



n God's name, amen.
this is the book of the
stories of the tavola
Ritonda, and of Sir
tristano, Sir
lancilotto, and many
other knights, as
recounted below.



y lords, this book tells and devises the fine adventures, the great deeds of chivalry, and the noble tournaments done in the time of King Uter Pandragon and the barons of the Tavola Vecchia, three hundred years and more after the death of our lord Iesu Cristo, son of the true and living God. Also it tells of the other deeds of chivalry done in the time of King Artù and the brave knights of the Tavola Nuova, especially by Sir Tristano, Sir Lancelotto, Sir Galasso, and Sir Palamidesso, and generally by all the other knights errant of the Tavola, and by foreign knights and those from far countries who at that time were proving themselves in deeds of arms. And also we will show the destruction of the Tavola, which came about through the undertaking of the high quest of the Sangradale. Therefore let each of you take care to be kind and courteous in listening to it, so that you may each be pleased with the story and the author may receive joy and delight.



In this part the story tells that King Uter Pandragon held a noble court and kept a great barony in the kingdom of Longres, at the grand castle of Urbano. It was once at the approach of the gentle season and the lovely month of May that he called together all the knights, kings, counts, and barons, bidding them come with their wives and their ladies to the great plain at Urbano to hold a tournament, as they used to do in days of old. And he decreed that whatever knight brought a lady with him, if she were captured by another knight, must fight bravely enough to keep her or be taken and put in a cart and pulled all around the field so that mud and filth would be thrown on his back, and he would be greatly dishonored.¹

As the month approached, all the kings, counts, knights, and barons brought their wives and ladies to the place appointed for the tournament. Meanwhile, Sir Gurone the Courteous, a knight from a faraway land, was resting at one of his retreats, that is, the castle of the Busco Verdulante. Hearing about this tournament, he armed himself, mounted his horse, and went toward the assembly all alone. As he rode along, he met two knights escorting a beautiful lady, richly adorned. Sir Gurone greeted them both, saying, "Which of you escorts this lady?"

"Sire," said one of the knights, "why do you ask?"

"I ask," said Gurone, "because I wish to win her by force of arms."

"So, you want to fight with us?" said the other knight.

"Yes, I do," said Gurone, "if you intend to contest her. Now, let's get to the proof."

Then with no further challenge, one moved away from the other. As they spurred their horses forward, Gurone lowered his lance and struck the knight such a blow that he sent him dead to the ground from his horse. When the lady saw that her knight was dead, she began to weep and cry, but Gurone approached her, saying, "You have lost one knight, but by fortune you have gained another who is equally good."

The lady took no comfort from his words; instead she sought protection from the other knight. That one attacked Gurone, but hit him on his

shield in a way that did no harm. Then Gurone struck him and sent him to the ground badly wounded. Coming to the lady he took her horse by the bridle and put her thus to ride before him, but before she left she spoke with the defeated knight. In that conversation she ordered a great treachery against Sir Gurone, through which he would be much dishonored. Mean-while Gurone led the lady away, and she pretended to love him, but in her heart she hated him bitterly.

When Gurone and the lady came to the tourney field they found many noble people assembled there, and Gurone lodged in the pavilion of Androes, King of Scozia. Soon over the field went a decree that all the knights should assemble, and that they should bring no weapon of offense except their lances. Then King Uter had all the ladies seated on a high wooden stand covered with cloths of fine silk.

The people were assembled when onto the field came two armed knights flying banners all of blue with a silver stripe. One of them was King Bordo of Gaules and the other was King Bando of Benoich, his brother. Riding to the middle of the plain, lances high, they cried out a challenge to any knight who wanted a separate joust. Then out of a pavilion rode two cavaliers: one was Amorotto of Gaules, and the other was called Sir Iaco. Sir Iaco came out from one side, and King Bando struck him so hard he sent him to earth from his horse, but Amorotto overthrew King Bordo and his horse as well. Know that then there was a multitude of knights jousting on the field.

Then King Meliadus rode onto the meadow, fierce as a dragon, flying a banner of azure with a golden lion in its center. He called out, "Whoever wants a joust with King Meliadus of Liones may have it!"

The first to respond was a worthy knight who rode to the encounter beneath a black banner; this was King Scalabrone who bore great hatred against King Meliadus only for envy of his chivalrous deeds. King Uter had everyone draw aside to watch the joust between the two noble knights. Then with no hesitation the two valiant barons rode to the far ends of the field so they were separated by more than a good three leagues; they struck their mounts with two fine golden spurs so that the horses, feeling the shock of it, ran willingly. The knights were eager, too, for each of them would have given a city to be the winner of that encounter. Both of them were considered the best knights in the world, and all the other jousts were held back for theirs. Their horses were stout chargers, and the knights were vigorous and strong; they came on in such a great storm that truly they seemed like lightning. The grass turned brown under the horses' forefeet and their back feet splintered the stones, making such a cloud of dust that it swallowed the sky like the mouth of a dragon, and the knights, fierce as lions, gripped their lances.

Then lowering their lances, they struck each other so hard that their weapons shattered. Knight and horse, they struck each other on their shields and breastplates so hard that both men went to earth with their horses.

Their fall was so heavy that neither pulse nor vein could be found or felt; they lay like dead men and were carried in arms to their pavilions.

The fourth joust was between Sir Estorri of Sobolis and Sir Cherin of Linello, and Sir Cherin was the victor; the fifth was between Sir Androes, King of Scozia, and King Ferramonte of Norgales, and King Ferramonte was the vanquished. In the sixth joust the King of Rilanfer in Irlanda defeated King Peles Peschaor. In the seventh, King Peries of Organia unhorsed King Bando of Benoich; in the eighth, Brunoro the Brown sent the King of Norgales dead to earth; in the ninth, Hettor the Brown overcame King Lotto. In the tenth joust, Februe the Brown unseated King Uter Pandragon and sent his horse down as well. These ten jousts were held separately, but all of the other knights jostled together on the field and many of them were killed or wounded, jousting until their lances were broken. Then a proclamation was cried throughout the field that all should go to rest in their own pavilions.

Having disarmed themselves, they went to eat with King Uter, where those who had won were asked to sit at the royal table. Sir Gurone the Courteous was among those who sat there, for he had proven himself very well to all the company. The lady he had won on the road sat in front of them with the other noblewomen. While the barons all were eating, the knight whose companion Gurone had killed came into the hall and, approaching Uter Pandragon, said, "My lord, it seems to me a great marvel that a knight eats at your table who by his cowardice lost his lady on the road. According to your decree he ought to be taken and bound in a cart."

The king asked this knight, "What man do you mean?"

And the knight, who was called Gariosso of the county of Maganza, lord of the city of Pontiere, said to the king, "There he is. He is called Gurone. I took his lady from him, and you can see the very one sitting there in front of you."

Gurone, hearing him lie so shamelessly, felt such anger swelling his heart that he could make no answer. The king asked Gurone, "Is what this knight accuses you of truly what happened?"

Gurone answered, "Upon my honor, I never did so foul a thing. Ask the lady who is with me; she will tell you the truth."

Gurone said this because he thought the lady loved him loyally and had not ordered any treachery against him. Then King Uter summoned the lady and commanded that she describe the matter as it had occurred. She said to him, "My lord king, know truly that I was at first the lady of Sir Gurone, who was bringing me to see this assembly. On the road we met that knight who, for desire of capturing me, challenged Sir Gurone to battle, and so they jostled together. He bested Gurone with lance and with sword, so Gurone lost me and this knight captured me and kept me with him all that day. At night, I escaped from him and came back to Sir Gurone, because

I love him very much and I have loved him for a long, long time."

Hearing her speak such great treachery, Gurone could not think how to deny or excuse what she had accused him of; thus the king had him taken and bound in a cart and had him led all around the field, so that mud and filth were hurled on top of him. Dismounting from the cart in great shame, Gurone departed and returned to his own country, where he became very cruel toward the knights of the Tavola Vecchia.

II.

Now the tale tells that the next day dawned beautiful and bright, and the proclamation went out that the knights and barons should return to the broad plain that was the jousting field. The ladies again mounted the high stand to see the tournament begun among the combattants. And having held back a little, here through the field rode an armed knight accompanied by four ladies, very beautiful and richly attired. Before the royal pavilion this knight announced that whoever wanted to joust with him should come forward, and whoever could best him might win the one of these four maidens who pleased him most. At that point, when the announcement was heard, without more delay the tall Meliadus of Liones came against him. Then they began to exchange blows, and the knight, who carried a shield of gold, struck Meliadus with such power that he knocked him to earth and his horse as well. Then he beat King Lotto, King Bordo, and King Iscambrinello, and he bested King Bando and Sir Febus, and as a last blow he knocked down King Uter Pandragon and his horse. After that, he rode through the crowd of knights subduing them all, and he did such deeds of arms it was a wonder to watch him, and thus he had the prize and honor of the tournament. This man was Sir Sigurans the Brown whose deeds are recorded in the tales of Sir Ganoro the Great.

When the next day came, each king, baron, and knight left to return to his own country. Now the tale leaves this history of Uter Pandragon and the mighty barons of the Tavola Vecchia and we will tell of the Tavola Nuova of King Artù. Especially will we tell of the birth, life, and death of two noble knights, that is, Sir Tristano and Sir Lancilotto, and of other foreign knights errant.

For the present, we will speak of Sir Tristano, because he was the source and foundation of all chivalry. And so that we may tell his story better,

we will tell of him and of the seven principal matters into which his whole history is divided. First we will speak of his most noble lineage, and then of his very noble birth, and then of his perfect love, and then of his cruel death. Then of the great lament that was made for this bitterest death, and of the very great vengeance that was taken on his behalf. Now, therefore, we will speak of his lineage, how he descended and from which nation; and therefore I beg that each of you be at peace, and be kind in the listening.

III.

The tellers of tales order and imagine that the first king of Cornovaglia descended from Salamone the high king, from his lineage of Bramanzia. He was called Codo, and had a son named Anzilere and also a daughter called Trasfilas. There came a time when Anzilere killed, by treachery and without any reason, the good King Appollo, first king of Liones, who was descended from the noble King Alesandro. King Codo was so grieved by the death of King Appollo that to preserve justice and reason he had his son Anzilere taken and had his head cut off, for paternal love could not in any way force him to falsify justice. In this he followed the counsel of Salamone, which is, "Uphold justice, ye who judge the land."²

According to what one reads, King Appollo left one son of about eight years who was called by name Gandaries. King Codo had the child brought to him, and had him cared for with great love; when the boy reached fifteen he thus made him a knight. And, to secure the peace, Codo gave him his daughter in marriage, and after his own death left him the kingdom of Cornovaglia. Gandaries and Trasfilas lived together many years and had twelve sons. The firstborn, who succeeded to the inheritance, was named Zersides. When Gandaries passed from this life, his twelve sons were in accord and they made their oldest brother king of Cornovaglia, and Baralis, their next brother, they made king of Liones. Then the ten who remained went adventuring in foreign lands, seeking to win honor as worthy and loyal knights.

Know then that Gandaries had never taken the crown itself. He could not wear it for this reason: at that time it was the custom that if a son did not take revenge for the death of his father, he could not wear his father's crown because he was not worthy of so much honor. He presided over his kingdom as lord only, and not as king.

Afterwards then Zersides was king in Cornovaglia and Baralis king in

Liones, but Zersides died a short time later and his kingdom reverted to Baralis, his brother. Baralis had two sons, one named Feriando and the other called Felissi, but since Feriando died as a youth, after the death of his father Felissi was crowned for both kingdoms. Thus he lived until he was attacked by King Dilianfer of Irlanda. There were mighty wars then between them, lasting a long time, with great battles on land and on sea, but in the end King Dilianfer invaded the kingdom of Cornovaglia with a vast army of knights and foot soldiers, and besieged the city of Tintoile.

He stayed so long with his host that he took the castle, conquering it for a tributary, setting a certain sum which had to be paid every year. And there were some who said that because of this King Felissi grew sick and died, because of his great grief. He left two sons after him; the firstborn called Meliadus, and the second Marco, because this child was born on the first Mars' day (Tuesday) in March. There was also a third son, whose name was Perna.

Marco was crowned king of Cornovaglia, and the people of that country were rather happy about having him for their lord for he was very handsome and courtly; but he was not very wise, because he was too easily persuaded to doubt and to believe. Meliadus was crowned king of Liones, and those of his land were also pleased because they saw that he was happy, wise, and courteous as well. After Marco was crowned for the kingdom of Cornovaglia, King Amoroldo of Irlanda, the son of King Dilianfer, did not wait long before he came down on him. He brought with him a great gathering of barons and knights and demanded of King Marco the tribute which he owed from the nine years past. Amoroldo told him if he did not pay the tribute within thirty days, he would owe ten times as much.

IV.

If anyone might ask how much the tribute was which Amoroldo demanded from King Marco, I would say that in the time of King Dilianfer, who conquered that realm by force of arms, this is the tribute and the tax which he imposed: King Felissi had to pay to him each year three measures of gold, ten marriageable maidens, ten young men to make knights, ten falcons, ten goshawks, ten hawks, ten dogs, and ten greyhounds; also three camels, three lions, three leopards, and three bucks.³ This was the same tribute Amoroldo demanded from King Marco. And when he had thus demanded it, Perna

spoke out against it, saying to King Marco his brother, "I protest that the tribute should not be paid, but should be defended in battle, so that you will not have to pay more, and we will not have to live as vassals of another."

But the king said, "Perna, words are cheap and combat is dear, for I have no knight courageous enough to take arms against Amoroldo. You know

he is praised as the worthiest knight in the world."

Then Perna replied to King Marco, "If you don't want to enter the lists against him to get this country out of bondage, then take off your crown. It may happen then that some good warrior will come to claim it, who through his prowess will get this country out of slavery."

You should know that Perna said these words to King Marco on his own behalf, for he had no part of his father's kingdoms, and would gladly have risked his life to become lord. Hearing such talk, King Marco became very angry against his brother, saying to him, "Not for this will I give up my crown for anyone living; instead I will keep it in spite of what anyone wants." Then he ordered the tribute to be paid. This was done immediately, and Amoroldo went back to his own country.

You should know that of the three sons of King Felissi, King Meliadus was the most noble, the worthiest, and the wisest; King Marco was the handsomest, but the least wise and the most despicable, while Perna was the ugliest and the smallest. For many days King Marco remained angry with Perna, until one day they went hunting in the desert of Liantes with many other barons. They came to the Fontana del Leone, and Perna dismounted to get a drink. He leaned over the fountain, and King Marco came quietly up behind him, hit him on the head with a sword, and killed him. He did this only because Perna had spoken against the tribute and said he should not pay it. This proves the words of the wise man, who says, "The man who sees, hears, and keeps silent wishes to live in peace. The one who talks too much often errs; the one who speaks little gains approval. To know how to hold one's tongue is the first and last virtue. Because the tongue is nobler than any other part of the body, one wants to unleash it most wisely. A man should think about a word before he says it, for once spoken, it cannot be taken back, because it cuts more sharply than a knife. The man who talks too much does not live long on the earth: do not talk too much if you have no wish to err."

And now the story stops speaking of King Marco and we will tell of the noble King Meliadus, from whom descended the courageous and courteous Sir Tristano.

All of the stories say and for this purpose agree that King Meliadus was truly a worthy and loyal knight. Never had he had a lady, nor ever thought of having one; he did this to please God and to better conserve his strength. But according to what the story contains, King Artù was the lord of Gran Bretagna, chief and protector of the knights errant. He frequently made war and held siege against the city of Liones because he wanted Meliadus to do him homage, and pay census and tribute to him as all the kings except Meliadus and the high prince Galeotto did. Galeotto was then the lord of distant lands and islands who, because of his bravery, ruled over eighteen kingdoms.

At that time King Artù held great power, because he had as his ally King Bando of Benoich and all his kin. Thus, when King Bando died, King Artù was no longer so eager to wage war on King Meliadus' lands, at least until the one son left by King Bando had become a knight. Then, to secure his power, King Artù began again to war against King Meliadus.

And therefore we will tell of the death of King Bando and the birth of his son, and then of the birth and life of Sir Tristano, son of the high king Meliadus, King of Liones and source of courtesy and knighthood.

VI.

The true history tells that King Bando was at the court of King Artù, enjoying himself on his return from the siege of the city of Liones, when a messenger came to tell him that the kings Arandus and Brandino, with their kinsmen, were holding the city of Benoich in siege, and that many of the barons and castles had risen in rebellion against him. Then King Bando in great sorrow and without any delay took horse and, accompanied by his lady and thirty knights, rode back to his own land. Riding thus, having arrived at the crest of the mountain and begun to descend toward the plain, he saw Benoich, his city, all ablaze.

Seeing himself in such height, then because of this brought so low, he felt himself swell with great pride as well as melancholy and grief. The blood was constrained in his heart, so that the heat of pride and the cold of grief and melancholy consumed his natural heat, and his heart struggled until

his strength failed and he fell senseless from his horse, dying almost at once.

Queen Gostanza was then seven months heavy with child, and when she saw that her husband and lord had passed from this life, at that very hour, because of the great pain her body had received, she was delivered of a beautiful little boy. After he was born, she lived three days and then died.

The Dama del Lago, sister of Fata Morgana, having discovered through her magic arts that King Bando had left a son who would become a brave knight, was very glad of it, for she had always felt great love for his father, King Bando. She arranged it so the little boy came into her care, and she had him baptized and gave him the name of Lancilotto, which means, "very wise and skilled knight of the lance and sword." She had him nursed well and faithfully, and devised it so no one might know she had him in her care except the wet nurse. King Artù and the King of Gaules, and all the others of his kin cared little if the boy lived or died, for he was the heir to the kingdom.

When the boy, that is Lancilotto, reached the age of fifteen, the Dama del Lago summoned four of her ladies to her side and instructed them to lead Lancilotto to the court of King Artù, and to ask the king on her behalf to make the boy a knight, knowing that by him all chivalry would be defended. Then the four ladies mounted and went on their way with the boy.

When they were inside the kingdom of Longres near the city of Camelot, they met three knights fully armed. One was Sir Calvano, another was Sir Chieso the Seneschal, and the third was called Sir Arecco. The weather was beautiful that day, and the sun was striking the armor of the three knights making them all shining and resplendant. It was such a beautiful thing to see, especially for one who had never seen arms or knights before. Lancilotto looked at them and hurled himself to the ground from his horse and fell to his knees, where he began to say his prayers before the three knights.

The knights spoke courteously to the four ladies, asking them who they were and why the young man had knelt thus. They responded happily to this greeting and said that they were from a far country, but as for why the young man knelt, they did not know. Then Sir Calvano came toward him, saying, "Young man, for what cause have you knelt there?"

