

SONGS FROM 'THE BROOK'

I COME from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

ENID

Had suffer'd, or should suffer any taint
 In nature: wherefore going to the king,
 He made this pretext, that his pryncedom lay
 Close on the borders of a territory,
 Wherein were bandit earls, and caitiff knights,
 Assassins, and all flyers from the hand
 Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law:
 And therefore, till the king himself should please
 To cleanse this common sewer of all his realm,
 He craved a fair permission to depart,
 And there defend his marches; and the king
 Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,
 Allowing it, the Prince and Enid rode,
 And fifty knights rode with them, to the shores
 Of Severn, and they past to their own land;
 Where, thinking, that if ever yet was wife
 True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,
 He compass'd her with sweet observances
 And worship, never leaving her, and grew
 Forgetful of his promise to the king,
 Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
 Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
 Forgetful of his glory and his name,
 Forgetful of his pryncedom and its cares.
 And this forgetfulness was hateful to her.
 And by and by the people, when they met
 In two and threes, or fuller companies,
 Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him
 As of a prince whose manhood was all gone,
 And molten down in mere uxoriousness.
 And this she gather'd from the people's eyes:
 This too the women who attired her head,
 To please her, dwelling on his boundless love,

ENID

Told Enid, and they sadden'd her the more:
And day by day she thought to tell Geraint,
But could not out of bashful delicacy;
While he that watch'd her sadden, was the more
Suspicious that her nature had a taint.

At last, it chanced that on a summer morn
(They sleeping each by other) the new sun
Beat thro' the blindless casement of the room,
And heated the strong warrior in his dreams;
Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,
And bared the knotted column of his throat,
The massive square of his heroic breast,
And arms on which the standing muscle sloped,
As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it.
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,
Admiring him, and thought within herself,
Was ever man so grandly made as he?
Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk
And accusation of uxoriousness
Across her mind, and bowing over him,
Low to her own heart piteously she said:

'O noble breast and all-puissant arms,
Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men
Reproach you, saying all your force is gone?
I *am* the cause because I dare not speak
And tell him what I think and what they say.
And yet I hate that he should linger here;
I cannot love my lord and not his name.
Far liefer had I gird his harness on him,
And ride with him to battle and stand by,

ENID

And watch his mightful hand striking great blows
 At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world.
 Far better were I laid in the dark earth,
 Not hearing any more his noble voice,
 Not to be folded more in these dear arms,
 And darken'd from the high light in his eyes,
 Than that my lord thro' me should suffer shame.
 Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,
 And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,
 Or maybe pierced to death before mine eyes,
 And yet not dare to tell him what I think,
 And how men slur him, saying all his force
 Is melted into mere effeminacy?
 O me, I fear that I am no true wife.'

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,
 And the strong passion in her made her weep
 True tears upon his broad and naked breast,
 And these awoke him, and by great mischance
 He heard but fragments of her later words,
 And that she fear'd she was not a true wife.
 And then he thought, 'In spite of all my care,
 For all my pains, poor man, for all my pains,
 She is not faithful to me, and I see her
 Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's hall.'
 Then tho' he loved and revered her too much
 To dream she could be guilty of foul act,
 Right thro' his manful breast darted the pang
 That makes a man, in the sweet face of her
 Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable.
 At this he hurl'd his huge limbs out of bed,
 And shook his drowsy squire awake and cried,
 'My charger and her palfrey,' then to her,

ENID

'I will ride forth into the wilderness;
For tho' it seems my spurs are yet to win,
I have not fall'n so low as some would wish.
And you, put on your worst and meanest dress
And ride with me.' And Enid ask'd, amazed,
'If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault.'
But he, 'I charge you, ask not but obey.'
Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
A faded mantle and a faded veil,
And moving toward a cedarn cabinet,
Wherein she kept them folded reverently
With sprigs of summer laid between the folds,
She took them, and array'd herself therein,
Remembering when first he came on her
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey to her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before
Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,
Before him came a forester of Dean,
Wet from the woods, with notice of a hart
Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,
First seen that day: these things he told the king.
Then the good king gave order to let blow
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn.
And when the Queen petition'd for his leave
To see the hunt, allow'd it easily.
So with the morning all the court were gone.
But Guinevere lay late into the morn,
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her love

ENID

For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt;
 But rose at last, a single maiden with her,
 Took horse, and forded Usk, and gain'd the wood;
 There, on a little knoll beside it, stay'd
 Waiting to hear the hounds; but heard instead
 A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince Geraint,
 Late also, wearing neither hunting-dress
 Nor weapon, save a golden-hilted brand,
 Came quickly flashing thro' the shallow ford
 Behind them, and so gallop'd up the knoll.
 A purple scarf, at either end whereof
 There swung an apple of the purest gold,
 Sway'd round about him, as he gallop'd up
 To join them, glancing like a dragon-fly
 In summer suit and silks of holiday.
 Low bow'd the tributary Prince, and she,
 Sweetly and stately, and with all grace
 Of womanhood and queenhood, answer'd him:
 'Late, late, Sir Prince,' she said, 'later than we!'
 'Yea, noble Queen,' he answered, 'and so late
 That I but come like you to see the hunt,
 Not join it.' 'Therefore wait with me,' she said;
 'For on this little knoll, if anywhere,
 There is good chance that we shall hear the hounds:
 Here often they break covert at our feet.'

And while they listen'd for the distant hunt,
 And chiefly for the baying of Cavall,
 King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth, there rode
 Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf;
 Whereof the dwarf lagg'd latest, and the knight
 Had visor up, and show'd a youthful face,
 Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments.

ENID

And Guinevere, not mindful of his face
 In the king's hall, desired his name, and sent
 Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf;
 Who being vicious, old and irritable,
 And doubling all his master's vice of pride,
 Made answer sharply that she should not know.
 'Then will I ask it of himself,' she said.
 'Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not,' cried the dwarf;
 'Thou art not worthy ev'n to speak of him;'
 And when she put her horse toward the knight,
 Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd
 Indignant to the Queen; at which Geraint
 Exclaiming, 'Surely I will learn the name,'
 Made sharply to the dwarf, and ask'd it of him,
 Who answer'd as before; and when the Prince
 Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,
 Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek.
 The Prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,
 Dyeing it; and his quick, instinctive hand
 Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him:
 But he, from his exceeding manfulness
 And pure nobility of temperament,
 Wroth to be wroth at such a worm, refrain'd
 From ev'n a word, and so returning said:

'I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,
 Done in your maiden's person to yourself:
 And I will track this vermin to their earths:
 For tho' I ride unarm'd, I do not doubt
 To find, at some place I shall come at, arms
 On loan, or else for pledge; and, being found,
 Then will I fight him, and will break his pride,

ENID

And on the third day, will again be here,
So that I be not fall'n in fight. Farewell.'

'Farewell, fair Prince,' answer'd the stately Queen.
'Be prosperous in this journey, as in all;
And may you light on all things that you love,
And live to wed with her whom first you love:
But ere you wed with any, bring your bride,
And I, were she the daughter of a king,
Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the hedge,
Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun.'

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that he heard
The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,
A little vext at losing of the hunt,
A little at the vile occasion, rode,
By ups and downs, thro' many a grassy glade
And valley, with fixt eye following the three.
At last they issued from the world of wood,
And climb'd upon a fair and even ridge,
And show'd themselves against the sky, and sank.
And thither came Geraint, and underneath
Beheld the long street of a little town
In a long valley, on one side of which,
White from the mason's hand, a fortress rose;
And on one side a castle in decay,
Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry ravine:
And out of town and valley came a noise
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed
Brawling, or like a clamour of the rooks
At distance, ere they settle for the night.

ENID

And onward to the fortress rode the three,
 And enter'd, and were lost behind the walls.
 'So,' thought Geraint, 'I have track'd him to his earth.'
 And down the long street riding wearily,
 Found every hostel full, and everywhere
 Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot hiss
 And bustling whistle of the youth who scour'd
 His master's armour; and of such a one
 He ask'd, 'What means the tumult in the town?'
 Who told him, scouring still, 'The sparrow-hawk!'

Then riding close behind an ancient churl,
 Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,
 Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
 Ask'd yet once more what meant the hubbub here?
 Who answer'd gruffly, 'Ugh! the sparrow-hawk.'
 Then riding further past an armourer's,
 Who, with back turn'd, and bow'd above his work,
 Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,
 He put the self-same query, but the man
 Not turning round, nor looking at him, said:
 'Friend, he that labours for the sparrow-hawk
 Has little time for idle questioners.'
 Whereat Geraint flash'd into sudden spleen:
 'A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-hawk!
 Tits, wrens, and all wing'd nothings peck him dead!
 Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg
 The murmur of the world! What is it to me?
 O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
 Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-hawks!
 Speak, if you be not like the rest, hawk-mad,
 Where can I get me harbourage for the night?
 And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy? Speak!
 At this the armourer turning all amazed

ENID

And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
 Came forward with the helmet yet in hand
 And answer'd, 'Pardon me, O stranger knight;
 We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,
 And there is scanty time for half the work.
 Arms? truth! I know not: all are wanted here.
 Harbourage? truth, good truth, I know not, save,
 It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge
 Yonder.' He spoke and fell to work again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet
 Across the bridge that spann'd the dry ravine.
 There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl,
 (His dress a suit of fray'd magnificence,
 Once fit for feasts of ceremony) and said:
 'Whither, fair son?' to whom Geraint replied,
 'O friend, I seek a harbourage for the night.'
 Then Yniol, 'Enter therefore and partake
 The slender entertainment of a house
 Once rich, now poor, but ever open-door'd.'
 'Thanks, venerable friend,' replied Geraint;
 'So that you do not serve me sparrow-hawks
 For supper, I will enter, I will eat
 With all the passion of a twelve hours' fast.'
 Then sigh'd and smiled the hoary-headed Earl,
 And answer'd, 'Graver cause than yours is mine
 To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-hawk:
 But in, go in; for save yourself desire it,
 We will not touch upon him ev'n in jest.'

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,
 His charger trampling many a prickly star
 Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.

ENID

He look'd and saw that all was ruinous.
 Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed with fern;
 And here had fall'n a great part of a tower,
 Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,
 And like a crag was gay with wilding flowers:
 And high above a piece of turret stair,
 Worn by the feet that now were silent, wound
 Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems
 Claspt the grey walls with hairy-fibred arms,
 And suck'd the joining of the stones, and look'd
 A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove.

