO KING ARTHUR'S COURT

THUS my Lord Yvain turned away
From the tower, and would not stay,
And before him went the maidens,
Those so wretchedly imprisoned,
Poor, ill-clad, weary in every limb,
Whom the lord had released to him.
Now they are rich it seems to them,
For they are free of the tower again,
Preceding Yvain, two by two,
With no less joy, I say to you,
Than they would have felt if He

Who made this world of ours wholly,
 Had descended from Heaven to Earth.
 Those who'd deemed him of little worth,
 The folk who'd warned him previously,
 Now come to beg for mercy and peace;
 And seek to escort him on his way.
 He knows not why they beg he says:
 'What you mean by it, I cannot tell,
 For you are free of blame as well,
 And I can think of naught you said
 That did me harm, or to harm has led.'
 They are delighted so to hear,
 And all hold his courtesy dear,
 And, after escorting him some way,
 They commend him to God alway.
 And then the maidens, for their part,
 Having asked his leave, so depart.
 And, as they leave him, all do bow,
 And they express the wish that now
 God will grant him health and joy,
 And protect him from all annoy,
 Wherever it is that he might be.
 Then he, being anxious to leave,
 Replied: 'God save you, equally.
 Go, and safe and happy may He
 Now conduct you to your country.'
 Thus they part from him joyfully,
 While, as they go, my Lord Yvain
 Takes himself to the road again,
 And in the opposite direction.
 And all that week they hasten,
 Led by the maid, for every day
 She never fails to find the way,
 Making the best speed they can
 To the place where she had left

That lady of all her lands bereft.
But when the lady hears the news
And the maiden comes in view,
Leading the Knight of the Lion,
Her delight is second to none,
Such the joy that fills her heart;
For she believes that now her part
Of the inheritance, her sister must
Relinquish to her, as is only just.
She had been ill a goodly while
This lady, and but a little while
Recovered from the malady
That had troubled her greatly,
As was apparent from her face.
But now she hurried on, apace,
To greet them without delay,
And honour them in every way.
In every manner that she might.
Of the joy indoors that night,
I'll not speak, though I surely could;
Yet not a word of that joy should
Be told, for it would take too long.
So I'll neglect it, and pass along
To the morrow when they did ride,
And journeyed on till they espied
The castle wherein King Arthur
Had lodged a fortnight or longer.
Now, the elder sister lodges there
Who has stolen her sister's share;
For she has kept close to the court,
Waiting her sister's advent, in short,
Who's on her way, and drawing near.
Yet the elder sister feels little fear,
Doubting the younger has on hand
Any knight who could withstand

The prowess of my Lord Gawain.
 And only a day doth now remain,
 Of the forty that were decreed;
 And by law and justice, indeed
 The inheritance is hers alone
 And she can claim it as her own,
 Once that certain day has passed.
 And yet more might be done, at last,
 Than she e'er believed or thought.
 Humble are their lodgings, sought
 Outside the castle, for the night,
 Where none who know them might
 Recognise them; if lodgings they
 Take there within then many may,
 And for that they do not care;
 Their lodgings thus are mean and bare.
 As morn is breaking they emerge,
 But then with the dawn shadows merge,
 Until the sun shines clear and bright.

**LINES 5872-5924 ALL AWAIT THE EXPIRY
OF THE TIME DECREED**

I know not how many days might
 Have passed since my Lord Gawain
 Had vanished, and all would fain
 Have news of him, all of the court,
 Except she whose cause he sought
 To defend, that is, the elder sister;
 For she knew he had hidden near,
 But three or four short leagues away.
 When he returned, on that day,
 None who knew him at court

Recognised him, as they ought,
For he was wearing strange armour.
Openly, thus, the elder sister
Presented him to all the court,
As one whom she had brought
To defend her cause though she
Had wronged her sister utterly.
She said to the king: 'Now, Sire
The time allotted has expired,
'Tis almost noon, this is the day.
And I, for witness it now you may,
Am ready to maintain my rights.
If my sister could produce a knight
To fight for her then we should wait.
But, God be thanked, she is too late,
She neither sends word, nor is here.
'Tis plain, she will not now appear,
And all her trouble was for naught,
While I have my champion brought
Prepared till this hour, at your sign,
To prove my right to what is mine.
I've proved it thus, without a fight.
And I may now, as is my right
Enjoy my inheritance in peace;
And no account of its increase
Henceforth to my sister give;
And sad and wretched may she live.'
But King Arthur who well knew
That the lady great wrong did do,
As disloyal to her younger sister,
Said: 'It is the custom, my dear,
In royal courts, i'faith, to wait
While justice doth yet deliberate,
Until the king decides the case.
We'll grant her a little grace,

For I think she may yet appear,
 And we shall see your sister here.'
 Before the king's speech was done,
 He beheld the Knight of the Lion,
 And saw the younger sister too.
 Alone, they advanced, these two,
 Having left the lion, out of sight,
 There, where they'd passed the night.

