



Complete Works of
Sir Thomas Malory

DELPHI  CLASSICS

Series Five

The Complete Works of
SIR THOMAS MALORY

(c.1434-1471)



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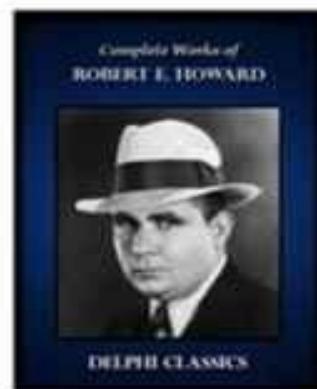
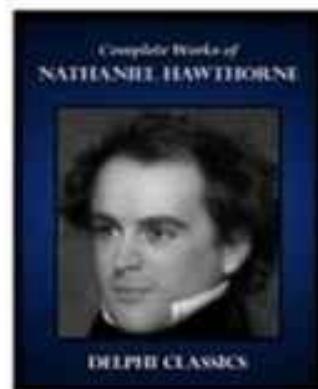
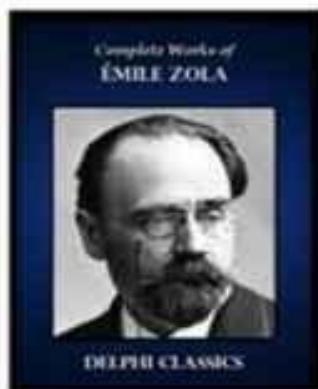
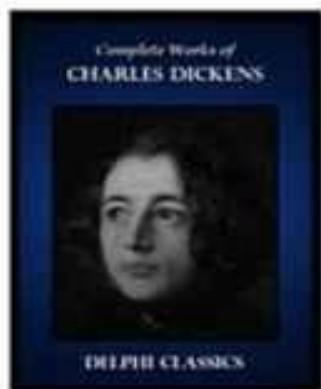


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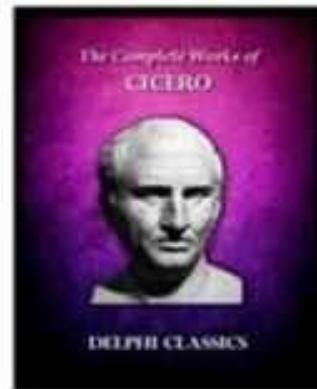
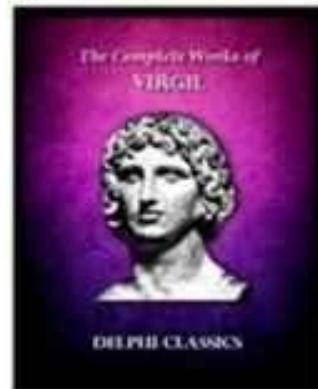
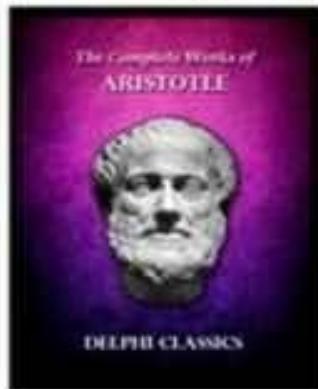
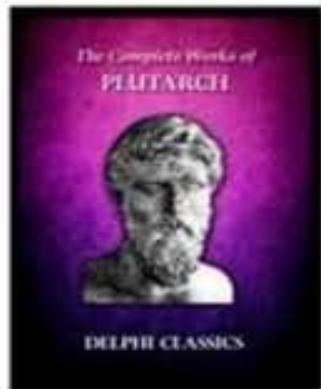
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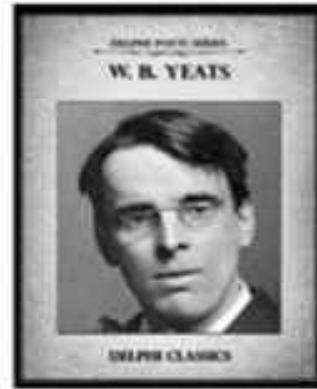
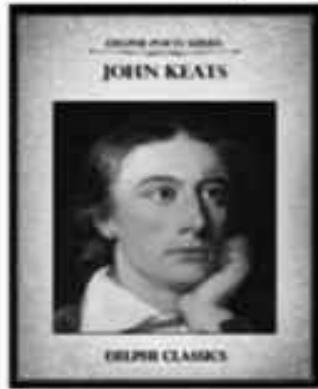
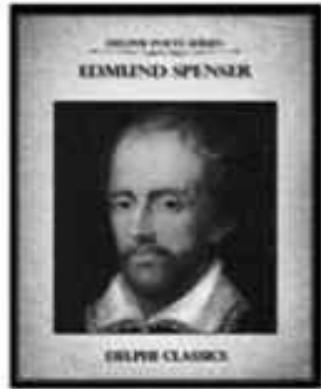
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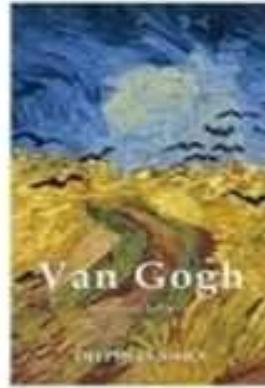
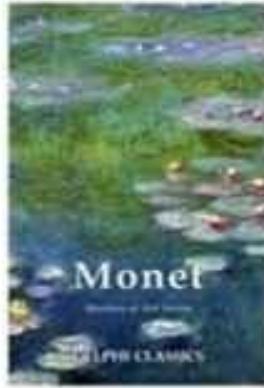
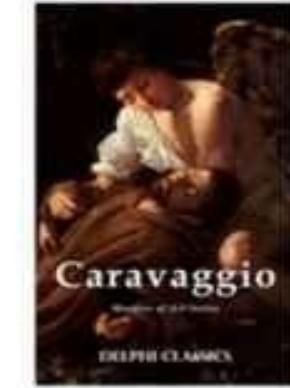
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The Complete Works of
SIR THOMAS MALORY



By Delphi Classics, 2014

Le Morte Darthur



Newbold Revel, Warwickshire—generally agreed to be Sir Thomas Malory's birthplace



First published in 1485 by William Caxton, *Le Morte Darthur* ('the death of Arthur') is a compilation by Sir Thomas Malory of romance-era tales concerning the legendary King Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot and the other Knights of the Round Table. Malory interprets existing French and English stories about these figures and adds original material, including the Gareth story.