And while he waited in the castle court,
 The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang
 Clear thro' the open casement of the Hall,
 Singing; and as the sweet voice of a bird,
 Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
 Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
 That sings so delicately clear, and make
 Conjecture of the plumage and the form;
 So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint;
 And made him like a man abroad at morn
 When first the liquid note beloved of men
 Comes flying over many a windy wave
 To Britain, and in April suddenly
 Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green and red,
 And he suspends his converse with a friend,
 Or it may be the labour of his hands,
 To think or say, 'There is the nightingale;'
 So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,
 'Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me.'

It chanced the song that Enid sang was one
 Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid sang:

ENID

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud;
Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm, and cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

'Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands,
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
For man is man and master of his fate.

'Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.'

'Hark, by the bird's song you may learn the nest,'
Said Yniol; 'Enter quickly.' Entering then,
Right o'er a mount of newly-fallen stones,
The dusky-rafter'd many-cobweb'd Hall,
He found an ancient dame in dim brocade;
And near her, like a blossom vermeil-white,
That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,
Her daughter. In a moment thought Geraint,
'Here by God's rood is the one maid for me.'
But none spake word except the hoary Earl:
'Enid, the good knight's horse stands in the court;
Take him to stall, and give him corn, and then
Go to the town and buy us flesh and wine;
And we will make us merry as we may.
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.'

ENID

He spake: the Prince, as Enid past him, fain
 To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught
 His purple scarf, and held, and said, 'Forbear!
 Rest; the good house, tho' ruin'd, O my Son,
 Endures not that her guest should serve himself.'
 And reverencing the custom of the house
 Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall;
 And after went her way across the bridge,
 And reach'd the town, and while the Prince and Earl
 Yet spoke together, came again with one,
 A youth, that following with a costrel bore
 The means of goodly welcome, flesh and wine.
 And Enid brought sweet cakes to make them cheer,
 And in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.
 And then, because their hall must also serve
 For kitchen, boil'd the flesh, and spread the board,
 And stood behind, and waited on the three.
 And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,
 Geraint had longing in him evermore
 To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,
 That crost the trencher as she laid it down:
 But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
 For now the wine made summer in his veins,
 Let his eye rove in following, or rest
 On Enid at her lowly handmaid-work,
 Now here, now there, about the dusky hall;
 Then suddenly address the hoary Earl:

'Fair Host and Earl, I pray your courtesy;
 This sparrow-hawk, what is he, tell me of him.
 His name? but no, good faith, I will not have it:

ENID

For if he be the knight whom late I saw
 Ride into that new fortress by your town,
 White from the mason's hand, then have I sworn
 From his own lips to have it – I am Geraint
 Of Devon – for this morning when the Queen
 Sent her own maiden to demand the name,
 His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,
 Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd
 Indignant to the Queen; and then I swore
 That I would track this caitiff to his hold,
 And fight and break his pride, and have it of him.
 And all unarm'd I rode, and thought to find
 Arms in your town, where all the men are mad;
 They take the rustic murmur of their bourg
 For the great wave that echoes round the world;
 They would not hear me speak: but if you know
 Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
 Should have them, tell me, seeing I have sworn
 That I will break his pride and learn his name,
 Avenging this great insult done the Queen.'

Then cried Earl Yniol, 'Art thou he indeed,
 Geraint, a name far-sounded among men
 For noble deeds? and truly I, when first
 I saw you moving by me on the bridge,
 Felt you were somewhat, yea and by your state
 And presence might have guess'd you one of those
 That eat in Arthur's hall at Camelot.
 Nor speak I now from foolish flattery;
 For this dear child hath often heard me praise
 Your feats of arms, and often when I paused
 Hath ask'd again, and ever loved to hear;
 So grateful is the noise of noble deeds

ENID

To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong:
 O never yet had woman such a pair
 Of suitors as this maiden; first Limours,
 A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
 Drunk even when he woo'd; and he he dead
 I know not, but he past to the wild land.
 The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,
 My curse, my nephew - I will not let his name
 Slip from my lips if I can help it - he,
 When I that knew him fierce and turbulent
 Refused her to him, then his pride awoke;
 And since the proud man often is the mean,
 He sow'd a slander in the common ear,
 Affirming that his father left him gold,
 And in my charge, which was not render'd to him;
 Bribed with large promises the men who served
 About my person, the more easily
 Because my means were somewhat broken into
 Thro' open doors and hospitality;
 Raised my own town against me in the night
 Before my Enid's birthday, sack'd my house;
 From mine own earldom foully ousted me;
 Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
 For truly there are those who love me yet;
 And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,
 Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,
 But that his pride too much despises me:
 And I myself sometimes despise myself;
 For I have let men be, and have their way;
 Am much too gentle, have not used my power:
 Nor know I whether I be very base
 Or very manful, whether very wise
 Or very foolish; only this I know,

ENID

That whatsoever evil happen to me,
I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,
But can endure it all most patiently.'

'Well said, true heart,' replied Geraint, 'but arms:
That if, as I suppose, your nephew fights
In next day's tourney I may break his pride.'

And Yniol answer'd, 'Arms, indeed, but old
And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,
Are mine, and therefore at your asking, yours.
But in this tournament can no man tilt,
Except the lady he loves best be there.
Two forks are fixt into the meadow ground,
And over these is laid a silver wand,
And over that is placed the sparrow-hawk,
The prize of beauty for the fairest there.
And this, what knight soever be in field
Lays claim to for the lady at his side,
And tilts with my good nephew thereupon,
Who being apt at arms and big of bone
Has ever won it for the lady with him,
And toppling over all antagonism
Has earn'd himself the name of sparrow-hawk.
But you, that have no lady, cannot fight.'

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,
Leaning a little toward him, 'Your leave!
Let *me* lay lance in rest, O noble host,
For this dear child, because I never saw,
Tho' having seen all beauties of our time,
Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.
And if I fall her name will yet remain

ENID

Untarnish'd as before; but if I live,
So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost,
As I will make her truly my true wife.'

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart
Danced in his bosom, seeing better days.
And looking round he saw not Enid there,
(Who hearing her own name had slept away)
But that old dame, to whom full tenderly
And fondling all her hand in his he said,
'Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
And best by her that bore her understood.
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest
Tell her, and prove her heart toward the Prince.'

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and she
With frequent smile and nod departing found,
Half disarray'd as to her rest, the girl;
Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek, and then
On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart: but never light and shade
Coursed one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale
Across the face of Enid hearing her;
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
When weight is added only grain by grain,
Sank her sweet head upon her gentle breast;
Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it;
So moving without answer to her rest
She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw

ENID

But when the third day from the hunting-morn
 Made a low splendour in the world, and wings
 Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay
 With her fair head in the dim-yellow light,
 Among the dancing shadows of the birds,
 Woke and bethought her of her promise given
 No later than last eve to Prince Geraint –
 So bent he seem'd on going the third day,
 He would not leave her, till her promise given –
 To ride with him this morning to the court,
 And there be made known to the stately Queen,
 And there be wedded with all ceremony.
 At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,
 And thought it never yet had look'd so mean.
 For as a leaf in mid-November is
 To what it was in mid-October, seem'd
 The dress that now she look'd on to the dress
 She look'd on ere the coming of Geraint.
 And still she look'd, and still the terror grew
 Of that strange bright and dreadful thing, a court,
 All staring at her in her faded silk:
 And softly to her own sweet heart she said:

'This noble prince who won our earldom back,
 So splendid in his acts and his attire,
 Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit him!
 Would he could tarry with us here awhile!
 But being so beholden to the Prince,
 It were but little grace in any of us,
 Bent as he seem'd on going this third day,
 To seek a second favour at his hands.
 Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,

ENID

Myself would work eye dim, and finger lame,
Far liefer than so much discredit him.'

And Enid fell in longing for a dress
All branch'd and flower'd with gold, a costly gift
Of her good mother, given her on the night
Before her birthday, three sad years ago,
That night of fire, when Edyrn sack'd their house,
And scatter'd all they had to all the winds:
For while the mother show'd it, and the two
Were turning and admiring it, the work
To both appear'd so costly, rose a cry
That Edyrn's men were on them, and they fled
With little save the jewels they had on,
Which being sold and sold had bought them bread:
And Edyrn's men had caught them in their flight,
And placed them in this ruin; and she wish'd
The Prince had found her in her ancient home;
Then let her fancy flit across the past,
And roam the goodly places that she knew;
And last bethought her how she used to watch,
Near that old home, a pool of golden carp;
And one was patch'd and blurr'd and lustreless
Among his burnish'd brethren of the pool;
And half asleep she made comparison
Of that and these to her own faded self
And the gay court, and fell asleep again;
And dreamt herself was such a faded form
Among her burnish'd sisters of the pool;
But this was in the garden of a king;
And tho' she lay dark in the pool, she knew
That all was bright; that all about were birds
Of sunny plume in gilded trellis-work;

ENID

That all the turf was rich in plots that look'd
 Each like a garnet or a turkis in it;
 And lords and ladies of the high court went
 In silver tissue talking things of state;
 And children of the king in cloeth of gold
 Glanced at the doors or gambol'd down the walks;
 And while she thought 'they will not see me,' came
 A stately queen whose name was Guinevere,
 And all the children in their cloth of gold
 Ran to her, crying, 'If we have fish at all
 Let them be gold; and charge the gardeners now
 To pick the faded creature from the pool,
 And cast it on the mixen that it die.'
 And therewithal one came and seized on her,
 And Enid started waking, with her heart
 All overshadow'd by the foolish dream,
 And lo! it was her mother grasping her
 To get her well awake; and in her hand
 A suit of bright apparel, which she laid
 Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly:

'See here, my child, how fresh the colours look,
 How fast they hold like colours of a shell
 That keeps the wear and polish of the wave.
 Why not? it never yet was worn, I trow:
 Look on it, child, and tell me if you know it.'