He answered, "If I have knelt, it is no wonder, for my lady and these ladies too have often told me that our lord God is the most beautiful thing in the world, and truly I believe that you are he, for you are the most beautiful thing I have ever seen in this world."

Then the knights and ladies, having heard the boy, began to laugh out loud, saying, "Young man, we are neither God nor angels, but knights who go into distant lands, proving our prowess so that no wrong will be done to anyone."

"By my faith," said Lancilotto, "since knights are so beautiful to see, I would willingly be one if I could."

Then the boy asked the three knights if they would show him the uses of their arms, and Sir Calvano told him how the helmet, shield, and breastplate were for defense, the lance and the sword for offense. "But these ladies say they are taking you to the court of King Artù; he will give you arms and a horse, and will make you a knight." With such words they made the boy very happy.

And so they took leave of each other, and Lancilotto and the ladies rode so that they came to the city of Camellotto, where King Artù was keeping his court. Entering the palace, they went to the great hall in which they found the king with Queen Ginevara and many knights and barons. The ladies greeted the king on behalf of the Dama del Lago, telling him how she ordered it, begging that the boy be made a knight. The king replied that he would do it gladly.

In a little while, the tables were laid, and all the people were seated to eat. Lancilotto was seated at the table of the knights of least proved merit. While they were thus eating, a maiden of the court arrived who had never spoken anything, and who was known as "the lady who tells no lies," because having never spoken at all, she had never uttered truth or falsehood. She took Lancilotto by the hand and then she spoke: "Stand up, young man. You are Bando of Benoich's son, and you have come to sit at the table of the knights errant." And never again in this world did the maiden speak.⁴

When the king knew that this boy the Dama del Lago had cared for was King Bando's son, he was very happy. He did the youth much honor, and made ready to make him a knight. All that night, just as it was the custom to do, Lancilotto kept vigil in the great church, and in the morning the king dubbed him a knight. He did not then gird him with a sword, for no one was ever thus girded until the age of twenty-five, but he vested him with arms, a horse, and the insignia his father King Bando had carried, the bright blue field with its silver band.

Queen Ginevara, seeing the new knight so handsome, immediately fell in love with him, and he fell in love with her. Each one desired the other for love, and gladly they served each other, and gladly would have wished to meet together, but they were afraid that they might be noticed. So they resisted, but both remained with their desire and still loved each other with good heart, and each of them was given totally to love and secretly they served each other in whatever way they could, but not so much that their love yet had fruit.

VII.

The story tells that as King Artù and his barons were still at court there appeared a knight armed fully, who had been wounded in the chest by a lance in such a way that one could see a good part of the tip coming out his back. Into the great hall before the king this knight came shouting and saying, "No knight may be so bold as to put his hand into my wound unless he will first swear to avenge my dishonor!"

But when the people asked him to name the knight who had wounded him, he said that the pain of his wound had made him lose his memory: "I don't know who I am myself; in no way can I tell who has wounded me."

Then Lancilotto stepped forward and pulled out the lance, but as soon as he did, the knight fell dead on the ground. The king said to Lancilotto, "Knight, why have you done this, when you do not know against whom to avenge him?"

Lancilotto replied, "I will start out seeking adventure, and with as many knights as I fight, so many will I kill, so that among them will be the knight who killed this man."

Then the king said to him, smiling, "You have more courage than anyone here."

But, according to what our book says, the dead knight was called Federion the Red, son of the lady Tessina who, some time later, Tristano would deliver from the hands of the lady Losanna of the Torre Antica in the mountains of Zetro.⁵ And the one who had wounded him was called Trincardo, brother of this Lady Losanna.

And so, having taken on the duty of vengeance for that knight, Lancilotto equipped himself with fine armor and a strong, swift horse, then took leave of King Artù and Queen Ginevara. She was very sad at his going, and spoke to him then a little in secret. She kissed him and embraced him as tightly as she could, then struck him lightly on his cheek, saying, "Knight, remember me always, and whoever recommends himself to you for love of me, do him no villainy."

Then he embraced her, and they made each other a pledge that they could not cash just then; he left her and began his journey through distant lands.

As the new knight went adventuring, he came to the lady of Mimalto who kept him in prison for a long time, only in order to have his love.⁶ After he was delivered out of that place he left her behind and rode until he came to the castle of Sir Lombardo, who called himself the mortal enemy of all the knights errant and knights of the Tavola Ritonda. When he came before the gate, Lancilotto found two pavilions raised. The count of Lombardo and his knights and barons were under one of them, and under the

other were tied some good war horses and some poles hung with great racks of armor. Under a pine tree nearby sat a marvellously beautiful lady. As Lancilotto rode between the two pavilions, the count said to him, "Sire, you cannot pass this way unless you consent to a joust. If you beat me, you will have won the lady beneath the pine and you may do whatever you like with me; but if I win, then you will be my prisoner forever. And if your horse or your armor has any blemish, take one of those under the pavilion there—they are all quite excellent."

Lancilotto, hearing such a challenge, gladly agreed to the joust, but not for anything would he change his horse or armor. Then Sir Lombardo mounted, and being on the field, each one challenged the other. They lowered their lances and gave each other two such immensely powerful blows that each one was bent over his saddlebow; but Lancilotto kept a strong grip on his lance, and through great force, he sent the count a shaft's length to earth. Then he put his hand to the hilt of his sword, saying, "Either promise me to go as a prisoner to Queen Ginevara or I will cut off your head." Sir Lombardo delayed not a moment but mounted his horse and rode so that he soon came to Camellotto and presented himself as a prisoner of Queen Ginevara on behalf of the new knight. Lancilotto, staying behind, cared nothing for the lady under the pine tree, so much he delighted in Queen Ginevara.

Then he left and rode on his way so that he found himself at a high, narrow pass which was guarded by two strong giants. It was King Gradosso of Sansogna who had it guarded in this way, because he lived in fear of the Count of Lombardo. But Lancilotto fought both of the giants: one he killed and the other sent as prisoner to Queen Ginevara. And she, seeing herself presented with so many prisoners on behalf of the new knight, was all consumed because of her love; night and day she thought only of how she might find him and see him again.

In order to see him, she devised a great subtlety. One night as she lay embracing King Artù she said, "Sire, if you will remember well, it has been nearly fifteen years since you have waged war on King Meliadus' lands. All the people are talking about that, and they say you hold back out of fear, because since King Bando died, you have never been bold enough to go into Meliadus' country. Surely you should not hold back out of fear, for even if King Bando is dead you have his son to aid you, who is alive enough and bold as well. He is in the district, and when he hears you are at war he will quickly give you help. Therefore I counsel you that you demonstrate your great power against King Meliadus."

Hearing these words, the king said that he would do it gladly, and that he would never cease warring on that realm if first King Meliadus did not swear allegiance to him and promise to pay him tribute. When morning came, the king sent letters and messages throughout his land to kings, dukes, mar-

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quires, barons, vavasors, and princes, to captains and all other men on foot and on horseback, from twenty years old all the way to one hundred, saying that in three months they must be in Camellotto with their arms and their horses and all other war tools, well supplied with biscuits and other provisions to last one year.

After the heralds had gone out and delivered their messages, at the determined time all the people gathered in the city of Camellotto. Then King Artù had the trumpets sounded and all rode out of the city riding one day after his banners were unfurled, and there they camped on the bank of a great river.

When King Meliadus saw that King Artù had again besieged his city he was very sorry and grieved, and quickly sent letters and messages telling all his allies about his predicament. Then quickly they gathered in response to those letters, the high prince Galeotto, the Duke of Bramante, Amoroldo of Irlanda, King Marco of Cornovaglia, the King of Scozia, the King of a Hundred Knights, and many other barons. When all of the warriors had gathered at the city of Liones, King Meliadus rode out and waited on his side of the river. King Artù, seeing such a mighty cavalry with Meliadus, began to feel somewhat doubtful, but Sir Viano, his counselor, comforted him very much by saying, "Sire, have no fear. If you follow my advice, you will be the conquerer. For now I thus advise you that you have Queen Ginevara come to the field, and all the other ladies and maidens with bright faces from the city of Camellotto, and have them sit high on the river bank on a wooden platform. Because your knights are all in love, when they see the ladies and their lovable faces, they will fight so valiantly that one man will be worth ten. Thus you will be the victor."

King Artù received this advice gladly, and called Queen Ginevara to come to the battlefield with all her bright-eyed ladies and maidens, 1280 of them, indeed the flower of all the ladies of the land. He had them all sit high on a tall wooden stand covered with fine cloths of gold and silk.

When King Meliadus saw this great strategy that King Artù had ordered, and knowing the reason it had been done, he himself thought of another device. He summoned to the field all the little boys up to ten years old, that is, all who were of noble birth. He made them all stand on the bank of the great river, saying to his knights that each one must be valiant and bold, for if they were losing, whichever of them had a son, that boy would be thrown into the river and drowned.

Meanwhile, King Artù had a hundred knights and many foot soldiers standing guard at his camp. But now the story leaves King Meliadus and King Artù, because each one stands bold against the other, and we will return again to tell of Lancilotto, to tell how he acquired Dolorosa Guardia, and took it away from the villainous Saracen.

The masters of stories say that as Lancilotto was riding along, all alone and coming to the end of his fine adventures, he arrived at a fair hermitage. There he dismounted, because the hour was late, and knocked on the grating of the cell and called out. Immediately there appeared to him a holy white-haired hermit, who said, "May eternal Majesty be ever praised! Who might this be who calls?"

Lancilotto answered, "As it is worthy, let it be blessed and praised. I am a knight who has need of your hospitality."

At that, the hermit opened the door, and when they were both inside, the hermit shared with him half the provisions that the angel had brought him. In the morning, when dawn was bright, Lancilotto arose and rearmed himself, mounting his horse to start on his way. As he looked directly in front of him, he saw a castle inside a strong fortress, surrounded by twelve silver towers made by magic and necromancy. He inquired of the hermit who the guardian of this noble fortress might be, and the hermit replied that the castle, which was known as Dolorosa Guardia, was held by an evil Saracen, of the race of giants, who was called Federiel. He said that the castle and the fortress were full of gold and silver, but that there was no way anyone could get inside, that a bird could scarcely fly there except by this one side.

"And God be my witness, the road is guarded as I tell you: at two leagues from the castle a hundred horsemen stand day and night; a little farther on there are two hundred, and nearer the castle four hundred more stand guard continually. The castle has twelve encircling walls all made of precious stones, and inside the walls are thirty towers, four of fine gold, twelve of silver, six of diamond, and eight of sapphire. The man who holds it is the fiercest Saracen in the world, the son of Caraone the Great of Granchole, the first giant to come from the faraway islands. I beg that you do not go by this road, for you will be killed."

But Lancilotto replied, "Friend of God, I want to take upon myself the adventure of conquering that castle, and taking it away from the Saracen dog. I ask that you pray to God to give me strength and power." And so Lancilotto left him there and rode until middle tierce.

When he was two leagues from Dolorosa Guardia, he encountered in his way a hundred horsemen who shouted against him, "Don't come any nearer, knight, if you don't want to die!"

But Lancilotto without delay lowered his lance and began to attack them, and did such deeds of arms that he put all hundred in great dismay. When he came to the second guard of two hundred knights he bore himself so

vigorously that out of fear they gave him passage. When he came to the third guard of four hundred knights, Lancilotto had much to do, and the battle was fierce and long; Lancilotto killed more than sixty of them, and put the others to such dismay that out of fear they retreated to the castle.

Then Lancilotto let them go and, dismounting, rested for a while. After refreshing his horse he carefully refastened girth and brace, then taking up his great spear of well-sharpened iron, he asked God to protect him and rode toward the castle. When he came to the first gate, he began to call to the porter in the Saracen language, "Tales dalena fregis falundas alustendas avrevis eoli perfersarti fiezies." To this the gatekeeper answered, "Eschirimbett eschinbi lecurdure chersi eriperendes efreson." And Lancilotto said in their language, "I call to you in the name of your god! Go to your lord and tell him that there is a knight errant at his gate who would be pleased to speak with him."

Then the porter went inside and delivered this message to his lord, and the Saracen said, "By my faith, this must be the man who has killed so many of my people." He came then to the parapet over the gate and called down, "Who are you, vassal, who have done me so much harm?"

Lancilotto replied, "I am a knight from a far country who gladly would come inside this fortress to find out if it is as beautiful there as it is without."

The Saracen answered him, "If you will wait until I am armed, I will show you the most secure place there is."

Lancilotto said, "Now what are you saying? I came here for no other reason, and not to run away."

The Saracen returned to his palace and told his lady, Nonfizata, how the knight who had done so much damage had challenged him. She said, "Alas, my lord, I have found out through my magic arts that you are about to do battle with the best knight in this world, so be certain that your armor and weapons will not fail you. Still, I find that your end is not to be here or now, since it is to be among many barons and knights, where kings and queens will attend your funeral. Therefore, ride boldly."

The Saracen then armed himself to great advantage and, mounting his horse, prayed to his god to give him the victory. When he came to the gate and was before the knight, without another word one challenged the other, then they met with such force and struck such great blows that their two great lances shattered. Finishing the course, they unsheathed their swords and began a cruel and dangerous battle. Lancilotto struck at the Saracen, but did him no harm, while the Saracen slashed at him so furiously that whatever weapon the young knight used was sent flying to the ground. Lancilotto hit him, and found him harder than a diamond, but the Saracen struck at Lancilotto's shield and split it down the middle. Then the young knight, swelling with fury, hit the Saracen once, then twice, but found him harder than an anvil and could not harm him at all.

Then the Saracen said to Lancilotto, "So you think you will deal me a blow or two! But don't wait for mine!" Then the proud Saracen struck him so fiercely that his armor was all bent and cut to pieces, and most of it was scattered on the ground; he was wounded in every part of his body. The Saracen's armor had not lost so much as a link, and was as fresh as it had been when the battle began. When Lancilotto asked for a rest, the Saracen refused him, saying, "Knight, defend yourself, for now you will receive payment for all you have done to harm me!" Then he gripped his sword with malice and lifted it for Lancilotto's death-blow. When Lancilotto saw that heavy blow coming he felt great fear of dying, for he had lost both his helmet and his shield.

But Iesu Cristo, who will not abandon a faithful Christian, sent Lancilotto to good fortune which was worth more to him than strength or courage. As the terrible stroke descended, Lancilotto held his sword up to protect his head, and it cut between the Saracen's gauntlet and arm guard, so that his hand and sword together flew into the weeds. When the pagan saw that he had lost his right hand, he dismounted and begged for mercy, asking that Lancilotto not put him to death and promising to give him the lordship of the fortress and its holdings.

And here might one well say, "O World, World! False to those who have faith in you and then are left cheated!" The Saracen lord was rich and strong and powerful, but in one moment he lost all his lordship.

Lancilotto, seeing that the Saracen had surrendered, said to him, "Knight, you are beaten. If you want to remain in this life, you must agree to go to the city of Camellotto and present yourself to Queen Ginevara on behalf of the new knight. If you refuse, I will kill you."

Right away then the Saracen stripped himself of all his armor except for his sword, remaining dressed in a silken tunic; he bound up his wrist where the blood flowed out. He got back on his horse and, taking leave of his lady, began to ride at a great pace toward the city of Camellotto. Lancilotto stayed behind and entered Dolorosa Guardia. He banished the lady and all of the other people who refused baptism, and changed the name of the fortress so that it became known as Gioiosa Guardia. He had all of their temples pulled down and had a lovely church built in honor of the Holy Trinity, calling it Our Lady Maria of Humility. Then Lancilotto rested there and enjoyed lovely days.

Meanwhile the Saracen rode day and night, so that one day followed upon another. Soon he found himself on the crest of the great mountain called Nervana, on the border of Longres and Liones. Looking down across the plain, he saw two mighty armies waiting on the banks of the great river; these were the armies of King Artù and King Meliadus. Upon a hillock he saw eighty knights and a great multitude of foot soldiers guarding King Artù's camp. Then the infidel knight, like a Saracen dog, rode hard into their

midst: "I had rather die bravely than live in a Christian prison."

He gave up all hope of life and, calling on his god, took his sword in his left hand and rode into the middle of those eighty knights dealing such blows and doing such deeds of arms it was a marvel to see. He killed more than ten of them, then rode on past the knights and threw himself in among the foot soldiers, where he died. King Artù and the other knights marvelled greatly, not knowing where this brave warrior had come from or who he might have been.

But Queen Ginevara said to herself, "By my faith, this was some worthy knight who was beaten by our new cavalier, and he was coming to us as a prisoner." Then they had him taken and buried with great honor, for it seemed to them that he was worthy of it.

IX.

The true story tells that Lancilotto stayed in Gioiosa Guardia and had much joy and solace there, when a messenger appeared in the hall telling him that King Artù was camped near the city of Liones to go against the high king Meliadus, and that it seemed King Artù might well lose, so valiant was King Meliadus' army. On hearing this news Sir Lancilotto took arms without delay, then assigning the man he trusted most as viceroy of the castle, he disguised his insignia and rode one day after another past fields, hills, and deep forests so that he soon reached the plain where King Artù's army was camped. He had himself announced there as the knight of the curved sword.

But when he came to the bank of the great river, and to the wooden stand where all the ladies were assembled, he saw the one he had longed to see all the time he had been adventuring in distant lands, that is, Queen Ginevara. Then he leaned far over his saddlebow to look at her angelic face, and began to think about her great beauty, and his heart and soul were so filled with looking at her that all other thought and purpose fled. He dropped his reins and forgot himself, and seemed like a knight afflicted. Then his horse wandered toward the river to drink, to a place where many squires were watering their horses. When these saw the knight coming toward them so dazed, they held his horse and took away his lance, shield, and sword, then one of them dipped his flask full of water and threw it in his face.

All at once Lancilotto returned to his senses and, thinking he had been

robbed, leaped off his horse and with his bare fist demanded the weapons that had been taken from him. Then he remounted and rode back toward the ladies' grandstand, beginning again to look at the angelic face of Queen Ginevara, and to lose himself again in the thought of how beautiful she was. Then one of the ladies in waiting, the niece of the King of Organia, spoke thus to the queen, "Ah, my lady, what proud deeds I saw done this morning by that knight who stares at you so.⁸ For courtesy, send him a lance and a garland and have him told that you want him to fight for love of you against the people of King Meliadus."

Then the queen said, "Alas, dear God, could this be the new knight with his banner disguised?"

The maiden replied, "By my faith, I believe it is so, for many good knights have the custom of disguising their banners and shields so they can go about more secretly."