**LINES 5925-5990 THE SISTERS INSIST ON
 THEIR RESPECTIVE CAUSES**

THE king had the maid in view,
 And at once her face he knew,
 And he was filled with delight
 To see her there beside the knight;
 In his concern for what was right,
 Holding she was wronged quite.
 Full of joy, at seeing her near
 He called out to her, loud and clear:
 'God save you! Approach, fair maid!
 The elder heard him and, afraid,
 Turned about, and saw the younger,
 And the knight too, whom her sister
 Had brought, to aid and support her;
 And her face turned black as thunder.
 The maiden was welcomed, in short,
 And, before the king and his court,
 Cried: 'King, if my rightful claim
 Can by a knight be here maintained
 Then it shall be so by this knight;
 And he my thanks doth earn outright,
 Whom I have brought to this affair,

Though he hath business elsewhere,
A knight so courteous and debonair;
Yet he's taken such pity on me,
He has set aside, as you can see,
All other affairs for my own.
Let courtesy and right be shown
Now, by this lady, my sister dear,
Whom I love with a love sincere,
By yielding me what is my right,
So betwixt us peace shine bright;
For I ask of her naught that's hers.'
'Nor do I ask aught of my sister's,'
The elder said, 'for she has naught
Nor shall; and naught is the import
Of her words, and naught the gain.
Now may she wither away in pain.'
Then the younger sister, since she
Was wise in the ways of courtesy,
And was prudent too and charming,
Replied: 'Grief to me it doth bring,
That two such gentlemen should fight,
On our behalf, to prove what's right.
Though tis a small disagreement,
I may not renounce my intent,
For I am left in too great need;
So I'd be grateful to you indeed
If you would render me my share.'
The elder sister replied: 'Who'er
Would do so must surely be mad.
May I with fire and flame be clad,
Before I seek to improve your lot!
The rivers will run boiling hot,
The sun elect to shine at night,
Before I will renounce this fight.'
'God, and the right I claim in this,

In which my trust both was and is,
 Always, until this present hour,
 May they both now lend their power
 To one whose kindness and pity
 Is offered thus in service to me;
 Though I know not who he may be,
 And he doth know no more of me!

LINES 5991-6148 GAWAIN AND YVAIN CONTEST THE ISSUE

ONCE their words were at an end,
 They led out the knights to defend
 Their two causes, amidst the court.
 And everyone a place there sought,
 In the way folk are accustomed to
 Whenever they've a wish to view
 A fine battle between two knights.
 But these two who are set to fight,
 Who've shown love to one another,
 Have failed to recognise each other.
 Do they still love each other now?
 Both 'Yes,' and 'No', do I avow.
 And I will prove both to be true
 In revealing my reasons to you.
 In truth then my Lord Gawain
 As his companion loves Yvain,
 And Yvain him where'er he be;
 Even here if he knew 'twere he,
 He would now make much of him
 And he would give his life for him;
 As he would give his life, Gawain,
 Before harm came to Lord Yvain.
 Is that not Love, entire and fine?

Yes, certainly. Is there no sign
Of Hate being equally present?
For one thing is indeed apparent,
This day they'd both wish to devote
To flying at one another's throat,
Or in wounding the other so
He the depths of shame might know.
I'faith, tis wondrously revealed
That in one heart may be concealed
Faithful Love and mortal Hate.
Lord, how in one dwelling-place
Can things which are such contraries
Reside, as twould appear do these?
For in one dwelling, it seems to me
There cannot lodge two contraries.
Since they could not appear together
In that dwelling, in any manner,
Without some quarrel being aired
If each knew the other was there.
But as the body has several members,
As lodgings have several chambers,
Such might well be the case here:
I think Love's chosen to disappear
Into the depths of a hidden room,
While Hate has chosen to assume
A seat high up, above the scene,
So as to be both heard and seen.
For Hate now is mounted on high,
And pricks and spurs so to outfly
Love, with ease, as oft may prove,
While Love indeed fails to move.
Ah, Love! Where art thou now?
Reveal yourself, regard the crowd
That the enemy brings against you;
Enemies makes of your friends too.