And Enid look'd, but all confused at first,
 Could scarce divide it from her foolish dream:
 Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,
 And answer'd, 'Yea, I know it; your good gift,
 So sadly lost on that unhappy night;
 Your own good gift!' 'Yea, surely,' said the dame,

'And gladly given again this happy morn.
 For when the jousts were ended yesterday,
 Went Yniol thro' the town, and everywhere
 He found the sack and plunder of our house
 All scatter'd thro' the houses of the town;
 And gave command that all which once was ours,
 Should now be ours again: and yester-eve,
 While you were talking sweetly with your Prince,
 Came one with this and laid it in my hand,
 For love or fear, or seeking favour of us,
 Because we have our earldom back again.
 And yester-eve I would not tell you of it,
 But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn.
 Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise?
 For I myself unwillingly have worn
 My faded suit, as you, my child, have yours,
 And howsoever patient, Yniol his.
 Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,
 With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,
 And page, and maid, and squire, and seneschal,
 And pastime both of hawk and hound, and all
 That appertains to noble maintenance.
 Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house;
 But since our fortune slipt from sun to shade,
 And all thro' that young traitor, cruel need
 Constrain'd us, but a better time has come;
 So clothe yourself in this, that better fits
 Our mended fortunes and a Prince's bride:
 For tho' you won the prize of fairest fair,
 And tho' I heard him call you fairest fair,
 Let never maiden think, however fair,
 She is not fairer in new clothes than old.
 And should some great court-lady say, the Prince

ENID

Hath pick'd a ragged-robin from the hedge,
And like a madman brought her to the court,
Then were you shamed, and, worst, might shame the Prince
To whom we are beholden; but I know,
When my dear child is set forth at her best,
That neither court nor country, tho' they sought
Thro' all the provinces like those of old
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her match.'

Here ceased the kindly mother out of breath;
And Enid listen'd brightening as she lay;
Then, as the white and glittering star of morn
Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,
And left her maiden couch, and robed herself,
Help'd by the mother's careful hand and eye,
Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown;
Who, after, turn'd her daughter round, and said,
She never yet had seen her half so fair;
And call'd her like that maiden in the tale,
Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of flowers,
And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun,
Flur, for whose love the Roman Caesar first
Invaded Britain, 'But we beat him back,
As this great prince invaded us, and we,
Not beat him back, but welcomed him with joy.
And I can scarcely ride with you to court,
For old am I, and rough the ways and wild;
But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream
I see my princess as I see her now,
Clothed with my gift, and gay among the gay.'

ENID

But while the women thus rejoiced, Geraint
 Woke whère he slept in the high hall, and call'd
 For Enid, and when Yniol made report
 Of that good mother making Enid gay
 In such apparel as might well beseem
 His princess, or indeed the stately queen,
 He answer'd; 'Earl, entreat her by my love,
 Albeit I give no reason but my wish,
 That she ride with me in her faded silk.'
 Yniol with that hard message went: it fell,
 Like flaws in summer laying lusty corn:
 For Enid, all abash'd she knew not why,
 Dared not to glance at her good mother's face,
 But silently, in all obedience,
 Her mother silent too, nor helping her,
 Laid from her limbs the costly-broider'd gift,
 And robed them in her ancient suit again
 And so descended. Never man rejoiced
 More than Geraint to greet her thus attired;
 And glancing all at once as keenly at her,
 As careful robins eye the delver's toil,
 Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,
 But rested with her sweet face satisfied;
 Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,
 Her by both hands he caught, and sweetly said,

'O my new mother, be not wroth or grieved
 At your new son, for my petition to her.
 When late I left Caerleon, our great Queen,
 In words whose echo lasts, they were so sweet,
 Made promise, that whatever bride I brought,
 Herself would clothe her like the sun in Heaven.
 Thereafter, when I reach'd this ruin'd hold,

ENID

Beholding one so bright in dark estate,
I vow'd that could I gain her, our kind Queen,
No hand but hers, should make your Enid burst
Sunlike from cloud – and likewise thought perhaps,
That service done so graciously would bind.
The two together; for I wish the two
To love each other: how should Enid find
A nobler friend? Another thought I had;
I came among you here so suddenly,
That tho' her gentle presence at the lists
Might well have served for proof that I was loved,
I doubted whether filial tenderness,
Or easy nature, did not let itself
Be moulded by your wishes for her weal;
Or whether some false sense in her own self
Of my contrasting brightness, overbore
Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall;
And such a sense might make her long for court
And all its dangerous glories: and I thought,
That could I somehow prove such force in her
Link'd with such love for me, that at a word
(No reason given her) she could cast aside
A splendour dear to women, new to her,
And therefore dearer; or if not so new,
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power
Of intermitted custom; then I felt
That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and flows,
Fixt on her faith. Now, therefore, I do rest,
A prophet certain of my prophecy,
That never shadow of mistrust can cross
Between us. Grant me pardon for my thoughts:
And for my strange petition I will make
Amends hereafter by some gaudy-day,

ENID

When your fair child shall wear your costly gift
Beside your own warm hearth, with, on her knees,
Who knows? another gift of the high God,
Which, maybe, shall have learn'd to lisp you thanks.'

He spoke: the mother smiled, but half in tears,
Then brought a mantle down and wrapt her in it,
And claspt and kiss'd her, and they rode away.

Now thrice that morning Guinevere had climb'd
The giant tower, from whose high crest, they say,
Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,
And white sails flying on the yellow sea:
But not to goodly hill or yellow sea
Look'd the fair Queen, but up the vale of Usk,
By the flat meadow, till she saw them come;
And then descending met them at the gates,
Embraced her with all welcome as a friend,
And did her honour as the Prince's bride,
And clothed her for her bridals like the sun;
And all that week was old Caerleon gay,
For by the hands of Dubric, the high saint,
They twain were wedded with all ceremony.

And this was on the last year's Whitsuntide.
But Enid ever kept the faded silk,
Remembering how first he came on her,
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey toward her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

And now this morning when he said to her,
'Put on your worst and meanest dress,' she found
And took it, and array'd herself therein.

ENID

O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true;
Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other, where we see as we are seen!

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing forth
That morning, when they both had got to horse,
Perhaps because he loved her passionately,
And felt that tempest brooding round his heart,
Which, if he spoke at all, would break perforce
Upon a head so dear in thunder, said:
'Not at my side. I charge you ride before,
Ever a good way on before; and this
I charge you, on your duty as a wife,
Whatever happens, not to speak to me,
No, not a word!' and Enid was aghast;
And forth they rode, but scarce three paces on,
When crying out 'Effeminate as I am,
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,
All shall be iron;' he loosed a mighty purse,
Hung at his belt, and hurl'd it toward the squire.
So the last sight that Enid had of home
Was all the marble threshold flashing, strown
With gold and scatter'd coinage, and the squire
Chafing his shoulder: then he cried again,
'To the wilds!' and Enid leading down the tracks
Thro' which he bade her lead him on, they past
The marches, and by bandit-haunted holds,
Grey swamps and pools, waste places of the henn,
And wildernesses, perilous paths, they rode:

ENID

Round was their pace at first, but slacken'd soon:
A stranger meeting them had surely thought,
They rode so slowly and they look'd so pale,
That each had suffer'd some exceeding wrong.
For he was ever saying to himself,
'O I that wasted time to tend upon her,
To compass her with sweet observances,
To dress her beautifully and keep her true' –
And there he broke the sentence in his heart
Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue
May break it, when his passion masters him.
And she was ever praying the sweet heavens
To save her dear lord whole from any wound.
And ever in her mind she cast about
For that unnoticed failing in herself,
Which made him look so cloudy and so cold;
Till the great plover's human whistle amazed
Her heart, and glancing round the waste she fear'd
In every wavering brake an ambuscade.
Then thought again, 'If there be such in me,
I might amend it by the grace of heaven,
If he would only speak and tell me of it.'

But when the fourth part of the day was gone,
Then Enid was aware of three tall knights
On horseback, wholly arm'd, behind a rock
In shadow, waiting for them, caitiffs all;
And heard one crying to his fellow, 'Look,
Here comes a laggard hanging down his head,
Who seems no bolder than a beaten hound;
Come, we will slay him and will have his horse
And armour, and his damsel shall be ours.'

ENID

Then Enid ponder'd in her heart, and said:
'I will go back a little to my lord,
And I will tell him all their caitiff talk;
For, be he wroth even to slaying me,
Far liefer by his dear hand had I die,
Than that my lord should suffer loss or shame.'

Then she went back some paces of return,
Met his full frown timidly firm, and said:
'My lord, I saw three bandits by the rock
Waiting to fall on you, and heard them boast
That they would slay you, and possess your horse
And armour, and your damsel should be theirs.'

He made a wrathful answer. 'Did I wish
Your warning or your silence? one command
I laid upon you, not to speak to me,
And thus you keep it! Well then, look - for now,
Whether you wish me victory or defeat,
Long for my life, or hunger for my death,
Yourself shall see my vigour is not lost.'

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,
And down upon him bare the bandit three.
And at the midmost charging, Prince Geraint
Drave the long spear a cubit thro' his breast
And out beyond; and then against his brace
Of comrades, each of whom had broken on him
A lance that splinter'd like an icicle,
Swung from his brand a windy buffet out
Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunn'd the twain
Or slew them, and dismounting like a man
That skins the wild beast after slaying him,

ENID

Stript from the three dead wolves of woman born
 The three gay suits of armour which they wore,
 And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits
 Of armour on their horses, each on each,
 And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
 Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on
 Before you;' and she drove them thro' the waste.

He follow'd nearer: ruth began to work
 Against his anger in him, while he watch'd
 The being he loved best in all the world,
 With difficulty in mild obedience
 Driving them on: he fain had spoken to her,
 And loosed in words of sudden fire the wrath
 And smoulder'd wrong that burnt him all within;
 But evermore it seem'd an easier thing
 At once without remorse to strike her dead,
 Than to cry 'Halt,' and to her own bright face
 Accuse her of the least immodesty:
 And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth the more
 That she *could* speak whom his own ear had heard
 Call herself false: and suffering thus he made
 Minutes an age: but in scarce longer time
 Than at Caerleon the full-tided Usk,
 Before he turn to fall seaward again,
 Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold
 In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,
 Before a gloom of stubborn-shafted oaks,
 Three other horsemen waiting, wholly arm'd,
 Whereof one seem'd far larger than her lord,
 And shook her pulses, crying, 'Look, a prize!
 Three horses and three goodly suits of arms,
 And all in charge of whom? a girl: set on.'

ENID

'Nay,' said the second, 'yonder comes a knight.'
The third, 'A craven; how he hangs his head.'
The giant answer'd merrily, 'Yea, but one?
Wait here, and when he passes fall upon him.'