Then the queen sent him a lance and a garland, and asked him to fight against King Meliadus' army. As soon as he received her commission, he was not slow but crossed the river very quickly and began to attack the guard of the enemy's camp. He gave the first knight he encountered such a blow with his lance that he sent him dead to the earth, then did the same to a second, a third, and a fourth. Before his lance broke, he had accounted for eight, then he took his sword in hand and did such deeds of arms it was a marvel to see. When King Meliadus saw this knight's valor, he sent four hundred knights to guard the river so that King Artù's men could not get across, but Lancilotto kept on felling knights and barons until finally his horse was killed under him and he was left on foot. Then King Meliadus rode up to him, saying, "Surrender yourself, knight, or you die!"

But the young knight said, "Sire, I will never give up, because I had rather die than surrender in such a way."

Then the high prince Galeotto, impressed by the courage of this knight, said to him, "Surrender yourself to me, young warrior, for I promise and swear to you, you will have no bad reward for the many knights of mine you have killed if, for love of me, you will break a lance against King Artù's men. Then you may ask a boon of me, anything you desire, and I swear I will do it."

Then the knight answered, "If you will equip me with a good horse and a lance, and give me your word that I may have any gift I ask of you, I will fight for you against my king until the lance is broken, but I will do nothing with the sword."

At that point Galeotto gave him his glove; then he gave him a swift horse and a strong lance of well-sharpened iron. Lancilotto remounted and, gripping the lance, crossed back over the river and began to attack all the people of King Artù's army, sending each one he jostled with tumbling to the ground. Because of the headway he made, King Meliadus, Prince Galeotto,

and their knights followed him easily, shouting all together, "Viva the knight of Liones!" They did such feats of arms it was a wonder to see; the battle was long and hard, and many good men died there on both sides.

But finally King Meliadus was pursuing King Artù and all his people over the field. Artù, seeing himself thus hunted, ordered that the siege be raised, but Lancilotto, when he realized that King Artù was retreating, said to himself, "This must not be!" And he used his lance so hard that it broke.

Approaching King Artù, he said to him, "As you hold life dear, do not go forward, but turn at once to the pavilion of the ladies where your crown will be honored and welcomed." Then Lancilotto himself went quickly forward before the high prince Galeotto, saying, "Sire, I have fought for you against my lord, and have broken a lance in your service, as I promised I would. Now you owe me the boon which you promised."

Galeotto said, "Ask bravely; I'm ready to give you anything." So Lancilotto made this request: "Sire, stop this battle, and go before King Artù and surrender yourself to him, swearing to be his liege man for the rest of your life."

These words made Galeotto the saddest man in the world, and he said to Lancilotto, "Knight, if I had foreseen this before I promised you a boon, I would have stopped fighting and gone away. But since I have promised, I cannot go back on my word, so I will give up the battle."

Then the high prince Galeotto, accompanied by King Meliadus and most of the other barons and knights, came before King Artù and vowed to obey Artù's commands and be loyal to his crown. Thus there came under King Artù's rule eighteen kingdoms captured by the sword arm. Artù, seeing himself so greatly honored, was very joyful, and said, "You, now, King Meliadus, what will you do? Will you obey my crown, or shall we begin our war once more?"

Then Meliadus answered, "In good faith, Sire, I would first have all my lands burnt and all my people killed before I would surrender to anyone through fear or cowardice; but if I myself choose it, I will serve you or any person. For I am determined to live and die free, and after my death come what may!"

At this point Lancilotto got to his feet and cried, "By the honor of God and His Mother!" (In this way he got the attention of King Artù and the others.) "King Artù, I have heard that King Meliadus is the bravest and most courteous knight in the world, and that he has in his kingdom neither lady nor child who does not delight in freedom; this is the king who would serve you and honor you through his own free will. Therefore I ask you, for the service I can do you and by the love you bore my father King Bando, that peace and concord be made between you and King Meliadus, and that you stop this war."

"By my faith," said King Artù to Lancilotto, "I call that man a fool who can have a thing for love and who prefers to take it by force. One man's

service given for love is worth that of a hundred men taken by force. Therefore know, Lancilotto, that for love of you I had rather have King Meliadus for a friend and a companion than to fight with him in any way. Let peace be made between the two of us."

Then the two kings took each other by the hand and sat down side by side on two rich seats of ivory; to confirm the peace they exchanged their sword belts and their crowns. Then, to celebrate their joy, every baron and knight began to play at arms upon the fields.

Now we leave the telling of this story to speak of the peace made between the two kings and to tell how, because of this peace, King Meliadus took for his wife a maiden of gentle birth, a lady from the family of King Bando of Benoch, to whom was born the brave, wise, gentle, courteous Sir Tristano.

X.

The true story tells that King Artù, King Meliadus, the high prince Galeotto, Lancilotto, and all the other barons of noble birth were gathered to celebrate their joy at the peace made among them. And being moved by this happiness, King Artù rose and said to King Meliadus, "Sire, if you will, I ask that you do me a favor. I am moved to ask two things: the one is to better confirm our peace; the other is that you are such a brave knight and noble king and lord of a mighty realm that if you do not leave an heir, it will be a great pity. And so I wish, if it pleases you, that you would take a wife. I myself will give you a beautiful lady, the daughter of King Andremo the Old of Sobicio and of my sister Queen Felice, and cousin to King Bando of Benoich. She is in this camp now with Queen Ginevara; her name is Eliabella."

King Meliadus replied to King Artù, "Sire, you know that I had sworn never to take a wife, and to remain a virgin forever until my death, but since I wish to please you and since she is of your family, I am well satisfied to do as you wish. But before I promise myself to this lady, I would like to see her."

Then King Artù summoned Eliabella without delay, and she came accompanied by Queen Ginevara and other women of the court, and she came together with a lovely woman and a very small knight who had been her fosterparents and teachers; the knight was called Sir Ferragunze the Courtefully.⁹ When King Meliadus saw the lovely maiden, he was very pleased, and

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said that he was content to marry her. So King Artù gave him the lady and all the kingdom of Sobicio, and King Meliadus married her and made her queen of Liones.

Sir Ferragunze and his wife Verseria, seeing their lady so honorably wed, were very happy. The small knight came forward, saying, "My lord King Meliadus, what gift will you give me in return for the great service I have done for your lady, and for the great love I bear her? For I have taught her and nurtured her as if she were my own daughter, but now she is obliged to you, and without your good will cannot reward me."

Then King Meliadus said, "Knight, I will gladly make you a gift, as great a one as your condition merits. So tell me your worth, and I will reward you according to your value."

The small knight said, "Sir King, write down four things to my credit: first, that I am of noble birth; second, that I was never afraid of one knight or even two; third, that I have never been jealous of my wife; and the fourth is that wine has never taken my memory. These are the four things I boast."

Then King Meliadus said, "Sir knight, I will do for you whatever seems just." Know that it was the custom at that time for anyone who asked for a gift from the king or the queen first to boast about himself, then the gift was made according to the truth of the boast. Thus different gifts were given to a knight than to a page, and awards to the brave were other than those given to the cowards.

King Artù spoke, "Meliadus, if this knight has as much virtue in him as he boasts he has, he is worthy of great honor. But first I want to test whether he is truly as he says he is."

So King Meliadus secretly called twenty-four knights to a narrow pass, and told them that if Ferragunze the Courtly tried to get through, they should attack him and seem to be trying to kill him, and should take careful notice of the way he behaved. They promised to do as he commanded. Then Meliadus sent for Sir Ferragunze and asked if he would carry a message to the Castle Rubisco, and tell the viceroy to bring him the keys of the land and the taxes which he owed, and Ferragunze replied that he was ready to obey. He armed himself quickly, mounted, and began the journey. Coming to the deep pass in the wilderness, he encountered the twenty-four knights who all shouted at him, "Hallo, wicked baron, don't come any closer or you die!"

Then they began to attack him furiously. When he found himself in such a predicament, Sir Ferragunze defended himself bravely and behaved nobly and well, and some of them he struck and some of them struck him. The knights, who did not fight as hard as they could have, gave way to him so that he could go on. When they returned to the king they told him how the small knight had come right in among them and borne himself nobly.

The next day, Ferragunze returned and reported on his embassy, but said

nothing of the deeds he had done. In this he showed great wisdom; the wise man speaks of it when he says, "If one does not praise himself he is praised, whoever boasts of himself too much loses the prize for the thing he boasts of, because the boast is then the prize for the thing that ought to be rewarded. One who does not boast may hope for a reward."¹⁰

Having proved Ferragunze on his first point, the two kings wanted to test him on a second, so King Meliadus had a great feast prepared for which there was a provision of roasts, hams, cheeses, and well-seasoned pies the like of which had never been seen. He summoned thirty knights to sit at the table, among them Ferragunze, who did not know that the king was doing this to test him. Since with all these spicy foods they had good, strong wine without any water, they soon began to drink like Germans, and joke like Greeks, and sing like Frenchmen, and dance like Moors, and make such revels that before the tables were taken away they all fell asleep like Englishmen, except for Ferragunze, who was as wise and reasonable as he had been at the start. Because of this the two kings were very impressed with him.

XI.

King Artù and King Meliadus had tested two of Ferragunze's boasts; now they wished to try him on a third, that is, to find out if he were jealous of his wife. King Artù summoned his nephew Sir Calvano and explained the test they wanted to make of the small knight. He asked Calvano to go to Verseria's pavilion and begin a conversation with her, acting very amorous and flirtatious, but always respecting her honor: he should only seem, not do. The king said, "Then if Ferragunze should come into the pavilion, make it look even more as if you are making love to her."

Calvano answered, "Sire, I'll do it gladly." You must know that the king chose Sir Calvano for this task because the young knight often enjoyed the company of ladies. He was said to be a great lover, and was the one the other knights were most suspicious of.

At that, the king summoned Ferragunze and asked if he would play a game of chess. When the small knight said yes, the king sent for a board and they began to play. When they were in the middle of the game, the king said, "Ferragunze, by my faith, I have the best of this game and I am the winner."

But the knight said, "Saving your crown, I have the better part of this game than you."

Then the king said, "I will wager one of the queen's veils¹¹ against one of your wife's."

And the knight replied, "If you will wait for me until I return, I will get it and wager it gladly."

"Go and get it then," said the king, "and I will send for mine."

When Ferragunze had gone to his pavilion, King Artù changed a pawn on his opponent's side, saying to himself, "If the knight is angry when he returns, he will not notice the trick." This proves the words of the wise man, which are "*Ira impedit animum*: anger obstructs the rational soul, which cannot then follow the true way."

When Ferragunze came to his pavilion, he found his wife and Sir Calvano talking very closely with each other. He said, "Lady, from where you are, toss me the key of your strongbox." She did, and he opened it, taking out the veil and returning to King Artù. When he was seated again at the board he looked at it and said, "Sire, this pawn is changed from its place."

He was perfectly cheerful and not unhappy, thus the two kings had proved the third boast. They had no need to prove the fourth, for it was clear that Sir Ferragunze was of knightly lineage and descended from the families of kings.

When the two kings had proved that he was worth what he had boasted, they called him before them in the presence of Lancilotto and the high prince Galeotto and many other barons and knights, saying, "Ferragunze, we are certain that you spoke the truth when you boasted before us, but before you receive our gift, we would like to know where so much virtue comes from."

Then Ferragunze answered the two kings, "Anyone who wants it can have this virtue of mine. If I have no fear of one knight or two, that is nothing to marvel at: I always remember the time Uter Pandragon died, when we were keeping guard in the city of Liones. I loved then a noble lady with a great love, but I could never speak with her except in secret. Wanting to see her one night, I got on my horse with my squire behind me, so he could watch the horse for me. As we were riding across the field we met the sentry, who wanted to know who we were; but as I was afraid of being recognized, I said nothing. Then he threw a spear at me. It missed me, but it curved, its iron point piercing the body of my squire, who died at once while I am still alive. Therefore I am of the opinion that the time and the hour and the place where a man must die is determined. Why should I not be brave, since I have to live until the appointed time?"

"Also if I am not jealous of my wife, that is nothing to cause any wonder. I remember when I was castellan of the castle whose lord is Sir Sanso the Strong. I had under my command 560 knights and a thousand foot soldiers when Lorgoreale Fretano, a Saracen, held us in siege. In all the castle there was only one woman to serve us in our need. It happened one day we made a foray far into the enemy's territory, to the castle of Semurano, where we

took and brought back a great many prisoners. One of them was a highborn lady, whom we escorted back with great joy. But when our lady of the castle saw her, she was furiously unhappy, calling out, 'So you've come in here, whore, to replace me with those I've served so long!' And we had great trouble to defend our poor prisoner, for our lady wanted to murder her.

"When this lady with so many men could stand no rival, how could I expect my lady to be content with me alone? If my lady is virtuous, I can be sure of her, and if she is bad, still I could not watch her all the time, and my jealousy would not make her good. Thus the proverb wisely says, 'Don't punish a good wife, and if she is wicked, it's not worth the trouble.'

And if wine never steals my memory, it never would anyone's who takes it the way I do. For I never drink unless I want to for the sake of true thirst. What a man drinks for delight and for no true need is converted into fumes, and makes his temper fierce, and mounts to his brain, and takes over his stomach. Thus he loses reason and memory, because the stomach cannot endure. Thus speaks the wise man: 'Wine is not to blame if you make a fool of yourself, but rather you are, because you took such delight in drinking.' And if I boasted and said that I am nobly bred, that is not bad, for any person can be noble who with fine customs, lovely manners, and sweet words behaves with courtesy."

At that, King Artù praised the knight greatly and King Meliadus made him viceroy of the kingdom of Sobicio for five years. Everyone celebrated joyfully, and the celebration lasted ten days. Then by command all the tents, shelters, and pavilions were taken down, and each king, baron, and knight returned to his own country. King Meliadus returned to the city of Liones with his lady and all of his barony, and King Artù, Queen Ginevara, and all the other ladies, barons, and knights errant went back to the city of Camellootto.

And then Lancilotto loved Queen Ginevara so much, that they did their best in such a way that he made the payments on the delightful pledge that they had given each other before, that is, from the look to the kiss, and afterwards to the embrace; then they managed so that their desire turned into delight, and they used each other at their pleasure. And now the tale leaves this story of King Artù, Queen Ginevara, and Sir Lancilotto, and we will tell of the high king Meliadus, and of the birth of the noble, courteous, and gentle Sir Tristano.

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XII.



It is said that when King Meliadus returned to Liones with his lady all the people showed great joy, both for the peace and because their king had taken a wife, for they had far rather be ruled by Meliadus and his descendants than by any other lord, because their king was a kind and courteous lord to them. By God's grace Eliabella soon became pregnant, and

all sorts of people showed great happiness about it.

But after a little while King Meliadus went hunting with many other barons, as his custom was. Hunting thus through the great desert of Medilontas, the king all alone began to follow a deer, and he followed so long and so far that he lost his companions. Then he went to the Fontana del Dragone, and here dismounted to rest and let his horse drink. When he had rested for a while, there came a beautiful damsels who said to the king, "Sire Meliadus, may Cristo our Lord give you a good life."

The king answered, "Lady, you are well met."

And she said, "King Meliadus, I tell you truly that if I were sure you were as bold as others say you are, I would set you on the highest and most noble venture that ever a knight brought to an end."

The king replied, "Lady, for my own sake I am not worthy, but if you please I will come with you for your sake and lend the power of my arms."

And the lady said she was well pleased. Then King Meliadus set out with her, and they rode along a narrow path until they came in the middle of the night to a beautiful castle which was called the Torre del' Incantamento. It belonged to this lady, who was known as the Wise Damsel. After they dismounted, the lady took the king by the hand and led him into a room enchanted in such a way that when the king entered it, he no longer remembered Queen Eliabella his lady, nor his knights and barons, nor his kingdom. All his thoughts were of the damsels who stood before him: he took with her delight and pleasure, and had not a care for any other thing. His barons, those who had been hunting with him, went searching and calling through the wilderness. When they could not find him they called themselves the saddest knights in the world and did not cease lamenting and grieving all that night; thus they went searching for three days. Not finding him, they made a great lament and complaint, and went back to the city.

Queen Eliabella, for her dear lord's sake, was the saddest lady in the world, she could not stop crying, and lay all that night in torment and misery. In the morning, with her lady in waiting, she rode into the wilderness to see if she could find out anything about her new husband, whether he might be alive or dead. Thus she went searching hard for him, but found neither trace nor news.

All the barons and knights of the realm went searching no less hard than she, some here, some there, in every way, but in no way could they find him, for the tower he had gone to was in the heart of the wilderness. It is true that at that time the greatest part of the world was a wilderness; also, the Wise Maiden had made her tower and dwelling in such a valley of the place that no one could find it except by a little path, and that she covered over with spiny plants in such a way that it could not be seen, nor would anyone know how to recognize it.

As the queen rode with her lady through the harsh forest, she went continually making a great lament. She wept for her lord because she could find no one anywhere who might tell her news of him, and she did not know if he were alive or dead. Riding across a great hillside in the wilderness and looking across the slope, she saw before her an unarmed knight who was riding in the guise of a great vavasor. When they met, she greeted him courteously, then asked him, "My lord, let me know if you can tell me any news of King Meliadus, who is lost in this forest."

And the knight, who was called Merlin the Prophet, answered, "Know, queen, that lost things cannot ever return. I assure you that King Meliadus will be found; still, you will never see him again." Having spoken these words he left and went on his way.

The queen thought very hard about the words this prophet had said. When she came to the crest of a great mountain she dismounted; beyond her was a great valley of the forest. She began to weep bitterly.

The lady in waiting said, "Queen, why do you weep and lament like this? It is making you all pale."

The queen answered and said, "My companion, I am afraid that we can't change the news, for this creature I bear in my body is kicking and turning very much."

At that, she got off her horse and rested a little, all the while making complaint and lament. Soon she began to weep even more, and cry out, and call on the Holy Blessed Mother to come to her aid, for the hour of her child's birth had come. The damsels comforted her, saying, "Could you not ride a little more, so we could get out of the forest and find some habitation?"

The queen responded panting, like one who was laboring and in great anguish, and said no—"You see, I could not possibly." And in such a way, like a lady, she began again to cry and call upon God and on the Queen

of Paradise. After such labor that she could hardly bear it, by the grace of God, the queen gave birth to a very beautiful male child.

Seeing him so lovely she praised the Queen of Heaven and asked the damsels to lay him in her arms. Holding him, with tears and sighs she began to say, "My darling son, I see you are as noble and lovely a creature as there could be in this world. I bless you, and may our lord Jesu Cristo bless you and make you gracious in this world, skillful, wise, and brave. Because of you I am the saddest lady in the world and because of you I am about to die in great pain, for I have given you birth all comfortless in this savage place. So that you will remember my pain and my death—for it comes to me and I can feel it—I will give you a name: I want you to be called Tanri. But it will be a more beautiful name with the "Tri" before the "tano," so I will call you Tritan."