Historically recorded as a member of the landed gentry of Warwickshire in the English Midlands, Sir Thomas Malory was reportedly a knight that flourished in the 1440s. However, in spite of the chivalrous behaviour of the knights whose adventures and quests he recounts, Malory's own life was punctuated with a series of terrible crimes, including attempted murder, cattle raids, poaching, extortion, robbery and rape. Twice he escaped from prison and twice he was excluded by name from general pardons, the last whilst completing his composition of *Le Morte Darthur*.

It is believed Malory started work on the collection of tales while he was in prison in the early 1450s, completing the collection of tales by 1470. The full title for the book was "The hoole booke kyng Arthur & of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table", but Caxton instead titled the work with Malory's name for the final section of the cycle. The Middle English language used in *Le Morte Darthur* is much closer to Early Modern English than the Middle English of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, bearing a close resemblance, especially in a modernised spelling text, to an Elizabethan English work.

Only two copies of Caxton's original 1485 printing are still known to exist, which are housed in the collections of the Morgan Library and Museum and the John Rylands Library. The work proved popular and was reprinted, with some additions and changes, in 1498 and 1529 by Wynkyn de Worde, who succeeded Caxton's press. Three more editions were published before the English Civil War: William Copland's (1557), Thomas East's (1585), and William Stansby's (1634), each of which contained additional changes and errors, including the omission of an entire leaf. Thereafter *Le Morte Darthur* went out of fashion until the Romantic revival of interest in all things medieval in the nineteenth century.

In 1934, a manuscript of *Le Morte Darthur* was discovered in the library of Winchester College, which was found to be closer to Malory than Caxton's printed edition of 1485. Neither text derived from the other and both are removed from Malory's original holograph. Curiously, although Caxton did not use the Winchester manuscript in preparing his printed text, it was in his possession at the time, as can be determined by type smudges on the manuscript. The Winchester Manuscript is now judged by scholars to be the closest text to Malory's translation and compilation.

Caxton separated Malory's eight books into twenty-one books, dividing each into a total of 50 chapters, while adding a summary of each chapter and a colophon to the entire book. Malory's original eight tales are:

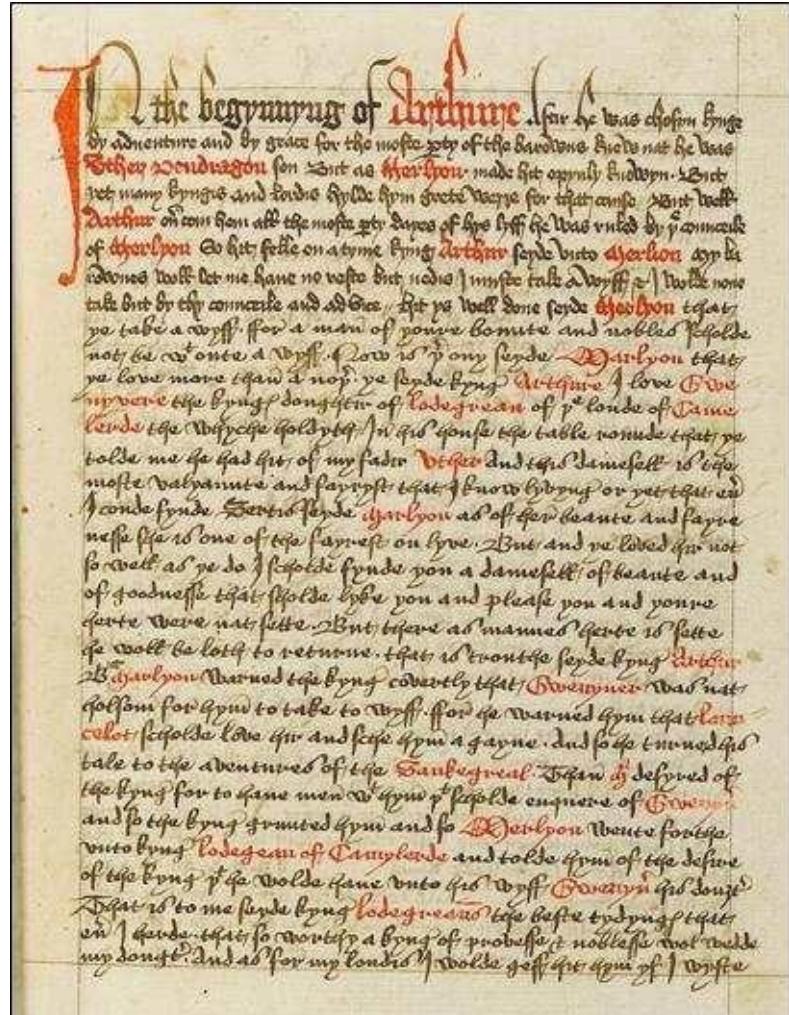
1. The birth and rise of Arthur: "From the Marriage of King Uther unto King Arthur the Which He Reigned After Him and Did Many Battles"
2. King Arthur's war against the Romans: "The Noble Tale Between King Arthur and Lucius the Emperor of Rome"
3. The book of Lancelot: "The Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lac"
4. The book of Gareth (brother of Gawain): "The Tale of Sir Gareth"
5. Tristan and Isolde: "The Book of Sir Tristrams de Lyons"
6. The Quest for the Holy Grail: "The Noble Tale of the Sangreal"
7. The affair between Lancelot and Guinevere: "Sir Launcelot and Queen Gwynevere"

8. The breaking of the Knights of the Round Table and the death of Arthur: “Le Morte D’Arthur”

Most of the events in *Le Morte Darthur* take place in Britain and France in the latter half of the fifteenth century. In some parts, the story ventures farther afield, to Rome and Sarras, near Babylon, recalling Biblical tales from the ancient Near East.