And Enid ponder'd in her heart and said,
'I will abide the coming of my lord,
And I will tell him all their villany.
My lord is weary with the fight before,
And they will fall upon him unawares.
I needs must disobey him for his good;
How should I dare obey him to his harm?
Needs must I speak, and tho' he kill me for it,
I save a life dearer to me than mine.'

And she abode his coming, and said to him
With timid firmness, 'Have I leave to speak?'
He said, 'You take it, speaking,' and she spoke.

'There lurk three villains yonder in the wood,
And each of them is wholly arm'd, and one
Is larger-limb'd than you are, and they say
That they will fall upon you while you pass.'

To which he flung a wrathful answer back:
'And if there were an hundred in the wood,
And every man were larger-limb'd than I,
And all at once should sally out upon me,
I swear it would not ruffle me so much
As you that not obey me. Stand aside,
And if I fall, cleave to the better man.'

ENID

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,
Not dare to watch the combat, only breathe
Short fits of prayer, at every stroke a breath.
And he, she dreaded most, bare down upon him.
Aim'd at the helm, his lance err'd; but Geraint's,
A little in the late encounter strain'd,
Struck thro' the bulky bandit's corslet home,
And then brake short, and down his enemy roll'd,
And there lay still; as he that tells the tale,
Saw once a great piece of a promontory,
That had a sapling growing on it, slip
From the long shore-cliff's windy walls to the beach,
And there lie still, and yet the sapling grew:
So lay the man transfixt. His craven pair
Of comrades, making slowlier at the Prince,
When now they saw their bulwark fallen, stood;
On whom the victor, to confound them more,
Spurr'd with his terrible war-cry; for as one,
That listens near a torrent mountain-brook,
All thro' the crash of the near cataract hears
The drumming thunder of the huger fall
At distance, were the soldiers wont to hear
His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,
And foemen scared, like that false pair who turn'd
Flying, but, overtaken, died the death
Themselves had wrought on many an innocent.

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, pick'd the lance
That pleased him best, and drew from those dead wolves
Their three gay suits of armour, each from each,
And bound them on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three

ENID

Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on
Before you,' and she drove them thro' the wood.

He follow'd nearer still: the pain she had
To keep them in the wild ways of the wood,
Two sets of three laden with jingling arms,
Together, served a little to disedge
The sharpness of that pain about her heart:
And they themselves, like creatures gently born
But into bad hands fall'n, and now so long
By bandits groom'd, prick'd their light ears, and felt
Her low firm voice and tender government.

So thro' the green gloom of the wood they past,
And issuing under open heavens beheld
A little town with towers, upon a rock,
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike chased
In the brown wild, and mowers mowing in it:
And down a rocky pathway from the place
There came a fair-hair'd youth, that in his hand
Bare victual for the mowers: and Geraint
Had ruth again on Enid looking pale:
Then, moving downward to the meadow ground,
He, when the fair-hair'd youth came by him, said,
'Friend, let her eat; the damsel is so faint.'
'Yea, willingly,' replied the youth; 'and you,
My lord, eat also, tho' the fare is coarse,
And only meet for mowers!' then set down
His basket, and dismounting on the sward
They let the horses graze, and ate themselves.
And Enid took a little delicately,
Less having stomach for it than desire
To close with her lord's pleasure; but Geraint

ENID

Ate all the mowers' victual unawares,
 And when he found all empty, was amazed;
 And 'Boy,' said he, 'I have eaten all, but take
 A horse and arms for guerdon; choose the best.'
 He, reddening in extremity of delight,
 'My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold.'
 'You will be all the wealthier,' cried the Prince.
 'I take it as free gift, then,' said the boy,
 'Not guerdon; for myself can easily,
 While your good damsel rests, return, and fetch
 Fresh victual for these mowers of our Earl;
 For these are his, and all the field is his,
 And I myself am his; and I will tell him
 How great a man you are: he loves to know
 When men of mark are in his territory:
 And he will have you to his palace here,
 And serve you costlier than with mowers' fare.'

Then said Geraint, 'I wish no better fare:
 I never ate with angrier appetite
 Than when I left your mowers dinnerless.
 And into no Earl's palace will I go.
 I know, God knows, too much of palaces!
 And if he want me, let him come to me.
 But hire us some fair chamber for the night,
 And stalling for the horses, and return
 With victual for these men, and let us know.'

'Yea, my kind lord,' said the glad youth, and went,
 Held his head high, and thought himself a knight,
 And up the rocky pathway disappear'd,
 Leading the horse, and they were left alone.

ENID

But when the Prince had brought his errant eyes
 Home from the rock, sideways he let them glance
 At Enid, where she droopt: his own false doom,
 That shadow of mistrust should never cross
 Betwixt them, came upon him, and he sigh'd;
 Then with another humorous ruth remark'd
 The lusty mowers labouring dinnerless,
 And watch'd the sun blaze on the turning scythe,
 And after nodded sleepily in the heat.
 But she, remembering her old ruin'd hall,
 And all the windy clamour of the daws
 About her hollow turret, pluck'd the grass
 There growing longest by the meadow's edge,
 And into many a listless annulet,
 Now over, now beneath her marriage ring,
 Wove and unwove it, till the boy return'd
 And told them of a chamber, and they went;
 Where, after saying to her, 'If you will,
 Call for the woman of the house,' to which
 She answer'd, 'Thanks, my lord;' the two remain'd
 Apart by all the chamber's width, and mute
 As creatures' voiceless thro' the fault of birth,
 Or two wild men supporters of a shield,
 Painted, who stare at open space, nor glance
 The one at other, parted by the shield.

On a sudden, many a voice along the street,
 And heel against the pavement echoing, burst
 Their drowse; and either started while the door,
 Push'd from without, drave backward to the wall,
 And midmost of a rout of roisterers,
 Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,
 Her suitor in old years before Geraint,

ENID

Enter'd, the wild lord of the place, Limours.
He moving up with pliant courtliness,
Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,
In the mid-warmth of welcome and graspt hand,
Found Enid with the corner of his eye,
And knew her sitting sad and solitary.
Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly cheer
To feed the sudden guest, and sumptuously
According to his fashion, bad the host
Call in what men soever were his friends,
And feast with these in honour of their earl;
'And care not for the cost; the cost is mine.'

And wine and food were brought, and Earl Limours
Drank till he jested with all ease, and told
Free tales. and took the word and play'd upon it,
And made of it two colours; for his talk,
When wine and free companions kindled him,
Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem
Of fifty facets; thus he moved the Prince
To laughter and his comrades to applause.
Then, when the Prince was merry, ask'd Limours,
'Your leave, my lord, to cross the room, and speak
To your good damsel there who sits apart,
And seems so lonely?' 'My free leave,' he said;
'Get her to speak: she does not speak to me.'
Then rose Limours and looking at his feet,
Like him who tries the bridge he fears may fail,
Cross and came near, lifted adoring eyes,
Bow'd at her side and utter'd whisperingly:

'Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,
Enid, my early and my only love,

ENID

Enid, the loss of whom has turn'd me wild -
 What chance is this? how is it I see you here?
 You are in my power at last, are in my power.
 Yet fear me not: I call mine own self wild,
 But keep a touch of sweet civility
 Here in the heart of waste and wilderness.
 I thought, but that your father came between,
 In former days you saw me favourably.
 And if it were so do not keep it back:
 Make me a little happier: let me know it:
 Owe you me nothing for a life half-lost?
 Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you are.
 And, Enid, you and he, I see with joy -
 Ye sit apart, you do not speak to him,
 You come with no attendance, page or maid,
 To serve you - does he love you as of old?
 For, call it lovers' quarrels, yet I know
 Tho' men may bicker with the things they love,
 They would not make them laughable in all eyes,
 Not while they loved them; and your wretched dress,
 A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks
 Your story; that this man loves you no more.
 Your beauty is no beauty to him now:
 A common chance - right well I know it - pall'd -
 For I know men: nor will you win him back,
 For the man's love once gone never returns.
 But here is one who loves you as of old;
 With more exceeding passion than of old:
 Good, speak the word: my followers ring him round:
 He sits unarm'd; I hold a finger up;
 They understand: no; I do not mean blood:
 Nor need you look so scared at what I say:
 My malice is no deeper than a moat,

ENID

No stronger than a wall: there is the keep;
 He shall not cross us more; speak but the word:
 Or speak it not; but then by Him that made me
 The one true lover which you ever had,
 I will make use of all the power I have.
 O pardon me! the madness of that hour,
 When first I parted from you, moves me yet.'

At this the tender sound of his own voice
 And sweet self-pity, or the fancy of it,
 Made his eye moist; but Enid fear'd his eyes,
 Moist as they were, wine-heated from the feast;
 And answer'd with such craft as women use,
 Guilty or guiltless, to stave off a chance
 That breaks upon them perilously, and said:

'Earl, if you love me as in former years,
 And do not practise on me, come with morn,
 And snatch me from him as by violence;
 Leave me to-night: I am weary to the death.'

Low at leave-taking, with his brandish'd plume
 Brushing his instep, bow'd the all-amorous Earl,
 And the stout Prince bad him a loud good-night.
 He moving homeward babbled to his men,
 How Enid never loved a man but him,
 Nor cared a broken egg-shell for her lord.