Then she put the little boy in the arms of her lady in waiting, and begged her to take care of him. She prayed to God and His Blessed Mother to have mercy on her sins, and at that, her soul left her body. Now the queen had passed from this life, and her damsels, seeing the queen her lady was dead, cried out with the greatest complaint in the world, so that her wailing made the wilderness resound.

XIII.

At that point, as the true story tells, two knights who were brothers were riding through the wilderness searching for King Meliadus, for they were two of the best allies the king had. Hearing the great lament of the damsels, they rode in that direction, and when they found her they saw the queen was dead, and the damsels held the baby boy in her arms. Then they asked what all this was, and the damsels told them everything that had happened, and how the queen had died in childbirth, and how this was the child she had borne. When they heard this, they drew aside and consulted with each other, saying, "Truly we see that the queen is dead, and the king cannot be found. Let us do this: let us kill the boy, and then the entire kingdom will be ours." And what one knight said, the other affirmed.

When the damsels realized what they were saying, she began to make the greatest complaint in the world, weeping bitterly. She fell on her knees before

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the two knights and begged them not to harm the boy, swearing by the sacrament of the mass to keep him in such places and in such a way that no news of him or of her would be known, pleading piteously and skillfully.

Then the knights commanded the damsel to go away and take the baby out of the kingdom and even farther. She rode away and took the baby, arms, and for three full days they lived in the desert on the juice of wild apples.

The two knights took the queen's body and put it on a palfrey. Then brought it back to the city, saying they had found her like that. The great ladies of the land, looking at the queen, knew she had given birth, knowing it by certain signs familiar to women. They asked where the child was, but the knights said they knew nothing about it.

The next day, Merlin the Prophet arrived. When he came to the palace, he commanded that a council be called, a council of the great barons and other good people of the city. When the barons had gathered, Merlin got to his feet and said to them, "Dear and noble lords, if you want to follow my counsel, I will show you your king, and I will also show you his most beautiful son, born to the queen. And both of them are living."

When they heard these words, they all said they were ready to do as he commanded. Then Merlin had the two knights held prisoner, and had sixty knights and three hundred foot soldiers armed and sent to the tower of the Wise Damsel to take the king who was being kept there. He commanded that they put her to death; otherwise, they could accomplish nothing. Then Merlin summoned a knight of Gaules who had served King Meliadus for a long time, and who was a knight of good family, very brave, noble, and loyal. His name was Governale the Thoughtful. Then Merlin said to him, "Knight, if you wish to be as loyal and concerned as I believe you are, I will give you on this day a baby boy truly born to King Meliadus, a boy who will be lord of Liones. He is the loveliest child, and will become the noblest and most courteous knight in the world."

And Governale said, "Merlin, if you will put him into my care, I promise and swear to you to guard him and care for him as loyally as if he were my own son."

At that, Merlin and Governale mounted and rode out of the city and rode until they came into the great wilderness, where they went searching all around. In the middle of the forest they found the Fontana del Lione and before the fountain was the first stone Merlin had erected, with letters carved in it saying: "Here will gather, for their quality and for their government, three noble knights."

Merlin said, "Governale, do you know what these letters say?"

Governale replied, "Truly, I have read them, but I still do not know who the three new valiant knights may be."

Then Merlin said, "Know, Governale, that the three worthy knights of

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whom the stone letters speak and who will be here are for one, Lancilotto, for another, the prince Galeotto, and the third will be Sir Tristano." But if anyone should ask me how the three brave knights would come together at that stone, I would tell them according to what I have found in the good book which is the source of all the high tales of the Tavola. That book belonged to Sir Viero of Guascogna, a kinsman of Carlo Magno of Francia, and at present is owned by Sir Garo, or rather Gaddo, de' Lanfranchi of Pisa. That book tells and shows truly how this was the stone where the three new knights of the wild beast assembled. This Merlin meant when he built the Tavola Ritonda, about the character a bold knight ought to have: the first stone, that is, the first foundation a knight who desires to be noble should have, is a heart in love; then he should be honest, courteous, and loyal. At this stone would gather the three knights I have mentioned, all having this foundation of love and courtesy.

Yet so much they failed, in that they were inexperienced, because in their loves they were neither secret nor wise: rather they were knights of the wild beast. Like wild animals they sought their delight inordinantly, disregarding other relationships: thus the three knights practiced their love. Thus in the story it is said that they were naive and not wise. Sir Tristano indeed had an excuse for this in the love potion, for more reasons than one reads.

Know that as Merlin and Governale were riding through the wilderness they came to a great valley in the depths of the forest where they found the damsel with the baby boy in her arms. Seeing the knights, she tried to run away and hide herself, but Merlin, who knew her and understood, rode around in front of her and made her stop. He took the child from her arms and embraced him, then gave him to Governale to hold. Governale received him with great love, than gave him back to the damsel, and they all rode toward the city.

When they got there, they went straight to the palace and found that King Meliadus had come home. Merlin showed him his son, and asked that he give the child into the care of Governale of Gaules; then after Merlin took leave, he went on his way.

King Meliadus showed great joy and delight in his son, and asked the damsel if he had been baptized, and if he had a name. She answered that the queen, in remembrance of her great sorrow, had given him the name Tristano, but that he had not been baptized. Then the king had that done, and reconfirmed the name the queen had given him, Tristano.

Afterwards, the king had the two knights seized who had brought the queen's body to the city, and he had their heads cut off, and to the damsel who had saved the baby and taken care of the queen he gave a rich and lovely castle, telling her to keep it for her pleasure. Thus the king rewarded the two treacherous knights for their treachery, and the loyal lady for her loyalty. Then they found a woman who had recently given birth and had

Tristano nursed; and always Governale kept a careful watch over him. After many years King Meliadus, desiring more children, took a second wife. She was Queen Agia, the daughter of King Bramo, brother of the Duke Bramante. When Queen Agia came to Meliadus' court and saw the boy Tristano so handsome, so agile and charming and tall,¹² she hated the child furiously, and was filled with jealousy. She vowed to have one son or more so that the king would show such love for them as she saw he had toward Tristano.

Soon she became pregnant, and when her time came she was delivered of a lovely boy. The king named him Allegreno, because Queen Agia was still the happiest woman in the world when her beautiful child was born. But inherit the kingdom. Hating him so, she said to herself, "I am the saddest woman in the world because Tristano will be king and wear the crown, and my son will be his subject."

She thought day and night of how she might find a way for Tristano to be killed, because her son would then be lord. She ordered a potion mixed with poison, but made to seem like fine wine, and set it in a window ledge she thought was a secret enough place. But one day at noon the king rose from sleeping beside her and, looking at that window, saw a beaker of what seemed like good wine. He was thirsty, so he lifted it to his lips; it appeared to be an act of God.

The queen saw him and cried out, "Sire, don't drink, don't drink it!" The king said, "Why shouldn't I?"

She answered simply, "Because it was not made for you." But then by God's will she suddenly changed; her face and her voice changed, and the king saw it.

"How now, lady," said he. "If the drink is not good and true, then why do you keep it here? Truly I want to know." The king was very suspicious, seeing her look so strange. He said again, "Look here, wife, once and for all, I want to know why you have ordered this potion, and why you keep it here, and what it is. Tell me the truth!"

And she told him, like a woman with no will of her own, how she had had the drink made for Tristano.

Then the king called his barons and counsellors into the great hall, and had a hound brought in and forced to drink the poison. As soon as the dog had swallowed enough, it fell down dead. When the king saw that, he told his barons how the queen had ordered this drink because she wanted to kill his son Tristano, and he commanded his judges to judge her and sentence her according to law. The chief judge sentenced the queen to be burned at the stake after ten days, giving her time to repent of her sin.

Because of that sentence all the court was heavy with gloom, knowing that their lady was going to be burnt. Tristano, who was then ten years

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old, saw all the sorrow and went to his tutor Governale saying, "What is the matter? Why are all the people so fearful and worried?"

Governale answered, "My son, they grieve for the queen. She is sentenced to be burnt and destroyed by fire because she was going to poison you."

When he heard this Tristano went at once to the king his father and knelt before him, saying, "My father and my lord, for God's love I pray you will grant me a boon, for you know this is the first thing I've ever asked you for."

Said the king then, "Ask boldly, my son, for whatever you want."

Tristano replied, "Sire, for a guarantee, give me your glove."

Then the king began to laugh and said, "Barons or knights, counts or marchesses, all these must give their gloves; but a king has no need of such a custom, for his word is his charter."

So Tristano spoke: "My father, I ask for God's love and for courtesy and for my sake, that you set the queen free."

The king frowned. "Tristano, who told you to say these words?"

The boy answered, "Sire, nobody made me say them, nothing but my own will. The honor and the shame of the queen belongs also to me and to my brother, and I don't want anyone to die because of me!"

Then the king postponed the queen's sentence for a hundred years, and forgave her himself for Tristano's sake. He prayed that God would give his son a long, good life, for if the boy lived he would surely become learned and wise. But pardoning the queen proved the truth of the proverb and of the scripture which says, "When a man serves and pleases a traitor, he diserves and displeases loyal men." Tristano, in defending the queen, offended himself, for she never ceased to envy him and wish him evil, and she made another potion, stronger and deadlier than the first. This she hid very carefully in her room, waiting for a chance to give it to Tristano.

But God the father, who knows and sees all, recognizes everything for what it is; out of all this he made a great miracle. One day the queen's nurse came into the chamber carrying the child Allegreno in her arms. He asked for a drink, so she looked around and chanced upon the beaker of poison in the window ledge. Since it looked like good pure wine she held it to the little boy's mouth, and as soon as he tasted it, he died.

When the nurse saw that, she began to shriek and wail, making such a noise that the sound of it drew the king and queen and many barons and knights. When she saw her baby was dead, the queen was the saddest, most miserable woman in the world, and she said to the nurse, "Alas, traitor, why have you killed my boy?"

But the nurse, sobbing, answered, "Saving your grace, it was not I who killed him. It was the person who put the potion in this flask, for I thought it was good wine, but it is poison."

The queen, hearing this, was quiet in her sorrow. But the king, who was wise and wary the second time, knew that the one to blame for this death

stood there before him, and he was the saddest, most miserable king in the world. He said to himself that in this bad work God had made a miracle, for the queen, who had wanted to kill a child born to another woman, had been made to kill her own.

When he knew his wife's great sin, the king never spoke to her again. From that day on he no longer lay with her, and he warned Governale to keep watch over Tristano, and commanded that the boy have nothing to eat or drink except from Governale's own hand. Their food was always specially prepared, and three servants tasted it before they did.

The queen was the most miserable woman in the world because her baby was dead, and still Tristano was always before her, always so good, and always becoming better. He did lovely deeds, wore noble clothes, and behaved with fine courtesy. Watching him become so graceful and agile in body caused her such sorrow at heart that it was unbearable. She knew how well-taught Tristano was, and how well he learned, and how everyone who saw him loved him immediately.

After a while, King Meliadus went hunting in the great wilderness with a large number of knights, all disarmed, for pleasure. While he was hunting the king was attacked by twelve armed knights, his mortal enemies even though they were his kin; they were then occupying a castle which they unjustly held. Since they found the king companionless and unarmed, far from his barons and friends, they struck him and killed him. But when Tristano was grown and had become a knight, he made a great vendetta, as you will hear. The barons of the country, seeing their lord dead, were the saddest men in the world. They took his body back to the city and had him buried with great honor in a rich and noble sepulchre in the great cathedral of the city, Santo Aloido.

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I counsel that you leave as lord in this country someone you trust well; then we will go to the court of King Ferramonte in Gaules. There is a great custom of chivalry there, of fencing, riding, and deeds of arms; many noble knights are gathered."

Tristano answered, "My teacher, I am ready to do or say, go or come wherever you want and wherever you please. I want to come with you, wherever you advise." Then they supplied themselves with gold and silver, fine horses and rich armor, and left as lord of the realm an old knight who had been the dearest friend his father ever had, and the most faithful: his name was Sir Palmoano. And Tristano also recommended Queen Agia his stepmother to Sir Palmoano's care, that while she wished to remain in the kingdom to keep and maintain the honor of King Meliadus, he should hold her as lady and greater than those she commands, and that if she wished to change her condition or return to her own country he should give her two rich castles on the mountain of Frabeganda.

After that, Tristano and Governale, with no companions other than their squires, left there and rode one day after another until they were in the kingdom of Gaules, that is Francia; they rode into the city of Parigi where lived Ferramonte, the lord of that country.

At that point, Tristano presented himself before the king, concealing his identity and offering his services. The king received him gladly and loved him very much, both for his beauty and his good service. Here Tristano began to fence and handle arms, and to ride through the city and take part in jousts, and all that he did, he did better than any other man. All the knights and squires marvelled at him, seeing him so well-made and powerful. All the good people loved him, and the other sort envied him greatly; that is not surprising, because the good always love the good and hate the evil ones, while evil and guilty men hate the good. Now we will drop this subject, and turn back to Tristano.

XIV.

The masters of the story say that the queen watched Tristano after the death of his father. The boy was then twelve years old, and Governale was fearful of the queen's great hatred, so he said, "Look, my son, we ought not stay in this country and be so idle. We should seek out another country where you can learn to fence and handle arms, and to do all that is appropriate to the honor of knighthood so you will be secure in this world and have a name for prowess and courtesy. Thus, if it seems good to you,

In this part the story tells that King Ferramonte had a daughter, the gentle and lovely Bellices, who was fifteen years old. She was the lady of the realm, for the king's wife was dead, and he loved his daughter only. Night and day he thought about giving her in marriage to a king's son, to whom he would then give half his kingdom because he had no other heir.

When Bellices saw Tristano, so handsome, graceful, and courteous, she fell quickly in love with him, dreaming constantly about his beauty. She loved him so passionately that she said to herself, "I don't know what will become of me if I can't have my desire!"

Then she summoned Governale into her chamber and told him how much she loved Tristano, and how because of him she could find neither rest nor repose. She asked Governale to be her ambassador, and tell Tristano how much she wished to be the lady of his heart.

Governale replied that he would do it gladly, and on those words they parted, having heard a loud noise and a great thundering of horses. It was Amoroldo of Irlanda returning from the court of King Artù, stopping to visit King Ferramonte, and he had with him seventy knights.

When King Ferramonte saw him, he greeted him with great honor, for King Amoroldo of Irlanda was one of the boldest knights in the world, a knight errant, and one of those because of whom the Tavola Ritonda was loved and honored.

When the barons and knights had dismounted and rested a little, the tables were set out and they went to eat. Amoroldo sat with the king at one table, and Tristano served them, for he was the handsomest and most graceful attendant in the whole court, one who could serve and carve as if it were nothing.

Amoroldo, seeing the young man so handsome and adroit and able to serve, asked the king who he might be, and the king said, "By my faith, I do not know. I don't know where he comes from or who his people might be. The truth is, he came and sought service with me, and he is the most gracious young man in the world, and thus I believe he must be connected with a gracious lineage."

"May God give him prowess," said Amoroldo; "he is so handsome and well-favored."

Then a court fool, who was called Rocchetto, stood up and said, "Amoroldo, Amoroldo, sire, the beauty and prowess of this young man will cost you dear."

Amoroldo laughed at such words, and the king said, "Amoroldo, I don't speak for this time, but at other times this fool has spoken no words that

did not have wisdom in them; his words are not meant as a joke. Know that the other day when a knight of Norgales was eating here he gave the fool a capon's thigh and when the fool took it he said, 'I receive it so that you will never surrender it to another.' And when the knight got up the next morning a lady of the court went to him and asked that he let her hold his sword for a little in her hand, and when she had hold of it she struck the knight with it and killed him instantly."

But Amoroldo, who was bold and proud, held those words as nothing. In this he showed that while a man has youth and riches and nobility, he gives no thought to what might happen to him, and in that he is much at fault, for he is not ready for the things that can happen suddenly.

Now when the barons had eaten they went to rest, and when morning came they armed themselves, mounted, and after taking leave of the king, rode toward Irlanda, their own country.

At that point, Governale called Tristano to him saying, "My son, you are a very fortunate young man to be beloved by the noble maiden Bellices, daughter of such a powerful king." Then he told Tristano all that Bellices had asked him to say. Tristano, whose nature was both noble and firm, replied, "My teacher, truly I will not love Bellices with an unlawful love, for it would be a great disloyalty to dishonor her when I have been so courteously treated. But I will love her and serve her as one ought to love his liege lady; I owe this to her father for the great honor he has done me. I am sure you do not counsel me to do otherwise."

Governale was silent then, very pleased with this response.

But a few days later it happened that Tristano was fencing in a hall of the palace with some other knights and squires. He wore a silken tunic, and his hair was yellower than gold. His face was flushed like a new rose, as beautiful as a girl's and as fresh as a leafy palm tree. The noble Bellices, so much in love, saw him there. She saw that he did not return her love, and she was all consumed for love of him. When she saw him quit the fencing match she stole out softly behind him and caught up with him between two rooms. She threw her arms around his neck and pressed herself so tightly against him that he could not break free, and she began to kiss him like one who because of him can find neither rest nor repose.

All this came about because Bellices was strongly consumed with a great desire for love, love which makes its servants wise and well-bred, which cuts like a knife, and is bitterer than gall and sweeter than a savory apple. As she held Tristano in her arms, Bellices was so filled with delight that all other thoughts deserted her and she desired nothing but the fulfillment of her pleasure and joy. This happened because she knew that the one who loves loyally is joyous in all things, and that out of love all pride, envy, and avarice ceases.¹³

But because Tristano did not respond to her she began to complain bit-

XVI.

Now if anyone asks me to which lord Bellices cried for help, I will say that according to the book which is the wellspring of all the others, it says this: the gentle Bellices cried for mercy to the high God of Love, praying to him that since he had bound her heart with love for Tristano, he take and bind Tristano's heart with love for her, so that love might be a sweetness and a single thing between the two of them. And her prayer was just, because no love can be perfect unless both are in love; because Tristano's will was not in accord with Bellices', she was very sorrowful.

She cried and cried, heedless of being heard, until the noise of her complaints drew the king and a number of his barons. As they came into the room, they saw how Bellices held Tristano so tightly in her arms, and the king said, "Daughter, what news is this?"

And she replied, "See this young man who is so full of villainy that he will not yield to do me courtesy, but makes me waste away and die!"

Then the king had Tristano seized and brought into the great hall of the palace. It seemed a great shame to all the people that Tristano might have to die for such a thing, and some said that Bellices was guiltier than the boy. Governale, at that point, was the saddest man in the world. He came before the king, saying, "Sire, I beg of you, do not be too swift to sentence this young man if you are not sure of the truth of the offense."

