

藤 納 遜 樂 府 本 事

STORIES FROM TENNYSON

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*A COLLECTION OF STORIES FROM
ENGLISH LITERATURE*

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THE COMMERCIAL PRESS, LIMITED

(84239)

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Stories from Tennyson

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編纂者 鄭富灼

發行兼印刷者 商務印書館

發行所 各埠商務印書館

實價每冊壹角伍分 外埠酌加運費

中華民國七年九月初版
中華民國二十一年九月國難後第一版
中華民國二十八年六月國難後第三版

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STORIES FROM ENGLISH LITERATURE

VOLUME I

STORIES FROM TENNYSON

KING ARTHUR

ARTHUR was an early king of Britain. The story concerning him figures prominently in English literature. Tennyson wrote some of the most beautiful poetry about King Arthur and the knights of his Round Table.

There were two stories concerning his birth. One said that he was the son of King Uther Pendragon, born after his father's death. For fear of his father's enemies, he was hidden away by his mother and the wisest man in Britain, the enchanter Merlin, and kept in secret all the years of his babyhood and boyhood. The other story said that Arthur was not the son of King Pendragon, but a child of fairy birth. He was cast up at Merlin's feet one day on the seashore by a great wave, whose green billow was shot and sprinkled over with magic fire. Merlin caught up the tiny, naked baby from the foam and fire, crying, "Here is the King of Britain."

It is hard to say which story is true, but there was no doubt of Arthur's beauty and strength, wisdom and goodness, and his fitness to rule a troubled country. He drew all the little provinces together and made one kingdom of them. When the princes rose against him, he broke their ranks in one great battle.

Chief among his knights was Sir Lancelot, the perfect, gentle knight, who was dearest of all his knights to him. In all his wars King Arthur and Lancelot fought side by side, and they loved and trusted each other wholly. Fighting against robbers and killing wild beasts in Cameliard, King Arthur stopped at the castle of the king of that country, Leodrogon. He saw the King's daughter, Guinevere, a girl of glorious beauty. He set his heart to have her for his wife and Queen of all Britain. After the battle which made him King, he sent Bedivere and other knights to King Leodrogon with a message which said, "If I have served you well in anything, give me your daughter Guinevere to wife." King Leodrogon sent back "Yes" as his answer. Then King Arthur sent his best knight, Lancelot, to fetch the Queen. Guinevere and Arthur were married. For a little while they reigned together in love and splendor, and Britain was at peace. The fellowship of the Round Table grew greatly and prospered exceedingly. Wrongs were redressed, the poor helped, the sad comforted, and the wicked punished by Arthur and his knights.

But there came a change which all the wisdom and courage of Arthur could not prevent. The knights grew less eager in good deeds, and the ladies of the court less gracious and sweet minded. A lady by the name of Vivien came to the court, and spread slander and ill-will there. Merlin was powerless against the evil seed sown by her, for he fell in love with her beautiful face, and so had no more power against her. He even told her a spell that would throw any one into a dead sleep for centuries long. This spell Vivien used against him. So, in spite of all his wisdom Merlin lay sleeping away the years of enchantment, and all his counsel was lost to the King at the time when it was needed most.

Then a vision came to the knights gathered at Camelot, a vision that they called the Holy Grail. It was the vision of the cup of wine which Jesus drank with his followers at their last supper, carried on a silver moonbeam. Those who saw the vision swore to follow it and see it again. Those who did not see it swore to look for it until they found it. Hence there was a great scattering of the knights of the Round Table. Arthur was sad because his knights, one after another, went off. Some returned quickly, but some were away a long time. Having seen the Grail, they turned holy men, becoming priests and hermits, and putting away their swords. Some never returned at all, but died in their search. Only a few came back to the King.

A new sorrow came upon him now. Growing tired of his spotless goodness, his beautiful Queen left the court, leaving the King a lonely man. Almost at the same time his nephew Modred took up arms against him. With a much smaller army, and with a sick heart, Arthur rode into the West to fight against Modred. But before they met, Arthur turned aside to the nunnery, where Guinevere had betaken herself, bade her farewell and forgave her for her desertion of him.

Then he rode on to his last great battle, which was fought on a misty day in winter. At the close of the day when the King saw the mist lifting, he saw that Modred and all his false knights were dead. Of Arthur's own Round Table there was left alive only Sir Bedivere. Then King Arthur said to him: "I am sorely wounded, and without help I shall not see to-morrow. There is a ruined chapel near by — carry me there." Sir Bedivere carried the wounded King there. The full moon was shining on a wide lake near the chapel. "Take my sword Excalibur," said the King, "and throw it out into the lake yonder, and tell me what thou seest." Sir Bedivere took the sword, and went down to the lake, but the gems in the handle sparkled so that he could not bear to throw it away. Hiding it in the reeds, he returned and said, "I have seen nothing." "That cannot be," said King Arthur; "thou hast surely played me false, Bedivere. Go now, and throw the sword in at once." Once more

Sir Bedivere went down to the water's edge to throw the sword into the lake, but again the beauty of it kept him back. "It should be kept," he said, "to show future Britons what manner of man King Arthur was." Again he hid it in the reeds. "What sawest thou?" asked Arthur. Bedivere again answered, "Nothing." "Thou hast played me false," said the King. "Go again, and see that this time I am obeyed, or, wounded as I am, I will surely slay thee." So Bedivere threw the sword into the lake, but before it touched the water an arm arose, caught the handle, and drew Excalibur under. He went back and told the King what he had seen. Then said King Arthur, "My time is come; carry me down to the margin of the lake." Sir Bedivere obeyed, and there he found waiting a black boat, at the helm of which were three queens. Mourning and wailing, they took the wounded King from Sir Bedivere, laid him in the boat, and slowly they sailed away under the moonlight.

