

The Quest of the Holy Grail

translated by

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Introduction

The text here translated is based on *La Queste del Saint Graal* (Paris: Champion, 1923), edited by M. Albert Pauphilet, the author of illuminating *Études sur la Queste del Saint Graal attribuée à Gautier Map* (Paris: Champion, 1921). This volume of *Études* constitutes a valuable interpretation of this document as a chapter in the history of mediæval religious thought.

The *Queste* is dated about 1220,—a fact which renders its attribution to Gautier Map, who died before 1210, “fantastic.” As we shall see, it was plainly conceived by someone writing under the influence of the Cistercian Order, and it was intended to be a picture of the victorious Christian life as shown forth to mediæval humanity by the White Friars. The individual author is unknown.

The *Queste* forms part of a long series of French prose compositions collectively known as the Lancelot-Graal series, arranged in the following order: *Estoire du Graal*, *Merlin*, with its continuation, *Lancelot*, *The Queste*, and *Mort Arthur*. The material contained in this series of romances has been preserved in whole or in part in many manuscripts.

The *Queste*, however, is to be distinguished from all the other romances with which it is associated in the manuscript compilations. By its subject it is of course connected superficially with the earlier biographical treatments of Lancelot, who was the central figure of the entire cycle. Further, Robert de Boron had already identified Perceval with the search for the Grail as a holy object of desire. In what, then, consists the apparent originality of the author of the *Queste* before us?

There is no necessity of repeating here information which is easily accessible in the vast amount of critical writings relating to the Arthurian

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romances, their origin and development, or to the origin and nature of the mysterious vessel called the Holy Grail, which came to be the object of knightly search at King Arthur's court. I am concerned here merely with the significance of the Holy Grail as revealed in the present text, and with the Christian qualities required in him who would succeed in the search for the precious vessel. The earliest authors who had presented the Grail as an object of search have failed to describe it with sufficient clearness to enable us to seize its outward appearance. Robert de Boron had described it as an actual cup used by Christ at the Last Supper, in which Joseph of Arimathæa later caught His blood after the Crucifixion and which, after being carefully preserved, was finally transported to Britain. But even so, there is something more mysterious back of it as a symbol, as well as of the bleeding lance with which Longinus pierced Christ's side upon the Cross and which came to be so mystically associated with the Grail itself. Our author is not concerned in clearing away the cloud of mystery surrounding these precious relics. He pays little attention to the lance and gives nowhere any description of the Grail as a tangible object. He is interested in the Grail as a symbol, in its virtues as an object of search, and in its effect upon him who is privileged to behold it. To him the Grail symbolises God, and the search for it is the search for God, who reveals Himself only to the pure—those who are pure in heart as well as in deed. Evidently the common man of the world, sullied with sin and unrepentant, is not fit to see God or to enjoy His benefits. A break in the established literary tradition will be required before the ascetic life can be portrayed in the old Arthurian atmosphere. This break is precisely what constitutes the originality of the present treatment.

Literary tradition had had its way with Gawain, Lancelot, Arthur, Guinevere, Bors, Hector des Mares, Perceval, and the rest of the great personages at court. This tradition had portrayed in these personages divers qualities dear to twelfth-century French chivalry, but it had not undertaken to represent any of this society as impeccably chaste, as pure, as "virgin." Perceval was the purest of them all, but even his literary title was not clear enough in the eyes of our author to entitle him to serve as

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protagonist in this new spiritual Quest. As for the rest of the courtiers, they were all far from perfect: they were guilty of pride, cruelty and incontinence. Their past record, known of all, debarred them from any hope of success in this exacting competition. Yet they were favourites with the social class whom the Cistercian apologist wished to reach with his revival call. He wished to call this proud and luxurious public to a militant career of virtue and self-abnegation. How should he catch their attention and turn it to his own purpose? By taking the old favourites, by showing their delinquencies and their unworthy traits, and by creating beside them a new character to embody those virtues which alone could win in the Quest. So he created Galahad, son of Lancelot, who thus belongs in the old corrupt society, but who distinguished himself from all his relatives and associates by his possession of those qualities which the ascetic author had determined to extol.

The whole setting of the Arthurian court, the Round Table and the knights, even their search for the Holy Grail—all this was taken over; the endless adventures which came to the knights-errant as they went up and down through the earth in their hopeless search are repeated with persistence but without enthusiasm. What our author is interested in is the revelation of a higher standard to these wayward worldlings. With all their pride and bravery in the field and joust, with all their chivalric trappings, he brings them to their knees before the White Friars, who mercilessly flay them for their sins of omission and commission and who instruct them in the true purpose of life as conceived in the cloister—the search for God.

These familiar adventures with lorn ladies, with eyrie castles, with awful tombs and sylvan shrines, with cruel or craven knights—are all invested with a new “significance.” They are interpreted by the lonely hermits and learned abbots as mere trials of that faith which must survive all trials along the way of life. These adventures which astound and baffle the knights are inexplicable to them until they are explained by godly men in their true perspective as tests of moral and spiritual strength. These Cistercian counsellors into whose hands the knights unflinching fall in their moments of greatest confusion and chagrin are

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God's ministers set to interpret the meaning of life. They will tolerate no excuses or palliation of guilt. They stand for the monastic doctrine undefiled, but a monastic doctrine applied to the man of the world. Faith, humility, mercy and chastity are the pillars of their teaching. Life is a continuous warfare against man's lower nature. There can be no compromise with the Devil, who is ever ready with his wiles to drag men down to Hell.

Here we have, then, exhibited in action the crusading spirit for which the Cistercians were famous. Militant Christianity was their ideal, in which the Christian hero should lay aside every weight and sin and fight straight on to the goal. Be not surprised if Galahad hearkens to no appeal of the world! He has been created and reared for a more arduous task than mere victory in a tourney or in a lady's bower like his father Lancelot. His eye is kept single upon the great Quest; where others falter and lose heart, he knows no discouragement. His eye is clear, his sword is keen, his heart is pure. Galahad is always in training. He will reach his goal. He will see God, and then gladly die.

Now we see the novelty of this composition: taking contemporary society as it loved to imagine itself in the brilliant but false colours of the Arthurian court, the author has introduced a new idealism—an idealism which has penetrated the entire mass of this romantic material and which has survived to our own day. Mere courtesy, formal deference to the rules of knighthood were not enough to purify society: these things savoured too much of the world and of corruption. What was needed to regenerate man was an insistent call to a higher Quest. It was more important to fight for the High Master than for Arthur, more imperative to save one's own soul than to save a fair damsel in distress.

This text, then, furnishes us with the biography of the perfect knight as seen by an important corporate body of Christians in the thirteenth century—an Order which we are told had eighteen hundred houses about 1200. This Order presented the most energetic type known in the Middle Ages. Galahad may be plainly taken as an embodiment of their ideal: he is the Christ of 1200.

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How powerfully this portrayal of manly perfection has fastened itself upon the imagination of posterity is evidenced by the manner in which to-day Galahad has come to dominate the entire Arthurian cycle. He arrived late, but he arrived with power. Artistic representations of Arthur himself, of his beloved Lancelot, of his nephew Gawain, of Kay the seneschal, of the goodly Perceval, may be sought in vain. But who is there unfamiliar with the figure of the saintly Galahad? From among all the glittering assembly of the Table Round, he represents for us, as he represented for his companions in the Quest, all that is best in knighthood and all of its spirituality that has survived.

Chapter I

On the eve of Pentecost, when the companions of the Round Table had come to Camelot and had heard mass, and when the tables were about to be set at the noon hour, there entered the hall a very fair damsel on horseback. It was evident that she had come in great haste, for her horse was still all in a sweat. Dismounting, she came before the king and saluted him with God's blessing. "Sire," said she, "for God's sake, tell me if Lancelot is here." "Yes, truly," the king replied, "see him yonder." And he pointed him out to her. Then going directly up to him, she said: "Lancelot, in the name of King Pellés, I bid you to accompany me into the forest." And he asked her in whose service she was. "I belong," she said, "to him whose name I have just mentioned." "And what is your need of me?" he inquired. "That you shall soon see," she replied. "Then in God's name," he said, "I will gladly go."

Then he bade a squire saddle his horse and bring him his arms; and the squire did so at once. And when the king and the others who were in the palace saw this, they were very sorry. Nevertheless, seeing that he would not tarry, they let him go. But the queen said: "How is it, Lancelot, that you leave us on the day of this high festival?" "My lady," the damsel then replied, "you may be sure that you will have him back here again to-morrow before the dinner-hour." "Then let him go," the queen replied, "for were he not to return to-morrow, he would not have my sanction to go away to-day." Then he mounted his horse and the damsel hers.

So they started away without other leave taking and without any company except a squire who had come with the damsel. And when they had gone forth from Camelot, they rode until they came into the forest.

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There they struck into the beaten highroad and continued half a league until they came into a valley and saw before them by the road an abbey of nuns, whither the damsel turned in. And when they came to the gate, the squire called, and the gate was opened. Then they dismounted and entered. And when those within knew that Lancelot had come, they all went to meet him and welcomed him joyfully. And when they had taken him to a chamber, and he was disarmed, he saw his two cousins, Bors and Lyonel, lying on their beds. Greatly delighted at the sight, he woke them; and when they saw him, they embraced him and kissed him. Then began a happy scene between the cousins. "Fair sire," said Bors to Lancelot, "what adventure has brought you here? We expected to find you at Camelot." Then he told them how a damsel had brought him here, but for what reason he did not know.

And while they were conversing thus, three nuns came in bringing Galahad, so fair and shapely a youth that one could hardly find his equal in the world. Then she who was most high-born, gently weeping, took him by the hand, and standing before Lancelot, she said to him: "Sire, here I bring you our ward, our greatest joy, our comfort and our hope, that you may make him a knight. For to our thinking there is no more honourable man than you from whom he could receive the order of chivalry." He looked at the youth and saw him to be so marvellously endowed with every beauty that he thought he would never again see such a fine figure of a man. And from the modesty which he saw in him he hoped for so much that he was greatly pleased to make him a knight. So he replied to the ladies that he would not fail to perform this request, and that he would gladly make him a knight, since they wished it so. "Sire," said she who had brought him in, "we wish it to be done to-night or to-morrow." "In God's name," said he, "it shall be as you desire."

Lancelot spent the night there and made the youth keep watch in the church throughout the night. In the morning at the hour of prime he made him a knight, he himself fastening one of his spurs and Bors the other. Then Lancelot girded him with the sword and gave him the accolade, and told him that God would make him an honourable man, seeing that he had not yet been found lacking in any good trait. And

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when he had done everything connected with this ceremonial, he said to him: "Fair sire, will you come with me to my lord King Arthur's court?" "Nay, sire," said he, "I will not go with you." Then Lancelot said to the abbess: "Lady, allow our new knight to come with us to the court of my lord the king. For he will make more progress there than if he stays here with you." "Sire," she replied, "he shall not go now; but as soon as we think that the time and the circumstances are favourable, we shall send him."

Then Lancelot and his companions left and rode together until they came to Camelot at the hour of tierce, when the king had gone to hear mass with a great company of his noble men. Upon arrival the three dismounted in the court-yard and went upstairs to the great hall. Then they began to talk about the young man whom Lancelot had knighted, and Bors remarked that he had never seen any other man who so much resembled Lancelot. "Upon my word," said he, "I will never believe anything again, if he is not Galahad who was born of the fair daughter of the Fisher King; for he bears a marvellous resemblance to that family and to ours." "In truth, I believe that is who he is," Lyonel replied, "for he is much like my lord (Lancelot)." They spoke of this subject for a long time in hope of drawing something from Lancelot, but to all they said he answered never a word.

When they had ceased speaking of this, they surveyed the seats placed about the Round Table and found on each one written "This is the seat of such an one." And they examined each one until they came to the large seat called "the Perilous Seat." There they found letters which had been newly written, as it seemed to them. And they saw that the letters said "Four hundred and fifty-four years are accomplished since the Passion of Jesus Christ; and on the day of Pentecost this seat is to find its occupant." At the sight of these words, they said one to another: "In faith, here is some marvellous adventure!" "In God's name," said Lancelot, "were one to count up the time elapsed since the resurrection of Our Lord until now, he would find, I believe, that this seat is due to be occupied this very day; for this is Pentecost after four hundred and fifty-four years elapsed. And I wish that no one else should see these

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words before the arrival of him to whom this adventure is to fall." Then the others said that they would take good care that they should not be seen; so they ordered a silken cloth to be brought, and with it they covered the words on the chair.

When the king had returned from church and saw that Lancelot was come with Bors and Lyonel, he showed great joy and bade them welcome. Then the festival began to be great and marvellous, for the companions of the Round Table were very happy over the arrival of the two brothers. My lord Gawain asked them how they had been since they left the court, and they replied: "Very well, thank God," for they had been hale and hearty all the time. "Certainly," said my lord Gawain, "I am glad to hear that." Joyous was the welcome that those of the court gave to Bors and Lyonel, for it had been some time since they had seen them.

When the king thought it was time to eat, he had the tables laid. But Kay the seneschal said: "Sire, if you sit down now to dinner, it seems to me that you will be breaking our custom here. For we have always observed that on a high feast-day you do not sit down at table before some adventure should have come to court in the sight of all the knights of your household." "Kay, you are right," said the king, "in truth. I have always maintained this custom, and shall continue to do so as long as I can. But I was so glad to see Lancelot and his cousins safe and sound again at court that I forgot the custom." "Well, remember it now," said Kay.

While they were talking thus, there entered a valet who said to the king: "Sire, I bring you strange news." "What?" said the king, "tell me quickly." "Sire, down below the palace yonder there is a great stone which I saw floating upon the water. Come and see it, for I am sure that it is some wonderful adventure." Then the king went down at once to see this wonder, and so did all the others. And when they had come to the bank, they found the stone which had emerged from the water, and was of red marble. In the stone there was affixed a sword of fair and rich appearance, and its pommel was a precious stone skilfully inlaid with letters of gold. The knights looked at the words, which ran thus: "No

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one shall remove me from here but the one at whose side I am destined to hang. And he shall be the best knight in the world." When the king saw these words, he said to Lancelot: "Fair sire, this sword is yours by right, for I am sure you are the best knight in the world." And he replied ill-humouredly: "Surely, sire, neither is it mine, nor would I be so bold or so imprudent as to set my hand to it; for I am neither sufficiently worthy nor adequate that I should take it. So I shall hold back and not touch it, for it would be madness on my part to seek to take it." "But try anyhow, and see if you can pull it out." "I will not, sire," said he, "for I know full well that if anyone tries and fails, he will receive a wound from it." "And how do you know that?" the king inquired. "Sire," he replied, "I know it well enough. And I will tell you still another thing; for I want you to know that this very day will begin the great adventures and marvels of the Holy Grail."

When the king heard that Lancelot would not do it, he said to my lord Gawain: "Fair nephew, do you try it." "Sire," said he, "saving your grace, I will not, since my lord Lancelot will not make the attempt. It would be useless for me to touch it, for you know well that he is a better knight than I." "Nevertheless," the king replied, "you will try because I wish it, and not because of the sword." So he stretched forth his hand and seizing the sword by the hilt, gave a pull, but he could not draw it out. Then the king said at once: "Let it be, fair nephew, for you have done my bidding." "My lord Gawain," said Lancelot, "be sure that this sword will yet touch you so closely that you would wish not to have sought to possess it for the price of a castle." "Sire," replied my lord Gawain, "I could not help it; were I to die for it on the spot, I would do it to carry out my lord's command." And when the king heard these words he repented of what my lord Gawain had done.

Then he told Perceval to try the sword. And he said he would gladly do so, to keep company with my lord Gawain. So he put his hand on the sword and pulled, but he could not get it loose. Then all the others present were persuaded that Lancelot had been right and that the words on the hilt were true. So there was no one else so bold as to dare to touch the sword. Then my lord Kay said to the king: "Sire, upon my

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word, you may surely now sit down to meat whenever you please; for you have had no lack of adventure before dinner, as it seems to me." "Let us go then," the king replied, "for it is indeed high time."

Then the knights left the stone by the river's brim and went away. And the king ordered the horn to be blown for the washing of hands, then sat down on his raised seat, while each of the companions of the Round Table took his allotted seat. That day four crowned kings rendered the service, and along with them so many men of high degree that it was a wondrous sight to see. That day the king was seated on his high seat in the palace, and there was a great company of noble men to do his service. And it came about that when they were all seated, they found that all the companions of the Round Table were present and the seats occupied, except only the one called "the Perilous Seat."

When they had finished the first course there happened such a marvellous adventure that all the doors and windows of the palace where they were dining were closed of their own accord without anyone having touched them, and yet the hall was not darkened. At this the wise and foolish were alike amazed. And King Arthur, who spoke first, said: "By God, fair lords, we have seen strange things to-day both here and at the river. But I believe we shall see to-night still greater wonders."

While the king was speaking thus, there entered a worthy old man with a white robe, but there was not a knight in the hall who saw where he came in. He came on foot and led by the hand a knight with scarlet armour, but having no sword or shield. And as soon as he was inside the hall, he said: "Peace be with you!" Then when he saw the king, he said: "King Arthur, I bring thee the Knight Desired, who is sprung from the high lineage of King David and from the family of Joseph of Arimathæa; it is he through whom the marvels of this country and of foreign lands will terminate. Behold him here!" Then the king, delighted with this news, said to the worthy man: "Sire, be welcome indeed if this news be true, and this knight be welcome too! For if it is he whom we have been awaiting to achieve the adventures of the Holy Grail, never was such a joyous reception given to any man as we shall give to him. But, whoever he be, whether the one you say or some other, I should wish him

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welcome, since he is such a gentle man and of such high lineage as you say." "Upon my word," the worthy man replied, "you shall soon have early evidence of what I say." Then he made the knight disarm, who was left clad in a jacket of red silk cloth; then he gave him a red mantle which he threw over his shoulder, all of heavy silk and furred inside with white ermine.

When he had clothed and equipped him, he said to him. "Follow me, sir knight," and so he did. Then he led him straight to the Perilous Seat beside the one occupied by Lancelot, and he raised the silken cloth with which it was covered. And there he found the words which said: "This is the seat of Galahad." When the worthy man looked at the words he saw that they were apparently recently inscribed, and he recognised the name. So he said in the hearing of all present: "Sir knight, take your seat here, for it is your place." And he sat down confidently and said to the worthy man: "Now you can go, for you have done all that you were commanded. And greet for me all those in the holy hostel and my uncle King Pellés and my grandsire the rich Fisher King, and tell them from me that I shall go to see them as soon as I can and when I have the leisure." Then the worthy man took his leave and commended King Arthur and all the rest to God's keeping. But when they wished to ask him who he was, he vouchsafed them no satisfaction, but simply answered that he would not tell them now, for they should know in good time if they dared to ask. When he came to the main doorway of the palace which was closed, he opened it and went down into the court-yard, where he found as many as fifteen knights and squires who had come with him and were awaiting him. So he mounted and departed from the court without their knowing more of his identity for this time.

Now when those in the hall saw the knight sitting in the seat which so many worthy men had feared and which had given rise to so many great adventures, they were all amazed, for they saw him to be so young a man that they did not know how such a favour could have come to him except by the will of Our Lord. Then the great festival began; and they all did great honour to the knight, for they thought it must be he who would bring to a conclusion the marvels of the Holy Grail; and they

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knew well that it was he by the test of the Seat, in which no one, excepting him, had tried to sit without some mischief befalling him. So they served and honoured him all they could as one whom they regarded as their master and lord above all those of the Round Table. And Lancelot who looked upon him with pleasure and surprise, knew that it was he whom he had that very day made a knight; and that gave him all the greater joy. So he did him all the honour he could, and while speaking with him of divers things, asked him to tell him something about himself. And he, who recognised him and dared not refuse his request, replied freely to his questions. But Bors who was as happy as he could be and knew well that it was Galahad, Lancelot's own son, who was destined to conclude the adventures, spoke to his brother Lyonel and said: "Fair brother, do you know who this knight is who occupies the Perilous Seat?" "I don't know much," said Lyonel, "except that he is the new knight whom Lancelot dubbed to-day with his own hand. Moreover, it is he of whom we have been speaking between ourselves and whom my lord Lancelot begot with the daughter of the rich Fisher King." "You are right," Bors replied, "for it is he, and he is our near cousin. And we ought to be very happy over this adventure; for there is no doubt that he will come to greater things than any knight I ever knew, and already we have a fine beginning."

Thus the two brothers spoke about Galahad, as did also the others who were present. The news travelled so quickly that the queen who was dining in her apartment heard it from a valet who said to her: "Lady, wondrous things are happening here." "How is that?" she inquired; "tell me about it." "Truly, lady," he replied, "a knight has come to court who has accomplished the adventure of the Perilous Seat, and he is such a young man that everyone is wondering whence the power to do so came to him." "Really." said she, "can this be true?" "Yes," he replied, "you may be sure of it." "In God's name," said she, "then he is welcome indeed; for no man has ever sought to accomplish this venture but he has died or been injured before achieving it." "Ah God!" the other ladies exclaimed, "in a good hour the knight was born. Never could any other man, whatever his prowess might be, accomplish what he has done. And

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from this adventure it may be inferred that he it is who will achieve the adventures of Great Britain and by whom the Cripple King shall receive his cure." "Fair friend," said the queen to the valet, "with God's help, tell me now what he is like." "Lady," he replied, "so help me God, he is one of the handsomest knights of the world. But he is wonderfully young and so strangely resembles Lancelot and the family of King Ban that they are all saying he must belong to it." Then the queen was more anxious to see him than she had been before. When she heard of the resemblance, she thought it must be Galahad whom Lancelot had begotten with the daughter of the rich Fisher King, in accordance with the story she had often been told of how he had been deceived; and that was why she was so angry with Lancelot, if the fault had been his.

When the king and the companions of the Round Table had dined, they rose from their places. And the king himself came to the Perilous Seat and, raising the silken cloth, he found the name of Galahad of which he had greatly desired to be assured. Then he pointed it out to my lord Gawain, saying: "Fair nephew, now we have with us Galahad the good and perfect knight whom we and those of the Round Table have so much desired to see. Let us strive to honour and serve him so long as he is with us; for I know right well that he will not stay here long because of the great Quest of the Grail which I doubt not will soon commence. And Lancelot has already given us to understand that he would not have said so if he had not known something about it." "Sire," my lord Gawain replied, "you and we ought to serve him as the one whom God has sent us to deliver our country from the great marvels and the strange adventures which have been happening so often for a long time past."

Then came the king to Galahad and said: "Welcome, sire, for we have greatly yearned to see you. Now at last we have you here, thanks be to God and also to you who have deigned to come." "Sire," he replied, "I have come because I was bound to do so; for all those who are to be companions in the Quest of the Holy Grail must start from here, and the Quest will soon begin." "Sire," said the king, "we had great need of your arrival for many reasons, both in order to terminate the great marvels of this land and to achieve an adventure which has this day come to us and

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in which the knights here have met defeat. But I know that you will not fail, for you are destined to succeed in the adventures where the others have failed. For this reason has God sent you to us, that you should accomplish what the others have had to leave undone." "Sire," said Galahad, "where is this adventure of which you speak? I should be glad to see it." "I will show it to you," the king replied; then he took him by the hand and they went down from the palace, followed by all the other knights to see how the adventure of the stone would turn out. They all ran thither so that there did not remain behind a single knight in the entire palace.

The news of this quickly reached the queen. And as soon as she heard it, she had the food removed and said to four of the noblest ladies with her: "Fair ladies, come with me to the river, for I would not miss seeing the end of this adventure, if I can arrive in time." Then the queen went down from the palace and with her a great company of ladies and damsels.

When the ladies had reached the water and the knights saw them approaching, they began to say: "Turn around, here is the queen!" And all those who stood nearest made way for her. Then the king said to Galahad: "Sire, here is the adventure of which I told you. Some of the most valued knights of my household have to day failed to draw this sword out of this stone: they have failed utterly in their attempt." "Sire," said Galahad in reply, "that is not surprising, for the adventure was reserved for me, and not for them. And because I was sure to get this sword, I did not bring any to court, as you can see." Then he stretched forth his hand and drew the sword from the stone as easily as if it had no hold there; then he took the scabbard and placed the sword in it. Then he girded it on him and said to the king: "Sire, now it is better placed than it was before. Now I lack nothing but a shield." "Fair sire," the king replied, "God will send you a shield from some source, as He has sent you a sword."

Then they looked down the stream and saw a damsel riding rapidly toward them on a white palfrey. And when she had come up to them, she greeted the king and all the company and asked if Lancelot was

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there. As he was standing right before her, he himself replied: "Damsel, here I am." Then she looked at him and recognised him, and said to him in tears: "Ah, Lancelot, how changed is your situation since yesterday morning!" And when he heard that, he said to her: "How is that, damsel? Tell me." "Upon my word," she replied, "I will tell you in the presence of all who are here. Yesterday morning you were the best knight in the world. Anyone who should have called you then the best knight of all, would have said the truth, for then you were so. But whoever should say it now would be considered a liar; for there is one better than you, as is proved by the adventure of this sword on which you did not dare to lay your hand. Now such is the change and alteration in your position, which I have pointed out in order that you may not henceforth think that you are the best knight in the world." And he said that he would never more think so, after this adventure which made it impossible for him so to regard himself. Then the damsel turned to the king and said: "King Arthur, I bring thee word from Nascien the hermit that there shall come to thee this day the greatest honour that ever befell a knight of Brittany. And this will not be for thy sake, but for another's. Dost thou know what this honour is to be? It is the Holy Grail which will appear to-day in thy palace and will nourish the companions of the Round Table." Then as soon as she had said these words, she turned away and left by the same road as she had come. Now there were there many barons and knights who would fain have detained her in order to learn who she was and whence she came; but she would not tarry for any request that was made of her.

Then the king said to the barons of his household: "Fair sirs, thus we have had true evidence that you are soon to enter upon the Quest of the Holy Grail. And because I well know that I shall never again see you all together as you are now, I desire that in the meadow of Camelot there should now be held so well-contested a tournament that after our death our descendants who come after us shall still hold it in remembrance." To this they all agreed. So they came back to the city and got their arms; some taking weapons wherewith they might joust more securely, and some who took nothing but coverings and shields, for most of them

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trusted in their prowess. Now the king, who had planned all this, had done it only to see an example of Galahad's chivalry. For he thought he would not return for some time to court, when he once should have gone away.

When all, both great and small, were assembled in the meadow of Camelot, Galahad at the request of the king and queen donned his hauberk and placed his helmet upon his head; but he would not take a shield for anything that they might say. And my lord Gawain, who was delighted at this, said that he would fetch him lances, and so said my lords Yvain and Bors de Gaunes. The queen had gone up on the walls with a great company of ladies and damsels. Then Galahad, who had come into the meadow with the others, began to break lances so lustily that all who beheld him considered him a marvel. He accomplished so much in a short time that every man and woman present who saw his chivalry regarded him as a marvel and the best of all. And those who had never seen him before said that he had begun well his knightly deeds, and it clearly appeared from what he had done that day that henceforth he could easily outstrip all the other knights in prowess. For when the tourney was concluded, they found that of all the companions of the Round Table who had taken part, there were only two whom he had not defeated, and they were Lancelot and Perceval.

So the tourney continued until after three o'clock, and then concluded. For the king himself, fearing some anger might finally develop, had the contestants separated, and caused Galahad to unlace his helmet, and gave it to Bors de Gaunes to carry. Then they took him from the meadow into the city of Camelot through the main street with face uncovered, so that all might see him openly. And when the queen had gazed at him fixedly, she said that truly Lancelot had begotten him, for never did two men so marvellously resemble each other as did they two. Therefore it was no wonder if he was endowed with great chivalry, for otherwise he would be too degenerate a scion of his line. And a lady who had heard a part of what the queen said, replied to her at once: "Lady, in God's name, is he then destined by right to be so good a knight as you say?" "Yes verily," said the queen; "for he is on both sides

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descended from the best knights in the world and from the highest lineage known.”

Then the ladies came down to attend vespers because it was a high feast-day. And when the king had come out from the church and had come into the upper hall, he ordered the tables to be laid. Then the knights went to take their seats as they had done in the morning. When they were all seated in silence, there was heard such a great and marvellous peal of thunder that it seemed to them the palace must collapse. But at once there shone in upon them a ray of sunlight which made the palace seven-fold brighter than it was before. And straightway they were as if illumined with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and they began to look at one another; for they knew not whence this experience had befallen them. Yet, there was no man present who could speak or utter a word: for great and small alike were dumb. Then when they had remained for some time so that none of them had power to speak, but rather they gazed at each other like dumb beasts, there entered the Holy Grail covered with a white cloth; but no one was able to see who was carrying it. It entered by the great door of the hall, and as soon as it had come in, the hall was filled with odours as sweet as if all the spices of the earth were diffused there. And it passed down the middle of the hall and all around the high seats; and as it passed before the tables, they were straightway filled at each place with such viands as the occupant desired. When all were served, the Holy Grail departed at once so that they knew not what had become of it nor did they see which way it went. At once the power of speech was restored to those who before could not utter a word. And most of them gave thanks to Our Lord for the great honour he had done them in feeding them with the grace from the Holy Vessel. But more than all the others present, King Arthur was joyous and glad because Our Lord had shown him greater favour than to any king before him.

Thus the familiars and the strangers at the court alike rejoiced, for it seemed to them that Our Lord had not forgotten them in showing them such a favour. And they continued to speak of it as long as the meal lasted. The king himself spoke of it to those who were seated nearest to

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him, and said: "Surely, my lords, we ought to be glad and rejoice greatly that Our Lord has given such evidence of His love that He has consented to feed us with His grace upon such a high festival as Pentecost." "Sire," replied my lord Gawain, "there is something else that you do not know: there is not a man here who has not been served with what he desired in his mind. And that is something that never happened in any court, unless it be in that of the Cripple King. But they are all so confounded that they could not see it openly, the true likeness being concealed from them. Wherefore, for my part I make this vow, to enter to-morrow without delay upon the Quest and to prosecute it for a year and a day, and longer yet if need be; and I will not return to court for any reason whatsoever until I have seen it more clearly than it has been manifested to me here, if peradventure it be destined that I can behold it. And if it be destined otherwise, I will return."

When the knights of the Round Table heard these words, they all rose from their seats and made the same vow that my lord Gawain had made, and said they would not cease from their wandering until they should have sat at the high table where such sweet meat was daily served as that which they had just tasted. And when the king saw that they had made this vow, he was in sore distress; for he knew well that he could not turn them aside from this enterprise. So he said to my lord Gawain: "Alas. Gawain, this vow which you have made will be the death of me, for you have deprived me of the fairest and most loyal company that I have ever found the company of the Round Table. For when they shall have left me, whenever the time may come, I know well that they will never all come back; rather will most of them continue in this Quest which will not end so soon as you think. So I am not a little distressed. For I have prospered and raised them with all my power, and have always loved them and love them still as if they were my sons or brothers, and therefore their departure will sorely grieve me; for I had grown accustomed to see them often and to have their company." Thereupon the king grew very pensive and tears came to his eyes, as those present could plainly see. When he spoke again, it was so loudly that everyone there could easily hear him: "Gawain, Gawain, you have

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brought great sorrow to my heart, from which I can never recover until I know truly how this Quest is going to turn out. For I greatly fear that my earthly friends will never come back from it." "Ah, sire," Lancelot replied, "for God's sake, what is this you say? Such a man as you ought not to give place in his heart to fear, but to justice, courage and good hope. You ought to take comfort, for surely if we should all die on this Quest, it would be a greater honour for us than to die anywhere else." "Lancelot," the king replied, "the great love that I have always cherished for them makes me speak this way, and it is no wonder if I am distressed at their departure. For never did a Christian king have so many good knights and worthy men at his table as I have had this day; nor will it ever happen again after they have gone, nor will they ever again be gathered about my board as they have been this day; and this it is that troubles me most." My lord Gawain knew not how to reply to this, for he knew well that the king spoke the truth. So he would have gladly taken back the promise he had made, if he had dared; but it could not be, for it was already too well known.

Soon it was announced through all the apartments of the palace how the Quest of the Holy Grail had been undertaken, and that all those who were to share in the Quest would leave court on the morrow. And many of those who heard the news were rather sorry than glad; for the prowess of the companions of the Round Table had made the household of King Arthur respected above all others. When the ladies and damsels who were seated with the queen in her apartments at supper heard this news, there were many who grieved and sorrowed, especially those who were wives or sweethearts of the companions of the Round Table. Nor was there cause for surprise in this: for they were honoured and held dear by those who they now feared would lose their lives on this Quest. So they began to make great lamentation. And the queen asked the valet who stood before her: "Tell me, valet," she said, "wast thou present when this Quest was pledged?" "Yes, lady, I was," said he. "And my lord Gawain, and Lancelot of the Lake, are they also to take part in it?" she inquired. "Yes, certainly, lady," he replied; "my lord Gawain was the first to take the vow, and after him Lancelot and all the rest, until none

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held back who was a companion of the Table." When she heard these words, she grieved so for Lancelot that she thought she would die of sorrow, and could not keep the tears from coming to her eyes. Then at last she replied as one whose cup of woe was full: "Surely," said she, "this is a great misfortune. This Quest will not be concluded without the death of many worthy men, since so many of them have undertaken it. I marvel greatly that my lord the king, who is so wise, has permitted it. For the better part of his lords will leave us now and the remainder will not be worth much." Then she began to weep tenderly, as did all the ladies and damsels who were with her.

So all the court was troubled at the news of those who were about to leave. And when the tables were removed in the hall and in the apartments, and the ladies had gathered with the knights, then the grief broke out afresh. For each lady or damsel, whether wife or sweetheart, said to her knight that she would go with him on the Quest. And there were some present who would have easily agreed to this and who would have wished it well enough, had it not been for a worthy old man, dressed in the garb of religion, who entered there after supper was concluded. And when he came before the king he said so loudly that all could hear him: "Hear ye, lords of the Round Table who have sworn to enter upon the Quest of the Holy Grail! Nascien the hermit sends you word by me that no one shall take with him upon this Quest either lady or damsel lest he fall into mortal sin: let no one enter upon it who is not confessed or who will not go to confession, for no one ought to enter upon such a lofty service before being cleansed and purged of all villainy and mortal sins. This Quest is not a quest for earthly things, but is to be the search for the deep secrets and confidences of Our Lord and for the great mysteries which the High Master will show openly to that fortunate knight whom he has elected among all the other knights of earth to be his servant. To him he will reveal the great marvel of the Holy Grail and will show him what mortal heart could not conceive nor the tongue of earthly man utter." Because of these words it came about that no one took with him his wife or friend. And the king entertained the worthy man well and richly, and asked him much about himself; but

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his replies were brief, for his mind was occupied with other things than with the king.

Then the queen came and sat down beside Galahad, and began to ask him about his origins, his country and his family. And he told her a good deal, as one who was well informed, but he never said anything about being the son of Lancelot. However, from what the queen heard she learned well enough that he was the son of Lancelot and that he had been born to the daughter of King Pellés, of whom she had often heard. But because she was determined to learn this from his own mouth, if possible, she asked him for the truth about his father. He replied, however, that he was not sure whose son he was. "Ah, sire!" said she, "you are concealing the truth from me. Why do you do that? So help me God, you need never be ashamed of hearing your father's name. For he is the handsomest knight in the world, and he is descended on all sides from kings and queens and from the highest lineage known, and has had until now the reputation of being the best knight in the world; wherefore you too ought to surpass all those in the world. And certainly you resemble him so wonderfully that there is no man here so foolish as to fail to notice it, if he should take heed." When Galahad heard these words he was filled with embarrassment. But he replied at once: "Lady, since you know him so well, you will be able to tell me who he is. And if it is he whom I think to be my father, I shall know that you speak the truth; and if it is not he, I should not be able to agree with you, whatever you might say." "In God's name," she replied, "since you will not mention his name, I will. He who begot you is my lord Lancelot of the Lake, the handsomest, best and most gracious knight, the most desired and best beloved of any born in our time. So it seems to me that you ought not to conceal the fact either from me or anyone else; for you could not be sprung from a more honourable man or a better knight." "Lady," he replied, "since you know it so well, why should I tell you? In time it will be known well enough."

The queen and Galahad continued their conversation until night fell. And when the time had come to retire, the king took Galahad to his own room and put him in his own bed where he himself was wont to lie, thus

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paying all honour and respect to him. Then the king retired and Lancelot and the other knights who were there. That night the king was very pensive and troubled because of the love he bore the worthy men who were to leave on the morrow and go to a place where he thought they would tarry long. His heart was filled with grief at the thought that many of them would die on the Quest, and this it was that made him sad. All night the noble barons and the people of the kingdom of Logres were in sorrow and distress. And when it pleased Our Lord to end the shadows of the night by the light of the breaking day, all the knights whose minds were intent upon their business arose and dressed and equipped themselves. When the day was fully come, the king too rose from his bed. When he was dressed he came into the room of my lord Gawain and Lancelot, who had slept together. When he entered, he found them dressed and accoutred to go and to hear mass. Then the king, who loved them both as if they were his sons, greeted them with and embrace, while they stood up and welcomed him. Bidding them be seated, he sat down with them, and looking at Gawain he began to speak: "Gawain, Gawain, you have betrayed me! your presence never enhanced my court so much as your departure now will work it harm. For it will never be honoured by such a noble and valiant company as that of which your action is depriving it. Yet I am not so much distressed for the others as I am for you two. For I have loved you with all the love one man can have for another, and not just now for the first time, but ever since I first recognised the excellent qualities you possess." When the king had spoken these words, he was silent and turned very pensive while the tears flowed down his face. And they seeing this, and being themselves as sad as possible, dared not reply when they saw him so miserable. After being for a long time plunged in grief, he said sadly: "Alas, God! I never thought to see myself separated from this company which fortune had bestowed upon me!" Then he added to Lancelot: "Lancelot, on the faith and on the oath which you and I have exchanged, I charge you to help me with counsel in this affair." "Tell me, sire," said he, "how I may do so." "I would fain have this Quest put off if possible," the king replied. "Sire," said Lancelot, "I have heard the oath of so many

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noble men that I do not believe they would renounce it for any cause. For every one of them would be a perjurer, and it would be a disloyal act to ask them to renounce their pledge." "Indeed, I know you speak the truth," the king replied. "But the great love I bear you and the others makes me speak this way. And if it were only a proper and fitting thing, I could wish so, for I shall be sorely grieved by their departure."

Thus they conversed until the day was bright and clear and the sun had dried the dew. Then the palace began to fill with the barons of the realm. And the queen, having arisen, came to the king and said: "Sire, the knights are awaiting you below to hear mass." Then he arose and wiped his eyes in order that those who saw him might not know what sorrow he had felt. My lord Gawain gave orders to bring his arms, as also did Lancelot. And when they were accoutred, except for their shields, they came into the hall and found their companions prepared like themselves for the start. When they had been to the chapel and had heard mass, they returned to the hall, and those who were pledged to pursue the Quest sat down beside one another. Then King Bademagus said: "Sire, since this affair has been undertaken so seriously that it cannot be allowed to drop, I recommend that the sacred relics be brought in. Then the companions will take such an oath as is fitting for those who are starting on a quest." "I consent to that, since it pleases you, and since it cannot be otherwise," King Arthur made reply. Then the priests bade the relics to be brought in, on which the oaths of the court were wont to be sworn. And when they were carried in before the high table, the king called my lord Gawain and said: "You who first assumed this Quest, come forward and be the first to take the oath which should be taken by those who engage in it." "Sire," said King Bademagus, "saving your grace, he shall not be the first, but that one shall do it before us all whom we are bound to regard as lord and master of the Round Table: that is my lord Galahad. And after he has sworn, the rest of us without dissent will all take the same oath, as is fitting." Then Galahad was called; and he came forward and, kneeling before the relics, swore as a loyal knight that he would pursue this Quest for a year and a day, or longer if need be, and would never return to court until he had

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learned the truth concerning the Holy Grail, if he could in any way do so. Then Lancelot swore to the same effect, and following him my lord Gawain and Perceval and Bors and Lyonel and Helains li Blans. Then all the companions of the Round Table took the oath in turn. And when all who had engaged themselves had sworn, it was found by those who kept the list that they numbered one hundred and fifty, and they were such worthy men that there was not a coward among them all. After taking some breakfast at the king's request, they donned their helmets and it became evident that they would not tarry long. So with tears and sadness they commended the queen to God.

When she saw that they were about to start without more delay, she began to grieve sorely, as though she already saw all her friends dead before her; and in order that the others might not see how deeply she was moved, she went to her room and threw herself upon her bed. Then she began to make such moan that there was no man in the world so hard-hearted but, on seeing her, would have pitied her. And when Lancelot was all prepared to mount, being extremely grieved for the sorrow of his lady the queen, he went to the room where he had seen her withdraw, and entered. And when the queen saw him come in all armed, she cried out to him: "Ah, Lancelot! you have betrayed me even to death in leaving the household of my lord the king in order to go into strange lands from which you will never return unless God restores you." "Lady," said he, "I shall come back much sooner than you think." "Ah, God!" said she, "not so speaks my heart which drives me to such anxiety and fear as never gentle lady felt for a man." "Lady," he replied, "I must go now, if it please you to give me leave." "You would never go, if I could help it," she made answer. "But since go you must, go in the keeping of Him who consented to suffer on the true Cross to deliver man from eternal death. May He conduct you in safety wherever you go!" "Lady," said he, "may God do so in His great pity!"

Then Lancelot left the queen and came down into the courtyard where he found his companions already mounted and waiting only for him to start. So he went to his horse and mounted. But the king seeing Galahad without a shield and about to start like the others on the Quest,

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came up to him and said: "Sire, methinks you are not adequately equipped in starting without such a shield as your companions have." "Sire," said he, "it would be wrong for me to take one. I will take none until some adventure brings me one." "Well, God help you," the king replied. "I will hold my peace, since it must be so."

Then the barons and knights got to horse, and riding forth from the castle passed down through the town. You never saw such sorrow and weeping as that of the citizens as they watched the companions leave for the Quest of the Holy Grail. There was not a man, poor or rich, of all those who were to stay behind, who did not weep bitterly: they were so sad at this leave taking.

But those who were to go away showed no signs of any concern; rather you would have thought, if you had seen them, that they were more than happy at the prospect, as indeed they were.

Now when they had come near the castle of Vagan in the forest, they stopped at a cross, and my lord Gawain said to the king: "Sire, you have come far enough; go back now, as must needs be, for it is not for you to convoy us farther." Then the king said: "It is much harder for me to turn back than to come thus far: for I am loth to part with you. But since I see that it must be done, I will return." Then my lord Gawain took his helmet from his head, as did the other companions; then he ran to embrace the king, and the other barons did so after him. Then, when they had relaced their helmets, with tears in their eyes they commended each other to God. After their separation, the king returned to Camelot, and the companions rode on through the forest until they came to the castle of Vagan.

This Vagan was a worthy man of exemplary life who had been in his youth one of the world's good knights. And when he saw that the companions were entering his castle, he had the gates closed on all sides, saying that since God had done him such honour as to place them in his power, they should not go forth until he had served them to the extent of his ability. So he detained them, as it were, by force, disarmed them, and served them so richly and royally that night that they all wondered where he could have got such wealth.

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That night they took counsel how they should next proceed. And on the morrow they decided that each should go off by himself, because it would be a shame for them to travel in company. So as soon as it was light, the companions arose and, taking their arms, went to hear mass in a chapel there. Then they mounted and commended the lord of the place to God and thanked him warmly for the honour he had done them. Sallying forth from the castle they took leave of each other as had been agreed, and entered the forest at divers places where they saw it to be thickest and wherever they saw there was no road or path. At the moment of parting many wept who thought their hearts were hard and insensible. But for the present the story will take leave of them and turn to speak of Galahad, because he had initiated the Quest.

Chapter II

Now the story tells that after Galahad had left his companions, he rode for three or four days without encountering any adventure worthy of mention. And on the fifth day after the vesper hour it happened that his path brought him to an abbey of White Friars. On his arrival he knocked at the gate and the friars came out and helped him to dismount with much courtesy, as knowing that he was a knight errant. While one took his horse, another led him into a hall on the ground floor to disarm him. And when they had relieved him of his arms, he beheld two of the companions of the Round Table, of whom one was King Bademagus and the other Yvain the Avoltres. And as soon as they espied him and recognised him, they ran to him with outstretched arms to welcome him joyfully, for they were very happy to have found him. When they had made themselves known to him, he too showed his joy at meeting them and honoured them as those whom he ought to regard as brothers and companions.

That evening when they had eaten and had gone to enjoy themselves in a beautiful garden of the abbey, they sat down under a tree and Galahad asked them what adventure had brought them there. "In truth, sire," they replied, "we came here to witness an adventure which is very marvellous, judging from what we have been told. For there is in this abbey a shield which no one can hang about his neck with the intention of carrying it away without there befalling him on the first or second day either death or an injury or some other mischance. So we have come to see if it is true as we have been told." "For my part I wish to try to carry it off in the morning," said King Bademagus, "and then I shall know if the adventure is as it is described to us." "In God's name," said Galahad,

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“you tell me a marvellous thing, if this shield is such as you say. And if you cannot carry it off, it is I who shall do so, for I have no shield.” “Then, sire, we shall leave it to you,” they said, “for we know full well that you will not fail in this adventure.” “I consent,” said he, “that you try it first, in order to learn if what they have told you is true or not.” So to this they all agreed. That night the companions were served and regaled with all that the friars could command; and the friars showed great honour to Galahad when they heard the testimony which the two knights bore him. So they gave him a rich and noble bed fitting for such a man as he. And near him lay King Bademagus and his companion.

The next day when they had heard mass, King Bademagus asked one of the friars where the shield was of which there was so much talk over the country. “Why do you inquire, sire?” asked the worthy man. “Because I shall carry it off with me to see whether it possess such qualities as they say,” he replied. “I advise you not to carry it off,” the friar said, “for nothing but shame would come to you.” “Nevertheless,” he replied, “I wish to know where it is and what it is like.” Then the other took him behind the High Altar, and there he found a white shield with a red cross. “Sire,” said the worthy man, “behold the shield you inquire for.” Then the knights looked at it and said they thought it the finest and richest shield they had ever seen; and it smelt as sweet as if all the spices in the world were spread upon it. When Yvain the Avoltres saw it, he said: “So help me God, this is the shield which no one is to hang about his neck unless he is a better knight than all the rest. And it will never hang about my neck, for surely I am not so valiant or so worthy that I should hang it about my neck.” “In God’s name,” said King Bademagus, “whatever may happen to me, I will carry it off from here!” Then he hung it about his neck and carried it out of the church. And when he came to his horse, he said to Galahad: “Sire, if it please you, I should like you to wait for me here until I can inform you how this adventure will turn out for me. If some mischance should befall me, I should like you to know of it; for I know very well that you could accomplish the adventure easily.” “I am very willing to wait for you,”

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Galahad replied. Then he mounted at once, and the friars gave him a squire to accompany him and to bring back the shield if necessary.

Thus Galahad stayed behind with Yvain to bear him company until he should learn the result of the adventure. And King Bademagus who started out with the squire rode two leagues and more until he came to a hermitage which lay at the bottom of a valley. Looking toward the hermitage, he saw approaching from that direction a knight in white armour riding as fast as his horse could carry him; he held his lance extended before him and came thrusting at him. As soon as he saw him approach, he turned toward him and broke over him his lance which flew in pieces. And the white knight, who had caught him unprotected, struck him so hard that he broke the mail of his hauberk and thrust his lance head through his left shoulder, striking him as one who had plenty of courage and strength, and knocking him from his horse. And when he fell, the knight took the shield from his neck and said so loudly that both he and the squire could hear: "Sir knight, you were foolish and rash to hang this shield about your neck. For no man is permitted to carry it unless he be the best knight in the world. And because of the sin you have committed Our Lord has sent me here to take vengeance suited to the crime." Having said this, he came up to the squire and said: "Here, take this shield to the servant of Jesus Christ, to the good knight named Galahad whom thou didst leave at the abbey; and tell him that the High Master bids him carry it. For he will always find it as fresh and as sound as it is at present, and for this reason he should value it highly. And give him my greetings as soon as thou seest him." And the valet asked him: "Sire, what is your name, that I may tell him when I come to him?" "My name," he answered, "thou mayst not know; for it is something that must not be told to thee or any mortal man; with so much thou must be satisfied. But do as I command thee." "Sire," said the valet, "since you will not tell me your name, I pray and conjure you by what you hold most dear to tell me the truth about this shield, how it was brought into this country and why so many marvels are connected with it. For no man in our time has been able to hang it about his neck without mischief befalling him." "Thou hast urged me so," the knight replied, "that I will

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tell thee. But it shall not be to thee alone; rather I wish thee to bring me the knight to whom thou shalt take the shield." And the valet said he would do so, but he added: "Where can we find you when we come this way?" "In this very place you will find me," was the reply. Then the valet went to King Bademagus and asked him if he was much wounded. "Yes, truly," the king replied, "so seriously that I cannot escape death." "Can you ride a horse?" the valet asked. And he answered that he would try to do so. So he got up, wounded as he was, and the valet supported him to where the horse was from which the king had fallen. Then the king got up in front and the valet behind to hold him about the waist; for he thought he would fall otherwise, as indeed he would have done.

So they left the place where the king had been wounded and rode until they reached the abbey from which they had recently set out. And when the inmates learned that they were approaching, they came out to meet them. They helped King Bademagus from his horse and took him to a room and took good care of his wound, which was deep and serious. Then Galahad asked one of the friars who was caring for him: "Sire, do you think he can recover? For it seems to me it would be too bad if he should die as the result of this adventure." "Sire," the friar replied, "he will recover, if God wills. But I tell you, he is very badly wounded, though he ought not to be greatly pitied. For we told him that if he carried off the shield, evil would befall him; yet he carried it off in spite of our advice, which was very foolish on his part." Now when the friars had done all they could for him, the valet said to Galahad in the hearing of all present: "Sire, greetings from the good knight with the white armour, who wounded King Bademagus, and who sent you this shield! He bids you to carry it henceforth, in the name of the High Master. For there is no one, as he said, except you alone who should carry it. Therefore he has sent it to you. And if you wish to know whence these great adventures have so often come about, come to him with me, and he will tell us according to his promise."

When the friars heard this piece of news, they bowed low before Galahad, and blessed the good fortune that had brought him that way: for now they were persuaded that the great and perilous adventures

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would be brought to an end. And Yvain the Avoltres said: "My lord Galahad, put about your neck this shield, which was intended for none other than you. So shall my desire be in some measure accomplished: for surely I desired nothing so much as to know the Good Knight who should bear the lordship of this shield." Then Galahad replied that he would place it about his neck, since it had been sent to him, but first he wished his arms to be brought to him; so he asked for them, and they were brought. When he was armed and mounted upon his horse, he hung the shield about his neck and departed, commending the friars to God. And when Yvain the Avoltres was armed again and mounted upon his horse, he announced that he would bear Galahad company. But he answered that this could not be, for he would go alone with the valet. So thus they parted and each went his way.

Yvain struck into the forest, while Galahad and the valet journeyed until they found the knight with the white arms whom the valet had seen before. And when he saw Galahad approach, he went to meet him and greeted him, and Galahad greeted him as courteously as he could. After engaging in some familiar talk, Galahad said to the knight: "Sire, I have heard that many marvellous adventures have come to pass in this country because of this shield which I am wearing. So I would kindly and frankly beg of you to tell me the truth, how and why all this has happened, for I am sure that you know." "Certainly, I will tell you gladly," said the knight; "for I know the truth full well. So listen, Galahad, if you please.