The first book concerns the birth of Arthur, who was the offspring of Uther Pendragon and Igraine due to the supernatural meddling of Merlin. Following his birth, Arthur is taken by Sir Ector to be fostered in the country. He later becomes the king of a leaderless England, after removing the fabled sword from the stone. Arthur goes on to win many battles due to his military prowess and Merlin’s counsel. He then begins to consolidate his kingdom.

This book also tells “The Tale of Balyn and Balan”, which ends in accidental fratricide and the begetting of Mordred, Arthur’s incestuous son by his half-sister, Morgause. Throughout the book, Malory addresses fifteenth century preoccupations with legitimacy and societal unrest, which themes often reoccur in *Le Morte Darthur*. Malory’s concern with legitimacy reflects the concerns of 15th century England, where many were claiming their rights to power through violence and bloodshed. Genealogy was a means to legitimise power in a less arbitrary manner and Malory often calls this into question. In the end, the book still holds out for hope even while the questions of legitimacy and morality continue in the books to follow. Arthur and his knights continually try and fail to live up to their chivalric codes, yet remain figures invested with Malory’s desperate optimism.



A page from the Winchester Manuscript



Detail from a fifteenth century French manuscript, portraying Arthur pulling the sword from the stone

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Detail of 'The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon' by Edward Burne-Jones, 1881

CAXTON'S PREFACE

(1)AFTER that I had accomplaysshed and fynysshed dyvers hystoryes as wel of contemplacyon as other hystoryal and worldly actes of grete conquerours and prynces, and also certeyn bookes ensaumples and doctryne, many noble and dyvers gentylmen of thys royme of Englond camen and demaunded me many and oftymes wherfore that I have not do made and emprynthe the noble hystory of the Saynt Greal and of the moost renomed Crysten kyng, fyrst and chyef of the thre best Crysten and worthy, Kyng Arthur, whyche ought moost to be remembred emonge us Englysshemen tofore all other Crysten kynges.

For it is notoyrly knownen thorugh the unyversal world that there been nine worthy and the best that ever were, that is to wete, thre Paynyme, thre Jewes, and thre Crysten men. As for the Paynyme, they were tofore the Incarnacyon of Cryst, whiche were named, the fyrst Hector of Troye, of whom the th'ystorye is comen bothe in balade and in prose, the second Alysaunder the Grete, and the thrid Julyus Cezar, Emperour of Rome, of whome th'ystoryes ben wel knownen and had. And as for the three Jewes whyche also were tofore th'Yncarnacyon of our Lord, of whome the fyrst was Duc Josaphat, whyche brought the chyldren of Israhel into the londe of byheste, the second Davyd, kyng of Jerusalem, and the thyrd Judas Machabeus, of these thre the Byble reherceth al theyr noble hystory and actes. And sythe the sayd Incarnacyon have ben thre noble Crysten men stalled and admittyd thorugh the unyversal world into the nombre of the nine beste and worthy, of whome was fyrst the noble Arthur, whos noble actes I purpose to wryte in thys present book here folowynge. The second was Charlemayn, or Charles the Grete, of whome th'ystorye is had in many places, bothe in Frensshe and Englysshe; and the thyrd and last was Godefray of Boloyn, of whos actes and lyf I made a book unto th'Excellent prynce and kyng of noble memorye, Kyng Edward the Fourth.

The sayd noble gentylmen instantly requyred me t'emprynthe th'ystorye of the sayd noble kyng and conquerour Kyng Arthur and of his knyghtes, wyth th'ystorye of the Saynt Greal and of the deth and entombing of the sayd Arthur, afferyng that I ought rather t'emprynthe his actes and noble feates than of Godefroye of Boloyn or ony of the other eyght, consyderyng that he was a man borne wythin thys royme and kyng and emperour of the same, and that there ben in Frensshe dyvers and many nobyl volumes of his actes, and also of his knyghtes.

To whome I answerd that dyvers men holde oppynyon that there was no suche Arthur and that all suche booke as been maad of hym ben but fayned and fables, bycause that somme cronycles make hym no mencyon ne remembre hym noothynge, ne of his knyghtes.

Wherto they answerd, and one in specyal sayd, that in hym that shold say or thynke that there was never suche a kyng callyd Arthur myght wel be aretted grete folye and blyndenesse, for he sayd that there were many evydences of the contrarye. Fyrst, ye may see his sepulture in the monasterye of Glastyngburye; and also in Polycronycon, in the fifth book, the sixte chappytre, and in the seventh book, the twenty-thyrd chappytre, where his body was buried, and after founden and translated into the sayd monasterye. Ye shal se also in th'ystorye of Bochas, in his book DE CASU PRINCIPUM, parte of his noble actes, and also of his falle. Also Galfrydus, in his Brutus book, recounteth his lyf. And in dyvers places of Englond many remembraunces ben yet of hym and shall remayne perpetually and also of his knyghtes: fyrst, in the abbey of Westmestre, at Saynt Edwardes shryne, remayneth the emprynthe of his seal in reed waxe, closed in beryll, in whych is wryton PATRICIUS ARTHURUS BRITANNIE GALLIE GERMANIE DACIE IMPERATOR; item, in the castel of Dover ye may see Gauways skulle and Cradoks mantel; at Wynchester, the Rounde Table; in other places Launcelotte swerde and many other thynges.

Thenne, al these thynges consydered, there can no man resonably gaynsaye but there was a kyng thys lande named Arthur. For in al places, Crysten and hethen, he is reputed and taken for one of the nine worthy, and the fyrst of the thre Crysten men. And also he is more spoken of beyonde the se moo booke made of his noble actes, than there be in Englond; as wel in Duche, Ytalyen, Spaynyssh and Grekysshe, as in Frensshe. And yet of record remayne in wytnesse of hym in Wales, in the tour of Camelot, the grete stones and mervaylous werkys of yron lyeng under the grounde, and ryal vauter which dyvers now lyvyng hath seen. Wherfor it is a mervayl why he is no more renomed in his owne contreye, sauf onelye it accordeth to the word of God, whyche sayth that no man is accept for prophete in his owne contreye.