Then he told the king all about the embassy Bellices had asked him to make to Tristano. The king, hearing this and watching his daughter's face, knew very well that Tristano was not guilty. He said to Governale, "Governale, go on your way. You may be sure that nothing but justice will be done here."

The king had Tristano brought before him, and he also had brought one of his own nephews who had been condemned that week to lose his head for killing a squire. Then he summoned Bellices, saying, "My daughter, here are two young men, and each one is under sentence of death. One is your cousin Brano, and the other is Tristano—no one knows where he comes from. Now I will grant you a boon. Choose the one of these two who delights you more; him I will free, and the other will be beheaded."

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Bellices hesitated, thinking how her father must be testing her. She did not want to expose herself in front of so many barons, so she asked for her cousin, saying, "Sire, I want you to pardon Brano. I care nothing for this other one."

Then the king made a great show of beheading Tristano, beginning immediately to read the sentence. Bellices, believing that he really intended to have Tristano killed, cried out, "Father, mercy, for the love of God! I repent! I made the wrong choice, I have not taken the one I really want. I said what I said against my will, but now I beg you for Tristano, my hope, for I love him over all other creatures!"

The king replied, "Daughter, you have what you asked for. Tristano cannot now escape his doom."

"Then father," she said, "if you will not free Tristano for love of me, will you grant me another favor?"

"Anything you desire, except Tristano."

"Then I ask that you behead me with your own two hands, so I will not see the one I love best in the world die."

The king's face turned white when he heard what she wanted, for he knew he had promised her. He was silent.

Bellices said, "Father, the two are one. Either you cut off my head, or for love of me let Tristano go free."

The king replied, "How now, daughter? Do you love Tristano as much as this?"

And she answered, "Look you, father, I love him better than all the world. Would it pleased God he returned my love but he does not."

Then the king knew for certain that Tristano was not guilty, so he pardoned him, and had his nephew's head cut off. Then he summoned Governale, saying, "Tell me, knight, as God is your savior, what country is Tristano from, and who are his people?"

Governale answered, "Sire, this boy is the son of King Meliadus of Liones."

When the king found out that Tristano was the son of the most courteous and noble king who had ever lived, he summoned him and said, "My boy, I don't believe your father had in this world a more loyal or closer friend than I. Therefore I beg that you take Bellices my daughter for your wife, and with her take half my kingdom."

Tristano answered, "Sire, I thank you greatly for the honor and the courtesy you have shown me. But I must not accept your offer of kinship, simply because I am too young, and not yet accustomed to handling arms. It would not do for me to be encumbered with a wife, or any other cares that might constrain me, except those practices which might lead me to a life of chivalry."

The king was content with this, but Governale knew that Bellices' love was still a dangerous thing, and he advised Tristano, saying "My son, since God has saved you from so great a danger, it is not for us to remain in this

court, for I know that Bellices is so much in love with you that you are sure to be compromised again. Let us go, if it pleases you, to Cornovaglia, your uncle. There you can learn best what makes a knight, because it is the school of all the masters who come from everywhere, even though the knights of that country are not bold."

Tristano answered, "My teacher, I am ready to do whatever you want me to do. If you want us to go to Cornovaglia, then we will go, but I don't want King Marco to know who I am, for the special tenderness he might have for me could be a great impediment to my learning what I need to know."

In this Tristano spoke wisely, for there are three principal things which can keep someone from learning what he ought to. The first is too much indulgence by relatives, which blunts the understanding and increases vain-glory; the second is bad company, which makes one forgetful, thoughtless, and negligent; the third is hatred or bad will carried in the heart, which makes one forget all other wisdom. Thus spoke the one who was pleased to be thought less of before his prime, so that his intellect would not be marred when he was older, and so that he would not forget to be patient and humble in his heart.

Now, having decided to go, Tristano and Governale took leave of King Ferramonte, and the noble maid Bellices, left behind, knew that Tristano's going made her the saddest maiden in the world. She summoned her most trustworthy squire and asked him to take a message to Tristano, that very day, before he left for Cornovaglia. She said, "Take him my good destrier, the best in the world even if it is so young, and give him my small terrier which is so fine, and give him this letter. But before you go, I want you to watch the death I will die for love of him, so you can testify to the truth about my deed."

Then at once she took her father's sword, placed the pommel on the ground and the point right over her heart, and said, "Heart of my body, Tristano! My love and my delight! Oh hope and joy of all other people! Why have you abandoned me? Oh my sweet hope, you are leaving, and because of this I shall not live another day!"

With these words she let herself fall against the point of the sword, which passed through her body in such a way that the soul escaped without much pain, because she was one with love and after her death her sorrow was gone, the sorrow of loving Tristano.

When the squire saw his lady was dead, he was greatly grieved; still he did not delay, but mounted onto the back of the good destrier and took the little dog in his arms, and carried the letter. He rode in such a way, one day after another, that he caught up with Tristano in the kingdom of Cornovaglia, near Tintoile, in the country where King Marco was lord. Then he saluted Tristano courteously on behalf of Bellices, daughter of King Ferramonte, and in her name gave him the horse and the dog; then afterwards

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he put her letter in his hand. Tristano opened it and read it, and this is what he read:

"My sweet friend, my sweet friend, Tristano, my sweet friend, who was loved with good heart and loyal love: because of your leaving your Bellices could no longer meet with you. I was so in love with you because of your great perfection that without your presence I could not live except in heavy torment and grievous martyrdom, so that I was almost dead. And I know certainly that imagining your great beauty and your great cruelty, and how you went away, and how I could no longer see you, as I used to, for pleasure and delight, I would remain in such pain and sorrow that I would not find any rest. And so, since I could not see you, I have killed myself with the same sword with which the king my father was going to cut off your head. Be certain that in my death I have sustained no sorrow or pain, thinking and dreaming how I died for you, the fountain and flower of all gracefulness, the sum of honor and courtesy, full of beauty, angelic and lovely flower. So that you will remember how I killed myself for you, I send you my good horse and my little dog: keep these for love of me. And you should not have so much cruelty in your heart as to answer gentleness with pride, but always keep a loving heart, so that we may meet again in the company of loyal lovers."

When Tristano had read that letter, with many tears he asked the squire, "Valet, is it a true thing that Bellices has died this way?"

And he answered and said, "It is certainly true, for I was there as a witness when she killed herself for you."

Then Tristano mounted the horse that Bellices had sent him, and gave his own to the squire, and they took leave of each other. Tristano and Governale began to ride through the kingdom of Cornovaglia, and thus rode on their journey until they reached the rich city of Tintoile. At the grand palace Tristano presented himself before King Marco and offered his services, but in no way let it be known who he was. The king, seeing that Tristano was so handsome and well-made, and thinking that he was probably the son of some great baron, received him gladly.

Tristano served him well and nobly, earning much love. He was then fifteen years old. He fenced and played at arms and learned to ride, doing nothing else so that he developed his full prowess, becoming a knight resembling his father and all his kinsmen who had been the flowers of knighthood.

a knight errant who, through his prowess, is of the company of the knights of the Tavola Ritonda."

Tristano said, "Since God has made you so cowardly you won't defend your own rights, you will have to find justice in paying." And he said no more until he went to find Governale. Then he said, "My teacher, as you see, Amoroldo of Irlanda is demanding tribute from King Marco, and I am told he has no right to it except through his great power and courage, and the king and his barons, through cowardice, are prepared to pay. I have heard that a single knight might contest it, so I have decided that I want to be knighted, and I want to contest that tribute, not for love of the cowardly people of this kingdom, but for the sake of my family name."

Governale replied, "My Tristano, how could you stand against Amoroldo, one of the best knights in the world, when you are just a boy?"

Tristano answered, "Governale, if Amoroldo is a bold knight, I wish he were still bolder, for if I should be the winner of the battle it would be a greater honor in my life than if he were an ordinary knight. In this first battle I will find out if I am worth anything at arms, and if I cannot be worthy, it is better to die fighting against a noble knight than to live in cowardice."

Then Governale said, "My son, since you want to become a knight and prove yourself, I am satisfied."

At that, Tristano went before King Marco, saying, "Sire, I have been in your court as you know, but it is not for the service I've done you that I ask a boon; rather, I ask only through your own courtesy that you will make me a knight."

The king said, "My son, I had rather put you off, since we are not now at a time for celebration. Still, since I know your desire, I will make you a knight."

And all that night Tristano kept vigil in the great church, as the custom was, and prayed that God might give him the grace to carry his knighthood with justice, loyalty, and prowess. Many knights and barons watched with him, and when morning came Tristano went to the great piazza of the city, where the king bathed him. Here Tristano took the name and vow of knighthood, that is, he promised to be brave, bold, and sure, loyal, courteous, and just; to defend the weak against those who would treat them unjustly; to renounce all goods and artifices, or any activities for worldly gain. He swore an oath to this and took the sacraments, just as all new knights did. Then the king girded him with a sword¹⁵ and struck him on both cheeks, praying that God would give him ardor, prowess, and courtesy so that he would live according to right, with courtesy and justice, defending right from wrong.

The masters of the stories say that Tristano had not been long at King Marco's court when King Amoroldo of Irlanda had a great multitude of knights and foot soldiers summoned to his city of Londres, saying to his barons, "My lords, you know that in spite of the embassy I sent to King Marco of Cornovaglia, he still has not sent me the tribute I owe him for the past nine years; he does this because he holds me in contempt and cares nothing for my power. Thus I have decided to cross the sea, invade his kingdom, and lay siege to the city of Tintoile until the tribute is doubly paid."

All the barons agreed to this. They supplied themselves with biscuits and meat, ships, galleys, and boats; they had the trumpets, drums, and cymbals sounded and had the bells rung with hammers. When all the people were in the ships, there were 30,700 knights and 60,000 foot soldiers. They raised the sails, and the weather was good, so that by the power of the sirocco they reached the port of Cornovaglia at Tintoile in sixteen days, where they disembarked, camping on the shore half a league from the city. Then Amoroldo summoned two great barons and sent them as ambassadors to King Marco, telling them that within thirty days the tribute owed for the past nine years must be paid double, under penalty of half of it and their lives as well. When the two ambassadors came before King Marco, they dispensed their message. At that news, the king was the saddest lord in the world, and all of his barons showed great sorrow.

Tristano, seeing everyone in the court so downcast, marvelled greatly at it, and asked an old knight about it, saying, "Where does so much sadness come from, so suddenly?"

The old knight told Tristano the whole story, how King Felissi had put them all in Irlanda's power, and how Amoroldo had just come for the tribute owed him for the past nine years. Tristano asked, "By what right does he claim it?"

"By none other than his great power, because he is one of the boldest knights in the world, ruling a strong, great kingdom, with some of the best knights in the world."¹⁴

Tristano said, "Sir knight, since Amoroldo does not make his demands justly, why don't we give battle? I have seen many knights in this realm, and many fine people, great barons, and much riches."

The old knight said, "You may be sure that in the kingdom of Cornovaglia there is no knight bold enough to stand against Amoroldo for all the gold in the world. Not a single knight, not even thirty, could stand in battle against him alone, because Amoroldo is one of the noblest knights in the world,

The true story tells that it was three days after Tristano was made a knight that the ambassadors returned to court, saying to King Marco, "Are you ready to pay the tribute? Don't you realize how close the deadline is?"

The king did not answer these words; instead he was crying loudly, and none of the barons answered because the tribute they had to pay was so great. Sir Tristano, seeing that none of the barons was answering, got to his feet and said to the ambassadors, "If our fathers paid tribute to Irlanda, they did not do it justly, but rather they paid out of fear, because they were forced to. Thus, since Amoroldo is demanding tribute on the basis of his power rather than of any right he has to it, we do not wish to pay it, nor to observe the ancient law of tyrants who ruled the world through force and power. We would rather observe the law of God which rules not through force but through justice and right, not through war and rapine, wrongly binding people and countries."

"And if Amoroldo says otherwise, I summon him to battle and will show him by force of arms that he deserves no tribute from us, but rather that the tribute he had in the past ought to be returned and restored to us."

The ambassadors said, "Sire, does this boy speak with your good will?"

The king said, "Yes, certainly."

The ambassadors turned to Tristano, saying, "Knight, who are you that you seek to battle with Amoroldo? He will fight with none but well-born knights."

Then Tristano said, "My lords, know that the battle cannot be avoided this way. If he is a knight, I am a knight; if he is a king's son, so am I. King Meliadus was my father."

At that, the ambassadors returned to Amoroldo and told him the message, how a new knight wanted to contest the tribute in battle. Amoroldo said, "If he is a new knight, I will make him newly dead. And because I gladly accept the challenge, present him this sword on my behalf; it is the best in the world. It first belonged to the Grand Tartar, and I won it on a distant island when I slew the great giant Tarturiale, who wore it by his side. Tell him I present it to him for love of his ardor, for I did not think in this kingdom of cowards there might be a man who would trouble himself to fight. Tell him our battle can be whenever he pleases."

But know that Amoroldo really sent Tristano that sword because it was too heavy, telling himself, "The knight is so young, he will not be able to wield it (and in this he thought wisely); however, it will seem heavier with heavy armor than when he is unarmed."

Then the two ambassadors returned to Tristano and as part of their em-

bassy presented him with the sword. Tristano received it gladly because it would be of compelling heaviness against strength and greatness. Tristano said to the ambassadors that it seemed best to him that the battle be on the island of Sanza Avventura. "If I lose, King Marco will redouble his tribute, and I will give Amoroldo the kingdom of Liones, and if Amoroldo loses, he will renounce the tribute and all other claims he may have on this realm. And give him this sword from me, which belonged to King Meliadus, my father, and this dog which belonged to King Ferramonte, and was given to me by his daughter Bellices."

The ambassadors went back to Amoroldo and gave him the message. Then Amoroldo had himself armed and his good warhorse also, as his custom was, and he got into a small boat and went alone to the island of Sanza Avventura. Tristano also armed himself to great advantage and King Marco went with him to the shore, saying, "Dear and lovely nephew, I would like to cancel this battle, because I would rather lose all the gold I have in this kingdom than lose you!"

Tristano did not reply to this, but instead got into a little boat and went to the island. When he disembarked, he gave his boat a strong push and sent it out into the water. When he met Amoroldo, he greeted him courteously. Amoroldo returned his greeting and said, "Tell me, knight, why have you pushed your boat out in the water?"

"Because I am sure that one of us will die on this island, and whoever of the two of us survives can go back in the boat I see tied over there."

Amoroldo then said to Tristano, "I see, knight, that you are very young, and I am sure that you are not very wise, having come to this island to die. If you knew me, you would not do battle with me for all the gold in the world."

Tristano said, "Amoroldo, I know you are brave and bold. I have seen you armed and I have seen you disarmed, and I served before you at the table at King Ferramonte's court, when you dismounted there and ate."

At that, Amoroldo realized that this was the boy the fool had warned him about. Then he felt doubtful, and said, "Knight, I will excuse you from this battle because I am sure you have undertaken it foolishly, and it would not be much honor for me to demonstrate my power against you."

Tristano answered, "If you will renounce your claim to the tribute you are demanding from King Marco, I would gladly give up this battle, but I will not leave it for any other reason."

Amoroldo said to Tristano, "I said what I said out of pity for you because you are so young. I do not intend to renounce my claim to the tribute."

Tristano said, "My lord, many thanks for taking pity on my youth. I wish your conscience would also move you not to demand tribute from King Marco, since you demand it unjustly."

Amoroldo said to Tristano, "Such words mean nothing to me. The good point of my sword will decide right and wrong."

Know, my lords, that Amoroldo was right; in this he prophesied and spoke the truth, because the point of the sword was to remain in his head, as you will hear, and because of that he had to renounce the tribute.

At once, then, the two knights challenged each other, and rode apart from each other the length of an arrow's flight, riding to strike with their lances in hand so they seemed as fierce as lions, and when they lowered the lances they struck so vigorously that the shafts were shattered and their horses sat down on the ground. Still the knights did not lose their stirrups. Then they struck their good destriers with spurs and forced them up again. They took their iron maces in hand, and there began between them a cruel and bitter battle, as they traded such great blows that their helmets rang on their heads. They shattered each other's shields one after the other, right off their arms. When they had fought for a long time they rested from the first assault.

During the second, they took their swords in hand and began to cut the armor off each other's backs so that most of it soon lay scattered over the ground. Fighting in this way, in the third assault each one wounded the other very much, and their flesh was nearly bare, colored by blood and sweat. In the fourth assault, their horses could no longer stand, and each of them marveled at the strength of the other, for each one still struck vigorously and well.

Amoroldo, with great skill, struck Tristano such a blow on his helmet that it made him bow down. Then he said, "Tristano, Tristano, how is your head? I'll make you know my sword is greater than yours!"

Then Tristano, full of vigor in spite of that blow on his head, was filled with desire to pay it back. He gripped his sword angrily and struck Amoroldo's helmet with all his power and strength. So great, so true, and so strong was the blow, that it cut deep into his helmet, through the iron cap, and landed in his head. At the impact of the blow the sword broke off near the point, so that a sliver of the blade was lodged in Amoroldo's brain; and from the force of the heavy blow Amoroldo was stretched out on the ground, crying to Tristano for mercy, begging him not to kill him, and conceding him the victory. He renounced all tribute he could ever demand from King Marco, whether he had a right to it or not.

Then Tristano, like a noble knight, for courtesy's sake pardoned him and did not kill him. He took him and put him into his boat and pushed it out into the water as far as he could, to send him back to his people. But Amoroldo, like a shameful knight, took a Syrian bow which he had in the boat and shot a poisoned arrow, wounding Tristano in the right thigh. Then he returned to his people, broke camp, and went home.

When Queen Lotta, his sister, saw how he was wounded, she was very troubled. She treated him, for she was the best physician in the world, and no one ever treated died when his doctor was Queen Lotta. And she managed, after fifteen days, to get the point of the sword out of her brother's

skull, but still Amoroldo could not escape, for in the end he died of it. There remained to him a little son, to whom King Languis of Irlanda, the husband of Queen Lotta, gave the name of Amoroldino Novello, in remembrance of the good Amoroldo.

XIX.

The true story tells that since Tristano remained on the island King Marco got into a boat with a great many barons and knights and sailed out to him with the greatest joy in the world, and brought him back to the city. All who saw him thought themselves blessed, because he had delivered them from such weakness and servitude.

But Tristano suffered greatly from the wound in his thigh, and day and night could find neither rest nor repose. King Marco called in the best and worthiest doctors in the entire country, but none of them knew how to cure it or give advice about it. The more they treated it the worse Tristano grew, because the arrow was poisoned, and the wound grew so putrid that no one could bear to be near him.