"Forty-two years after the Passion of Jesus Christ it came about that Joseph of Arimathæa, the gentle knight who took down Our Lord from the true and holy Cross, departed from the city of Jerusalem with a large number of his relatives. And they journeyed as they were directed by Our Lord's command until they came to the city of Sarraz, which a Saracen, King Ewalach, held. Now when Joseph reached Sarraz, Ewalach was at war with a rich and powerful neighbouring king, named Tholomer, whose lands bordered upon his own. And when Ewalach was ready to go against Tholomer, who required of him his land, Josephe the son of Joseph said to him that if he went to battle ill-prepared as he was,

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he would be discomfited and put to shame by his enemy. 'What then is your advice?' Ewalach inquired. 'I will tell you,' he replied. Then he began to expose to him the features of the new dispensation and the truth of the gospel and of the crucifixion of Our Lord and of the resurrection, and he had a shield brought whereon he attached a cross of silk, and said: 'King Ewalach, now I will show you clearly how you may recognise the power and virtue of the true Crucified One. It is true that this caitif Tholomer will have the mastery over you for three days and three nights and will bring you into the fear of death. But when you think that you cannot longer escape, then uncover the cross and say: "Fair Lord God, of whose death I bear the sign, deliver me from this peril, and lead me safe and sound to receive your faith and trust."' "

"Then the king left and started to attack Tholomer. And it happened to him as Josephe had said. But when he saw himself in such peril that he thought he must surely die he uncovered his shield and saw portrayed in the midst of it a man crucified who was bathed in blood. Then he uttered the words which Josephe had taught him, whereupon the victory and honour rested with him and he was delivered from the hands of his enemies and he triumphed over Tholomer and all his men. And when he had returned to the city of Sarraz, he told all the people how Josephe had spoken the truth, and he so showed forth the power of the Crucified One that Nascien consented to receive baptism. And while they were baptising him a Christian, it happened that a man passed by who had one hand cut off which he was carrying in his other hand. When Josephe called him, he drew near. And as soon as he had touched the cross upon the shield, his hand which he had lost was healed. Then happened another marvellous thing. For the cross on the shield left its place and adhered to the man's arm so that it was no more to be seen on the shield. Then Ewalach received baptism and became a servant of Jesus Christ, and held him in great love and reverence and had the shield very carefully preserved.

"Afterwards it came about, when Josephe had left Sarraz with his father and they had arrived in Great Britain, that they encountered a wicked and cruel king who threw them both into prison, together with a

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numerous company of Christians. The report soon spread abroad that Josephe was in prison, for there was then no man in the world of greater fame, and even King Mordrain heard the news. So he summoned his men and retainers to join him and his brother-in-law Nascien and they came to Great Britain and attacked him who held Josephe in prison. And they totally defeated him and confounded all those of the country, so that holy Christianity was spread in the land. So great was their love for Josephe that they never left the country, but stayed with him and followed him wherever he went. Now when Josephe came to his death-bed and Ewalach knew that he must leave the world, he came before him weeping tenderly and said: 'Sire, now that you are leaving me, I shall remain all alone in this country, having resigned for your sake my native land and the satisfaction of living among my own people. For God's sake, since you must leave this world, give me some tokens to serve me after your death as a remembrance.' 'Sire,' said Josephe, 'that will I do.'

"Then he began to think what he could leave him. And when he had thought for some time, he said: 'King Ewalach, send for that shield which I gave thee when thou didst go to battle against Tholomer.' The king said he would do so gladly, for the shield was close by, being the one he took with him wherever he went. So he had the shield brought to Josephe, when straightway Josephe began to bleed severely at the nose so that it could not be stanchd. But taking at once the shield, he made upon it with his blood the cross which you here behold: for you must know this is the very same shield of which I am telling you. And when he had made the cross as you can see it here, he said to him: 'Behold this shield which I leave you as a remembrance of me. You shall never see this shield but it shall remind you of me, for you know that this cross is made with my blood which will always remain as fresh and crimson as you see it now so long as the shield endure. And it will endure for a long time; because no one will hang it about his neck, even though he be a knight, who will not repent of it, until Galahad the Good Knight, last of the line of Nascien, shall hang it about his neck. So let no one seek to wear it except the one destined by God. Moreover, it has such properties

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that, just as in this shield greater marvels have been seen than in any other, just so there shall be seen in him more marvellous prowess and a nobler life than in any other knight.' 'Since you are to leave me such a good remembrance,' the king replied, 'tell me, if you please, where I shall leave this shield. For I should like it to be put in such a place as the Good Knight may find it.' 'Then I shall tell you,' said Josephe, 'what to do. Put the shield where you see Nascien laid after his death: for thither the Good Knight will come on the fifth day after he receives the order of chivalry.'

"Now it has all happened as he said, for on the fifth day after receiving knighthood you have come to this abbey where Nascien lies. So now I have told you why the great adventures happened to the foolhardy knights who in spite of this prohibition wished to carry off the shield which was vouchsafed to you alone."

And when he had told this story, he disappeared so that Galahad knew not what had become of him nor whither he had gone. When the valet who was present had heard this strange story, he dismounted from his nag and fell at the feet of Galahad, begging him in tears for the love of Him whose sign he carried on his shield to permit him to go with him as his squire and to make him a knight. "Certainly," said Galahad, "if I wished for any company, I would not refuse thee." "For God's sake, sire," the valet said, "I beg of you then to make me a knight, and I promise you that knighthood shall be well served by me, if God will." Galahad wept softly as he looked at him; and because of the great pity he felt, he granted him his request. "Sire," said the valet, "return to the place we started from, for there I shall get arms and a horse. And this you ought to do, not only for my sake, but because of an adventure there, which no one else can achieve, but I know that you will do so." And Galahad said he would gladly go.

So he returned at once to the abbey. And when the friars saw him return, they were very glad and inquired of the valet why the knight had come back. "To make me a knight," said he; and for his sake they were very glad. Then the Good Knight asked where the adventure was to be found. "Sire," they said, "do you know what this adventure is?" "Not in

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the least," he replied. "Then you must know," they said, "that it is a voice which issues from one of the tombs in our cemetery. And it is of such strength that anyone who hears it loses his bodily powers for a long time afterward." Then Galahad inquired, "Do you know whose voice this is?" "No," they answered, "unless it is the devil's." "Then lead me thither," said he, "for I am very anxious to learn the truth about it." "Then you must come along with us." Then they escorted him outside the church all armed as he was, but without his helmet. And one of the friars said to him: "Do you see that great tree with the tomb beneath it?" "Yes," said he. "I will tell you, then, what to do," said one of the friars: "go to the tomb and raise the lid, and I promise you shall find under it some marvellous thing." Then Galahad approached and heard a voice utter a marvellously dolorous cry, and it said so loudly that all could hear: "Ah, Galahad! servant of Jesus Christ, approach me not, for thou wouldst make me move from where I have been so long." Now Galahad, hearing that, was not afraid, but went to the tomb. And when he tried to seize it by the heavy end, he saw smoke come forth and a flame after it, and he saw emerge the most hideous face that ever bore human semblance. Then he crossed himself, knowing this was the devil. And he heard a voice saying to him: "Ah, Galahad! holy creature, I see thee so compassed about with angels that my power cannot prevail against thy might: I leave this place to thee." Hearing this, he crossed himself again and thanked Our Lord. Then he raised up the lid of the tomb and saw lying there a body fully armed, with a sword alongside and all that was needed to create a knight. Seeing these things, he summoned the friars, saying: "Come, see what I have found, and tell me what I shall do, for I am ready to do more, if so I must." And when they drew near, they saw the body lying in the grave and said to him: "Sire, there is nothing more to be done, for this body which lies here shall never be moved from its place according to our belief." "Yes, it shall be," said the old man who had told Galahad of this adventure; "the body must be taken from this cemetery and cast out, for this ground is holy and sanctified; wherefore the body of a wicked and false Christian must not remain here." Then he ordered the servants to remove the body from the grave and to cast it

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out of the cemetery, and they did so. Then Galahad said to the worthy man: "Sire, have I accomplished all of this adventure which I ought to do?" "Yes," he replied, "for never again shall be heard the voice which has brought us so much woe." "And do you know," Galahad inquired, "why so many marvels have come to pass?" "Yes, indeed, sire," he replied, "and I will tell you gladly; for you ought to understand it as being a matter of great significance."

Thereupon they left the cemetery and returned to the abbey. And Galahad told the valet that he must keep watch that night in the church and that on the morrow he would make him a knight, as was right. And he replied that he had no other wish. So he prepared himself as instructed to receive the high order of chivalry which he so much desired. But the worthy man took Galahad into a room where he relieved him of his arms and armour. Then making him sit down on a bed, he said to him: "Sire, you asked me the meaning of this adventure which you have just achieved, and I will gladly explain it to you. In this adventure there were three things which gave cause for fear: the tomb itself which was not easy to open, the body of the knight which had to be cast out, and the voice which caused all who heard it to lose their bodily strength and their senses and memory. Now of these three things I will tell you the meaning.

"The tomb which enclosed the dead body signifies the hardness of this world which Our Lord encountered when He came to earth and found nothing but hardness there. For the son did not love the father, nor the father the son, wherefore the devil carried them all off to hell. When the Father in Heaven saw that there was such hardness on earth that one man did not know another nor believe another nor the words of the prophet, but that on the other hand they set up new gods each day, He sent His Son to earth to soften this hardness and to give sinners new and tender hearts. But when He came down to earth, He found them so hardened in mortal sin that one might as soon soften a rock as their hearts. Wherefore He said by the mouth of the prophet David: 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death'; as if to say: 'Father, thou hast converted very few of this people before my death.' And as the Father

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sent His Son to deliver His people, so the same situation is renewed to-day. For just as error and folly took flight at His coming and the truth was plainly manifested, so Our Lord has chosen you above all other knights to send into strange lands to put an end to dire adventures and to learn their source. Wherefore your coming may be compared with that of Jesus Christ, but in appearance rather than in degree. And just as the prophets a long time before He came prophesied that He would come and said that He would deliver the people from the bonds of hell, so have hermits and holy men announced your coming for more than twenty years. And they have all said that the adventures of the kingdom of Logres would never cease until you came. But, thank God, we have waited until now we have you."

"Now tell me," said Galahad, "what the dead body signifies; for you have made clear the meaning of the tomb." "That too I will explain," said he. "The dead body signifies the people whose heart had been so long hardened that they were all as if dead and blinded by the great weight of the sins they had committed day after day. And that they were blind appeared plainly when Jesus Christ was manifested. For when they had in their midst the King of kings and the Saviour of the world, they regarded Him as a sinner and thought He was even as they were. And they trusted rather in the devil than in Him, and they delivered His body to death at the instigation of the devil who was constantly whispering in their ears and who had entered into their hearts. Thus for these their works Vespasian overwhelmed and destroyed them as soon as he learned the truth about the Prophet to whom they had proved disloyal; thus they were destroyed by the devil and his counsel.

"Now we must see how these two instances agree. The tomb signifies the great hardness of the Jews, while the dead body signifies them and their descendants who came to their death through mortal sin from which they could not easily release themselves. And the voice which issued from the tomb signifies the doleful words they spoke to Pilate the governor: 'His blood be upon us and upon our children!' And because of this saying they were put to shame and lost themselves and all that they had. Thus you can see in this adventure the significance of the Passion of

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Jesus Christ and the likeness of His coming. One other thing happened in former times: for as soon as the knights-errant used to come and approach the tomb, the devil, who knew them to be vile and corrupt sinners and saw that they were wrapped in luxury and iniquity, frightened them so with his horrible and terrible voice that they lost their bodily power. Nor would the adventure ever have ceased to discomfit the sinners, if God had not brought you to carry it through. But as soon as you arrived, the devil, who knew you to be pure and as free from every sin as mortal man can be, dared not wait for you, but fled and lost all his power through your advent. Then concluded the adventure which many a noted knight had tried. So now I have told you the truth about this matter." And Galahad said that it had much greater significance than he had thought.

That night the friars did their best to serve Galahad. And in the morning he made the valet a knight in accordance with the custom of those days. When he had done all he ought for him, he asked him what his name was. And he said his name was Melyant and that he was the son of the King of Denmark. "Fair friend," said Galahad, "now that you are a knight and since you are descended from the high lineage of a king and queen, see to it that chivalry be so worthily shown forth in you that the honour of your lineage may be preserved. For as soon as a king's son receives the order of chivalry, he ought to outshine all other knights in goodness as the rays of the sun outshine the stars." Then he replied that, if it please God, the honour of chivalry would be safe with him; for he would never fall short of his duty because of any pain he might have to bear. Then Galahad called for his arms, and when they were brought, Melyant said to him: "Sire, thanks to God and to you, you have made me a knight, which gives me more joy than I can say; and you know that it is a custom that whoever makes another man a knight must not refuse to grant him the first request he makes, provided the request be reasonable." "That is true," Galahad replied, "but why do you say it?" "Because I wish to ask for a boon," said he; "and I beg you to grant it to me, for it is something from which no harm can come to you." "I will grant it to you," said Galahad, "even were it to my cost." "Many

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thanks," said Melyant; "now I ask you to let me accompany you on this Quest until fate separate us, and afterward, if we are brought together again, do not deprive me of your company to bestow it upon another."

Then he ordered a horse to be brought in order to depart with Galahad; and when this was done, they went off together. All day they rode, and all that week. And it happened on a Tuesday morning that they came to a cross where there was a parting of the ways. Coming to the cross they found words which were cut in the wood and which said: *Give heed, thou knight who seekest adventures; here are two roads, one to the right and the other to the left. I forbid thee to take the left, for he must be an exceptionally worthy man who enters there with the expectation of coming through. And if thou takest the right-hand road, thou art likely to perish soon.* When Melyant saw this inscription, he said to Galahad: "Ah! generous knight, for God's sake let me take this left-hand road, for then I shall be able to try my strength and learn if there be in me such prowess and courage as shall gain me the praise of chivalry." "If you were willing," said Galahad, "I would take that road myself, for I think I should fare better than you." But the other said that he would take it, if anyone did. So they parted, and each went his way. Now the story takes leave of Galahad and tells how it fared with Melyant.

Chapter III

Now the story tells how Melyant, having left Galahad, rode until he came to an ancient forest which stretched for two days' journey; and on the morrow about the hour of prime he came to a meadow. Then in the middle of his road he saw a fine rich seat on which lay a beautiful crown of gold; and in front of the seat there were several tables filled with rich viands. On looking at this strange sight, he envied nothing he saw except the beautiful crown, and he said to himself that anyone would be happy who should wear it on his head in the presence of his people. Then he seized it, saying he would carry it off himself, and slipping it over his right arm, he rode into the forest again. But he had not gone far when he saw a knight riding after him, who called to him: "Sir knight, put down that crown which is not yours and which it was wrong for you to take."

Upon hearing these words Melyant turned round, knowing that he must fight with him. So he crossed himself and said: "Fair Lord God, now help your novice knight!" Then the knight charged him and struck him with such violence that his lance pierced shield and hauberk to his very body; indeed, he struck him so skilfully that he overthrew him on the ground, leaving the iron of the lance and a great piece of the wooden stock in his body. And the knight coming up to him took the crown from his arm and said: "Sir knight, give up the crown to which you have no right." Then he turned away in the direction he had come. And Melyant lay, without strength to rise, as one who believes he is mortally wounded. Then he blamed himself for not following Galahad's advice, seeing woe had now befallen him.

While he lay in pain it chanced that Galahad rode by that way. And seeing Melyant lying wounded on the ground, he was much distressed,

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for he thought he had a mortal wound. So coming up to him, he said: "Ah! Melyant, who has treated you thus? Do you think you can recover?" And when he heard him, he recognised him and said: "Ah! sire, for God's sake do not leave me to die in this forest, but carry me to some abbey where I may receive the consolation of religion and die there like a good Christian!" "What is it, Melyant?" said my lord Galahad, "are you so badly wounded that you expect to die?" "Yes," he replied. Then Galahad was sorely grieved and asked what had become of those who had injured him.

Then there issued forth from among the trees the knight who had wounded Melyant, and said to Galahad: "Sir knight, be on your guard, for I shall do you all the harm I can." "Ah! sire," said Melyant, "this is he who gave me my mortal blow. In God's name, be on your guard against him." Galahad replied not a word, but faced the knight who came at him at such great speed that he failed to strike him squarely. But Galahad gave him such a blow that his lance pierced his shoulder, throwing horse and rider together in a heap and breaking his lance. And Galahad rode past him in full career, but when he turned he looked and saw another armed knight coming who called to him: "Sir knight, you will leave your horse to me." Riding at him with lance outstretched, he broke it upon Galahad's shield, but without unseating him, while Galahad cut off his left hand with his sword. When the other felt himself thus crippled, he turned in flight for fear of death. And Galahad, not wishing to do him further harm, did not ride after him, but turned to Melyant, not heeding the first knight whom he had laid low.

Then he asked Melyant what he wanted him to do, for he was ready to do anything he could for him. "Sire, if I could bear to ride, I should like you to lift me up before you and carry me to an abbey near here. For I know, if I were once there, they would do everything they could to cure me." And Galahad said he would gladly do so: "But I think it would be better to draw out the lance-head first." "Ah! sire, I would never run that risk before making my confession, for I think I shall die when it is drawn out. But lift me up." Then he took him as gently as he could and

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set him on the horse in front of him, holding him so that he would not fall in his weakened state. Thus they rode until they came to an abbey.

Arriving at the gate, they called, and the friars who were worthy men, opened to them and received them tenderly, carrying Melyant to a quiet room. As soon as his helmet had been removed, he requested the Eucharist to be brought, which was done. And when he had been confessed and had begged for forgiveness like a good Christian, he received the Body of Our Lord. Then, after communion, he said to Galahad: "Sire, let death come now, for I am equipped to receive it. Now you may try to draw out the lance-head from my body." And he laid hands on the iron and drew it out together with the wooden stock. When Melyant swooned with pain, Galahad inquired if there was anyone there who could look after the knight's wounds. "Yes, sire," they answered. So they sent for an elderly monk, who had been a knight, and showed him the wound. And after examining it, he said he would make him whole within a month. At this news Galahad was very glad, and, after having had his arms removed, said he would tarry there all that day and the next to learn whether Melyant could recover.

So he stayed there three days. And when he asked Melyant how he was, he told him his recovery was begun. "Then I can go away to-morrow," said Galahad. But Melyant replied sadly: "Ah! my lord Galahad, will you leave me here? I am the man who most in the world desires your company, if he could retain it." "Sire," said Galahad, "I am of no use to you here; and it is more important for me to do something else than to rest here: I must seek the Holy Grail whose Quest I have undertaken." "What!" said one of the friars, "has it been begun?" "Yes," Galahad replied, "and we two are companions in the Quest." "In faith, I tell you, sir wounded knight," said the friar, "that this misfortune has befallen you because of your sin. And if you would tell me of your experiences since the Quest was begun, I would show you for what sin this had befallen you." "Sire," Melyant replied, "I will tell you."

Then Melyant told him how Galahad had knighted him, and about the inscription which they had found upon the cross forbidding them to take the left-hand road, and how he had taken it notwithstanding, and of

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all that had then befallen him. Then the friar, who was a saintly and learned man, said to him: "Surely, sir knight, these are adventures of the Holy Grail; for you have told me nothing but what possessed great significance, as I shall now explain to you.

"When you were about to be made a knight, you went to confession, and you entered the order of chivalry clean and purged of all the filth and sin with which you knew you were befouled; and thus you entered upon the Quest of the Holy Grail as pure as you ought to be. But when the devil saw this, he was very sorrowful and made up his mind to attack you as soon as he saw his chance. So he did, and I will tell you when it was. When you left the abbey where you were made a knight, the first thing you met was the sign of the true Cross, which is the sign in which a knight ought most to trust. And there was something else: there was an inscription which pointed out to you two ways, one to the right and the other to the left. By the right-hand road you were to understand the way of Jesus Christ, the way of pity, which the knights of Our Lord tread by night and day, by day according to the soul and by night according to the body. And by the left-hand road you were to understand the sinners' way where great dangers come to those who tread therein. Now because this way is not so safe as the other, the inscription forbade anyone to enter it unless he was a worthier man than anyone else, that is to say, unless he was so rooted in the love of Jesus Christ that he would not fall peradventure into sin. But when you saw the inscription you marvelled what it could be; and there at once the enemy struck you with one of his darts. And with what dart? With the dart of pride, for you thought you could travel that road with your prowess. But your understanding was deceived; for the writing referred to the heavenly chivalry, and you took it to mean the chivalry of this world; wherefore you became captive of pride and fell into mortal sin.

"When you parted from Galahad, the enemy, finding you unresisting, joined you and felt that he had not accomplished much unless he caused you to sin again so that from sin to sin he could cast you into hell. So he set before you a crown of gold and made you covet it as soon as you saw it. And as soon as you seized it, you fell into two mortal sins, pride and

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covetousness. When he saw that you were in the grip of covetousness and that you were carrying off the crown, he assumed the guise of a wicked knight and incited him to such cruelty, as being of the devil himself, that he sought to compass your death. So he attacked you with outstretched lance and would have killed you, but you made the sign of the cross and were saved. However, as a punishment for deserting His service Our Lord brought you into the very shadow of death in order that another time you might trust more in the help of Our Lord than in your own strength. And in order that you might have speedy succour He sent you Galahad, this holy knight, together with the two knights who typified the two sins lodged within you; but they could not withstand him because he was without mortal sin. Now I have told you the significance of these adventures which have befallen you." And they admitted that the significance was fair and wonderful.

The worthy man and the two knights talked at length that night about the adventures of the Holy Grail. And Galahad besought Melyant so urgently that he gave him leave to depart whenever he pleased. And he said that, since he allowed him to do so, he would go away. So the next day, as soon as he had heard mass, Galahad armed himself and, commending Melyant to God's care, rode for many a day without meeting with any adventure worthy of mention. But one day it happened that he had left the house of a vavassor without hearing mass; and journeying until he came to a high mountain, he found there an ancient chapel. He turned in there to hear mass, for he disliked to spend a day without being present at God's service. But on drawing near he found no living soul about, and the chapel was in ruins. However, he fell upon his knees and prayed to Our Lord for counsel. And when he had prayed, a voice spoke to him: "Hear thou, adventurous knight! Go directly to the Maidens' Castle and put to an end the evil practices there."

On hearing this, he thanked Our Lord for the message He had given him, and he promptly mounted and rode away. Then he espied at some distance in a valley a strong castle in a goodly site; and through the midst of it there flowed a swift stream called the Severn. When he turned thither and was drawing near, he met an old man poorly clad

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who greeted him courteously. Saluting him in turn, Galahad inquired of him the name of the castle. "Sire," said he, "the Maidens' Castle; it is a cursed castle, and all they are cursed who dwell therein; for all pity is banished thence, and hardness of heart dwells there instead." "How is that?" Galahad inquired. "Because they treat shamefully all who enter there," he replied. "And therefore I advise you, sir knight, to turn back; for shame awaits you if you press on." "Now God help you, worthy sir, but I am loth to turn back," said Galahad. Then he examined his arms to see that nothing was lacking; and when he found that all was right, he pressed on hastily to the castle.

And there he met seven damsels richly mounted who said to him: "Sir knight, you have passed the bounds." And he answered that no bounds should keep him from going to the castle. So he continued to advance until he met a valet who told him that those within forbade him to come farther until they knew what his errand was. "I have no desire," said he, "but to comply with the practices followed here." "Surely," he replied, "you will be sorry you ever cherished this desire; for you shall have such an adventure as never knight has been able to accomplish. But await me here, and your desire shall be fulfilled." "Go quickly then," said Galahad, "and hasten the business before me."

Then the valet entered the castle. And presently Galahad saw seven knights who were brothers come forth, who cried to him: "Sir knight, look out for us, for we are intent upon nothing but your death!" "What!" said he, "do you all intend to join in attacking me?" "Yes," they answered, "for such is the adventure and the practice here." When he heard that, he charged them with lance out-thrust and struck the first so hard that he cast him on the ground and almost broke his neck. Then the others joining their efforts struck him on the shield, but they could not budge him from his saddle. Yet the shock of their lances stopped his horse in full career and almost threw him on the ground. In this encounter all lances were broken, but not until Galahad had unhorsed three of the knights with his. Then he took his sword in hand and engaged those who were still in the saddle, they also attacking him. Between them a great and fierce fight began. Meanwhile those who had

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been unhorsed remounted their steeds, and the battle was fiercer than before. But he who was the best knight of them all strove so valiantly that he made them all retreat, attacking them so fiercely with his trenchant sword that their armour was of no avail and blood flowed from their bodies. And they found him to be so strong and agile that they thought he could not be a mere mortal man; for there is no man in the world who could withstand half of what he had withstood. So they were much amazed, seeing they could not move him from his place and that his strength continued as great as at first. For it was true, as the history of the Holy Grail testifies, that no one ever saw him exhausted by the labours of chivalry.

Thus the conflict lasted until noon. But when that hour arrived, the seven brothers, despite their great prowess, found themselves so weary and hard pressed that they were powerless to defend themselves. And he who never drew back from fear continued to unhorse them. When they saw that they could no longer hold out, they turned in flight. And he, seeing this, did not pursue them, but came to the bridge leading to the castle, where he met an old man clad in a religious garb who handed him the keys of the place, and said: "Sire, take these keys. Now you may do what you please with this castle and those who are within; for you have done so well that the castle now is yours."

So he took the keys and entered the castle. And as soon as he was inside, he met in the streets so many damsels that he could not count them. And they all said to him: "Welcome, sire! We have long awaited our deliverance. Praised be God that He has brought you hither; else we should never have been delivered from this doleful castle." And he in turn wished them God's blessing. Then they seized his horse's bridle and led him inside the stronghold where they removed his arms as it were by force, for he said it was not yet time to seek a lodging. But one of the damsels said to him: "Ah! sire, what is this you say? Surely if you go off now, those whom your prowess has put to flight would straightway return to-night and resume the hateful practice which they have so long maintained in this castle. Then all your labour would go for nothing." "Well, what do you want me to do?" said he; "I am ready to do your

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will, provided I think that it is right." Then the damsel answered: "We want you to summon the knights and vavassors of the country round who hold their fiefs from this castle; and make them swear, as well as all the people here, that they will never again maintain this custom." So he gave the command. And when they had taken him to the principal residence, he dismounted and removed his helmet and went upstairs into the hall. Then a damsel came from a neighbouring room bringing an ivory horn richly circled with gold. Giving it to Galahad, she said: "If you wish them to come who shall henceforth hold this land in fief from you, sound this horn which can be heard for ten leagues." And he said that that was a good thing to do. So he handed it to a knight whom he saw close by. He taking it blew it so loudly that it could be heard all through the country round. After this, they all sat down around Galahad. And he asked the man who had given him the keys whether he was a priest. And he said he was. "Tell me then," said he, "about the custom here and where all these damsels here came from." "I will gladly do so," the priest replied.

"It is true that ten years have passed since the seven knights whom you have defeated came by chance to this castle and lodged with Duke Lynor, who was lord of all this country and the most honourable man known. And at night after the meal was done, a strife broke out between the seven brothers and the duke over a daughter of his whom the seven brothers sought to possess by force. Finally the duke and one of his sons were killed, and she who was the cause of the strife fell into their hands. And when the brothers had accomplished their purpose, they took all the treasure here and, summoning knights and sergeants, began a war against the people of this country. And they succeeded so well that they put them down and took over their fiefs from them. When the duke's daughter saw this, she was very angry and said as if in prophecy: 'Surely, gentlemen,' said she, 'we do not care if you now have the lordship of this castle. For as you have won it through a woman, so shall you lose it through a damsel; and all seven of you shall be defeated at the hands of a single knight.' They were much displeased at this and answered that because of what she had said, every damsel who should

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ever pass before the castle should be held prisoner by them until the knight should come who could defeat them. This they have done until now, so the castle has been called the Maidens' Castle." "And the damsel for whose sake the strife was first begun," Galahad inquired, "is she still here?" "No, sire," he replied; "she is dead. But a younger sister of hers is here." "And how did these damsels fare?" asked Galahad. "They were very wretched," he replied. "Well, they are free now," said Galahad.

At noon the castle began to fill up, with those who had learned the news that the castle had been won. So they made much of Galahad as their lord. And he reinvested the duke's daughter with the castle and its appanages, and made all the knights of the country acknowledge themselves the damsel's vassals, and made them swear they would never again support this custom. And the maidens all departed to their homes.

All day Galahad tarried there, and they did him great honour. And on the morrow came the report that all seven brothers had been killed. "And who killed them?" Galahad inquired. "Sire," a valet replied, "when they left you yesterday, they met on yonder hill my lord Gawain and his brother Gaheriet and my lord Yvain. And when they attacked each other, the seven brothers were discomfited." And he marvelled at this adventure, and asked for his arms, which were brought to him. And when he was armed, he left the castle accompanied by the people for a long distance until he made them turn back, when he rode on his way alone. But now the story leaves him and returns to my lord Gawain.

Chapter IV

Now the story tells how my lord Gawain left his companions and rode for many a day without encountering any adventure worthy of mention. And finally he came to the abbey where Galahad had taken the white shield with the red cross upon it and where he was told of the adventures which Galahad had accomplished. When he heard all this, he asked which way he had gone, and they told him. So he started out after him and rode until chance brought him to the place where Melyant lay ill, who, when he recognised my lord Gawain, told him that Galahad had but that morning gone away. "God!" said my lord Gawain, "how unlucky I am! I am surely the most ill-starred knight in the world, to go following this knight so closely and not to be able to come up with him! Truly, if God should grant that I find him, I would never more leave him, provided he desired my company as much as I his."

One of the friars present heard these words, and replied to my lord Gawain: "The companionship of you two, sir, would not be at all suitable. For you are a wicked and disloyal servant, while he is such a knight as he ought to be." "Sire," replied my lord Gawain, "from what you say it appears that you know me well." "I know you," said the worthy man, "much better than you suppose." "Fair sire," said Gawain, "then you can tell me, if you please, how I deserve the character you have given me." "It is not for me to tell you," said he, "but you shall meet someone soon who will tell you."

While they were conversing thus, there entered a knight fully armed who dismounted in the courtyard. Then the friars ran to disarm him and took him to the room where my lord Gawain was. And as soon as he was disarmed and Gawain saw him, he knew him to be his brother

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Gaheriet; so running to him with outstretched arms he welcomed him joyfully and asked him if he was well and happy. And he answered: "Yes, I am, thank God."

That night they were well cared for by the friars, and the next morning, as soon as it was day, they heard mass all armed except their helmets. Then, when they were mounted and equipped, they left and rode until the hour of prime. Then looking ahead they saw my lord Yvain riding alone; and they knew him by the arms he wore. So they called him to stop. He looked back when he heard his name called, and stopped and knew them by their voices. And they welcomed him gladly and asked him how it had been faring with him. He replied that he had accomplished nothing, for he had not yet encountered any adventure to please him. "Then let us ride all together," said Gaheriet, "until God shall send us some adventure." As that was agreeable to all of them, they all three continued on their road together until they came near the Maidens' Castle. Now this was the very day that the castle had been captured. When the seven brothers saw the three companions approaching, they said: "Now let us attack and kill them; for they are some of the party who have driven us out, and they are knights seeking adventure." Then they rode at the three companions and shouted to them to be on their guard, for they are headed straight for death. Hearing this warning, they turned about their horses' heads. And it happened at the first encounter that three of the seven brothers lost their life: for my lord Gawain killed one, my lord Yvain another, and Gaheriet the third. Then they drew their swords and attacked the others. And they defended themselves as best they could, but to little avail, for they were very weary and exhausted by the great conflict and strife already offered them that day by Galahad. So the three companions, being good men and doughty knights, used them so ill that they killed them in short order. Then leaving them dead where they fell, they went whither fortune led them.

They did not return to the Maidens' Castle, but turned off to the right and thus lost track of Galahad. And at the vesper hour they separated, and each one went his way. My lord Gawain rode until he came to a hermitage and found the hermit was in his chapel singing

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vespers in honour of Our Lady. So he dismounted and listened to the service, then asked for a lodging in the name of holy charity. And the hermit gladly welcomed him.

That evening the worthy man asked my lord Gawain whence he came. So he told him the truth and also the quest which he had undertaken. And the hermit, understanding that this was my lord Gawain, said to him: "If it pleased you, sire, I should surely like to know how it goes with you." Then he began to speak to him about confession and to call to mind many fair lessons from the gospel, and he advised him to make his confession to him, and he would do his best to counsel him. "Sire," said my lord Gawain, "if you would explain to me something which was said to me yesterday, I would tell you all about myself, for you seem to be a very worthy man, and I am aware that you are a priest." And the worthy man promised him that he would counsel him as well as he could. Then my lord Gawain looked at the hermit and saw him to be so old and so worthy of respect that he felt drawn to make his confession to him. So he told him the cause of the greatest guilt he felt towards Our Lord, not forgetting to mention what had been told him by the friar. Thus the hermit learned that full four years had passed since his last confession. So he said to him:

"With good reason you were called a wicked and disloyal servant. For when you were admitted into the order of chivalry you were not admitted in order that you should become a servant of the devil, but that you might serve our Creator and defend Holy Church and render to God the treasure which He gave you to keep, that is your soul. That is why you were made a knight, but your chivalry has been ill employed. For you have completely served the devil, and deserted your Creator, and led the most foul and wicked life that a knight ever led. So you can plainly see that he who called you a wicked and disloyal servant was well acquainted with you. And surely, if you were not such a sinner as you are, the seven brothers would not have been killed by you or with your assistance, but they would have repented of the wicked custom they had so long maintained in the Maidens' Castle and would have been reconciled with God. Far otherwise did the Good Knight Galahad of

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whom you are now in quest: for he defeated them without taking their life. And it was not without great significance that the seven brothers had maintained this custom in the castle and detained all the maidens who came into this region, whether rightfully or not." "Ah! sire," said my lord Gawain, "tell me the meaning of it, that I may relate it at court when I return." "I will gladly," said the worthy man.

"By the Maidens' Castle you must understand that hell is meant, and by the damsels the good souls who were detained there wrongfully before the Passion of Jesus Christ. And by the seven knights you must understand is meant the seven capital sins that held sway then in the world, so that there was no righteousness. For as soon as any soul, be it of a good or a wicked man, left the body, it went straight to hell and was imprisoned there precisely as the damsels were. But when the Father in Heaven saw that what He had created was doomed to such an evil fate, He sent His Son to earth to deliver the good damsels, that is the good souls. And just as He sent His Son whom He had before the world began, so He sent Galahad, His chosen knight and servant, to release from the castle the good damsels, who are as pure and clean as the fleur-de-lys which never feels the summer's heat."

On hearing these words, he did not know what to say; and the good man continued: "Gawain, Gawain, if you would forsake this wicked life which you have lived so long, you might yet be reconciled with Our Lord. For the Scripture says that not one sinner shall fail to find Our Lord's mercy if he seek it earnestly. Therefore, I counsel you with my best advice to do penance for your crimes." But he replied that he could not bear the burden of doing penance. So the hermit left him alone, without saying more, for he saw his advice would be thrown away.

In the morning my lord Gawain went away and rode until he met by chance Agloval and Girflet the son of Doon. And they journeyed together for four days without meeting any adventure worth mentioning, and on the fifth day they separated and each one went his own way. So now the story turns from them and takes up Galahad.

Chapter V

Now the story tells that when Galahad had left the Maidens' Castle he rode until he came to the Forest Gaste. One day it happened that he met Lancelot and Perceval who were riding in company; but they did not recognise him, not having had an occasion to see his arms before. So Lancelot attacked him first and broke his lance against Galahad's breast. Then Galahad struck him so hard that he upset him and his horse in a pile, but he did him no other harm. Having broken his lance, he drew his sword and dealt Perceval such a blow that he split his helmet and cap of mail; and if the sword had not turned in his hand, he would surely have killed him. However, Perceval had not the strength to keep his saddle, but fell to the ground so weak and stunned from the terrific blow he had received that he did not know whether it was night or day. Now this conflict was waged in front of a hermitage where a recluse dwelt. When she saw Galahad going away, she called to him: "Farewell now, and may God lead you! Certainly, if they had known you as well as I know you, they would never have been so bold as to attack you." When Galahad heard these words, he was in great fear of being recognised. So he spurred his horse and rode away as fast as he could urge him. Now when the two knights saw that he was going away, they mounted their steeds as quickly as possible. But when they saw that they could not follow him, they turned back so abashed and so angry that they would fain have died at once; for their lives were hateful to them. So they struck into the Forest Gaste.

Lancelot was in the Forest Gaste, wretched and furious at having lost trace of the knight. And he said to Perceval: "What can we do?" and he replied he could think of no plan to pursue. For the knight went away so

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fast that they could not follow after him. "You see yourself," said he, "that night has surprised us in a place whence we cannot escape unless some chance should assist us. So it seems to me that we had better go back to the road. For if we begin to wander about here, I think we shall not get back to the right road for a long time. Now you may do what you please; but I see more advantage in our turning back than in pushing forward." Then Lancelot said that he would not agree to turn back, but would go after the knight with the white shield: for he would never be satisfied until he learned who he was. "You can at least wait," said Perceval, "until the morrow comes. Then you and I will pursue the knight." But Lancelot said he would do nothing of the kind. "God help you, then," said Perceval; "for to-day I go no farther, but I'll turn back to the recluse who said she knew well who he was."

Thus the companions separated, and Perceval returned to the recluse. Meanwhile Lancelot rode in pursuit of the knight hither and thither through the forest, following no trail or pathway, but going at random where chance took him. His regret was great that he could see neither in the distance nor near at hand any path to follow, for the night was very dark. Yet he pushed on until he came to a stone cross at the parting of two ways in a deserted place. And looking more closely at the cross as he drew near, he saw beside it a marble stone on which he thought he saw some writing. But the night was so dark that he could not make out what the writing said. And looking about the cross, he saw a very ancient chapel whither he turned in the hope of finding someone. When he was close to it he dismounted and, tying his horse to an oak tree, he removed his shield from his neck and hung it on the tree. Then, coming to the chapel, he found it deserted and in ruins. And when he was about to enter, he found at the entrance some iron prongs so closely joined together that it would be no easy task for anyone to get in. Looking through the bars he saw inside an altar very richly adorned with silken cloths and other things, and before it stood a silver candelabra holding six burning tapers which cast a bright light around. At the sight of this, he yearned to enter to see who inhabited the place: for he could not imagine that there should be such beautiful things in such a remote place.

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So he examined the grill, and when he found he could not go farther, he was so distressed that he left the chapel and led his steed back by the bridle to the cross, where he took off the saddle and bridle and let him browse. Then he unlaced his helmet and set it down before him, and he removed his sword and lay down upon his shield in front of the cross and being weary fell into a light doze, though he could not entirely banish from his mind the Good Knight with the white shield.

When he had been there for some time, he saw coming in a litter borne by two palfreys, a sick knight who was lamenting bitterly. And when he drew near Lancelot, he stopped and gazed at him, but did not say a word, thinking he was asleep. Nor did Lancelot say a word, but lay as one in a doze between a sleep and wakefulness. And the knight in the litter who had stopped at the cross began to bewail his fate aloud, crying: "Ah! God, is there to be no end to my distress? Ah! God! when will the Holy Vessel come who will cause my agony to cease? Ah! God, did ever mortal man suffer so grievously as I suffer, and for so little guilt?" For a long time the knight thus complained and bewailed his woes and his pains to God. But Lancelot did not stir nor say a word, lying still as one in a trance, though he saw him and heard what he said.

And when the knight had waited for a long time in this way, Lancelot looked and saw approaching from the direction of the chapel the silver candelabra which he had seen in the chapel with the tapers. As he looked at the candelabra, he saw it moving toward the cross, but he could not see who was bearing it; and he was filled with wonder. Next he saw drawing near upon a silver table the Holy Vessel which he had seen once before at the Fisher King's, the very same which was called the Holy Grail. As soon as the sick knight saw it approaching, he fell his full length upon the ground, and with hands clasped toward it, he exclaimed: "Fair sire God, who hast wrought so many miracles in this and other lands through this Holy Vessel which I see drawing near, Father, look upon me in pity, that this woe which I suffer may be speedily relieved, and that I too may enter upon the Quest even as other worthy men have done." Then he dragged himself along by his arms to the stone where the table rested with the Holy Vessel upon it. And he raised himself up by his two

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hands until he could kiss the silver table and touch it with his eyes. As soon as he had done this he felt, as it were, cured of his woes: so he uttered a great sigh and said: "Ah! God, I am healed." And at once he fell asleep. Now when the Vessel had stayed there a while, the candelabra moved away toward the chapel and the Vessel with it, so that Lancelot did not know by whom it could be carried either when it approached or when it withdrew. However, it came about that either because he was wearied by his labours or because of sin which had overcome him, he did not stir when the Holy Grail passed by nor did he manifest any concern for it; wherefore later on the Quest many a word of shame was said to him and many a misfortune befell him.

When the Holy Grail had left the cross and returned to the chapel, the knight of the litter rose up restored and sound and kissed the cross. At once there appeared a squire bringing some fine rich arms, and going up to the knight he asked him how it was with him. "Well, in faith," said he, "thank God: I was healed at once as soon as the Holy Grail visited me. But I marvel at yon knight who is sound asleep and never woke up when it passed by." "In truth," said the squire, "he is some knight who is living in some great sin which he has never confessed, and of which he is perchance so guilty before Our Lord that He would not permit him to behold this fair adventure." "Surely," the knight replied, "he is unfortunate, whoever he be; for I believe he is one of the companions of the Round Table who have taken up the Quest of the Holy Grail." "Sire," said the squire, "I have brought here your arms, which you may take when you please." The knight replied that now he needed nothing else. So he armed himself and put on his iron greaves and his hauberk. Then taking Lancelot's sword and helmet, the squire gave them to him, and then he put the saddle and bridle on Lancelot's horse. When he had equipped the steed, he said to his lord: "Mount now, sire, for you are not lacking a good horse and a good sword. Truly, I have given you nothing which will not be better used by you than by that wretched knight lying yonder." The moon had now risen fair and clear, for it was already past midnight. And the knight inquired of the squire how he knew about the sword; and he replied that he knew it must be good by its beauty: for he

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had already drawn it from the scabbard and had thought it so beautiful that he had coveted it. And when the knight was fully armed and mounted upon Lancelot's steed, he raised his hand toward the chapel and swore that with the help of God and the saints he would never cease his wanderings until he found out how it was that the Holy Grail appeared in so many places in the kingdom of Logres, and by whom it was brought to England and for what purpose, unless someone else should anticipate him in discovering the truth. "So help me God," said the valet, "you have said enough. Now may God grant you to come out with honour from this Quest, and with salvation of your soul; for surely you cannot long maintain it without running danger of death." "If I die," the knight replied, "it will be rather to my honour than my shame. For no man of honour ought to refuse to undertake this Quest either for fear of death or love of life." Then he and his squire, taking the arms of Lancelot, left the cross and rode whither they were led by chance.

Now when he had gone perhaps half a league or more, it happened that Lancelot sat up like one who now for the first time was completely awake. And he wondered whether what he had seen had been a dream or a reality, for he did not know whether he had beheld the Holy Grail in fact or only in a dream. Then he stood up and saw the candelabra in front of the altar, but he saw no sign of what he would more like to see, that is the Holy Grail, about which he would fain learn the truth if possible.

When Lancelot had stood for a long time before the iron bars striving to catch a glimpse of what he most desired to see, a voice was heard saying to him: "Lancelot, harder than stone, more bitter than wood, more barren and stripped than the fig-tree, how wert thou so bold as to dare to enter the place where the Holy Grail reposed? Get thee hence, for the place is already polluted by thy presence." Hearing these words, he was so sorrowful that he knew not what to do. So he went away sighing deeply and weeping, and he cursed the hour he was born. for he knew well he had come to a place where he would have no more honour, since he had failed to learn the truth about the Holy Grail. But he did not forget the three expressions that had been addressed to him, nor will he

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forget them as long as he lives, nor will he be much relieved until he learns why he was addressed in this manner. And coming to the cross he found neither his helmet nor his sword nor his horse: then he perceived it had been the reality which he had beheld. Then he began a great marvellous lament, reproaching himself as a sorrowful wretch: "Ah! God, now my sins and my wicked life appear openly. Now I see that my own wickedness has been the cause of my confusion more than anything else. For when I ought to have reformed my conduct, the devil destroyed me by taking from me my sight so that I could not see anything that came from God. It is no wonder that I cannot see clearly, for since I was first made a knight there has been no time when I was not covered with the darkness of mortal sin, for more than any other man I have lived in the lust and degradation of this world."

Thus Lancelot violently reproached and blamed himself and uttered his lament all night. When the day dawned fair and clear and the birds began to sing in the woods and the sun began to shine among the trees, he saw the fine weather and heard the song of the birds which had many a time brought joy to his heart; then he saw himself stripped of his arms and his horse and everything, and he realised that in truth Our Lord was angry with him. And he thought he could never again find anything in the world to restore his joy to him. For he had been wanting at the very place where he expected to find his joy and every earthly honour, that is in the adventures of the Holy Grail. And this it was that made him disconsolate.

And when he had for a long time lamented and raved and regretted his misfortune, he left the cross and went through the forest on foot, without helmet, sword or shield. So he did not go back to the chapel where he had heard the three strange words addressed to him; but he turned off by a path which led him at the hour of prime to a hill where he found a hermitage and a hermit who was about to begin the mass and who had already donned the robes of Holy Church. Gloomy, pensive and immeasurably sad, he entered the chapel, and kneeling in the middle of the chancel he confessed his sins and cried aloud upon Our Lord for forgiveness for the evil deeds he had done in this world. Then he gave

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heed to the mass celebrated by the worthy man and his clerk. When the mass was over and the good man had laid aside the robes of Our Lord, Lancelot called him aside and begged him for God's sake to give him advice. And when the hermit asked him who he was, he replied that he belonged to King Arthur's household and was a companion of the Round Table. Then the good man asked him: "What do you want advice about? Is it a confession you wish to make?" "Yes, sire," he replied. "Then in Our Lord's name, let us proceed," the hermit said.

Then he led him in front of the altar and they sat down together. When the good man asked him his name, he said he was Lancelot of the Lake, son of King Ban of Benoyc. Then when the worthy man heard that he was Lancelot of the Lake, the man in the world of whom most good was spoken, he was amazed to see him display such grief, and he said to him:

"Sire, you owe a great debt to God for making you so fair and valiant that we know no one in the world who is your match for beauty and valour. He has given you the intelligence and the memory you possess, and you ought to deal so kindly with Him that His love may be safely bestowed in you and that the devil may derive no advantage from the great talent He has granted you. So serve Him with all your power and do His commandments. With the talent He has given you, serve not His mortal enemy, the devil. For if He has been generous to you above all others and He should lose after all, then you would be greatly to be blamed.

"So be not like the unprofitable servant of whom it speaks in the Gospel, whom one of the evangelists mentions when he tells that a certain rich man handed over to three of his servants a great part of his gold. For to one he gave one besant, and to another two, and to the other five. He to whom he gave five increased them so that when he came before his master to give him an account of his profits, he said: 'Lord, thou gavest me five besants: behold, here they are with five others which I have gained.' And when the lord heard it, he replied: 'Come, good and faithful servant: I admit thee into the company of my household.' Afterward came he who had received the two besants and

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told his master that he had gained two others. And his lord replied to him as he had done to the other servant. But it happened that he who had only received one had buried it in the earth and had fled from before his master's face, not daring to come forward. This was the wicked servant, the false simoniac, the hypocritical heart into which the flame of the Holy Spirit never entered. Therefore he cannot burn with the love of Our Lord nor kindle those to whom He announced the holy gospel. For as the holy scripture says: 'He who is not on fire himself will not burn another,' which is to say: 'If the flame of the Holy Spirit does not warm him who speaks the Gospel word, then the man who hears it will neither burn nor be warmed.'

"These words I have quoted because of the great gift which Our Lord has bestowed on you. For I see that He has created you fairer and better than other men, so far as can be judged from the outward semblance. And if you in spite of this gift which He has granted you are His enemy, then be sure that He will reduce you to nothingness in a short time, if you do not beseech Him for mercy in true confession and in hearty repentance and in amendment of your life. But I promise you that, if you beseech His mercy in this way, He is kind and loves the true repentance of the sinner more than He does the error, and He will raise you up stronger and more vigorous than you ever were before."

"Sire," said Lancelot, "this parable which you have shown me of the three servants who had received the besants, distresses me more than anything else. For I know well that Jesus Christ furnished me in childhood with all the good graces that any man could have; but because He was so generous to me with what I have so ill repaid Him, I know that I shall be judged as the wicked servant who hid his besant in the earth. For all my life I have served His enemy, and have warred against Him by my sin. Thus I have slain myself in the road which one finds at the beginning to be broad and seductive: that is the beginning of sin. The devil showed me the sweetness and the honey; but he did not show me the eternal punishment to be suffered by him who travels that road."

When the worthy man heard these words, he wept and said to Lancelot: "Sire, I know that no one continues in this path you mention

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who is not consigned to an endless death. But just as you may see how a man sometimes loses his road when he falls asleep and returns to it when he wakes up, so it is with the sinner who is lulled asleep in mortal sin and loses the right path, but later returns to his way, that is his Creator, and directs himself to the High Lord who cries continually: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'" At that moment he looked and beheld a cross on which the sign of the true Cross was portrayed; and pointing it out to Lancelot, he said: "Sire, do you see that cross?" "Yes," he replied. "Then know truly," said the hermit, "that that figure has stretched out its arms as if to draw all men unto it. In like manner Our Lord stretched out His arms to receive every sinner, you and all others who appeal to Him, and He cries continually: 'Come, come!' And since He is so kind as to receive all men and women who return to Him, know that He will not refuse you, if you offer yourself up to Him in the way I describe, with true confession of mouth and repentance of heart and amendment of life. So recount your state and your affairs to Him in my hearing, and I will do my best to help you to find succour, and I will counsel you as best I may."

Lancelot was still a while as one who never admitted his relations with the queen, and would never mention them as long as he lived, unless great pressure should be brought upon him. Then he heaved a sigh from the depths of his heart and was so moved that he could not utter a word. Though he would fain speak, he did not dare, being more cowardly than brave. Meanwhile the good man exhorted him to confess his sin and have it out; otherwise he would be ashamed for not doing as he was bid, and he further assured him of eternal life if he confessed his sin and of hell if he concealed it. He spoke to him so kindly and so appealingly that finally Lancelot began to speak:

"Sire, the fact is that I am dead in sin because of my lady whom I have loved all my life, and she is Queen Guinevere, the wife of King Arthur. It is she who has given me abundance of gold and silver and the valuable gifts which I have sometimes handed on to poor knights. It is she who has set me up in great luxury in the high places I occupy. It is for love of her that I have performed the great deeds of prowess of which

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the whole world talks. It is she who has raised me from poverty to riches and from misery to all the blessings earth affords. But I know well that because of my sin with her Our Lord is sorely displeased with me as He clearly revealed to me last night." Then he told him how he had beheld the Holy Grail without stirring in its presence either to do it honour or to prove his devotion to Our Lord.

Then when he had rehearsed his state and all his past life to the worthy man, he begged him for God's sake to counsel him. "Certainly, sire," he then replied, "there is no use in counselling you unless you promise God that you will never again fall into this sin. But if you were willing to renounce it altogether and cry for mercy and heartily repent, I think that Our Lord would still recall you to the number of His servants and would open for you the door of Heaven, where eternal life is prepared for those who enter in. But in your present state of mind there is no use in giving you advice. For it would be as in the case of the man who built a strong, high tower upon a poor foundation: and it turned out that when he had built for some time, it all fell in a heap. In like manner all my trouble would be wasted on you, if you did not receive my advice gladly and apply it. It would be like the seed sown upon the rock, which the birds carry off and scatter so that it never yields anything." "Sire," said he, "you cannot tell me anything that I will not do, if God grant me life." "Then I insist," said the worthy man, "that you promise me that you will never wrong your Creator by committing mortal sin with the queen or any other woman or in any other way which would anger Him." And this he promised like a loyal knight.

"Now tell me again," said the good man, "of your experience with the Holy Grail." Then he told him and repeated the three words which the voice had said to him in the chapel when he had been called a stone, wood, and a fig-tree. "Now in God's name," said he, "tell me the meaning of these three things. For I never heard anything which I so desired to understand. Therefore, I pray you to explain them to me: for I know that you know their meaning." Then the worthy man began to think a long while, and when he spoke, he said: "I am certainly not astonished, Lancelot," said he, "that these three words have been

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addressed to you. For you have always been the most marvellous man in the world, and so it is not strange that more marvellous words should be addressed to you than to others. And since you desire to know their meaning, I will gladly tell you. So listen.