But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,
 Debating his command of silence given,
 And that she now perforce must violate it,
 Held commune with herself, and while she held
 He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart

ENID

To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly pleased
 To find him yet unwounded after fight,
 And hear him breathing low and equally.
 Anon she rose, and stepping lightly, heap'd
 The pieces of his armour in one place,
 All to be there against a sudden need;
 Then dozed awhile herself, but overtoil'd
 By that day's grief and travel, evermore
 Seem'd catching at a rootless thorn, and then
 Went slipping down horrible precipices,
 And strongly striking out her limbs awoke;
 Then thought she heard the wild Earl at the door,
 With all his rout of random followers,
 Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning her;
 Which was the red cock shouting to the light,
 As the grey dawn stole o'er the dewy world,
 And glimmer'd on his armour in the room.
 And once again she rose to look at it,
 But touch'd it unawares: jangling, the casque
 Fell, and he started up and stared at her.
 Then breaking his command of silence given,
 She told him all that Earl Limours had said,
 Except the passage that he loved her not;
 Nor left untold the craft herself had used;
 But ended with apology so sweet,
 Low-spoken, and of so few words, and seem'd
 So justified by that necessity,
 That tho' he thought 'was it for him she wept
 In Devon?' he but gave a wrathful groan,
 Saying, 'Your sweet faces make good fellows fools
 And traitors. Call the host and bid him bring
 Charger and palfrey.' So she glided out
 Among the heavy breathings of the house,

ENID

And like a household Spirit at the walls
Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and return'd:
Then tending her rough lord, tho' all unask'd,
In silence, did him service as a squire;
Till issuing arm'd he found the host and cried,
'Thy reckoning, friend?' and ere he learnt it, 'Take
Five horses and their armours;' and the host,
Suddenly honest, answer'd in amaze,
'My lord, I scarce have spent the worth of one!'
'You will be all the wealthier,' said the Prince,
And then to Enid, 'Forward! and to-day
I charge you, Enid, more especially,
What thing soever you may hear, or see,
Or fancy (tho' I count it of small use
To charge you) that you speak not but obey.'

And Enid answer'd, 'Yea, my lord, I know
Your wish, and would obey; but riding first,
I hear the violent threats you do not hear,
I see the danger which you cannot see:
Then not to give you warning, that seems hard;
Almost beyond me: yet I would obey.'

'Yea so,' said he, 'do it: be not too wise;
Seeing that you are wedded to a man,
Not quite mismated with a yawning clown,
But one with arms to guard his head and yours,
With eyes to find you out however far,
And ears to hear you even in his dreams.'

With that he turn'd and look'd as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil;
And that within her, which a wanton fool,

ENID

Or hasty judger would have call'd her guilt,
 Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall.
 And Geraint look'd and was not satisfied.

Then forward by a way which, beaten broad,
 Led from the territory of false Limours
 To the waste earldom of another earl,
 Doorm, whom his shaking vassals call'd the Bull,
 Went Enid with her sullen follower on.
 Once she look'd back, and when she saw him ride
 More near by many a rood than yestermorn,
 It wellnigh made her cheerful; till Geraint
 Waving an angry hand as who should say
 'You watch me,' sadden'd all her heart again.
 But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,
 The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof
 Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw
 Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it.
 Then not to disobey her lord's behest,
 And yet to give him warning, for he rode
 As if he heard not, moving back she held
 Her finger up, and pointed to the dust.
 At which the warrior in his obstinacy,
 Because she kept the letter of his word,
 Was in a manner pleased, and turning, stood.
 And in the moment after, wild Limours,
 Borne on a black horse, like a thunder-cloud
 Whose skirts are loosen'd by the breaking storm,
 Half ridden off with by the thing he rode,
 And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,
 Dash'd on Geraint, who closed with him, and bore
 Down by the length of lance and arm beyond
 The crupper, and so left him stunn'd or dead,

ENID

And overthrew the next that follow'd him,
 And blindly rush'd on all the rout behind.
 But at the flash and motion of the man
 They vanish'd panic-stricken, like a shoal
 Of darting fish, that on a summer morn
 Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot
 Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,
 But if a man who stands upon the brink
 But lift a shining hand against the sun,
 There is not left the twinkle of a fin
 Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower;
 So, scared but at the motion of the man,
 Fled all the boon companions of the Earl,
 And left him lying in the public way;
 So vanish friendships only made in wine.

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled Geraint,
 Who saw the chargers of the two that fell
 Start from their fallen lords, and wildly fly,
 Mixt with the flyers. 'Horse and man,' he said,
 'All of one mind and all right-honest friends!
 Not a hoof left: and I methinks till now
 Was honest - paid with horses and with arms;
 I cannot steal or plunder, no nor beg:
 And so what say you, shall we strip him there,
 Your lover? has your palfrey heart enough
 To bear his armour? shall we fast, or dine?
 No? - then do you, being right honest, pray
 That we may meet the horsemen of Earl Doorm,
 I too would still be honest.' Thus he said:
 And sadly gazing on her bridle-reins,
 And answering not one word, she led the way.

ENID

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,
But coming back he learns it, and the loss
So pains him that he sickens nigh to death;
So fared it with Geraint, who being prick'd
In combat with the follower of Limours,
Bled underneath his armour secretly,
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife
What ail'd him, hardly knowing it himself,
Till his eye darken'd and his helmet wagg'd;
And at a sudden swerving of the road,
Tho' happily down on a bank of grass,
The Prince, without a word, from his horse fell.

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his arms,
Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
And tearing off her veil of faded silk
Had bared her forehead to the blistering sun,
And swathed the hurt that drain'd her dear Lord's life.
Then after all was done that hand could do,
She rested, and her desolation came
Upon her, and she wept beside the way.

And many past, but none regarded her,
For in that realm of lawless turbulence,
A woman weeping for her murder'd mate
Was cared as much for as a summer shower:
One took him for a victim of Earl Doorm,
Nor dared to waste a perilous pity on him:
Another hurrying past, a man-at-arms,

ENID

Rode on a mission to the bandit Earl;
 Half whistling and half singing a coarse song,
 He drove the dust against her veilles eyes:
 Another, flying from the wrath of Doorm
 Before an ever-fancied arrow, made
 The long way smoke beneath him in his fear;
 At which her palfrey whinnying lifted heel,
 And scour'd into the coppices and was lost,
 While the great charger stood, grieved like a man.

But at the point of noon the huge Earl Doorm,
 Broad-faced with under-fringe of russet beard,
 Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,
 Came riding with a hundred lances up;
 But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,
 Cried out with a big voice, 'What, is he dead?'
 'No, no, not dead!' she answer'd in all haste.
 'Would some of your kind people take him up,
 And bear him hence out of this cruel sun:
 Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead.'

Then said Earl Doorm: 'Well, if he be not dead,
 Why wail you for him thus? you seem a child.
 And be he dead, I count you for a fool;
 Your wailing will not quicken him: dead or not,
 You mar a comely face with idiot tears.
 Yet, since the face is comely - some of you,
 Here, take him up, and bear him to our hall:
 An if he live, we will have him of our band;
 And if he die, why earth has earth enough
 To hide him. See ye take the charger too,
 A noble one.'

He spake, and past away,

ENID

But left two brawny spearmen, who advanced,
 Each growling like a dog, when his good bone
 Seems to be pluck'd at by the village boys
 Who love to vex him eating, and he fears
 To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,
 Gnawing and growling: so the ruffians growl'd,
 Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,
 Their chance of booty from the morning's raid;
 Yet raised and laid him on a litter-bier,
 Such as they brought upon their forays out
 For those that might be wounded; laid him on it
 All in the hollow of his shield, and took
 And bore him to the naked hall of Doorm,
 (His gentle charger following him unled)
 And cast him and the bier in which he lay
 Down on an oaken settle in the hall,
 And then departed, not in haste to join
 Their luckier mates, but growling as before,
 And cursing their lost time, and the dead man,
 And their own Earl, and their own souls, and her.
 They might as well have blest her: she was deaf
 To blessing or to cursing save from one.

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord,
 There in the naked hall, propping his head,
 And chafing his pale hands, and calling to him.
 And at the last he waken'd from his swoon,
 And found his own dear bride propping his head,
 And chafing his faint hands, and calling to him;
 And felt the warm tears falling on his face;
 And said to his own heart, 'She weeps for me.'
 And yet lay still, and feign'd himself as dead,

ENID

That he might prove her to the uttermost,
And say to his own heart, 'She weeps for me.'

But in the falling afternoon return'd
The huge Earl Doorm with plunder to the hall.
His lusty spearmen follow'd him with noise:
Each hurling down a heap of things that rang
Against the pavement, cast his lance aside,
And doff'd his helm: and then there flutter'd in,
Half-bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,
A tribe of women, dress'd in many hues,
And mingled with the spearmen: and Earl Doorm
Struck with a knife's haft hard against the board,
And call'd for flesh and wine to feed his spears.
And men brought in whole hogs and quarter beeves,
And all the hall was dim with steam of flesh:
And none spake word, but all sat down at once,
And ate with tumult in the naked hall,
Feeding like horses when you hear them feed;
Till Enid shrank far back into herself,
To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe.
But when Earl Doorm had eaten all he would,
He roll'd his eyes about the hall, and found
A damsel drooping in a corner of it.
Then he remember'd her, and how she wept;
And out of her there came a power upon him;
And rising on the sudden he said, 'Eat!
I never yet beheld a thing so pale.
God's curse, it makes me mad to see you weep.
Eat! Look yourself. Good luck had your good man,
For were I dead who is it would weep for me?
Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath
Have I beheld a lily like yourself.'

ENID

And so there lived some colour in your cheek,
 There is not one among my gentlewomen
 Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove.
 But listen to me, and by me be ruled,
 And I will do the thing I have not done,
 For you shall share my earldom with me, girl,
 And we will live like two birds in one nest,
 And I will fetch you forage from all fields,
 For I compel all creatures to my will.'

He spoke: the brawny spearman let his cheek
 Bulge with the unswallow'd piece, and turning stared;
 While some, whose souls the old serpent long had drawn
 Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd leaf
 And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's ear
 What shall not be recorded - women they,
 Women, or what had been those gracious things,
 But now desired the humbling of their best,
 Yea, would have help'd him to it: and all at once
 They hated her, who took no thought of them,
 But answer'd in low voice, her meek head yet
 Drooping, 'I pray you of your courtesy,
 He being as he is, to let me be.'

She spake so low he hardly heard her speak,
 But like a mighty patron, satisfied
 With what himself had done so graciously,
 Assumed that she had thanked him, adding, 'Yea,
 Eat and be glad, for I account you mine.'

She answer'd meekly, 'How should I be glad
 Henceforth in all the world at anything,
 Until my lord arise and look upon me?'

ENID

Here the huge Earl cried out upon her talk,
As all but empty heart and weariness
And sickly nothing; suddenly seized on her,
And bare her by main violence to the board,
And thrust the dish before her, crying, 'Eat.'

'No, no,' said Enid, vext, 'I will not eat,
Till yonder man upon the bier arise,
And eat with me.' 'Drink, then,' he answered. 'Here!
(And fill'd a horn with wine and held it to her,)
'Lo! I, myself, when flush'd with fight, or hot,
God's curse, with anger - often I myself,
Before I well have drunken, scarce can eat:
Drink therefore and the wine will change your will.'