For greater ease, Tristano had himself carried to the great palace of Riano, outside the city on the sea shore. Here he lived for two months, in constant pain. He took his harp with him, and other instruments for his delight, but to no avail. His pain was so great that many times he would have thrown himself into the sea if Governale had not guarded him so well. After Tristano had been for some time in such travail, he said to King Marco, "Since I can find no help in this kingdom, I have decided to seek my cure throughout the world. Therefore, my lord, I ask your leave to go."

The king, seeing his strong desire, said that he was satisfied to have him leave. Then Tristano had a ship made, all painted and decorated, furnishing it with gold and silver and all things necessary and good for a year's travelling. He had his sword put in, and his harp, and other instruments of delight, then he himself boarded with Governale and other good sailors in whom he had great confidence. The weather was clear, good for navigating, so that in a very short time they were on the high seas. The good weather held for eight days, but on the ninth there arose a great and dangerous storm with winds contrary to the prow, so they were all in danger of being killed. They endured that storm and its uncertainty for ten days.

The master sailors were very frightened, seeing themselves so close to death.

They gave themselves up to God, and let the wind blow them this way and that as it would, so great was their fear; thus fortune led their ship in such a way that they all thought they would die. After going thus all day, when midnight came they found themselves on dry land, at the foot of a rich castle. The sailors were very glad of it. They dropped anchor, secured the rudder, and furled the sails, then took oars and rowed the ship to the shore.

XX.

Now, if anyone should ask me where Tristano had come, I would say that he had arrived in the country of Irlanda, at the gate of the winter castle of King Languis, brother-in-law of Amoroldo, whom Tristano had killed; the castle was some two leagues outside of the city of Londres. When the day-star had risen and dawn began to appear Sir Tristano, as he always did for comfort of his pain, took up his harp and began to play it. So sweetly he played that it was a great delight to hear. When King Languis heard the music, he got out of bed, put on a silken tunic, and went out on his balcony to listen. After Tristano had played, the young knight gave a great sigh, saying, "Alas, lord God, why must I die like this?" And he wept bitterly.

The king, having heard the music and then those words, summoned four squires, taking them with him down to the shore. He saw how Tristano was lying in a rich bed, near death. The king greeted him courteously and asked why he lamented so; then Tristano answered that he was a knight from a land far away, and that he had been wounded in the thigh and could find no cure. The king asked him to the castle, and Tristano said it would please him to come. Then the king had his four squires lift him and place him in a silken litter and carry him to the palace, where he was laid in a rich bed inside a lovely chamber. Still, no one knew who he was except his own people.

Now know that King Languis called one of his daughters, who was called Isotta the Blonde. At that time she was twelve years old, and was already counted among the most beautiful women in the world, one of the three then found: one was Queen Ginevara of Bretagna, the second was Queen Albagia of Organia, and the third, flower of them all, was Isotta the Blonde: of all that was beautiful and sweet, she was the best.

When Isotta came before the king her father, he said to her, "My daughter, here is a knight from a distant country who is terribly wounded, and in

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his journeying has found no help nor remedy to cure him. Therefore I beg you, my lovely daughter, that you take him into your care; I ask you to do this for my sake."

Isotta then answered him, "My father, I will do it gladly."

If anyone wants to know why King Languis did not give Tristano into the care of Queen Lotta, his wife, who was the wisest doctor in the world, I will say that from the day that Amoroldo her brother died, she did not want to treat patients any more because of the great sorrow she felt from having treated him and not cured him; because of this she no longer would be involved in healing. She said, "Since I could not save my own brother, it would not please God that I help or cure anyone else." For this reason, her daughter Isotta now did all the doctoring.

The story says that when Isotta looked at Tristano's wound, she saw how it was poisoned, and treated it in new ways. She did so much with her good medicine that in thirty days Tristano was almost well. One day she said to him, "Knight, do you have the heart to leap?"

When Tristano said he did, she told him to try. He leapt twenty-two feet, but the wound reopened. Then Isotta treated it some more, and did not ask him to test it until she was certain it was well healed. When she did, he leapt thirty feet, and Isotta said, "Knight, now you are well." Still, neither his strength nor his good color had yet returned, his suffering had been so serious and had lasted so long.

XXI.

Now says the tale that the country of Irlanda had the custom of holding many tournaments and fine jousts. At that point, the King of Scozia had one proclaimed, saying that on the feast of the Annunciation every knight who wanted to demonstrate his prowess and strength for love of a lady or maiden should come to the assembly to be held before the castle at Monte Soave, on the broad and lovely meadow. When that time came, King Languis said to Tristano, "Knight, do you want to come to the assembly that the King of Scozia has called against the King of a Hundred Knights?"

"I would be very glad to," said Tristano, "but I don't yet feel strong enough to wear armor."

Then the king said, "By my faith, I would not want you to bear arms. I myself am going to watch; in the morning, if you like, we will ride over together." Tristano said that he was ready to go.

When the next day came, the king and Sir Tristano, with many other barons and knights, mounted and went toward the place where the tournament was to be held. They rode that day and the next, coming to the castle of Monte Soave; here they met Sir Calvano, King Artu's nephew, and ten more knights errant. Tristano also saw here the squire who had presented him with the horse on Bellice's behalf. The king greeted the knights errant with great honor. In the morning Tristano went with many others to have Bellice's squire dubbed a knight; he was given arms and a horse, and the name Amadore the Well-behaved.

After that, all the knights mounted and gathered that day at the place where the tournament was to be. Here they found on one side the King of Scozia and all the knights of his realm, and on the other, the King of a Hundred Knights, with all his barons and a good dozen knights errant. As soon as all the people had gathered, the King of Scozia had trumpets and horns sounded once, then twice, and at the third blast all the knights began to fight at once. The battle was heavy and strong, lasting the greater part of the day; many knights were wounded or killed. And on one side, the King of a Hundred Knights fought so that with help from the good knights errant, he was the winner.

But at that point, right after noon, there entered on the side of the King of Scozia a knight who bore all black insignia, and who was called Palamidesso the Pagan, son of King Scalabrino. This Palamidesso carried two swords by his side as a signal that no knight had ever made him bend over the saddlebow. He began to fight against the people of the King of a Hundred Knights, striking barons, knights, and horses; when his lance broke he took a sword in hand, dealing blows so heavy and strong that no one could stand before him. In a short time he had conquered the field and scattered the King of a Hundred Knights and all his people. King Languis felt sorrow and anger because of it, and he felt offended himself, because he was always against the King of Scozia.

All the people shouted, "The knight of the black banner has won the tournament!" At that the King of a Hundred Knights, hoping to vindicate himself, had another tournament proclaimed, saying it would be on Easter Day, and that each king, duke, count, baron, and knight should gather to compete in a tournament on the great field of Fregolo, in front of the castle of the Enchantresses, each to prove himself for love of his lady or the maiden he loves. After the proclamation, each knight left and returned to his own country.

King Languis waited for Palamidesso, and when he caught up with him, Languis invited him warmly to come and rest with him at the castle of Irlanda, near the city of Londres, and Palamidesso accepted the invitation. They rode until they reached the castle, and coming into the palace they disarmed and rested. After a little, the tables were brought, and when they sat down

to eat, the lovely maid Isotta served before the king her father.

Palamidesso, seeing the lovely girl, so graceful and adorned, fell in love with her at once, and could not stop gazing at her. When Tristano noticed that he was staring at her, he began to do it himself, just to annoy Palamidesso. Palamidesso, noticing Tristano's gaze, felt very sad, and began to hate Tristano very, very much. Tristano began to hate him, too, so that each of them would gladly have killed the other. At that began the hatred between them so great that from then on they were mortal enemies.

Each one was a young knight, except that Palamidesso was a little older than Tristano; and they would both die on the same day, according to what I have read.

The two young knights exchanged so many spiteful looks that Isotta's lady in waiting, Brandina, noticed them, and said secretly to Isotta, "If God blessed you, and you could choose, which knight would you prefer, the one you cured, or him of the black banner?"

Isotta answered, "If our knight is as bold as he seems to be, I would prefer him, but if he is not as brave as he is handsome, I would want the other."

When Palamidesso had been at court for a few days, he took leave, mounted, and went on his way, because the time of the next tournament was approaching. King Languis summoned all his barons and knights to enter the tournament against the King of Scozia. He said to Tristano, "Knight, do you want to go to this assembly?"

And Tristano, because he wanted to go more secretly, said, "I cannot yet bear arms."

"Then stay behind," said the king. And at that point he armed himself and had all his people armed and mounted. He took Isotta with him, because it delighted him to see her there before him and she loved to watch the men at arms. They rode until they came to the place where the tournament was to be, and they found on one side the King of Scozia with all the knights of Longres, and on the other, the King of a Hundred Knights with all the knights of Guzilagne. King Languis entered the lists on the side of the King of a Hundred Knights. When the two sides were lined up, the horns were sounded and all the barons began to strike, one side against the other. The King of a Hundred Knights overcame the King of Scozia, and Palamidesso beat King Languis. They broke their lances and put their hands to their swords: the battle was so dangerous it was a marvel to see, for there were more than 7500 knights there, counting both sides. But the bold Palamidesso, who fought for the King of Scozia, did such deeds of arms it was impossible to see them all. Relentlessly he chased the King of a Hundred Knights over the field, and King Languis, and the knights errant and their forces, so great were his prowess and the fierce, fine deeds he did.

The masters of stories tell that Tristano, staying behind at the court of King Languis, was very thoughtful, wondering how he might get to that tournament. Brandina, noticing how worried he was, said to him, "Tell me, why are you so thoughtful? For courtesy's sake, let me know."

Tristano said, "Lady, by my faith, I will tell you the truth. I have a great desire to go to this tournament, if I had but a horse, and a squire to keep me company who might guide me to the place of assembly."

At that, Brandina took Tristano by the hand and led him into a room where many handsome arms were hung, saying to him, "Knight, choose whichever arms please you the most, the ones that seem best to you."

Then Tristano chose white armor and a white banner, and armed himself to great advantage. Brandina had a good horse made ready for him, and lent him her own two brothers to bear him company. Then Tristano and Governale and the two squires rode to the tournament, arriving just as Palamidesso was getting the best of everyone on the field.

Tristano entered the lists on the side of the King of a Hundred Knights, who was losing badly. The young knight set his lance and began to do such deeds of arms that all the people who saw him marvelled. Before his lance was broken, he had knocked eleven knights off their horses, and with his last blow he sent Sir Palamidesso to earth, horse and all. Then he drew his sword and began to deal such great blows that no one had the courage to face him or the will to wait for him, for if they stood against him they were quickly knocked down. Thus he overcame the King of Scozia and all the knights of Ingilterra, and with his own hand put to death more than twenty-five knights. All the people cried out, "The knight of the white banner has won the tournament."

As Tristano looked over the field, he saw that Sir Palamidesso was leaving, and called out to him, "Hallo, knight, guard yourself against me! I am the knight you met at King Languis' court, and it seems now that I am the worthier of the love of Isotta the Blonde!"

Bold Palamidesso, hearing those words, turned his horse's head around and, drawing his sword, gave Tristano such blows on his helmet that he bent him over the saddlebow. But Tristano hit back, and hit Palamidesso so hard on his helmet that he made blood gush out of his mouth and nose, and knocked him off his horse so badly wounded that for a long time he was unconscious. Thus Palamidesso lost the prize, and lost also the right to wear two swords.

Thus Tristano won the tournament against the King of Scozia. Afterwards he left very secretly and went back to the castle of Irlanda, and all the kings,

barons, and knights went home to their own countries. And they all went asking and wondering who the knight of the white banner could be, who had done such deeds of arms.

When King Languis returned, Tristano went to meet him since he was there before him, asking for news, and asking which side had won the tournament. The king said, "God the Father sent to fight on our side a heavenly knight all dressed in white, who did such deeds of arms that no other knight could do half as much in a day's time; it was he who truly vindicated our late shame and outrage, and all in all, he was the winner of the tournament. Afterwards, he left so secretly that no one could find out anything about him and this is one of the greatest sorrows and causes of grief that we have, not being able to find out who that knight was who did such noble deeds."

While they spoke, the king and the other barons looked hard at Tristano, because he had many cuts and scratches he could not hide; even though his face showed nothing, elsewhere he had had many blows. The king noticed it, and said to Tristano, "Sir, were you at the assembly for this tournament, where such a noble battle was fought?"

But Tristano said, "Sire, I was here. I was not prepared to go to any tournament."

When the king had rested a little, the tables were brought, and water to wash their hands, and they went in to eat, the king continually saying, "By my faith, I would give one of my rich castles to know the name and origin of that knight who won the tournament, and did such deeds of arms."

After the tables were taken away, Brandina presented herself before the king and, taking him by the hand, said, "Noble sire, do you want so very much to know who the knight of the white banner was who won the tournament?"

And the king answered, "Brandina, I have never wanted anything as badly as I want this."

Then Brandina said, "Noble sire, know certainly that the knight who won the battle for the King of a Hundred Knights and who beat Palamidesso two times was our knight, the one you gave to Isotta to cure."

The king said, "Brandina, how can this be?"

Then Brandina showed him the white banner, and the good horse wounded in two places, and her brothers told him everything that had happened. Then the king had all his great barons summoned to the castle, and all the noble ladies and maidens, then he had Tristano called, and had stand before him the one who, of three, was among the handsomest in the world. When all the people were assembled, the king got to his feet and said to Tristano, "Knight, I marvel much that you have been at my court so long, and still I do not know where you are from; therefore I ask that you tell me your name."

Tristano, hearing these words, was very troubled, for it would not do for

him to be known here. He said to the king, "My lord King Languis, I beg you for courtesy's sake that you will pardon me from revealing my lineage now, for the credit of my name I hold my greatest treasure. Call me by this name - 'The Distant Knight' - because I come from a land far away."

The king answered, "I will desist for now from wanting to know your origin and where you come from and your name, if you will tell me just one thing. For the love which I showed you when I gave you into the care of my daughter, tell me whether you are that knight who routed the King of Scozia and overcame Palamidesso the Pagan."

Tristano, seeing how gently he asked it, thought it would be a great villainy to lie. He said, "Know that I am the knight who did those deeds you have asked me about. I am sure that it is a great villainy to boast, but my debt to you has made me speak that which I would have kept to myself."

Then the king embraced him and kissed him, and all the other people did him great honor, and held themselves fortunate if they could be with him or serve him.

XXIII.



The true story tells that as Tristano was staying thus in the court of King Languis, having returned from the tournament with the King of Scozia, he had a bath prepared, because he was sore from the buffets he had taken, and from the long exertion. There he was well attended by squires and other people, who greatly honored him. On the third day he went again to bathe, and it happened that he left the door of his chamber open through carelessness and left his sword lying on the bed where he slept. This sword was heavily gilded, and nobly adorned with silverwork and many precious stones. At that point a squire, finding the room open, came in. When he saw the sword on the bed, he picked it up to look at it, because it was so beautiful. Meanwhile, Queen Isotta was passing by and saw that the squire was holding Tristano's sword. She came up to him and took it in her hands, pulling it out of its sheath

and saying, "Here is the noblest and most beautiful sword anyone has ever seen."

She pulled it all the way out and, looking at the end of it, saw that the tip was blunted. She wondered at that, then suddenly remembered the point of a sword she had drawn from the head of Amoraldo, her brother. She went to her chamber and took that point out of the jewel box where she kept it, and found that it fitted exactly onto the end of Tristano's sword. Thus she was sure that this was the knight who had killed her brother. She ran at once into the bath with that sword in her hand, crying, "Alas, you false traitor, you nephew of King Marco of Cornovaglia, now you can conceal yourself no longer, for we are certain that you are the false traitor who treacherously killed Amoraldo! Now it is necessary that you die by my hand!"

She would have struck him, had it not been that those who were there prevented her, and Tristano did not flinch, because he did not believe that a woman's blow had the power to do him harm. But the great uproar the queen was making brought King Languis and many barons, and the queen, when she saw the king, said, "My lord king, you see before you Tristano, the nephew of King Marco of Cornovaglia, who killed Amoraldo, my brother, through great treachery!"

The king said, "Lady, don't cry and don't give yourself so much trouble. Leave this vendetta to me, for it is not right that a woman should concern herself with such things." Then he turned to Tristano, saying, "Sir, are you this Tristano who is of such great fame throughout the world?"

Tristano replied, "Sire, some people do speak of me that way."

The king said, "Sir, then dress yourself at once. And you, knights, stay with him and bring him to the palace."

Then Tristano got out of the bath and dressed himself in a silken tunic and put a mantle of camel's hair over his shoulders; the beautiful Isotta refastened his sword. When Tristano stood before the king, it seemed to all the people a great sin to kill such a noble knight in such a way.

The queen came before the king like a madwoman, crying, "Sire, I beg you for the love you bore to Amoraldo, my brother, that you take vengeance on this false traitor!"

The king said, "Lady, go on your way. I will do what is right, and your shame will be nobly vindicated." Then he spoke to Tristano and said, "Sir, did you kill Amoraldo treacherously?"

Then Sir Tristano answered King Languis, saying, "Sire, it is true that I killed him, though not through treachery, for I have never been a traitor, and may it please God that I never will be. I killed him as one knight does another, in a fair fight ordained between the two of us. If there is anyone eager to say that I killed him treacherously, him I call to the field of battle, where I will show him through strength and the power of arms how I killed him in a fair encounter arranged between the two of us. I will show anyone

who wishes it that never have I been a traitor or done any treacherous deed." The king, seeing what a young and fine-looking knight he was, thought a little and said, "Tristano, did you already have at this time enough strength to kill Amoroldo, the best knight in the world?"

And Tristano answered, "Sire, it is not right for me to vaunt myself, but the deed could be told by more than five hundred knights of this country who were there and who saw all that happened. They could tell the whole truth, whatever is needed."

Now it was quite clear to the king, and he knew well what had happened in that battle and how it had ended; but still he would gladly have found a reason to cut off Tristano's head to satisfy the queen, his wife. All the people thought it was very unfair to Tristano, for they saw that, right or wrong, the king was going to pass judgement on him.

Know that the noble maiden Isotta had been standing near the king as he examined Tristano, and that she was very worried and sad about what was happening. She knew well that Amoroldo had not been wounded or killed through treachery, because she had heard him say, when the queen was treating him, that he had never met a truer or a nobler knight, nor a more courteous fighter than the one he had faced in the battle that caused his death. Thus it seemed to the beautiful Isotta a great evil and injustice that Tristano should die as though he had done wrong. When she saw what a handsome, gifted young knight he was, and when she thought how she had treated and cured him and saved his life, she almost thought of him as her own knight. Because of all this, she could no longer keep quiet, but got to her feet and said, "My father, I have never asked a boon of you or anyone, but now I beg one of you. I pray that since this is my first, you will not deny me, but will grant it generously."