“You say that you were told: ‘Lancelot, harder than stone, more bitter than wood, more barren and stripped than the fig-tree, get thee hence.’ When you were called harder than stone, a strange thing is to be understood. For every stone is hard by nature, the only difference being in degree. By the stone with its hardness is meant the sinner who has become so lulled and hardened in his sin that his heart cannot be softened by fire or water. It cannot be softened by fire; for the fire of the Holy Spirit cannot penetrate it or find access because of the filthy vessel and the mortal sins which have been increased and accumulated day by day. And it cannot be softened by water; for the word of the Holy Spirit, which is the sweet water and the gentle rain, cannot be received into such a heart as his. For Our Lord will never seek lodgment in a place where His enemy is, but insists that the place where He lodges be clean and purged of all vice and filth. Now the sinner is likened to a stone because of the exceeding hardness which He finds in him. But it remains to be seen why you are harder than stone, that is, why you are a greater sinner than all others.” And, saying that, he began to think and then continued:

“I will tell you wherein you are worse than other sinners. You have heard of the three servants to whom the rich man gave the besants to increase and multiply. The two who had received most were good and faithful servants, wise and prudent. And the other, who had received less, was a stupid and disloyal servant. Now consider whether you could be one of His servants to whom Our Lord gave the five besants to multiply. It seems to me that to you He gave much more. For if one were to consider the knights of the world, methinks he could not find a man to whom Our Lord has granted so much grace as He has bestowed upon you. He gave you exceeding beauty; He gave you intelligence and discretion to distinguish the good from the evil; He gave you prowess and valour. And moreover He gave you happiness so generously that

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you have risen far above where you began. All these things Our Lord granted you in order that you might be His knight and servant. But He did not give you these things in order that they should be wasted on you, but that they should be increased and improved. But you have been such a wicked and disloyal servant that you have forsaken Him and served His enemy, for you have continually been at strife with Him. You have been like the wicked soldier who leaves his lord as soon as he has received his wages and goes to help his enemy. Thus you have acted toward Our Lord: for as soon as He had paid you richly and well, you left Him to go and serve him who is always at war with Him. This would not be done by any man, I think, whom He had paid as well as He has paid you. Thus you may see that you are harder than stone, and a greater sinner than any other. However, whoever wishes may interpret the word stone in another manner. For a multitude of people saw sweet water issue from the rock in the desert beyond the Red Sea where the people of Israel tarried so long a time. There it was clearly seen that when the people were athirst and quarrelled with each other, Moses came to a hard old rock and said, just as if it were impossible: 'Can we not draw water from this rock?' And immediately there issued water from the rock in such plenty that all the people had enough to drink, and their murmuring was appeased and their thirst assuaged. Thus one can say that sometimes sweetness has issued even from a rock; but none ever issued from you, wherefore you can plainly see that you are harder than stone."

"Sire," said Lancelot, "now tell me why it was said that I was more bitter than wood." "I will tell you," the hermit made reply. "Now listen to me. I have shown you that in you there is nothing but hardness, and where hardness is there can be no sweetness, and we ought not to expect to find anything there but bitterness; and there is as much of bitterness in you as there ought to be of sweetness. So you are like the dead and rotten wood in which no sweetness is to be found, but only bitterness. Now I have shown you how you are harder than stone and more bitter than wood.

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“Now the third thing to explain is how you are more barren and stripped than a fig-tree. The fig tree here concerned is mentioned in the Gospel where it speaks of Palm Sunday when Our Lord entered the city of Jerusalem on an ass, the day when the children of the Hebrews sang to welcome Him the sweet songs of which Holy Church reminds us each year on the day we call the day of palms. That day the High Lord, the High Master, the High Prophet preached in the city of Jerusalem surrounded by those in whom all hardness was lodged. And when He had toiled all day and had finished His sermon, He found no one in the city who would lodge Him, wherefore He went forth from the city. And when He was outside the city, He saw by the road a fig tree which was fine-looking and well furnished with leaves and branches, but without fruit. And Our Lord came to the tree, and when He saw it bare of fruit, He was angered and cursed the tree which bore no fruit. So it was with the fig tree outside of Jerusalem. Now consider whether you might be such an one, only more barren and stripped than it was. When the High Lord came to the tree, He found on it leaves which He might have picked, had He wished. But when the Holy Grail passed where you were, it found you so stripped as to be without any good thought or intention; rather it found you mean and filthy and lying in luxury and stripped of leaves and blossoms, that is to say, of all good works. Therefore, you were told what you have reported to me: ‘Lancelot, harder than stone, more bitter than wood, more barren and stripped than a fig-tree, get thee hence.’”

“Certainly, sire,” said Lancelot, “you have spoken and shown me clearly that I have good reason to be called a stone, wood, and a fig tree; for all those things you have mentioned are found in me. But since you told me that I have not gone so far astray that I may not yet return, if I am willing to keep from falling again into mortal sin, I promise God first and you afterward that I will never resume the life I have so long led, but will observe chastity and keep my body as pure as I can. But I could not cease from chivalry and feats of arms so long as I remain strong and healthy as I am now.” When the good man heard these words, he was very happy and replied: “Without doubt, if you willingly renounced your

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sin with the queen, I tell you truly that Our Lord would love you again, and would succour you, and would look upon you with pity, and would grant you power to achieve many a thing which you cannot do now because of your sin." "Sire," said Lancelot, "I renounce them all, and will never more sin with her or anyone else."

When the worthy man heard that, he prescribed such penance as he thought he could accomplish, then absolved him and blessed him and invited him to spend that day with him. And he replied that he must needs do so, as he had no horse to mount, nor shield nor lance nor sword. "I can help you about that," the hermit said, "before to morrow evening. For close by there lives a brother of mine who is a knight and who will send me a horse and arms and everything else required as soon as I send word to him." Lancelot replied that in that case he would gladly stay, which made the good man happy and glad.

Thus Lancelot tarried with the hermit who exhorted him to do the right. And he gave him so much good advice that Lancelot repented of the life he had so long led. For he saw clearly that if he should die, his soul would be lost; and his body peradventure would suffer too, if it could be reached by punishment. So he repented that he had ever cherished this mad love for the queen, for he had ill spent his time. So he blamed himself and was ashamed, and promised in his heart that he would never again relapse. But now the story ceases to speak of him and returns to Perceval.

Chapter VI

Now the story tells how when Perceval had left Lancelot, he started back to the recluse from whom he thought to hear news of the knight who had escaped them. And when he had turned about, he could not find any direct path which led in that direction. Nevertheless, he followed the direction as best he could. Coming to the chapel, he knocked at the little window belonging to the recluse, which she opened at once, as she had not been asleep, and thrust out her head as far as possible to inquire who was there. And he told her he belonged to the household of King Arthur and that his name was Perceval le Gallois. When she heard this name, she was very glad; for she loved him dearly, as was natural, seeing that he was her nephew. So she called her servants and ordered them to open the door for the knight outside and give him something to eat if he needed it, and to serve him in every way they could, for he was the man whom she loved most in the world. Then the servants obeyed her and opened the door and, after admitting the knight, they removed his arms and gave him something to eat. And he asked if he might speak with the recluse again. "Nay, sire, not now," they said, "but to-morrow after mass we think you can speak with her." So he resigned himself and lay down on a bed which they prepared for him; and there he rested all night, being weary and exhausted.

The next morning when it was bright daylight, Perceval got up and heard mass which the hermit there celebrated for him. And when he was armed, he went to the recluse and said to her: "Lady, for God's sake give me some news of the knight who passed by here, to whom you said that you had good reason to know him: for I am very anxious to know who he is." When the lady heard that, she asked him why he was

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seeking him. "Because," he replied, "I shall not be happy until I have found him and fought with him. For he has done me so much wrong that I could not give him up without being ashamed."

"Ah! Perceval," said she, "what is this you say? Do you wish to fight with him? Do you wish to die like your brothers, who were killed as the result of their outrageous behaviour? And surely if you die in like manner, it will be a great pity and your lineage will be greatly humiliated. Do you know what you would lose, if you fight that knight? I will tell you. It is true that the Quest of the Holy Grail has been begun, that you are a companion in the Quest, I believe, and it will soon be accomplished, if God will. Now you are seeking much greater honour than you realise, if you insist on fighting alone against this knight. For this we know well, in this country and in many other places, that at the finish there will be three valued knights who above all others shall receive the credit and the reward in this Quest: two of them shall be virgin and the third shall be chaste. Of the two virgin knights, he whom you seek shall be one and you the other, while the third shall be Bors de Gaunes. By these three the Quest shall be accomplished. And since God has destined you to receive this honour, it would be too bad if you should seek your own death. And you certainly will hasten it, if you fight with this knight whom you are seeking, for he is surely a much better knight than you are or anyone else."

"Lady," said Perceval, "it appears from what you say of my brothers, that you know who I am." "I do know," said she, "and have good reason to do so: for I am your aunt, and you are my nephew. Do not doubt my words because I am here in this humble place: rather believe that I am she who was formerly called queen of the Terre Gaste. You have seen me in very different circumstances from the present, for I was one of the richest ladies in the world. Yet my wealth never pleased nor suited me so well as does this poverty in which I now live."

When Perceval heard this, he began to weep for pity; and as he thought it over, he knew that it was his aunt. Then he sat down beside her and asked about his mother and his family. "How is this?" she inquired; "have you no news of your mother?" "Absolutely none, lady,"

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he replied; "I do not know whether she is living or not. But many a time in my dreams it has come over me that she had much more cause to complain of me than to praise me, seeing how ill I treated her." When the lady heard him say this, she replied sadly and pensively: "Indeed, unless in a dream, you have not beheld your mother, for she died as soon as you went to King Arthur's court." "How was that, lady?" he inquired. "Upon my word," she replied, "your mother was so grieved at your departure that that very day, as soon as she had made confession, she died." "Now may God have mercy on her soul," said he, "for surely this is a heavy sorrow. However, since it has happened, I must bear it, for to this end we all must come. I never heard news of her after we parted. But in God's name, can you tell me who this knight is whom I seek, and where he comes from, and whether it was he who came to court with the red arms?" "By my head, I swear it was he," she said. "He came there with perfect right, and I will tell you what the meaning of it was.

"You are aware that since the advent of Jesus Christ there have been three famous tables in the world. The first was the table of Jesus Christ at which the apostles ate several times. That was the table which nourished both bodies and souls with meat from heaven. At this table sat the brethren who were united in body and soul, about whom the prophet David uttered a marvellous saying in his book: 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' Peace, concord and patience dwelt in the brethren who sat at that table, and all good works shone forth in them. And that table was established by the Lamb without blemish who was sacrificed for our redemption.

"After that table there was another like it and in remembrance of the first. That was the table of the Holy Grail which gave rise to so many great miracles in this country in the time of Joseph of Arimathæa when Christianity was first introduced into this land,—a miraculous event which must dwell in the memory of all men, good and bad, for ever. It came about in those days that Joseph of Arimathæa arrived in this country bringing many people with him, perhaps four thousand in number and all poor men. And when they arrived here, they were greatly distressed for fear that there would be insufficient food for such

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great numbers. One day they were wandering in a forest, where they found no one and nothing to eat. And they were much dismayed, for they had not anticipated this. Thus they suffered want that day, but the next they searched up hill and down dale until they met an old woman who was carrying twelve loaves of bread from the oven. And they bought them. And when they came to divide them, they got angry and quarrelled among themselves, for some would not agree to what the others proposed. When Joseph heard of this situation, he was much displeased. So he commanded that the loaves should be brought to him, which was done. Then came those who had bought the loaves, and from them he learned how some would not agree with the others. Then he commanded all the people to sit down as though they had been at Communion. Then he broke the bread and distributed it; at the head of the table he placed the Holy Grail, and in its presence the twelve loaves were multiplied so that all the people, of whom there might have been four thousand, were miraculously fed and satisfied. When they saw this they thanked God for His mercy in that He had succoured them so openly.

“At this table there was a seat which was to be occupied by Josephe, the son of Joseph of Arimathæa. This seat was established in order that the master and pastor of them all might occupy it, and no one else was authorised to sit in it. It was hallowed and blessed by the hand of Our Lord Himself, as the story tells, and was the seat of that authority which Josephe was to exercise over the Christians. In that chair Our Lord Himself had placed him; and consequently there was no one so bold as to dare to occupy it. And this seat had been constructed on the model of the one occupied by Our Lord at the Last Supper, when He sat among His apostles as shepherd and master. And just as He was lord and master of all His apostles, so was Josephe destined to lead all those who sat at the table of the Holy Grail: he was to be their lord and master. But it came about, when they had arrived in this country and had long wandered in strange lands, that two brothers who were relatives of Josephe, were envious because Our Lord had elevated him above them and had chosen him as the best of the company. So they spoke of it privily and said that

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they would not endure him as their master: for they were of as high lineage as he, and therefore they would no longer regard themselves as his disciples nor call him master. The next day, when they had climbed a high hill, and the tables were spread, and they were about to place Josephe in the highest seat, the two brothers opposed him, and one of them took the seat himself in the sight of all. But at once a miracle took place, for the earth swallowed up him who had taken the seat. This miracle was promptly known throughout the country, wherefore the seat was thereafter called the Perilous Seat. And no one since that time has been so foolhardy as to sit in it, except the one whom Our Lord had chosen for it.

“After this table the Round Table was constructed, not without great significance, upon the advice of Merlin. By its name the Round Table is meant to signify the round world and the round canopy of the planets and the elements in the firmament, where are to be seen the stars and many other things. Wherefore one may say that in the Round Table the world is accurately symbolised. For you can see that from all countries where chivalry is established, whether Christian or pagan, the knights come to the Round Table. And when God gives them grace to become companions, they esteem themselves more fortunate than if they had gained the whole world, and we can see how for it they leave their fathers and mothers and wives and children. You have seen this happen in your own case. For since you left your mother and became a companion of the Round Table. you have had no desire to return, but rather you were at once possessed by the gentleness and brotherhood which are bound to exist between those who are companions.

“When Merlin had established the Round Table, he said that through the agency of those who should be its companions the truth would be known concerning the Holy Grail, of which no sign was to be seen in the days of Merlin. And they asked him how they could distinguish those who were to be accounted most excellent. And he replied: ‘There shall be three who will accomplish the Quest: two of them virgin and the third chaste. One of the three shall surpass his father as much as the lion surpasses the leopard in strength and courage. He shall be accounted

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master and shepherd above all others; and the companions of the Round Table will continue to idle away their time in search for the Holy Grail until Our Lord shall send it into their midst so suddenly that it will be a marvellous thing.' When they heard this, they said: 'Now, Merlin, since this is to be so excellent a man as you say, you ought to construct a proper seat in which no one should sit excepting him, and which should be so much larger than all the others that everyone could distinguish it.' 'That I will do,' Merlin replied. Then he made a great and marvellous seat, distinguished from all the rest. When he had finished it, he began to kiss it and said that he had done this for love of the Good Knight who should sit in it. Then they said to him: 'Merlin, what will be the future of this seat?' 'Indeed,' said he, 'in the future many strange things shall happen because of it: for no one will ever sit down in it without meeting death or injury until the True Knight shall sit in it.' 'In God's name,' they said, 'then whoever should sit in it would run a great risk?' 'He would, indeed,' Merlin replied, 'and because of the danger attached to it, it shall be called the Perilous Seat.'

"Fair nephew," said the lady, "now I have told you why the Round Table was made and why the Perilous Seat was made, in which many a knight has died who was not worthy to sit in it. Now I will tell you in what manner the knight with the scarlet armour came to court. You know how Jesus Christ sat among His apostles as shepherd and master at the table of the Last Supper, and what significance was given to the table of the Holy Grail by Joseph and to the Round Table by this knight. Our Lord promised His apostles before His Passion that He would come to see and visit them, and sad and dismayed they waited for Him to fulfil the promise. Then it came about that on the day of Pentecost, when they were all in one room and the door was shut, the Holy Spirit descended among them like a flame and comforted them and assured them of that concerning which they were in doubt. Then they were dismissed and sent through the lands to preach to the people and to teach the Holy Gospel. These things happened to the apostles on the day of Pentecost when Our Lord came to visit and comfort them. In the same way, I think, the knight whom you ought to regard as master and shepherd came to

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comfort you. For just as Our Lord came in the appearance of a flame, so the knight came in scarlet armour, in colours like fire. Moreover, just as the doors of the house in which the apostles were gathered were closed at the coming of Our Lord, so the doors of the palace were closed when the knight came. Hence, he arrived so suddenly among you that no one was clever enough to know where he came from. And that very day was undertaken the Quest of the Holy Grail, which will never be given up until the truth concerning it be known, and concerning the lance, and why so many adventures have befallen this country because of it. Now I have told you the truth about the knight so that you may not fight with him; for know well that you ought not to do it, seeing that you are his brother in the fraternity of the Round Table, and that you would not have a chance to withstand him, for he is a much better knight than you."

"Lady," said he, "you have told me so much that I shall never again desire to fight with him. But for God's sake show me what to do and how to find him. For if I had him as a companion, I should not leave him so long as I could follow after him." "I will give you the best advice I can on that subject," she replied. "Where he is just now, I cannot say; but I can tell you by what signs you may the sooner find him, and then, when you have found him, stay with him as long as you can. You shall go from here to a castle called Got, where he has a cousin—a lady for whose love I expect that he lodged there last night. And if she can tell you which way he is bound, follow him as fast as you can. And if she tells you nothing about him, go directly to the castle of Corbenyc where dwells the Cripple King. There I am sure you will hear of him, if indeed you do not find him there."

Thus Perceval and the recluse talked about the knight until noon. Then she said to Perceval: "Fair nephew, you must stay with me to-night, and I shall be greatly pleased. For it has been so long since I last saw you, that I shall be very sorry if you leave me now." "Lady," said he, "I have so much to do that I really ought not to tarry longer: I pray you for God's sake to let me go." "Certainly, you shall not go to-day with my permission," she replied. "But to-morrow as soon as you have heard mass, I will gladly give you leave to go." Then he consented to remain.

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And as soon as he had his armour removed, the table was spread and they ate what the lady had had prepared.

That night Perceval stayed there with his aunt. They talked about the knight and many other things, until she said to him: "Fair nephew, up to the present time you have guarded yourself with such vigilance that your virginity has not been violated or injured, and you have never known what the flesh and the lust of the flesh may mean. And that is well for you, for if your flesh had been corrupted by sin, you would have proved wanting as one of the leading companions of the Quest, just as Lancelot of the Lake has done, who through lust of the flesh and lechery has a long time since forfeited the chance to accomplish that for which all the others are struggling. Therefore, I pray you to keep your body as pure as when Our Lord admitted you to knighthood, so that you may come into the presence of the Holy Grail virgin, pure, and without a taint of lust. And certainly that will be one of the finest deeds of prowess that ever a knight performed: for of all those of the Round Table there is none that has not forfeited his virginity except you and Galahad, the Good Knight of whom I speak." And he replied that with God's help he would be on his guard as he ought to be.

Perceval stayed there all that day while his aunt gave him much advice and counsel about doing right. But above all she besought him to keep his body pure as he ought to do, and he promised her he would do so. And when they had talked a long time about the knight and King Arthur's court, Perceval asked her why she had left her own country and had established herself in such a desert place. "Before God!" she replied, "I fled here in fear of death. For you know that, when you went to court, my lord the king was at war with King Libran; wherefore, as soon as my lord died, I, a timorous woman, feared that he would kill me if he captured me. So I took a great part of my possessions and fled to this desert place in order that I might not be discovered. Then I had this retreat constructed and this house as you see it, and established here my chaplain and my servants with me, and I have dwelt in this retreat with the intention of not leaving it, if God will, so long as I live, but rather of spending the rest of my life here and dying in the service of Our Lord."

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"Upon my faith," said Perceval, "this is a strange thing. But now tell me what has become of your son Dyabiaus: for I desire greatly to know how he is doing." "In truth," she replied, "he went to serve King Pellés your relative to gain his arms; and I have since heard that he has knighted him. But it has been two years since I saw him, while he was following the tournaments over Great Britain. But I think you will find him at Corbenyc if you go there." "I will surely go there," said he, "if for no other reason than to see him, for I greatly desire to bear him company." "In God's name," said she. "I wish that he might meet you, for then I should be happy, if you were together."

So Perceval stayed with his aunt all that day. And on the morrow, as soon as he had heard mass and was armed, he went away and rode all day through the forest which was so vast that he met neither man nor woman. But after vespers he happened to hear a bell ringing on his right-hand side. So he turned in that direction, knowing that it was some religious house or hermitage. When he had gone a little farther, he saw it was a religious house surrounded by walls and deep moats. And he drew near and called at the gate until it was opened. When those within saw that he was fully armed, they thought at once that he was a knight-errant; so they had his armour removed and welcomed him gladly. And they took his horse to the stable and gave him plenty of hay and oats. Then one of the friars took Perceval to his room to rest, and that night he was lodged as well as the friars could afford. In the morning he awoke before the hour of prime, and went to hear mass in the abbey.

And when he had entered the church, he saw on the right an iron grating where there was a friar clad in the robes of Our Lord about to begin the mass. Turning in that direction as one who desired to hear the service, he came to the grating and thought to enter in; but he realised that he could not do so, as he could not find any entrance. Wherefore he gave up the idea and kneeled down outside. And looking beyond where the priest was standing, he saw a couch richly spread as if with silk and other stuffs; there was nothing about it that was not white. Perceval looked at the couch so intently that he perceived there was lying upon it

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either a man or a woman, he could not tell which, for the face was covered with a white cloth spread out, so that it could not be clearly seen. When he realised that he would only waste his time by gazing, he turned his attention to the service which the good man had begun. And when the time came for the priest to elevate the body of Our Lord, the figure upon the couch sat up and uncovered his face. And behold! it was an old white-haired man with a crown of gold on his head, and his shoulders were bare and he was uncovered to the waist. When Perceval looked at him, he saw that his body was covered with wounds and that there were scars upon his palms, arms and face. When the priest presented openly the body of Jesus Christ, he stretched forth his hands and began to cry: "Fair gentle Father, do not forget my guerdon!" Nor would he lie down again, but remained at his prayers and orisons with hands outstretched toward his Creator and with the crown of gold still upon his head. Perceval looked long at the man sitting upon the couch, who seemed in distress because of his wounds; and he saw that he looked so old that he thought he must be three hundred years old or more. And he continued to watch him, thinking this a very strange thing. When the mass was concluded, he saw the priest take in his hands the body of Our Lord and carry it to the man upon the couch for him to partake of it. And as soon as he had received it, he took the crown from his head and had it placed upon the altar. Then he lay down again upon his couch as before and was covered up so that no part of him was visible. Then the priest took off his robes, having finished the mass.

After Perceval had witnessed these things, he left the church and went to the room where he had spent the night, and calling one of the friars said to him: "Sire, for God's sake, answer the question I am going to ask, for I am sure that you know the truth." "Sir knight," he replied, "tell me what it is, and if I know I will tell you gladly, provided I can do so lawfully." "Upon my word," he said, "I will tell you what it is. I was in the church just now and heard the service; and there I saw inside a grating and before an altar a very old man lying on a couch with a crown of gold upon his head. And when he sat up, I saw that he was covered with wounds all over. When mass had been sung, the priest gave him to

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partake of the body of Our Lord. And as soon as he had partaken, he lay down again and removed the crown from his head. Fair sir, it seems to me that there must be some deep meaning in all this, and I would fain know what it can be; therefore I beg of you to enlighten me." "Certainly," said the worthy man, "that will I gladly do.

"It is true, as you have heard many people say, that Joseph of Arimathæa, that worthy man and true knight, was first sent to this land by the High Master to plant and strengthen holy Christianity with the help of his Creator. And, when he came, he suffered much persecution and adversity from the enemies of the Faith, for in those days there were nothing but Saracens in this country. There dwelt here a king named Crudel, the most wicked and cruel in the world, without pity or humility. When he heard that the Christians had arrived in his country and had brought with them a precious vessel so marvellous that nearly all could live in the grace which it shed abroad, he regarded the report as a lie. But they continued to assert to him that it was true. Then he said he would soon find out for himself. So he took Josephe the son of Joseph and two of his nephews and a hundred of those whom he had elected to be masters and shepherds over the Christians. And when he had seized them and cast them into prison, they had with them the Holy Vessel, wherefore they had no fear as regards their bodily food. Now the king kept them thus in prison for forty days without sending them anything to eat or drink, and strictly forbidding anyone to be so bold as to do anything for them during that time.

"Now the news travelled through all the lands where Josephe had been that King Crudel held him and a great part of the Christians in prison. Finally, King Mordrain who dwelt at Sarraz in the regions toward Jerusalem and had been converted by the preaching of Josephe, heard the news. And he was very sad: for it had been by the counsel of Josephe that he had recovered his land which Tholomer had tried to take from him; and the attempt would have been successful had it not been for the counsel of Josephe and the aid of his brother-in-law Seraphe. When King Mordrain heard that Josephe was in prison, he said he would do his utmost to deliver him. So he hastily summoned all the forces he

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could collect and put to sea, equipped with arms and horses, and finally arrived by ship in this country. And when he had arrived with all his followers, he sent word to King Crudel that if he did not surrender Josephe to him, he would take his land and ruin him. But being in little awe, King Crudel instead led his army against him. So the two hosts met in battle array. Now it came about by the will of Our Lord that the Christians won the victory, and King Crudel and his people were killed. And King Mordrain, who had been named Ewalach before he became a Christian, acquitted himself so well in the battle that all his men considered him wonderful. And when they removed his arms, they found he had so many wounds that any other man would have died of them. So they asked him how he fared, and he said he did not feel badly and was not aware of any wound. So he removed Josephe from prison, and when he saw him, he rejoiced greatly, for he loved him deeply. And Josephe asked him who had brought him into those parts, and he answered that he had come to deliver him.

“The next day the Christians presented themselves before the table of the Holy Grail and prayed. And when Josephe, who was master, had put on his robes to approach the Holy Grail and was engaged in this service, King Mordrain who had always desired to behold the Holy Grail openly, drew nearer than he should have done; whereupon a voice descended in their midst, saying: ‘King, go no farther, for thou hast not the right!’ But he had already advanced the least little bit and was so desirous of beholding it that he continued to edge closer. Then suddenly there descended a cloud before him which deprived him of his sight and of his bodily strength, so that he could not see anything or help himself. And when he saw that Our Lord had taken such vengeance upon him, because he had disobeyed His commandment, he cried in the hearing of all the people: ‘Fair Lord God Jesus Christ, who hast shown me so plainly that it is madness to disobey your commandment, as it is true that this affliction with which you have visited me pleases me, and as I endure it gladly, so grant in your good pleasure as a reward for my service that I may not die until the Good Knight, the ninth of my line in descent, he who is to behold the wonders of the Holy Grail openly, shall come to visit me, so

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that I may embrace and kiss him.' When the king had addressed this request to God, the voice was heard saying: 'Be not dismayed, O king: Our Lord has heard thy prayer. Thy desire shall be accomplished in this respect: for thou shalt not die until the knight whom thou requirest shall come to see thee; and when he shall appear, the light of thy eyes shall be restored and thou shalt see clearly, and thy wounds shall be healed, though until that time they shall not close.'

"Thus spake the voice to the king, telling him that he should behold the coming of the knight whom he so desired. And it appears now that all those things are true. Behold! four hundred years are passed since this adventure happened to him, and his eyes have not seen, nor his wounds been healed, nor has he been able to help himself. But now, they say, the knight is in this country who is to conclude this adventure. And by the signs which we have noticed, we think that he will yet see and have the use of his limbs again, but after that he will not live long.

"Thus it has happened to King Mordrain as I have told you. He has lived for four hundred years in such saintly and religious fashion that he has never tasted of earthly food except that which the priest offers us in the sacrament of the mass, and that is the body of Jesus Christ. This you could see for yourself to-day: for as soon as the priest had celebrated mass, he brought the body of Our Lord to the king and made him partake of it. Thus the king has waited since the time of Joseph until now for the coming of that knight whom he has so desired to see. He is like old Simeon who waited for the coming of Our Lord, and being brought to the temple there the old man received Him and took Him in his arms, happy and rejoicing that His promise was fulfilled. For the Holy Spirit had showed him that he would not die before he had seen Jesus Christ. And when he saw Him, he sang that sweet song which is mentioned by the prophet David. Now as he awaited with great desire for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the high Prophet, the sovereign Shepherd, so this king awaits the coming of Galahad, the good and perfect knight.

"Now I have told the truth about what you asked me, just as it has happened; and now I ask you to tell me who you are."

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Then he told him that he belonged to King Arthur's household and was a companion of the Round Table, and that his name was Perceval le Gallois. And when the good man heard his name, he was very glad, for he had often heard of him. And he invited him to tarry there that day, and the friars would entertain and honour him, as it was their duty to do. But he said that he had so much to do that he could by no means tarry, but must needs be on his way. So he asked for his arms which were brought to him. When he was equipped, he mounted and took leave of them, riding through the forest until noon.

At noon his road led him into a valley, and there met as many as twenty armed men carrying upon a noble bier a man who had just been killed. As soon as they saw him, they asked him whence he came. And when he replied that he was of King Arthur's household, they all cried at once: "At him now!" Whereupon he prepared to defend himself as best he could, and turned to face the one who was coming at him first, striking him with such violence that he knocked him to the ground with his horse on top of him. But as he was about to continue his charge, he was prevented by more than seven of them striking him upon the shield, while the others killed his horse, so that he fell to the ground. Then he tried to get up, like one possessed of great courage, and drew his sword and prepared to defend himself. But the others ran upon him so fiercely that defence was useless, and they struck him upon the shield and helmet and dealt him so many blows that he could not stand upright, but fell with one knee upon the ground. And they struck and pounded him and handled him so severely that they would have soon killed him, for they had already snatched his helmet from his head and wounded him, if it had not been that chance brought that way the knight with the scarlet armour. Now when he saw the knight all alone on foot struggling with so many enemies who were trying to kill him, he turned that way as fast as his horse could carry him, and shouted to them: "Let that knight alone!" Then with lance outstretched he rode among them, and struck the first one so heavily that he brought him to earth. Then, when his lance was shattered, he took his sword in hand. As he spurred up and down he struck first one and then another so amazingly that all whom he

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struck squarely he threw upon the ground. In a short time he wrought such execution with the great blows he dealt and the speed he showed that there was none left so bold as to face his attack; rather did they flee in different directions and scatter through the forest, which was extensive, so that only three remained to be seen, of whom Perceval had unhorsed one and wounded two. When he saw that they all had fled and that Perceval had nothing more to fear, he re-entered the forest where he saw it was thickest, like a man who did not wish to be followed.

When Perceval saw him going off so hastily, he cried out to him as loudly as he could, saying: "Ah! sir knight, for God's sake stop a moment to speak with me!" The Good Knight showed no sign of hearing Perceval, but rode away rapidly like one who had no desire to turn back. And Perceval, without his horse which had been killed, followed him as fast as he could on foot. Presently he met a valet on a strong fast nag, leading a big black steed. When Perceval espied him, he knew not what to do. For he would fain possess the steed to pursue the knight and do great execution with him, provided he could have him with the valet's permission; for he would not take him by force, unless under stress of great need, for fear he might be considered mean. So he greeted the valet as he approached, and the valet gave him God's blessing. "Fair friend," said Perceval, "in return for my service and favour and upon my word that I will serve as your knight the first time you ask my help, I beg of you to lend me that steed until I have overtaken a knight who is riding away from me." "Sire," said the valet, "I could not possibly do so, for there is a man who would do me violence, if I should not return the steed to him." "Fair friend," said Perceval again, "do me the favour I ask. For I have never been so sorry for anything as I shall be to lose that knight for lack of a horse." "Upon my word," the valet replied, "I shall do nothing of the kind. You shall never take him with my permission as long as he is in my care. You can take him by force, of course, if you will." When he heard that, he was so distressed that he thought he must go out of his mind. For he would not do anything mean to the valet; yet, if he should lose the knight who had gone away, he would never be happy again. These two things filled his heart with such distress that he

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could no longer stand up, but fell beneath a tree and his heart failed him. Then he turned pale and faint, as if he had lost all his strength, and he was so stricken with grief that he hoped to die. Then he took off his helmet, and took his sword, and said to the valet: "Fair friend, since you will not relieve me of the grief from which I cannot escape but by death, I beg you to take this sword and kill me now: then will my sorrow be at an end. Then, if the Good Knight, whom I wished to seek, hears that I died of grief on his account, he will not be so mean as not to pray Our Lord to have mercy on my soul." "In God's name," the valet replied, "I will never kill you, if it please God; for you have not deserved it." Then he rode off rapidly, and Perceval stayed behind so sorrowful that he thought he would die of grief. And when he saw neither the valet nor anyone else, he began to lament bitterly and to call himself a miserable wretch: "Ah! alas! unhappy one, now hast thou missed what thou didst seek, for he has escaped thee. Never again shalt thou have such a good chance of finding him as that thou hast just missed!"

While Perceval was lamenting thus, he listened and heard the noise of horses coming; and opening his eyes, he saw an armed knight riding along the forest road, and he was riding the very horse which the valet had shortly before been leading. Perceval recognised the horse, but did not know that he had acquired him by force. When he had passed out of sight, his grief broke out anew. But presently he saw the valet approaching on his nag and deeply distressed. As soon as he espied Perceval, he said to him: "Ah! sire, did you see pass by an armed knight mounted on the horse you asked me for a while ago?" "Yes," said Perceval, "but why do you ask?" "Because he took him from me by force," was the reply. "He treated me badly and has caused my death; for my lord will kill me wherever he finds me." "And what do you want me to do about it?" asked Perceval. "I cannot recover him for you, as I am on foot. But if I had a horse, I believe I could soon bring him back to you." "Sire," said the valet, "mount my nag, and if you can recover the horse, you may have him." "But," said Perceval, "how can you have your nag again, if I recover the horse?" "I will follow you, sire, on foot," the

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valet said, "and if you can defeat the knight, I will take my nag, and the horse shall be yours." And Perceval said that that suited him perfectly.

Then Perceval relaced his helmet, mounted the nag, took his shield, and went after the knight with all the speed he could get out of his mount. He rode until he came to one of the little fields of which there were many in the forest. There he saw in front of him the knight who was galloping along on the steed. As soon as he espied him, he cried out to him: "Sir knight, turn back and restore to the valet his horse which you have wickedly taken from him!" At the sound of his shout, the knight dashed at him with lance outstretched; and Perceval drew his sword, seeing that the shock was imminent. But the knight, wishing to make short work of him, rushed on as fast as the horse could carry him and struck the nag in the breast so hard that he pierced him through and through. The nag fell to the ground, mortally wounded, and Perceval flew over his head. When the knight saw the effect of his blow, he continued his charge and rode away across the meadow into the forest where he saw it was thickest. When Perceval realised what had happened, he was so grieved that he did not know what to do or say. But he cried to the knight as he went away: "Coward of body and craven of heart, turn back and fight me who am on foot while you are mounted!" but he made no reply to what was said, having no further fear of him, and struck into the forest as soon as he reached it. And when Perceval had lost sight of him, he was so sad that he threw his shield and sword upon the ground, and took his helmet from his head, and began his wail of grief more bitterly than before. He wept and cried aloud, calling himself wretched, miserable and the most unlucky of all knights, saying: "Now I have failed in all my desires!"

All that day Perceval stayed there in his grief and anger, without anyone coming by to comfort him. When night came on, he felt so weary and exhausted that it seemed to him all his limbs had lost their strength. Overcome with drowsiness he fell asleep and did not awake until midnight. And when he was awake he looked and saw in front of him a woman who asked him with much trepidation: "Perceval, what are you doing here?" He said he was not doing anything good or bad, and that if

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he had a horse, he would go away. "If you would promise," said she, "to do my will whenever I should summon you, I would give you a good fine horse which would carry you anywhere you wished to go." Hearing that, he was as happy as possible, and paid no attention to the person to whom he was speaking. He supposed it was some woman he was speaking with, but it was the devil seeking to deceive him and to fix him so his soul would be lost forevermore. And when he heard her promise him what he most desired, he replied that he was all ready to assure her of what she wished, and that if she gave him a good fine horse, he would do what she asked of him. "Do you promise it as a loyal knight?" she asked. "Truly, I do!" said he. "Then wait for me," she said, "for I shall soon be back." Then she went into the forest and returned presently leading a splendid great horse, so black that he was marvellous to see.

When Perceval beheld the horse, he looked at him and took a dislike to him; yet he was bold enough to mount him as one who cared not for the enemy's snare. And when he was mounted and had taken his lance and sword, the woman standing there said to him: "Perceval, are you going away? Remember that you owe me a gift in return." And he said he would. Then he rode away rapidly and entered the forest in the clear moonlight. But he was borne along so fast that he was soon out of the forest and had been carried more than three days' journey. So he rode until he saw before him in a valley a swiftly flowing stream. And when the steed came to it, he was about to plunge in. But when Perceval saw that the stream was so wide, he was afraid to cross, seeing it was night and that there was no bridge or plank. Then he raised his hand and crossed himself on the forehead. As soon as the devil felt himself burdened with the weight of the cross which was very heavy and grievous for him to bear, he shook himself loose from Perceval and dashed into the water barking and crying and finishing his career with shame. And at once the water gleamed here and there with fire and a bright flame, so that it seemed as it were on fire.

When Perceval beheld this strange sight, he realised at once that it was the devil who had brought him thither to deceive him and to ruin his body and soul. Then he crossed himself and commended himself to

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God and prayed Our Lord not to let him fall into any temptation by which he might lose the companionship of the heavenly knighthood. And he raised his hands to heaven and thanked Our Lord from the bottom of his heart that He had so effectively aided him in this time of need. For if the devil had got him into the water, he would have surely let him fall and then he would have drowned and perished, losing at once both body and soul. Then he withdrew from the water's edge, still fearing some assault of the devil, and knelt toward the east and made the prayers and orisons he knew. Thinking that the devil must have carried him far from the abbey where he saw King Mordrain the day before, he longed for the day to break in order to learn in what land he was.

Thus Perceval remained engaged in prayer until daylight, waiting until the sun should have completed its journey through the firmament and should reappear to the world. Then when the sun was risen bright and clear and had somewhat dried the dew, Perceval looked about him and saw that he was on top of a great marvellous mountain, very wild, which was surrounded on all sides by a sea so broad that he saw no sign of land except in the far distance. Then he noticed that he had been transported to some island, but he knew not what; he would gladly have learned the truth, but knew not how to do so, for so far as he could see, there was nowhere near any castle, fortress, retreat or house where people could live. Yet he was not so lonely but that he saw about him wild beasts, bears, lions, leopards and flying serpents. And when he realised where he was, he was very uncomfortable, for he feared the wild beasts, knowing well they would not leave him in peace, but would kill him unless he could defend himself. Nevertheless, if He who saved Jonah in the whale's belly and who protected Daniel in the lions' den would be as well his shield and defence, he would not fear all he saw. So he trusted more in His aid and succour than in his own sword, seeing clearly that by no prowess of earthly chivalry could he escape, unless Our Lord was with him. Then he looked about him and saw in the middle of the isle a very high and wondrous rock, where he thought he would fear no wild beast if he could only get there. So, armed as he was, he made his way thither. And on his way he looked and saw a serpent carrying by

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the neck a lion's cub in his teeth, and it stopped on the top of the mountain. After the serpent came a lion running and roaring and making such an outcry that it seemed to Perceval it was making lament for the cub which the serpent was carrying off.

When Perceval saw this strange sight, he started to run up the mountain as fast as he could. But before he could reach the top, the lion being swifter had already passed him and was engaged in a struggle with the serpent. However, as soon as he was up on the rock and saw the two beasts, he thought he would help the lion as being a more natural creature and nobler than the serpent. So he drew his sword and holding his shield before his face as a protection against the serpent's flame, he attacked the serpent and dealt it a great blow between the ears. Then the creature cast forth fire and flame which burned all his shield and the front of his hauberk. It might have done him still more harm, had he not been quick and agile enough to handle it as one does fire-brands, so that the flame did not strike him fairly and hence was less dangerous. But when he saw this, he was much afraid lest poison might be mingled with the flame. However, he attacked the serpent again, giving it great blows wherever he could reach it. And it happened that he succeeded in hitting it again in the same place where he had first struck it. His sword being light and good, it easily cut through the head where the skin had been already bruised and where the bones were soft, and the serpent lay dead upon the spot.

When the lion saw that it was freed from the serpent by the help of the knight, it showed no sign of wishing to attack him, but came and bowed before him and showed all the appreciation it could, so that Perceval saw that it had no desire to do him harm. Then he put back his sword in its sheath and threw down the shield which was all burned, and took off his helmet to get some air, for the serpent had made him hot enough. Meanwhile the lion kept close beside him wagging his tail and showing his satisfaction. At the sight of this, he began to stroke the animal's neck, head and shoulders, thinking that Our Lord had sent him this beast to bear him company: and he was pleased with the adventure. And the lion showed all the joy a dumb beast can show to a man, and

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stayed with him all day until noon. But as soon as the hour of noon was passed, he went down from the rock carrying the cub on his neck back to his lair. When Perceval saw himself alone on the strange high and remote rock, it is no wonder that he was ill at ease; but he would have been still more so, had he not placed great hope in his Creator; for he was one of the knights in the world who believed most perfectly in Our Lord. Yet in this respect he differed from others in the land: for in those days the people throughout the kingdom of Wales were so mad and unrestrained that if a son found his father lying sick in bed, he would drag him out by the head or arms and kill him on the spot, for it would be a shame to him if his father should die in bed. But if it happened that the son killed the father, or the father the son, and all the family died in battle, then the people of the country said they were of high lineage.

All that day Perceval stayed upon the rock, looking far out to sea for sight of some passing ship. But gaze as he might far and wide, he saw none that day. However, he took heart and sought comfort in Our Lord, praying that He would keep him from falling into any temptation either through the devil's wiles or his own evil thoughts, but that He would protect and nourish him as the father ought to protect the son. And raising his hands to heaven, he said:

"Fair Lord God, who have permitted me to rise to such a height as the order of chivalry, who chose me to be your servant, unworthy as I was; Lord, in your pity let me not depart from serving you, but let me be like the good and sure champion who defends his lord's quarrel against anyone who wrongly accuses him. Fair gentle Lord, in like manner grant that I may defend my soul, which is your concern and your rightful heritage, against him who wrongfully seeks to obtain it. Fair gentle Father, who said of yourself in the Gospel: 'I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep; but the hireling shepherd doeth not so; rather does he leave his sheep without protection so that the wolf strangles them and devours them as soon as he comes'; Sire, be my shepherd and defender and leader, so that I may be one of your sheep. And if it happens, fair Lord God, that I be the hundredth foolish and wretched sheep who wandered away from the ninety and nine and

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was lost in the desert, Lord, take pity on me and leave me not in the desert, but bring me back to your fold, which is the Holy Church and holy faith, where the good sheep are and where true men, good Christians, are, so that the devil who seeks nothing in me but my substance, that is my soul, may not find me defenceless."

When Perceval had spoken thus, he saw coming toward him the lion for whose sake he had fought the serpent; but he made no show of wishing to harm him, but rather came to him gladly. When Perceval saw this, he called him and approached him, stroking his neck and head. And the lion lay down before him as if he were the tamest animal in the world. Then Perceval lay down beside him, putting his head upon his shoulder, and waited until the black darkness of night came on, when he quickly went to sleep beside the lion. And he had no desire to eat, for his mind was full of other things.

When Perceval had gone to sleep, a strange thing happened to him: for in his sleep he seemed to see before him two ladies, one very old and the other young and fair. The two ladies came not on foot, but were riding on very different mounts, one on a lion and the other on a serpent. And he looked at the two ladies, astonished that they were able to handle two such beasts. Then the younger one said to him: "Perceval, my lord salutes you and bids you prepare, as best you can, to fight to-morrow with the most redoubtable champion in the world. And if you are defeated, you will not get off with the loss of some limb, but he will treat you so cruelly that you will be ashamed the rest of your life." When he heard this, he replied to her: "Lady, who is your lord?" "Surely," she answered, "he is the richest man in the world. So see to it that you be so valiant and steadfast that you gain honour in the fight." Then she disappeared so suddenly that Perceval knew not what became of her.

Then the other lady came forward, who was mounted on the serpent, and said to him: "Perceval, I have good reason to complain of you: for you have done wrong to me and mine, and I had not so deserved of you." When he heard these words, he replied in confusion: "Lady, I do not think I have done wrong to you or any lady in the world. So I beg you to tell me in what respect I have done wrong to you, and if I can

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make amends, I will do so gladly in any way you say." "I will tell you indeed," said she, "how you have done me wrong. I had for some time nourished in my castle a beast called a serpent, which served me more than you can imagine. Yesterday this creature flew by chance to this mountain and found a lion's cub which it carried to this rock. And you came running after it with your sword and killed it without its giving you any cause. Now tell me why you killed it. Had I done you any harm that you should slay it? Was the lion yours or in your charge, that you were obliged to fight in his behalf? Are the beasts of the air so without the pale that you are obliged to kill them without cause?" When Perceval heard what the lady said, he replied: "Lady, you had done me no harm so far as I know, nor was the lion mine, nor are the creatures of the air so without the pale. But because the lion is of a more pleasing nature and of a nobler character, and because I saw that the lion was less harmful than the serpent, I attacked the latter and slew it. So it seems to me that I have not done you any wrong, as you say." When the lady heard this reply, she said: "Perceval, is that all you are going to do for me?" And he replied: "Lady, what more do you wish me to do?" "I wish," said she, "that to compensate me for my serpent you should become subject unto me." But he replied that he would not do so. "No?" said she; "you once were mine; before you became subject to your present lord, you were mine. And because you belonged to me before anyone else, I will not let you off; but I promise you that wherever I find you defenceless, I shall seize you as one who formerly belonged to me."

After saying this, the lady disappeared. Meanwhile Perceval remained asleep, though much disturbed by this dream, and he slept all night without once waking. On the morrow when the day had dawned bright and the sun was up and already shining warmly on his head, Perceval opened his eyes and saw that it was day. Then he sat up and, raising his hand, he crossed himself and prayed Our Lord to give him such counsel as should be profitable to his soul: for his body he was not so much concerned as usual, thinking he could never escape from the rock where he was. Then he looked all about him, but saw nothing, not

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even the lion which had borne him company, nor the dragon which he had slain; so he marvelled greatly what had become of them.

While Perceval was thinking of these things, he looked far out to sea and beheld a ship with sail set coming straight toward the place where Perceval was waiting to see whether God would send him some welcome adventure. And the ship sailed fast, having a fair wind which hastened it, as it pursued its course toward him and arrived at the foot of the rock. When Perceval saw this from his place up on the rock, he was filled with joy, thinking there must be plenty of people on board. So he stood up and took his arms. Then he went down from the rock to find out what people were in the ship. Coming nearer, he saw that the ship was decorated inside and out with silk, so that the whole effect was white. When he stepped on board, he found a man clad in a surplice and alb like a priest, and on his head he wore a crown of white silk as wide as two fingers, and on this crown were inscribed words in which the worthy attributes of Our Lord were set forth. At the sight of this Perceval was astonished, and drawing near him saluted him with these words: "Welcome, sire! May God conduct you!" "Fair friend," said the worthy man, "who are you?" "I am," he answered, "of King Arthur's household." "And what adventure has brought you here?" he inquired. "Sire," said he, "I know not how I got here." "And what do you intend to do?" asked the worthy man. "Sire," said he, "if it pleased Our Lord, I would fain get away from here and join my brothers of the Round Table in the Quest of the Holy Grail: it was for this purpose only that I stirred from the court of my lord the king." "In God's own time," said the worthy man, "you will safely get away. He will soon release you when it pleases Him. If He knew you were His servant and that you would do His service better somewhere else than here, be sure that He would soon set you free. But He has now placed you here as a test and trial to see if you are His faithful servant and loyal knight as is required by the order of chivalry. For since you have risen to such a high degree, your heart ought not to be abased by fear or earthly peril. The heart of a knight ought to be so hard and proof against the enemy of his lord that nothing could affect it. And if he is reduced to fear, he is not one of those true

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knights and champions who would let themselves be killed on the field rather than not defend their lord's cause."

Then Perceval asked him whence he came and from what land; and he replied that he came from a foreign land. "And what adventure," asked Perceval, "brought you to such a strange and wild place as this seems to be?"

"Upon my word," the good man said, "I came here to see and comfort you, and in order that you might tell me about yourself. For if you will tell me in what respect you need advice, I will counsel you as well as anyone could do." "It is passing strange," said Perceval, "that you should say that you came here to counsel me. I do not see how that can be, for none but God and me knew that I was on this rock. And even if you had known I was here, I don't believe you know my name, for to the best of my knowledge you never saw me. So I marvel at what you say." "Ah! Perceval," the worthy man replied, "I know you much better than you think. For a long time you have done nothing that I did not know much better than you did yourself." When he heard the good man call him by name, he was indeed amazed. Then he regretted what he had said and apologised, saying: "Ah! sire, for God's sake pardon me for what I said. I thought you did not know me, but now I see that you know me better than I you: so I think I am foolish and you are wise."

Then Perceval leaned on the rail of the boat with the good man, and they spoke together of many things. And Perceval found him to be so wise in all matters that he marvelled greatly who he could be. He was so happy in his company and in listening to his gentle and pleasing conversation that, if he could be always with him, he would never need to eat or drink. Now when they had talked together for a long time, Perceval said to him: "Sire, explain to me a dream which came to me last night in my sleep, which seems to me so remarkable that I shall not be easy until I know the truth about it." "Tell it to me," said the worthy man, "and I will explain it to you so that you will see clearly what it means." "I will tell you," said Perceval. "Last night as I slept two ladies appeared to me, one of whom was mounted on a lion and the other on a dragon. She who was on the lion was a young lady, and she who was on

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the dragon was old, and the younger one spoke to me first." Then he began to tell him all that he had heard in his sleep, just as it had been told to him, for as yet he had forgotten nothing. And when he had told his dream, he begged the good man to tell him its meaning. Then he said he would gladly do so and began thus:

"Perceval," said he, "of these two ladies whom you saw mounted one upon a lion and the other on a dragon, the significance is wonderful, and I will tell you what it is. She on the lion signifies the new dispensation, which is founded on the lion, that is on Jesus Christ, which by Him was established, raised up and shown forth to the view of all Christendom, and so that it might become the mirror and true light of all those who set their hearts upon the Trinity. And this lady is seated upon the lion, that is upon Jesus Christ, and she represents faith, hope, belief, and baptism. She is the sure and firm foundation upon which Jesus Christ said that He would found Holy Church, when He said: 'On this rock I will build my church.' And this lady who was seated on the lion typifies the new dispensation, which Our Lord maintains in strength and power as the father does the child. It is not strange that she seemed to you younger than the other lady, for she has neither her age nor her appearance: for she was born in the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, while the other had already reigned long upon the earth. She spoke to you as to her son, for all good Christians are her sons, and she showed plainly that she was your mother: for she was so solicitous on your account that she came to announce in advance what was to happen to you. She came to inform you on behalf of her Lord Jesus Christ that you would have to fight. Upon my word, I assert that if she had not loved you, she would not have come to warn you, for she would not have cared for your defeat. But she came quickly to warn you in order that you might be better prepared at the time of battle. And against whom? The most redoubtable champion in the world, because of whom Enoch and Elijah, who were such excellent men, were translated from earth to heaven, and who will not return before the day of judgment to fight him who is so greatly to be feared. This champion is the devil himself, who so strives and toils that he leads man into mortal sin and then drives him into hell.

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This is the champion whom you must fight, and if you are defeated, as the lady told you, you will not get off with the loss of some limb, but you will be disgraced for ever. You can see for yourself whether this is true; for if it turns out that the devil can vanquish you, he will bring your body and soul into perdition and thence will lead you into the house of darkness, that is into hell, where you will suffer shame and grief and torment as long as the power of Jesus Christ shall last.