For enemies are these two friends,
 Who love each other to holy ends,
 With that love, nor false nor faint,
 Precious, worthy of many a saint.
 Here Love proves utterly blind,
 And Hate is sightless too we find,
 For if Love had recognised them,
 He would them have obliged them
 Never to attack each other
 Or do harm to one another.
 Thus, in this matter, Love is blind
 Discomfited, to error consigned;
 And those who are Love's by right,
 Love knows not in broad daylight.
 And e'en though Hate cannot state
 Why each the other doth so hate,
 Hate would see them both frustrate
 The other through such mortal hate.
 No man loves another, or could,
 Who'd do him harm, and draw blood,
 Seek his death, or see him shamed.
 How then? Would my Lord Yvain
 Kill his friend, my Lord Gawain?
 Yes, and he the other, the same.
 Would then his friend, my Lord Gawain
 With his own hands slay Yvain,
 Or do some worse thing instead?
 No, I swear not; as I have said,
 Neither would his true friend disarm,
 Nor bring him shame, nor do him harm,
 For aught with which God graces man,
 Or the Empire of Rome doth command.
 And yet I cannot help but lie,
 For one can plainly see, say I,
 That with lances thus they hover

Ready to attack each other.
And each would strike his friend
And wound him though he defend,
And work him woe without restraint.
Gainst whom shall he lodge complaint?
Who has the worst then of the fight,
When conquered by the other knight?
For if they now should come to blows
The fear is great, I would suppose,
That each will fight against his friend,
Till one of them the fight shall end.
Could Yvain claim, in all reason,
If he is worsted, that tis treason;
That he has been hurt or shamed
By a man that he'd have named
As a friend, one who has never
Called him aught but that ever?
Or if injury were done Gawain,
Would he be right to complain,
He had therefore been betrayed,
If he were shamed in any way?
No, for he'd know not by whom.
Now, they grant each other room,
Prepared for their joint encounter.
At the first shock the lances shiver,
Though they are ashen and strong.
Neither uttered a word thereon,
Yet if they had exchanged a word,
Their meeting had proved absurd.
Neither lance nor sword, we know,
Would have dealt a single blow.
They'd have kissed and embraced,
Rather than each other have faced.
Yet as they face each other now
Their swords win naught, I vow;

Nor their helms nor their shields,
Which are dented as they yield;
While the keenness of each blade,
They blunt, the steel they abrade.
Many a harsh blow they pledge,
Not with the flat, with the edge,
And the pommels deal such blows
On the neck, and about the nose,
And on the cheeks and brow too,
That the skin is black and blue
For, beneath, the blood gathers.
And their chain-mail shatters,
While the shields are so unsound,
Beneath them dire harm is found.
So hard they labour, courting death,
They can scarcely catch their breath;
And so hotly they strive to win,
That every emerald and jacinth
That upon their helmets is inset,
Is crushed to shards at their onset;
While the two so pound away
With the pommels, both are dazed,
Almost braining one another.
Their eyes in their sockets glitter,
The heavy fists are firmly squared,
Solid the bones, and strong the nerves;
They strike each other about the face
As long as they can grip their blades,
Which offer them both good service,
While they wield them in their fists.

LINES 6149-6228 THE TWO FIGHT TO A STANDSTILL

WHEN a long while they'd striven,
Till their helms were wholly riven;
And they with the steel had flailed
Fiercely enough to split their mail,
The shields too frail now to contest,
Both drew back a little, to rest;
To let the blood cool in their veins,
And so restore their breath again.
And yet they do not long delay,
But attack, strongly as they may,
More fiercely even than before;
And all confess they never saw
A pair of more courageous knights:
'It is no manner of game this fight;
Their cause each strives to assert,
And their worth and true deserts
Will ne'er be rendered completely.'
The two friends heard them, surely,
And knew that all spoke together
Of reconciling sister to sister,
Yet had failed to devise a way
To pacify the elder that day,
Nor placate her in any manner;
While the intent of the younger
Was but the king's word to obey,
Not contradict him in any way.
Yet the elder is so stubborn here
That even the queen, Guinevere,
And the lords also, and the king,
Most courteous in everything,