The king said, "Then ask, my daughter, and all will be as you please, for I am ready to do it"; he believed that Isotta would side with the queen, and want Tristano killed.

Then spoke the merciful blond Isotta: "My father," she said, "I pray you by the one God, and for your honor's sake, do not make your kindness and magnanimity the price of what you do here, as you will if you depart from reason and justice. For until now, no one in the world could say of you that you ever falsified justice. And if you remember, you are king, and a king is none other than the shield, lance, and helmet, that is, leader, guide, and protector of true justice, defender of the truth, so that if you have Tristano killed, today you will lose all the great honor you have earned over so long a time. For, my father, to falsify justice and to act against your own conscience is a fault that water won't wash nor a cloak cover."

"Know certainly, if you do not already know it, that Tristano did not kill Amoroldo treacherously, for Amoroldo himself and all his barons said that it was a battle well and truly proclaimed between them on both sides. Now,

if Amoroldo lost in such a battle and was killed, should Tristano be held a traitor for that? And if you do not believe that he was strong enough, and if you think his age forbids it, you must know that it was a bigger thing by a hundred times that he overcame Palamidesso and routed the King of Scozia than that he put Amoroldo to death. So now I ask of you the boon you promised me. I ask you, my father, to give me this Tristano, and that nothing bad be done to him."

At that, the king turned to Sir Tristano, saying to him, "Knight, the truth is that to vindicate my shame and to satisfy my lady, I would bring justice against you, but now I remember myself, and I will not seek vengeance against you. The first reason is that when you came to my court you were nearly dead, and through me and through my daughter you were cured, so that it seems to me a great cruelty to have brought the dead back to life and afterwards to lead him back to death in such a way. The second cause is that I do not want to be the one to put an end to the beauty and prowess of the world. And the third reason that I pardon you all offenses and offer you peace is for love of my daughter, Isotta the Blonde; truly it is from her that you have your life. From now on, you can be free to go or stay or come, healthy and safe, at your pleasure and however you like."

Then Tristano thanked the king and gave many thanks to the lovely Isotta the Blonde.

XXIV.

Then the story goes on to say that Tristano had Governale order a ship all prepared, because he wanted to leave and go back to Cornovaglia. Isotta gave Tristano back his sword, and he thanked her very courteously for the service she had done him. They took leave of each other with many sighs, for they loved each other with a loyal love.

Tristano went aboard the ship, taking Brandina's two brothers with him. The weather was so good that in a little time they were well out to sea, that is, on the high seas. They went with the wind as their guide, so that when the weather began to change they did not arrive where they had wanted to, but instead ended up in the kingdom of Liones. Tristano and his companions disembarked and had their horses led out so they could ride through that country.

There Tristano was shown the castle of Brinoa, where lived the lords of those knights who had killed King Meliadus, his father. When Tristano came

to the castle he demanded a joust, as it was the custom to do in those times, and there came against him one of his mortal enemies, the one who was the leader of those who had put his father to death. Confronting each other, they called out their challenges and began to strike; the knight, who was called Sir Magano, struck Tristano such a great blow on the shield that he shattered his lance, but he did Tristano no harm, then Tristano struck him with such skill that he knocked him flat on the ground from his horse. Then he beat the second, and the third until of the eight, he had beaten five, and the others did not want to joust.

At that point, Tristano unsheathed his sword, as did the good Governale and the two squires, and they went toward the gate, entering the castle by force, putting whomever they found to the sword. Then he took the five mortal enemies he had beaten, and put them, well armed, into a single room. All alone he went in among them, his good sword in hand, saying, "Defend yourselves against me, knights, for I am that Tristano, son of King Meliadus whom you killed. Know now that you have reached the place where, God willing, I will take great vengeance for this. Defend yourself, for there is no other way to escape me, that is sure!"

Seeing themselves in such a situation, they struck out against Sir Tristano, and did so well that they wounded him in two places; and Tristano, who was a bold fighter, grew so angry against these traitors for the way they had attacked him that he cut them to pieces with his true sword, all except one, the youngest of the five. This one cried to Tristano for mercy and pardon and Tristano, a merciful man, granted him his life. But afterwards he made everyone leave the castle, and had it set afire and burned to the ground.

Then he rode on toward his own city of Liones, where he was received with feasts and great celebrations. He found out that the queen, his step-mother, had passed from this life. While he was there he made the young man he had pardoned a knight and gave him a rich castle, and he knighted Brandina's two brothers and gave them the lordship and revenues of the country for five years.

He and Governale then returned to Cornovaglia, to the city of Tintoile, and King Marco, when he saw them, received them with great honor, and all the people of the land showed great joy and happiness at Tristano's return. Then King Marco made a decree that all the knights and barons of the city and the castle, with their ladies and maidens, should come to the great palace to celebrate their happiness at the return of Tristano, their lord and defender.

Then to the palace came all the barons, knights, and ladies of high degree, and among them came one who was called the Hebrew damsel of Aigua della Spina, a maiden whom King Marco loved very much. She was included, for her beauty, among other ladies of worth: she was ranked with the lady Losanna of the Old Court, and with the damsel Isotta of the White Hands; the third of these was this Jewess.

All the barons and high-born ladies of Cornovaglia gathered at the great palace to celebrate Sir Tristano's return. Enough tables were brought so that everyone could eat, and the ladies' tables were in front of the knights'. Among the ladies sat the Hebrew maiden of Aigua della Spina, and as they ate she looked at the side of the men's table where Tristano was. Seeing him there so handsome and so young, she fell madly in love with him, and could not stop staring. Soon Tristano felt her gaze, and soon returned it, so that it was plain to both how much they desired each other. Getting up from the table, the maiden went to Tristano's side, saying, "Knight, I am she who loves you most with all my heart."

Tristano replied, "You show great mercy, lady, when you deign to say so. Know that I am your loving knight."

With that, they took leave of each other and the lady rode back to her dwelling. When she was in bed she summoned a dwarf of hers in whom she had great trust and said to him, "I want you to carry a message from me to Sir Tristano. Tell him prudently for me that he is to come to me this evening at my palace, here in the middle of the Garden of Aigua della Spina, and tell him to come armed, because he cannot tell what adventure he may meet."

The dwarf replied, "Lady, I will do it at once and willingly." He mounted immediately and rode to the court of King Marco; there he found Sir Tristano. The dwarf called him aside and delivered his message, which made Tristano very glad, and the young knight replied that he was ready to go at the appointed time. But know that when the dwarf was speaking with Tristano, King Marco became aware of it, and at once realized that the maiden had sent for him. He had the dwarf brought into his chamber and said to him, "Look here, I want you to tell me what message you delivered to Tristano."

The dwarf replied, "It would not be courteous to reveal the secret entrusted to me."

"What?" said the king. "I marvel greatly at you. You will not tell me what I ask of you?" The dwarf said no, then the king said, "Then I will have you beheaded." Then the dwarf was afraid, and out of fear told King Marco what had happened.

The king said, "I have often paid court to your lady, dwarf, and from her I have had not even one good reply. Because of this, I see she is a lady of little worth who will always choose the worst, who refuses me, the king, and chooses Tristano, who is worth nothing. I will surely have her put to death."

The dwarf replied, "It would not be just for you to punish my lady because

of these things, for you know it happens every day that a great baron desires a poor lady, or a great queen loves an unproved knight. You ought to know that love pays no attention to riches or beauty, but rather enters where pleasure carries it. And since love is the greatest of man's worldly treasures, the one who loves needs no other riches. Therefore my lady ought not to be found guilty."

Then the king said, "Dwarf, you know well how to arrange it that I have your lady for my pleasure, if you will, and she will receive from me no bad reward. And so do this: ride with Tristano, and I will arm myself and ride alone until I am ahead of you. When we meet, I will challenge Tristano, and if I win, you will take me to your lady."

The dwarf agreed, and secretly the king armed himself, mounted, and went on his way. When evening came, Tristano armed himself, and he and the dwarf rode toward the palace of Aigua della Spina. When they came to a pass, the king confronted and challenged Tristano, saying, "Knight, guard yourself against me!"

Tristano, who did not recognize him, lowered his lance, and the two struck each other with such force that each one pierced the other's shield and breastplate. The king wounded Tristano slightly, but not enough to move him in his saddle, while Tristano knocked the king off his horse badly wounded, so that he had to ride back to Tintoile in great pain.

When Tristano reached the palace, he dismounted and treated and banded his wounds, then coming to her chamber he found that the damsels was already in bed. It was the time of first sleep. Tristano got into bed with her, and together they took solace and gave each other pleasure and delight.

It is true that the damsels had taken a husband just sixteen days before, but they had not yet consummated their marriage. It was the custom at that time that when a knight took a wife they waited thirty days before consummation, hearing mass together each day so that God might pardon their sins and forgive them the loss of their virginity and their coming to carnal knowledge. And they prayed that their children might be noble in the world, gracious to all people, and blessed by God, and that they themselves would be faithful in marriage.

Tristano was in the midst of great delight when the dwarf came to the door and called out to him, "Get up! Here comes my lord Lambergus, coming back from the castle of Girano!"

This news made Tristano very unhappy, but at once he armed himself and mounted, took leave and went on his way. Soon the lady's husband arrived, and went into her room. Looking at the floor, he saw that it was covered with blood from Tristano's wound. The knight asked what blood this was, and the lady answered, "It is blood from my nose."

The knight said, "Maiden, tell me the truth. This blood came from some other place than your nose."

Then she was afraid, and told him the truth, that Tristano the nephew of King Marco had been there. Then Lambergus, greatly outraged, mounted and rode after Tristano. Meeting him by the moon's light, he called out, "I defy you!" At that, they struck each other with great vigor, wounding each other, but Tristano beat the knight and rode on his way. When he came to Tintoile he went to his own palace, which was named Luogo Franco, because within ten paces of it the king could have no one seized; also here no one ever lacked bread or wine, and here someone could always be found ready to fence or joust, or to read lovely stories of Rome or Troy. When Tristano got home, he had his wounds treated, and soon the king sent for him, asking, "My dear nephew, how are you?"

Tristano replied, "I am better than someone wanted me to be."

The king asked, "Do you know who wounded you?"

"I think I know very well," said Tristano, "and I will take high revenge for it."

Tristano meant the maiden's husband, but King Marco thought these words were intended for him, and meant him. He became very suspicious, and worried a lot about Tristano, believing that he had found out who had jostled with him, but Tristano, in truth, did not know.

When Tristano was cured, and after a few days, the king had two pavilions of fine silk set up on the shore, and commanded that every baron come with his lady to chase melancholy away. Many barons, knights, and ladies came, among them the lady of Aigua della Spina and her husband, and King Marco and Tristano rode over afterwards.

As they rode past a great snowdrift, Tristano looked down and saw three drops of blood that had fallen from a bird Adriette had wounded. He stopped and began to gaze intently at this blood on the snow, for the color gave him much pleasure, the bit of vermillion on the white. The king asked what he was thinking about, and he replied, "Surely, sire, these are the very colors of Isotta's face, Isotta who is the beautiful daughter of King Languis of Irlanda, who saved me from an evil death."

Then they joined the knights and ladies who were amusing themselves by the sea, eating and dancing and playing chess, and giving each other great pleasure and solace. As they played thus, there arrived among them a knight errant, who was called Sir Brunoro, and when he saw the damsels of Aigua della Spina, he fell madly in love with her. He went before the king and craved a boon of him, which the king granted gladly, not knowing what he wanted. Then he said, "Sire, I want this damsels." And he took her by the hand and led her away right in front of her husband, who was standing there. Her husband at once held him back from taking her, and struck Sir Brunoro; thus she wanted to go back to her husband, but still she had to go with Sir Brunoro.

At that point, all the people went back to the city, and King Marco, looking

at Tristano, said to him, "Sweet nephew, did you see how that knight dishonored that lady? I pray that you will go to rescue her."

Then Tristano called to Governale and said, "Now ready my arms and my horse." And as soon as he was armed and mounted, he rode after Brunoro. He found him at his castle, and Tristano began to call out, "Slow down, knight. You have no right to take her. I am King Marco's nephew."

Then Brunoro set himself to joust with Sir Tristano, and they began to strike. In the attack, they broke their lances, then unsheathed their swords. They began to strike and to make a great assault; Tristano struck Sir Brunoro such heavy blows that most of his armor hung in shreds down his back. Then Brunoro said, "Sir Tristano, there is no cause for the two of us to fight to the death. Rather ask the lady which of us pleases her most, and our quarrel will be over at once."

Tristano said that this pleased him well. Then they went to the lady and said, "Lady, our fight is finished. Now pick the one of us who pleases you most."

And the damsels said, "It happens that Tristano is a traitor, who for no cause should ever have allowed me to be taken from the court. Still, I want him the most."

Thus Brunoro departed and went on his way, and Tristano and the damsels went back to court, and Tristano returned her to her husband.

XXVI.

The story says that King Marco, seeing Tristano's prowess, every day became more and more suspicious of him, making the excuses of fearful and disloyal people who, having themselves no faith, can't believe in the faithfulness of others. He said to himself, "If Tristano stays in this country he will soon, through his prowess, try to claim lordship and keep the crown for himself." He tried to think of ways he might have his nephew killed or sent to such a country that he might never return to Cornovaglia; here he proved the proverb which says, "Merchants have shops, drinkers have taverns, players have chessboards, and all like goes with like." King Marco was accustomed in that country to the meanness of heart that leads to treachery and the greed which gives rise to envy, so that he was not comfortable with a man so different from the others, one who expected magnanimity.

Being so suspicious, and harboring such evil thoughts against the loyal

TRISTANO AND THE ROUND TABLE

knight Sir Tristano, one day he summoned all his knights and barons to Tintoile. Then he got to his feet, saying, "Tristano, my lovely nephew, much I can and ought to love you, and much all the barons and knights of this country ought to honor you, for King Felissi left us slaves, and you have set us free, and delivered this country, which is rich in silver and gold. "Still, one thing remains, as my barons have often reminded me; a king is not reasonable if he remains unmarried. It is my will that I have no wife unless I may have the one who, by you and by others, has been so praised for beauty and nobility. This is the daughter of King Languis of Irlanda, who has so captured my heart that because of her I can find neither rest nor peace. Thus I ask you for my sake to journey to the kingdom of Irlanda, and arrange it there by guile or by force that I might have her for my wife. I swear that this would be the greatest service you could give me, and the greatest pleasure."

Then good and loyal Tristano, with no malice in his heart, answered, "My lord, now that I know your will and your desire, I will cross the sea and go to Irlanda, and do everything in my power to win the lady for you."

The king had him give his glove on that vow, then said, "Tristano, I offer you gold and silver and whatever company you desire, and command you to leave this country within three days, never to return unless you bring with you the beautiful Isotta."

Tristano, hearing the command so clearly made, got busy and prepared all the things he had need of. He had a ship furnished with biscuits, meat, and fresh water, and had put within it three noble and lovely pavilions; then he asked for the company of sixty knights, all young, handsome, and nobly equipped. The king gave all this gladly, as if to say, "Oh well, take whatever you like, because I am sending you to such a place and such a country that you will never return to this kingdom."

Then Tristano ordered his company, and they got on board ship. Their fathers and mothers made a great lament; still, none of them had wives or children, because Tristano did not want to take people with him who thought of such high things. The mariners raised the sails; the weather and the winds were good so that in a short time they were on the high seas. King Marco, staying behind, said to himself, "Now I have made a certain vendetta, and I am free of all suspicion, for as soon as King Languis sees Tristano, he will have him put to death."

Meanwhile, for Tristano on the high seas, the good weather lasted four days, and then two contrary winds arose, and such a storm that they were all in danger of death. Then they took hope, and let the ship go at the will of the wind, so that in seven days they found themselves in a lovely port.

Tristano asked the master mariner where they had come to, and the man said, "We are in the kingdom of Longres, and that beautiful city you see is called Camellotto."

Tristano was very happy to hear this. He had all his people disembark, and had all three of the handsome pavilions set up on the shore and had strong shields hung outside, saying that for love of the beautiful land they would remain for five days and joust with any knight who happened by.

As they were waiting, two knights errant came by; one was Lionello and the other was Agravano. When they saw the shields, they stopped and demanded a joust. Then an old knight from the kingdom of Cornovaglia went to Tristano saying, "Here we have two knights who are demanding a joust, and you have brought that about by hanging those shields outside. Thus it seems better to me that they be taken down. Let us say to these knights that they should go away with good fortune, and that we are not knights errant or foreign knights, but messengers; that way you can avoid the joust."

At those words, Tristano became very angry, saying, "What an evil loss to the country of Cornovaglia that so much cowardice reigns there! I regret the day that I set you free!"

At once he hurried to arm himself, and in a short time was on his horse and going to meet the two knights. Sir Agravano rode first to this joust, because he had been knighted first. Challenging each other, they drew apart, and at the lowering of the lances gave two such great blows on their shields that Agravano's lance broke into pieces. But Tristano had given him such a blow that he sent him to earth with his horse, then he beat Sir Lionello.

Now the story stops telling about Sir Tristano, and we will tell of King Languis of Irlanda, and how he had come to the court of King Artù to defend himself for an accusation made against him, for which he had been summoned to court.

XXVII.

The masters of stories set down that at the time the tournament was held in Irlanda at the court of King Languis, four knights arrived whom the king received with great honor, because they were knights errant. But when they had been there three days, one of the knights was killed that evening in the court. His three companions went back to the court of King Artù, where they accused King Languis of having their friend killed with great treachery. King Artù, hearing those words, marvelled greatly, for King Languis was not a man to do such an evil thing, but was loyal and courteous. Still, because

he had been accused, King Artù sent him a summons to come to the city of Camellotto within three months to defend himself in battle against that accusation, against the knights who had accused him.

When King Languis received this clear command, he was the saddest king in the world, and very much afraid. Then he had summoned all his people and his knights, telling them how he was in danger of death, and how if he did not obey King Artù's command "he will come here with all his forces against you and me, and put my whole land to fire and flame. And if I go to Camellotto, I am not strong enough to stand against the knight who accuses me, but if I confess to this evil deed, I would be false to the truth and they will cut off my head. Because of all this, I do not know what I ought to do. But if there is anyone among you willing to take my fight upon himself, I will give him half my kingdom."

When they heard this news, the knights were very sad, but not one of them was brave enough to take that battle on himself. Then the king decided to go alone, and defend himself as best he could. He had a ship all prepared, and took with him a hundred great barons, and arranged that, in case he did not return, half his kingdom should go to his daughter Isotta the Blonde, and the other half to his nephew Amoroldino. Then they raised the sails. The winds and weather were favorable, and in ten days they were on the high seas.