“Now I have explained to you what is typified by this lady whom you saw in your dream riding upon a lion. And by what I have shown you, you can easily imagine who the other one must be.”

“Sire,” said Perceval, “you have told me so much of the one that I know for what she stands. But now tell me about the other who rode upon the dragon; for I shall not understand her significance, unless you explain it to me.” “Then I will tell you,” said the worthy man; “now listen to what I say. The lady whom you saw mounted upon the dragon is the Synagogue, the first dispensation, which was set aside as soon as Jesus Christ introduced the new dispensation. And the dragon which carries her is the Scripture badly understood and expounded, namely hypocrisy and heresy and iniquity and mortal sin—in short, the devil himself. This is the serpent which because of his pride was cast out of paradise and which said to Adam and his wife: ‘If you eat of this fruit, you shall be like God,’ and through this word envy entered into them. For then they longed to be higher than they were, and they believed the devil’s counsel and sinned, wherefore they were cast out of paradise and sent into exile. In this sin all their descendants have their part and pay the penalty even to this day. When the lady came before you, she complained about her serpent which you had killed. But do you know about what serpent she complained? She did not complain of the serpent which you killed yesterday, but of the serpent which she rides, that is the devil. And do you know when you caused her such grief? At the moment when the devil was carrying you to this rock and you made the sign of the cross upon yourself. For when you crossed yourself, he could not endure it, but was so afraid that he thought he was dead: so he fled hastily as one who could not bear your company. And thus you killed

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him and destroyed and took away from him the power and strength of his mastery and control when he thought he had you in his grasp: and this is the cause of her great anger with you. When you had answered her question as well as you could, she required of you that you should become subject to her as a compensation for the mischief you had done her. But you said you would not do so. Then she said that you had already been subject to her before you did homage to your lord. You have pondered much upon this to-day, and yet you ought to know what she meant. For doubtless before you received baptism and Christianity, you were subject to the devil. But as soon as you had received the seal of Jesus Christ, that is when you had been anointed with the holy oil, you abjured the devil and his mastery, for you had done homage to your Creator. So I have told you the meaning of both these ladies. Now I must go, for I have much to do. And do you remain here, and remember the battle you have to fight; for if you are defeated, you shall receive just what has been foretold to you."

"Fair sire," said Perceval, "why do you go away so soon? Certainly your speech and your company please me so that I could wish never to leave you more. For God's sake, if you can, stay with me; for surely I shall profit all my life by what you have told me." "I must go," the good man replied, "because many people are waiting for me, and you shall stay behind. Take care not to be unprepared for him whom you must fight. For if he finds you unprepared, misfortune will soon come to you."

Having said this, he went away; and when the wind filled the sail, it carried the ship away faster than the eye could follow it, and soon it was so distant that Perceval could see nothing more of it. And when it was completely out of sight, he climbed upon the rock again all armed as he was. As soon as he was on top, he met the lion which had been with him the day before. And he began to stroke him because he saw that the lion was very glad to see him. When he had been there until noon, he looked out over the sea and beheld another ship coming toward him as swiftly as if all the winds in the world were driving it on; and in front of it there travelled a whirlwind which stirred the sea and beat up the waves on all sides. At the sight of this, he marvelled greatly what it could be; for the

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whirlwind concealed the ship from sight. Nevertheless it drew so near that he knew it was a ship and that it was draped with black cloth, but whether of silk or linen he could not tell. When it was now close to land, he went down to find out what it was. So he went down, wishing it might be again the good man with whom he had talked that day. Now it happened somehow, either by the grace of God or for some other reason, that there was no beast on the mountain that dared to attack or assail him. So he went down the hill and came to the ship as quickly as he could. And when he was about to go on board, he saw sitting in the ship a damsel of passing beauty, and clad in richest raiment.

As soon as she saw Perceval approach, she rose to meet him and said without further greeting: "Perceval, what are you doing here? Who brought you to this mountain, which is so remote that you would never be rescued unless by some chance, nor would you find anything to eat here, but you would die of hunger and of misery at finding no one to give heed to your needs?" "Damsel," he replied, "if I should die of hunger, I should not be a loyal servant. For no one serves such a high Master as I do but can ask for what he needs, provided he serve Him faithfully and heartily. He Himself said that His door is never closed to anyone who comes to it, but that he who knocks may enter, and that he who asks receives. And if anyone seeks Him, He does not hide Himself, but may be easily found." When she heard mention of the gospel, she replied not a word, but changed the subject, saying: "Perceval, do you know where I came from?" "Damsel," said he, "how did you know my name?" "I know it well enough," she replied, "and I know you better than you think." "And where did you come from thus?" he asked. "In truth," said she, "I came from the Forest Gaste, where I witnessed the strangest adventure in the world connected with the Good Knight." "Ah! damsel," said he, "tell me about the Good Knight, in the name of what you love dearest in the world!" "I will by no means tell you what I know," said she, "unless you swear by the order of chivalry you profess that you will do my will whenever I summon you." Then he said he would do it if he could. "You have said enough," she replied. "Now I will tell you the truth. It is a fact that I was a while ago in the midst of

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the Forest Gaste, just where the broad stream called the Marcoise flows. There I saw the Good Knight come and drive before him two other knights whom he tried to kill. In fear of death they plunged into the water and succeeded in getting across. But he had bad luck; for his horse was drowned, and he would have been too, had he not turned back and saved his life. Now you have heard the Good Knight's adventure which you asked of me. Now I wish you to tell me what you have been doing since you arrived in this remote island, where you will be as good as lost if you are not delivered from it. For you see that no one comes here to help you, and you must escape from here or die. So, if you do not wish to die, you must make some compact with someone which will result in your freedom. And you cannot be set free except by me; wherefore, if you are wise, you are bound to do for me so much that I will release you, for I know no greater folly than his who can help himself and does not do so."

"Damsel," Perceval replied, "if I thought that it would please Our Lord for me to escape, I would escape if I could; but under any other condition I would not wish to be at large. There is nothing in the world which I should wish to have done, if I did not think that it was pleasing in His sight; for in that case I should have received chivalry in an evil hour, if I were found to be warring against Him." "Never mind all that," said she, "and tell me if you have had anything to eat to-day." "It is true," said he, "that I have eaten no earthly food this day. But there came here a worthy man to comfort me, who spoke to me such satisfying words that he fed and filled me so generously that I shall never hunger nor thirst so long as I may remember him." "Do you know who he is?" she asked. "He is an enchanter, a monger of words who says a hundred words instead of one and will never tell the truth if he can help it. If you believe him, you are undone, for you will never escape from this rock; instead, you will die of hunger and the wild beasts will devour you, as you can see to be very probable. Already you have been here two days and nights and part of this third day; all this time the person of whom you speak has brought you no food, but has left you and will leave you here, for you will never be helped by him. It will be a great pity and

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misfortune if you die here: for you are such a young and worthy knight that you might yet be of great value to me and to others, if you were released from here. And I say I will release you, if you wish."

When Perceval heard what she offered him, he said: "Damsel, who are you, who would so willingly release me from here, if I should consent?" "I am a disinherited damsel," she replied, "who would now be the richest lady in the world, had I not been driven from my heritage." "Disinherited damsel," said he, "now tell me who deprived you of your heritage: for I feel much greater pity for you than I did before." "I will tell you," she replied; "the truth is that once upon a time a rich man established me in his house as his servant, and this rich man was the richest king known. And I was so fair and beautiful that everyone marvelled at my beauty: for I was passing fair. Being naturally more proud of my beauty than I should have been, I said something which displeased him. And as soon as I had said it, he became so angry with me that he would no longer tolerate my presence, but drove me out poor and stripped, and felt no pity either for me or for anyone who was concerned for my welfare. Thus the rich man drove me out with my dependents, and sent me into the wilderness in exile. He thought he had disposed of me in this cruel fashion; and so he would have done, had it not been for the skill with which I began at once to war against him. Since that time I have had such good fortune that I have made great gains: for I have taken from him part of his men, who have deserted him to join me and the fine company I have to offer them. For I give them everything they ask of me, and more. So I am at war day and night against him who banished me. And I have assembled knights and sergeants and people of all kinds; and I will tell you that to every knight and gentleman of whom I learn I offer the honour of joining my party. Because I know that you are a good knight and a gentleman, I have come here to secure your aid. You ought to help me, because you are a companion of the Round Table, and no one who is a companion ought to deny a damsel in distress when she asks him for his aid. You know well that this is true, for when you took the place given you by King Arthur, you swore as the first oath you took that you would never deny a

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damsel's request for aid." Then he said he had certainly taken this oath, and that he would gladly help her in accordance with her request. Then she thanked him heartily.

They talked together until it was past noon and nearly three o'clock. The sun was burning hot, and the damsel said to Perceval: "Perceval, there is on board this ship the richest tent of silk that you ever saw. If you like, I shall have it brought out and set up here to protect you from the sun's heat." And he said that he approved of that. Then at once she went inside the ship, and commanded the servants to erect the tent on the shore. When they had done so as well as they could, the damsel said to Perceval: "Sit down and rest yourself until night comes, and move out of the sun, for I think you are getting too warm." Then he went into the tent and promptly fell asleep; but she had first made him lay aside his helmet, hauberk and sword, and she let him go to sleep thus without his arms.

When he had slept a long time, he awoke and asked for food. At her command the table was spread, and he saw that it was covered with such a plenty of viands that it was marvellous to behold. When he asked for drink, it was furnished him, and he found it to be the best and strongest wine, so he wondered whence it could have come. For in those days there was no wine in Great Britain except in the houses of the rich, but they commonly drank beer and other beverages which they made. He drank so much of this wine that he became heated to excess. Then looking at the damsel, he thought her so fair that he had never seen her equal for beauty. She caused him such pleasure and delight by the elegance he saw in her and by the gentle words she spoke, that he desired ardently to possess her. After speaking to her of divers things, he sought her love and begged her to give herself to him and he would give himself to her. She put him off as long as she could, wishing his desire to be further kindled. But he continued to urge her. So when she saw that his ardour was sufficiently aroused, she said to him: "Perceval, you know full well that I will not do your pleasure, unless you promise me that henceforth you will be mine and will help me against all men, and will never do anything except what I command you." And he said he

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would agree to that. "Do you promise me as a loyal knight?" said she. He answered, "Yes." "Then I will resign myself," said she, "and will do your pleasure. But know of a truth that you have not desired to possess me so much as I have desired you. For you are one of the knights in the world upon whom I have most cast my eyes."

Then she ordered the servants to prepare the finest and most elegant bed they could in the middle of the tent; and they said they would obey her command. So they soon set up a bed, undressed the damsel, and put her in it, and Perceval as well. When he had taken his place by the damsel's side and was about to pull the covers up, he happened to catch sight of his sword lying upon the ground where it had fallen when they relieved him of it. When he stretched over to reach it and lean it against the bed, he saw a red cross carved in the pommel. At once he came to himself. He crossed himself upon the forehead, when behold! the tent was overturned, and such a thick cloud of smoke surrounded him that he could not see a thing; and he smelt such a stench all about him that he thought he must be in hell. Then he cried with a loud voice, saying: "Fair gentle Father Jesus Christ, let me not perish, but succour me with your grace, or otherwise I am lost!" When he had said this, he opened his eyes again, but he saw nothing of the tent in which he had just now lain. And as he looked toward the shore, he saw the ship just as it had been previously, and the damsel, who said to him: "Perceval, you have betrayed me!" And at once the ship put out to sea, and Perceval saw that such a storm followed it that it seemed the ship must be driven from its course; meanwhile the entire surface of the sea was covered with flames so that it seemed that all the fires in the world had caught there; and the ship tore on faster apparently than any blast of wind could blow.

When Perceval saw how this adventure turned out, he was so stricken with grief that he thought he would die. He watched the ship as long as he could see it and called down upon it curses and pestilence; and when he saw the last of it, he said: "Ah! alas! I am dead." And he was so wretched that he would fain be dead. Then he drew his sword from the scabbard and slashed himself so fiercely that he cut his left thigh and the blood spurted out in all directions. When he saw this, he said: "Fair Lord

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God, this is to repay you for the wrong I have done you." Then he surveyed himself and saw that he was completely naked except for his breeches, and seeing his clothes in one place and his arms in another, he cried: "Alas! wretch that I am! I have been vile and foul to have been brought so soon to the point of losing what no one can ever recover—his virginity, which can never be recovered when it has been once lost." Then he replaced his sword in the scabbard, and regretted more the thought that God was angry with him than the fact that he was wounded. Putting on his shirt and jacket, he dressed as best he could, and then lay down upon the rock and prayed Our Lord to send him such counsel that he might find pity and mercy. For he felt that he was guilty of such sin in His eyes that he thought he could never find peace again except through His mercy. Thus Perceval lay all day near the shore, as one who could not move either forward or backward because of his wound. And he prayed Our Lord to help him and to send him counsel profitable for his soul, for he thought of asking nothing else. "Nor do I desire, fair Lord God," said he, "ever to move from here either dead or alive, unless it be your will."

Thus Perceval remained all day on the rock and lost much blood from his wound. But when he saw night coming and shrouding the world in darkness, he reached for his hauberk and laid his head upon it, making the sign of the true Cross and beseeching Our Lord in His gentle pity to guard him so that the devil, his enemy, should not have power to lead him into temptation. When he had finished his prayer, he stood up and cut a piece from his shirt with which to stanch his wound from bleeding too much. Then he began his prayers and orisons, of which he knew several, and waited thus employed until day dawned. When it pleased Our Lord to shed the light of day upon the earth, and when the sun was casting its rays where Perceval was lying, he looked about him and saw the sea on one hand and the rock on the other. When he remembered the devil, who in the guise of a damsel had possessed him, for he was sure it must have been the devil, he began a great and marvellous lament, saying that he was now a dead man, unless the grace of the Holy Spirit should comfort him.

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While he was communing thus with himself, he looked out across the sea toward the east and saw approaching the ship which he had seen before, the one draped in white silk, in which the good man clad like a priest had been. When he recognised it, he was greatly comforted because of the excellent words which the good man had spoken to him before and the wisdom he had found in him. When the ship had arrived and he saw the good man on board, he sat up as best he could and bade him welcome. Then the good man came ashore and sat down on the rock near Perceval and said to him: "How have you been getting on?" "Badly, sire," said Perceval; "for a damsel came near leading me into mortal sin." Then he told him how it had come about. Then the good man asked him: "Do you know who she is?" "No, sire," said he. "But I am sure the devil sent her here to put me to shame and deceive me. And I would surely have been disgraced, had it not been for the sign of the cross which restored me to my right mind and memory. As soon as I made the sign of the cross, she departed at once, and I have not seen her since. Now I beseech you for God's sake to tell me what to do; for I never stood in such need of advice as now." "Ah! Perceval," said the good man, "will you always be so innocent? Don't you recognise the damsel who brought you to the brink of mortal sin, when the sign of the cross delivered you?" "I certainly do not know who she is. But I beg you for God's sake to tell me who she is and from what country, and who this rich man is who drove her out into exile, and against whom she sought my aid." "Well, I will tell you," the good man replied, "and then you will know. Now listen to me.

"The damsel with whom you spoke is the devil, the lord of hell, he who has authority over all the rest. It is true that he was once in heaven in company with the angels, and, as an angel, was so fair and radiant that because of his great beauty he grew proud and wished to make himself equal with the Trinity, and said: 'I shall rise on high and be like the fair Lord Himself.' But as soon as he had formed this resolve, Our Lord, who had no desire for His mansion to be contaminated with the poison of pride, cast him down from his high place where He had placed him, and sent him to the dark dwelling place called hell. When he saw that he was

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cast down from the high place of dignity he was wont to occupy and was set in eternal darkness, he resolved to make war to the extent of his ability upon Him who had cast him out. But he could not see any way to do so. Finally, he made the acquaintance of Adam's wife, the first woman of the human race; and he spied upon her and beguiled her until he had caught her in the same mortal sin for which he had been expelled and cast down from heavenly glory, namely covetousness. He influenced her disloyal desire to pick the deadly fruit of the tree which had been prohibited her by the mouth of the Creator. When she had picked it, she ate of it and gave it to her husband Adam to eat, with the result that all their heirs have felt the mortal effect of their sin. The devil who brought them to this pass was the serpent you saw the day before yesterday bearing the old lady, and he was also the damsel whom you saw last evening. When she said she was at war day and night, she spoke truly, as you yourself know full well: for she is ever on the watch to ensnare the knights of Jesus Christ and all worthy men and the servants in whom the Holy Spirit is lodged.

"When she had softened you by her false words and trickery, she commanded her tent to be set up that you might find shelter there, and said: 'Perceval, come to sit down and rest until nightfall, and seek shelter from the sun, for I think it is too hot for you.' These words of hers are not without great significance. For she meant something quite different from what you understood. The tent, which was round like the canopy of the world, signifies evidently the world which will never be purged of sin; and because sin dwells forever in it, she would not have you lodged anywhere but in the tent; therefore she had it prepared for you. And when she called you and said: 'Perceval, come to sit down and rest until nightfall,' she meant that you should be idle and should feed your body upon earthly and lust-satisfying meats. She did not recommend that you do any work in this world or sow any seed such as good men will reap on the day of judgment. She invited you to rest until nightfall, that is until death shall overtake you, which in truth is always called night whenever it overtakes man in mortal sin. She called you because she was afraid that the sun would overheat you. No wonder she was afraid! For

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when the sun, by which we mean Jesus Christ, the true light, warms the sinner with the fire of the Holy Spirit, the chill and ice of the devil cannot do him much harm, provided he has fixed his heart upon the lofty sun. Now I have told you enough about this lady to enable you to know who she is, and that she visited you rather for your woe than for your good."

"Sire," said Perceval, "you have told me enough about this lady for me to know that she is the champion whom I was to fight." "Upon my word," the good man replied, "you are right. Now see what kind of a fight you have made." "A sorry enough showing, sire, I fear. For I would have been beaten, but for the grace of the Holy Spirit who did not let me perish, thanks be to Him!" "However it may have been this time," said the worthy man, "in future be on your guard. For if you go down again, you will not find anyone to set you up so quickly as you did this first time."

The good man spoke at length with Perceval and counselled him to do right, saying that God would not forget him, but would soon send him succour. Then he asked him how his wound was. "In truth," said he. "since you came I have felt no pain or discomfort any more than if I never had a wound; nor, while you are speaking with me, do I feel the slightest pain, but rather from your words and your face there come such balm and relief to all my members that I cannot believe you are a mortal man, but rather some creature of the spirit. And I know surely that if you would always abide with me, I should suffer neither hunger nor thirst; and if I dared, I would maintain that you are the living Bread which comes down from heaven, and of which if any man eat worthily he shall have everlasting life."

As soon as he had said this, the good man vanished so that he did not know what became of him. Then a voice said: "Perceval, you have gained the victory and are healed. Enter this ship and go whithersoever fortune may lead you. And he not dismayed by anything that you may see, for wherever you go God will lead you. You have at least earned this reward, that you shall see after a while your companions Bors and Galahad, which is what you most desire."

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When he heard this, he felt the greatest joy any man could feel, and thanked Our Lord for his good fortune. He took his arms and, arming himself, entered the ship, and put out to sea from the rock as soon as the wind filled the sail. But now the story takes leave of him and returns to Lancelot, who had tarried with the good man who had interpreted to him so clearly the meaning of the three words which the voice had uttered in the chapel.

Chapter VII

Now the story tells how the worthy man made Lancelot stay with him for three days. While he had him with him, he talked with him constantly, counselling him to do right and saving:

“Surely, Lancelot, there is no use in your going upon this Quest unless you abstain from all mortal sin and withdraw your heart from earthly thoughts and from lust of the world. For rest assured that in this Quest your chivalry can avail you nothing, unless the Holy Spirit prepares the way before you in all the adventures which you will meet. You are aware that this Quest is undertaken in order to learn something of the marvels of the Holy Grail, which Our Lord has promised to reveal to the true knight who shall surpass in goodness and in chivalry all those who have lived before him or who shall live after him. This chosen knight you saw at Pentecost in the Perilous Seat of the Round Table, where no one before had sat without losing his life. Upon one occasion you had a forecast of this adventure to come. This knight is the great man who will exhibit in his life-time the acme of earthly chivalry. And when his deeds shall have qualified him to be no longer a creature of earth but a creature of spirit, then he will quit his earthly tenement and will join the chivalry of heaven. Thus spoke Merlin, who was very wise concerning future events, regarding that knight whom you have once seen. And yet, though it be true that this knight has in him more prowess and courage than anyone else, know of a truth that if he should allow himself to fall into mortal sin—from which may Our Lord in His pity preserve him—he would accomplish in this Quest no more than any other simple knight. For this service upon which you are entering has nothing to do with earthly things, but with heavenly things; wherefore, you can see that whoever

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wishes to enter upon it and accomplish anything must first purge and cleanse himself from all worldly filthiness, so that the devil may have no part in him. Then, when he shall have turned his back upon the devil and shall be cleansed and washed of all mortal sins, he will be able with confidence to enter upon this high Quest and service. But if he be of such feeble and insufficient faith that he thinks he will accomplish more by his own chivalry than by Our Lord's grace, then be assured that he will not escape shameless, and that in the end he will achieve nothing of what he sets out to do."

Thus spake the good man to Lancelot as he kept him three days with him. And Lancelot held himself fortunate in that God had brought him thither to this good man who had instructed him so well that he thought he would be the better for it all his life.

When the fourth day had come, the good man sent word to his brother to send him arms and a horse for a knight who was tarrying with him. And his request was gladly complied with. So, on the fifth day, when Lancelot had heard mass and was armed and mounted upon the horse, he left the good man in tears, earnestly beseeching him for God's sake to pray Our Lord not to forget him and allow him to relapse into his former state of wretchedness. And he promised him that he would do so; whereupon he went away.

When he had left the worthy man, he rode through the forest until the hour of prime, when he met a valet who asked him: "Sir knight, where do you come from?" "I belong to the household of King Arthur," he replied. "And tell me, what is your name?" Then he answered that he was Lancelot of the Lake. "Lancelot," said he, "before God! I was not looking for you: for you are one of the most unhappy knights in the world." "How do you know that, fair friend?" asked Lancelot. "I know it well enough," the valet replied; "are you not he who saw the Holy Grail pass before him and work an open miracle, yet did not stir in its presence any more than an infidel?" "I certainly saw it, yet did not stir," Lancelot replied, "but I grieve rather than boast about it." "I am not surprised that you grieve," the valet said; "for you certainly showed plainly that you were neither an honourable man nor a true knight, but a

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faithless unbeliever. And since you declined to show it honour, do not be surprised if shame is your portion in this Quest upon which you have entered among others who are honourable men. Certainly, you who have been tried and have miserably failed ought to grieve, you who were wont to be considered the best knight in the world, and are now held to be the most despicable and disloyal!"

Hearing these words, he knew not what to say, for he knew the valet's accusation was warranted. Nevertheless he said: "Fair friend, you may say whatever you wish to me, and I will listen to you. For no knight ought to resent what a valet says to him, unless he shames him by his words." "That is just what you are going to hear," the valet said, "for henceforth no good can come out of you. Yet, you were wont to be called the flower of the world's chivalry! Wretch! You are bewitched by her who neither loves you nor even holds you in much esteem. She has brought you where you have lost the joy of heaven and the company of the angelic host and all honour here below, and have come to receive all obloquy." To this he dared not make reply, being so mortified that he fain would die. And the valet continued reviling him and putting him to shame by heaping him with all the contumely he could command. And all the time he listened like one who was so overcome that he did not dare even to look at him. When the valet had finished saying what was on his mind and when he saw that he would not reply, he went on his way. But Lancelot never once looked at him, but wept and sadly prayed Our Lord to lead him back into such a way as might be profitable to his soul. For he saw clearly that he had sinned so deeply in his life and had so strayed from his Creator that unless Our Lord's mercy was very great, he could never find pardon. Thus he was brought to the point where the way before him held out more satisfaction than any prospect he had ever entered upon before.

When he had ridden until noon, he saw in front of him off the road a little house, and knowing it must be a hermitage, he turned toward it. When he drew near, he saw a little chapel inside of a small building. In front of the entrance there was sitting an old man robed in white like a man of the Church, making loud moan and saying: "Fair Lord God, why

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have you permitted this? He had served you for so long a time and had toiled so much in your service!" When Lancelot saw the good man weeping so bitterly, he felt great pity for him and, greeting him, said: "God keep you, sir." "May He do so indeed, sir knight," the good man replied; "for if He does not keep me closely, I do not doubt that the devil will be able to surprise me easily. And may God deliver you from the sin in which you are: for surely you are in a worse way than any knight I know."

When Lancelot heard what the good man said, he dismounted and determined not to leave the place that day, but rather to seek counsel of the good man who evidently knew him, judging by the words he had spoken to him. So he tied his horse to a tree and stepped forward; whereupon he saw that inside the entrance of the chapel there lay apparently dead an old man clad in a loose white shirt with a garment of coarse prickly sackcloth beside him. At the sight of this, Lancelot greatly wondered and asked the hermit the meaning of this death. He sat down and inquired how the old man had died. And the good man replied: "Sir knight, I do not know; but I see plainly that he did not die as God and his Order would have it. For in such a garb as you see here no such man can die without breaking his religious vows; therefore I can tell that the devil has attacked him thus fatally. And it is a great pity, too, I think; for he has been in Our Lord's service more than thirty years." "Before God!" said Lancelot, "I think it a great pity indeed that he has wasted his service only to be deceived by the devil at such an age as his."

Then the hermit entered the chapel and got a book and a stole which he put about his neck. Then he stepped out and began to conjure the devil. When he had read and conjured for some time, he looked and saw the devil standing before him so hideous of mien that the heart of any man would have been afraid. "You are worrying me too much," the devil said; "now you have me, what do you want?" "I wish you to tell me," he replied, "how this companion of mine has met his death, and whether he is lost or saved." Then the devil spoke in a horrible and terrible voice, saying to the worthy man: "He is not lost, but saved." "How can that be?" the good man asked. "It seems to me you must be lying. For our

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Order does not command, but plainly forbids, that anyone should be clad in a linen shirt; and whoever wears one transgresses the rules of the Order. And it seems to me that it cannot be well with anyone who dies while flouting his Order." "I will tell you what happened to him," the devil replied.

"You know that he was a gentleman and of high lineage, and his nephews and nieces are still living in this country. Now it happened a few days ago that the Count del Val began to war against a man named Agaran who is a nephew of the dead man here. When the war was begun, Agaran, seeing the odds were against him and not knowing what to do, came to seek counsel of his uncle here, who at his nephew's urgent request left the hermitage and went to help him in his war against the count. Thus he returned to his wonted life under arms. And when he had joined his other relatives, he used his chivalry such good purpose that the count was taken prisoner on the third day after they had joined forces. Then the count and Agaran made peace, while the count gave surety that he would never again make war on him.

"When the war was over and peace was made, the good man returned to his hermitage and took up again the service in which he had long been engaged. But when the count realised by whom he had been defeated, he requested two of his nephews to avenge him. And they said that they would do so. So they came here at once, and when they arrived at this chapel they saw that the hermit was saying mass. So they did not dare to attack him just then, but said they would wait until he came out; so they set up a tent outside. And when he had finished his office and came out of the chapel, they told him he was a dead man. Then they seized him and drew their swords. But when they expected to cut his head off speedily, He whom he had always served wrought such a miracle in his behalf that they could not harm him with their blows, though he had on nothing but his robe. Their swords broke and bounded off from him as if they were struck upon an anvil. Though they struck at him until their swords were in pieces and they were tired and exhausted by their efforts, yet they had not harmed him even to the extent of drawing blood.

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“When they saw this, they were beside themselves with wrath and hatred. They brought tinder and a piece of steel, saying that they would burn him, for he would be unable to resist fire. So they stripped him naked and took off his hair shirt which you see yonder. When he saw that he was naked, he was ashamed of his condition, and begged them to give him some garment that he might not be thus shamefully exposed. But they were so wicked and cruel that they told him that he should never more wear linen or wool, but should die. Upon hearing this, he smiled and replied: ‘Do you think that I can perish in this fire which is here prepared for me?’ They replied: ‘There is nothing but death in store for you.’ ‘To be sure, sirs,’ he replied, ‘if Our Lord desires my death, it will please me much. But if I die, it will be rather because of Our Lord’s will than because of the fire: for this fire cannot so much as singe my hair; nor is there in the world so thin a shirt, if I put it on and walked right into the fire, that it would be harmed or damaged.’ When they heard this, they thought that what he was saying was all nonsense; nevertheless, one of them said that he would soon see whether this was true. So he took off his own shirt and made the hermit put it on; then they cast him in the fire which they had made so great that it burned from yesterday morning until late last night. And when it was burned out, they found the good man indeed lifeless; but his flesh was sound and whole as you can see, and the shirt he had on was no more damaged than you see. When they beheld him thus, they were sore afraid; so they took him out of the fire and carried him here where you see him, and laid his hair shirt beside him, and went away. By this miracle which was wrought for him by Him whom he had so long served, you may clearly see that he is not lost, but saved. I myself will be gone now, for I have fully explained what you did not understand.”

Thereupon he went off, overthrowing the trees in his path and making the greatest uproar in the world, so that it seemed that all the devils in hell were passing through the forest.

When the worthy man heard the account of this event, he felt much happier than before. He put away the book and his stole and, approaching the dead body, kissed it and said to Lancelot: “In faith, sire,

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Our Lord has wrought a glorious miracle for this man who I thought had died in some mortal sin. But it is not so, thank God! Rather is he saved, as you yourself have heard." "Sire," said Lancelot, "who was it that spoke with you so long? I could not see him, but I heard his voice, which was so ugly and terrible that anyone would have been afraid of it." "Sire," the hermit replied, "anyone might well be afraid, for nothing is so redoubtable as he, seeing that it is he who helps a man to lose his body and soul." Then Lancelot knew of whom he spoke. And the hermit asked him to keep vigil with him over the sacred body, and to help him bury it on the morrow. And he said he would gladly do so and that he was very happy that God had brought him where he could be of service to such a good man as he.

Then he removed his arms and put them in the chapel, and took off his horse's saddle and bridle; then he returned to the good man to bear him company. And when they were seated together, he asked him: "Sir knight, are you not Lancelot of the Lake?" And he said he was. "And of what are you in search all armed this way?" "Sire, with my other companions I am seeking the adventures of the Holy Grail."

"Well," said the hermit, "you may search for them, but you have already failed of success. For if the Holy Grail should appear before you, I don't think you could see it any more than a blind man would see a sword before his eyes. Yet, many people have remained in the darkness and obscurity of sin for a long time whom Our Lord has later summoned to the true fight as soon as He saw that their hearts were attentive to it. Our Lord is not slow to help a sinner; as soon as He sees that he is inclined toward Him either in his heart or in thought or in some good work, He quickly comes to visit him. And if he has prepared and cleansed his dwelling as a sinner ought to do, He comes down and lodges with him, and the sinner need have no fear that He will go away unless he drives Him out. But if he calls in another guest who is opposed to Him, He goes away as one who cannot longer tarry when he who is always at war with Him has been admitted.

"Lancelot, I have instructed you thus because of the life which you have so long lived ever since you fell into sin, that is ever since you

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received the order of chivalry. For until you became a knight you had all the virtues lodged in you so naturally that I know of no young man who was your equal. For at the outset you possessed virginity so naturally that you had never violated it either in intention or in deed. You even had no desire to violate it; for many a time when you considered the abomination of the carnal sin in which virginity is corrupted, you used to spit in disgust and assert that you would never fall into such lewdness. Then you used to proclaim that there was no such lofty chivalry as that of being virgin and of eschewing lust and keeping one's body pure.

“Beside this virtue, which is so lofty, you possessed humility. Humility treads gently and softly, with head bowed. It does not act as the Pharisee did when he said in his prayer in the temple: ‘Fair Lord God, I thank thee that I am not as wicked and disloyal as are my neighbours.’ You were not like him, but rather like the publican who did not dare so much as to raise his eye toward the holy place lest God should be angry with him because he was too sinful, but rather stood afar off from the altar and beat his breast, saying: ‘Fair Lord God Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me a sinner!’ So must he demean himself who desires sincerely to accomplish the works of humility. So did you use to do when you were a young man, for you then used to love and fear your Creator above all else and say that one should not fear anything on earth, but one ought to fear Him who can destroy body and soul and cast them into hell.

“Beside these two virtues which I have mentioned, you had patience. Patience is like the emerald which is always green. For patience cannot be so sorely tempted as to succumb, but rather is it always green and vigorous, and in every conflict it wins the victory and the honour. For no one can so well defeat his enemy as by patience. Whatever sin you may commit in the outward man, you know full well within your heart that you possessed this virtue by gift of nature.

“In addition, you had another virtue similarly lodged in you as if by nature: that is justice. Justice is such a strong and powerful virtue that all things are maintained by it in their proper place, it will never change, and it will render to every man what he deserves and merits at the

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hands of justice. Justice grants no favours through favouritism and takes none away through dislike; it will spare neither friend nor relative, but will always pursue its straight course without deviation for any cause that may arise.

“Finally, you had the virtue of charity so highly developed in you that it was a marvel. For if you had had all the riches of the world in your possession, you would have dared to surrender them all for love of your Creator. In those days the flame of the Holy Spirit was hot and ardent in you, and your heart and soul were desirous and attentive to hold to what these virtues had granted you.

“Thus equipped with all goodness and all earthly virtues you entered the high Order of chivalry. But, when the devil, who first caused man’s sin and brought him into condemnation, saw you so equipped and protected on all sides, he feared that he could not surprise you in any way. But he saw plainly that he could more than accomplish his purpose if he could dislodge you from one of the points which supported you. He saw that you were set apart to be a servant of Our Lord and were exalted in such high degree that you were not likely ever to abase yourself to serve the devil. Yet he long hesitated to assail you for fear lest he would waste his time. Then he turned over in his mind how he could ensnare you. At last he thought that he could more readily lead you into mortal sin by a woman than in any other way; and he reflected that our first father had been deceived by a woman, as well as Solomon the wisest of all men, and Samson the strongest man, and Absalom the son of David, the fairest man in the world. Then said he: ‘Since all these have been deceived and brought to shame by women, it seems to me that this youth ought not to offer much resistance.’

“Then he entered into the Queen Guinevere, who had not gone to confession since she was first married, and he prompted her to look upon you with desire while you were at her residence, the day that you became a knight. When you saw that her gaze was fixed upon you, you too thought of her; and at once the devil smote you unawares with one of his darts with such violence that he made you tremble, thus causing you to turn aside from the straight path and to enter upon one which you

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had never trod: the path of lust which ruins body and soul more strangely than can be conceived by any who have not experienced it. From that moment the devil has destroyed your sight. For as soon as your eyes were heated with lustful desire, you at once banished humility and summoned pride, wishing to walk with your head high as proudly as a lion, and saying within yourself that you ought and would value nothing henceforth, if you did not have your way with her whom you beheld so fair. When the devil, who hears everything as soon as the tongue speaks, knew that you were in mortal sin so far as your thoughts and desires were concerned, he entered into you, and drove out Him whom you had so long lodged.

“Thus you were lost to Our Lord, who had nourished and raised you and equipped you with all good virtues, and had so exalted you as to establish you in His service. So that when He thought you were His servant and that you would serve Him with the favours which He had bestowed upon you, you left Him suddenly, and when you ought to be a servant of Jesus Christ you became a servant of the devil and adopted as many of the devil’s virtues as Our Lord had endowed you with His. For, opposed to virginity and chastity you now gave place to luxury which puts them to confusion; and as against humility you now embraced pride like a man who esteemed no one so highly as himself. Then you banished all the other virtues I have mentioned and harboured those which were their opposites. Nevertheless, Our Lord had vested you with so many favours that it could not be but that from such abundance some vestige should survive. With this remnant which God left to you you have accomplished the great deeds of prowess in foreign lands of which the whole world talks. Just think now what you might have done, if you had conserved all these virtues which Our Lord had bestowed upon you. You would not have failed to accomplish the adventures of the Holy Grail about which all the others are in travail; rather would you have successfully terminated them as no one else could do, save the True Knight. And your eyes would not have been blinded in the presence of your Lord’s face, but you would have seen Him openly. All these things have I told you because I grieve that you are so badly off and so

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disgraced that wherever you go you will be dishonoured, and all those who know the truth of what has happened to you on the Quest will charge you with base conduct.

“Nevertheless, you have not wandered so far astray that you cannot find pardon, if you sincerely cry for mercy to Him who had equipped you so excellently and had summoned you to this service. But unless you can do this sincerely, I advise you not to go on with this Quest. For be very sure that anyone who enters upon it without making a true confession is certain to come out of it covered with shame. The Quest is not for earthly treasure, but for heavenly treasure, and he who wishes to enter heaven while still filthy and vile shall be cast out so cruelly that he will feel the effects of it all his life. So is it with those who have entered upon this Quest vile and befouled with worldly vices; for they shall not know how to keep to the paths and roads, but shall wander idly in foreign lands. The case is like that of the parable in the Gospels where it is said:

“There was once a rich man who had prepared to celebrate a wedding and invited his friends and relatives and neighbours. When the tables were ready, he sent his messengers to those whom he had invited and bade them come for all things were now ready. But they tarried and delayed until the good man grew angry. When he saw that they would not come, he said to his servants: ‘Go through the streets and lanes and bid friends and strangers, the poor and the rich, to come and eat, for the tables are set and all is ready.’ They carried out their lord’s behest and brought with them so many that the house was full. When they were all seated, the lord looked and saw among the others a man who was not dressed in a wedding garment. So he came to him and said: ‘Fair friend, what are you here for?’ ‘Sire, I came like the rest.’ ‘Indeed,’ said the lord, ‘you did not: for they have come full of joy and rejoicing and are dressed as one ought to be for a wedding feast. But you have brought nothing suitable for a wedding.’ Then he had him put out of the house and, in the hearing of all who were seated at the tables, said that he had bidden ten times as many guests as had come to the wedding: wherefore one can truly say that many are called, but few chosen.

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“This parable in the Gospels enables us to understand this Quest. For by the wedding feast which was proclaimed we may understand the table of the Holy Grail where worthy men and true knights shall eat, those whom Our Lord shall find robed in wedding garments, that is, in the goodly graces and virtues which God accords to them that serve Him. But those whom He shall find unadorned and stripped of true confession and good works He will not receive, but will have them banished from the company of the others, so that they shall receive shame and humiliation while the others receive honour.”

Then he paused and looked at Lancelot who was weeping as bitterly as if he saw before him dead the one in the world whom he loved best, like a man who is so stricken with grief that he does not know what is to become of him. And when he had looked at him for some time, he asked him if he had made any confession since he had entered upon the Quest. With difficulty he replied that he had; and he told him all about himself and the three things that had been said to him and their meaning. When the hermit had heard what he had to say, he replied to him: “Lancelot, I summon you, by that Christianity which you have embraced and by the order of chivalry which you received long since, to tell me which manner of life pleases you most, that which you used to lead, or this upon which you have newly entered.” “Sire, I swear by my Creator that this new existence pleases me more a hundred times than the other ever did, and so long as I live I hope I may never leave it for any reason whatsoever.” “Then be not dismayed,” the good man said, “for if Our Lord sees that you sincerely seek His pardon, He will so endow you with grace that you will become a temple and a dwelling-place for Him, and He will establish Himself in you.”

In such conversation they spent the day. And when night came, they ate some bread and drank some beer which they found in the hermitage. Then they lay down by the corpse, but slept little, for their minds were more upon heavenly than earthly things. The next morning, when the hermit had buried the body before the altar, he went into his hermitage, saying that he would never leave it again, but would serve his Lord in heaven all his life. When he saw that Lancelot was about to take his arms,

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he said to him: "Lancelot, I recommend to you in the name of holy penitence to put on and wear in future the hair shirt worn formerly by this sainted corpse. And I assure you that such a blessing will come to you from it that you will never fall into mortal sin so long as you wear it; and this ought to give you great confidence. Moreover, I recommend that so long as you are on this Quest you eat no flesh and drink no wine, but go daily to church to hear the service of Our Lord, if you are where you can do so." And he received this injunction as a penance, and stripping himself in the hermit's presence he submitted willingly to chastisement. Then he took the hair shirt, which was coarse and prickly, and put it on his back with his cloak outside. And when he was thus equipped, he took his arms, and mounting, asked the good man for leave to go. And he dismissed him willingly, but urgently besought him to do right, and by no means to fail to confess himself each week, so that the devil might have no power to do him harm. And he promised so to do. Then he left and rode through the forest all day until vespers without meeting any adventure worthy of mention.

After vespers he met a damsel riding upon a white palfrey and coming rapidly toward him. When she espied Lancelot, she greeted him with the words: "Where are you going, sir knight?" "Damsel," said he, "I hardly know, except where fortune leads me. For I do not know which way I can find what I am seeking." "I know what you are looking for," said she; "you were nearer to it before than you are now, and you are nearer to it now than you were before, if you keep on the way you are going." "Damsel," said he, "these two statements which you make seem to be contrary." "Never mind," said she; "you will see it all more plainly than you see it now, and I have not said anything which you will not later understand."

When she had said this and was about to go away, he asked her where he could find a place to lodge. "You will not find any lodging to night," said she, "but to morrow you shall find a suitable place and then your present doubt will be relieved." After they had commended each other to God's keeping, he left her and rode through the forest until nightfall found him at a fork in the roads, where a wooden cross stood at

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the parting of the ways. When he saw the cross, he was very happy to have found it and said that there he would stop for the night. So he bowed his head and dismounted, removing the saddle and bridle from his horse and allowing him to graze; then he took the shield from his neck, and unlacing his helmet, removed it from his head. Then, kneeling before the cross, he said his prayers and orisons, beseeching Him who had been crucified, in honour and memory of whom this cross had been raised there, to keep him from falling into mortal sin. For he feared nothing so much as a relapse into sin.

When he had finished his orisons and had prayed Our Lord for a long time, he reclined upon a stone in front of the cross. Now he had a great desire to sleep, being weary and exhausted by his fasting and vigils. So it came about that he fell asleep at once as soon as he stretched out upon the stone. When he was asleep, it seemed to him that there appeared before him a man all surrounded by stars; and in his company there were seven kings and two knights, and he himself had a golden crown upon his head. When they had all come before Lancelot, they stopped and adored the cross and as a penance scourged themselves. And after they had been on their knees some time, they all sat down and raised their hands toward heaven, saying in a loud voice: "Father in heaven, visit us now, and render to each one according to his deserts, and receive us into Thy abode, into the mansion where we desire so earnestly to enter!" When they had said this, they all held their peace. Then Lancelot looked toward heaven and saw the clouds part, and a man came forth with a great company of angels; and he descended upon them and gave each one his blessing and called them good and loyal servants, saying: "My mansion is prepared for you all: enter into eternal joy." And when he had said this, he came to the elder of the two knights and said: "Depart hence, for I have lost all that I invested in you. You have not been a son to me, but a stepson; you have not been a friend to me, but an enemy. I tell you that I will put you to confusion, if you do not restore my treasure." When he heard this, he fled from the others and most piteously cried for mercy. Then the man said to him: "If you wish, I will love you, and if you wish, I will hate you." Whereupon the older knight

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departed from the rest of the company. Then the man who had come down from heaven came to the younger knight and transformed him into the figure of a lion, and gave him wings, and said to him: "Fair son, now you can go everywhere and soar above all chivalry." And he began to fly, and his wings grew so great and marvellous that they covered the whole world. And when he had flown so far that all the world thought it a marvel, he went up toward the clouds; then heaven opened to receive him, and he entered in without delay.

This was the vision which Lancelot saw in his sleep. And when he saw that it was day, he crossed himself and commended himself to Our Lord, saying: "Fair Father Jesus Christ, who art the true saviour and comfort of all those who call upon Thee with a pure heart; Lord, I adore Thee and thank Thee for protecting and delivering me from the great shame and torment which I should have rightly suffered, had it not been for Thy great goodness. Lord, I am Thy creature, to whom Thou hast shown such great love that when my soul was about to descend into hell and eternal perdition, Thou in Thy pity didst deliver it and call it back to the knowledge and fear of Thee. Lord, in Thy pity, let me not wander henceforth from the straight path, but guard me so closely that the devil, who seeks but to deceive me, may not find me out of Thy hands! "

Having said this, he arose and saddled and bridled his horse. Then he laced on his helmet and, taking his shield and lance, he mounted. Setting out upon his road as he had the day before, he pondered over what he had seen in his sleep, for he did not know what would come of it. But he would fain learn if possible. After riding until noon, he felt very warm. Then in a valley he met the knight who had carried off his arms some days before. When the knight saw him coming, he did not salute him courteously, but shouted: "Lancelot, be on your guard! For you are a dead man, unless you can defend yourself against me." Then he came at him with his lance outstretched and struck him so furiously that he pierced his shield and hauberk, but did not touch his flesh. And Lancelot, putting all his strength into the blow, struck him with such violence that he overthrew to earth rider and horse so hard that he nearly broke his opponent's neck. His charge carried him beyond, but on

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turning back he saw the horse already struggling to rise. So he seized him by the bridle and tied him to a tree so that the knight might find him ready when he rose. Then he continued on his way and rode until evening. Then he was weary and exhausted, not having eaten all that day and the day before, and in the meantime having been in the saddle two long days.

He rode until he arrived in front of a hermitage situated upon a hill. Looking, he saw an old hermit seated before the door. He greeted him very gladly, and the hermit returned his salutation courteously. "Sire," Lancelot inquired, "can you lodge a wandering knight?" "Fair sire," the good man replied, "if you like, I will lodge you to the best of my ability, and will give you to eat of what God has loaned to me." When he replied that he asked for nothing better, the hermit took his horse and led him to a shed in front of his abode, removing his saddle and bridle, and giving him some hay of which there was plenty there. Then he took Lancelot's shield and lance and carried them into his dwelling. Meanwhile Lancelot had unlaced his helmet and lowered his vizor; then he removed his hauberk and carried it inside. When he had taken off all his arms, the good man asked him if he had heard vespers, to which he replied that he had not seen a man or a woman or a dwelling of any kind, except one man whom he had met about noon. Then the hermit went into his chapel and, summoning his clerk, began the vespers of the day and then of the Virgin. And when he had concluded the service fixed for that day, he came forth from the chapel. Then he asked Lancelot who he was and from what country. And he told him about himself, concealing nothing that had happened to him in connection with the Holy Grail. When the worthy man heard of this experience, he felt great pity for Lancelot; for he noticed that he began to weep when he spoke of his meeting with the Holy Grail. Then he urged him in the name of St. Mary and for the sake of holy faith, to make to him a full and frank confession, which he said he would gladly do to please him. Then he took him back into his chapel, and Lancelot told him all about himself as he had already done once before, and then asked him for God's sake to give him help.

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When the hermit had heard him confess his entire life, he gave him much comfort and confidence, and said so many kind words to him that Lancelot was much happier than before. And he said to him: "Sire, give me advice about a question I am going to ask you, if you can do so." "What is it?" the worthy man inquired; "for I will counsel you in any matter to the best of my ability." "Sire," said Lancelot, "there appeared to me last night in my sleep a man all surrounded by stars, and he had with him seven kings and two knights." Then he told him in detail all he had seen in his dream. When the good man had heard the story, he said: "Ah! Lancelot, in all this you can see the nobility of your lineage and from what forebears you are descended. You may be sure that there is much more meaning in this than some people might think. Now listen to me if you will, and I will tell you the origins of your family. But I must go back a long way.

"Forty-two years after the Passion of Jesus Christ, Joseph of Arimathæa, that good man and true knight, left Jerusalem by Our Lord's command to preach and proclaim the truth of the new dispensation and commandments of the gospel. Upon reaching the city of Sarraz he found a pagan king, Ewalac by name, who was at war with a rich and powerful neighbour. When he became acquainted with the king, he gave him such counsel that he prevailed over his enemy and vanquished him in battle with the help which God sent him. And when he returned to his city, he received baptism at the hand of Joseph the son of Joseph. Now he had a brother-in-law named Seraphe, while yet a pagan, but who when he had forsaken his old religion received the name of Nascien. When this knight had forsaken his earlier faith and had become a Christian, he believed so thoroughly in God and loved his Creator so dearly that he was, as it were, a pillar and foundation of the faith. His worth and loyalty were proved by the fact that Our Lord permitted him to behold the great secrets and mysteries of the Holy Grail, which no knight as yet had ever seen except Joseph, and which no knight since then has ever seen, unless it be yourself in a dream.

"In those days it appeared to King Ewalac that from a nephew of his, Nascien's son, there flowed a great lake as it were from his belly. And

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from this lake there issued nine streams, all of which were indeed wide and deep, but the last one was wider and deeper than all the rest, and it was so swift and tumultuous that nothing could withstand it. This stream at its rise was turbid and as thick as mud, and in its middle course it was clear and clean, but at its mouth it was still more so: for it was a hundred times fairer and clearer than at its source, and so sweet to drink that no one could get enough of it. Such was the last of the nine streams. Then King Ewalac looked and saw a man coming from heaven who bore the appearance and semblance of Our Lord. And when he had come to the lake, he washed his hands and feet in it and in each of the rivers. And when he came to the ninth stream, he washed not only his hands and feet, but his whole body.

“This vision came to King Mordrain (i.e. Ewalac) as he lay asleep. And I will show you the significance and meaning of it all. King Mordrain’s nephew, from whom the lake issued, was Celydoine, the son of Nascien, whom Our Lord sent into the world to confound and put down the unbelievers. This man was truly one of the servants of Jesus Christ, one of the knights of God. He knew the course of the stars and planets and the nature of the firmament as well as, or better than, any philosopher. And because he was such a master of science and mechanics, he appeared to you all surrounded by stars. He was the first Christian king to reign in Scotland. He was indeed a lake, so far as science and mechanics are concerned, for from him could all the traits and strength of divinity be drawn. From this lake flowed nine streams, namely, the nine men who were descended from him; not that they were all his own sons, but they were descended one from the other in direct line. Of these nine, seven are kings and two are knights. The first king who was Celydoine’s son was named Narpus, a worthy man dearly devoted to Holy Church. The next was named Nascien after his grandfather; Our Lord dwelt so marvellously in him that no better man was known in his time. The third one was named Elyan le Gros, who would rather have perished than do aught against his Creator. The name of the fourth was Ysaies, a good and loyal man, who feared Our Lord above all else, and who never consciously incensed his heavenly Master. The fifth one’s name was

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Jonaans, a good and loyal knight who was braver than any other man, and never knowingly did anything to anger Our Lord. He removed from this country and went into Gaul, where he married the daughter of Maronex from whom he received the kingdom. From him sprang King Lancelot your grandfather, who left Gaul and came to dwell in this country and took to wife the daughter of the King of Ireland. He was a very worthy man, as you heard when you found at the fountain your grandsire's horn which was guarded by the two lions. His son was King Ban your father, who was a much more worthy and sanctified man than was thought by some, who imagined that grief for his land had caused his death, but it was not that; for all his life he had besought Our Lord to quit this life when he should request His permission. And Our Lord showed that He had heard his prayer: for as soon as he asked to die in the body, he was allowed to do so, and to find life for his soul.

“These seven persons whom I have mentioned, and who are the earliest of your line, are the seven kings who appeared to you in your dream, and they were the seven streams that issued from the lake seen by King Mordrain in his dream; and in all seven of them Our Lord has washed His hands and feet. Now I must tell you who are the two knights in their company. The older of them who followed the others, that is who was descended from them, is you yourself: for you are sprung from King Ban who was last of the seven kings. When they were all gathered before you, they said: ‘Father in heaven, come visit us and grant to each one according to his deserts, and receive us into Thy abode!’ In saying ‘Father, come visit us,’ they admitted you into their company and begged Our Lord to come and seek them and you, because they were your origin and root. When they said: ‘Grant to each one according to his deserts,’ you should understand that there was nothing in them but justice: for because of their love for you, they would not ask Our Lord for more than was right, namely to render justice to each one. When they had said this, it seemed to you that there came a man from heaven with a multitude of angels, and descended upon them and gave to each of them his blessing. And as it happened in your vision, so it

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happened in reality long ago: for there is not one of them but is in the company of the angels.