'Not so,' she cried, 'by Heaven, I will not drink,
Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,
And drink with me; and if he rise no more,
I will not look at wine until I die.'

At this he turn'd all red and paced his hall,
Now gnaw'd his under, now his upper lip,
And coming up close to her, said at last;
'Girl, for I see you scorn my courtesies,
Take warning: yonder man is surely dead;
And I compel all creatures to my will.
Not eat nor drink? And wherefore wail for one
Who put your beauty to this flout and scorn
By dressing it in rags? Amazed am I,
Beholding how you butt against my wish,
That I forbear you thus: cross me no more.
At least put off to please me this poor gown,
This silken rag, this beggar-woman's weed:

ENID

I love that beauty should go beautifully:
For see you not my gentlewomen here,
How gay, how suited to the house of one,
Who loves that beauty should go beautifully!
Rise therefore; robe yourself in this: obey.'

He spoke, and one among his gentlewomen
Display'd a splendid silk of foreign loom,
Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue
Play'd into green, and thicker down the front
With jewels than the sward with drops of dew,
When all night long a cloud clings to the hill,
And with the dawn ascending lets the day
Strike where it clung: so thickly shone the gems.

But Enid answer'd, harder to be moved
Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,
With life-long injuries burning unavenged,
And now their hour has come; and Enid said:

'In this poor gown my dear lord found me first,
And loved me serving in my father's hall:
In this poor gown I rode with him to court,
And there the Queen array'd me like the sun:
In this poor gown he bade me clothe myself,
When now we rode upon this fatal quest
Of honour, where no honour can be gain'd:
And this poor gown I will not cast aside
Until himself arise a living man,
And bid me cast it. I have griefs enough:
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be:
I never loved, can never love but him:
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,
He being as he is, to let me be.'

ENID

Then strode the brute Earl up and down his hall,
And took his russet beard between his teeth;
Last, coming up quite close, and in his mood
Crying, 'I count it of no more avail,
Dame, to be gentle than ungentle with you;
Take my salute,' unknighly with flat hand,
However lightly, smote her on the cheek.

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,
And since she thought, 'He had not dared to do it,
Except he surely knew my lord was dead,'
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,
Which sees the trapper coming thro' the wood.

This heard Geraint, and grasping at his sword,
(It lay beside him in the hollow shield),
Made but a single bound, and with a sweep of it
Shore thro' the swarthy neck, and like a ball
The russet-bearded head roll'd on the floor.
So died Earl Doorm by him he counted dead.
And all the men and women in the hall
Rose when they saw the dead man rise, and fled
Yelling as from a spectre, and the two
Were left alone together, and he said:

'Enid, I have used you worse than that dead man;
Done you more wrong: we both have undergone
That trouble which has left me thrice your own:
Henceforward I will rather die than doubt.
And here I lay this penance on myself,
Not, tho' mine own ears heard you yestermorn -
You thought me sleeping, but I heard you say,

ENID

I heard you say, that you were no true wife:
 I swear I will not ask your meaning in it:
 I do believe yourself against yourself,
 And will henceforward rather die than doubt.'

And Enid could not say one tender word,
 She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart:
 She only prayed him, 'Fly, they will return
 And slay you; fly, your charger is without,
 My palfrey lost.' 'Then, Enid, shall you ride
 Behind me.' 'Yea,' said Enid, 'let us go.'
 And moving out they found the stately horse,
 Who now no more a vassal to the thief,
 But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,
 Neigh'd with all gladness as they came, and stoop'd
 With a low whinny toward the pair: and she
 Kiss'd the white star upon his noble front,
 Glad also; then Geraint upon the horse
 Mounted, and reach'd a hand, and on his foot
 She set her own and climb'd; he turn'd his face
 And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast her arms
 About him, and at once they rode away.

And never yet, since high in Paradise
 O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
 Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
 Than lived thro' her, who in that perilous hour
 Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
 And felt him hers again: she did not weep,
 But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist
 Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
 Before the useful trouble of the rain:
 Yet not so misty were her meek blue eyes

ENID

As not to see before them on the path,
 Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,
 A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his lance
 In rest, and made as if to fall upon him.
 Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of blood,
 She, with her mind all full of what had chanced,
 Shriek'd to the stranger, 'Slay not a dead man!'
 'The voice of Enid,' said the knight; but she,
 Beholding it was Edyrn son of Nudd,
 Was moved so much the more, and shriek'd again,
 'O cousin, slay not him who gave you life.'
 And Edyrn moving frankly forward spake:
 'My lord Geraint, I greet you with all love;
 I took you for a bandit knight of Doorm;
 And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon him,
 Who love you, Prince, with something of the love
 Wherewith we love the Heaven that chastens us.
 For once, when I was up so high in pride
 That I was halfway down the slope to Hell,
 By overthrowing me you threw me higher.
 Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table Round,
 And since I knew this Earl, when I myself
 Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,
 I come the mouthpiece of our King to Doorm
 (The King is close behind me) bidding him
 Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,
 Submit, and hear the judgement of the King.'

'He hears the judgement of the King of Kings,'
 Cried the wan Prince; 'and lo the powers of Doorm
 Are scatter'd,' and he pointed to the field,
 Where, huddled here and there on mound and knoll,
 Were men and women staring and aghast,

ENID

While some yet fled; and then he plainlier told
 How the huge Earl lay slain within his hall.
 But when the knight besought him, 'Follow me,
 Prince, to the camp, and in the King's own ear
 Speak what has chanced; you surely have endured
 Strange chances here alone;' that other flush'd,
 And hung his head, and halted in reply,
 Fearing the mild face of the blameless King,
 And after madness acted question ask'd:
 Till Edyrn crying, 'If you will not go
 To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,'
 'Enough,' he said, 'I follow,' and they went.
 But Enid in their going had two fears,
 One from the bandit scatter'd in the field,
 And one from Edyrn. Every now and then
 When Edyrn rein'd his charger at her side,
 She shrank a little. In a hollow land,
 From which old fires have broken, men may fear
 Fresh fire and ruin. He, perceiving, said:

'Fair and dear cousin, you that most had cause
 To fear me, fear no longer, I am changed.
 Yourself were first the blameless cause to make
 My nature's prideful sparkle in the blood
 Break into furious flame; being repulsed
 By Yniol and yourself, I schemed and wrought
 Until I overturn'd him; then set up
 (With one main purpose ever at my heart)
 My haughty jousts, and took a paramour;
 Did her mock-honour as the fairest fair,
 And, toppling over all antagonism,
 So wax'd in pride, that I believed myself
 Unconquerable, for I was wellnigh mad:

And, but for my main purpose in these jousts,
 I should have slain your father, seized yourself.
 I lived in hope that sometime you would come
 To these my lists with him whom best you loved;
 And there, poor cousin, with your meek blue eyes,
 The truest eyes that ever answer'd heaven,
 Behold me overturn and trample on him.
 Then, had you cried, or knelt, or pray'd to me,
 I should not less have kill'd him. And you came, —
 But once you came, — and with your own true eyes
 Beheld the man you loved (I speak as one
 Speaks of a service done him) overthrow
 My proud self, and my purpose three years old,
 And set his foot upon me, and give me life.
 There was I broken down; there was I saved:
 Tho' thence I rode all-shamed, hating the life
 He gave me, meaning to be rid of it.
 And all the penance the Queen laid upon me
 Was but to rest awhile within her court;
 Where first as sullen as a beast new-caged,
 And waiting to be treated like a wolf,
 Because I knew my deeds were known, I found,
 Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,
 Such fine reserve and noble reticence,
 Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace
 Of tenderest courtesy, that I began
 To glance behind me at my former life,
 And find that it had been the wolf's indeed:
 And oft I talk'd with Dubric, the high saint,
 Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,
 Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness,
 Which, when it weds with manhood, makes a man.
 And you were often there about the Queen,

ENID

But saw me not, or mark'd not if you saw;
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you,
But kept myself aloof till I was changed;
And fear not, cousin; I am changed indeed.'

He spoke, and Enid easily believed,
Like simple noble natures, credulous
Of what they long for, good in friend or foe,
There most in those who most have done them ill.
And when they reach'd the camp the King himself
Advanced to greet them, and beholding her
Tho' pale, yet happy, ask'd her not a word,
But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held
In converse for a little, and return'd,
And, gravely smiling, lifted her from horse,
And kiss'd her with all pureness, brother-like,
And show'd an empty tent allotted her,
And glancing for a minute, till he saw her
Pass into it, turn'd to the Prince, and said:

'Prince, when of late you pray'd me for my leave
To move to your own land, and there defend
Your marches, I was prick'd with some reproof,
As one that let foul wrong stagnate and be,
By having look'd too much thro' alien eyes,
And wrought too long with delegated hands,
Not used mine own: but now behold me come
To cleanse this common sewer of all my realm,
With Edyrn and with others; have you look'd
At Edyrn? have you seen how nobly changed?
This work of his is great and wonderful.
His very face with change of heart is changed.

ENID

The world will not believe a man repents:
 And this wise world of ours is mainly right.
 Full seldom *does* a man repent, or use
 Both grace and will to pick the vicious quitch
 Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
 And make all clean, and plant himself afresh.
 Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart
 As I will weed this land before I go.
 I, therefore, made him of our Table Round,
 Not rashly, but have proved him everyway
 One of our noblest, our most valorous,
 Sanest and most obedient: and indeed
 This work of Edyrn wrought upon himself
 After a life of violence, seems to me
 A thousand-fold more great and wonderful
 Than if some knight of mine, risking his life,
 My subject with my subjects under him,
 Should make an onslaught single on a realm
 Of robbers, tho' he slew them one by one,
 And were himself nigh wounded to the death.'

So spake the King; low bow'd the Prince, and felt
 His work was neither great nor wonderful,
 And past to Enid's tent; and thither came
 The King's own leech to look into his hurt;
 And Enid tended on him there; and there
 Her constant motion round him, and the breath
 Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,
 Fill'd all the genial courses of his blood
 With deeper and with ever deeper love,
 As the south-west that blowing Bala lake
 Fills all the sacred Dee. So past the days.