All side with the younger sister.
To the king requests are proffered,
That he, despite the elder sister,
Might grant title to the younger,
At least a third or a quarter part;
And might these two knights part
Who had displayed such courage;
For it would do the court damage
If one should now the other injure,
Or deprive him of any honour.
Yet now the king declares that he
Is unable to achieve a peace,
For the elder is such a creature
As desires not peace, by nature.
All this was fully understood
By the two knights who stood
Against each other there, while all
Marvelled at so equal a battle,
For none knew nor could attest
Which was worst, and which was best.
Even the two who are in the fight
Where pain wins honour as a knight,
Marvel now, and are taken aback,
That both prove equal in attack;
Such that each man wonders who
Is matched with him and doth pursue
Such fierce combat, while the light
Fades, and day draws on to night.
They have fought, and fight, so long.
That neither man waxes as strong,
Their bodies tire, the arms weary.
While warm blood, trickling slowly
From many a wound to the ground,
There beneath their mail runs down.
They are both in such distress,

No wonder if they wish to rest.
They feel no further urge to fight,
Partly because of the fall of night,
Partly through mutual respect,
Reasons that lead them to effect
A truce, and swear to keep the peace.
Yet, ere they leave the field, these
Two shall disclose their identities,
And affirm their love and sympathy.

**LINES 6229-6526 THEIR IDENTITIES ARE REVEALED,
ARTHUR GIVES JUDGEMENT**

MY Lord Yvain it was spoke first,
Yvain, the brave and courteous;
Yet his good friend knew him not
From his speech, since he had got
Such a deal of blows his blood
Was sluggish and, though he stood,
His speech was both low and faint,
His voice yet subject to constraint.
'Sir,' said he 'night doth approach,
I think nor blame nor reproach
Accrues to those parted by night.
But, for my part, I say, sir knight,
I admire you, and much respect you;
Never in my life have I so rued
A contest, so suffered in a fight,
Nor ever thought to see a knight
Whom I would so seek to know.
You grasp both how to land a blow
And how to employ your strength.
No knight I have fought at length

Has dealt me such blows as those.
 Against my will, I took the blows
 That I've received from you today.
 My head felt every blow, I say.'
 'By my faith,' said my Lord Gawain,
 'I am no less mazed and faint
 Than you are, but rather more so;
 'Twill please you I think to know
 If I but tell you the simple truth,
 Of what I lent you, in good sooth,
 You have rendered full account,
 Adding interest to that amount;
 For you were readier to render it
 Than I to receive the half of it.
 But now, however that may be,
 As you wish to know from me
 By what name I may be called,
 I'll not hide it from you at all;
 Son of King Lot am I, Gawain.'
 On hearing this, my Lord Yvain
 Is sorely troubled and amazed,
 And, by anger and sorrow mazed;
 To the earth his sword he throws,
 From which the blood yet flows,
 And then his shattered shield also,
 And down from his horse he goes,
 Crying: 'Alas! What mischance!
 How, through mutual ignorance,
 We have battled with each other
 Not recognising one another!
 If I had known that it was you
 I would never have fought with you;
 Before e'er dealing a single blow
 I'd have yielded, as you well know.'
 'How so,' cries my Lord Gawain,

'Who art thou then?' 'I am Yvain,
Who loves you more than any man
In all the world doth love, or can.
For you have loved me always,
And honoured me, all my days.
And now, in this business too,
I'd make amends and honour you,
For I offer complete surrender.'
'So much to me you'd render?'
Said the noble Lord Gawain,
'Surely twould bring me shame,
To let you thus seek amends.
The honour is not mine, my friend,
But yours, to whom I thus resign it.
'Ah! Speak, fair sir, no more of it!
What you have said can never be;
For I can endure no more you see,
I am so wearied from the fight.'
'Surely, your wounds are but light,'
His friend and companion replied,
'While I'm sore overcome,' he sighed,
'And I offer that not in flattery,
For there's no stranger, equally,
To whom I would not say the same.
Rather than suffer further pain.'
So saying, Gawain descended
And to each other they extended
Their arms in friendly embrace,
Each swearing to the other's face
Twas himself who'd met defeat,
Their protestations incomplete
When the king and his knights
Joining them, to assess their plight,
And finding them joined in amity,
Desired to know how this could be,