“When he had spoken to the older of the two knights and had said the words that you remember, for you ought to take them for yourself inasmuch as they were uttered concerning you and for your sake, and as you are typified in him to whom they were addressed, he came to the younger knight who is your offspring; for you engendered him with the Fisher King’s daughter, so that he takes his descent from you. Him he changed into the figure of a lion, that is, he placed him above all earthly men, so that none should equal him in pride or power. And he gave him wings so that none should be so fast and speedy as he was, and so that none should mount so high in prowess or in any other quality, and he said to him: ‘Fair son, now you can go everywhere and soar above all earthly chivalry.’ And straightway he began to fly; and his wings grew so great and marvellous that the whole world was covered with them. All that you then beheld has now happened to Galahad, this knight who is your son: for his life is so noble that it is a wondrous thing, and neither you nor anyone else can equal him in chivalry. And because he has mounted so high that no one can attain to him, we have a right to say that Our Lord gave him wings to soar above all the rest. By him we ought to understand the ninth river which King Mordrain saw in his dream, which was wider and deeper than all the rest combined. Now I have told you who are the seven kings whom you beheld in your dream, and who was the knight who was separated from their company, and who was the last one upon whom Our Lord conferred such favour that He caused him to soar above all the rest.”

“Sire,” said Lancelot, “your statement that the Good Knight is my son causes me great astonishment.” “You ought not to be astonished or amazed,” the good man replied, “for you are well aware that you had carnal acquaintance with the daughter of King Pellés and begot Galahad, as you have many a time been told. And this Galahad whom you begot with this damsel is the knight who sat in the Perilous Seat on the day of Pentecost: he is the knight whom you seek. I have told you and informed you of this because I did not wish you to join battle with him: for you

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might cause him to commit a mortal sin in doing you injury. For if you should undertake to fight with him, you may be sure that it would soon be all over with you, since no prowess can equal his."

"Sire," said Lancelot, "I am much comforted by what you have told me. For it seems to me, since Our Lord has permitted such fruit to spring from me, that he who is such an excellent man ought not to allow his father, whoever he be, to be lost, but rather should pray Our Lord night and day to remove me in His gentle pity from the evil life I have so long led." "I will tell you," the good man replied, "how it is. Of mortal sins the father bears his own burden, and the son bears his; the son shall never share in the sins of his father, and the father shall not share in the sins of his son; but each one shall receive his reward according to his deserts. Therefore, you should place no hope in your son, but only in God, for if you ask aid of Him, He will aid you and succour you in every need." "Since no one but Jesus Christ can help me or avail me anything," said Lancelot, "I pray Him to be my strength and help lest I fall into the hands of the devil, so that I can restore to Him the treasure he asks of me, that is my soul, on that awful day when He shall say to the wicked: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into eternal fire!' and He will speak to the good these gentle words: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, ye blessed children, enter into the joy that shall never end!'"

The hermit and Lancelot talked long together; and when it was time to eat, they left the chapel and sat down in the good man's dwelling, and ate bread and drank beer. When they had eaten, the hermit made Lancelot lie down upon the grass, having no other bed at his disposal. And there he slept very well, being weary and exhausted, and he did not think so much as usual about the great luxury of the world. For if he had thought of that, he would not have gone to sleep, on account of the earth which was very hard and the hair shirt which was coarse and prickling next his skin. But he had been brought to the point where this discomfort and this hardness pleased and gratified him so much that he never made trial of anything which gave him such satisfaction. So nothing that he did distressed him now.

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That night Lancelot slept and rested in the good man's dwelling. And when it was day, he arose and went to hear the service of Our Lord. When the hermit had finished his chant, Lancelot took his arms, mounted his steed, and commended his host to God. The worthy man exhorted him to keep on the way as he had begun, and he replied that he would, if God gave him health. Then he went away and rode through the forest all day without keeping to any road or path. For he was thinking much of his past life and estate, and repented deeply of the great sins he had committed, for which he was excluded from the noble company which he had seen in his dream. And he was so grieved at this, that he feared greatly lest he would despair. Yet, because he set all his expectation upon Jesus Christ, he thought he might regain the place from which he had been cast out and keep company with those from whom he was excluded.

When he had ridden until midday, he came to a great plain in the forest, and saw before him a castle, strong and well situated, surrounded by walls and moats. In front of the castle there was a field where there were raised as many as a hundred silk tents of divers colours. In front of the tents there were fully five hundred knights or more who were engaged in a wonderful tournament, and whose arms were either white or black, but not otherwise distinguished. Those with the white arms stood toward the forest, and the others toward the castle. They had already begun their wonderful tournament, and there were so many worsted knights that it was a strange thing. He watched the jousting for a while, until he thought that those on the castle side were getting the worst of it and were losing ground, though they had more men than the other side. When he noticed this, he turned toward them with the intention of doing his best to help them. Lowering his lance and giving rein to his steed, he struck his first opponent so hard that he carried him and his horse to earth. Spurring forward he struck another and broke his lance, though he nevertheless bore him to the ground. Then taking his sword he began to deal great blows here and there through the ranks with great valour; and in a short time he did so well that all witnesses admitted that the honour and distinction of the tournament were his.

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Nevertheless, he could not yet dispose of those who opposed him: for their hardiness and endurance amazed him. He struck and hammered them as he might have done on a piece of wood. But they gave no evidence of feeling the blows he dealt them, nor did they retreat, but rather gained ground on him. And they wore him out so thoroughly in a short time that he could not hold his sword, and was so tired and exhausted that he thought he could never carry arms again. So they took him by force and led him away into the forest. And all his partners were quickly vanquished as soon as his help was withdrawn. Those who led Lancelot away said to him: "Lancelot, we have succeeded in getting possession of you and you are now our prisoner; if you wish to gain your freedom, you must do our will." Then he promised them, and straightway went off, leaving them in the forest. But he took another path than the one by which he had come.

And when he was a long distance from those who had taken him prisoner, he reflected how he had been reduced to a point he had never reached before: for he had never before failed to win any tournament in which he had engaged, and had never been taken prisoner. When he thought of this, he was sorely grieved and said to himself that he was evidently a greater sinner than anyone else. For his sins and his bad luck have deprived him of his sight and his physical powers. The loss of his sight was proved by his failure to see the Holy Grail when it passed before him. He had just made sad test of his bodily strength, for he had never been tired or exhausted by such a number of men as were present at this tournament, but rather had put them all to flight willy-nilly. Thus sad and sorrowful he rode on until nightfall surprised him in a great deep valley. When he saw that he could not reach the mountain, he dismounted under a tall poplar tree and took the saddle and bridle from his horse; then he relieved himself of his helmet and hauberk and lowered his vizor. Then he lay down on the grass and quickly went to sleep, more tired and weary than he had been for many a day.

When he had gone to sleep, it seemed to him that there came toward him from heaven someone who seemed a very worthy man; and he approached as one who is angry and said to him: "Ah! man of little faith

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and of meagre trust, why is your will so easily changed regarding your mortal enemy? If you do not take care, he will make you fall into the deep abyss from which none returns." And having said this, he vanished so that Lancelot did not know what had become of him. He was much distressed at these words, but he did not awake on this account; rather did he remain asleep and did not awake until morning. Then he arose and, making the sign of the cross upon his forehead, he commended himself to Our Lord. Then he looked all about him, but could see nothing of his horse; however, he searched until he found him. Then he put on his saddle and mounted as soon as he was prepared.

When he was about to go away, he saw to the right of the road about a bow-shot from him a chapel where there lived a recluse, reputed to be one of the best women in the country. At the sight of this, he said to himself that he was really unlucky and that his sin truly interfered with all his blessings. For he could easily have come that far the evening before while it was yet daylight and asked advice about his estate and his conduct. However, he now turned thither and, dismounting at the entrance, tied his horse to a tree, took off his shield, helmet and sword, and placed them all outside the door. When he went in, he saw that above the altar were the robes of Holy Church all ready to put on, and before the altar kneeled a chaplain saying his orisons. And presently he assumed the robes of Our Lord and began the mass of the Blessed Mother of God. And when he had finished the service and had taken off his robes, the recluse who had a little retreat from which she could view the altar, called Lancelot, seeing that he seemed to be a knight-errant in need of counsel. So he came to her, and she asked him who he was, whence he came, and what he was seeking. And he answered all her questions faithfully. And when he had told her everything else, he related to her the adventure of the tournament where he had been the day before, and how those with the white arms had taken him prisoner, and what had been said to him. Then he told her of the vision he had had in his sleep. And when he had told her all about himself, he begged her to counsel him as best she could. Then she straightway said:

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“Lancelot, Lancelot, so long as you were a knight of this world’s chivalry, you were the most marvellous and adventurous man in the world. But now that you have enrolled yourself in the ranks of heavenly chivalry, be not surprised if marvellous adventures fall in your way. Nevertheless, I will tell you the meaning of the tournament which you witnessed; for doubtless what you saw was only as it were an allegory of Jesus Christ. Yet, the tournament was unquestionably between knights of flesh and blood; but there was greater meaning in it all than they themselves understood. First, I will tell you why the tournament was held and who the knights were. The tournament was held to decide who would have more knights, whether Elyezer, son of King Pellés, or Argustes, son of King Herlen. And in order that they might be distinguished from each other, Elyezer made his party wear white arms. And when they met in the jousting, the blacks were defeated, although you gave them your aid, and although your party was more numerous than theirs.

“Now I will explain to you the significance of this. Some time ago, on the day of Pentecost, the knights of the world and the knights of heaven engaged in a tournament together, that is, they began together the Quest. The knights who are in a state of mortal sin are the knights of this world, and the celestial knights are the true knights, the worthy men who were not soiled by sin: these began the Quest of the Holy Grail, which is the tournament they organised. The earthly knights, who had this world before their eyes and in their hearts, took black arms, as being those who were covered with black and horrible sin. The others, of the celestial knighthood, took white armour to signify virginity and chastity in which there is neither blackness nor blemish. When the tourney was begun, that is, when the Quest was begun, you watched the sinners and the virtuous men, and you thought the sinners were being worsted. And because you belonged in the sinners’ ranks, being yourself in mortal sin, you turned to help them and fought against the virtuous knights. You got into the thick of the fray when you essayed to joust with Galahad your son; but he overthrew your horse and Perceval’s as well. When you had been for a long time in the struggle and were so weary that you could

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not longer help yourself, the good knights took you prisoner away into the forest. When you undertook the Quest some time ago and the Holy Grail appeared to you, then you found yourself to be so vile and befouled with sin that you thought you could never bear arms again, that is, you saw yourself to be so base and filthy with sins that you thought that Our Lord would never make of you His knight and servant. But at once good men took care of you, hermits and religious persons who set you in the path of Our Lord, which is full of life and verdure like the forest itself. And they gave you counsel which was profitable to your soul. When you left them, you did not return to the path you had trod before, that is, you did not turn again to mortal sin as you had turned before. Nevertheless, as soon as you recalled the vainglory of this world and the great pride with which you used to be puffed up, you began to grieve because you had not been completely victorious; wherefore Our Lord was naturally angered with you. And He showed this to you clearly in your sleep in that He told you that your faith was weak and your trust was poor, and He warned you that the devil would cause you to fall into the deep pit, which is hell, if you did not take care. Now I have made clear to you the meaning of the tournament and of your dream, in order that you may not depart from the way of truth through vainglory or for any other reason. Inasmuch as you have so greatly erred toward your Creator, be very sure that if you do anything more against His will, He will let you stumble from sin to sin until you fall into eternal punishment, which is hell."

Thereupon the lady ceased speaking and Lancelot replied: Lady, you have said so much, and the worthy men with whom I have spoken, that if I should fall into mortal sin, I should be more worthy of blame than any other sinner." "May God grant," said she, "in His mercy that you never fall into sin again!" Then she added: "Lancelot, this forest is very wide and pathless; a knight may well travel for a day without finding house or habitation. So I wish you to tell me whether you have had anything to eat to-day. For if you have eaten nothing, I shall give you of such store as God has loaned us." Then he said that he had eaten neither that day nor the day before. So she had bread and water brought to him.

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And he entered the chaplain's house and partook of the God-given store. When he had eaten, he went away, commending the lady to God, and rode all day until evening.

That night he lay upon a high and marvellous rock, deprived of all company, except of God. And a part of the night he spent in prayers and orisons, and a part he slept. The next day when he saw the light appear, he crossed himself upon his forehead, and humbly kneeled toward the east, and prayed as he had the day before. Then he went and saddled and bridled his horse and mounted; then he resumed his journey as he had done before. He rode until he came into a deep valley, fair to see, lying between two great marvellous rocks. When he entered the valley, he began to reflect seriously; he looked ahead of him and saw the river Marcoise which divided the forest in two parts. At the sight of this, he knew not what to do. For he saw that he would have to ford the river which was deep and dangerous, and the prospect filled him with dismay. However, by putting his hope and trust in God, he was delivered from his gloomy thoughts and concluded that he could cross safely with the help of God.

While he was turning this over in his mind, a marvellous adventure happened to him; for he saw coming out of the river a knight with arms blacker than a mulberry, and he was seated upon a great black steed. At the sight of Lancelot, he lowered his lance without saying a word, and struck his horse so violently that he killed him, but without touching Lancelot; then he went off so fast that after a moment Lancelot could see nothing more of him. When he saw that his horse was killed under him, he got up, and was not too much cast down since so it was pleasing to Our Lord. Without looking at his steed again, he went on armed as he was. When he reached the water and could not see how he was to cross, he stopped and removed his shield, sword, and lance, and lying down beside a rock, decided to wait there until Our Lord should send him succour.

Thus Lancelot was shut in on three sides, on one side by the water, on another by the rocks, and on the third side by the forest. And look though he would in the three directions, he saw no human possibility of

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safety. If he went up in the rocks and wanted something to eat, he would find nothing there to satisfy his hunger, unless Our Lord should vouchsafe His help. If he entered the forest, which was more pathless than any he ever saw, he might well lose his way and stay there a long time before finding anyone to help him. And if he went into the water, he did not see how he could escape danger: for it was so dark and deep that he could not get a footing. These three considerations induced him to stay on the bank and pray Our Lord in His mercy to come and comfort him and counsel him in order that he might not fall into any hostile temptation through the devil's wiles nor be reduced to despair. But now the story ceases to speak of him and returns to my lord Gawain.

Chapter VIII

Now the story tells how, when Gawain had left his companions, he rode far and near for many a day without finding any adventure worthy of mention. Such was the case also with the other companions, for they did not find one-tenth as many adventures as usual, so that they were the more dissatisfied with the Quest. My lord Gawain rode from Pentecost until the feast of St. Magdalene without encountering any adventure worth mentioning; at this he marvelled, for he had expected that mightier and stranger adventures would be encountered upon the Quest of the Holy Grail than anywhere else. One day he happened to meet Hector des Mares riding alone. They recognised each other at sight and were delighted at the meeting. When Gawain asked Hector about himself, he replied that he was well and strong, but had met with no adventure anywhere for some time. "Upon my word," said my lord Gawain, "I was about to complain to you of the same thing: for, so help me God! since leaving Camelot I have met with no adventure at all. I do not know how to explain it: for it is certainly not for lack of riding day and night through strange lands and distant countries. For I will swear to you loyally as to my companion that in going about alone, without other business on hand, I have slain more than ten knights of whom the worst showed considerable valour, yet have I met with no adventure." At this Hector crossed himself in surprise. "Now tell me," said my lord Gawain, "if you have met any of our companions." "Yes," said Hector, "in the past fortnight I have met more than a score of them travelling singly, but there was not one who did not complain to me that he had met with no adventure." "Upon my word, that is strange," said my lord Gawain; "and have you heard any news lately of my lord Lancelot?" "I

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certainly have not," said he; "I can find no one to give me news of him, any more than if he had been swallowed up by the earth. So I am much worried about him, and fear he may be somewhere in confinement. "Have you heard anything of Galahad and Perceval and Bors?" Gawain inquired. "Not a word," Hector replied; "all four of them have so completely disappeared that we have lost all scent and trace of them." "May God guide them, wherever they are," said my lord Gawain; "for surely if they lack adventures of the Holy Grail, the rest will find none. Yet I think they will end by finding some, for they are the best men on the Quest."

After they had been talking together for a long time, Hector said: "You and I have each been riding alone for a long time without meeting anything. Let us ride together now, to see if we may be more lucky in finding some adventure than when each one was for himself." "Upon my word," said my lord Gawain, "that is a good idea and I agree. Let us join forces now, and may God conduct us where we may find some trace of what we are looking for." "Sire," said Hector, "we shall find nothing in the direction from which I have come nor in the direction from which you have come." And Gawain admitted that this might well be so. "Then my advice," said Hector, "is that we strike out in a new direction." To this also Gawain agreed. Then Hector entered a path which ran across the plain where they had met, and they turned away from the main road.

Thus they rode for a week without finding any adventure, and they were much disgusted. One day it happened that they were riding through a wide and unfamiliar forest where they met neither man nor woman. When evening came they found between two rocks on a mountain an ancient chapel, which appeared to be in such a state of ruin that no one frequented it. On arriving there, they dismounted and removed their shields and lances and left them outside the chapel against the wall. Then removing the bridles and saddles, they allowed their horses to pasture on the mountain. Unfastening their swords, they laid them down, and then advanced to the altar to say their orisons and prayers, as good Christians should do. When they had concluded their orisons, they sat down on a seat in the chancel and talked of many

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things; but they said nothing about eating, for they knew that they should only worry about that subject to no purpose. It was very dark inside, because there was no lamp or candle burning there. So when they had sat up for a while, they fell asleep each where he was.

When they had gone to sleep, there came to each of them a wonderful vision which ought not to be omitted, but which ought to be mentioned in this account; for it was full of meaning. As for my lord Gawain's dream, it seemed to him that he was in a meadow full of green grass and with flowers in plenty. In this meadow there was a rack at which one hundred and fifty bulls were feeding. The bulls were fierce, and all were spotted excepting three. Of these three, one was just slightly spotted, while the others were as fair and white as they could be. These three bulls were bound together by the neck with strong and firm yokes. Then all the bulls said: "Let us go to seek better feeding-ground than this." So with that they scattered over the waste lands, leaving the meadow, and were gone for a long time. When they came back, a great number of them were missing. And those which returned were so thin and exhausted that they could hardly stand up. Of the three spotless bulls, one came back and the others did not. And when they had come back to the rack, there arose such a strife among them that the food was exhausted and they had to scatter, some here and others there.

This was the vision of Gawain. But Hector had a very different dream. For it seemed to him that he and Lancelot came down from a high seat, and mounted two great steeds, and said: "Let us go to seek what we shall never find." Then they started forth and wandered for many a day until Lancelot fell from his horse, for a man cast him down who robbed him of all his gear. And when he had stripped him, he clothed him with a robe that was all full of nettles and set him upon an ass. And when he was mounted, he rode for a long time until he came to a spring, the most beautiful he had ever seen. But when he stooped over to drink, the spring disappeared so that he saw nothing more of it. And when he saw that he could get no water, he returned to the place where he had started. Meanwhile, Hector without being once disturbed was wandering about aimlessly until he came to a rich man's house where

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there was a wedding and a great feast. He called at the door saying: "Open! open!" but the master came forward and said to him: "Sir knight, seek some other lodging place than this: for no one enters here who has risen so high as you." Then he went away very sorrowfully, and returned to the high seat which he had left.

Hector was so disturbed by this dream that he woke up and began to turn this way and that like a man who could not sleep. My lord Gawain who could not sleep either, but who had been awakened by his dream, when he heard Hector tossing about, said to him: "Sire, are you asleep?" "No, sir," said he, "I have just been aroused by a strange dream which I have had in my sleep." "Upon my word," said my lord Gawain, "I have had the same experience. I too have had a remarkable dream which has aroused me, and I tell you that I shall never be satisfied until I know the meaning of it." "I can say the same thing," Hector replied, "for I shall never be content until I learn the truth about my brother my lord Lancelot." While they were speaking thus, they saw enter the door of the chapel a hand which was covered as far as the elbow with red silk. From this hand there hung suspended a plain bridle, and in the hand there was a great taper burning brightly; and the hand passed before them, entered the chancel, and then disappeared so that they could not tell what became of it. Then they heard a voice saying to them: "Knights poor in faith and trust, these three things which you have just seen are lacking to you; and therefore you cannot attain the adventures of the Holy Grail." When they heard this, they were greatly dismayed. And when they had been silent for a long time, my lord Gawain spoke first and said to Hector: "Did you understand that?" "I certainly did not," Hector replied, "though I heard it well enough." "In God's name," said my lord Gawain, "we have heard so much to-night while asleep and awake that I believe the best thing for us to do is to go seek some hermit, some good man who will tell the meaning of our dreams and of what we have heard. Then we can do whatever he may advise: for otherwise I believe we should be wasting our efforts as we have hitherto." Hector replied that he could see nothing but good sense in this plan, So the two companions

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stayed all night in the chapel, without going to sleep again, but each one thinking intently upon what he had seen in his dream.

When day dawned, they went to see where their horses were, and sought for them until they found them. Putting saddles and bridles on their steeds, they took their arms, mounted and left the mountain. In the valley they met a valet who was riding alone on a hack, and they greeted each other. "Fair friend," said my lord Gawain, "could you direct us to some hermitage or religious house near here?" "Yes, sire," the valet replied. Then he pointed out a little path leading to the right, and said: "This path will lead you directly to the hermitage which stands on a slight elevation; but the hill is so steep that horses cannot climb it, and you will have to ascend on foot. There you will find a hermit who is the best and most upright man in this country." "Well, fair friend, we commend you to God," said my lord Gawain, "for you have done us a great service by the words you have spoken."

So the valet went away in one direction, and they in another. And when they had proceeded a short distance, they met in the valley a knight completely armed who shouted as soon as he saw them: "Joust!" "In God's name," said my lord Gawain, "I have not met anyone who asked me for a joust since I left Camelot. and since this knight asks for it, he shall have it." "Sire," said Hector, "let me go to meet him, please." "Indeed not," he replied, "but if he overthrows me, I don't mind your going after me." Then, putting his lance in rest and grasping his shield, he charged at the knight, who also came at him as fast as his horse could carry him. They struck each other so lustily that both shields were pierced and both hauberks crushed, and each knight was wounded. My lord Gawain was injured in the left side, but not seriously; but the other knight was wounded so mortally that the lance had completely run him through. They both were knocked from their saddle-bows, and in falling broke their lances, while the strange knight lay in confusion, feeling himself to be so mortally wounded that he was unable to rise.

When my lord Gawain found himself lying on the ground, he sat up quickly, and taking his sword in hand and holding his shield before his face, he prepared to make as brave a showing as he could, like a man

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who had plenty of courage in him. But when he saw that the knight did not get up, he thought he must be mortally wounded. So he said to him: "Sir knight, you must continue our joust, or I shall kill you." "Ah! sir knight, I am killed already, as you well know. So I beg you to heed my request." And he said he would gladly do anything he could for him. "Sire," said he, "I beseech you to carry me to an abbey near here and let me receive the sacraments as a knight should do." "Sire," said my lord Gawain, "I know of no religious house in the neighbourhood." "Ah! sire," said he, "put me on your horse and I will lead you to an abbey I know, which is not far from here." Then my lord Gawain gave Hector his shield to carry, and lifted him up in front of him on his horse, holding him around the waist in order that he might not fall. And the knight guided the horse straight to an abbey which was near by in a valley.

When they came to the gate, they called until those within heard and came to open the gate; then they welcomed them and helped the wounded knight from his horse and put him tenderly to bed. As soon as he was in bed, he asked that his Saviour should be brought to him. And when he saw the body of his Lord approaching, he began to weep bitterly, stretching out his hands, and in the hearing of all present, he confessed the sins of which he was guilty toward his Creator, and begged Him in tears to have mercy upon him. And when he had confessed everything he remembered, the priest administered to him the sacrament which he devoutly received. When he had partaken of the body of Our Lord, he bade my lord Gawain draw out the lance head from his breast. But first he asked him who he was and from what country. "Sire," said he, "I am of King Arthur's household and a companion of the Round Table; my name is Yvain the Avoltres, son of King Urien. I started out upon the Quest of the Holy Grail with my other companions. But now it has come about, by Our Lord's will or through my own sin, that you have slain me; but I gladly pardon you, and may God do the same!" When my lord Gawain heard that, he was very sorry and sad, and said: "Ah God! what a sad accident is this! Ah, Yvain, I am so sorry for you!" "Sire," said he, "who are you?" "I am Gawain, King Arthur's nephew." "Then I do not regret," said he, "being killed by such

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a worthy man as you. For God's sake, when you come to court, greet for me all our companions whom you find alive, though I am persuaded that many of them will die on this Quest; and tell them for the sake of our common brotherhood to remember me in their prayers and orisons, and to pray to Our Lord to have mercy on my soul." Then my lord Gawain and Hector both began to weep. And my lord Gawain seized the head of the lance in Yvain's breast, and when he pulled it out Yvain stiffened with the agony he felt and passed away in Hector's arms. My lord Gawain and Hector were sorely grieved, for many a deed of prowess they had seen him do. They caused him to be buried fairly and richly in a silk cloth furnished by the friars when they learned he was a king's son; then they said for him a service fitting for the dead, and buried him before the high altar, and built a fine tomb over him, where they inscribed his name and the name of him who had killed him.

Thereupon my lord Gawain and Hector went away sorrowful and grieving for this misfortune which had befallen them and which they saw to be the result of pure mischance. So they rode until they came to the foot of the hill on which was perched the hermitage. There they tied their horses to two oak trees, and started up the path which climbed the bill; but they found it so steep and tiresome to climb that they were all weary and exhausted before they arrived at the top. But having gained the summit, they saw the hermitage where dwelt the good man Nasciens. It consisted of a poor dwelling and a tiny chapel. When they approached, they saw in a small yard beside the chapel an old, old man plucking nettles for his table, like one who had tasted of no other food for many a day. As soon as he saw them with their arms, he thought they must be knights-errant in search of the Holy Grail, of which he had already heard. So turning from his occupation, he came and greeted them. They humbly returned his salutation. "Fair lords," said he, "what adventure has brought you here?" "Sire," said my lord Gawain, "hunger, and the great desire we have to speak with you, to receive advice wherein we need it, and to be assured concerning our doubts." When he heard my lord Gawain speak thus, he thought he must be very wise in

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worldly matters, and he replied to him: "Sire, I shall not fail you in anything I know or in anything I can do for you."

Then he led them both to his chapel and asked them who they were. They told him their names and introduced themselves, so that he understood perfectly who they were. Then he asked them to tell him what their trouble was, and he would advise them as best he could. Then my lord Gawain said: "Sire, it happened yesterday while this companion of mine and I were riding through a forest all day without meeting a single man or woman, that we came upon a chapel in the mountain. We dismounted there, for we preferred to spend the night under cover rather than outside. And when we had removed our armour, we went inside and fell asleep, each in his own place. When I had gone to sleep, a marvellous dream came to me." Then he told him about it, and when he had finished, Hector related his. Afterwards they told him about the hand which they had seen while awake, and about the words which the voice had spoken to them. And when they had told him everything, they asked him for God's sake to tell them what it meant: for it had not been without deep significance that all this had happened to them in their sleep.

When the hermit had heard why they had come to him, he replied to my lord Gawain: "Now, fair sire, in the meadow which you saw there was a rack. By this rack we must understand the Round Table: for just as in a rack there are spindles which separate the compartments, so in the Round Table there are pillars which separate the seats. By the meadow we should understand humility and patience which are always lively and effective. And because humility and patience can never be overcome, the Round Table was established, where chivalry has ever since been maintained so powerful through the gentleness and brotherhood of the knights, that it has never been possible to overthrow it. Therefore it is said to be founded upon humility and patience. At the rack there were feeding one hundred and fifty bulls. They chose to eat there rather than in the meadow; for if they had been in the meadow, their hearts would have dwelt in humility and patience. The bulls were haughty and all were spotted except three. By the bulls you must understand the

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companions of the Round Table, who through luxury and pride have fallen into mortal sin so deeply that their sins can no longer be concealed within, but must needs appear outwardly, so that they are spotted and speckled and befouled and hideous because of them, just as the bulls were. But there were three of the bulls which were not spotted, that is, they were without sin. Two were fair and white, while the third had a mere trace of spots. The two which were white and fair stood for Galahad and Perceval, who are whiter and fairer than any of the rest. They are fair indeed, being perfect in all virtues; and they are white without spot or blemish, such as few can now be found. The third, who had a trace of blemish, is Bors, whose virgin purity had once been stained. But he has since made such amends by a life of chastity that his sin has been pardoned. The three bulls were bound together by the necks, representing the three knights in whom chastity is so deeply rooted that they cannot raise their heads, that is, they are careful that no pride find place in them. The bulls said: 'Let us seek elsewhere better pasture than this.' The knights of the Round Table said on the feast of Pentecost: 'Let us go on the Quest of the Holy Grail, and we shall be filled with worldly honours as well as with that celestial food which the Holy Spirit sends to those who sit at the table of the Holy Grail. There is the good pasture. Let us leave this, and go there.' Then they left the court and travelled over waste lands instead of remaining in the meadow. When they left the court, they did not go to confession, as those should do who engage in the service of Our Lord. They went not in humility and patience, which is typified by the meadow, but they wandered in the waste places and deserts where neither flower nor fruit grows, that is, in hell, that is, the place where all things which are not right go to destruction. When they came back, most of them were missing, which means that all never will return, but that some of them will die. Those which came back were so lean and weak that they could hardly stand up; that is to say that those which return will be so blinded with sin that some of them will have killed the others; the fact that they will not have a single limb to sustain them means that they will possess no virtue in them such as keeps a man from falling into hell, and they will

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be filled with all kinds of uncleanness and mortal sins. Of the three without sin, one will come back and the other two will not, meaning that of the three good knights one will return to court, not to get the food in the rack, but to tell of the good pasture which they have lost who are in mortal sin. The other two will stay away, for they shall find such sweetness in the food of the Holy Grail that they would not leave it for anything after they have relished it. The last part of your dream I will not explain to you, for no advantage could come of it, and it might be wrong for anyone to avert from you the consequences of it." "Sire," said my lord Gawain, "since you prefer it so, I shall abide the consequences. And indeed I ought to do so; for you have explained so clearly what caused my doubt that I understand fully the meaning of my dream."

Then the hermit addressed Hector, saying: "Hector, it seemed to you that you and Lancelot stepped down from a high seat: the seat signifies mastery or lordship. The seat from which you stepped down is the great honour and respect which was shown to you at the Round Table; and the meaning is that you left all this when you went away from King Arthur's court. You two mounted two great steeds, that is, pride and arrogance, both of them the devil's steeds. Then you said: 'Let us go to seek what we shall never find,' that is, the Holy Grail, the secret mysteries of Our Lord, which shall never be revealed to you because you are not worthy to behold them. When you separated from each other, Lancelot rode until he fell from his horse, that is, until he gave up his pride and took on humility. And do you know who delivered him from pride? He who cast pride out of heaven, Jesus Christ, who brought him to the point of humility where he was stripped. He stripped him of his sins, so that he saw himself bare of all those good virtues which a Christian ought to possess, and he cried for mercy. Then Our Lord clothed him again, and do you know with what? With patience and humility: that was the robe which He gave him full of nettles, namely, the sack-cloth which is as sharp as nettles. Then he set him upon an ass, the beast of humility, as was appropriate, for Our Lord rode such an one when He entered the city of Jerusalem—He who was King of kings and who had all wealth at His command, yet who would not come upon a war-horse or even a

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palfrey, but preferred to come upon an ass, the poorest and meanest beast, in order that poor and rich alike might take it as an example. Upon such a beast you saw Lancelot riding in your dream. And when he had ridden a while, he came to a spring, the fairest ever seen, and he dismounted to drink of it; but when he stooped over, the spring disappeared; and when he saw that he could get no water, he returned to the high seat he had left. A spring indeed it is, which can never be exhausted however much one may draw from it: for it is the Holy Grail, that is, the grace of the Holy Spirit. The spring is like the gentle rain, the sweet word of the gospel, in which the truly repentant heart finds such sweet savour that the more he tastes of it, the more of it he desires: that is, the grace of the Holy Grail. For as it is large and abundant, so is it the more unfailing. Wherefore it ought by right to be called a spring. When he came to the spring, he dismounted, which means that in the presence of the Holy Grail he will step down, and will no longer consider himself a man, because upon occasion he had fallen into sin. And when he shall stoop over, that is, when he shall kneel to drink and be satisfied and nourished with its abundant grace, then the spring, the Holy Grail, shall disappear. For in the presence of the Holy Vessel he shall lose the sight of his eyes, because he befouled them by looking upon earthly filth, and he shall lose the strength of his body because he has devoted it so long to the devil's service. And this punishment shall endure twenty-four days, during which he shall neither eat nor drink, nor speak, nor move his hand or any other of his members; rather he will think that he will always continue in the same state of bliss as when he lost his sight. Then he will tell a part of what he has seen, then straightway leave that country and return to Camelot.

“And you, who in the meantime will be riding the great steed, are destined to be always in mortal sin, pride, envy, and many other vices, and to go wandering here and there until you come to the residence of the Rich Fisher, where the good men and true knights will hold their festival over the rich treasure which they will have found. But when you arrive there and seek to enter, the king will tell you that he cares nothing for a man mounted so high as you, that is, who is lying in mortal sin and

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pride. When you hear this, you will return to Camelot without having accomplished much to your honour upon this Quest. Now I have told you and explained a part of what will happen to you.

“Now you must learn plainly about the hand which you saw pass before you carrying a taper and a bridle, and about the voice which said that these three things were lacking to you. By the hand you should understand charity, and by the red silk cloth the grace of the Holy Spirit, in which charity is always bound up. He who has charity in him is warm and glowing with the love of our celestial Lord, Jesus Christ. The bridle signifies abstinence. For abstinence is the bridle, as it were, with which a man guides his horse whithersoever he will have him go. For it is so firmly set in the Christian’s heart that he cannot fall into mortal sin, nor follow his own will except to engage in good works. By the taper is to be understood the gospel truth, that is, Jesus Christ who gives light and sight to all those who draw back from sin and return to the way of Jesus Christ. Therefore, when charity, abstinence, and truth appeared to you in the chapel, it signified that when Our Lord came to His abode in His chapel, which He had not built for vile, filthy and corrupt sinners to enter, but in order that truth might be proclaimed in it, and when He saw you there, he departed because the place had been polluted by your presence, and He said to you: ‘Knights poor in faith and trust, these three things are lacking to you, charity, abstinence and truth; and therefore you cannot attain the adventures of the Holy Grail.’ Now I have told you the meaning of your dreams and the significance of the hand.”

“Certainly,” said my lord Gawain, “you have explained it all so truly that I understand it clearly. Now I beg you to tell us why we do not find so many adventures as we were wont to do.” “I will tell you,” the good man said. “how that is. The adventures which happen now are the indications and demonstrations of the Holy Grail, and the signs of the Holy Grail will never appear to a sinner or to any man enveloped in sin. Therefore these signs will never appear to you, who are disloyal sinners. Now you must not think that these adventures which are happening at present consist of killing men and knights; instead, they have to do with

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spiritual things which are much greater and more important." "Sire," my lord Gawain then said, "for this reason which you allege, I believe that since we are in mortal sin it is futile for us to continue upon this Quest; for my part I shall accomplish nothing." "That is surely the truth," the hermit replied; "and there are many others who shall win nothing but shame." "Sire," said Hector, "if we followed your advice, should we return to Camelot?" "I advise you to do so," the good man said; "and I would add that so long as you are in mortal sin, you will derive no honour from anything you do." When he had said that, they went away. But when they had gone off a little way, the hermit called back my lord Gawain. And when he came back, the hermit said to him:

"Gawain, it is a long time since you became a knight, and little enough have you served your Creator since then. You are an old tree, bearing no longer either leaf or fruit. Now consider how Our Lord may have at least the pith and the bark, if nothing more, since the devil has had the flower and the fruit." "Sire," said my lord Gawain, "if I had the leisure to speak with you, I should gladly do so. But my companion yonder is already going down the hill, so that I must go now. But be sure that as soon as I shall have an opportunity to come back, I shall do so; for I greatly desire to speak with you privately." Then they separated; and the two knights went down the hill, and on coming to where their horses were, they mounted and rode until evening. That night they lay at a forester's, who lodged them and gave them a warm welcome. Next day they resumed their journey and rode a long time without finding any adventure worthy of mention. But now the story leaves them a while and returns to my lord Bors de Gaunes.

Chapter IX

Now the story tells that when Bors had left Lancelot, he rode until the hour of noon. Then he came upon a man of great age, dressed in religious garb, and riding upon an ass; there was neither servant nor valet in his company. Bors saluted him and said: "Sire, may God be with you!" Then the other looked at him and, recognising him as a knight-errant, returned his greeting. When Bors asked him whence he came thus alone: "I come," said he, "from visiting a servant of mine who is sick, but who was wont to attend to my affairs. And you, who are you, and whither are you going?" "I am a knight-errant," he replied, "who has started upon a Quest about which I fain would have Our Lord's counsel. For it is the highest Quest which was ever begun, that is, the Quest of the Holy Grail, in which he who can accomplish it will receive such honour that the heart of mortal man could not conceive of it."

"Certainly," said the good man, "you say the truth: he shall have great honour, and it will be no wonder, for he will be the most loyal and true knight of all the Quest. He shall not enter upon this Quest vile, or filthy, or befouled, as are the disloyal sinners who have engaged in it without amending their lives: for this is the very service of Our Lord. Consider now how foolish they are. They know well, and have often heard it said, that no one can approach his Creator but by the gate of purification, which is confession. For no one can be cleansed and purified unless true confession visits him, for by confession the devil is cast out. When the knight, or any other man, commits mortal sin, he receives and partakes of the devil, and cannot prevent his abiding with him. And after he has been in this state for ten or twenty years, or any other length of time, he comes to confession and vomits him forth and casts him out of

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his body, and lodges another instead from whom he receives greater honour, namely Jesus Christ. For a long time He has furnished the knights of this world with food for the body. But now He has evidently become more generous and solicitous than He was before. For He has vouchsafed to them the food of the Holy Grail which is food for the soul and nourishment for the body. This is that sweet food with which He so long fed and sustained the people of Israel in the desert. Thus He has become more generous toward them in promising them gold where they used to find lead. But just as the earthly has been changed into heavenly food, so must those who hitherto have been earthly, that is, those who have until now been sinners, be changed from earthly to heavenly, leaving their sins and their corruption, and coming to confession and repentance, becoming knights of Jesus Christ and carrying His shield, which is patience and humility. For no other defence did He carry against the devil, when He conquered him upon the cross where He suffered death in order to redeem His knights from the death of hell and servitude in which they languished. Through this gate, called confession, which none can avoid who would come to Jesus Christ, it is necessary to enter upon this Quest, and all must change their nature, corresponding to their food which is also changed. Whoever would enter in by some other way, that is, whoever strives to attain without first going to confession, shall not find what he seeks, but shall return without tasting the food which is promised to them. Then there is another thing which will happen to them. For, because they shall pose as celestial knights contrary to the fact, that is, because they pretend without warrant to be companions of the Quest, they shall be more filthy and wicked than I can express, and some shall fall into adultery, and some into fornication, and some into murder. Thus they shall be mocked and ridiculed through their sin and the devil's wiles, and they shall return to court without finding anything, except the devil's salary, which is shame and dishonour, of which they shall receive plenty before they get back. Sir knight, all this have I told you because you have started on the Quest of the Holy Grail. For I should not advise you to persevere in this Quest, were you not such as you ought to be."

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"Sire," said Bors, "it seems to me from what you say that they will all be companions in failure if left to themselves; for it appears to me certain that upon such an exalted service as this, which is the very service of Jesus Christ, no one ought to enter except through confession. If anyone seeks to enter otherwise, I do not see how he can find any such great treasure as this is." "You are right," said the worthy man.

Then Bors asked him whether he was a priest, and he replied that he was. "Then I beg of you," said Bors, "in the name of holy charity, that you counsel me as a father ought to counsel his son, that is, the sinner who comes to confession; for the priest stands in place of Jesus Christ, who is a father to all those who believe in Him. So I beg you to counsel me to the profit of my soul and the honour of chivalry." "In God's name," said the hermit, "you are asking much of me. Yet, if I should fail you now, and later you should fall into mortal sin or error, you would have a right to blame me before the face of Jesus Christ on the great and terrible day. Therefore, I shall counsel you as well as I can." Then he asked him what his name was, and he replied that he was Bors de Gaunes, son of King Bors and cousin of my lord Lancelot of the Lake.

When the good man heard that, he replied: "Surely, Bors, if the word of the Gospel applied in your case, you would be a good and true knight. For if Our Lord said: 'The good tree brings forth good fruit,' you ought by right to be good, for you are the fruit of a very good tree. Your father, King Bors, was one of the best men I ever saw, a kind and humble king; and your mother, Queen Eveine, was one of the best ladies I have seen for many a day. They two formed one single tree and one flesh by the union of marriage. And since you are their fruit, you ought to be as good as the parent trees were good." "Sire," said Bors, "even if a man is sprung from an evil tree, that is, from an evil father and mother, yet is he changed from bitterness to sweetness as soon as he receives the holy oil, the holy unction; wherefore it seems to me that it does not depend upon fathers and mothers whether a man be good or evil, but upon his own heart. The heart of a man is like the helm of a boat, which steers it wherever it wishes, either into a safe port or into peril." "The helm has a master," the hermit replied, "who holds it and controls it and directs it

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as he wishes; so is it with the heart of man. For when he does right, it comes from the grace and counsel of the Holy Spirit; and when he does wrong, it comes by instigation of the devil."

Thus they discussed this subject until they saw in front of them a hermit's dwelling. The good man turned in there and bade Bors follow him, saying that he would lodge him that night, and in the morning he would speak with him in private about the subject concerning which he had asked his advice; and Bors willingly agreed to this. On their arrival they dismounted and found inside a clerk, who removed the saddle and bridle from Bors' horse and took charge of him, then helped Bors to take off his arms. When he was disarmed, the hermit told him to go to hear vespers. And he answered: "Gladly will I." So they entered the chapel and he began the vesper service. When he had finished chanting the service, he had the table set and gave Bors bread and water, saying to him: "Sire, with such meat ought celestial knights to nourish their body, and not with heavy food which leads men to luxury and mortal sin. And so help me God!" said he, "if I thought you would consent to do something for me, I would make a request of you." Then Bors asked him what it was. "It is something," said the worthy man, "which would be good for your soul and would at the same time sufficiently nourish your body." Then he promised to grant his request. "Many thanks," the worthy man replied; "do you know to what you have agreed? That you will eat no other food than this until you shall be at the table of the Holy Grail." "And how do you know," Bors inquired, "that I shall ever be there?" "I know well enough," was the reply, "that you will be there with two companions of the Round Table." "Then I promise you," said he, "as a loyal knight, that I shall never eat aught but bread and water until I shall be at the table of which you speak." Then the hermit thanked him for this abstinence which he was ready to observe out of love for the true Crucified One.

That night Bors lay upon the green grass which the clerk gathered for him beside the chapel. The next morning, as soon as day broke, he got up, and the good man came to him saying: "Sire, here is a white jacket for you to put on instead of a shirt. It will serve as a sign of penitence

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and will be a chastisement for your flesh." Then he took off his suit and his shirt, and put it on as directed by the hermit who gave it to him; then he put on over it a scarlet suit. Then he crossed himself and entered the hermit's chapel, and confessed to him all the sins of which he felt guilty toward his Creator. The hermit found him to be of such excellent and religious life that he was greatly amazed, and knew that he had never given away to fleshly lust except when he had begotten Elyan le Blanc. For this he felt that Our Lord should be thanked. When the good man had absolved him and laid upon him such penance as he knew to be appropriate, Bors asked him to administer to him Communion: then he would feel more secure wherever he might go, for he did not know whether he would die upon this Quest or survive. The hermit told him to wait patiently until he had heard mass, which he said he would do.

Then the worthy man began matins; and when he had finished his chant, he changed his garb and began the mass. When he had pronounced the benediction, he took the body of Our Lord and motioned to Bors to come forward. This he did and kneeled before him. And when he had taken his position, the hermit said to him: "Bors, do you see what I have here?" "I do, sire," said he; "I see that you hold my Saviour and my redemption in the form of bread; I would not behold it in such form, but that my eyes which are earthly and cannot discern spiritual things, do not allow me to see it otherwise, but deprive me of its true nature. For I do not doubt that it is really true flesh and true man and at the same time my God." Then he began to weep bitterly, and the good man said to him: "Now you would be foolish if you received such a precious thing as you say this is without bearing it loyal company as long as you live." "Sire," said Bors, "so long as I live I shall be no one's servant but His, and I shall never depart from His law." Then the hermit gave him Communion which he received very devoutly, and so happily and gladly that he thought he would never be unhappy again for anything that might happen to him.

When he had partaken and had remained kneeling as long as he pleased, he went to the hermit and told him that he was ready to go, for he had tarried there long enough. And the good man told him he could

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leave when he wished, for now he was armed as befitted a celestial knight, and was so well protected against the devil that he could not be more so. Then he went and took his arms. And when he was armed, he went away commending to God the worthy man. The latter requested him to pray to God for him when he should come to the Holy Grail. And Bors asked him to pray to Our Lord not to allow him to fall into mortal sin through the devil's wiles. Then the hermit said that he would think of him in every way he could.

Then Bors went away and rode all day until the hour of noon. When this hour was a little passed, he looked up and saw a great bird flying around an old dead and deserted tree, without leaf or fruit. When it had circled about the tree for a while, it perched on it, for it had its young there, I know not how many, and they were all dead. And when the bird visited its nest and found all the young birds dead, it plucked its breast with its bill so that it made the blood issue forth. When the young birds felt the warm blood, they came to life, while the bird died in their midst, and thus they were reborn from the blood of the parent bird. When Bors saw this strange sight, he marvelled at it and could not make out what its significance might be. But he realised that it must have some important meaning. He watched for a long time to see if the large bird would rise, but that could not be, for it was dead. And when he saw that it was dead, he proceeded on his way until after vespers.

At evening it happened, as he rode aimlessly, that he came to a strong high tower where he asked for lodging, which was willingly granted to him. When those within had eased him of his arms in one of the rooms, they led him into a lofty hall where he found the lady of the place, who was young and fair but poorly clad. When she saw Bors enter, she ran to meet and welcome him. He saluted her as the lady of the place, and she received him joyfully, offering him a seat beside her and making much of him. When it was time for the meal, she made Bors sit by her side, while the servants brought great plates of meat and placed them on the table. At the sight of this, he resolved not to touch them and, calling a servant, asked him to bring him some water. When it was brought in a silver bowl, Bors set it before him and dipped three sops in it. Noticing this,

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the lady said to him: "Sire, do you not like the meat which has been set before you?" "Yes, lady, very well," said he, "yet I shall eat nothing more than what you see." With that, she left him alone, not daring to insist on anything against his will. When the meal was finished and the tables cleared, they got up and went to the palace windows, where Bors sat down beside the lady.

While they were talking, a servant came and said to the lady: "Lady, things are going badly. Your sister has seized two of your castles and all of your vassals who were in them, and now she informs you that she will not leave you a square foot of land if by to-morrow at the hour of prime you have not found a knight to fight for you against Priadan le Noir, who is her champion." Upon hearing this, the lady was sorely grieved and said: "Ah! God, why did you ever delegate me to hold land, only to be deprived of it without cause?" When Bors heard this, he asked the lady what the trouble was. "Sire," she replied, "it is the strangest story in the world." "Tell me about it," said he, "if you please." "I will do so gladly, sire," she said.

"The fact is that King Amanz, who once owned all this land and even more, once loved a lady who is my sister and much older than I, and he gave her full control over his land and people. While she was with him, she introduced some evil and onerous customs, which were not only unjust but absolutely wrong, which resulted in the death of many of her people. When the king saw the evil of her acts, he drove her from the land and put me in charge of all his possessions. But no sooner was he dead than she began a war with me, in which she has deprived me of a great part of my land and has won over many of my men to her side. Even with that, however, she does not consider that she has been compensated, and says that she will take from me all I have. And she has made such a good beginning that she has left me nothing but this tower, which I shall not have long, unless I can find to-morrow someone to fight for me against Priadan le Noir who is willing to enter the lists as her champion."

"Now tell me," said he, "who this Priadan is." She replied: "He is the most redoubtable champion of the country, and a man of the greatest

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prowess." "And is this battle of yours to be to-morrow?" he inquired. "Yes," said she. "Well," said he, "you can send word to your sister and to this Priadan that you have found a knight who will fight for you; that you ought by right to have the land, since King Amanz gave it to you, and that she ought to recover none of it, since her lord drove her from it."

The lady was not a little pleased at hearing this, and said with gladness: "Sire, well it is that you have come here! For this promise of yours has made me happy indeed. May God give you strength and power to defend my cause in accordance with its justice! That is all I ask." Then he gave her great confidence, saying that she need not fear to lose her cause so long as he remain well and strong. So she informed her sister that her champion would be prepared on the morrow to execute everything that the knights of the country should declare requisite. So it was agreed that the battle should be set for the next day.

That night Bors was happy and glad, and the lady had prepared for him a fine rich bed. When it was time to retire and they had undressed him, they conducted him to a large and handsome room, where he saw the bed prepared for him. Then he bade them all leave him alone, which they did at his request. Then he quickly put out the tapers, lay down upon the hard floor, put a box beneath his head, and made his prayers and orisons that God in His mercy would lend him aid against that knight whom he must fight, since he was undertaking the task in order to cause the triumph of justice and loyalty and to punish violence.

After making his prayers and orisons, he fell asleep. Then at once it seemed to him that there came before him two birds, one of which was large and white like a swan which it resembled. The other was wonderfully black and not so large. Upon examination, it resembled a crow, but it was very beautiful because of its blackness. The white bird came to him and said: "If you would consent to serve me, I would give you all the wealth in the world, and would make you as fair and white as I am." Then he asked it what it was. "Don't you see, then, what I am?" it replied; "I am even more white and fair than you think." When he made no reply to this, the bird departed. Then straightway the black bird came

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and said to him: "You must serve me to-morrow, and do not be prejudiced against me because I am black. Remember that my black hue is worth more than another's white." Then it too went away, so that he saw neither bird again.

After this there came to him another very marvellous vision. For it appeared to him that he was in a great fair residence which resembled a chapel, where he found a man seated upon a high chair. At his left, some distance from him, there was a rotten, worm eaten tree, so weak that it could hardly remain standing; and on his right there were two fleurs-de-lys. One of the flowers drew near the other and tried to deprive it of its whiteness. But the good man separated them, so that one could not touch the other, and soon from each flower there issued a tree bearing fruit in great plenty. After this, the good man seemed to say to Bors: "Bors, would not anyone be a fool who should allow these flowers to perish in order to keep this rotten tree from falling down?" "Sire," said he, "he would indeed. For it appears that this tree is of no use, while the flowers are more wonderful than I thought." "Take care now," the good man said, "that, should such an adventure happen to you, you do not allow these flowers to perish in order to give aid to the rotten tree. For they might soon perish in excessive heat." And he said that he would remember this, if the occasion should arise.

Thus there came to him that night these two visions, which greatly astonished him, for he could not think what it could all mean. And so great was his concern as he slept that he awoke and crossed himself upon his forehead, and fervently commended himself to Our Lord. Then he awaited the dawn of day. And when the day came bright and fair, he got into the bed and arranged it so that no one might see that he had not spent the night in it. Then the lady came and greeted him, and he wished her joy in God's name. Then the lady led him to a chapel in the building, where he heard matins and the service of the day.