Thenne, al these thynges forsayd aledged, I coude not wel denye but that there was suche a noble kyng named Arthur, and reputed one of the nine worthy, and fyrst and chyef of the Cristen men. An many noble volumes be made of hym and of his noble knyghtes in Frensshe, which I have seen and redde beyonde the see, which been not had in our maternal tongue. But in Walsshe ben many, and also in Frensshe, and somme in Englysshe, but nowher nygh alle. Wherfore, suche as have late ben drawne oute bryefly into Englysshe, I have, after the symple connynge that God hath sente to me, under the favour and correctyon of al noble lordes and gentylmen, enpryzed to enprynte a book of the nobel hystoryes of the sayd Kynge Arthur and of certeyn of his knyghtes, after a copye unto me delyvered, whyche copye Syr Thomas Malorye dyd take oute of certeyn booke of Frensshe and reduced it into Englysshe.

And I, accordyng to my copye, have doon sette it in enprynte to the entente that noble men may se and lerne the noble actes of chyvalrye, the jentyl and vertuous dedes that somme knyghtes used in thidayes, by whyche they came to honour, and how they that were vycious were punysshed and ofte penaunce to shame and rebuke; humbly bysechynge al noble lordes and ladyes wyth al other estates, of what estate or degree they been of, that shal see and rede in this sayd book and werke, that they take the good and honest actes in their remembraunce, and to folowe the same; wherin they shalle fynde many joyous and playsaunt hystoryes and noble and renomed actes of humanyté, gentylnesse, and chyvalryes. For herein may be seen noble chyvalrye, curtosye, humanyté, frendlynnesse, hardynesse, love, frendshyp, cowardyse, murdre, hate, vertue, and synne. Doo after the good and leve the evyl, and it shal brynge you to good fame and renommee.

And for to passe the tyme thys book shal be plesaunte to rede in, but for to gyve fayth and byleve that al is trewe that is conteyned herin, ye be at your lyberté. But al is wryton for our doctryne, and for to beware that we falle not to vyce ne synne, but t'exersyse and folowe vertu, by whyche we may comen and atteyne to good fame and renommé in thys lyf, and after thys shorte and transytorye lyf to come unto everlasting bisse in heven; the whyche He graunte us that reygneth in heven, the Blessyd Trynyté. AMEN.

Thenne, to procédé forth in thys sayd book, whyche I dyrecte unto alle noble prynces, lordes, and ladyes, gentylmen or gentylwymmen, that desyre to rede or here redde of the noble and joyous hystorye of the grete conquerour and excellent kyng, Kyng Arthur, somtyme kyng of thys noble royalme thenne callyd Brytaygne, I, Wylliam Caxton, symple persone, present thys book folowynge whyche I have enpryzed t'enprynte: and treateth of the noble actes, feates of armes of chyvalrye, prowesse, hardynesse, humanyté, love, curtosye, and veray gentylnesse, wthy many wonderfull hystoryes and adventures.

BOOK I. THE TALE OF KING ARTHUR

I. MERLIN

(1) HIT befel in the dayes of Uther Pendragon, when he was kynge of all Englond and so regned, that there was a myghty duke in Cornewaill that helde warre ageynst hym long tyme, and the duke was called the duke of Tyntagil. And so by meanes kynge Uther send for this duk chargyng hym to bryng his wyf with hym, for she was called a fair lady and a passyng wyse, and her name was called Igrayne.

So whan the duke and his wyf were comyn unto the kynge, by the meanes of grete lordes they were accorded bothe. The kynge lyked and loved this lady wel, and he made them grete chere out of mesun and desyred to have lyen by her, but she was a passyng good woman and wold not assente unto the kynge. And thenne she told the duke her husband and said, ‘I suppose that we were sente for that shold be dishonoured. Wherfor, husband, I counceille yow that we departe from hens sodenly, that we maye ryde all nyghte unto oure owne castell.’

And in lyke wyse as she saide so they departed, that neyther the kynge nor none of his councelle were ware of their departyng. Also soone as kyng Uther knewe of theire departyng soo sodenly, he was wonderly wrothe; thenne he called to hym his pryyv counceille and told them of the sodeyn departyng of the duke and his wyf. Thenne they avysed the kynge to send for the duke and his wyf by grete charge:

‘And yf he wille not come at your somons, thenne may ye do your best; thenne have ye cause make myghty werre upon hym.’ Soo that was done, and the messagers hadde their ansuers; and ther was thys, shortly, that neyther he nor his wyf wold not come at hym. Thenne was the kyng wonderly wroth; and thenne the kyng sente hym playne word ageyne and badde hym be redy and stiffe hym and garnysshe hym, for within forty dayes he wold fetche hym oute of the byggest castell that he hath.

Whanne the duke hadde thys warnynge anone he wente and furnysshed and garnysshed two strong castels of his, of the whiche the one hyght Tyntagil and the other castel hyght Terrabil. So his wyf dame Igrayne, he putte in the castell of Tyntagil, and hymself he putte in the castel of Terrabil, the whiche had many yssues and posternes oute. Thenne in all haste came Uther with a grete hoost and leyd a syege aboue the castel of Terrabil, and ther he pyght many pavelyons. And there was grete warre made on bothe partyes and moche peple slayne.

Thenne for pure angre and for grete love of fayr Igrayne the kyng Uther felle seke. So came to the kynge Uther syre Ulfius, a noble knyght, and asked the kynge why he was seke.

‘I shall telle the,’ said the kynge. ‘I am seke for angre and for love of fayre Igrayne, that I may never be hool.’

‘Wel, my lord,’ said syre Ulfius, ‘I shal seke Merlyn and he shalle do yow remedy, that youre herte shal be pleasyd.’

So Ulfius departed and by adventure he mette Merlyn in a beggars aray, and ther Merlyn asked Ulfius whome he soughte, and he said he had lytyl ado to telle hym.

‘Well,’ saide Merlyn, ‘I knowe whome thou sekkest, for thou sekkest Merlyn; therfore seke no ferther for I am he. And yf kynge Uther wille wel rewarde me and be sworne unto me to fulfille my desyre that shall be his honour and profite more than myn, for I shalle cause hym to have alle his desyre.’