"But now farewell. I am going a long way . . .
To the island-valley of Avllion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, . . .
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

GERAINT AND ENID

THE story of Geraint and Enid is told by Tennyson in "Idylls of the King." Sir Geraint was one of the strongest and boldest of all the knights of King Arthur's great Round Table. He was a man of Devon; he was fair, with broad shoulders, long arms, and strong hands. He could throw a spear as well as he could ride a horse, and pull an oar as well as he could throw a spear. He was fond of his horse and hunting; but above all things he loved his wife Enid—Enid of the Faded Dress. Here is the story of Enid and her Dress.

While King Arthur was holding his court at Caerleon, a forester from the Forest of Dean came and knelt before him. He informed the King that there was a white, strange, and beautiful hart ranging the woods, and he thought that its horns and hide were worthy a king's hunting. The King said, "We will hunt the white hart to-morrow;" and then broke off in his speaking, because Queen Guinevere was looking at him eagerly. On being asked what the Queen wanted, she replied, "Let me ride after the white hart with you." "You shall ride a-hunting with us to-morrow, if you will," said the King.

But when the morning came, all the hunting party rose and rode off early, and the Queen was too fast asleep to hear the horns they blew to waken her. When she awoke it was broad daylight. After dressing, she

rode out with only one lady of the court with her. They came to a little wood, where they stopped their horses on a piece of rising ground that overlooked the Usk River and the Forest of Dean. Sir Geraint rode up to the knoll where they waited. While they were talking, a knight, a lady, and a dwarf rode slowly by, the dwarf being last. The knight's vizor was up, and the Queen wondered who he was.

"Go and ask his name," she said, and her lady-in-waiting rode after the little dwarf, and asked him his master's name.

"I shall not tell you," said he.

"Well, I will ask him himself," said the lady.

"That you shall not. You shall not ride a step nearer to him," said the dwarf. As she tried to pass him, he cut her across the hand with his whip.

When she told the Queen what had happened, Geraint, in a passion, rode after the dwarf, asked him the same question, and received the same answer. He tried to push by the rude dwarf, and got a whip-cut across his face. Then he rode back to the Queen in great anger.

"I will ride after master and man," he said, "and get the master's name sooner or later; and he shall fight me when I have somewhere got me arms for love or money, and I will so avenge the insult done to you in the person of this your lady, noble Queen; and having punished him, if I am alive, in three days I shall return."

"Do so," said the Queen. "Be lucky in this quest of yours, and having punished the hard word and the hard blow, bring home with you something sweeter than justice. Perhaps, in humbling this proud knight and his insolent servant, you will find a sweet wife for yourself. If you do, bring her to me; and be she beggar-girl or king's daughter, I will give her a wedding dress that shall shine like the sun."

Geraint rode away and followed the three to a little town, which had one long street. There was a ruined castle farther on, and nearer him rose a new castle. He saw the three he followed were riding in at the gates of the new castle. The town was very busy and noisy. From repeated inquiries he learned that the excitement was due to the arrival of the "Sparrowhawk," and that there was to be a tournament on the next day. For lodgings he was directed to try at the ruined castle, where lived Earl Yniol. He rode into the court, which was all in ruins, like the castle itself. While he waited for some one to come and take his horse from him, he heard a girl's voice singing inside the castle. It was Enid, Yniol's daughter. Geraint followed the Earl into the castle, where was the Earl's wife, wearing a gown of faded brocade, and beside her, red-and-white as a newly-budded rose, was her daughter Enid, who was also wearing a dress of silk as faded as her own.

When dinner was over, Geraint said to the Earl: "Tell me what is this Sparrowhawk? Can he by any

chance be the knight whose dwarf this morning struck the Queen's lady-in-waiting? If so, do not tell me his name, for I have sworn, as surely as my name is Geraint of Devon, to have this knight's name from his own lips when I have fought with him and conquered him. I followed this knight to a new castle outside this town, and came into the town asking for arms, but all your townsmen are hawk-mad, and I could get no arms anywhere."

"So you are Geraint of Devon?" said the Earl. "Well, we know you by your name, Enid and I. As for the Sparrow-hawk, he is my own nephew, and he is like enough to be the knight whose dwarf struck your Queen's waiting-maid—like master, like man. I will not tell you his name, as you would fain have it from himself: but this I will tell you, that he desired to marry Enid. Being denied her, he raised my own town against me in the night, bribed my nearest friends and kinsmen, sacked my house and sent me here, a kind of prisoner, to this ruined castle, where he would kill me if he thought me worth the killing."