And who these two knights were
 Who such mutual joy did aver.
 ‘Gentlemen,’ said the king, ‘tell me
 What has brought about such amity
 Between you both, this rare accord
 After the enmity and discord
 You have exhibited all day?’
 ‘Sire, your request I now obey,’
 Replied his nephew, Lord Gawain,
 ‘The cause of conflict and the pain
 That thus ensued, of that I’ll tell,
 Since you attend us here as well,
 To hear of it, and know the truth.
 It is right to inform you, in sooth,
 That I, sire, your nephew, Gawain,
 Failed to recognise twas Yvain,
 My companion, fought with me,
 Till God was pleased, thankfully,
 To prompt him to ask my name.
 Once I replied, and he the same,
 We knew the other, but not until
 We both had fought to a standstill.
 Already we had fought for long,
 And if we had continued strong
 And fought on as furiously
 It would have gone most ill for me;
 He’d have slain me, upon my life,
 Given injustice caused this strife,
 And given also Yvain’s prowess;
 Much better it is, I now confess,
 My friend defeats me than kills me.’
 Rising to this claim, and fiercely,
 My Lord Yvain replied, in one:
 ‘God aid me, my dear companion,
 You are in error in saying so.

Let my Lord the King, now know,
That I was defeated in the fight,
And surrendered, as well I might.'
'No, I.' 'No, I.' Thus they dispute.
And both are so courteous, in truth,
That each the honour and the crown
Grants the other, and lays it down.
Neither gives way to the other here,
But strives to make King Arthur hear,
And all the people gathered round,
That defeated, he yields the ground.
Yet, after indulging them, a little,
The king ended the loving quarrel.
For he indeed took much pleasure
In what he heard, and the measure
Of these friends in warm embrace,
Though while fighting face to face
They had wounded each other too.
'My lords,' said he 'twixt you two,
Lies great affection, as can be seen
By each conceding defeat, I mean;
So place yourself now in my hands
And I'll arrange, as I have planned,
That in great honour you'll be held
And I'll be praised by all the world.'
Then they both swore, most willingly,
To obey his wish, and loyally
Accept all that he chose to say.
And then the king said, that today
He'd resolve the cause, and justly.
'Where now,' he asked, 'is that lady
Who forcibly, by her command,
Has seized her own sister's land?
'Sire,' cried the elder, 'here I am.'
'Are you there? Well then, advance,

You who claimed the inheritance.
 For some time now have I known
 That you your sister's right disown,
 But she'll no longer be denied,
 For you the evidence supplied;
 You must now resign her share.'
 'Ah, sire,' she answered, 'if I there
 Spoke a thought, unwise, absurd,
 Do not now take me at my word.
 For God's sake, do not harm me!
 You are the king, and should be
 Wary of every wrong and error.'
 'And that is why I wish to render
 To your sister what is her right;
 Against the wrong I'll ever fight,'
 Said the king, 'You will have heard
 How both your champion and hers
 Have left the matter in my hands.
 You'll not have what you demand.
 For its injustice is obvious.
 Each claims that his was the loss,
 Seeking so to honour the other.
 But upon that I will not linger,
 Since the judgement lies with me.
 Either you obey me promptly,
 In regard to what I pronounce,
 Willingly, or I shall announce
 My nephew it was that met defeat.
 That would all your cause unseat;
 Yet I would do so, against my will.'
 He would never so have done, still
 He said it to see whether she would
 In fear of him, perform the good,
 And render to her sister, at once,
 Her share of the inheritance;

For the king quite clearly saw
That she would surrender naught,
Despite aught that he might say
Unless force or fear won the day.
And due to her doubt and fear
She replied: 'Sire, it is clear,
I must yield to you, for my part,
Though indeed it grieves my heart.
But I will do what yet grieves me,
My sister shall have what she seeks,
As her share; and I will advance
As guarantor of her inheritance,
Your own self, to reassure her.'
'Then, swiftly, restore it to her,'
Said the king, 'and let her now stand
As your vassal, and from your hand
Receive her share, and then may you
Love her, and she to you prove true,
As her lady and her sister.'
Thus the king resolved the matter,
While the younger received her share
And thanked the king for all his care.
So then the king asked his nephew,
That knight most valiant and true,
That of his armour he be eased,
And Lord Yvain, if he so pleased,
To lay aside his armour too,
Who now might suffer so to do.
Thus they disarmed as he dictated,
And on equal terms they separated.
And while they were thus disarming,
They saw the lion come running,
That was seeking for its master.
As soon as the lion drew nearer,
It demonstrated its delight;