‘Alle this wyll I undertake,’ said Ulfius, ‘that ther shalle be nothyng resonable but thou shalt have thy desyre.’

‘Well,’ said Merlyn, ‘he shall have his entente and desyre, and therfore,’ saide Merlyn, ‘ryde out of your wey, for I wille not be long behynde.’

Thenne Ulfius was glad and rode on more than a paas tyll that he [2] came to kynge Uther Pendragon.

and told hym he had met with Merlyn.

‘Where is he?’ said the kyng.

‘Sir,’ said Ulfius, ‘he wille not dwelle long.’

Therewithal Ulfius was ware where Merlyn stood at the porche of the pavelions dore, and thenne Merlyn was bounde to come to the kynge. Whan kyng Uther sawe hym he said he was welcome.

‘Syr,’ said Merlyn, ‘I knowe al your hert every dele. So ye wil be sworn unto me, as ye be a true kynge enoynted, to fulfille my desyre, ye shal have your desyre.’

Thenne the kyng was sworne upon the four Evangelistes.

‘Syre,’ said Merlyn, ‘this is my desyre: the first nyght that ye shal lye by Igrayne ye shal gete child on her; and whan that is borne, that it shall be delyverd to me for to nourissh thereas I will have it, for it shal be your worship and the childis availle as mykel as the child is worth.’

‘I wylle wel,’ said the kynge, ‘as thow wilt have it.’

‘Now make you redy,’ said Merlyn. ‘This nyght ye shalle lye with Igrayne in the castel of Tyntigayll. And ye shalle be lyke the duke her husband, Ulfus shal be lyke syre Brastias, a knyghte of the dukes, and I will be lyke a knyghte that hyghte syr Jordanus, a knyghte of the dukes. But wayte ye make not many questions with her nor her men, but saye ye are diseased, and soo hye yow to bede, and ryse not on the morne tyll I come to yow, for the castel of Tyntygaiill is but ten myle hens.’

Soo this was done as they devysed. But the duke of Tyntigail aspyed hou the kyng rode fro the sye of Tarabil. And therfor that nyghte he yssued oute of the castel at a posterne for to have distressid the kynge's hooste, and so thorowe his owne yssue the duke hymself was slayne or ever the kynge cam to the castel of Tyntigail. So after the deth of the duke kyng Uther lay with Igrayne, more than three houres after his deth, and begat on her that nyght Arthur; and or day cam, Merlyn cam to the kyng and bad hym make hym redy, and so he kist the lady Igrayne and departed in all hast. But whan the lady herd telle of the duke her husband, and by all record he was dede or ever kynge Uther came to her, thenne she merveilled who that myghte be that laye with her in lykenes of her lord. So she mourned pryvely and held hir pees.

Thenne alle the barons by one assent prayd the kynge of accord betwixe the lady Igrayne and hym. The kynge gaf hem leve, for fayne wold he have ben accorded with her; soo the kyng put alle the trunys in Ulfus to entrete bitwene them. So by the entreté at the last the kyng and she met togyder.

‘Now wille we doo wel,’ said Ulfus; ‘our kyng is a lusty knyghte and wyveles, and my lady Igrayne is a passyng fair lady; it were grete joye unto us all and hit myghte please the kynge to make her his quene.’

Unto that they all well accordyd and meved it to the kyng. And anone lyke a lusty knyghte he assentid therto with good wille, and so in alle haste they were maryed in a mornynge with grete myrthe and joye.

And kynge Lott of Lowthean and of Orkenay thenne wedded Margawse that was Gaweys mode, and kynge Nentres of the land of Garlot wedded Elayne: al this was done at the request of kynge Uther. And the thyrd syster, Morgan le Fey, was put to scole in a nonnery, and ther she lerned so moche that she was a grete clerke of nygromancye. And after she was wedded to kynge Uryens of the lond of Gore that was syre Ewayns le Blaunce Maynys fader.

Thenne quene Igrayne waxid dayly gretter and gretter. So it befel [3] after within half a yere, as kyng Uther lay by his quene, he asked hir by the feith she ought to hym whos was the child within her bode. Thenne was she sore abasshed to yeve ansuer.

‘Desmaye you not,’ said the kyng, ‘but telle me the trouthe, and I shall love you the better, by the feythe of my body!’

‘Syre,’ saide she, ‘I shalle telle you the trouthe. The same nyghte that my lord was dede, the houre of his deth as his knyghtes record, ther came into my castel of Tyntygaiill a man lyke my lord in spech,

and in countenaunce, and two knyghtes with hym in lykenes of his two knyghtes Barcias and Jordans
and so I went unto bed with hym as I ought to do with my lord; and the same nyght, as I shal answe
unto God, this child was begotten upon me.'

'That is trouthe,' saide the kynge, 'as ye say, for it was I myself that cam in the lykenesse. And
therfor desmay you not, for I am fader to the child,' and ther he told her alle the cause how it was b
Merlyns counceil. Thenne the quene made grete joye whan she knewe who was the fader of her child.'

Sone come Merlyn unto the kyng and said, 'Syr, ye must purvey yow for the nourisshyng of your
child.'

'As thou wolt,' said the kyng, 'be it.'

'Wel,' said Merlyn, 'I knowe a lord of yours in this land that is a passyng true man and a feithful
and he shal have the nourysshing of your child; and his name is sir Ector, and he is a lord of fa
lyvelode in many partyes in Englond and Walys. And this lord, sir Ector, lete hym be sent for for t
come and speke with you, and desyre hym yourself as he loveth you that he will put his owne child
nourisshyng to another woman and that his wyf nourisshe yours. And whan the child is borne lete
be delyverd to me at yonder pryy posterne, uncrystned.'