A little before the hour of prime he left the chapel and entered the hall with a great company of knights and sergeants whom the lady had bidden to see the battle. When he came into the palace the lady told him to eat before he put on his arms, that he might be more fit. But he said

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that he would eat nothing until he had finished the battle. "Then," said the retainers, "there is nothing to do but to take your arms and make ready. For we believe that Priadan is already armed on the battleground." Then he asked for his arms which were brought to him. When he was all prepared and nothing was lacking, he mounted his steed and told the lady to mount with her escort and take him to the field where the battle was to be fought. So she mounted with him and her followers, and they started forth. Coming to a meadow in a valley, they saw down in the valley a great crowd of people who were awaiting Bors and the lady whom he was to defend. They came down the hill, and when they were arrived on the ground the two ladies caught sight of each other and came to meet each other. Then said the younger lady, for whom Bors was to fight: "Lady, I have good reason to complain of you. For you have deprived me of my heritage and my rights which were given me by King Amanz, to which you can have no claim, having been disinherited by the king's own command." Then the other retorted that she had never been disinherited, as she was ready to prove, if her sister dared to offer a defence. When the latter saw that she had no other recourse, she said to Bors: "Sire, what do you think of this lady's claim?" "I think," said he, "that she is both wrong and disloyal to war against you, and so are all those who give her aid. I have heard enough from you and from others to know that she is in the wrong and you are in the right. And if any knight wishes to maintain that she is in the right, I am ready at once to make him recant." Then the other knight leapt forward and announced that he did not care a button for his threats, and was ready to defend the lady. "I am ready too," Bors replied, "to fight against you on behalf of this lady; for she ought to have the land, since the king bestowed it upon her, and the other lady ought by right to lose it."

Then those who were gathered on the field separated on opposite sides, leaving clear the space where the battle was to take place. Then the two knights drew apart and took their distance; after which, they charged each other and dealt such fierce blows in mid-career that their shields were pierced and their hauberks crushed. If their lances had not

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broken into pieces, they would both have been killed. Then they rushed upon each other so violently with their bodies and shields that both were thrown to earth from their horses. But brave as they were, they got up quickly, and raising their shields over their heads, they drew their swords and each struck his opponent where he thought him most vulnerable. Thus they shattered their shields at top and bottom, causing great splinters to fall to the ground, and they crushed their hauberks over arms and hips, making great deep gashes in the flesh, whence flowed the blood on their sharp flashing swords. Bors found the knight's defence to be stronger than he had anticipated; yet he knew that he was engaged in a righteous and loyal cause, and this fact gave him confidence. He allowed the knight to strike him again and again, being satisfied to protect himself and let the other wear himself out. When he had permitted this for a long time and when he saw that the knight was breathing hard, he attacked him as quickly and as freshly as if he had not yet dealt a blow. So he struck him great blows with his sword and reduced him in a short time so that he could not defend himself, because he had received so many strokes and had lost so much blood. When Bors saw that he was thus worn out, he pressed him more and more as he faltered and finally fell down upon his face. Then Bors seized him by the helmet and pulled it from his head and threw it away; then he struck him upon the head with the pommel of his sword until he made the blood spurt and drove the rings of his hauberk into his head. He said he would kill him if he did not admit his defeat, and pretended to be about to cut off his head. When he saw the sword suspended above his head, he was deathly afraid, and cried out for mercy, saying: "Ah! fair knight, have mercy and do not kill me. I promise never to make war against the young lady so long as I live, and I will keep hands off." Then Bors let him alone. And when the older lady saw that her champion was defeated, she fled from the place as fast as she could, as one who thought she had been disgraced. Then Bors came at once to those present who were her vassals and told them that he would slay them if they did not renounce their allegiance to her. Many of the men at once did homage to the younger lady. But those who refused to do so were either killed, or

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deprived of their goods, or were driven from the land. Thus it came about that through Bors' prowess the young lady recovered the high place which had been given her by the king. The other continued, however, to war upon her all her life, as one who was still jealous of her.

When the country had been pacified, so that the young lady's enemies no longer dared to raise their heads against her, Bors went away and rode through the forest, thinking about what he had seen in his sleep; for he greatly desired that God would conduct him somewhere to learn its meaning. The first night he spent at the dwelling of a widowed lady, who gave him a good lodging, and who was glad of his arrival and delighted when she learned who he was.

The next day as soon as dawn appeared, he left there and travelled the great high-road through the forest. And when he had proceeded until noon, a marvellous adventure befell him. For at the junction of the roads he met two knights who were leading his brother Lyonel, stripped to his breeches and seated on a big strong hack, his hands bound before his breast; each one held a handful of sharp thorns, with which they beat him so cruelly that the blood ran down his back from more than a hundred wounds, and he was covered with blood both behind and before. But he said never a word, as one possessed of great fortitude, and endured all that they did to him as if he felt nothing. As he was about to go to succour him, Bors looked in another direction and beheld an armed knight who was carrying off by force a fair damsel, whom he was trying to transport into the thickest part of the forest, in order that she might not be discovered by those who might seek her, in case anyone came to lend her aid. And she in her terror said aloud: "Holy Mary, save your damsel!" When she beheld Bors riding alone, she thought it might be one of the knights-errant of the Quest. So she turned toward him and shouted as loud as she could: "Ah! knight, I beseech you by the faith you owe Him whose liegeman you are and in whose service you are engaged, to aid me and not to allow me to be dishonoured by this knight who is carrying me off by force!"

When Bors heard her beseeching him in the name of Him whose liege-man he was, he felt so disturbed that he did not know what he

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ought to do; for if he allowed his brother to be led away by those who had him in hand, he need not expect to see him safe and hearty again; whereas, if he did not help this maiden, she would soon be violated and dishonoured, and her shame would result from his remissness. Then he raised his eyes to heaven and said weeping: "Fair gentle Father Jesus Christ, whose liege-man I am, guard my brother from death at the hand of these knights. Mindful of your pity and mercy I will in the meantime defend this maiden from violence: for I think this knight intends to assault her." Then he turned where the knight was carrying off the damsel, and spurred his horse until the blood dripped from both his flanks. And when he drew close to him, he cried out: "Sir knight, let the damsel alone, or you are a dead man!" Upon hearing this, he set the damsel down. He was completely armed except for a lance; so he grasped his shield, drew his sword, and advanced toward Bors. But the latter struck him with such violence that he thrust his lance through both shield and hauberk, so that he fainted with the pain he felt. Then Bors came to the damsel, and said: "Damsel, I believe you are now delivered from this knight. What else do you wish me to do?" "Sire," she replied, "since you have saved me from loss of honour and from shame, I beg of you to take me back to the place where this knight seized me." This he said he would gladly do. So, taking the horse of the wounded knight, he set the damsel upon it and escorted her as she directed. And when they had gone a little distance, she said to him: "Sir knight, you have done a greater service than you think in rescuing me. For if he had assaulted me, five hundred men would have met their death who now will be saved." Then he asked her who the knight was. "He is a cousin of mine," she said, "who through some devilish inspiration coveted me so lustily that he seized me privily in my father's house and carried me into this forest to attack me. If he had succeeded, he would have been dishonoured in his body and would have died for his sin, while I should have lived in shame all my days." As they talked thus, they saw approaching twelve knights who were searching through the forest for the damsel. And when they saw her, they welcomed her with great joy. She asked them to make much of the knight and to keep him in their company, for she

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would have been dishonoured but for God and his help. So they took his horse's bridle and said: "Sire, you must come with us, for thus it is fitting. We beg you to come, for you have rendered us such a service that we cannot do too much to requite you." "Gentlemen, I can by no means go," said he; "for I have so much to do elsewhere, that I cannot tarry. So I pray you not to feel hurt; for be sure that I should gladly go, but the demand upon me is so great, and the loss would be so great if I failed to respond, that none but God could make it good." When they heard that the need for him was so urgent, they did not dare longer to insist, but commended him to God. And the damsel prayed him gently for God's sake to come to see her as soon as he should be free, and told him where he would find her. Then he said that if fortune brought him that way, he would remember what she had said. Thereupon he left them and they led the damsel away to safety.

Then Bors rode toward the place where he had seen his brother Lyonel. And when he arrived where he had last seen him, he looked up hill and down dale as far as the forest permitted him to see. Then he listened attentively to see if he could hear anything. When he heard nothing that gave him any hope of his brother, he started out on the road he had last seen them take. After going along for some distance, he caught up with a man clad in religious garb, and riding a horse blacker than a mulberry. When he heard Bors coming behind him, he called out to him: "Knight, what are you seeking?" "Sire," said Bors, "I am looking for a brother of mine whom I saw a while ago being led along and beaten by two knights." "Ah! Bors," said he, "if I did not think you would be too much cast down and that you would fall a prey to despair, I would tell you what I know about him, and would show him to you."

When Bors heard this, he thought at once that the two knights had killed him. Then he began to lament bitterly, and when he was able to speak, he said: "Ah! sire, if he is dead, show me his body, and I shall have him interred and shall have such honour done to him as is fitting for the son of a king: for surely he was the son of honourable parents." "Look about you now," said the man, "and you will see him." Then he looked and saw a body lying stretched out and bloody upon the ground,

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evidently recently killed. He looked at it and knew that it was his brother. Then he was so grieved that he could not stand up, but fell in a faint and lay for some time in a swoon. When he got up, he said: "Ah! fair sire, who has done this thing to you? Surely, I shall never be happy again, unless He comforts me who comes to visit sinners in their troubles and afflictions. Fair, sweet brother, since we are parted, may He whom I chose as my companion and master be my conductor and deliverer in all dangers. Henceforth I have nothing to think of but my soul, since you have passed from life."

Having said this, he took the body and lifted it into the saddle as if it seemingly had no weight, and then said to the man who was standing by: "Sire, for God's sake tell me if there is in the neighbourhood any church or chapel where I can bury this knight." "Yes," said he, "there is a chapel near by, before a tower, where he may be interred." "Sire," said Bors, "for God's sake lead me thither." "I shall be glad to do so," he replied; "follow me." Then Bors mounted upon his horse's croup, holding in front of him his brother's body. They had not gone far when they saw before them a strong high tower, and in front of it there was an old ruined structure like a chapel. They dismounted before the entrance and went in, and laid the body on a great marble tomb which was in the middle of the building. Bors looked all about, but he saw no holy water, nor cross, nor any symbol of Jesus Christ. "Let us leave him here," said the man, "and let us lodge in this tower until tomorrow, when I shall return to celebrate a service for your brother." "Are you then a priest, sir?" Bors asked. "I am," said he. "Then I beg of you," Bors said, "to tell me the truth about the dream I had in my sleep and about another thing concerning which I am in doubt." "What is it?" said he. Then he told him about the bird he had seen in the forest. Then he told him about the two birds, of which one was white and the other black, and about the rotten tree and the white flowers. "I will explain a part of it to you now," he said, "and the rest to-morrow.

"The bird which appeared to you in the guise of a swan signifies a damsel who will love you truly and has already loved you long, and will come soon to ask you to be her friend and paramour. And the fact that

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you did not consent to her request means that you will reject her, and she will go off at once and die of grief, unless you relent. The black bird signifies your great sin which will cause you to reject her. For you will not reject her because of any fear of God or for any virtue there is in you; but you will do it to gain a reputation for chastity and to win the praise and vainglory of the world. Such great evil shall come from this chastity that your cousin Lancelot will die because of it; for the maiden's relatives will kill him, and she herself will die of grief at being rejected by you. Thus it may be truly said that you are the murderer of both, as you have already been of your brother; for you could easily have rescued him, had you wished it, when you forsook him to go to succour the damsel who had no connection with you. Now consider which is the greater loss—that she should lose her honour, or that your brother, one of the good knights in the world, should be killed. Surely it would be better for all the damsels in the world to be undone than for him to be killed.”

When Bors heard himself thus blamed, for the service he had rendered the damsel, by one whose life he thought to be so exemplary, he did not know what to say. And the other asked him: “Have you understood the meaning of your dream?” “Yes, sire,” said Bors. “Well, now the fate of Lancelot your cousin is in your hands,” he said. “For if you wish, you can save him from death, and if you wish, you can cause his death. It is for you to decide what fate you wish to be in store for him.” “There is certainly nothing,” said Bors, “which I would not do rather than kill Lancelot.” “That we shall see by and by,” said he.

Then he took him to the tower. And when he went in, he found knights and ladies and damsels who all said to him: “Welcome, Bors!” And they took him into the hall and removed his armour. When he was stripped of his armour, they brought him a rich mantle lined with ermine and threw it about his neck, and they seated him upon a white bed, comforting him and striving to cheer him up, so that they made him forget a part of his sorrow. While they were intent upon comforting him, there entered a damsel so fair and charming that she appeared the embodiment of all earthly beauty, and she was as richly dressed as if she had had her choice of all the beautiful dresses in the world. “Sire,” said

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one of the knights, "this is our mistress, the fairest and richest lady in the world, and the one who has loved you most. She has waited for you long, not wishing to take any knight as her lover excepting you." When he heard that, he was dumbfounded. But when she approached, he saluted her, and she greeted him in turn and sat down by his side. They talked of many things, until she asked him to be her lover, for she loved him above all things on earth; and if he would give her his love, she would make him richer than any man of his line had ever been.

Upon hearing this, Bors was very uncomfortable, for he had no intention of violating his chastity; so he did not know how to reply to her. Then she said: "How is it, Bors? Will you not comply with my request?" "My lady," said he, "there is no lady in the world so rich that I would comply with her request in this respect. No one ought to make such a request of me in my present position: for close by here my brother lies dead who has been killed to-day, though I know not how." "Ah! Bors," she replied, "give no heed to that! You must do what I ask of you. Be sure that, if I did not love you more than woman ever loved a man, I should not make this request of you: for it is not the custom or practice that the woman should woo the man, however much she may be in love with him. But the great desire that I have always felt for you brings my heart to this point and compels me to speak out what I have hitherto concealed. Therefore, fair sweet friend, I beseech you to comply with my request, which is to lie with me to-night!" Then he said that he would by no means do such a thing. When she heard that, she made such a display of grief that she seemed to him to weep and make loud moan; but all this did not advance her case.

When she saw that she could by no means persuade him, she said: "Bors, by this refusal you have reduced me to the point of dying at once in your very presence." Then she took him by the hand and led him to the door of the palace, and said to him: "Stand here, and you shall see me die for love of you." "Upon my word," said he, "I shall never see any such thing." Then she bade her men hold him there, which they said they would do. And she went up at once to the battlements with twelve of her damsels. When they were up there, one of the damsels called out:

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“Ah! Bors, have mercy upon us all, and grant my lady’s desire. If you do not consent, we shall all cast ourselves from this tower before our mistress does, for we could not bear to see her die. If you allow us to die for so slight a cause, surely never did a knight act so disloyally.” Then he looked at them and reflected how they were really gentle women and noble ladies; and he felt great pity for them. However, he was minded to prefer that they should all lose their souls rather than that he should lose his alone: so he told them that he would not interfere either for their death or for their life. Then they cast themselves at once from the high tower to the ground. At the sight of this he was astounded, and raising his hand, he crossed himself. And immediately there was such a noise and outcry round about him that he thought that all the devils of hell were surrounding him: and doubtless there were many there in fact. On looking about him, he saw neither the tower nor the lady who sought his love, nor anything he had seen before, excepting only his arms which he had brought with him and the building where he thought he had left the dead body of his brother.

When he saw this, he perceived that it was the devil who had laid this trap for him, because he wished to bring his body to destruction and his soul to perdition, but by the virtue of Our Lord he had escaped. Then he raised his hands towards heaven, and said: “Fair Father Jesus Christ, blessed be Thou who hast given me strength and power to fight with the devil and hast vouchsafed me the victory in the strife!” Then he went where he thought he had left his brother’s body, but found nothing there. Then he was greatly relieved, for he thought that perhaps he was not dead at all and that it had been some phantom he had seen. So he went to his arms and put them on and mounted, leaving the place where he would no longer tarry, as he said, because the devil was thereabouts.

When he had ridden some distance, he listened and heard a bell ringing on the left of where he was. He was very glad of this, and turned in that direction; and before long he saw an abbey surrounded with stout walls, belonging to the White Friars. Then coming to the gate, he knocked until it was opened for him. When they saw him all armed, they thought at once that he must be a companion of the Quest. They helped

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him from his horse and took him to a chamber to disarm, and they showed him all the attention they could. Then he said to a good man whom he took to be a priest: "Sire, for God's sake take me to the brother here whom you think to be the most worthy man. For to-day a most marvellous thing has happened to me, concerning which I wish to receive God's counsel and his." "Sir knight," he replied, "if you take my advice, you will go to the abbot: for he is the worthiest man here both in rank and in excellence of life." "Sire," said Bors, "in God's name take me to him." And he said he would gladly do so. Then he took him to a chapel where the good man was, and when he had pointed him out, he turned away. Then Bors stepped forward and saluted him, while the abbot bowed and asked him who he was. Then Bors told him that he was a knight-errant, and told him what had happened to him that day. When he had told him the whole story, the good man said to him:

"Sir knight, I know not who you are, but upon my word! I should never have supposed that a knight of your age was so strong in the grace of Our Lord as you are. You have spoken to me of your affairs, but I could not now give you such advice as I should like, because it is too late. Go to rest yourself now, and in the morning I will counsel you the best I can."

Bors went off, commending the good man to God. But the abbot remained behind, thinking of what he had been told, and he bade the friar serve Bors well and generously, as being a more worthy man than one might think. That night Bors was more richly served and entertained than he would have preferred, for they set meat and fish before him. But he partook of none of it, but only ate as much bread and water as he required, and did not even taste of anything else, not wishing in any way to go counter to the penance which had been laid upon him, either as regards his bed or anything else. In the morning, as soon as he had heard matins and the mass, the abbot, who had not forgotten him, came and wished him good-day in God's name. To this Bors replied in kind. Then the good man drew him to the altar, apart from the others, and asked him to tell him what had happened to him on the Quest of the Holy Grail. So he told him word for word what he had heard and seen both

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while asleep and while awake, and begged him to tell the meaning of all these things. The abbot thought a while, and then said he would be glad to do so, and he began thus:

“Bors, when you had received the High Master, the High Companion, that is, when you had partaken of the body of Our Lord, you set out to learn if Our Lord would vouchsafe to you to find the precious treasure which will fall to the knights of Jesus Christ, the true men of worth in this Quest. You had not gone far when Our Lord appeared to you in the form of a bird, and manifested to you the grief and pain He suffered for us. First I will rehearse what it was you saw. When the bird came to the tree that was without leaf and fruit, he looked at his young and saw that none of them was alive. Then he took his place among them and began to smite his breast with his beak until the blood streamed forth; then he died, while the young birds revived with his blood. This much you saw. Now I will tell you the meaning of it.

“The bird signifies Our Creator, who formed man in His own likeness. And when he was driven out of paradise because of his own sin, he came into a land where he found naught but death, for there was no life there. The leafless and fruitless tree plainly signifies the world, where there was nothing then but unhappiness and poverty and suffering. The young birds signify the human race, the members of which were then so forlorn that they were all bound for hell, the good as well as the bad, for they were all alike in merit. When the Son of God beheld this, He ascended the tree, namely the Cross, and was there pierced with the beak of the lance, that is, the point, in the left side until the blood gushed forth. With this blood the young birds were revived, for they were His own creation; for He delivered them from hell where all was death, and where even yet there is no life. This bounty to the world, to me and you and all other sinners, God came to reveal to you in the guise of a bird, in order that you should not fear to die for Him any more than He did for you.

“Then He conducted you to the lady to whom King Amanz had committed the charge of his land. By King Amanz you must understand Jesus Christ, who is the king in the world who most truly loved, and in

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whom can be found more gentleness and pity than in any mortal man. Against her fought the other woman as fiercely as she could, she who had been driven from the land. Then you fought and won the battle, and I will tell you what that means.

“Our Lord had shown you that He had shed His blood for you; and you promptly undertook a battle on His behalf. For it was indeed really for Him when you undertook it for the lady’s sake: for by her we understand Holy Church, which maintains holy Christianity in its proper faith and belief, which is the estate and the lawful heritage of Jesus Christ. By the other lady who had been cast out and was warring against her, we understand the Old Dispensation, that is, the devil which still makes war upon Holy Church and her followers. When the young lady had told you why the other made war against her, you undertook to fight on her behalf, as was right; for you were a knight of Jesus Christ, wherefore you were obligated to defend Holy Church. At night Holy Church came to visit you in the guise of a sad and distressed woman who was wrongfully dispossessed. She came not in joyous and festal garb, but robed in sorrow, that is in black. She appeared to you sad and gloomy because of the distress caused her by her sons, who are the sinful Christians and who ought to be her sons, but who treat her like step sons. Though they ought to treat her as their mother, they do not, but cause her trouble day and night. Therefore she visited you in the guise of a sad and troubled woman, in order that you might feel greater pity for her.

“By the black bird which appeared to you must be understood Holy Church, which said: ‘I am black, yet fair. remember that my black hue is worth more than another’s white.’ By the white bird which looked like a swan must be understood the devil, and I will tell you why. The swan is white outside and black inside, like the hypocrite who is yellow and pale and appears, so far as can be seen outwardly, to be a servant of Jesus Christ; but within he is so black and disgusting with his filth and sin that he completely deceives the world. The bird appeared to you not only as you slept, but also when you were awake. Do you know when that was? When the devil appeared to you in the guise of a religious man, saying

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that you had allowed your brother to be killed. In this he lied, for your brother is not killed, but is still alive. But he said so to deceive you and to bring you to despair and debauchery. Thus he would have led you into mortal sin, and thus you would have missed the adventures of the Holy Grail. Now I have explained to you what the white bird was and what the black, and who the lady was for whose sake you undertook the battle, and against whom you fought.

“Now I must explain to you the significance of the rotten tree and of the flowers. The tree without strength or vigour signifies Lyonel, your brother, who has in him no virtue of Our Lord to sustain him. The rotten state signifies the great quantity of mortal sins which he has harboured within himself and multiplied day by day, wherefore he may by right be called a rotten and worm-eaten tree. By the two flowers on your right are meant two virgin creatures, one of whom is the knight whom you wounded yesterday, and the other the damsel whom you rescued. When one of the flowers drew near the other, it was the knight who wished to possess the damsel by force in order to dishonour her and rob her of her whiteness. But the good man separated them, which means that Our Lord did not wish her whiteness to be lost; so He brought you thither to separate them and preserve the purity of each. He said to you: ‘Bors, anyone would be a fool to allow these flowers to perish in order to help this rotten tree. Take care now that, should such an adventure happen to you, you do not allow those flowers to perish in order to give aid to the rotten tree.’ This commandment He gave you, and you obeyed it, wherefore He is highly pleased with you. For you saw your brother whom the two knights were leading, and you saw the damsel whom one knight was leading. She asked for your aid so gently that you were won by pity, and for the sake of Jesus Christ you put behind you all natural love: you went to succour the damsel and allowed your own brother to be led away into danger. But He in whose service you were engaged took your place, and there resulted such a fair miracle, because of the love which you showed for the King of Heaven, that both the knights fell dead who were leading your brother away. So he unbound himself and took the arms of one of them, then mounted a horse and resumed the

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Quest with his companions; and you shall learn soon enough how this adventure has turned out.

“When you saw that leaves and fruit issued from the flowers, it meant that from the knight there would yet spring a great line of worthy men and true knights, who may well be regarded as fruit; and the same shall issue from the damsel. And if it had befallen that she lost her virginity in loathsome sin, Our Lord would have been so incensed that both of them would have been damned with sudden death, and thus they would have perished, both body and soul. But just here you came to the rescue. Wherefore you are to be regarded as a good and loyal servant of Jesus Christ. So help me God! if you were a mere creature of earth, so high an adventure would never have befallen you as that you should deliver the Christians of Our Lord—their bodies from trouble here on earth, and their souls from the pains of hell. Now I have explained to you the meaning of the adventures which have befallen you on the Quest of the Holy Grail.”

“Sire,” said Bors, “you tell the truth. You have made it all so clear to me that I shall be the better for it all my life.” “Now I beg you,” said the worthy man, “to pray on my behalf, for, so help me God! I believe He would hear you more readily than He would me.” But Bors kept silent, as if ashamed that the abbot should consider him such a good man.

When they had conversed for a long time, Bors left the abbot and commended him to God. When he had put on his arms, he went his way and rode until evening, when he lodged with a widowed lady who received him kindly. The next morning he resumed his journey and rode until he came to a castle called Tubele, which stood in a valley. Approaching the castle, he met a valet who was riding rapidly toward a forest, and he asked him if he had any news. “Yes,” said the valet, “to-morrow there will be held before this castle a very wonderful tournament.” “Between whom?” Bors inquired. “Between the Count des Plains and the widowed lady here,” was the reply. When Bors heard this, he thought he would tarry there, for he could not fail to see some of his companions of the Quest, who might tell him news of his brother, or perchance his brother might be there in person, if he was somewhere

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near by and in good health. So he turned toward a hermitage which stood by the edge of the forest. And when he came there, he found his brother Lyonel all disarmed sitting by the door of the chapel, he having chosen to lodge there in order to be present on the morrow at the tournament which was to be contested in the meadow. When Bors saw his brother, he was so overjoyed that it could not be told. He leapt from his horse and said: "Fair brother, when did you get here?" When Lyonel heard this, he did not stir, but he recognised him and said: "Bors, Bors, it was not your fault that I was not killed the other day, when the two knights were scourging me and leading me away; you let them do it and never helped me, but you went instead to help the damsel whom the knight was carrying off, and you left me in danger of death. Never did my brother commit so disloyal a deed, and for this misconduct I offer you nothing but the death you have so richly deserved. So be on your guard, for be very sure that you may expect from me nothing but death, wherever I find you, as soon as I can get my armour on."

When Bors heard these words, he was very sorry that his brother was angry with him. So he kneeled before him and with hands clasped cried for mercy, asking him for God's sake to pardon him. But he answered that it could not be, but that, he would kill him, with God's help, if he could get the better of him. Not wishing to listen to him any longer, he went into the house where he had put his arms, and taking them, he quickly put them on. And when he was armed, he went and mounted his horse, and shouted to Bors: "Be on your guard! For so help me God! if I can defeat you, I shall give you what a disloyal traitor deserves. For surely you are the greatest traitor and the most disloyal man that ever sprang from such a worthy man as King Bors was, who begot both me and you. Now mount your horse so as to be better prepared; but if you do not do it, I shall kill you on foot as you are; in that case mine will be the shame and yours the loss; but I do not mind the shame, for I prefer to bear a little shame and to be blamed by some than that you should fail to be stamped with disgrace as you ought to be."

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When Bors saw that he was brought to a point where he had to fight, he did not know what to do, for he could not feel reconciled to fight against him. Yet, in order to be more secure, he was prepared to mount his steed. However, he was determined to try once more to see if he could obtain mercy. So he kneeled on the ground in front of his brother's horse and, weeping tenderly, said to him: "For God's sake, fair brother, have mercy on me! Pardon me for my mistake and slay me not; remember the great love that ought to exist between me and you!"

Lyonel cared not for what Bors said, the devil having incited his desire to kill his brother. Still Bors remained on his knees before him and begged for mercy with clasped hands. When Lyonel saw that he would not get up and fight, he spurred forward and struck Bors with his horse's breast so violently that he knocked him over backward on the ground, so that he was badly wounded. Then he rode straight over him and trampled him severely. Bors swooned with the pain he felt, and thought he was about to die without making any confession. When Lyonel had placed him in such a fix that he could not get up, he got off his horse with the intention of cutting off his head.

When he had dismounted and was about to snatch his helmet from his head, there came running up the hermit, who was a venerable old man and who had heard the brothers' words. When he saw Lyonel about to cut off Bors' head, he threw himself upon Bors' body and said to Lyonel: "Ah! noble knight, for God's sake have mercy on yourself and on your brother! For if you kill him, you yourself will die in sin, and his loss will be inestimable; for he is one of the best men in the world and one of the most excellent knights." "So help me God! sire," said Lyonel, "if you do not get away from him, I will kill you first and not spare him." "I certainly prefer," the good man said, "to have you kill me than him, for my death will not be so great a loss as his: so I prefer to die rather than see him perish." So he lay close upon his body and clung to his shoulders. When Lyonel saw this, he drew his sword from the scabbard and struck the worthy man so hard that he broke his neck behind. Then he stretched out stiff in the agony of death.

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After doing this, his evil desire was not yet satisfied; so he seized his brother by the helmet and unlaced it so as to cut off his head. And this he would have promptly done when by Our Lord's design there arrived Calogrenant, a knight of King Arthur's household and a companion of the Round Table. When he beheld the hermit dead, he marvelled what the cause could be. Then he looked farther and espied Lyonel about to kill his brother, and he already had unlaced his helm. Now he knew Bors and loved him devotedly. So he jumped from his horse and, seizing Lyonel by his shoulders, he pulled him back and said: "What is this, Lyonel? Are you beside yourself, to wish to kill your brother, who is one of the best knights we know? In God's name, no decent man would let you do this." "What?" said Lyonel; "do you intend to rescue him? If you interfere, I will leave him and attack you." Calogrenant looked at him in amazement, and said: "How is this, Lyonel? Do you really intend to kill him?" "I intend to kill him and shall do so," Lyonel replied, "and neither you nor anyone else can stop me: for he has done me such a wrong that he richly deserves to die." Then Lyonel resumed his intention and was about to cut off his head. But Calogrenant stepped between the two and said that if he dared to lay hands on him, he would join in the fray himself.

When Lyonel heard this, he seized his shield and asked Calogrenant who he was. So he told him. Upon learning his identity, he defied him and ran at him with drawn sword, giving him as hard a blow with his weapon as he could. Seeing that a fight was inevitable, Calogrenant seized his shield and drew his sword. He was a good and powerful knight, and defended himself vigorously. The strife continued so long that Bors sat up, though he was distressed to think that he would not get back his strength for months, unless Our Lord should come to his aid. When he beheld Calogrenant engaged with his brother, he was greatly concerned. For if Calogrenant should kill his brother before his eyes, he could never be happy again; whereas, if he should kill Calogrenant, the shame would be his: for he knew well enough that he began the fight only on his account. Therefore, he was greatly distressed, and would have gladly gone to separate them, if he had had the strength; but he

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was in such pain that he had not the power to defend himself or to attack anyone else. So he watched until he saw Calogrenant getting the worst of the struggle. For Lyonel was very skilled and brave, and he had splintered his opponent's shield and helmet, and had brought him to the point where he expected nothing but death: for he had lost so much blood that it was surprising that he could stand up. Seeing himself in danger of death, he was afraid, and seeing Bors now sitting up, he said to him: "Ah! Bors, come, come to my aid and deliver me from the peril of death, to which I have come from trying to rescue you when you were nearer death than I am now. Surely, if I die, it is you whom everyone should blame." "There is certainly no need of all this talk," said Lyonel; "you shall die for this, and no one can prevent my killing both of you with this sword!"

Upon hearing this, Bors felt very insecure, knowing well that if Calogrenant should die, he himself would be in danger of death. So he exerted himself, and got up and taking his helmet, set it on his head. When he saw the hermit was dead, he was very sorrowful and prayed Our Lord to have mercy on his soul; for never did such a good man die with so little cause. But Calogrenant called to him: "Ah! Bors, will you allow me to be killed? If you wish to see me die, death will please me too, for I could not suffer death in an effort to save a better man than you." Thereat Lyonel struck him with his sword and sent the helmet flying from his head. When he saw that his head was bare and uncovered, he realised that he could not escape, and said: "Ah! fair Father Jesus Christ, who didst permit me to enter Thy service, though I have not served so worthily as I should have done, have mercy on my soul so that this pain, which my body must endure because of the good and kind service I tried to render, may be counted as penance and relief to my soul." As he said this, Lyonel struck him so hard that he laid him out dead upon the ground, and his body grew stiff in agony.

Not satisfied with killing Calogrenant, he ran at his brother and gave him such a blow that it made him double up. But the latter, being rooted in humility, prayed God to pardon him for waging this battle. "For if it turns out, fair brother, that I kill you or you kill me, we shall die in our

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sins." "May God never help me," said Lyonel, "if I ever have mercy on you and do not kill you if I can get the better of you: for it is not your fault if I am not killed." Then Bors drew his sword and said weeping: "Fair Father Jesus Christ, let it not be counted to me as a sin if I defend my life against my brother!" Then he raised his sword in air, and as he was about to bring it down, he heard a voice saying to him: "Flee, Bors, do not touch him, for you would slay him." Then there fell between them a fiery brand like a lightning-bolt, and it came from heaven, and from it there issued such a marvellous consuming flame that both their shields were burnt, and they were both so terrified that they fell to the earth and lay for a long time in a swoon. And when they got up, they gazed at each other fixedly; and they saw that the ground between them was all red with the fire which had been there. But when Bors saw that his brother was not hurt, he raised his hands to heaven and thanked God from the bottom of his heart.

Then he heard a voice which said: "Bors, get up, and be gone from here. Keep company no longer with your brother, but travel toward the sea, and make no delay anywhere, for Perceval awaits you there." When he heard this, he kneeled and, stretching his hands toward heaven, said: "Father in heaven, blessed be Thou for deigning to summon me to Thy service!" Then coming to Lyonel, who was still quite stunned, he said to him: "Fair brother, you have ill-treated this knight, our companion, whom you have put to death, as well as this hermit. For God's sake, do not go away until the bodies have been interred and until the honour has been done them to which they are entitled." "And what are you going to do?" asked Lyonel; "are you going to wait here until they are buried?" "Nay," said Bors; "I am going to the sea, where Perceval awaits me, as the divine voice has given me to understand."

Then he went away and took the road which led toward the sea. And he rode on his journey until he came to an abbey overlooking the sea. That night he lay there; and when he had gone to sleep, behold a voice which spoke to him, saying: "Bors, rise up and go directly to the sea where Perceval awaits you on the shore!" Thereupon, he jumped to his feet and crossing himself upon his forehead, he prayed Our Lord to

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guide him. Going to the place where he had left his arms, he took them and put them on at once; then he went to his horse and put on the saddle and bridle. When all was ready, not wishing anyone to know that he was going away at such an hour, he searched for some way to escape, until he found in the rear a break in the wall, through which he could safely pass. So he got his horse, mounted him, and coming to the break in the wall, he passed through.

So he got away without the knowledge of anyone. Riding until he reached the seashore, he found a boat at the beach, all covered with a white silk cloth. He dismounted, and entered the boat, and commended himself to Jesus Christ. And as soon as he went on board, he noticed that the boat left the beach, and the wind caught the sail and carried the boat along so swiftly that it seemed to be flying over the waves. When he realised that he had omitted to take his steed on board, he was sorely grieved. Then he looked about the boat, but saw nothing, for the night was so dark and obscure that it was impossible to see anything. So he leaned on the edge of the boat and prayed Jesus Christ to conduct him where his soul might be safe. And when his prayer was ended, he went to sleep until daybreak.

On awaking, he looked about the boat and saw a knight fully armed, except for his helmet, and he recognised him as Perceval le Gallois. He ran at once to embrace him and greet him joyfully. But the latter was amazed to see him standing before him, for he did not know how he could have come there. So he asked him who he was. "Why! don't you know me?" Bors said. "Certainly not," Perceval replied; "and I marvel greatly how you got on board, unless Our Lord Himself placed you here." At this, Bors smiled and removed his helmet. Then Perceval knew him; and it would not be easy to tell their delight in meeting each other. Then Bors began to tell him how he came to the ship, and how he had been instructed to do so. And Perceval in turn told him the adventures which had befallen him on the rock where he had been, where the devil had appeared to him in the guise of a woman who had brought him to the point of mortal sin. Thus the two friends were together in accordance with Our Lord's plans for them, and they waited for the adventures

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which Our Lord might wish to send them. Thus they drifted on the sea, now here, now there, as the wind carried them. And they spoke of many things and comforted one another. Perceval remarked that only Galahad was lacking to the fulfilment of the promise which had been made to him. Then he told Bors how a promise had been made to him. But now the story ceases to tell of them and returns to the Good Knight.

Chapter X

Now the story tells how, when the Good Knight had left Perceval and had rescued him from the twenty knights who had attacked him, he entered the high-road of the Forest Gaste, and wandered back and forth for many a day as chance led him. He encountered many adventures there of which the story makes no mention, because it would take too long to speak of each one separately. When the Good Knight had ridden a long stretch in the kingdom of Logres wherever he heard mention of any adventure, he departed and rode toward the sea, following his own sweet will. And it befell that he passed by a castle where a great battle was in progress. But those without had fought so well that those from within had taken to flight, for those on the outside were more numerous and were better knights.

When Galahad perceived that those within were in great trouble and that they were being slain at the castle gate, he turned toward them with the intention of helping them. So lowering his lance and spurring his steed, he struck the first man he met so hard that he brought him to earth, and his lance flew to pieces. Then he took his sword in hand like an expert and, attacking where he saw the thickest press, began to cut down men and horses, and to perform such wonderful feats of arms that no one saw him but considered him a champion. Meanwhile my lord Gawain, who had come with Hector to the conflict, was aiding those on the outside. But as soon as they saw the white shield with the red cross, they exclaimed to each other: "There is the Good Knight! Anyone will be mad to face him, for against his sword no arms will avail." While they were speaking thus, as luck would have it, Galahad came spurring toward my lord Gawain. And he dealt him such a blow that he split his

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helmet and his steel cap. My lord Gawain, who thought he was dead of the blow he had received, flew from his saddle-bow. But Galahad, unable to control his thrust, struck the horse in front of the saddle bow, and pierced his shoulders so deeply, that he laid him over dead on top of my lord Gawain.

When Hector saw my lord Gawain unhorsed, he drew back, seeing that it would be madness to withstand one who could deal such blows, and also because he was bound to protect and love Galahad as his nephew. Meanwhile Galahad charged up and down, and in a short time did such execution that those from the castle rallied, who just now had been undone; and they continued to strike and wound until those from outside were beaten by sheer force and sought safety in flight. Galahad pursued them a long distance, but when he saw there was no danger of their coming back, he disappeared so quietly that no one knew where he went; but he carried off the praise and prize of both parties in the fight. Then my lord Gawain, who was in such pain from the blow he had received that he thought he could not escape alive, said to Hector who was standing before him: "Upon my honour, now has come true the word that was spoken to me on the day of Pentecost, about the stone and the sword upon which I had laid hands, that I should receive from it such a blow before a year had passed, that I would give a castle not to have been struck by it. And now, upon my honour, this is the sword with which this knight has just now wounded me. I can well say that the affair has turned out as was promised." "Sire," said Hector, "has the knight wounded you as badly as you say?" "He certainly has," my lord Gawain replied; "I cannot escape without danger, unless God comes to my aid." "Then what can we do?" asked Hector. "It appears that our quest is at an end, now that you are so wounded." "Sire," he answered, "yours is not ended, but mine is, until it please God that I follow you."

While they were speaking thus, the knights of the castle gathered there. And when they recognised my lord Gawain and knew that he was wounded, most of them were much distressed; for he was certainly the man in the world most loved by strangers. So they took him up and carried him into the castle, where they removed his arms and laid him in

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a quiet, peaceful room, far from all disturbance. Then they sent for a physician and had him examine the wound, and asked whether he would recover. And he assured them that in a month's time he could make him so well and strong that he would be able to ride and bear arms. Then they promised that, if he could accomplish this, they would give him enough money to make him rich all his life. And he told them that they might be at ease, for he would do what he had said. So my lord Gawain tarried there with Hector, who would not leave him until he was cured.

When he had left the scene of the conflict, the Good Knight rode aimlessly until he came at night within two leagues of Corbenyc. And it chanced that night overtook him when he was in front of a hermitage. When he noticed that night had fallen, he dismounted and knocked at the hermit's door until it was opened to him. When the hermit saw him to be a knight-errant, he welcomed him, stabling his horse, and helping him to lay aside his arms. After he was disarmed, he gave him to eat of such fare as God had provided. Of this he partook gladly, having eaten nothing all that day. After the meal he fell asleep upon a bundle of hay there was inside.

When they had gone to bed, a damsel came who knocked at the door and called Galahad. The hermit went to the door and inquired who could wish to enter at such an hour. "Sir Ulfin," said she, "I am a damsel who wishes to speak to the knight inside, for I am in great need of him." Then the hermit woke him up and said: "Sir knight, a damsel wishes to speak with you; she is outside, and apparently has great need of you." Then Galahad arose, and went to ask her what she wanted. "Galahad," said she, "I want you to arm yourself, then mount and follow me. I will promise to reveal to you the highest adventure any knight ever saw." When Galahad heard that, he went and armed himself. And when he had saddled his horse, he mounted and, commending the hermit to God's keeping, he said to the damsel: "Now you can go where you please, for I will follow you anywhere." Then she rode ahead as fast as her palfrey could carry her, and he followed her. They proceeded until day began to dawn, and when it was bright and clear, they entered a forest named

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Celibe which stretched as far as the sea. And they rode along the highway all that day without stopping even to eat or drink.

In the evening after vespers they came in a valley upon a castle which was thoroughly furnished in all respects and was surrounded by flowing water and good strong walls and deep moats. The damsel went straight into the castle, and Galahad after her. When the people of the place saw her, they began to call: "Welcome, lady." And they received her gladly as their mistress. She told them to make much of the knight, for he was the best man who ever bore arms. So as soon as they had helped him to dismount, they hastened to relieve him of his arms. Then he said to the damsel: "Lady, are we going to tarry here a while?" "Nay," said she, "but as soon as we have eaten and slept a little, we shall go on." Then they sat down to eat, and afterward they went to sleep. No sooner had she fallen into her first slumber than she awoke and called out to Galahad: "Sire, rise up!" So he rose up, and the servants brought tapers and torches that he might see to arm himself. Then he mounted his steed, and the lady took a fine rich casket which she held in front of her on her mount.

Then they hastily left the castle and rode rapidly through the night until they reached the sea. There they found the ship in which Bors and Perceval were waiting. They were not asleep, but called from afar to Galahad: "Welcome, sire! We have long awaited you until now you have come, thank God! Come on, for now nothing remains but to start on the high adventure to which God has called us." And when he heard them, he asked them who they were and why they said they had waited for him so long. And he inquired of the damsel whether she was going to dismount. "Yes, sire," said she, "and leave your horse here, as I shall leave mine." Then he dismounted at once and removed the saddle and bridle from his horse, and did the same for the damsel's palfrey. Then, making the sign of the cross upon his brow and commending himself to Our Lord, he entered the ship with the damsel following him. The two companions received them with the greatest possible joy and rejoicing. And at once the ship began to move rapidly across the sea as the wind rose and urged it on. In a short time they sailed so far that they could see

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no land either near or far. When day broke, they recognised each other, and all three of them wept at finding themselves thus reunited.

Then Bors took off his helmet and Galahad took off his helmet and sword, but he would not take off his hauberk. When he saw the ship was so fair both without and within, he asked his two companions whether they knew where so fine a ship came from. And Bors said he knew nothing about it. Then Perceval told him all he knew about it, and also how he had fared on the rock and how the worthy man who seemed to be a priest had bade him enter the ship. "And he said that before long I should have you in my company; but of this damsel he made no mention." "Upon my word," said Galahad, "I should never have come this way, I guess, if she had not brought me hither. So it may be truly said that I am here because of her rather than of myself. For I never passed this way before, and I should never have expected to hear of you, my two companions, in such a strange place as this." At this they began to laugh.

Then they told each other of their adventures, until Bors said to Galahad: "If your father, my lord Lancelot, were here, I should feel that we lacked nothing." But he replied that this could not be, since Our Lord had not willed it so.

Thus they conversed until the noon hour, when they might be some distance from the kingdom of Logres, for the ship had proceeded all night and all day under full sail. Then they arrived between two rocks at a wild island, marvellously secluded, which must have been in a bay of the sea. And when they arrived there, they beheld before them another ship on the other side of a rock to which they could not attain unless they proceeded on foot. "Fair lords," the damsel said, "in yonder ship lies the adventure for which Our Lord has brought you together: you must leave this ship and go to that one." So they said they would do so willingly. Then they stepped forth and assisted the damsel to disembark; then they made fast their ship, that the waves might not set it adrift. When they were on the rock, they went in the direction where they saw the other ship. And when they reached it, they found it to be yet more magnificent than the one they had just left, but they marvelled greatly to find no man

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or woman in it. So they drew closer to see if they could see anything. And as they examined the side of the ship, they saw letters written in Chaldee which spelt an awful and mysterious legend to anyone who would enter in; and this was the manner of the inscription:

“Hear, thou man, who wouldst enter me, whoever thou be, see well that thou be full of faith, for I am nothing if not faith. So, before thou enter, see to it well that thou be without blemish, for I am nothing if not faith and belief. And as soon as thou desert thy faith, I will desert thee so that thou shalt receive no comfort or aid from me; rather will I leave thee helpless wherever thou mayst fall into unbelief, however slight the delinquency.”

When they had read those words, they looked at one another. Then the damsel said to Perceval: “Do you know who I am?” “Certainly not,” he replied; “to the best of my knowledge, I never saw you.” “Learn, then, said she. “that I am your sister and the daughter of King Pellehen. And do you know why I have revealed myself to you? In order that you may better believe what I shall say to you. So in the first place I shall say to you as to him whom I love most, that, if you do not believe perfectly in Jesus Christ, you shall not enter this ship, for be very sure that you would straightway perish. For the ship is such a precious thing that no one affected with any evil vice can remain in it with impunity.”

Upon hearing this, Perceval looked and saw that she was indeed his sister. Then he showed her his happiness, and said: “Certainly, fair sister, I will enter; and do you know why? In order that, if I lack faith, I may perish as a disloyal man; and if I am full of faith and such as a knight ought to be, in order that I may be saved.” “Enter then with confidence,” said she, “and may Our Lord be your protection and defence! “

While she was saying this, Galahad, who was ahead, raised his hand and, crossing himself, went on board. And when he was inside, he began to look about, and the damsel followed him after crossing herself. Seeing this, the others delayed no longer, but also went on board. And when they had examined it above and below, they said that they did not suppose that there was on land or sea such a fair and costly ship as this seemed to be. And after they had looked everywhere, they saw in the

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body of the ship a very precious cloth stretched like a curtain, and beneath it a very large fine couch.

Galahad approached the cloth and, raising it, looked under it, where he saw the most beautiful couch he had ever seen. For the couch was large and rich, having at the head a beautiful crown of gold, and at the foot a very fair and shining sword, lying across the couch and drawn a half-foot from its scabbard.

This sword had various peculiarities: for the pommel was formed of a stone containing all the colours to be found on earth. And it had this other strange property, which was still more precious, that each colour had a virtue of its own. Moreover, the story tells that the hilt was formed from the bones of two different beasts. The first was of a kind of serpent which dwells in Scotland rather than in any other land, called the "papalustes"; such is the property of this serpent that anyone who holds any of its bones need have no fear of feeling excessive heat. Such was the character and virtue of one bone. And the other was that of a medium-sized fish called the "ostenax," which lives in the river Euphrates and in no other waters. Its bones are of such a nature that if a man takes one of them, so long as he has it, he will have no recollection of any other joy or pain, save only for that thing which prompted him to seize this bone. But so soon as he shall put it down, his memory will function again as usual in a normal man. Such was the virtue of the two bones in the hilt of the sword, and they were covered with a rich vermilion cloth inscribed with letters which said:

"I am marvellous to see and know. For no man has ever been able to grasp me, however large his hand, nor shall any be able to do so, save one; and this one shall surpass in skill all who have been before him or who shall come after him."

Thus said the words on the hilt; and as soon as they who could read had read the letters, they looked at each other and said: "Here are wonders to be seen indeed." "In God's name," said Perceval, "I shall see if I can grasp this sword." So he put his hand to the sword, but he could not grasp the hilt. "Upon my faith," said he, "now I believe that those letters tell the truth." Then Bors stretched forth his hand, but to no

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effect. And when they saw this, they said to Galahad: "Sire, do you try this sword. For we know that you can achieve this adventure from the fact that we have failed in it." But he said that he would not try it. "For I see greater marvels here," said he, "than I have ever seen before." Then he examined the blade of the sword which was partially drawn from the scabbard as you have heard; and on it he saw more letters, red as blood, which said:

"Let no one be so bold as to draw me from the scabbard unless he can fight better and more boldly than anyone else. Whoever else may draw me out must know that he will soon be dead or injured. And this has already been proven once."

When Galahad saw this, he said: "Upon my word, I intended to take this sword; but since the penalty is so severe, I shall not touch it." So also said Perceval and Bors. "Fair sires," said the damsel, "be sure that all are forbidden to draw it out save one, and I will tell you what happened not long ago."

"It was true," said the damsel, "that this ship arrived at the kingdom of Logres; in those days there was a mortal war between King Lambar, who was father of him whom they call the Cripple King, and King Varlan, who, after being a Saracen all his life, had then recently become a Christian, so that he was considered one of the worthiest men in the world. One day it happened that King Lambar and King Varlan had assembled their hosts on the coast where the ship had arrived, and King Varlan had been defeated. When he saw that he was undone and his men slain, he was afraid that he himself would die. So he came to this ship which had arrived there, and leaped aboard of it. And when he found this sword, he drew it from its scabbard and issued forth again. Then he found King Lambar, that Christian in the world who had the greatest faith and confidence and in whom Our Lord had the greatest share. When King Varlan saw King Lambar, he drew the sword and smote him on the helmet so heavily that he split both him and his horse to the earth. Such was the first blow dealt by this sword in the kingdom of Logres. And there resulted from it such a pestilence and persecution in the two kingdoms that never since has the land rendered its produce to the

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labourers; for since that time neither wheat nor any other crop has grown, nor have the trees borne fruit, nor have any fish, but few, been found in the waters. Therefore the land of the two kingdoms has been called the 'Terre Gaste,' because it had been ruined by this fell stroke.

"When King Varlan saw that the sword was so keen, he thought he would go back and get the scabbard. So he went to the ship and entered it and replaced the sword in the scabbard; but as soon as he had done this, he fell down dead in front of the bed. Thus it was demonstrated that no one should draw this sword without dying or suffering injury. The body of the king lay here in front of this bed until a damsel cast it forth; for no man was bold enough to enter this ship because of the prohibition expressed by the letters on the side."

"Upon my word," said Galahad, "this is a fine adventure indeed, and I can well believe that it happened thus, for I do not doubt that this sword is much more marvellous than any other." Then he went to draw it forth. "Ah! Galahad," the damsel said, "wait a moment until we have looked at the marvels on it." So he left it alone, and they began to examine the scabbard, but they could not make out of what material it was composed unless it was of serpent skin. Yet they saw that it was as red as a rose leaf, and that upon it were inscribed letters of gold and of azure. But when they came to examine the sword-belt, they all marvelled more than ever. For they saw that the belt was not suitable for such a fine weapon as this: for it was of some such poor material as hempen cord, and appeared to be so weak that they thought it could not support the sword for an hour without breaking. And the letters which were on the scabbard said: "He who will carry me must be much braver and surer than anyone else, if he is to carry me as purely as he should. For I am not made to enter any place where there is filthiness or sin. Anyone who carries me into such a place will be the first to repent of it. But if he keeps me with purity, he can go anywhere with security. For the body of him at whose side I hang can never be disgraced so long as he is girt with the belt from which I hang. But let no one be so bold as to remove the belt which is here attached. For it must not be removed by any man now or in the future, but only by the hand of a daughter of a king and queen.

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And she shall make a substitution for it of the personal possession which she values most, and this she shall put in place of this belt. And this damsel must be all her life a virgin in intent and in act. If it happen that she violates her virginity, she shall surely die the most ignominious death that any woman can die. And this damsel shall call this sword by its right name and me by my right name; but before she comes, no one shall know how to call us by our proper names."

When they had read these words, they began to laugh and said that these were indeed strange things to see and to hear. "Sire," said Perceval, "turn the sword and see what there is on the other side." And turning it at once, they saw that it was as red as blood on the other side, and there were letters which said:

"He who will prize me most will find greater cause to blame me in time of need than he could expect, and to him to whom I should be the greatest blessing I shall prove the greatest curse. But this shall happen only once, for thus it is destined to occur."

Such were the words inscribed on this side. And when they saw them, they were more amazed than before. "In God's name," said Perceval to Galahad, "I was about to tell you to seize this sword. But since these words say that it will fail in time of need, and that it will be a curse to him to whom it ought to prove a boon, I will not allow you to take it: for it might some time bring you to disgrace, and that would be a grievous pity." Upon hearing this, the damsel said to Perceval: "Fair brother, these two things have already happened, and I will tell you when and to whom; wherefore no one should hesitate to take this sword, provided he be worthy to do so.