While all the folk there took fright,
 Even the bold began to flee.
 Then my Lord Yvain cried he:
 ‘Stay, why run, none chases you?
 Fear not that it will mischief do;
 The lion there that you now see
 Is mine, and I am his; trust me,
 If you but will, that we are one,
 And each a true companion.’
 Then those folk were assured
 Who had heard voiced abroad
 All the adventures of the lion
 And all those of his companion,
 That this was the very knight
 Who’d killed the vile giant in fight;
 And my Lord Gawain then said:
 ‘My dear friend, God be my aid,
 You fill me with shame today.
 I little merited of you, I say,
 The service you rendered me
 In saving my nephews and niece;
 Slaying the giant, so fearlessly.
 I have been thinking, fruitlessly,
 Of whom that knight might be
 For it was said that I and he
 Were well-acquainted; indeed,
 I thought a deal on it, you see;
 But I could never come upon
 A memory of a fighting man,
 Whom I’d heard tell of anywhere,
 In any land where I did fare,
 And known by name to anyone,
 As this same Knight of the Lion.’
 They disarmed as Yvain replied,
 And the lion came to his side,

To the place where his master sat,
And reaching him this giant cat
Showed all the joy a dumb beast might.
Then it was meet that both the knights
Be led to the infirmary, and there,
Receive a royal doctor's care,
And have their wounds treated swiftly.
Now, Arthur, who loved them dearly,
Had the two men brought before him,
And a surgeon, he'd attached to him
As one who knew more than most,
He now had minister to them both.
And he worked on them so well
He returned them both to health
More swiftly than any other might.
And when he had healed the knights,
My Lord Yvain, whose heart was yet,
Without recourse, on his love set,
Knew that he would not last a day
But would die of his love away,
If she, for love of whom, his lady,
He was dying, showed no mercy.
So he thought to leave the court
And go alone to where he'd fought
Beside the fountain that was hers,
And cause there such a mighty stir,
Such a tempest of wind and rain,
That perforce she must then again
Grant him peace, or there would never
Be an end to the business ever
Of the troubling of that fountain,
And all its storm of wind and rain.

**LINES 6527-6658 YVAIN RIDES TO THE FOUNTAIN,
AND ROUSES THE TEMPEST**

SO, now, once my Lord Yvain
 Felt fully healed and sound again
 He left the court, with none knowing
 Where he and the lion were going;
 For the lion wished its life to be
 Spent in its master's company.
 They journeyed on until they saw,
 The fount, and made the rain to pour.
 Don't think I seek to tell a lie
 If I say the tempest, there on high,
 Was so violent none could tell
 A tenth of it; caught in its spell
 It seemed the whole forest would drown;
 While the lady feared for the town,
 Lest it too foundered altogether.
 The tower sways, the walls totter,
 And, about to fall, hang perilously.
 The bravest Turk would rather be
 A prisoner in Persia than it befall
 That he is trapped between such walls.
 The folk are so filled with fear they
 Revile their ancestors; thus they say:
 'Let that man's name be accursed
 Who, within this town, was first
 To build a house; accursed its founder,
 Who in this world could find no other
 Place more evil, where but one man
 May invade our territory, and can
 Trouble us and torment us so!'

'You must take good counsel though,
In this matter, lady,' said Lunete,
'For you will find no other yet
To aid you in this hour of need
Unless you seek far off indeed;
Or we shall never have repose
In this castle, nor dare expose
Our lives to aught beyond the wall.
Not a knight here will meet the call,
As well you know, for none will dare
To offer himself in this affair;
Even the best of them step back.
And should it appear that you lack
A knight to defend your fountain
You will seem a fool, for certain.
True, great honour to you accrues
If he who attacks it should choose
To withdraw now without a fight;
Yet you will be in sadder plight
If you can think of no better plan.'
'If you, who are so wise then, can
Some better plan at once devise,
Then I will do as you advise,'
Cried the lady. 'If I'd one, as yet,
I'd willingly share it,' said Lunete,
'But you have need for a greater
Source of wisdom than I can offer.
And since I can do no better,
With the others I will suffer
Both the wind and pouring rain
Until, please God, I see again,
At your court, some worthy knight,
Who'll take it on himself to fight,
And bear the burden of the battle.
Although, as far as I can tell,