So like as Merlyn devysed it was done. And whan syre Ector was come he made fyaunce to the kyng
for to nourisse the child lyke as the kynge desyred, and there the kyng graunted syr Ector gre
rewardys. Thenne when the lady was delyverd the kynge commaunded two knyghtes and two ladyes
take the child bound in a cloth of gold, 'and that ye delyver hym to what poure man ye mete at th
posterne yate of the castel.' So the child was delyverd unto Merlyn, and so he bare it forth unto sy
Ector and made an holy man to crysten hym and named hym Arthur. And so sir Ectors wyf nourysshed
hym with her owne pappe.

Thenne within two yeres kyng Uther felle seke of a grete maladye. And in the meanewhyle hym
enemyes usurpped upon hym and dyd a grete bataylle upon his men and slewe many of his peple.

'Sir,' said Merlyn, 'ye may not lye so as ye doo, for ye must to the feld, though ye ryde on an hor
lyttar. For ye shall never have the better of your enemyes but yf your persone be there, and thenne
shall ye have the vyctory.'

So it was done as Merlyn had devysed, and they caryed the kynge forth in an hors-lyttar with a gre
hooste towarde his enemyes, and at Saynt Albons ther mette with the kynge a grete hoost of the North
And that day syre Ulfyus and sir Bracias dyd grete dedes of armes, and kyng Uthers men overcome th
northeryn bataylle and slewe many peple and putt the remenaunt to flight; and thenne the kyng
retorned unto London and made grete joye of his vyctory.

And thenne he fyll passyng sore seke so that thre dayes and thre nyghtes he was spechelid
wherfore alle the barons made grete sorow and asked Merlyn what counceill were best.

'There nys none other remedye,' said Merlyn, 'but God wil have his wille. But loke ye al barons b
bifore kyng Uther to-morne, and God and I shalle make hym to speke.'

So on the morne alle the barons with Merlyn came tofore the kyng. Thenne Merlyn said aloud unto
kyng Uther, 'Syr, shall your sone Arthur be kyng after your dayes of this realme with all th
appertenaunce?'

Thenne Uther Pendragon torned hym and said in herynge of them alle, 'I gyve hym Gods blisssyng
and myne, and byd hym pray for my soule, and righteuously and worshipfully that he clayme the
croune upon forfeture of my blessyng,' and therwith he yelde up the ghost. And thenne was he enter
as longed to a kyng, wherfor the quene, fayre Igrayne, made grete sorowe and alle the barons.

Thenne stood the reame in grete jeopardy long whyle, for every lord that was myghty of men maa
hym stronge, and many wende to have ben kyng. Thenne Merlyn wente to the Archebisshop of
Caunterbury and councelled hym for to sende for all the lordes of the reame and alle the gentilmen
armes that they shold to London come by Cristmas upon Payne of cursynge, and for this cause, th

Jesu, that was borne on that nyghte, that He wold of His grete mercy shewe some myracle, as He wold come to be Kynge of mankynde, for to shewe somme myracle who shold be rightwys kynge of the reame. So the Archebisshop by the advys of Merlyn send for alle the lordes and gentilmen of armes that they shold come by Crystmasse even unto London, and many of hem made hem clene of her lyne that her prayer myghte be the more acceptable unto God.

Soo in the grettest chirch of London — whether it were Powlis or not the Frensshe booke maketh no mencyon — alle the estates were longe or day in the chirche for to praye. And whan matyns and the first masse was done there was sene in the chircheyard ayenst the hyhe aulter a grete stone four square, lyke unto a marbel stone; and in myddes therof was lyke an anvylde of stele a foot on hight, and theryn stack a fayre swerd naked by the poynt, and letters there were wryten in gold aboute the swerd that saiden thus: ‘WHOSO PULLETH OUTE THIS SWERD OF THIS STONE AND ANVYLDE IS RIGHTWYS KYNGE BORNE OF ALL ENGLOND.’ Thenne the peple merveilled and told it to the Archebisshop.

‘I commande,’ said thArchebisshop, ‘that ye kepe yow within your chirche and pray unto God still that no man touche the swerd till the hyhe masse be all done.’

So whan all masses were done all the lordes wente to beholde the stone and the swerd. And whan they sawe the scripture som assayed suche as wold have ben kyng, but none myght stere the swerd ne meve hit.

‘He is not here,’ said the Archebisshop, ‘that shall encheve the swerd, but doubte not, God will make hym knownen. But this is my counceill,’ said the Archebisshop, ‘that we lete purvey to knyghtes, men of good fame, and they to kepe this swerd.’

So it was ordeyned, and thenne ther was made a crye that every man shold assay that wold for to wynne the swerd. And upon Newe Yeers day the barons lete maake a justes and a tournement, that all knyghtes that wold juste or tourneye there myght playe. And all this was ordeyned for to kepe the lordes togyders and the comyns, for the Archebisshop trusted that God wold make hym knowe that he shold wynne the swerd.

So upon New Yeres day, whan the servyce was done, the barons rode unto the feld, some to justes and som to torney. And so it happed that syre Ector that had grete lyvelode aboute London rode unto the justes, and with hym rode syr Kaynus, his sone, and yong Arthur that was hys nourisshed broder, and syr Kay was made knyght at Alhalowmas afore. So as they rode to the justes ward sir Kay had lost his swerd, for he had lefte it at his faders lodgyng, and so he prayd yong Arthur for to ryde for him to swerd.

‘I wyll wel,’ said Arthur, and rode fast after the swerd.

And whan he cam home the lady and al were out to see the joustyng. Thenne was Arthur wroth and saide to hymself, ‘I will ryde to the chircheyard and take the swerd with me that stycketh in the stome for my broder sir Kay shal not be without a swerd this day.’ So whan he cam to the chircheyard saw he Arthur alight and tayed his hors to the style, and so he wente to the tent and found no knyghtes therin for they were atte justyng. And so he handled the swerd by the handels, and lightly and fiersly pulled it out of the stone, and took his hors and rode his way untyll he came to his broder sir Kay and delyvered hym the swerd.

And as sone as sir Kay saw the swerd he wist wel it was the swerd of the stone, and so he rode to his fader syre Ector and said, ‘Sire, loo here is the swerd of the stone, wherfor I must be kyng of thys lande.’

When syre Ector beheld the swerd he returned ageyne and cam to the chirche, and there they alighted al thre and wente into the chirche, and anon he made sir Kay to swere upon a book how he came to the swerd.