"Once upon a time it happened, full forty years after the Passion of Jesus Christ, that Nascien, the brother-in-law of King Mordrain, was transported in a cloud more than fourteen days distant from his country by the command of Our Lord to an isle near the western country called 'the Turning Island.' When he arrived there, it happened that he found this ship, in which we are, at the entrance of a rock. And when he had entered it, he found this couch and this sword just as you see it now, and he looked at it a long time and desired greatly to possess it. Yet he did

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not dare to draw it forth. Thus he continued desiring and yearning to possess it. Eight days he tarried in the ship, almost depriving himself of drink and food. On the ninth day it happened that a great and marvellous wind arose and carried him away from the Turning Island to another isle far removed in the west. There he arrived directly upon a rock. And when he went on land, he encountered the biggest and most marvellous giant in the world who cried out to him that he was a dead man. And he was indeed in mortal fear when he saw this devil running toward him. But when he looked about him, he saw nothing with which to defend himself. Then he ran to the sword, like one driven by the fear and terror of death, and drew it from the scabbard. When he saw it bared, he prized it more than anything else, and began to wave it aloft; but at the first flourish the sword broke in half. Then he said that he must rightly blame the thing which he had prized most in the world, because it had failed him in his great need.

“Then he replaced the pieces of the sword on the bed, and springing forth from the ship, he attacked the giant and killed him. Then he returned to the ship. And when the wind struck the sail, he journeyed across the sea until he met another ship belonging to King Mordrain, who had been fiercely attacked and assailed by the enemy at the rock of the Port Perilous. When they beheld each other, they were very glad like men who loved each other with a great affection. Each asked the other how he was and what adventures had befallen him. Finally Nascien said: ‘Sire, I do not know what you will think of the adventures I have had. But since you saw me last, I say that one of the most marvellous adventures has befallen me, such as I believe never happened to any man before.’ Then he told him about the precious sword, how it had broken in time of need when he was about to kill the giant with it. ‘Upon my word,’ he replied, ‘this is a strange story you tell. What did you do with this sword?’ ‘Sire,’ said Nascien, ‘I left it where I found it. You can see it for yourself if you please, for it is here within.’ Then King Mordrain left his ship and came aboard Nascien’s ship and approached the couch. And when he saw the pieces of the broken sword, he esteemed it more highly than anything he had ever seen. He said that it had not broken because

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of any weakness or flaw in the sword, but because of some significance, or because of some fault in Nascien. Then he took the two pieces and fitted them together. And as soon as the two pieces of steel were joined, he welded the sword together as readily as it had been broken. And when he saw this, he began to smile and said: 'By God, marvellous is the virtue of Jesus Christ, who welds and breaks more quickly than one could suppose!' Then he replaced the sword in its scabbard and laid it there where you see it now. Then straightway they heard a voice which said to them: 'Now leave this ship and enter the other one, for however little you may fall into sin, if so be that you are discovered in sin while you are here, you cannot escape without peril.' Thereupon they left that ship and entered the other. But as Nascien was passing from one to the other, he was struck so severely on the shoulder by a thrown sword that he fell back into the ship. As he fell, he cried: 'Ah! God, how am I wounded!' Then he heard a voice which said to him: 'This is because of the crime you committed in drawing the sword, when you had no right to do so, not being worthy. Now take better care next time not to go against your Creator.'

"Thus, as I have told you, was realised the prophecy here written: 'He who will prize me most will find greater cause to blame me in time of need.' For he who most prized this sword was Nascien, and it failed him in his greatest need, as I have told you."

"In God's name," said Galahad, "you have made this thing very clear to us. Now tell us how the other part turned out."

"Willingly," the damsel replied.

"True it is," said she, "that King Parlan, who is called the Cripple King, so long as he was able to ride as a knight did much to exalt holy Christianity, and honoured the poor more than did anyone else known, and was of such an excellent character that his equal could not be found in Christendom. But one day he was hunting in a forest of his which stretched away to the sea, when he lost his dogs and huntsmen and all his knights save one who was his own cousin. When he saw that he had lost all his company, he knew not what to do; for he saw he was so deep in the forest that he did not know how to get out of it, not having

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learned the way. So he with his knight followed the road until he came to the shore of the sea toward Illande. And when he reached there, he found this ship in which we are; and he went on board and found the inscription that you have seen. When he saw it, he was not afraid, feeling that he had fallen short of none of the service which an earthly knight could render to Jesus Christ. Then he entered the ship all alone, for the knight his companion was not bold enough to enter. When he had found this sword, he drew it as far from the scabbard as you can see, for previously none of the blade had shown. He would presently have drawn it forth completely; but all at once there entered there a lance which smote him through the two thighs so grievously that he still remains wounded with it, as it appears, and has never been able to be cured, nor ever will be until you come to him. Thus he was injured as a result of his own boldness. And because of this vengeance they say that the sword was a curse to him which ought to have been, a blessing: for he was the best knight and the most worthy man who was then alive."

"In God's name, damsel," they said, "you have told us enough to enable us to see that because of these words no one need fail to grasp this sword."

Then they looked and saw that the bed was made of wood and was not a couch of cushions. In the middle of the front was a post standing straight up and fastened into the piece of wood which ran the length of the bed in front. Opposite to this post was another standing straight up and fixed to the other side of the bed. Between these two posts was the width of the bed, and over them and fastened to each of them was a smaller piece of wood cut square. The post standing in front was whiter than fallen snow; the one on the far side was as red as drops of blood; while the cross bar was as green as an emerald. The three pieces of wood were of these three colours; and you must know that the colours were natural and not painted, for they had not been laid on by hand of any mortal man or woman. Now, because people might hear this and think it was a lie, if they were not made to understand how it could come about, the story will turn aside a little from its course and subject to describe how these three pieces of wood came to be of three colours.

Chapter XI

Now the story of the Holy Grail tells at this point how it befell that the sinful Eve, who was the first woman, took counsel with the mortal enemy, that is the devil, who from that time began with his wiles to beguile the human race; and he incited her to mortal sin, namely covetousness, for which sin he had himself been cast forth from paradise and had been hurled down from the high glory of heaven, and he so stirred her disloyal desire that he made her pick the mortal fruit from the tree, and with the fruit a branch of the tree itself, as it often happens that the branch is detached with the fruit when picked. As soon as she had carried it to her husband Adam, he being urged and encouraged by her, seized it in such a way that he broke the fruit from the branch and ate it to his sorrow and to our great woe. And when he had broken it from the branch as you have heard, it happened that the branch remained in his wife's hand, as one happens sometimes to hold something in one's hands without noticing it. And as soon as they had eaten of the mortal fruit, which indeed ought to be called mortal since by it came death first to these two and later to us all, all the qualities changed which they had previously possessed, and they realised that they were of flesh and naked, who were before only creatures of the spirit, though they possessed bodies. The story, however, does not assert that they were completely spiritual; for anything formed of such vile matter as clay cannot be of such great purity. But they were spiritual in that they were created to live forever if they had refrained always from sin. When they looked at each other, they saw that they were naked and were aware of their uncomely parts; and they were ashamed in the presence of one another, so conscious were they already of their sin. Then they covered

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their uncomely parts with their two hands. Eve still had in her hand the branch which had been attached to the fruit, nor did she ever let go of this branch either before or afterward.

When He who knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart knew that they had thus sinned, He came to them and called first to Adam. It was just that he should be held responsible rather than his wife, for she was of a weaker character, having been formed from the rib of the man; and it was fitting that she should be obedient to him and not he to her; therefore He summoned Adam first. And when He had said to him His woeful words: "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat thy bread," He did not intend that the woman should go free and not be a partaker in the punishment as she had been in the crime; and He said to her: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." Then He drove them both out from paradise, which the Scriptures call the paradise of delight. And when they were outside, Eve still held the branch in her hand unconsciously. But when she noticed the branch, she saw that it was still green as if it had just been picked. Then, knowing that the tree from which the branch had been plucked was the cause of her exile and woe, she said that, in memory of the great loss she had sustained through that tree, she would keep the branch as long as she could, so that she might see it often as a reminder of her great misfortune.

Then Eve bethought herself that she had no pot or box in which she could plant it, for in those days there were no such things. So she planted it in the earth, so that it stood up straight, and said that thus she could often see it. And the branch which was planted in the earth, by the will of the Creator whom all things obey, grew and thrived in the earth and took root.

This branch which the first sinful woman carried out of paradise was full of great significance. For in that she carried it in her hand, it signified great joy, as if she were speaking to her offspring who were to come after her, for as yet she was a virgin. The significance of the branch was as if she said to them: "Be not dismayed that we are cast out of our heritage: we have not lost it forever; behold here a sign that we shall some day be restored to it." And if anyone should wish to ask of the

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book why the man did not carry the branch from paradise rather than the woman, because the man is above the woman, it replies that the carrying of the branch did not belong to the man but to the woman. For inasmuch as the woman carried it, it signified that by woman life was lost and by woman it would be restored. And further, it was an indication that the heritage which was lost for the time would be recovered by the Virgin Mary.

Now the story reverts to the branch planted in the earth, and says that it grew and multiplied so much that it was a great tree in a short time. And when it was tall and cast a shade, it was all white as snow on the trunk and the branches and the leaves. Now this was an emblem of virginity; for virginity is a virtue whereby the body is kept pure and the soul white. The fact that it was completely white signifies that she who had planted it was still a virgin at the time she planted it: for when Eve and Adam were cast out of paradise they were still pure and virgin as regards all filthiness and lust. Now be sure that virginity and maidenhood are not identical, for there is a great difference between them. Maidenhood cannot be compared with virginity, and I will tell you why. Maidenhood is a virtue possessed by all men and women who have had no carnal association. But virginity is a much higher and more virtuous quality: for no one can have it, whether man or woman, who has felt any lust for sexual union. This was the virginity possessed by Eve when she was cast out of paradise and the great delights that were there; and when she planted the branch, she had not yet lost virginity. But later God commanded Adam to know his wife, that is to lie with her, as nature requires that the man should lie with his wife and the wife with her husband. Then Eve lost her virginity and from that time forward their bodies were united.

Some time after he had known her as you have heard, it happened that they were sitting together beneath this tree. And Adam began to look at her and to pity her sorrow and exile. Then each began to weep for the other's sake. Eve said it was not strange that in that spot they should remember their grief and sorrow; for the tree possessed that quality that no one could sit beneath it, however happy he might be,

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without going away sorrowful; and with good reason they were sorrowful, for this was the Tree of Death. As soon as she had said this, a voice was heard saying to them: "Ah! unhappy ones, why do you thus predict and foretell death to each other? Foretell nothing in despair, but comfort one another, for life avails more than death." Thus spake the voice to the two wretched creatures; and they were greatly comforted, and from that time forward they called it the Tree of Life, and because of the great joy which they found in it they planted many others which were all scions of this one. As soon as they broke off a branch, they stuck it in the ground where it took root of itself, and always retained the colour of the parent tree.

The original tree continued to grow and develop. So it came to pass that Adam and Eve sat under it more gladly than they used to do. They were sitting there one day, which according to the story happened to be a Friday. When they had been there for some time together, they heard a voice speaking to them and commanding them to consummate their union. But at this they were both so full of shame that their eyes could not endure the sight of themselves so indecently employed, for the man was as much embarrassed as the woman. Yet they knew not how to dare to disobey Our Lord's command, being still mindful of their punishment for their earlier disobedience. So they began to regard each other shamefacedly. Then Our Lord saw their confusion, and took pity on them. But since His commandment could not be disregarded, and since it was His wish to re-establish from these two the human line and thus restore the tenth legion of angels which had been cast down from heaven through pride, therefore He comforted them in their shame. For He set between them so great a darkness that neither of them could see the other. They were greatly astonished that such obscurity could come between them so suddenly. Then they called each other and blindly sought each other out. And because all things must be done as Our Lord commands, therefore they must needs join their bodies in intercourse as the true Father had commanded them. And when they had lain together, they planted new seed whereby their great sin was somewhat relieved;

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for Adam had begotten and Eve had conceived Abel the just, who first served his Creator acceptably by loyally rendering Him his tithes.

Thus was Abel the just begotten beneath the Tree of Life on a Friday, as you have heard. And when the darkness disappeared, they saw each other as before. Then they perceived that Our Lord had done this in order to spare their shame, and they were very glad. And at once there happened a marvellous thing, for the tree which before had been completely white, became as green as the grass of the field; and all those branches which were planted after they had lain together became green in the wood and the leaves and the bark.

Thus the tree was changed from white to green; but the earlier scions of the parent tree did not change their original colour, nor were they in any way affected. Only the tree itself was covered with green from top to bottom, and from that time it began to flower and to bear fruit, though it had never done so previously. When it lost its white colour and turned to green, it signified that virginity was gone from her who had planted it, and the green colour which it took on and the flower and the fruit signified the seed which had been sown beneath it, and that this seed would always be green in Our Lord, that is, would always be well and lovingly inclined toward its Creator. The blossom signified that the creature who had been begotten beneath this tree would be chaste and clean and pure of body. And the fruit signified that this creature would vigorously carry out and exemplify the cause of religion and goodness in all his earthly affairs.

Thus was this tree for a long time green as well as all those descended from it after the union of Adam and Eve. And after a while Abel had grown up and was so devoted and well disposed to his Creator that he gave to Him his tithes and the first-fruits of all the best he had. But Cain his brother did not so, taking the most vile and despicable things he had and offering them to his Creator. Therefore Our Lord gave such a blessing to him who rendered to Him his fairest tithes that when he had ascended up to the hill where he was accustomed to burn his sacrifices as Our Lord had commanded him, the smoke of them rose straight to heaven. But the smoke of his brother Cain did not rise in like

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manner, but spread over the fields, ugly, black and foul; while the smoke which rose from Abel's sacrifice was white and of a pleasant odour. When Cain saw that his brother Abel was more blessed in his sacrifice than he, and that Our Lord received it more gladly than his, he was much displeased, and came to hate his brother beyond measure. Then he began to think how he could take vengeance upon him, and he said within himself that he would slay him: for he did not see any other way by which he could be avenged on him.

Thus Cain carried for a long time this hate in his heart, never betraying in his face or appearance anything by which his guileless brother might feel suspicious. So this hate was concealed until one day when Abel had gone some distance from his father's house which stood at a distance from this tree, and near the tree were his flocks which he was watching. Now the day was warm and the sun was hot, so that Abel could not stand the heat, and he went to sit down beneath the tree. And feeling the desire to sleep, he lay down beneath the tree and began to doze. Then his brother, who had long planned this treachery, spied upon him and followed him until he saw him reclining beneath the tree. So he came up and thought to kill him before he should be discovered. But Abel heard him approach; and seeing that it was his brother, he rose to greet him, for he loved him dearly in his heart. And he said to him: "Welcome, fair brother!" And Cain returned his greeting and bade him sit down; but first he took a curved knife which he had with him, and thrust it into his breast.

Thus Abel was done to death by the hand of his disloyal brother on the very spot where he had been begotten. And just as he was begotten on a Friday, as the day is truly called, so he came to his death on a Friday by the same token. The death which Abel received by treason at a time when there were as yet only three men on earth signified the death of the true crucified One, for by Abel was He signified, and by Cain was Judas signified, through whom He received His death. Just as Cain saluted Abel his brother and then slew him, so Judas saluted his Lord, even when he had planned His death. Thus the two deaths agreed, not in importance, but in significance. For just as Cain slew Abel on a Friday, so

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Judas killed his Lord on a Friday, not by his own hand to be sure, but by his betrayal. And Judas was signified by Cain in several respects, for he could find no occasion in Jesus Christ for which he should hate Him; but he found an unjust reason, for he hated Him not for any evil which he had found in Him, but just because he found nothing in Him but good. For it is common for all wicked men to regard good people with envy and hostility. And if Judas, who was so disloyal and treacherous, had found as much disloyalty and wickedness in Jesus Christ as he did in himself, he would not have hated Him, but he would have loved Him the more because he would have seen Him to be as he knew himself to be. Now concerning this treachery which Cain committed toward his brother Abel, Our Lord speaks in the Psalms by the mouth of King David who, though unconsciously, spoke a cruel word; for he spoke thus, as if he were saying to Cain: "Thou hast plotted and spoken wickedness against thy brother, and against the son of thy mother thou hast set thy treachery and thy traps. This thou didst, and I kept silence. And therefore thou thoughtest that I was like unto thee, because I said nothing. But I am not so, rather will I chastise thee and reprove thee sorely."

This vengeance had been executed before David ever conceived of it, in that Our Lord came to Cain and said to him: "Cain, where is thy brother?" And he replied as one who knew that he was guilty of the treason he had worked and who had already covered his brother with the leaves of the tree in order that he might not be found. So when Our Lord asked him where his brother was, he replied: "Lord, I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" And Our Lord said to him: "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground. And because of what thou hast done, thou shalt be cursed upon the earth; and the earth shall be cursed in all the labour thou shalt perform, because it received thy brother's blood, which thou didst treacherously spill upon it."

Thus Our Lord cursed the earth, but He did not curse the tree under which Abel had been killed, nor the other trees which sprung from it, nor those which later were created by His will. In connection with this

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tree a great marvel came to pass, for as soon as Abel had come to his death beneath the tree, it lost its green colour and became red all over; this was in memory of the blood which had been shed there. But in the future all the shoots of it which they planted would not grow, but died and came to nothing. But the tree itself grew and flourished so marvellously that it became the finest tree that ever was seen and the most beautiful to look upon.

This tree continued for a long time with the colour and the beauty you have heard me describe, without ever growing old or withering or deteriorating in any way, except only that it bore no blossom or fruit from the hour that Abel's blood was shed; but the others which had previously been cut from it flowered and bore fruit as trees usually do. So it remained as the years passed by and multiplied. And the descendants of Eve and Adam held it in great honour, and from one generation to another they told how the first mother had planted it. So old and young alike found solace under it, and came thither to be comforted when they were in any distress; wherefore it was called the Tree of Life, and served them as a joyful reminder. And if this tree grew and flourished, so did all the others derived from it, both those which were altogether white and those which were altogether green; and no one alive was so bold as to remove from it a branch or a leaf.

There was yet another marvel connected with this tree. For when Our Lord sent the flood upon the earth, by which the world perished in its wickedness, and the fruits of the earth and the forests and the fields had suffered so heavily that they could not henceforth have such a sweet savour as before, all things were then turned to bitterness. But as regards those trees which were descended from the Tree of Life, no one could observe that they had lost any savour or fruit or changed the colour which they had before.

These trees lasted in such fashion until Solomon, the son of David, reigned in succession to his father. This Solomon was so wise that he was furnished with all the goodly knowledge that the heart of a mortal man could compass, and he knew the strength of all precious stones and the virtues of all herbs, and the course of the heavens and the stars so

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thoroughly that none but God could know them better. Yet all his wisdom could not withstand the scheming of his wife, for she deceived him often whenever she tried to do so. But this ought to cause no surprise; for doubtless, when a woman sets her heart and her intention upon a scheme, no wisdom of mortal man can thwart her; and this is no new thing in our time, but began with our first mother.

When Solomon perceived that he could not cope with his wife's wiles, he was greatly astonished that it should be so, and was much incensed. But he dared not take any further action: wherefore he said in his book called Proverbs: "I have searched the whole world through as thoroughly as a mortal man can search, and in all the journey I have not been able to find one good woman." These words Solomon spoke in anger that he could not cope with his wife. And he tried in various ways to change her attitude of mind, but without success. Seeing this, he began to ask himself why woman liked to be such a trial to man. As he was pondering upon this question, a voice replied to his query: "Solomon, Solomon, if man sorrows because of woman, let not that worry thee. For by a woman there shall come to man a hundred times greater joy than this sorrow; and this woman shall spring from thy line."

Upon hearing this, Solomon saw his folly in blaming his wife. Then he began to ponder those things that appeared to him when he was awake or asleep to see if he might discover the true end of his line. And he pondered and considered so long that the Holy Spirit revealed to him the coming of the glorious Virgin, and a voice declared to him a portion of what was to happen in the future. When he heard this news, he asked if she was to be the end of his line. "Nay," said the voice; "a virgin man shall be the end of it, and he shall be as much finer a knight than thy brother-in-law Joshua as this Virgin shall be better than thy wife. Now I have given thee assurance concerning what had caused thee doubt."

When Solomon heard these words, he said that he was very happy that the extreme limit of his line was to rest upon such an example of goodness and of illustrious knighthood. Then he thought how he could communicate to that last man of his line the fact that Solomon, who had lived so long before him, had had knowledge of his coming. Upon this he

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thought and pondered long: for he did not see how he could inform a man, who was to come so long after him, that he had known anything about him. Then his wife perceived that he was thinking about something which he could not decide. Now she loved him well enough, though not so much as many women love their husbands, and she was very shrewd. So she did not wish to ask him suddenly, but bided her time until she saw one evening that he was happy and glad and in a good humour. Then she begged him to answer her a question which she would ask; and he, not thinking of what she had in mind, said that he would gladly do so. Then she said to him straightway: "Sire, you have been much engaged in thought this week and last and for a long time, so that you have not ceased to be pensive. I can easily tell that you have been pondering about something which you have not been able to decide. Now I should be very glad to know what it is. For there is nothing in the world which I think we could not settle with your great wisdom and my great cunning."

Thereupon Solomon thought that, if mortal heart could reach any decision on this matter, she would be the one to do it; for he had found her to be so shrewd that he did not believe there was any soul in the world capable of equalling her shrewdness. Therefore he was disposed to tell her his thoughts, and he told her the truth in full. And when he had told her, she thought a little and then replied at once: "So you are puzzled as to how you can inform this knight that you have known the truth about him?" "Yes," said he, "but I do not see how it can be done. For it is such a long interval from now until his time that I am completely at a loss." "Upon my word," said she, "since you do not know how to do it, I shall show you. But tell me first how long you think it will be before his time." And he replied that he thought it would be two thousand years and more. "Now I will tell you what to do," said she: "build a ship of the finest and most durable wood you can find, and such as neither water nor anything else will rot." And he replied that he would do so. The next day Solomon sent for all the workers in wood in his land, and commanded them to make the most marvellous ship that ever was seen, and of such wood as would not rot. And when they had selected the

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wood and the timbers, and had begun the construction, his wife said to Solomon: "Sire, since you say that this knight is destined to excel in chivalry all those who have been before him or who shall come after him, it would be a great honour for you to prepare for him some armour which would surpass in excellence all other armour just as he is to surpass all other knights in goodness." But he said that he did not know where to find such armour as she indicated. "I will show you," said she: "in the temple which you have built in honour of your Lord is your father David's sword, the keenest and most marvellous sword that was ever handled by a knight. Take it and remove the pommel and the hilt, so that we may have the blade remaining alone. Then you, who know the virtue of precious stones and the strength of the herbs and the properties of everything on earth, make a pommel of precious stones so skilfully joined together that no one on earth can tell where one is separated from another, but everyone who sees it will think that it is all one stone. Then make a hilt so marvellous that there shall be none in the world so excellent or wonderful. Then make a scabbard as remarkable in its turn as the sword is itself. And when you have done all this, I will attach the belt in accordance with my own ideas."

And he did all that she said, except in regard to the pommel, where he set only one stone, but it was of all the colours one could mention; and he made a marvellous hilt which is described in another place.

When the ship was finished and launched, the lady had a large and wonderful bed placed in it, with many cushions, so that the bed was elegant and comfortable. At the head of the bed the king put his crown, and covered it with a white silk cloth. He had given the sword to his wife in order that she might attach the belt, and said to her: "Bring back the sword, and I will put it at the foot of the bed." So she brought it; and he looked at it, and saw that she had attached to it a belt of tow. At this he was very angry, but she said to him: "Sire, know that I have nothing fine enough to be worthy to hold such a sword as this." "Then what can be done about it?" he asked. "Leave it the way it is," she answered, "for it is not our business to employ some suitable material; some damsel will do that eventually, but I know not when." Thereupon the king left the

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sword as it was. Then they had the ship enveloped in silken cloth which would not rot from water or anything else. When they had done this, the lady looked at the bed and said that it still lacked one thing.

Then she and two carpenters went out to the tree under which Abel had been slain. And when she had come to it, she said to the carpenters: "Cut enough wood from this tree to make a plank." "Ah! lady," they said, "we do not dare. Know you not that this is the tree which our first mother planted?" "You must do it," she replied, "or I shall have you put to death." Then they said that they would do it since they were forced to do so, for they would rather do wrong than be put to death. So they began at once to cut into the tree; but they had not made much progress when they were filled with terror: for they saw clearly that from the tree there issued drops of blood as red as a rose. So they wished to stop cutting; but she made them continue, whether they wished to do so or not. Finally, they cut away enough to make a plank. Next, she made them take one of the green coloured trees which were sprung from the others, and then one of the others which were completely white.

When they were furnished with these three kinds of wood of different colours, they returned to the ship. Then she entered it, and making the others follow her, she said to them: "I wish you to make of this lumber three planks, one for this side of the bed, and one for the other, and the third to reach over from one to the other and to be fastened to each." And they made them as she had commanded and fastened the planks, and none of them has ever changed its colour so long as the ship has endured. When they had done this, Solomon surveyed the ship, and said to his wife: "Thou hast accomplished marvels," he said, "for if all the people in the world were here, they could not guess the meaning of this ship unless Our Lord revealed it to them, and even thou, who hast made it, dost not know its significance. Yet not from anything that thou hast made can the knight learn that I have had tidings of him, unless Our Lord makes some other provision." "Well, let that be now," said she, "for in time you will hear news about that other than you now expect."

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That night Solomon lay with a small company in his tent beside the ship. And when he had gone to sleep, it seemed to him that from heaven there came a man with a great number of angels who came down into the ship. When he had gone in, he took the water which one of the angels carried in a silver vessel, and sprinkled all the ship with it; then he came to the sword and wrote letters on the pommel and the hilt; then he went to the side of the ship and also traced some letters there. When he had done this, he went and lay down upon the bed, after which Solomon never knew what became of him, for he vanished with all his company.

At dawn next day, as soon as Solomon was awake, he came to the ship and found an inscription on the side which said: "Hear, thou man, who wouldst enter me, see that thou enter not unless thou art full of faith, for I am nothing if not faith and belief. And as soon as thou desert thy faith, I will desert thee so that thou shalt receive no comfort or aid from me; rather will I let thee go the moment thou art tainted with unbelief."

When Solomon saw these words, he was so abashed that he dared not go on board, but instead drew back; and the ship was straightway put out to sea and it sailed away so swiftly that in a little while it was out of sight. And he sat down upon the seashore and began to think about this. Then a voice came down and spoke to him: "Solomon, the last knight of thy race shall lie upon this bed which thou hast made, and shall receive tidings of thee." At this Solomon was very glad, and he awoke his wife and those who were with him and told them what had happened; and he gave his friends and strangers to know how his wife had accomplished what he had not known how to undertake. And for the same reason as the book has explained to you, the story also tells why the ship was constructed, and why and how the planks came naturally to be of white, green and red colour without the use of any paint. So now the story says no more of that, and speaks of something else.

Chapter XII

Now the story tells that the three companions looked for a long time at the bed and the planks until they were sure that the planks were of natural colour and not painted; at which they marvelled greatly, for they did not understand how such a thing could have happened. And when they had sufficiently gazed at them, they lifted the cloth and saw beneath it the crown of gold, and beneath the crown a very handsome wallet. Perceval took it and opened it and found within a letter. When the others saw it, they said that if God willed, this letter would assure them regarding the ship, whence it came and who built it originally. Then Perceval began to read what was in the letter and explained to them the nature of the planks and of the ship as told in the story. All present wept as they listened, for it called to their mind matters of great importance connected with people of high lineage.

When Perceval had read to them concerning the nature of the ship and of the planks, Galahad said: "Fair lords, now it behoves us to seek the damsel who is to remove this belt and fasten a different one; for until that is done no one must move this sword from here." But they said that they knew not where to find her. "However," said they, "we will gladly look for her, since so it must be done." When the damsel who was Perceval's sister heard them discussing thus, she said to them: "My lords, be not dismayed, for if it please God, before we go hence, the cords of the belt shall be attached, as handsome and rich as they ought to be." Then the damsel opened a casket which she had and drew out some cords richly woven of gold, of silk and of hair. The hair was so fair and bright that it could hardly be distinguished from the threads of gold. And in them were set rich precious stones, together with two golden

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buckles so fine that their equals could scarce be found. "Fair lords," said she, "behold the belt which is to be fastened here. You must know that I made it of the most precious thing that belonged to me, that is, of my hair. And if I valued it, it is not strange, for on the day of Pentecost when you were made a knight, sire," said she to Galahad, "I had the finest head of hair any woman in the world. But as soon as I knew that the adventure was assigned to me and that I must execute it I quickly had my head shorn, and I made these tresses as you can see."

"In God's name, damsel," said Bors, "you are indeed welcome! For you have delivered us from the great difficulty in which we were, if it had not been for what you say." Then she went to the sword and removed the cords of tow and attached those others as skilfully as if she had done it all her life. When she had finished, she said to the companions: "Do you know the name of this sword?" "Nay, damsel," they replied, "you it is who must give it a name, in accordance with what the inscription says." "Know then," said she, "that the sword is named 'the Sword with the strange belt,' and the scabbard is named 'Memory of blood.' For no one with intelligence can see the part of the scabbard which was formed from the Tree of Life but should be reminded of Abel's blood."

When they heard this, they said to Galahad: "Now we pray you in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and in order that all chivalry may be dignified, gird on the Sword with the strange belt, which has been so earnestly desired in the kingdom of Logres that not even the apostles ever longed so for Our Lord." For because of this sword they felt sure that the marvels of the Holy Grail would terminate as well as the perilous adventures which befell them each day. "Then let me first," said Galahad, "perform the rite connected with the sword. For no one should have it who cannot seize the pommel. In this way you can easily see that it is not for me, if I fail in the attempt." And they said that that was right. So he put his hand upon the hilt; and it came to pass that when he grasped it his fingers more than encompassed it. When they saw this, his companions said to Galahad: "Sire, now we know that it is yours; there can be no further objection to your girding it on." Then he drew it from

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the scabbard and saw that it was so bright and fair that one could behold himself in it as in a mirror; and he prized it more than anything in the world. Then Galahad returned it to the scabbard. And the damsel loosed his own sword for him, and girded on this one by the belt. And when she had hung it at his side, she said: "Certainly, sire, I care not now when I die, for I consider myself henceforth as the most favoured damsel in the world, in having knighted the worthiest man of the age. For know that you were not properly a knight when you carried the sword which you wore when you entered this land." "Damsel," Galahad replied, "you have done so much that I shall be your knight forevermore. Many thanks for all you have said." "Now we can leave here," she said, "and go to attend to our other affairs." And they left the ship and went to the rock. Then Perceval said to Galahad: "Surely, sire, no day shall ever pass without my thanking Our Lord that it pleased Him to give me a part in accomplishing such a noble adventure as this has been: for it is the most wonderful I have ever seen."

When they had come to their own ship, they went aboard; and the wind struck the sail so that it soon carried them from the rock. And when the night fell, they began to wonder if they were near land. And each one had to say that he did not know. That night they spent at sea, and neither ate nor drank, for they were without food. But the next day they arrived at a town called Carcelois in the march of Scotland. When they had gone ashore and had thanked Our Lord who had enabled them safely to accomplish the adventure of the sword, they entered the town. When they had passed through the gate, the damsel said to them: "My lords, we have come to a bad port: for if it is known that we are of King Arthur's household, we shall be at once attacked, for he is hated here more than any man." "Now, damsel, do not be dismayed," said Bors, "for He who delivered us from the rock will deliver us from here when it is His will."

While they were speaking thus, a valet came to meet them who inquired: "Sir knights, who are you?" And they replied: "We belong to King Arthur's household." "Then in truth," said he, "upon my word you have come to a bad place." With that, he returned toward the main

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fortress; and it was not long before they heard a horn which might be heard all over the town. Then a damsel approached and asked them whence they came. And they told her. "Ah! my lords," said she, "return now if you can! For, so help me God, you are come to your death; so I would honestly advise you to return before the people here can surprise you within their walls." But they said that they would not turn back. "Then do you wish to die?" she asked. "Now do not be dismayed," they said. "For He in whose service we are engaged will conduct us." Thereupon they saw approaching them down the main street ten armed knights who told them to surrender or they would kill them. But they replied that they had no thought of surrendering. "Then you are done for," the others said. With that, they charged upon their steeds. But though they were numerous and were mounted instead of on foot, yet our knights feared them not and drew their swords. Perceval struck one and knocked him from his horse; then he took the horse himself and mounted, as Galahad had already done. As soon as they were mounted, they began to beat down and kill the others, and they secured a horse for Bors. When the others saw that they were being so roughly handled, they turned to flight, and were pursued as far as the citadel where they took refuge.

When they went up into the great hall, they met other knights and men-at-arms who were arming themselves because of the cry they had heard in the town. When the three companions, who had pressed after the others on horseback, saw all these men taking their arms, they ran at them with swords drawn, killing them and beating them down like dumb cattle. They defended their lives as best they could, but in the end were forced to turn and run. For Galahad did such wonders and slew so many of them that they thought it could not be a mortal man, but some devil who had rushed in to destroy them. At last, when they saw that they could not hold out, those who could escaped through the doors, and others broke their necks, legs and arms by leaping from the windows.

When the three companions saw that the palace was cleared, they surveyed the bodies of those whom they had killed and felt guilty for

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the havoc they had wrought, saying that they had done wrong to kill so many folk. "To be sure," said Bors, "I cannot think that Our Lord cared much for them, that they should have been so punished. Perchance they have been some faithless and renegade people, who have sinned so grievously against Our Lord that He did not wish them to live any longer, and sent us here to destroy them." "That is not enough to say," Galahad replied, "for if they have wronged Our Lord, vengeance was not ours to take, but His who waits until the sinner recognises the evil of his ways. So, for my part, I shall never be at peace until, if it be Our Lord's pleasure, I know the true significance of what we have done here."

While they were speaking thus, a worthy man came out of one of the adjoining rooms. He was a priest and garbed in white. and was carrying the Eucharist in a chalice. When he saw all the dead bodies in the hall, he was aghast. So he drew back, not knowing what to do at the sight of so many men lying dead. Then Galahad, who had seen what he was carrying, doffed his helmet in his presence, knowing well that the priest was afraid. Then he checked his companions and, approaching the good man, he said: "Sire, why do you draw back? You need have no fear of us." "Who are you?" the worthy man inquired, to which they replied that they were of King Arthur's household. When the worthy man heard this, he quickly recovered from his fear and, being at ease in his mind again, he asked Galahad to tell him how these knights had been killed. Then he told him how they three, companions in the Quest, had made their way in thither, and how there they had been attacked; but their opponents had been discomfited, as could readily be seen. When he had heard this, he said: "Sire, be sure that you have done the best job that ever knights performed. If you should live as long as the world endures, I do not think that you could render again such a service as this. I am persuaded that Our Lord sent you here to perform this task. For there were no people in the world who hated Our Lord so much as did the three brothers who held this town. In their great disloyalty they had brought the people of this town to a state in which they were worse than Saracens and did nothing but what was against God and Holy Church." "Sire,"

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said Galahad, "I was very regretful that I had killed them. supposing them to be Christians." "Never regret what you have done," said the worthy man, "but rejoice in it. For I tell you truly that Our Lord is grateful to you for killing them; for they were no Christians, but the most disloyal folk I have ever seen; and I will tell you how I know that.

"A year ago the lord of this town where we are was Count Hernolx. He had three sons, who were quite good knights-at-arms, and the most beautiful daughter in the country-side. These three brothers loved their sister with such an insane love that in their lust for her they lay with her and violated her; and when she dared to bewail her fate to her father, they killed her. When the count learned of this treachery, he tried to drive them from his presence; but not allowing that, they took their father and cast him into prison and wounded him severely and would have put him to death, had not a brother of his rescued him. When they had done all this, they began to commit every kind of treachery, for they slew clerks and priests and monks and abbots and destroyed two chapels which used to be here. Since then they have committed so many crimes that it is a wonder that they have not been destroyed long ago. But this very morning it happened that their father, who was lying ill or rather, as I think, on his death-bed, sent for me to come bearing the sacrament as you saw. And I was glad to go to him, as he had formerly held me dear. But as soon as I had entered here, they treated me so shamefully that if the Saracens had held me they could not have used me worse. All this I willingly endured, for the love of that Lord in whose despite they were acting thus. When I came to the prison where the count was, and told him the shameful way they had treated me, he said: 'Never mind; your shame as well as mine will be avenged by three servants of Jesus Christ: for this the High Master has announced to me.' From this you can judge that Our Lord will not be angry at what you have done; on the contrary, you may be sure that He sent you hither precisely to slay and discomfit them. And before the day is over you shall see a still clearer proof that this is true."

Then Galahad called his other companions and told them what the good man had said to him, how the people of the place, whom they had

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put to death, were the most wicked people in the world; and he told them about the father of the three knights, whom they held in prison, and why they did so. When Bors heard this news, he said: "My lord Galahad, did I not tell you that Our Lord had sent us here to take vengeance on them for their outrageous conduct? Surely, had it not pleased Our Lord, we three could never have killed so many men in such a short time." Then they had Count Hernolx brought out from his prison; and when they had brought him into the palace and had placed him in the great hall, they found that he was at the point of death. Nevertheless, as soon as he perceived Galahad, he knew him, not because he had ever seen him before, but Our Lord's power enabled him. Then the count began to weep softly, and he said: "Sire, we have long awaited your coming, until now, thank God, we have you. But for God's sake hold me upon your knees, so that my soul may rejoice that my body shall pass away supported by such a man as you." And Galahad gladly complied with his request. And as he held him in his bosom, the count drooped over like one who was in the death-agony and said: "Fair Father in heaven, into Thy hand I commend my soul and spirit!" Then he bent over altogether and so remained until they supposed he was dead. Yet after a while he spoke again, and said: "Galahad, the High Master sends you word that you have so well avenged Him of His adversaries to-day that the company in heaven is rejoicing over it. Now you must betake yourself to the Cripple King as quickly as you can in order that he may receive the cure for which he has so long waited: for he is to receive it when you arrive. So start as soon as you have an opportunity."

Thereupon he ceased speaking and at once the soul left his body. When those in the town who were still alive saw that the count was dead, they made a great lament, for they had loved him dearly. And when the body was prepared with all the honour owing to such a high personage, they gave out the news of his death. Then all the monks in the neighbourhood came and buried the body in a hermitage.

Next day the three companions left there and set out upon their road, Perceval's sister still accompanying them. And they rode until they came to the Forest Gaste. And when they had entered the forest, they looked

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and saw approaching the White Stag escorted by the four lions which Perceval had seen once before. "Galahad," said Perceval, "here is a wondrous sight: for upon my word, I have never seen a stranger thing. I really believe that these lions are protecting the Stag; I shall never be satisfied until I know the explanation of it." "In God's name," said Galahad, "I too should like to know. Let us follow him until we know where he has his retreat. For I believe that this adventure comes from God." To this they willingly agreed.

Then they followed the Stag until they came into a valley. There they looked about them and in a little thicket espied a hermitage where an excellent old man dwelt. The Stag and the lions having gone in, the knights who were following dismounted upon reaching the hermitage. Turning toward the chapel, they saw the worthy man dressed in his vestments, about to begin the mass of the Holy Spirit. When the companions saw this, they said that they had arrived at a fortunate moment, and they tarried to hear the mass which the old man celebrated. When they came to the moment when the Host was elevated, the three companions had reason to marvel even more than before. For, as it seemed to them, they saw the Stag become a very man, seated above the altar on a beautiful rich seat, and they saw the lions were also changed—one into the form of a man, the second into the form of an eagle, the third into the form of a lion, and the fourth into the form of an ox. Thus the lions were transformed, and they had wings, so that they could have flown, had it pleased Our Lord. Then they seized the seat in which the Stag was seated, two in front and two behind, and they passed out through a glass window which was there, though the window was not in the least broken or injured. When they had gone and those left behind saw nothing more of them, a voice descended to them which said: "In like fashion the Son of God entered the blessed Virgin Mary without harming or injuring her virginity."

When they heard these words, they fell prostrate upon the ground. For the voice had come upon them like a bolt of lightning and a crash of thunder, and it seemed to them that the chapel had fallen down. When they regained their strength, they saw the worthy man was removing his

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vestments, having finished the mass. So they came and asked him to tell them the meaning of what they had witnessed. "What have you seen?" he inquired. "We saw," they replied, "a stag changed into the form of a man, and also the lions changed into something else." When the hermit heard this, he said to them: "Ah! my lords, you are welcome. Now I know by what you tell me that you are worthy men and true knights, who will accomplish the Quest of the Holy Grail, and who will endure great pains and labours. For you are they to whom Our Lord has revealed His secrets and His mysteries. He has already shown you a part of these; for in showing you the stag transformed into a celestial man, who is not mortal, He has revealed to you the transformation which He underwent upon the cross: in that He was clothed with an earthly garment, that is with mortal flesh, in dying He conquered death and secured eternal life. And it is fitting that He should be represented by the stag. For just as the stag is rejuvenated by shedding its skin and a part of its coat, so was Our Lord reborn from death to life when He parted with His tenement of clay, namely, the mortal flesh which He had assumed in the blessed Virgin's womb. And because in the blessed Virgin there was no taint of human sin, He appeared in the guise of a white stag without blemish. By those who were with Him you must understand the four evangelists, blessed persons who set down in writing a part of the acts of Jesus Christ which He performed while among us as mortal man. Learn now that never before has any knight been able to know the truth of what this can be. Yet the Blessed One, the High Lord, has in this and in many lands appeared to good men and knights in the form of a stag accompanied by four lions, in order that they seeing Him might learn a lesson thereby. But be very sure that henceforth no one shall ever see Him again in such wise."

Upon hearing this, they wept with joy and thanked Our Lord that He had revealed this to them openly. All that day they tarried with the hermit. And when they had heard mass next morning and were compelled to leave, Perceval took the sword which Galahad had left, and said that he would carry it henceforth, leaving his own behind with the hermit.

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When they had gone away and had ridden until after midday, they drew near to a strong and well-situated castle. But they did not enter, for their road lay in another direction. And when they were some distance from the principal gate, they saw coming after them a knight who said: "My lords, is that damsel whom you have with you a virgin?" "Upon my word," Bors replied, "you may be sure she is." When he heard that, he put out his hand and seized the damsel's bridle, and said: "By the holy Cross, you shall not escape me until you have observed the custom of this castle." When Perceval saw that the knight had arrested his sister in this fashion, he was much displeased and said: "Sir knight, you are not justified in speaking thus. For, wherever she may pass, a maid is exempt from all customs, especially so gentle a lady as this who is the daughter of a king and queen." While they were conversing thus, there issued from the castle ten armed knights having with them a damsel who held a silver basin in her hand. And they said to the three companions: "Fair lords, it is urgently required of this damsel whom you escort that she comply with the custom of this castle." Then Galahad inquired what the custom was. "Sire," one of the knights replied, "every virgin who passes here must fill this basin with blood from her right arm, and none may pass without fulfilling this requirement." "A curse upon the false knight," said Galahad, "who established such a vile and wicked custom! So help me God! in the case of this damsel you are in error; for so long as I have strength and she trusts in me, she shall not give you what you require." "So help me God!" said Perceval, "I too would sooner die!" "And I too," said Bors. "Upon my word," the knight replied, "then you shall all three die; for you could not withstand us, were you the best knights in the whole world."

Then they attacked each other. And it came to pass that before their lances were splintered, the three companions defeated the ten knights. Then they took their swords in hand and went about slaying and cutting them down like cattle. And they would easily have killed them all, had not sixty armed knights come forth from the castle to succour them. In advance of them came an old man who said to the three companions: "Fair lords, have mercy upon yourselves and be not the cause of your

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own death; that would certainly be too bad, for you are worthy men and good knights. Therefore, we would request you to perform what we ask of you." "Surely," said Galahad, "you speak in vain; for it shall never be done while she trusts in me." "What," said the other, "do you wish to die?" "We have not reached that point yet," said Galahad, "but certainly we would rather die than suffer such an indignity as you require." Then the great and marvellous struggle began afresh on both sides, and the companions were attacked from every quarter. But Galahad, who wielded the Sword with the strange belt, struck out to right and left, killing all whom he reached, and performed such wonders that all who saw him thought he could not be a mortal man, but rather some monster. He advanced steadily, without ever turning back, and gaining ground from his enemies. His companions aided him valiantly to right and left, so that none could approach him except directly in front.

Thus the battle lasted until after the noon hour without the three companions feeling any fear or losing any ground. Indeed, they maintained themselves until dark night came on, compelling them to separate, when those from the castle said that the struggle would have to be given up. Then the good man, who had before addressed the three companions, approached them again and said: "My lords, we beseech you in love and courtesy to bide to-night with us, promising loyally to restore you tomorrow in as good condition as you are now. And do you know why I say this? I am sure that as you know the facts in the case, you will permit the damsel to do what we request of her." "My lords," said the damsel, "go, since he invites you." So they agreed at once. Then they made a truce and all entered the castle together. Never was such a joyful reception given to anyone as the inhabitants gave to the three companions. They made them dismount and remove their arms. And when they had eaten their meal, they asked them about the custom of the castle and how and why it had been established. Then one of the inhabitants promptly said: "That we can easily explain to you.

"The fact is that there is here a damsel to whom we and all the people of the country belong, as well as of this and many another castle. Now it came to pass two years ago that she fell ill by Our Lord's desire. And

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when she had languished long, we studied to see what illness she had. And we perceived that she was full of the disease called leprosy. Then we sent for all the physicians from near and far, but none of them could enlighten us regarding her malady. At last a wise man informed us that if we could get a basin full of blood from a damsel who was a virgin both in spirit and in fact, provided she were the daughter of a king and queen and a sister to the chaste Perceval, and then if we should bathe her with this blood, she would be promptly cured. When we heard this, we made it a rule that no damsel should pass by here, provided she were a virgin, without our getting a basin of her blood. So we set guards at the castle gates to stop all those damsels who passed this way. Now you have heard how the custom of the castle was established as you have encountered it. And now you may do about it what you please."

Then the damsel summoned the three companions and said to them: "My lords, you see that this damsel is ill, and that her illness or recovery depends upon me. Now tell me what to do." "In God's name," said Galahad, "if you who are so young and tender do this thing, you cannot avoid death yourself." "In faith," she replied, "were I to die for the sake of this cure, it would be a great honour to me and to all my kin. And I ought to do it, partly for your sake and partly for theirs. For if you fight again to-morrow as you have done to-day, greater damage will inevitably result than from my death. So I tell you that I shall comply with their desire, and the strife will cease. So I pray you for God's sake to grant me your permission." Then they grew very sad.

Then the damsel summoned the people of the place and said to them: "Rejoice and be glad. For there will be no battle to morrow: I promise you that to-morrow I shall carry out the obligation to you as damsels are required to do." When the people heard this, they thanked her very heartily, and began to rejoice and make merry more than they had done before. They served the companions to the extent of their power and gave them the richest beds they could. That night the three companions were well received, and they would have been still more so, had they been willing to take all that was offered them.

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Next morning, when they had heard mass, the damsel came to the palace and ordered them to bring in the damsel who was ill and who was to be cured by her blood. And they said that they would bring her gladly. Then they went to get her in the room where she was. When the companions beheld her, they were greatly astonished; for her face was so disfigured and diseased with the marks of leprosy that it was a marvel how she could live in such distress. When they saw her enter, they arose and made her sit down with them. Then at once she bade the damsel make the sacrifice which she had promised her. And she said she was ready to do so. Then the damsel ordered a basin to be brought. When it was brought, she bared her arm and had one of her veins punctured with a little blade as sharp as a razor. The blood spurted out at once, and she crossed herself and commended herself into Our Lord's keeping, adding to the lady: "Lady, I have submitted to death that you might be healed. For God's sake, pray for my soul, for I am at death's door."

Upon speaking thus, she fainted from loss of blood, for the basin was already full. The companions ran to support her and to stanch the flow of blood. When she had lain in a swoon for some time and was able to speak again, she said to Perceval: "Ah! fair brother Perceval, I am dying that this damsel may be healed. I pray you not to bury my body in this country, but as soon as I shall have passed away, place me in a little boat in the nearest port, and set me adrift whither chance may carry me. And I tell you that you cannot so quickly reach the city of Sarraz, whither you must go after the Holy Grail, but you will find me already arrived at the foot of the tower. In my honour have my body buried in the church. Do you know why I require this of you? Because Galahad and you shall lie there too."

When Perceval heard this, he wept and willingly promised to do what she had said. Then she added: "Start to morrow, and let each one go his own way until fortune shall unite you at the Cripple King's. For this is the will of the High Master, who issues the command through me in order that you may obey." And they said that they would do so. Then she requested to have her Saviour brought in. So they sent for a worthy hermit who dwelt in a grove quite near the castle. He did not delay his

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coming, for he saw that the need was urgent. So he came to the damsel, and when she saw him approach, she stretched out her hands toward her Saviour, and very devoutly received Him. Then she died, and the companions were so overcome with grief that they thought they could never be comforted.

That very day the lady was cured. For as soon as she had washed in the blood of the holy damsel, she was cleansed and healed of her leprosy, and her flesh was restored to beauty, which before was dark and horrible to behold. The three companions and all the people there were overjoyed at this. Then they did for the damsel what she had requested, removing from the body all that was necessary and embalming it as richly as if it had been the body of an emperor. Then they took a boat and covered it with a rich silken cloth and set up a handsome bed in it. When they had furnished the boat as handsomely as they could, they laid the damsel's body in it, and then launched the boat upon the sea. Then Bors said to Perceval that he regretted that there was no paper with the body by which the damsel might be identified and the manner of her death made known. "I may tell you," said Perceval, "that I have placed by the pillow a paper which tells of her family, and how she met her death, and of all the adventures which she had helped us to accomplish. So that if she should be found in some foreign country, her identity will be known." And Galahad said that he had done well. "For someone may find the body," said he, "who will render it greater honour for knowing the truth about her station and her life."

So long as the people of the castle could see the ship, they stood on the shore, most of them weeping softly, for the damsel had done a very generous act in sacrificing her life to heal a lady of a strange country, and they remarked that never had a damsel done such a thing before. And when they could no longer see the ship, they went back into the castle. But the companions said that they would not enter it again, for love of the damsel whom they had lost there. So they stayed outside and asked the inhabitants to bring out their arms to them, which they promptly did.

When the three companions had mounted and were about to start on their way, they saw that the sky was darkened and the clouds were full

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of rain; so they betook themselves to a chapel beside the road. Putting their horses outside in a shed, they went in, seeing that a heavy storm was imminent. Then it began to thunder and lighten and the bolts fell as thick as rain upon the castle. All day the storm raged so wildly over the castle that fully half of the walls were overthrown and cast to earth, at which they were filled with consternation. For they would not have supposed that in a year's time the castle could be destroyed by such a storm, as they beheld it from outside.

When the weather had cleared after vespers, the companions saw a knight fleeing before them; he was grievously wounded in the body, and he kept saying frequently: "Ah! God, help me, for now am I in need." After him followed another knight and a dwarf, who both cried to him from afar: "You are dead, there is no help for you." But he raised his hands to heaven and cried: "Fair Lord God, help me and let me not die now, so that my life may not desert me in such great trouble as this seems to be!"

When the companions saw the knight who was thus lamenting to Our Lord, they were filled with pity, and Galahad said that he was going to help him. "I wish to do so, sire," said Bors; "you need not bestir yourself on behalf of a single knight." So he said that he would stand aside, since he so desired. Whereupon, Bors mounted his horse, saying: "Fair lords, if I do not return, do not give up your quest on my account, but resume your journey in the morning, each going his own way, and continue your wanderings until Our Lord unites us all three at the Cripple King's." And they told him to set out in Our Lord's safe keeping, and they two would start the next morning. So he left at once and followed the knight to help him who was thus lamenting to Our Lord. But now the story ceases to speak of him, and returns to the two companions who tarried in the chapel.