Today, no such thing shall be.'
 'No more of him!' cried the lady,
 Exceeding prompt in her reply.
 'You know, among my folk, that I
 Have not one whom I might expect
 To step forward and, to any effect,
 Defend the fountain and the stone.
 I ask, that you yourself, alone,
 Determine what should be our plan!
 In need, they say, woman or man,
 May prove the value of a friend.'
 'Lady, if any knows where to send
 For him who slew the giant outright,
 And overcame the three knights,
 Then he'd do well to do so now.
 Yet while that knight, I do avow,
 Knows his lady's anger and scorn,
 There is no man or woman born,
 It seems to me, he would follow
 Unless she swore, on oath also,
 All in her power would be done
 To set aside the enmity shown
 By her, to him, for tis my belief,
 He is dying of trouble and grief.'
 And the lady said: 'I will attest,
 Ere you enter upon this quest,
 To give you my word faithfully,
 And swear, that if he comes to me,
 I, without guile or deception,
 Will do all that can be done
 To bring about his peace of mind.'
 And Lunete replied: 'You will find,
 My lady, that you may easily
 Bring about such a state of peace,
 If you so wish; yet before I may

Set out, myself, upon the way,
Do not be angry, I must also
Hear you swear it before I go.
'That is well,' replied the lady.
Lunete, so full of courtesy,
Brought a precious relic to her
Immediately, on which to swear;
And the lady fell to her knees.
Then Lunete, most courteously,
Took her assertion upon oath.
And in administering that oath
She forgot naught that might
Be useful to serve the knight.
'Lady,' she said, 'now raise your hand!
For I'd not wish, you understand,
That you lay some charge on me
After tomorrow, because, you see,
What you do is for you, not me!
Now you shall swear, if you please,
To display your good intention
Towards the Knight of the Lion,
Until he knows he has regained
All the love that once obtained,
As completely as ever he knew.'
The lady raised her hand anew,
And replied: 'Thus, I swear true:
As you have said, so shall I do,
And if God aid me and the saints
My heart shall ne'er prove faint,
Nor fail to do all in its power.
If strength I own, love is his dower,
And the grace I'll render him too,
That with his lady he once knew.'

LINES 6659-6706 LUNETE GOES TO FIND YVAIN

LUNETE had done her work full well,
 She wished no more than there befell,
 For all she'd wished, she had achieved.
 Already a mount she had received,
 A gentle palfrey, without delay,
 Mounted, and set out on her way;
 She rode along for some time,
 Until she found beneath the pine
 One whom she had scarcely thought
 To find so near; the man she sought;
 For she had expected far and wide
 To seek, before that knight she spied.
 As soon as e'er she came in view
 She saw the lion and thus she knew,
 And riding towards him swiftly
 Descended to the earth promptly.
 And my Lord Yvain knew her
 As soon as he set eyes on her;
 Gave her greeting, and she he,
 Saying: 'Sir, I'm more than happy
 To find you here, so near at hand.'
 Said Yvain: 'Must I understand
 That you are here then seeking me?'
 'Yes, my lord, and most joyfully,
 More than e'er in my life before.
 I've so wrought that my lady swore,
 On pain, that is, of perjury,
 She will be, as she used to be,
 Your own lady, and you her lord.
 This be the truth, be you assured.'



*'And his deep gratitude he voiced,
Clasped her, and kissed her gently'*

The Book of Romance (p122, 1902) - Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
Internet Archive Book Images

At this my Lord Yvain rejoiced,
 And his deep gratitude he voiced,
 Clasped her, and kissed her gently.
 She said: 'Let us away, swiftly!'
 Then he demanded: 'And my name
 Have you told it her?' 'Nay, blame
 Me not, for name have you none
 To her, but the Knight of the Lion.'