‘Syr,’ said sir Kay, ‘by my broder Arthur, for he brought it to me.’ How gate ye this swerd?’ said syre Ector to Arthur.

'Sir, I will telle you. When I cam home for my broders swerd I fond nobdy at home to delyver m
his swerd, and so I thought my broder syr Kay shold not be swerdles, and so I cam hyder egerly and
pulled it out of the stone withoute ony payn.'

'Found ye ony knyghtes about this swerd?' seid sir Ector.

'Nay,' said Arthur.

'Now,' said sir Ector to Arthur, 'I understande ye must be kynge of this land.'

'Wherfore I?' sayd Arthur, and for what cause?'

'Sire,' saide Ector, 'for God wille have hit soo, for ther shold never man have drawen oute the
swerde but he that shal be rightwys kyng of this land. Now lete me see whether ye can putte the swerde
theras it was and pulle hit oute agayne.'

'That is no maystry,' said Arthur, and soo he put it in the stone. Therwithalle sir Ector assayed to
pulle oute the swerd and faylled.

'Now assay,' said syre Ector unto syre Kay. And anon he pulled at the swerd with alle his myght,
but it wold not be. 6

'Now shal ye assay,' said syre Ector to Arthur.

'I wyll wel,' said Arthur, and pulled it out easily.

And therwithalle syre Ector knelyd doun to the erthe and syre Kay.

'Allas!' said Arthur, 'myne own dere fader and broder, why knele ye to me?'

'Nay, nay, my lord Arthur, it is not so. I was never your fader nor of your blood, but I wote wel y
are of an hyher blood than I wende ye were,' and thenne syre Ector told hym all how he was bitaken
hym for to nourishe hym and by whoos commandement, and by Merlyns delyveraunce.

Thenne Arthur made grete doole whan he understood that syre Ector was not his fader.

'Sir,' said Ector unto Arthur, 'woll ye be my good and gracious lord when ye are kyng?'

'Els were I to blame,' said Arthur, 'for ye are the man in the world that I am most beholding to, and
my good lady and moder your wyf that as wel as her owne hath fostred me and kepte. And yf ever he
be Goddes will that I be kyng as ye say, ye shall desyre of me what I may doo and I shalle not fail
yow. God forbede I shold faille yow.'

'Sir,' said sire Ector, 'I will aske no more of yow but that ye wille make my sone, your foster
broder syre Kay, senceall of alle your landes.'

'That shalle be done,' said Arthur, 'and more, by the feith of my body, that never man shalle have
that office but he whyle he and I lyve.'

Therewithal! they wente unto the Archebisshop and told hym how the swerd was encheved and b
whome. And on twelfth day alle the barons cam thyder and to assay to take the swerd who that wo
assay, but there afore hem alle ther myghte none take it out but Arthur. Wherfor ther were many
lordes wroth and saide it was grete shame unto them all and the reame to be overgovernyd with a boy
of no hyghe blood borne. And so they fell oute at that tyme, that it was put of tyll Candelmas, and
thenne all the barons shold mete there agayne, but alwey the ten knyghtes were ordeyned to watche th
swerd day and nyght, and so they sette a pavelione over the stone and the swerd, and fyve alway
watched.

Soo at Candalmasse many moo grete lordes came thyder for to have wonne the swerde, but ther
myghte none prevaille. And right as Arthur dyd at Cristmasse he dyd at Candelmasse and pulled ou
the swerde easely, wheroft the barons were sore agreved and put it of in delay till the hyghe feste o
Eester. And as Arthur sped afore so dyd he at Eester. Yet there were some of the grete lordes ha
indignacion that Arthur shold be kyng, and put it of in a delay tyll the feest of Pentecoste. Thenne th
Archebisshop of Caunterbury by Merlyns provydence lete purveye thenne of the best knyghtes th
they myghte gete, and suche knyghtes as Uther Pendragon loved best and moost trusted in his daye.
And suche knyghtes were put aboute Arthur as syr Bawdewyn of Bretayn, syre Kaynes, syre Ulfyu

syre Barsias; all these with many other were alweyes about Arthur day and nyghte till the feste
Pentecost.

And at the feste of Pentecost alle maner of men assayed to pulle ^[7]at the swerde that wold assay, b
none myghte prevaille but Arthur, and he pulled it oute afore all the lordes and comyns that we
there. Wherfore alle the comyns cryed at ones, ‘We wille have Arthur unto Qur kyng! We wille pu
hym no more in delay, for we all see that it is Goddes wille that he shalle be our kyng, and who th
holdeth ageynst it we wille slee hym.’

And therwithall they knelyd at ones both ryche and poure and cryed Arthur mercy bycause they ha
delayed hym so longe. And Arthur foryaf hem and took the swerd bitwene both his handes and offred
it upon theaulter where the Archebisshop was, and so was he made knyghte of the best man that wa
there.

And so anon was the coronacyon made, and ther was he sworne unto his lordes and the comyns f
to be a true kyng, to stand with true justyce fro thens forth the dayes of this lyf. Also thenne he mada
alle lordes that helde of the croune to come in and to do servyce as they oughte to doo. And man
complayntes were made unto sir Arthur of grete wronges that were done syn the dethe of kyng Uther
of many londes that were bereved lordes, knyghtes, ladyes, and gentilmen; wherfor kyng Arthur
maade the londes to be yeven ageyne unto them that oughte hem.

Whanne this was done that the kyng had stablissched alle the countreyes aboue London, thenne he
lete make syr Kay sencial of Englond, and sir Baudewyn of Bretayne was made constable, and s
Ulfyus was made chamberlayn, and sire Brastias was maade wardeyn to wayte upon the Northe f
Trent forwardes, for it was that tyme the most party the kynges enemys. But within fewe yeres aft
Arthur wan alle the North, Scotland and alle that were under their obeissaunce, also Walys; a parte o
it helde ayenst Arthur, but he overcam hem al as he dyd the remenaunt thurgh the noble prowesse o
hymself and his knyghtes of the Round Table.