"Give me arms," exclaimed Geraint, "and I will bring his crest down to the dust."

"Arms I have," answered Yniol, "but old and rusty like myself. But no one can fight in this tournament except in the name of a lady, for the prize of the tournament is a golden sparrow-hawk, and the good knight who overcomes my nephew and carries off the hawk shall have the lady of his choice known as fairest

of the fair. Have you a wife to fight for, Prince Geraint?"

"No," Geraint said; "but give me Enid for my wife, and I will fight in her name, and if I live to bear away the prize she shall be Princess of Devon."

Then Yniol was very happy, because he saw that better days were coming for them. He called his wife, who gave the message to their daughter. Enid listened to it silently, and silently kissed her mother good night. She thought and wondered all night long. She and her mother rose early next morning. Hand in hand they went to the meadow where the tournament was held, and waited there for Yniol and Geraint. The meadow was crowded. A trumpet was blown, and Yniol's nephew turned to the lady who stood beside him and said:

"Come forward and take the prize again as fairest of the fair. Two years running have I won it for you, and this year no one challenges me."

But Geraint shouted: "There is a challenger. Here stands a lovelier lady!"

The Sparrow-hawk knight was very angry. "Do battle for the hawk, then!" he cried. Geraint and he clashed together, breaking each three spears. Then they sprang off their horses and attacked each other with their swords. They struck great blows at each other, but neither had the advantage. At last Yniol cried out:

"Remember that great insult done Queen Guinevere!" That cry put fresh strength into Geraint's arm. He brought his sword down on his opponent's head with a terrific crash. The Sparrow-hawk's helmet was cracked through. He fell at Geraint's feet. Geraint set his foot on the fallen man's neck. "What is your name?" he said. When he learned the name of the Sparrow-hawk, he said:

"Well, Edyrn, Son of Nudd, I have two commands to lay upon you. You and your damsel shall ride to Caerleon, and ask pardon there of the Queen for the blow struck at her lady-in-waiting. Next you shall give back the earldom to the rightful lord, Earl Yniol here. Now, will you do these two things, or will you die at my hands? Choose!"

Edyrn answered: "You have conquered me, and I will do your will. I am broken down, for Enid saw me conquered, and brought low." He kept his word, rode to Caerleon, and there asked pardon of the Queen. He became gentle as well as brave, and at last he died in a great battle, fighting for King Arthur.

Enid promised to ride with Geraint to Caerleon in three days, and to be married to him there. She was afraid of the splendor of the court, and she feared that her old silk dress would be too mean for the wife of so great a knight as Geraint. Happily, the beautiful dress that her mother had given her as a birthday gift the night before they were driven out of their

home was returned to her. So Enid put on the beautiful dress, in which she looked lovely indeed. But while she was dressing there came a message from Geraint, begging her to wear her old dress to ride with him to Caerleon. Enid was grieved, and her mother was angry, but Enid took off the beautiful dress and put on the shabby one. Geraint was very happy. He explained that he made the request because the Queen bade him to bring his bride to her and that she would give his bride her wedding dress. Another reason was he wished to see if Enid loved him or not.

When Yniol, Geraint, and Enid reached Caerleon, Guinevere gave her a royal welcome and a splendid wedding, and Enid's wedding dress was as pure as a wreath of snow new fallen and as shining as the sun. But she kept the old and shabby dress put carefully away in a carved box that held her greatest treasures.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

HER name was Elaine, and because she was white as the flowers in her garden, people called her the Lily Maid. She was the youngest of three children, and was much loved by her father, the Lord of Astolat, and her two brothers, Torre and Lavaine. She lived with them in a lonely castle, which was missed even by knights who sought adventures. Sir Lancelot came across it once, but he never would have seen

it if he had not lost his way. He rested there for the night and was made welcome.

He was on his way to a great tournament whose prize was a great diamond. He did not wish to be known for Lancelot at the tournament, but desired to do battle for the diamond as a plain knight. So he borrowed the plain shield of Sir Torre, and promised to bring it back and take away his own, which meanwhile was taken care of by Elaine. She put it in her own room, and she made and embroidered a case for it, that it might not get soiled or rusty. Every day she sat alone in her room with the shield for a little time, taking off the silk case she had made for it, and studying the pictures and devices on it. So she pleased herself with her lonely thoughts, and was glad to think that Sir Lancelot had carried with him in his helmet her parting gift, a red sleeve sewed with seed pearls.

While she dreamed about the shield and her knight, her brother Lavaine and Sir Lancelot rode to the tournament together. They slept during the first night in a cell cut in the chalk rock by a hermit. As they rode away together, Sir Lancelot told Lavaine who he was. They finally reached Camelot, where the tournament was to be held. The lists were set up in a meadow just outside the city limits. There was a gallery full of seats which ran half round the course. The place was gay with the colors of gowns of ladies and mantles of knights. Here sat King Arthur, splendid in his red silk robes and golden crown. Over