**LINES 6707-6748 THE LADY FINDS YVAIN IS
 THE KNIGHT OF THE LION**

THUS conversing they went along
 The lion behind them following on,
 Till to the castle all three came.
 The lady before him, Lord Yvain,
 As soon as he saw her thus, he fell
 Straight to his knees, all armed as well.
 And Lunete, who was standing by,
 Said: 'Lady, raise him, and apply
 All your efforts, skill and sense
 To granting peace and recompense
 To one whom you should pardon;
 For in all the world, there is none
 Except it be you can grant this prize.'
 Then the lady made him to rise,
 And said: 'My power is his alone
 And willingly I'll give all I own
 If I can but bring him happiness.'
 'Lady, I'd not say this unless
 The thing was true,' said Lunete.
 'All this is now within your power;
 You've ne'er had nor will you ever

Possess such a good friend as he.
God wills that between you and he
Such sweet love and peace shall be
It shall endure to eternity.
God has let me find him so near.
The proof of this will now appear,
And I have but one thing to say
Lady, grant him pardon today,
For he has no lady but you:
This is Yvain, your husband too.'

**LINES 6749-6766 THE LADY ACCEPTS SHE MUST
RECONCILE WITH YVAIN**

THE lady, trembling at what was said,
Replied: 'God stand me in good stead,
For now at my own word you take me
And, despite myself, you'd make me
Love a man who accounts me naught.
Well indeed have you now wrought!
A great service now you've done me!
I'd rather my whole life should be
But wind and storm, and so endure!
And if 'twere not that to perjure
Oneself were a vile thing, surely
He would ne'er find peace with me,
Nor true accord twixt us abide.
Always in my heart would hide,
As fire lurks among the cinders,
What I no longer wish to utter,
Nor care to mention here again,
Who seek accord now with Yvain.'

LINES 6767-6788 YVAIN SEEKS THEIR RECONCILIATION

MY Lord Yvain now understood
 His cause tended towards the good,
 That he would have peace and accord,
 And said: 'Mercy one should afford
 To a sinner, my lady. I have paid
 For my madness, and dearly I say
 I should have paid, full many a day.
 Madness twas, made me keep away.
 And rendered me guilty and forfeit.
 And bold indeed do I prove in it,
 By daring to come before you here.
 But if you'd wish to keep me here,
 Nevermore will I do you wrong.'
 She replied: 'I must go along
 With that, for I'm perjured if I
 Do not with all my powers try
 To make peace now twixt you and me;
 Thus, by my faith, the thing must be.'
 'Five hundred thanks, lady,' said he.
 For, may the Holy Spirit aid me,
 Never a man in this mortal life
 Has for a woman known such strife!'

LINES 6789-6803 YVAIN AND HIS LADY ARE RECONCILED

NOW was my Lord Yvain at peace.
 And this, the truth, you may believe,

That he had never such joy of aught,
Despite the trouble it had brought.
For all has turned out well we see,
And Yvain is loved by his lady,
And she by him is held the dearer.
His ills he no more remembers,
For, through joy, all are forgot,
That joy in her which is his lot.
And Lunete' mind is now at ease,
Nothing is lacking her to please,
She has her contentment gained
In making peace between Yvain
And his dear and charming lady.

LINES 6804-6808 CHRETIEN'S ENVOI

THUS Chrétien now ends his story,
His worthy romance of Yvain,
For no more doth the tale contain,
Than he has heard, or you may hear,
Unless one seeks to add lies here.

The End of the Tale of Yvain



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chrétien, likely a native of Troyes in north-eastern France, served at the court of his patroness, Marie of France, Countess of Champagne and daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, between 1160 and 1172. Hers was a literate court, and she herself knowledgeable in Latin as well as French texts, and Chrétien used the legendary court of King Arthur as an analogue for the French and Angevin courts of his own day. Marie's mother Eleanor became Queen of England, in 1154, as the spouse of Henry II, following annulment of her marriage to Louis VII of France, thus Chrétien was able to blend French and British traditions in his works. Between 1170 and 1190, Chrétien, writing in fluent octosyllabic couplets, developed and transformed the narrative verse tradition, and laid the foundations for the plot-driven prose narratives of later times.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Anthony Kline lives in England. He graduated in Mathematics from the University of Manchester, and was Chief Information Officer (Systems Director) of a large UK Company, before dedicating himself to his literary work and interests. He was born in 1947. His work consists of translations of poetry; critical works, biographical history with poetry as a central theme; and his own original poetry. He has translated into English from Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Chinese and the European languages. He also maintains a deep interest in developments in Mathematics and the Sciences.

He continues to write predominantly for the Internet, making all works available in download format, with an added focus on the rapidly developing area of electronic books. His most extensive works are complete translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.