ENID

But while Geraint lay healing of his hurt,
 The blameless King went forth and cast his eyes
 On whom his father Uther left in charge
 Long since, to guard the justice of the King:
 He look'd and found them wanting; and as now
 Men weed the white horse on the Berkshire hills
 To keep him bright and clean as heretofore,
 He rooted out the slothful officer
 Or guilty, which for bribe had wink'd at wrong,
 And in their chairs set up a stronger race
 With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men
 To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
 Clear'd the dark places and let in the law,
 And broke the bandit holds and cleansed the land.

Then, when Geraint was whole again, they past
 With Arthur to Caerleon upon Usk.
 There the great Queen once more embraced her friend,
 And clothed her in apparel like the day.
 And tho' Geraint could never take again
 That comfort from their converse which he took
 Before the Queen's fair name was breathed upon,
 He rested well content that all was well.
 Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,
 And fifty knights rode with them to the shores
 Of Severn, and they past to their own land.
 And there he kept the justice of the King
 So vigorously yet mildly, that all hearts
 Applauded, and the spiteful whisper died:
 And being ever foremost in the chase,
 And victor at the tilt and tournament,
 They call'd him the great Prince and man of men.
 But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call

ENID

Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
Enid the Good; and in their halls arose
The cry of children, Enids and Geraints
Of times to be; nor did he doubt her more
But rested in her fealty, till he crowned
A happy life with a fair death, and fell
Against the heathen of the Northern Sea
In battle, fighting for the blameless King.

GUINEVERE

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court, and sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,
A novice: one low light betwixt them burn'd,
Blurr'd by the creeping mist, for all abroad,
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight
Sir Modred; he the nearest to the King,
His nephew, ever like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance: for this,
He chill'd the popular praises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;
And tamper'd with the Lords of the White Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and sought
To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot.

For thus it chanced one morn when all the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd the may,
Had been, their wont, a-maying and return'd,
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,
Climb'd to the high top of the garden-wall
To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best

GUINEVERE

Enid, and lissom Vivien, of her court
 The wiliest and the worst; and more than this
 He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by
 Spied where he couch'd, and as the gardener's hand
 Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,
 So from the high wall and the flowering grove
 Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the heel,
 And cast him as a worm upon the way;
 But when he knew the Prince tho' marr'd with dust,
 He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,
 Made such excuses as he might, and these
 Full knightly without scorn; for in those days
 No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;
 But, if a man were halt or hunch'd, in him
 By those whom God had made full-limb'd and tall,
 Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,
 And he was answer'd softly by the King
 And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot help
 To raise the Prince, who rising twice or thrice
 Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled, and went:
 But, ever after, the small violence done
 Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,
 As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
 A little bitter pool about a stone
 On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told
 This matter to the Queen, at first she laugh'd
 Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
 Then shudder'd, as the village wife who cries
 'I shudder, some one steps across my grave;'

Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed
 She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
 Would track her guilt until he found, and hers

GUINEVERE

Would be for evermore a name of scorn.
 Henceforward rarely could she front in Hall,
 Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
 Heart-hiding smile, and grey persistent eye:
 Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,
 To help it from the death that cannot die,
 And save it even in extremes, began
 To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,
 Beside the placid breathings of the King,
 In the dead night, grim faces came and went
 Before her, or a vague spiritual fear –
 Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,
 Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,
 That keeps the rust of murder on the walls –
 Held her awake: or if she slept, she dream'd
 An awful dream; for then she seem'd to stand
 On some vast plain before a setting sun,
 And from the sun there swiftly made at her
 A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
 Before it, till it touch'd her, and she turn'd –
 When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,
 And blackening, swallow'd all the land, and in it
 Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.
 And all this trouble did not pass but grew;
 Till ev'n the clear face of the guileless King,
 And trustful courtesies of household life,
 Became her bane; and at the last she said,
 'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,
 For if thou tarry we shall meet again,
 And if we meet again, some evil chance
 Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze
 Before the people, and our lord the King.'
 And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd,

GUINEVERE

And still they met and met. Again she said,
 'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.'
 And then they were agreed upon a night
 (When the good King should not be there) to meet
 And part for ever. Passion-pale they met
 And greeted: hands in hands, and eye to eye,
 Low on the border of her couch they sat
 Stammering and staring: it was their last hour,
 A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
 His creatures to the basement of the tower
 For testimony; and crying with full voice
 'Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,' aroused
 Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
 Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong, and he fell
 Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bare him off
 And all was still: then she, 'the end is come
 And I am shamed for ever;' and he said,
 'Mine be the shame; mine was the sin: but rise,
 And fly to my strong castle overseas:
 There will I hide thee, till my life shall end,
 There hold thee with my life against the world.'
 She answer'd, 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?
 Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.
 Would God, that thou could'st hide me from myself!
 Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou
 Unwedded: yet rise now, and let us fly,
 For I will draw me into sanctuary,
 And bide my doom.' So Lancelot got her horse,
 Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,
 And then they rode to the divided way,
 There kiss'd, and parted weeping: for he past,
 Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,
 Back to his land; but she to Almesbury

GUINEVERE

Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,
And heard the Spirits of the waste and weald
Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan:
And in herself she moan'd 'too late, too late!'
Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn,
A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,
Croak'd, and she thought, 'He spies a field of death;
For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,
Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court,
Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land.'

And when she came to Almesbury she spake
There to the nuns, and said, 'Mine enemies
Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,
Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask
Her name, to whom ye yield it, till her time
To tell you:' and her beauty, grace and power,
Wrought as a charm upon them, and they spared
To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode
For many a week, unknown, among the nuns;
Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name, nor sought,
Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for shrift,
But communed only with the little maid,
Who pleased her with a babbling heedlessness
Which often lured her from herself; but now,
This night, a rumour wildly blown about
Came, that Sir Modred had usurp'd the ream,
And leagued him with the heathen, while the King
Was waging war on Lancelot: then she thought,
'With what a hate the people and the King
Must hate me,' and bow'd down upon her hands
Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd

GUINEVERE

No silence, brake it, uttering 'late! so late!
What hour, I wonder, now?' and when she drew
No answer, by and by began to hum
An air the nuns had taught her; 'late, so late!
Which when she heard, the Queen look'd up, and said,
'O maiden, if indeed you list to sing,
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep.'
Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.

'Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light had we: for that we do repent;
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light: so late! and dark and chill the night!
O let us in, that we may find the light!
Too late, too late: ye cannot enter now.

'Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now.'

So sang the novice, while full passionately,
Her head upon her hands, remembering
Her thought when first she came, wept the sad Queen.
Then said the little novice prattling to her:

'O pray you, noble lady, weep no more;
But let my words, the words of one so small,
Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,

GUINEVERE

And if I do not there is penance given –
Comfort your sorrows; for they do not flow
From evil done; right sure am I of that,
Who see your tender grace and stateliness.
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the King's,
And weighing find them less; for gone is he
To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot there,
Round that strong castle where he holds the Queen;
And Modred whom he left in charge of all,
The traitor – Ah sweet lady, the King's grief
For his own self, and his own Queen, and realm,
Must needs be thrice as great as any of ours.
For me, I thank the saints, I am not great.
For if there ever come a grief to me
I cry my cry in silence, and have done:
None knows it, and my tears have brought me good:
But even were the griefs of little ones
As great as those of great ones, yet this grief
Is added to the griefs the great must bear,
That howsoever much they may desire
Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud:
As even here they talk at Almesbury
About the good King and his wicked Queen,
And were I such a King with such a Queen,
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,
But were I such a King, it could not be.'

Then to her own sad heart mutter'd the Queen,
'Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?'
But openly she answer'd 'must not I,
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,
Grieve with the common grief of all the realm?'

GUINEVERE

'Yea,' said the maid, 'this is all woman's grief,
That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life
Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round
Which good King Arthur founded, years ago,
With signs and miracles and wonders, there
At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen.'

Then thought the Queen within herself again,
'Will the child kill me with her foolish prate?'
But openly she spake and said to her,
'O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,
What canst thou know of Kings and Tables Round,
Or what of signs and wonders, but the signs
And simple miracles of thy nunnery?'

To whom the little novice garrulously:
'Yea, but I know: the land was full of signs
And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.
So said my father, and himself was knight
Of the great Table - at the founding of it;
And rode thereto from Lyonesse, and he said
That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
Strange music, and he paused and turning - there,
All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,
Each with a beacon-star upon his head,
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,
He saw them - headland after headland flame
Far on into the rich heart of the west:
And in the light the white mermaiden swam,
And strong man-breasted things stood from the sea,
And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the land,
To which the little elves of chasm and cleft

GUINEVERE

Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.
So said my father – yea, and furthermore,
Next morning, while he past the dim-lit woods,
Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy
Come dashing down on a tall wayside flower,
That shook beneath them, as the thistle shakes
When three grey linnets wrangle for the seed:
And still at evenings on before his horse
The flickering fairy-circle wheel'd and broke
Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and broke
Flying, for all the land was full of life.
And when at last he came to Camelot,
A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand
Swung round the lighted lantern of the hall;
And in the hall itself was such a feast
As never man had dream'd; for every knight
Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served
By hands unseen; and even as he said
Down in the cellars merry bloated things
Shoulder'd the spigot, traddling on the butts
While the wine ran: so glad were spirits and men
Before the coming of the sinful Queen.'

Then spake the Queen and somewhat bitterly,
'Were they so glad? ill prophets were they all,
Spirits and men: could none of them foresee,
Not even thy wise father with his signs
And wonders, what has fall'n upon the realm?'

To whom the novice garrulously again:
'Yea, one, a bard; of whom my father said,
Full many a noble war-song had he sung,
Ev'n in the presence of an enemy's fleet,

GUINEVERE

Between the steep cliff and the coming wave;
And many a mystic lay of life and death
Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops,
When round him bent the spirits of the hills
With all their dewy hair blown back like flame:
So said my father – and that night the bard
Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the King
As wellnigh more than man, and rail'd at those
Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois:
For there was no man knew from whence he came;
But after tempest, when the long wave broke
All down the thundering shores of Bude and Bos,
There came a day as still as heaven, and then
They found a naked child upon the sands
Of dark Dundagil by the Cornish sea;
And that was Arthur; and they foster'd him
Till he by miracle was approven king:
And that his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth, and could he find
A woman in her womanhood as great
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
The twain together well might change the world.
But even in the middle of his song
He falter'd, and his hand fell from the harp,
And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would have fall'n,
But that they stay'd him up; nor would he tell
His vision; but what doubt that he foresaw
This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?