Thenne the kyng remeved into Walys and lete crye a grete feste, ^[8]that it shold be holdyn
Pentecost after the incoronacion of hym at the cyté of Carlyon. Unto the fest come kyng Lott
Lowthean and of Orkeney with fyve hondred knyghtes with hym; also ther come to the feste kyng
Uryens of Gore with four hondred knyghtes with hym; also ther come to that feeste kyng Nayntres
Garloth with seven hundred knyghtes with hym; also ther came to the feest the kynge of Scotland wi
sixe honderd knyghtes with hym, and he was but a yong man. Also ther came to the feste a kyng th
was called the Kyng with the Honderd Knyghtes, but he and his men were passyng wel bisene at
poyntes; also ther cam the kyng of Cardos with fyve honderd knyghtes.

And kyng Arthur was glad of their comynge, for he wende that al the kynges and knyghtes had com
for grete love and to have done hym worship at his feste, wherfor the kyng made grete joye and sem
the kynges and knyghtes grete présentes. But the kynges wold none receyve, but rebuked th
messagers shamefully and said they had no joye to receyve no yeftes of a berdles boye that was com
of lowe blood, and sente hym word they wold none of his yeftes, but that they were come to gyve hym
yeftes with hard swerdys betwixt the neck and the sholders; and therfore they came thyder, so th
told to the messagers playnly, for it was grete shame to all them to see suche a boye to have a rule o
soo noble a reaume as this land was. With this ansuer the messagers departed and told to kyng Arthur
this ansuer, wherfor by the advys of his barons he took hym to a strong towre with fyve hondred good
men with hym. And all the kynges aforesaid in a maner leyd a syege tofore hym, but kyng Arthur wa
well vyttailed.

And within fyftene dayes ther came Merlyn amoneg hem into the cyté of Carlyon. Thenne all th
kynges were passyng gladde of Merlyn and asked hym, ‘For what cause is that boye Arthur made yo
kyng?’

‘Syres,’ said Merlyn, ‘I shalle telle yow the cause, for he is kyng Uther Pendragons sone borne

wedlok, gotten on Igrayne, the dukes wyf of Tyntigail.'

'Thenne is he a bastard,' they said al.

'Nay,' said Merlyn, 'after the deth of the duke more than thre houres was Arthur begoten, and thirtene dayes after kyng Uther wedded Igrayne, and therfor I preve hym he is no bastard. And, whil saith nay, he shal be kyng and overcome alle his enemyes, and or he deye he shalle be long kyng of all Englond and have under his obeyssance Walys, Yrland, and Scotland, and moo reames than I wot now reherce.'

Some of the kynges had merveyl of Merlyns wordes and demed well that it shold be as he said, and som of hem lough hym to scorne, as kyng Lot, and me other called hym a wytche. But thenne were they accorded with Merlyn that kynge Arthur shold come oute and speke with the kynges, and to comen sauf and to goo sauf, suche suraunce ther was made. So Merlyn went unto kynge Arthur and told hym how he had done and badde hym, 'Fere not, but come oute boldly and speke with hem; and spare hem not, but ansuere them as their kyng and chyvetayn, for ye shal overcome hem all, whether they will or nalle.'

Thenne kynge Arthur came oute of his tour and had under his ^[19] gowne a jesseraunte of doublet maylle, and ther wente with hym the Archebisshop of Caunterbury, and syr Baudewyn of Bretayne, and syr Kay, and syre Brastias; these were the men of moost worship that were with hym. And whan they were mette there was no mekenes but stoute wordes on bothe sydes, but alweytes kynge Arthur ansuerd them and said he wold make them to bowe and he lyved, wherfore they departed with wrath. And kynge Arthur badde kepe hem wel, and they bad the kynge kepe hym wel. Soo the kynge retornyd hym to the toure ageyne and armed hym and alle his knyghtes.

'What will ye do?' said Merlyn to the kynges. 'Ye were better for to stynte, for ye shalle not helpe hym prevaille, though ye were ten so many.'

'Be we wel avysed to be aferd of a dreme-reder?' said kyng Lot. With that Merlyn vanysshed away, and came to kynge Arthur and bad hym set on hem fiersly. And in the menewhyle there were three honderd good men of the best that were with the kynges that wente streyghte unto kynge Arthur, and that comforted hym gretely.

'Syr,' said Merlyn to Arthur, 'fyghte not with the swerde that ye had by myracle til that ye see ye godes unto the wers; thenne drawe it out and do your best.'

So forthwithalle kynge Arthur sette upon hem in their lodgyng, and syre Bawdewyn, syre Kay, and syre Brastias slewe on the right hand and on the lyfte hand, that it was merveylle; and alweytes kynge Arthur on horsback leyd on with a swerd and dyd merveillous dedes of armes, that many of the kynges had grete joye of his dedes and hardynesse. Thenne kynge Lot brake out on the bak syde, and the Knyghtes with the Honderd Knyghtes and kyng Carados, and sette on Arthur fiersly behynde hym.

With that syre Arthur torned with his knyghtes and smote behynd and before, and ever sir Arthur was in the formest prees tyl his hors was slayne underneth hym. And therwith kynge Lot smote downe kyng Arthur. With that his four knyghtes reskowed hym and set hym on horsback; thenne he drewe his swerd Excalibur, but it was so bryght in his enemyes eyen that it gaf light lyke thirty torchys, and therwith he put hem on bak and slewe moche peple. And thenne the comyns of Carlyon aroos with clubbis and stavys and slewe many knyghtes, but alle the kynges helde them togyders with hys knyghtes that were lefte on lyve, and so fled and departed; and Merlyn come unto Arthur and counciell hym to folowe hem no further.

^[10] So after the feste and journeye kynge Arthur drewe hym unto London. And soo by the council of Merlyn the kyng lete calle his barons to council, for Merlyn had told the kyng that the sixe kynges that made warre upon hym wold in al haste be awroke on hym and on his landys; wherfor the kyng asked council at hem al. They coude no council gyve, but said they were bygge ynough.

'Ye saye well,' said Arthur, 'I thanke you for your good courage; but wil ye al that loveth me speke

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