Chapter XIII

Now the story tells how Galahad and Perceval lay in the chapel all that night, beseeching Our Lord to guard and guide Bors wherever he might go. The next morning, when the day was bright and clear, and the storm was over, and the weather had turned fair, they mounted their steeds and rode toward the castle to see how it had fared with those inside. And when they came to the gate, they found everything burned and the walls thrown down. Upon going inside, they marvelled still more at finding no man or woman who was not dead. Up and down they searched, exclaiming over the great damage done and the great loss of life. When they came to the principal palace, they found the walls overthrown, and the partitions collapsed, and the knights lying dead here and there, just as Our Lord had blasted and smitten them for the sinful life they had led. When the companions saw all this, they said that it was caused by Heaven's vengeance. "It would never have happened thus," said they, "had it not been to appease the wrath of the Creator of the world." While they were conversing thus, they heard a voice which said to them: "This is revenge for the blood of the virtuous maiden, which has been shed here for the earthly cure of a wicked sinner." When they heard these words, they said that Our Lord's vengeance is a marvellous thing, and that any man is mad who transgresses His will either for death or life.

When the two companions had gone about the castle for some time, looking at the devastation caused by death, they found beside a chapel a cemetery full of trees in bloom and of green grass, and in it were many handsome sepulchres perhaps as many as sixty. It was so beautiful and peaceful that it did not seem that any storm had visited it. Such, indeed,

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was the case, for there lay the bodies of the maidens who had died for the lady's sake. When they had entered the cemetery, mounted as they were, they came upon the tombs, and found on each the name of her who lay within. So they went about reading the inscriptions until they discovered that there were buried there twelve damsels, all daughters of kings and sprung from high lineage. At the sight of this, they said that it was indeed an evil and wicked custom which had been maintained in the castle, and that the people of the country had suffered it too long, for many a rich family had been cast down and brought to naught through the death of these maidens.

When the two companions had tarried there until the hour of prime and had seen enough, they left and rode until they came to a forest. Being about to enter it, Perceval said to Galahad: "To day we must separate and each go his own way. So I commend you to Our Lord's keeping, and may He grant that we soon meet again. For I have never found a man whose company seemed so sweet and agreeable as yours; so this parting grieves me much more than you may suppose. Yet it must be so, since it pleases Our Lord." When he removed his helmet, Galahad did the same, and they kissed at parting, for great was their love for one another: this appeared clearly in their death, for one barely survived the other. Thus the companions separated on the edge of the forest, called by the people of the country Aube, and each one went his way. Now the story ceases to speak of them, and returns to Lancelot, of whom nothing has been said for a long time.

Chapter XIV

Now the story tells how, when Lancelot had come to the river Marcoise, he saw himself shut in by three things that caused him great anxiety. On one side lay the great pathless forest; on either hand were two lofty ancient rocks; and in front of him was the river deep and dark. These three things inclined him not to move from where he was, but to await God's mercy: so he tarried there until night fell. When night had taken the place of day, Lancelot removed his arms and lay down beside them, commending himself into Our Lord's keeping and praying the best he knew that Our Lord would not forget him but would send him the help of which his soul and body stood in need. Having said this, he fell asleep and his heart thought no more of Our Lord than of purely earthly things. And when he was asleep, there came a voice which spoke to him: "Lancelot, arise, take thy arms, and enter the first boat thou shalt find." When he heard this, he trembled all over and opened his eyes and saw all about him such a great light that he thought it must be day; but presently it disappeared so that he did not know what became of it. Then he raised his hand and crossed himself and, commending himself to Our Lord, he armed himself. When he was completely armed with his sword girt on, he looked toward the river bank and saw a boat without any sail or oar; so he went toward it and entered in. As soon as he was on board, it seemed to him that he smelt all the sweet odours in the world, and that he was nourished with all the good things ever tasted by mortal man. Then he was a hundred times more contented than before, for he appeared to have all that he ever desired in his life: wherefore he gave thanks to Our Lord. Then he knelt in his boat and said: "Fair Father Jesus Christ, I know not whence all this comes, unless it be from Thee. For I

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now see that my heart is possessed by such joy and comfort that I cannot tell whether I am on earth or in the terrestrial paradise." Then he leaned upon the edge of the boat and fell asleep in great happiness.

All that night Lancelot slumbered in such peace that it seemed to him that he was not the same man as before, but changed. In the morning when he awoke, he looked about him and saw in the middle of the boat a very beautiful rich bed. And in the middle of the bed lay a lifeless maiden, whose face alone was uncovered. At the sight of her, he stood up and crossed himself and thanked Our Lord for affording him such company. Then he drew near, seeking to learn who she was and of what lineage. He looked at her up and down until he espied a letter beneath her head. He put out his hand to take it, and on unfolding it, found writing in it which said: "This damsel was the sister of Perceval le Gallois, and was always a virgin in thought and in deed. It was she who changed the belt on the Sword with the strange belt which Galahad, son of Lancelot of the Lake, now carries." Farther on in the letter he found the story of her life and the manner of her death, and how the three companions, Galahad, Bors and Perceval, had wrapped her thus in a shroud and placed her on the ship at the bidding of the divine voice. When he had learned the truth of all this, he was much happier than before; for he was delighted to know that Bors and Galahad were together. So he put the letter back in its place, and coming to the edge of the boat, he prayed Our Lord that before the conclusion of the Quest he might encounter Galahad his son, and see him and talk and rejoice with him.

While Lancelot was engaged in prayer on this account, he looked and saw that the ship had arrived at an ancient rock near a little chapel, before whose door sat an old white haired man. As soon as he was near enough to make him hear, he called out a greeting to him. And the worthy man replied to his salutation more vigorously than Lancelot expected he could do. Then he arose from where he was sitting and came to the edge of the boat, sat down on a mound of earth, and asked Lancelot what chance had brought him there. So he told him the facts about himself and how fortune had brought him where he thought he

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had never been before. Then the old man asked him who he was, and he told him his name. When he heard that he was Lancelot of the Lake, he marvelled greatly how he happened to be in this ship. So he inquired who was with him. "Sire," said Lancelot, "come and see, if you please." Then he went on board and found the damsel and the letter. When he had read it through and had learned of the Sword with the strange belt, he said: "Ah! Lancelot, I did not expect to live to learn the name of this sword. Now you may call yourself unfortunate, since you were not on hand to achieve this noble adventure in which these three worthy men have been engaged, who were sometime reckoned to be less valiant than you. But now it is clearly shown that they are more worthy and better knights toward God than you have been. Yet, whatever you may have done in the past, I am sure that if you would keep henceforth from mortal sin and opposition to your Creator, you could still find pity and mercy in Him in whom all pity dwells, who has called you back to the way of truth. But tell me now how you came to enter this ship." When he had told him, the old man replied in tears: "Lancelot, know that Our Lord has shown you great favour when He brought you into the company of this noble and sainted maid. See now that you be henceforth chaste in thought and in deed, so that your chastity may accord with hers. Thus your companionship may endure." And he promised him truly with heart unfeigned that he would never do aught which he thought displeasing in his Creator's eyes. "Go now, for you must not longer delay. For, if God will, you shall reach the dwelling where you wish so much to be." "And you, sire," said Lancelot, "do you stay here?" "Yes," he replied, "for so it must be."

While they were speaking thus, the wind struck the ship and carried it away from the rock. And when they saw that they were being separated from each other, they commended each other to God, and the old man returned to his chapel. But before he left the rock, he called out: "Ah! Lancelot, servant of Jesus Christ, for God's sake do not forget me, but ask Galahad, the true knight, whom you will soon have in your company, to pray to Our Lord in His gentle pity to have mercy on me!" Thus the good man shouted after Lancelot, who was very glad to hear

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what he said, that Galahad was soon to be his companion. So he came to the edge of the boat and prostrated himself upon his elbows and knees, and addressed his prayers and orisons to Our Lord that He would lead him where he might do what was pleasing to Him.

Thus was Lancelot a month and more in the ship without once leaving it. And if anyone should ask upon what he lived all that time, having found nothing in the boat to eat, the story answers that the High Lord who fed the people of Israel on manna in the desert, and who caused water to issue from the rock to slake their thirst, sustained this man too; thus, each morning as soon as he had finished his prayer and had supplicated the High Master and requested Him not to forget him, but to send him his bread as the father ought to do for his son, every time that Lancelot made this prayer, he found himself so replete and furnished with the grace of the Holy Spirit that it seemed to him that he had tasted of all the pleasant meats in the world.

When he had gone thus a long time without once leaving the ship, it happened one night that he came to land by the edge of a forest. Then he listened and heard a knight approaching on horseback and making a noise crashing through the woods. When he came to the edge of the forest and saw the boat, he dismounted and, after removing the saddle and bridle, let the horse go where it wished. Then he came to the ship and crossed himself and came on board completely armed.

When Lancelot saw the knight draw near, he did not run to take his arms, thinking of the promise which the hermit had made about Galahad who would be with him and bear him company a while. So he arose and said: "Welcome, sir knight." But the other was amazed to hear him speak, thinking there was no living soul aboard; so he answered in his astonishment: "Good fortune to you, sire, and in God's name, if it may be, tell me who you are, for I greatly desire to know." So he told his name, and said he was Lancelot of the Lake. "Then truly be welcome, sire," said he; "it is God's truth that I desired to see you and have you as a companion above all others in the world. And so it is natural, for it is from you that I am sprung." Then the knight removed his helmet and set it in the middle of the boat. And Lancelot asked of him: "Ah! Galahad, is

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it you?" "Yes, sire," said he, "it is truly I." When he heard that, he ran to him with outstretched arms, and they began to embrace each other and rejoice in a way I could not describe.

Then each asked the other how he was. Then each told of the adventures which had befallen him since they had left the court. They continued thus in conversation until day dawned and the sun rose next morning. When the day was bright and clear, they could see and recognise each other, and they began to be exceeding glad. When Galahad beheld the damsel who lay in the boat, he recognised her as the one whom he had seen before. So he asked Lancelot if he knew who she was. "Yes," he answered, "I know full well. For the letter by her head clearly reveals the truth. But for God's sake tell me whether you have achieved the adventure of the Sword with the strange belt." "Yes, sire," said he, "and if you have never seen the Sword, behold it here." When Lancelot looked at it, he knew at once that this was it; and he seized it by the hilt and began to kiss the pommel and the scabbard and the blade. Then he asked Galahad to tell him how and where he had found it. And he told him all about the ship which Solomon's wife had had made, and the three planks, and how Eve, the first mother, had planted the first tree, whose shoots were by nature coloured white and green and red. And when he had told him all about the ship and the inscriptions they had found in it, Lancelot confessed that never had such a high adventure come to any knight as had befallen him.

Lancelot and Galahad abode in this ship for half a year and more, attentive to serve their Creator heartily. Many a time they came to strange islands far from human kind, where nothing but wild beasts dwelt, where they encountered and achieved marvellous adventures, partly by their own prowess and partly by the grace of the Holy Spirit which always aided them. But of these things the story of the Holy Grail makes no mention, for it would take too long to tell all that befell them.

After Easter, in the spring when all things turn green and the birds sing in the woods their sweet songs in welcome of the pleasant season, and everything turns more to joy than at any other season—about that time it happened one day at noon that they came to land at the edge of a

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forest in front of a cross. Then they saw a knight come forth from the forest armed in white armour; he was richly mounted himself and led another white horse by the bridle. When he saw the ship come to land, he came to the place as fast as he could, saluted the two knights in the name of the High Master, and said to Galahad: "Sir knight, you have been with your father long enough. Leave the ship and mount this fair white horse and go whither chance may lead you, seeking and accomplishing the adventures of the kingdom of Logres."

When he heard this, he ran to his father, kissed him tenderly, and said to him weeping: "Fair gentle sire, I know not if I shall ever see you again. I commend you to Jesus Christ Himself, and may He preserve you in His service." Then they both began to weep. When Galahad had left the ship and had mounted, there came a voice between them which said to them: "Now let each one think of doing right, for you shall not see each other again before the great and terrible day when Our Lord will render to every man according to his deserts: that will be on the day of judgment." When Lancelot heard these words, he said in tears to Galahad: "Son, since I must depart from you forever, pray the High Master that He may not let me quit His service, but that He may keep me as His servant both on earth and in heaven." Then Galahad replied: "Sire, no prayer is as potent as your own. So do not forget yourself." Then they parted, and Galahad entered the forest. And a great and wonderful wind struck the ship and soon carried Lancelot from the shore.

Thus Lancelot was all alone in the ship, except for the corpse of the damsel. And he was carried for a month about the sea, sleeping little and in vigils much, praying Our Lord tenderly in tears to bring him where he might see something of the Holy Grail.

One evening it chanced that he came to land in front of a fair rich town well situated; and in the rear of the town there was a gate which opened toward the water, and which was always open day and night. No one who dwelt there stood on guard, for there were always two lions opposite each other guarding the entrance, so that anyone wishing to pass through that gate could do so only by passing between them.

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When the ship came to land there, the moon was shining so brightly that one could see far and near. And straightway he heard a voice which said: "Lancelot, leave the ship and enter this town, where thou shalt find much of what thou seekest and hast yearned so ardently to behold." Upon hearing this, he ran at once and seized his arms, leaving behind nothing which he had brought with him. And when he was on shore, he came to the gate and found the two lions; then he thought that he could not escape without a fight, so he drew his sword and prepared to defend himself. But as soon as he had drawn his sword, he looked up and saw a burning hand which struck him so forcibly on the arm that his sword flew from his hand. Then he heard a voice saying: "Ah! man poor in faith and trust, why dost thou trust more in thy hand than in thy Creator? Thou art very wretched, not to believe that He in whose service thou art engaged can avail more than thy arms!"

Lancelot was so abashed by these words and by the hand that had struck him that he fell to the ground stunned, and was so overcome that he did not know whether it was day or night. But after a while he stood up and said: "Ah! fair Father Jesus Christ, I thank you and adore you for deigning to reprove me for my misdeeds. Now I see clearly that you regard me as your servant, since you have shown me this token of my lack of faith."

Then Lancelot took his sword and replaced it in the scabbard, saying he would never draw it out again, but would trust in the mercy of Our Lord. "And if it please Him that I die, it will be the salvation of my soul. And if it so be that I escape death, it will redound to my greater honour." Then he crossed himself upon his forehead and, commending himself to Our Lord, approached the lions. When they saw him drawing near, they remained passive and gave no evidence of intending to do him harm. So he passed between them without their touching him. And he came to the main thoroughfare and walked up through the town until he reached the citadel. Everyone had retired throughout the town, for it might have been midnight by now. He went up the steps until he found himself in the main hall, all armed as he was. And when he was upstairs, he looked everywhere, but saw no man or woman, which greatly

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surprised him, for he could not believe that such a fine palace and such handsome apartments should be deserted. So he passed on and decided he would continue until he found someone who would tell him where he was, for he did not even know what country he was in.

So Lancelot kept on until he reached a chamber of which the door was closed and locked. He put his hand on the door and tried to open it, but in vain; he even made a great effort, but he could do nothing to effect an entrance. Then he listened, and heard a voice chanting so sweetly that it seemed to be the voice rather of some heavenly than of a mortal creature. And the voice seemed to be saying: "Glory, praise and honour to Thee, Father in heaven!" When Lancelot heard what the voice was saying, his heart was melted; and he knelt beside the chamber door, for he thought the Holy Grail might be inside. So he said weeping: "Fair sweet Father Jesus Christ, if I ever did aught which pleased Thee, fair Lord, in Thy pity do not bear me any grudge, but show me some revelation of what I am seeking."

As soon as Lancelot had said this, he looked in front of him and saw the door of the chamber open, and through it there shone as bright a light as if the sun were lodged therein. Because of the bright light which issued forth, the whole building was illuminated as if all the candles in the world were lighted. When he saw this, he was very happy and felt such a desire to see whence this brightness came that he forgot all else. So he approached the chamber door and was about to enter in, when a voice said to him: "Flee, Lancelot, do not enter, for you must not do so. If you go in despite this prohibition, you shall repent of it." When Lancelot heard this, he drew back sorrowfully, like one who would fain go in but yet refrained because of the prohibition he had heard.

Yet he looked into the room and saw the Holy Vessel covered with a red silk cloth. And all around he saw angels serving the Holy Vessel, some holding silver censers and lighted candles, others holding crosses and altar vessels, and there was none who was not doing his part. In front of the Holy Vessel there sat an old man dressed like a priest, and it appeared that he was assisting at the sacrament of the mass. When he was about to elevate the body of Our Lord, it seemed to Lancelot that

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above the good man's hands there appeared the figures of three men in the air, two of whom placed the youngest of them in the priest's hands; and thus he raised him on high and appeared to manifest him to the people.

Then Lancelot, who beheld these things, was not a little astonished: for he saw that the priest was so burdened with the figure he held up, that it seemed he must succumb beneath the weight. When he saw this, he wished to go to aid him, for he thought that none of the others present had any intention to lend a hand. Then his desire to come forward was so great that he forgot the prohibition which had been laid upon him not to set foot within the room. Then he advanced quickly to the door, saying: "Ah! fair Father Jesus Christ, may it not bring me to punishment and loss if I wish to help this worthy man in his necessity." Then he went in and walked toward the silver table. And when he approached it, he felt a breath of air, as it seemed to him, as hot as if it were mixed with flame, which smote him in the face so fiercely that he felt as if his face were blasted with the heat. Then his strength failed him, like one whose power of body and of hearing and seeing is affected, and all his limbs were powerless. Then he felt several hands seize him and carry him away. And when they had roughly picked him up, they cast him out of the room and deserted him there.

The next morning, when the day appeared bright and clear, the people of the place arose and found Lancelot lying before the chamber door and they marvelled greatly what the cause could be. When they bade him rise, he showed no sign of hearing them and did not stir. Thereupon, they supposed that he was dead. So they quickly removed his arms and examined him all over to find out if he was alive. And they found that he was not dead, but full of life; but he had no power to speak or to utter a word, but lay like a clod of earth. So they picked him up bodily in their arms and carried him into one of the rooms, where they laid him upon a very rich bed, far from the crowd, that he might not be disturbed by any noise. And they took the best care of him they could, remaining beside him all day, and often speaking to him to see if he would reply. But he answered never a word and gave the appearance

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of never having been able to speak. They examined his pulse and his veins, and thought it very strange that a knight who was fully alive could not speak to them; but some said that they could not explain the cause for this unless it was some vengeance or manifestation of Our Lord.

All that day the people stayed with Lancelot, as well as the third and fourth, some saying that he was dead, and others that he was alive. "In God's name," said an old man who was present and who knew something of medicine, "I tell you truly that he is not dead, but as full of life as the healthiest of us all; so my advice is that he be cared for well and richly until Our Lord restores him to his customary health; then we shall know the truth about him, who he is and from what land. And truly, if I ever knew anything aright, I believe that he has been one of the good knights in the world, and shall be so yet again, if Our Lord wills: he need not yet be afraid of death, it seems to me, though I do not say that he may not languish for some time in his present state." Thus spake the old man of Lancelot, as one who was very wise. And every word he said turned out to be true. For they cared for Lancelot for twenty-four days and nights, and in all that time he neither drank nor ate, nor did a word come from his mouth, nor did he stir foot or hand or any other member, nor did he give any evidence of being alive. Yet every time they examined him, they concluded that he was alive. So all the men and women pitied him, saying: "God! what a pity it is about this knight, who appears to have been so valiant and excellent and handsome, and now God has reduced him to this state of confinement!" Thus they often spoke of Lancelot and wept for him; yet, with all their inquiries, they did not recognise him as Lancelot. Nevertheless, many knights were there who had often seen him and ought to have recognised him.

Thus Lancelot lay for twenty four days while the people of the place awaited his death. But on the twenty-fourth day about noon he opened his eyes. And when he saw the people, he began to lament bitterly, and said: "Ah! God, why have you awakened me so soon? Just now I was more comfortable than I shall ever be again! Ah! fair Father Jesus Christ, who could ever be so favoured or so worthy as to behold clearly the great marvels of your secrets in that place where my sinful gaze and my

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sight befouled by worldly lusts were blinded?" When those who surrounded Lancelot heard these words, they were very joyful and asked him what he had seen. "I have seen," said he, "such great wonders and blessings that my tongue could not reveal them to you, nor could my heart itself conceive of them, so great are they. For they are not earthly things, but things of the spirit. And were it not for my great sin and misfortune, I should have seen still more; but I lost the sight of my eyes and the strength of my body because of the great disloyalty which God saw in me."

Then Lancelot said to those who were present: "Fair lords, I marvel greatly how I happen to be here. For I do not recollect how or in what manner I got here." Then they told him all they had seen of him, and how he had been with them twenty-four days without their knowing whether he was dead or alive. When he heard this, he began to consider the meaning of his having continued so long in that state. And finally he reflected that he had served the devil for twenty four years, wherefore Our Lord had punished him by depriving him of the strength of his body and members for twenty-four days. Then Lancelot looked beside him and espied the hair shirt which he had worn for nearly half a year, but of which he was now deprived. He grieved sorely about this, for he thought that he had violated his vow in this respect. Then they asked him how he felt, and he replied that he felt sound and healthy, thank God. "But for God's sake tell me where I am," he said. And they told him that he was in the castle of Corbenyc.

Then there came a damsel carrying to Lancelot a fresh new linen robe; but he would not put it on, preferring the hair shirt. When those who were about him saw this, they said: "Sir knight, you may well give up the hair shirt, for your quest is at an end; there is no use of your striving further in search of the Holy Grail; for be very sure that you shall see no more of it than you have already seen. Now may God bring us those who are destined to see more of it!" But Lancelot would not be persuaded to give it up, but took the hair shirt and put it on, and over it the linen robe, and then a scarlet robe which was brought to him. When he was dressed and apparelled, all the people came to see him and

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considered marvellous what God had done with him. Then as soon as they looked at him, they recognised him and said: "Ah! my lord Lancelot, is it you?" And he said that it was. Then great and wondrous joy was felt. And the news spread until King Pellés heard of it; for a knight said to him: "Sire, I can tell you something wonderful." "About what?" the king inquired. "Upon my word, this knight who has lain here so long like a dead man has just now got up sound and healthy; well, know that he is my lord Lancelot of the Lake." When the king heard that, he was very glad and went to visit him. And when Lancelot saw him approaching, he rose to meet him and welcomed him, and received him joyfully. The king told him about his fair daughter who was dead, and who was the mother of Galahad. Lancelot was much distressed, because she was such a gentle woman and was descended from such a noble line.

Four days more Lancelot tarried there, which caused the king great joy, for he had long desired to have him with him. But on the fifth day when they were seated at dinner it befell that the Holy Grail had filled the tables so marvellously that no one could imagine a more bounteous provision. While they were eating, something happened which they regarded as a great marvel. For they saw plainly that the doors of the palace closed of themselves without anyone touching them: at which they were greatly amazed. Then a knight fully armed, and mounted on a mighty steed, appeared before the main door and began to shout: "Open, open!" But those within would not open for him. Still he continued to shout, and he annoyed them so that the king himself left the table and went to one of the palace windows looking out on the place where the knight was. He looked at him, and seeing him stationed before the door, he said to him: "Sir knight, you shall not enter here; no one who is seated so high as you shall enter so long as the Holy Grail is here. But begone to your own country, for you do not belong to the companions of the Quest, but are one of those who have deserted the service of Jesus Christ and have enlisted in the devil's service."

When the knight heard that, he was greatly distressed, and was so sorrowful that he knew not what to do. So he turned away; but the king

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called him back and said to him: "Sir knight, since you have come thus far, I pray you to tell me who you are." "Sire," he replied, "I am from the kingdom of Logres, my name is Hector des Mares, and I am brother to my lord Lancelot of the Lake." "In God's name," said the king, "now I know you well, and am more sorry than before; I did not care much before, but now I care indeed because of my affection for your brother who is here within."

When Hector heard that his brother was inside, the man in the world whom he respected most because of the love he bore him, he exclaimed: "Ah! God, now my shame is doubled and increases more and more! Never again shall I be so bold as to come into my brother's presence, since I have proved derelict where the worthy and true knights will never be found wanting. Truly spake the good man on the hill who expounded to me and my lord Gawain the meaning of our dreams!"

Thereupon Hector left the courtyard and rode away through the town as fast as his horse could carry him. And when the townspeople saw him flee, they cried after him, taunting him and cursing the hour he was born, and calling him a bad and faithless knight; and this made his heart so sore that he wished he were dead. He fled away out of the town and struck into the forest where it appeared to be thickest. Then King Pellés came back to Lancelot and told him about his brother, which grieved Lancelot so deeply that he did not know what he ought to do. The others present could not fail to mark his feelings, when they saw the tears running down his cheeks. So the king regretted having spoken to him about his brother; for he would not have done it for anything had he thought that Lancelot would have taken it so to heart.

When they had eaten, Lancelot requested of the king that his arms might be brought to him, for he would fain journey to the kingdom of Logres where he had not been for over a year. "Sire," said the king, "I beg of you for God's sake to pardon me for telling you about your brother." And he said that he pardoned him willingly. Then the king ordered his arms to be brought, and when they were brought, he took them. When he was equipped and ready to mount, the king had brought into the middle of the courtyard a strong swift horse, which he mounted

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at the king's request. Then, when he had mounted and had bidden farewell to the people of the place, he departed and rode far through strange lands.

One night it happened that Lancelot was lodged in an abbey of White Friars, who showed him great honour because he was a knight-errant. In the morning, when he had heard mass and was about to leave the monastery, he looked to the right and saw a rich fair tomb which had been recently constructed, as he thought. So he turned in that direction to see what it was. And when he drew near, he saw that it was so handsome that he knew that some rich prince must lie beneath it. When he looked at the head, he saw an inscription which said: "Here lies King Bademagus of Gorre, whom Gawain, King Arthur's nephew, killed." When he learned this, he sorrowed not a little, for he loved with a great love King Bademagus. If it had been any other than my lord Gawain who had killed him, he could not have escaped paying the penalty of death. As it was, he wept tenderly and made lament, saying that this was indeed a heavy blow to those of King Arthur's household as well as to many another worthy man.

That day Lancelot tarried there grieving much and in distress for love of the good man who had shown him many an honour. The next morning, when he was armed, he mounted his steed and, commending the friars to God's keeping, he resumed his journey. And in his wanderings he came by chance to the tombs where the swords were set up. As soon as he beheld this strange sight, he rode inside on his horse and examined the tombs. Then he left there and rode until he came to King Arthur's court where all gave him a joyous welcome as soon as they caught sight of him; for greatly had they desired his return and that of the other companions, very few of whom had as yet come back. And those who had returned were ashamed of having accomplished nothing in the Quest. Now the story ceases to speak of them all, and returns to Galahad, the son of Lancelot of the Lake.

Chapter XV

Now the story tells how Galahad, after he had separated from Lancelot, rode for many a day as chance led him, one hour forward and another hour back again, until he came to an abbey where King Mordrain was; and when he heard that the king was waiting for the Good Knight, he thought he would go to see him. So the next day, as soon as he had heard mass, he went where the king was. As soon as he got inside, the king, who for a long time had lost his sight and the strength of his body by Our Lord's will, immediately regained his sight when he drew near him. And at once he sat up straight and said to Galahad: "Galahad, servant of God, true knight whose arrival I have so long awaited, embrace me and allow me to rest upon thy breast, in order that I may pass away in thy arms; for thou art pure and chaste above all other knights, as the fleur-de-lys, which is the emblem of virginity, is whiter than all other flowers. Thou art like the lily in purity, and also like the rose for perfect virtue and flaming hue; for the flame of the Holy Spirit is so kindled and warm in thee that my flesh, which was all dead and worn out, is now all rejuvenated and healthy."

When Galahad heard these words, he sat down by the head of the king's bed, and took him in his arms upon his lap, because the good man wished to rest there. Then the king reclined upon him and, putting his arms about him, began to embrace him, and said: "Fair Father Jesus Christ, now I have my desire fulfilled! Now I beseech Thee to come to fetch me where I am, for there could be no easier and more appropriate place for me to die than this. There is nothing but lilies and roses in this sweet contentment I have so long craved." As soon as he had addressed this request to Our Lord, it became clear that Our Lord had heard his

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prayer, for he promptly returned his soul to Him whom he had served so long, and died in the arms of Galahad. When the others in the abbey learned of this, they came and found that the wounds which he had so long borne on his body were wholly healed: and this they regarded as a miracle. Then they rendered to the body the rites due to a king, and buried it there.

Galahad tarried there two days. On the third he went away, and rode until he came to the Perilous Forest, where he found the boiling spring, of which the story spoke some distance back. But as soon as he put his hand in it, the heat left the water, because in him there had never been any heat of lust. The people of the country considered this a marvellous thing, as soon as they heard that the water had turned cool. So the spring lost the name it had borne before, and was henceforth known as Galahad's Spring.

When he had completed this adventure, he came by chance to the entrance of the country of Gorre, where he found an abbey once visited by Lancelot, where the latter had come upon the tomb of Galahad King of Hoselice, son of Joseph of Arimathæa, and the tomb of Simeon where he had failed. Having arrived there, he looked down into the crypt which was beneath the monastery, and when he saw the tomb burning so marvellously, he asked the friars what it was. "Sire," said they, "this is a strange adventure which can be achieved only by him who shall surpass in goodness and chivalry all the companions of the Round Table." "I should like," said he, "if it pleased you, to have you take me to the entrance of the crypt," which they said they would gladly do. So they took him to the entrance of the crypt, and he went down the steps. As soon as he drew near, the tomb of fire, which for many a day had burned bright and strong, subsided and the flame flickered, because of the arrival of him in whom was no sinful heat. When he came to the tomb, he raised it up and saw within the body of Simeon who had died; and as soon as the heat had ceased, he heard a voice which said: "Galahad, Galahad, you ought to render profound thanks to Our Lord for granting you such a favour: for because of your good life, you can retrieve souls from punishment on earth and set them in the joys of

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paradise. I am your relative Simeon who for three hundred and fifty four years have dwelt here in this burning heat to expiate a sin which I once committed against Joseph of Arimathæa. I should have been lost and damned with the punishment which I have endured. But the grace of the Holy Spirit, which in you avails more than earthly chivalry, has looked upon me with pity because of the great humility in you, and in its mercy has delivered me from earthly woe and set me in the joy of heaven through the favour afforded by your arrival." The others present, who had come down as soon as the flame was extinguished, heard these words, and considered it a great marvel and miracle. Then Galahad took the body and removed it from the tomb where it had so long been, and carried it into the middle of the church. Then the friars took it and buried it as befitted a knight, for such he had been, and held a suitable service with interment in front of the high altar. Then they came to Galahad and showed him the greatest honour in their power, and asked him whence he came and to whom he belonged. And he told them the truth about it all.

The next morning, when Galahad had heard mass, he left there, commending the friars to God, and rode five full years before coming to the residence of the Cripple King. And during all these five years Perceval bore him company wherever he went. Within that time they had so completely achieved the adventures of the kingdom of Logres that few were ever seen there afterward except some miraculous revelation of Our Lord. And wherever they passed, and whatever the number of their foes, they could never be discomfited or dismayed or frightened.

One day it happened that they came forth from a great and marvellous forest. And there they met at a cross-road Bors who was riding alone. When they recognised him, do not ask whether they were glad and happy, for they had long been without his company and greatly desired to see him. So they made much of each other, celebrating the honour and good fortune of the meeting. Then they asked him how he was, and he told them the truth and how he had fared: and he said that full five years had passed without his lying four times in any bed or in any house where people lived; but he had slept in lonely woods and

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distant mountains, where he would have died more than a hundred times, had it not been for the grace of the Holy Spirit which had comforted and cheered him in his distress. "And did you find what we are looking for?" asked Perceval. "Certainly not," said he, "yet I believe that we shall not separate before we have finished that for which we started upon this Quest." "God grant us that!" said Galahad, "for so help me God, I know of nothing which could make me so happy as your arrival which delights me and satisfies my desire."

Thus chance brought the three companions together as chance had previously separated them. They journeyed together for a long time until one day they came to the castle of Corbenyc. When they were inside and the king recognised them, the joy was great and marvellous, for it was generally known that with their arrival the adventures of the castle would end, which had so long existed. And the news travelled far and wide, until all the inhabitants came to see them. King Pellés wept over Galahad, his nephew, and so did the others who had seen him as a little child.

When they had removed their arms, Elyezer, the son of King Pellés, brought to them the Broken Sword, of which the story has already been told, and with which Joseph had been smitten through the thigh. And when he had drawn it from the scabbard and had told them how it came to be broken, Bors took it to see if he could join it again, but without success. When he saw that he was not equal to the task, he handed it to Perceval, saying: "Sire, see whether you can achieve this adventure." "Willingly," he replied. So he took the sword just as it was and fitted the two pieces together, but could by no means join them. Seeing this, he said to Galahad: "Sire, we have failed in this adventure. Now you must try, and if you fail, I think it will never be achieved by mortal man." Then Galahad took the two pieces of the sword and fitted them together. And at once the pieces became joined so marvellously that no one in the world could detect the break or know that it had ever been broken.

When the companions beheld this, they said that God had granted them a good beginning, and that they believed that they would easily accomplish the other adventures, since this one had now been achieved.

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When the others present saw that the adventure of the sword had been concluded, they were very happy. They presented it to Bors, saying that it could not be in better hands, for he was such a wonderfully fine knight and worthy man.

When the vesper hour arrived, the weather changed, the sky grew dark, and a great and marvellous wind arose which fairly struck the palace; and the heat of the wind was so fierce that many of them expected to be burned, and some fainted with fear. Then they heard a voice saying: "Let those who are not entitled to sit at the table of Jesus Christ withdraw; for the true knights are about to be fed with food from heaven."

Upon hearing this, all went out without delay, except King Pellés, who was a worthy man of holy life, his son Elyezer and a damsel who was the king's niece, the most holy and religious creature known in those days in any land. With these three the three companions remained to see what revelation Our Lord would be pleased to grant them. After waiting a little while, they saw coming through the door nine armed knights, who took off their helmets and armour; then approaching Galahad, they bowed to him and said: "Sire, we have come in haste to be present with you at the table when the precious food is to be broken." Then he replied that they had arrived in time, for they too had just got there. Then they all sat down in the midst of the palace, and Galahad asked them whence they came. Three of them said they came from Gaul, and three from Ireland, and the other three from Denmark.

While they were conversing thus, they saw come out from one of the adjoining chambers a wooden bed borne by four damsels. Upon the bed there lay a worthy man apparently in great distress, and he had a golden crown upon his head. When the damsels had carried him into the middle of the hall, they set him down and withdrew. Then he lifted his head and said to Galahad: "Welcome, sire! I have long desired to see you and have long waited for you to come, being in such pain and anguish the while that any other could not have endured the trial. But now, if it please God, has come the hour when my grief is to be relieved, and I shall depart from this life as it was long ago promised me."

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While they were speaking thus, they heard a voice saying: "Anyone who has not been a companion of the Quest of the Holy Grail should now withdraw: for he may not longer remain here." As soon as these words were uttered, King Pellés and his son Elyezer and the damsel withdrew. When the palace was emptied of all except those who knew themselves to be companions of the Quest, it seemed at once to those who had remained that there came from heaven a man dressed in the garb of a bishop, with a crozier in his hand and a mitre upon his head; and four angels carried him upon a rich seat and seated him at the table on which was the Holy Grail. He who had been carried in like a bishop had words on his brow which said: "Behold Josephe, the first Christian bishop, whom Our Lord anointed in the city of Sarraz, in the temple there." And the knights seeing this understood the words, but marvelled how it could be true; for this Josephe to whom the words referred had been dead more than three hundred years. But he spoke to them at once, and said: "Ah! knights of God, servants of Jesus Christ, marvel not to see me before you as I am in the presence of this Holy Vessel; for just as I served it in the flesh, so I serve it being a spirit."

Saying this, he drew near the silver table and prostrated himself on his elbows and knees before the altar. And when he had continued thus for some space, he listened and heard the chamber door open and slam loudly. So he looked in that direction, as did all the others. And they saw the angels come in who had carried Josephe, two of them bearing two tapers, and the third a red silk cloth, and the fourth a lance which dripped blood so freely that the drops fell down into a box in his other hand. Then the two set the tapers upon the table, and the third laid the cloth beside the Holy Vessel, and the fourth held the lance straight up over the Holy Vessel so that the blood which was flowing down the lance dropped into it. As soon as they had done all this, Josephe arose and removed the lance a little from the Holy Vessel and covered the latter with the cloth.

Then Josephe prepared to celebrate the sacrament of the mass. And after waiting a little, he took in the sacred Vessel a wafer apparently of bread. And at the elevation there came down from heaven a figure as of

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a child with a face as red as if it were aflame with fire; and He entered into the bread so that those present saw clearly that the bread had assumed the form of carnal man. When Josephe had held it thus a while, he put it back in the Holy Vessel.

When Josephe had performed the priest's part in the service of the mass, he came up to Galahad and kissed him, and told him in like manner to kiss all his brothers. And so he did. When this ceremony was over, he said to them: "Servants of Jesus Christ, who have striven and toiled to behold a part of the wonders of the Holy Grail, sit down now at this table, and you shall be filled with the best and most precious food that ever knights tasted, and this from the very hand of your Saviour. And you can say that you have toiled to good purpose, for you shall receive to-day the highest reward that ever knights received." Having said this, Josephe vanished from their midst, so that they never knew what had become of him. Then they sat down at once at the table in great fear, and wept so tenderly that their faces were all wet with tears.

Then the companions looked and saw come forth from the Holy Vessel a man as it were quite naked, and His hands and feet and body were bleeding; and He said to them: "My knights and servants and My loyal sons, who while yet in this mortal life have become spiritual, who have sought for Me so long that I can no longer conceal Myself from you, it is fitting that you should behold a part of My mysteries and secrets, for you have proved yourselves worthy to sit at My table, where no knight ever ate since the time of Joseph of Arimathæa. Some of the others have partaken as faithful servants: that is, some of the knights here and many others have been satisfied with the grace of the Holy Vessel; but they have never been in the same position which you now occupy. Now take and receive the precious food which you have so long desired, and for which you have endured such toil."

Then He Himself took the Holy Vessel and came to Galahad, to whom when he had kneeled, He gave to partake of his Saviour. And he received Him joyfully with folded hands. So did each of the others, and there was none to whom it did not seem that something like bread was placed in his mouth. When they had all received of this precious food,

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which seemed to them so marvellously sweet that they thought that all the savours they could imagine were entering their bodies, He who had regaled them thus said to Galahad; "Son, so pure and clean as mortal man can be, dost thou know what I am holding in My hands?" "Nay," he replied, "unless you tell me." He replied: "It is the bowl from which Jesus Christ ate of the lamb on Easter Day with His disciples. This is the bowl which has served acceptably all those whom I have found serving Me; this is the bowl which no faithless man ever beheld without suffering for it. And because it has thus served all manner of people acceptably, it is properly called the Holy Grail. Now thou hast seen what thou hast so desired to see and what thou hast coveted. But thou hast not yet beheld it so clearly as thou shalt yet see it. And knowest thou where it is to be? In the temple in the city of Sarraz, and therefore it behoves thee to proceed thither and bear this holy Vessel company, which to-night will leave the kingdom of Logres so that it shall never be seen there again, nor shall it cause any more adventures there. And knowest thou why it is going away? Because its claims are no more served or honoured by the people of this land. For they have turned to a lower worldly life, in spite of having been nourished with grace from this Holy Vessel. And because they have so ill repaid the favour, I divest them of the honour which I had done them. Therefore I wish thee to go to-morrow to the sea, and there thou shalt find the ship in which thou didst find the Sword with the strange belt. In order that thou mayst not go alone, I wish thee to take with thee Perceval and Bors. However, since I do not wish thee to leave this country without curing the Cripple King, I wish thee to take some blood from this lance and anoint his legs with it; for by this shall he be cured, and by nothing else." "Ah! Sire," said Galahad, "why will you not permit all the others to come with me?" "Because I will not have it so," He said, "but I wish to do it after the manner of My disciples. For just as they ate with me at the Last Supper, so you have eaten now with me at the table of the Holy Grail. And you are twelve just as the disciples were, I being over you as the thirteenth, who am to be your Master and Shepherd. Just as I separated them and sent them over the world to preach the true gospel, so I send you, one here and another there. And

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you shall all die in this service, except one of you." Then He gave them His blessing and vanished, so that they knew not what became of Him, except that they saw Him ascend toward heaven.

And Galahad came to the lance which was lying on the table and touched the blood; then he went to the Cripple King and anointed his legs with it where he had been wounded. Then the king clothed himself and left the bed healthy and whole. And he thanked Our Lord for having so promptly regarded him with His favour. He lived a long time yet, but not in the world, for he withdrew at once into a community of White Friars. And Our Lord performed many a fine miracle for love of him, of which the story does not tell in this place, as there is no need of it.

About midnight, when they had prayed for a long time to Our Lord that in His mercy He would conduct them with safety for their souls whithersoever they might go, a voice descended in their midst which said: "Ye who are My true sons and not My step-sons, My friends and not My enemies, be gone from here and go where you think you will fare best, as chance may lead you." When they heard this, they all answered with one voice: "Father in heaven, blessed be Thou who hast deigned to call us Thy sons and Thy friends! Now we see clearly that we have not wasted our efforts."

Thereupon they left the palace and came down into the courtyard where they found arms and horses. Then they equipped themselves and mounted at once. And when they were mounted, they rode out from the castle and asked each other where they came from, in order that they might recognise each other. Thus they discovered that among the three who came from Gaul was Claudin, the son of Claudas, and that the others, from whatever land they came, were gentlemen of high lineage. When the time came to separate, they embraced each other like brothers and wept very tenderly, and they all said to Galahad: "Sire, you must know that we were never so happy as when we knew that we should be in your company, nor was grief ever so bitter as ours now that we must depart from you so soon. But we see that this separation is pleasing to Our Lord; and therefore we must part without grieving." "Fair

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gentlemen," said Galahad, "if you liked my company, I liked yours just as much. But you see that we must not remain together. Therefore I commend you to God, and pray you, if you come to King Arthur's court, to salute my father, my lord Lancelot, and those of the Round Table." And they said that, if they passed that way, they would not forget the commission.

Then they separated. Then Galahad with his two companions rode until they came to the sea in less than four days. They would have reached it sooner, but they did not travel directly, not being acquainted with the roads.

Upon reaching the sea, they found on the shore the ship in which the Sword with the strange belt had been discovered, and they saw the inscription on the side of the ship which forbade anyone to enter unless he believed firmly in Jesus Christ. When they came to the side and looked in, they saw in the middle of the bed, which was in the ship, the silver table which they had left at the Cripple King's. And the Holy Grail was upon it, covered with a red silk cloth like a napkin. When the companions beheld this strange thing, they showed it to one another, and said that they were fortunate indeed to have what they most loved and cherished bear them company where they were to dwell. Then they crossed themselves and, commending themselves to Our Lord, they entered the ship. And as soon as they were on board, the wind, which before had been quiet and calm, struck the sail so violently that it drove the ship from the shore and out to sea. Then it began to sail very swiftly, as the wind drove it more and more.

Thus they sailed over the sea for a long time without knowing whither God was leading them. Every time that Galahad lay down or rose up, he prayed to Our Lord that whensoever He should require of him his translation from this world, He would send for him. He prayed this prayer so often at morning and evening that the divine voice said to him: "Fear not, Galahad, for Our Lord will perform thy desire concerning this: whenever thou shalt request the death of thy body, thou shalt have thy request, and shalt receive the life of thy soul with eternal bliss." This request, which Galahad had so often preferred, was heard by

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Perceval; and he wondered greatly why he made it; so he begged him in the name of the comradeship and the faith which united them, to tell him why he sought such a favour. "I will tell you," Galahad replied. "At that time when we saw a part of the marvels of the Holy Grail which Our Lord revealed to us in His holy mercy, as I beheld the mysteries which are not discovered to everyone, but only to the ministers of Jesus Christ—at that moment when I saw these things which the heart of mortal man could not conceive nor tongue describe, my heart was enthralled in such sweet bliss that if I had passed at once from this life, I believe that no man ever died in such contentment as I would then have done. For there stood then before me such a great company of angels and such a host of heavenly powers that I should have been then translated from the earthly to the heavenly life in the satisfaction of the glorious martyrs and the friends of Our Lord. And because I believe that I shall be sometime again in as favourable a position, or mayhap in a better one than I was in then, to behold this great joy, I prefer this request that you have heard. Thus I expect to leave this world, in accordance with Our Lord's will, while beholding the marvels of the Holy Grail."

Thus Galahad announced to Perceval the approach of his death, as it had been revealed to him by the divine message. In this manner, as I have told you, the people of the country of Logres because of their sins lost the Holy Grail, which so often had fed and nourished them. Just as Our Lord sent it to Galahad, to Joseph, and to their posterity because of their virtues, so He cut the wicked heirs off from it because of their wickedness and the evil He found in them. Thus one can see clearly that the wicked lost through their perversity what the good preserved through their virtue.

The companions continued a long time at sea, until one day they said to Galahad: "Sire, you have never lain upon this bed which, according to the inscription, was prepared for you. You ought to do so, for the letters state that you shall lie upon it." So he said that he would do so. And he lay down and slept for a long time. When he awoke, he looked about him and beheld the city of Sarraz. Then there came to them a voice which

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said: "Leave the ship, knights of Jesus Christ, take this silver table between you three, and carry it just as it is into the city, not setting it down before you enter the temple where Our Lord first consecrated Josephe as bishop."

When they were about to remove the table from the ship, they looked across the water and saw approaching the vessel in which they had long before laid the sister of Perceval. At the sight of it, they exclaimed to each other: "In God's name, this damsel has kept the promise to us in following us here." Then they took the silver table and removed it from the ship, Bors and Perceval carrying it in front, and Galahad behind. Then they started to enter the city. But when they came to the gate, Galahad was exhausted by the weight of the table which was heavy. And he saw a man with crutches sitting under the gate who was awaiting alms from the passers by, who often gave him something out of love for Jesus Christ. As Galahad approached him, he called him, saying: "Good man, come here and help me carry this table up the temple." "Ah! sir, in God's name," said he, "what are you saying? It is more than ten years since I have been able to move without help." "Never mind," Galahad replied, "but rise and have no hesitation, for thou art cured." When Galahad had said this, he tried to see if he could get up; and as soon as he made the effort, he found himself as well and healthy as if he had never had any infirmity in his life. Then he ran to the table and took hold of it opposite to Galahad. And when he was within the city, he told all those whom he met of the miracle which God had wrought in him.

When they had come up into the temple, they saw the seat which Our Lord had formerly prepared for Josephe to occupy. And at once all the people of the city ran together to see the maimed man who had recently been made whole. When the companions had done what was commanded them, they returned to the water-side and entered the ship in which Perceval's sister lay. Then they carried her body upon the bed into the temple, and buried her with honours befitting a king's daughter.

When the king of the city, named Escorant, saw the three companions, he asked them whence they came and what they had carried in on the silver table. And they answered his inquiries truthfully, and

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told him of the marvel of the Holy Grail and the power which God had conferred on it. But he was treacherous and cruel, being a member of the cursed pagan line. So he believed nothing of what they told him, but said they were faithless deceivers. Waiting until he saw them remove their arms, he had them seized by his men and thrown into prison; and he held them closely in confinement for a year without allowing them any freedom. But this turned out well for them; for as soon as they were cast into prison, Our Lord, who was not forgetful of them, sent the Holy Grail to bear them company, by whose favour they were daily nourished so long as they were confined.

At the end of the year Galahad complained to Our Lord one day, saying: "Sire, it seems to me that I have survived in this world long enough: if it please you, release me from it soon." Now that day it happened that King Escorant lay sick unto death. So he sent for them and begged their forgiveness for having wrongfully treated them so ill. They willingly pardoned him, and he died at once.

When he was interred, those of the city were greatly dismayed, for they knew not whom they could make their king. So they took lengthy counsel together; and while they were thus engaged, they heard a voice which said to them: "Take the youngest of the three companions, and he will take care of you and be your counsellor so long as he remains with you." So they obeyed the command of the voice, and took Galahad, making him their unwilling master, and put the crown upon his head. All this he regretted much; but seeing that it must needs be so, he permitted it, for otherwise they would have killed him.

When Galahad had become lord of the land, he constructed on the silver table an ark of gold and precious stones to cover the sacred Vessel. And every morning, as soon as he arose, he and his companions came to the sacred Vessel to make their prayers and orisons.

When the end of the year came around, on the anniversary of the day when he had first won the crown, he and his companions arose early in the morning. And when they came into the temple, they looked at the sacred Vessel; and there they saw a handsome man garbed like a bishop, and he was on his knees before the table making his confession; and

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about him there was such a great company of angels as if he were Jesus Christ Himself. After remaining upon his knees for a long time, he got up and began the mass of the glorious Mother of God. And when he came to the mystery of the mass and had removed the platter from the sacred Vessel, he called Galahad, and said to him: "Come forward, servant of Jesus Christ, and thou shalt behold what thou hast so desired to see." Then he stepped forward and looked within the sacred Vessel. And when he had looked in, he began to tremble violently, as soon as mortal flesh began to gaze upon things of the spirit. Then Galahad stretched forth his hands toward heaven, and said: "Lord, I adore Thee and thank Thee that Thou hast brought my desire to pass, for now I see clearly what tongue could not tell nor heart conceive. Here I behold the motive of courage and the inspiration of prowess; here I see the marvel of marvels! And since it is so, fair gentle Lord, that you have accomplished my desire and allowed me to see what I have always longed to see, now I pray you, just as I am and in this great bliss, to permit me to pass from this earthly life to that in heaven."

As soon as Galahad had addressed this request to Our Lord, the good man who stood before the altar, dressed like a priest, took the Body of Our Lord from the table and offered it to Galahad. Humbly and devoutly he received it. And when he had partaken of it, the good man said to him: "Knowest thou who I am?" "Nay, lord, unless you tell me." "Know, then," said he, "that I am Josephe, son of Joseph of Arimathæa, whom Our Lord has sent to bear thee company. And knowest thou why He has sent me rather than another? Because thou hast resembled me in two respects: in that thou hast beheld the marvels of the Holy Grail as I have done, and in that thou hast been virgin as I am too; and it is right that one pure man should bear another company."

When he heard this, Galahad came up to Perceval and kissed him; then he did the same to Bors, saying to him: "Bors, salute my father, my lord Lancelot, as soon as you see him." Then Galahad prostrated himself on his elbows and knees before the table; but he had not been there long before he fell forward upon his face on the temple floor, for the soul was

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already gone from his body. And the angels bore him away with jubilation, blessing Our Lord.

As soon as Galahad had passed away, a great miracle happened there. For the two companions saw plainly that a hand came down from heaven; but they saw no body to which the hand belonged. Coming straight to the Holy Vessel, it seized it and the lance as well, and carried it up toward heaven, so that since then no man has been bold enough to assert that he had seen the Holy Grail.

When Perceval and Bors saw that Galahad was dead, never were men so sorrowful; and had they not been such good men of virtuous life, they might readily have fallen into despair for the great love they bore him. The people of the country mourned him sorely too, and were in deep distress. His grave was dug there where he died; and as soon as he was interred, Perceval withdrew to a hermitage without the city and assumed the religious garb. Bors accompanied him, but without laying aside his worldly dress, because he was desirous of returning to King Arthur's court. Perceval lived a year and three days in the hermitage, and then died; and Bors had him buried with his sister and with Galahad in the temple.

When Bors saw that he was all alone in such a distant land as in these regions of Babylon, he left Sarraz all armed, and coming to the sea entered a ship. And he had such good fortune that in a very short time he arrived in the kingdom of Logres. When once in the country, he rode until he came to Camelot, where King Arthur was. Never was such joy made over anyone as over him; for they thought they had lost him forever, seeing that he had been so long absent from the country.

When they had finished their meal, the king sent for the clerks who used to set down in writing the adventures of the knights of the court. So when Bors had related the adventures of the Holy Grail just as he had beheld them, they were committed to writing and kept among the rolls at Salisbury. Master Walter Map got them from there to make his book of the Holy Grail for for love of his lord King Henry, who ordered the story to be translated from Latin into French. Here the story concludes, without further mention of the Adventures of the Holy Grail.