Then thought the Queen 'lo! they have set her on,
Our simple-seeming Abbess and her nuns,
To play upon me,' and bow'd her head nor spake.
Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd hands,

GUINEVERE

Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,
 Said the good nuns would check her gadding tongue
 Full often, 'and, sweet lady, if I seem
 To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,
 Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales
 Which my good father told me, check me too:
 Nor let me shame my father's memory, one
 Of noblest manners, tho' himself would say
 Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he died,
 Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers back,
 And left me; but of others who remain,
 And of the two first-famed for courtesy -
 And pray you, check me if I ask amiss -
 But pray you, which had noblest, while you moved
 Among them, Lancelot or our lord the King?

Then the pale Queen look'd up and answer'd her.
 'Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,
 Was gracious to all ladies, and the same
 In open battle or the tilting-field
 Forbore his own advantage, and the King
 In open battle or the tilting-field
 Forbore his own advantage, and these two
 Were the most nobly-manner'd men of all;
 For manners are not idle, but the fruit
 Of loyal nature, and of noble mind.'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'be manners such fair fruit?
 Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousand-fold
 Less noble, being, as all rumour runs,
 The most disloyal friend in all the world.'

To which a mournful answer made the Queen:
 'O closed about by narrowing nunnery-walls,

GUINEVERE

What knowest thou of the world, and all its lights
And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe?
If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,
Were for one hour less noble than himself,
Pray for him that he scape the doom of fire,
And weep for her, who drew him to his doom.'

'Yea,' said the little novice, 'I pray for both;
But I should all as soon believe that his,
Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,
As I could think, sweet lady, yours would be
Such as they are, were you the sinful Queen.'

So she, like many another babbler, hurt
Whom she would soothe, and harm'd where she would heal;
For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat
Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who cried,
'Such as thou art be never maiden more
For ever! thou their tool, set on to plague
And play upon, and harry me, petty spy
And traitress.' When that storm of anger brake
From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,
White as her veil, and stood before the Queen
As tremulously as foam upon the beach
Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,
And when the Queen had added 'Get thee hence,'
Fled frightened. Then that other left alone
Sighed, and began to gather heart again,
Saying in herself, 'The simple, fearful child
Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful guilt,
Simpler than any child, betrays itself.
But help me, heaven, for surely I repent.
For what is true repentance but in thought -

GUINEVERE

Not ev'n in inmost thought to think again
The sins that made the past so pleasant to us:
And I have sworn never to see him more,
To see him more.'

And ev'n in saying this,
Her memory from old habit of the mind
Went slipping back upon the golden days
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,
Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,
Ambassador, to lead her to his lord
Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead
Of his and her retinue moving, they,
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
And sport and tilts and pleasure, (for the time
Was maytime, and as yet no sin was dream'd,)
Rode under groves that look'd a paradise
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
That seem'd the heavens upbreking thro' the earth,
And on from hill to hill, and every day
Beheld at noon in some delicious dale
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised
For brief repast or afternoon repose
By couriers gone before; and on again,
Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,
That crown'd the state pavilion of the King,
Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such a trance,
And moving thro' the past unconsciously,
Came to that point, when first she saw the King
Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to find
Her journey done, glanced at him, thought him cold,

GUINEVERE

High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not like him,
 'Not like my Lancelot' – while she brooded thus
 And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,
 There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
 A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery ran,
 Then on a sudden a cry, 'the King.' She sat
 Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed feet
 Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
 Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell,
 And grovell'd with her face against the floor:
 There with her milkwhite arms and shadowy hair
 She made her face a darkness from the King:
 And in the darkness heard his armed feet
 Pause by her; then came silence, then a voice,
 Monotonous and hollow like a Ghost's
 Denouncing judgement, but tho' changed, the King's.

'Liest thou here so low, the child of one
 I honour'd, happy, dead before thy shame?
 Well is it that no child is born of thee.
 The children born of thee are sword and fire,
 Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
 The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts
 Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea,
 Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,
 The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,
 Have everywhere about this land of Christ
 In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.
 And knowest thou now from whence I come – from him,
 From waging bitter war with him: and he,
 That did not shun to smite me in worse way,
 Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,
 He spared to lift his hand against the King

GUINEVERE

Who made him knight: but many a knight was slain;
 And many more, and all his kith and kin
 Clave to him, and abode in his own land:
 And many more when Modred raised revolt,
 Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
 To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.
 And of this remnant will I leave a part,
 True men who love me still, for whom I live,
 To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
 Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.
 Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my death.
 Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
 Have err'd not, that I march to meet my doom.
 Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,
 That I the King should greatly care to live;
 For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
 Bear with me for the last time while I show,
 Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast sinn'd.
 For when the Roman left us, and their law
 Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways
 Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a deed
 Of prowess done redress'd a random wrong.
 But I was first of all the kings who drew
 The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
 The realms together under me, their Head,
 In that fair order of my Table Round,
 A glorious company, the flower of men,
 To serve as model for the mighty world,
 And be the fair beginning of a time.
 I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
 To reverence the King, as if he were
 Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
 To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,

GUINEVERE

To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
 To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
 To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
 To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
 And worship her by years of noble deeds,
 Until they won her; for indeed I knew
 Of no more subtle master under heaven
 Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
 Not only to keep down the base in man.
 But teach high thought, and amiable words
 And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
 And love of truth, and all that makes a man.
 And all this throve until I wedded thee!
 Believing "lo mine helpmate, one to feel
 My purpose and rejoicing in my joy."
 Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
 Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
 Then others, following these my mightiest knights,
 And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
 Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
 Of all my heart had destined did obtain.
 And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine
 I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,
 Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
 How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
 To sit once more within his lonely hall.
 And miss the wonted number of my knights,
 And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
 As in the golden days before thy sin.
 For which of us, who might be left, could speak
 Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?
 And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
 Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,

GUINEVERE

And I should evermore be vext with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.
For think not, tho' thou would'st not love thy lord,
Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.
I am not made of so slight elements.
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house:
For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps
The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.
Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!
Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people, and their bane.'

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.
Then waiting by the doors the warhorse neigh'd
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,

GUINEVERE

My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
 The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,
 The doom of treason and the flaming death,
 (When first I learnt thee hidden here) is past.
 The pang – which while I weigh'd thy heart with one
 Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
 Made my tears burn – is also past, in part.
 And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
 Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
 Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.
 But how to take last leave of all I loved?
 O golden hair, with which I used to play
 Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,
 And beauty such as never woman wore,
 Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee –
 I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
 But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's.
 I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,
 And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine own flesh
 Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
 "I loathe thee:" yet not less, O Guinevere,
 For I was ever virgin save for thee,
 My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life
 So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
 Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
 Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
 And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
 Hereafter in that world where all are pure
 We two may meet before high God, and thou
 Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
 I am thine husband – not a smaller soul,
 Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
 I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.

GUINEVERE

Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow:
They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against my sister's son,
Leagued with the lords of the White Horse and knights
Once mine, and strike him dead, and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side, see thee no more:
Farewell!

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And, in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found
The casement: 'peradventure,' so she thought,
'If I might see his face, and not be seen.'
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the sad nuns with each a light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore.
And while he spake to these his helm was lower'd,
To which for crest the golden dragon clung
Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
And even then he turn'd; and more and more
The moony vapour rolling round the King,

GUINEVERE

Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him grey
And greyer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretch'd out her arms and cried aloud
'O Arthur!' there her voice brake suddenly,
Then – as a stream that spouting from a cliff
Fails in mid-air, but gathering at the base
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale –
Went on in passionate utterance.

'Gone – my lord!

Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
Farewell? I should have answer'd his farewell.
His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,
My own true lord! how dare I call him mine?
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution: he, the King,
Call'd me polluted: shall I kill myself?
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;
No, nor by living can I live it down.
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,
The months will add themselves and make the years,
The years will roll into the centuries,
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
Let the world be; that is but of the world.
What else? what hope? I think there was a hope,
Except he mock'd me when he spake of hope;
His hope he call'd it; but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.

GUINEVERE

And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven
My wickedness to him, and left me hope.
That in mine own heart I can live down sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God. Ah great and gentle lord,
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint
Among his warring senses, to thy knights –
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that took
Full easily all impressions from below,
Would not look up, or half-despised the height
To which I would not or I could not climb –
I thought I could not breathe in that fine air,
That pure severity of perfect light –
I wanted warmth and colour, which I found
In Lancelot – now I see thee what thou art,
Thou art the highest and most human too,
Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
Now – ere he goes to the great Battle? none:
Myself must tell him in that purer life,
But now it were too daring. Ah my God,
What might I not have made of thy fair world,
Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest:
It surely was my profit had I known:
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another.'

Here her hand

Grasp'd, made her veil her eyes: she look'd and saw
The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to her,
'Yea, little maid, for am I not forgiven?'
Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns

GUINEVERE

All round her, weeping; and her heart was loosed
Within her, and she wept with these and said:

'Ye know me then, that wicked one, who broke
The vast design and purpose of the King.
O shut me round with narrowing nunnery-walls,
Meek maidens, from the voices crying "shame."
I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.
Let no one dream but that he loves me still.
So let me, if you do not shudder at me
Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;
Wear black and white, and be a nun like you;
Fast with your fasts, not feasting with your feasts;
Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at your joys,
But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;
Pray and be pray'd for; lie before your shrines;
Do each low office of your holy house;
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole
To poor sick people, richer in His eyes
Who ransom'd us, and haler too than I;
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal mine own;
And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer
The sombre close of that voluptuous day,
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King.'

She said: they took her to themselves; and she
Still hoping, fearing 'is it yet too late?'
Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess died.
Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,
And for the power of ministration in her,
And likewise for the high rank she had borne,
Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess, lived
For three brief years, and there, an Abbess, past
To where beyond these voices there is peace.

TITHONUS

THE woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream
The ever silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this grey shadow, once a man –
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd
To his great heart none other than a God!
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men who care not how they give.
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
To dwell in presence of immortal youth, ^{disable}
Immortal age beside immortal youth, →
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,

TITHONUS

Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born. → उमनी कदाकिर
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
{Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,
{Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Dearest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.'

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch - if I be he that watch'd -
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay, → Eastern sky
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm

TITHONUS

With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet) १६ ← १०० २१
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground;
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave:
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn!
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.