As they sailed thus, King Languis looked toward the shore and saw the three pavilions, and asked whose they were. He was answered, "They belong to a Cornish baron called Sir Tristano." When King Languis heard that Tristano of Cornovaglia was here, at once he put in to the shore and had his people disembark, that is, only a dozen of his knights. Quickly they approached the pavilions, and asked a knight to take them to speak with Sir Tristano. The knight, a courteous man, did so at once. When Tristano and King Languis met they embraced each other, expressing great joy and celebration, and Tristano received him with great honor.

After they had rested in front of the pavilions three days, King Languis spoke to Sir Tristano and said, "Truly, noble sir, the time has now come when I could make much, much use of your great prowess."

Tristano answered, "Truly, sire, prowess, person, and all are at your service. I owe you a great deal, for through you I recovered my life. Thus tell me what fortune brings you here."

When Tristano had thus offered himself to the king, the king said, "Tristano, it is true, as you know, that a tournament was held in Irlanda; after you left we held another, to which came four knights errant, kinsmen of King Bando of Benoich. One was Brunoro the White, another was Bordo, a third was Lionello, and the fourth was Maragins. At the tournament, they proved themselves well, and when it was over they came to rest at my castle, and in good faith I honored them as well as I could. I do not know how and

I never could find out, but one of these knights was killed; that is, Maragins
was killed one night in my court.

"And his three companions approached me with threats, saying that I had
killed the knight, or that I had had him killed, but that is not true. When
they returned to King Artù's court, they accused me of treason, and have
had me summoned on pain of my lands to come to Camellotto to defend
myself, or have myself defended in battle against the knight who accuses
me. Hearing this command, so strong and clear, I gathered all my barons
and told them what had happened, but none of them was bold enough to
take my battle on himself; now I, considering King Artù's great power, have
come to defend and exonerate myself from this evil deed, of which I am
not guilty."

"I know I will not be acquitted, and I know the knight I have to battle
is so strong I cannot possibly stand up to him; but I will die for justice, because
I will be fighting against wrong. Therefore I ask of you, dear sire, for God's
sake, that you will join with me, and choose to forget the wrongs I've done
you in the past. May it please you now to uphold justice and chivalry, for
I have been greatly wronged, and you are the knight most well known for
defending justice."

"Thus I ask you as strongly as I can, please take this battle against the
knight for me; the deed was made for you. For, noble sire, I swear to you
I am not guilty of this death. I have been falsely accused, and as a king still
I swear loyally to you that I am accused unjustly, and that I send you justly
to the battle; therefore I pray you will undertake it. By my faith, I felt great
sorrow at the death of that knight, and I still bear much shame because of it."

When Tristano heard what King Languis said, he felt very relieved and
glad, saying to himself, "Now the very fortune I wanted and needed has fallen
into my hands. Because of this, I'll be able to win Isotta the Blonde." Then
he said aloud to the king, "Noble sire, I am very sorry for your trouble, and
I want you to be assured that since I lived in your court and was cured by
your daughter, you can send me to my death as often as you need."

King Languis was glad and joyful at those words, saying to Tristano, "If
you will do so much for me there will not be a thing in my power in this
world that I would not do for you; I want you to ask of me or my kingdom
anything you please."

Then he summoned all the Irish knights, and Tristano spoke to them,
saying, "Know that I have taken upon myself the trial by combat your king
must make, and I will fight anyone who comes against him. But this much
I say to you, that if God gives me grace to win this battle I want the king
to grant me a boon, whatever I might demand of him."

The king said he was ready to do whatever Tristano might ask; and this
is how Sir Tristano took King Languis' fight upon himself, so that they all
passed the night in celebration until dawn.

XXVIII.

Then, when the night was past and the dawn of day had come, the king
and Tristano got up and arrayed themselves in fine silken robes and went
to amuse themselves in the meadow before the pavilions. At that point a
damsel on horseback appeared, carrying a marvellous, beautiful shield that
was decorated with two figures and covered in gold. One of the images was
of a bold and loyal knight, and the other was the figure of a lady. But the
shield was all open in front; that is, it was split down the middle between
the two faces, and on down to the point, between the two figures as well.
When Tristano saw that the shield was split like that, he thought it very
strange, so he went toward the damsel, greeting her courteously, and say-
ing, "Lady, God save you, where do you come from this early morning?"

The lady answered, "I am coming from Camellotto, where I went to speak
with King Artù and his lady, Queen Ginevara, and to Sir Lancilotto, but
I did not find them. They had ridden to the kingdom of Gaules to mourn
for King Pellinoro, who has died, and now I am going to meet them there."

Then Tristano said, "Lady, for courtesy's sake, tell me why this shield is
split like that."

And she replied, "Truly, knight, I can't yet tell you, for I have been for-
bidden to. But if you will tell me your name, I will tell you something of
the matter."

And Tristano, because he wanted so much to find out about this adven-
ture, told her his name. She then said, "Tristano, the truth is that in different
countries there are a maiden and a knight who love each other with a loyal
love and no bad intent; but their loyal love must turn into great delight
(that is, carnal love) through no fault of their own, but as the result of a
mistake. Therefore a lady of this country, who knows what has been and
what shall be, and who wants to give warning of what she knows, is send-
ing this shield to King Artù and Queen Ginevara."

"No longer is Lancilotto the noblest knight, and the most perfect and loyal
love is not his. When perfect, loyal love will join the most beautiful and
loyal lovers in the world, it will be between the most beautiful lady and the
handsomest, most courteous, bravest knight in the world, and this shield
will resolder itself, as if it had never been broken. And when the two loyal
lovers die because of their love this shield will wear out, so that the figures
on it will disappear."

Tristano then asked, "Tell me, who are this knight and this lady who will
suffer so much for love?"

But the damsel answered, "I cannot tell you that, because I do not know;
my lady has not told me."

Tristano said, "Who stays in Camellotto in place of King Artù?" And she replied that two kings were there, King Agalone and King Alielle, who were waiting for King Languis of Irlanda to come to defend himself against an accusation. The king must fight a cousin of Sir Lancilotto who is a very bold knight, and the two kings are waiting to judge the outcome of that battle. At that, their conversation was over, and the damsel went on her way while Tristano returned to the pavilion where he had left King Languis.

XXIX.

If anyone should ask me who sent that shield, and whose the messenger was, and who were the knight and high lady destined for such a love, I would tell you according to how I found it in the good book of Sir Garo, or rather Gaddo, de'Lanfranchi of Pisa, which formerly belonged to Sir Piero, Count of Savoia,¹⁶ brought from the great kingdom of Francia. That book says this: the lady who sent the shield was Fata Morgana, and she sent it to King Artū that he might keep it. She sent it also to warn him, because she could tell the future and knew what would happen in the time to come, and also to show Lancilotto and Queen Ginevara that there was in the world a handsomer knight and more beautiful lady than they, and that these two were going to have a stronger and more loyal love than theirs. This would be Tristano and Isotta the Blonde, who now loved each other with a loyal love. Tristano loved Isotta because she had saved him from death when he lay wounded by Amoraldo's arrow, and Isotta loved him for his prowess, and because she had taken him for her own loyal knight.

Afterwards, when by mistake they were given the love potion to drink, they loved each other with carnal love. The potion was so perfect that it led them to one death. On the day that their love was aroused, all at once the divided shield closed itself as if it had never been broken, and on the day of their death the shield grew old, and the figures faded.

So Tristano returned to King Languis and told him about the shield, and how the two kings waited in Camellotto to judge their battle, and the king resolved to set out with Tristano the next morning. But at that moment, the damsel of the shield came back making the greatest complaint in the world. Tristano went to meet her and asked her why she was crying so, and she answered, "At the edge of this desert I met the most villainous and out-

rageous knight in the world. He took my shield, and if I had not run away, truly he would have harmed me. Now I am the saddest lady in the world, because I cannot complete my embassy."

When Tristano heard this, at once he had his own shield brought, and his helmet, lance, and sword. He mounted, thus lightly armed because of his great hurry, and went with the damsel. As they entered the desert they encountered the knight, and Tristano challenged him to joust; they rode against each other, and exchanged two great blows, but Tristano beat the knight by the length of a lance and sent him hard to the ground. Afterwards, he commanded that he tell him his name, and the knight, who had no choice, said that he was Breus sanza Pietà. Tristano, realizing that this was Breus the anti-lover, ordered him to surrender himself, in Tristano's name, to Calvano the lover. Breus said that he would, and he gave the shield back to the lady.

Then each one went his own way, and Tristano returned to the pavilions. Here tables were set, and they went in to eat. Afterwards, King Languis and all his barons arrayed themselves in robes of fine silk, and Tristano armed himself, and had his good horse armed in fine gear, and they all rode to the city of Camellotto.

When they reached the palace, they dismounted, leaving their horses in the piazza. They ascended to the great hall where the two kings stayed with many knights and barons, and King Languis greeted and bowed to all the people, saying to the two kings, "My lords, I have received a command from King Artū that I appear before before him to defend myself against an accusation of treachery. Therefore I appear before you to defend myself as a knight who is not guilty, for I have done no wrong."

At these words a bold and eager knight came forward, Sir Brunoro the Red, nephew of King Bando of Benioch. He said, "How can you say this, King Languis, and deny that you had killed, or killed yourself, a knight in your court who was our companion. I will prove by force of arms that you are guilty."

And at those words Sir Tristano stepped forward, saying, "My lords, I am a knight from a distant country who is very displeased to see one knight accusing another without just cause. Thus I will take King Languis' battle upon myself and will show by force of arms that he is guilty of no treachery, and that he has been falsely accused."

Brunoro said to Tristano, "Since you have lost all your wits and want to die for King Languis, I am well pleased to do battle with you. If you win, I will make you a recantation as a knight who wrongly fights, but if I beat you, I will give you good penance for all your sins as one ought to give knights who defend evil, and I will cut off King Languis' head."

Thus the two knights came to accord, and exchanged gloves in front of the two kings. The kings then decreed that they should be on the field before Camellotto in three days, to decide the question by combat.

The true story tells that when the day set for the battle came, King Languis and Tristano and their knights rode out of the city of Camelotto and came to the great tourney field. At once the two kings arrived, seating themselves on two rich seats of ivory, and then came Sir Brunoro, accompanied by Sir Astore di Mare, Lionello, and Bordo, and by some other knights. Then Sir Briobris came instructing him, saying, "Cousin, now it is up to you to strengthen and honor our family name from this day forward. Guard yourself well and make no mistakes, so that what you have said will be the truth."

Tristano, who needed no instruction, when he saw Brunoro came forward saying, "Knight, I challenge you. On guard!" Then they moved away from each other, and each one struck his good horse with his spurs, and the horses ran strong and willing. At the lowering of the lances, they exchanged two great blows: Brunoro broke his lance against Tristano, though he did no other harm, but Tristano knocked him sprawling to the earth from his horse.

As soon as Brunoro was on the ground he got to his feet and put his hand to his sword, saying to Tristano, "Knight, even though you have knocked me down, if you love your horse, dismount. I call you to fight, for even though you have unhorsed me, I may yet claim the victory."

At that, Tristano dismounted and grasped his sword, and they began a cruel battle, trading mighty blows. They fought so vigorously that in a little while each one had wounded the other. The two kings, and all the knights of King Bando's family, realizing that Brunoro was losing, were very much afraid for him. He had lost a lot of blood, and his blows were growing weaker while Tristano's grew stronger. It seemed that the longer they fought, the more vigorously Tristano struck, and while the other was tired and weary, Tristano seemed always refreshed. That was because he was a wise and worthy fighter, and seldom did all that he might have done.

The two of them fought like this until Brunoro stopped, saying to Tristano, "Knight, I know well that you are the best fighter in the world. Therefore, if it pleases you, I would like to know your name, and I will tell you mine. Know that I am called Brunoro, the cousin of Lancilotto."

Tristano answered, "Sir knight, since you have told me your name, it is fitting that I tell you mine. Therefore know that I am called Tristano of Cornovaglia."

Brunoro, when he heard that this was Tristano, who was already so famous throughout the world, comforted himself and said then, "I tell you truly that I am already so tired that I would call myself beaten. But since I know now who you are, let us begin our battle anew and fight to the finish. I don't

care if I die, for if you kill me it will be no dishonor to me or to my kinsmen, for there can be no shame in dying by the hand of the best knight in the world."

Then they began to fight again, giving each other great blows. Soon their armor was almost completely destroyed, and their flesh exposed, and the ground red with their blood; still they fought furiously. Then Tristano gathered all his strength and struck Brunoro such a blow on his helmet that his sword cut through both the helmet and the iron cap, making the blood spurt out over his face and out of his nose and mouth. He fell to the ground badly wounded, and lay there as if he were almost unconscious, his pulse so weak it could hardly be found. Tristano did not want to kill him, so he said, "Knight, knight, should we fight any more?"

With great effort, Brunoro tried to rise, but could only say, "I give up this battle, right or wrong, that I had against King Languis."

Then Sir Tristano went before the two kings and said, "My lords, I have fought so hard with Brunoro that we both need a rest. Therefore I wish, if it pleases you, that between King Languis and him be made a good and true peace, so that King Languis can return safely to his own country as a knight freed from all charges of treason."

When they heard Tristano's words, the two kings took counsel with many other barons, saying, "Now we can see openly and truly the great nobility and good breeding of this knight, for we see that even though he is the victor, in his magnanimity he sue for peace." Then they said to Tristano, "Sir knight, we will in no way grant King Languis peace if first we do not know your name."

Then Tristano, seeing that he could do nothing else, told them he was called Tristano of Cornovaglia. If anyone should ask me why Tristano did not say he was from Liones, where he was born, I will tell him that in those days a man could choose his title from either of two rights: first, for the place he was born, or second, for the place he was made a knight. Since Tristano was so proud of his knighthood, he said he was from Cornovaglia, because he had been knighted there.

When the two kings heard the name of Tristano, who many times they had heard mentioned for great prowess and many virtues, they said, "Knight, you have proved yourself so well in this battle that King Languis can stay, go, or come, however you will. By your prowess and good will, King Languis is acquitted of all accusations ever made against him up to today. We know that if you had not considered Brunoro because of his kinsmen, you could have killed him in the first encounter."

At that point, Tristano and King Languis and their knights returned to their pavilions, and the two kings remained to write a letter to be sent to Gaules, telling the truth about King Languis and the battle fought between Tristano and Brunoro. Their messenger rode so that he came to the city of

Parigi before King Artù, and gave him the letter. The king opened it, and gave it to Sir Ivano to read; the letter said this:

XXXI.

To the powerful lord, great nobility and honor. My lord King Artù, your Alliele and Agalone send greetings and highest personal salutations to the nobility of your crown, to the honor and worthiness of your lady Queen Ginevara, and to Sir Lancilotto and all the other knights and barons who wait upon your excellence.

"Know that on the twenty-fifth day of September King Languis came from Irlanda to the city of Camellootto to defend himself against the accusation for which you had summoned him. He brought with him a young knight, new to our country, who acted as his champion and entered the fight against Sir Brunoro. Brunoro was beaten with the lance, then fighting on foot with swords the foreign knight was also the victor, but for courtesy's sake he forbore killing his opponent.

"Therefore let it be known that King Languis has been vindicated by the prowess of the best knight in the world, and as we were commissioned by you to oversee the trial by battle, thus we decide and pass judgement in complete agreement. The knight who championed King Languis is the bravest, noblest, handsomest, and most courteous who ever might wear a sword or come into this court; he is the fountain of courtesy, honor, and chivalric worthiness, and his name is Sir Tristano, son of King Meliadus of Liones."

After the letter had been read and solemnly heard, King Artù showed great happiness. He had brought to him the conferment of the Tavola, that is, a book in which were written the names of the knights errant, and the laws and customs they were to uphold. King Artù had the name of Tristano inscribed therein, and then he sealed it shut. That book was never again unsealed, except for King Amoroldo and Sir Galasso.

Then to further ennable the occasion, King Artù had the young squire who had brought the letter knighted, and gave him a fine and noble castle called Cosignano, and Sir Lancilotto gave him arms and a horse.

When King Languis and Tristano got back to their pavilions, and had rested three days, Tristano said to the king, "Sire, you know the agreement made between you and me."

The king replied, "Tristano, there is nothing you could ask of me that

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is in my power that I would not do at once for your good pleasure. Because of this, I pray you, if you do not mind crossing the sea, that you and your people return with me to Irlanda."

Tristano said that he was ready to come, and truthfully, he was glad of such a request. They had the pavilions taken down, and all the people got on board ship with much happiness and celebration. They raised the sails and the weather was good, so that in twelve days they made harbor in Irlanda. Having disembarked, they went to the castle, and there all the people showed their great joy. Inside the palace, Queen Lotta received her lord with great honor, and the king said, "Lady, are you glad of my return?"

When she said yes, he told her, "Then thank God, but thank also Sir Tristano of Cornovaglia, who defended me." Then she went to Tristano and embraced him and kissed him and made peace with him, and all the people did him great honor.

XXXII.

The masters of stories say that when Tristano had rested ten days in the Irish court, he went to the king and said, "Sire, do you remember the covenant we made?"

The king replied, "Tristano, I well know that I owe you a boon, I've promised it to you and I want to give it, so ask boldly for anything in my power to grant."

With no more delay, then, Tristano said, "My lord, I ask for your daughter Isotta, that she may become the wife of King Marco, my uncle; he wants to crown her with the kingdom of Cornovaglia."

Then the king summoned the beautiful Isotta the Blonde to come before him, and then he said, "Tristano, it would make me very happy to give you my daughter to be your own wife. I know of no king in the world who would not be content to have you as his son-in-law, and I would like to give you half my kingdom, and with you I would be happier than with any other king in the world."

Still, Tristano said, "Sire, I ask her for King Marco, my uncle."

The king replied, "For courtesy's sake I ask that you take Isotta for your own wife. Furthermore, I will give you the crown of my whole kingdom, for in you reign the four things which make a man perfect in this world, especially in chivalry. You are noble and of high parentage; you are cour-

teous and wise, with lovely manners and great prowess; and you are beyond measure handsomer and better made than any other knight."

But Tristano answered, "Sire, you see that I do not ask her for myself, but for my uncle, Marco. I am not yet ready to take a wife, because I could not then be a knight errant; I could not obligate myself so much. As I told you, I want her for King Marco. I don't refuse your kingdom; indeed, I accept it. I want to make Amoroldo's son a knight, then let his be the kingdom and the crown, for I give it to him."

The king, when he saw there was nothing else he could do, took Isotta by the hand and gave her to Tristano, saying, "I entrust her to you, because with King Marco she is badly matched; by my faith, he is not worthy of such a prize. I pray to God that she will soon be released from him."

At that, Tristano received Isotta, and knighted Gulistante, conferring on him his father's name, that is, Amoroldo. Then all the people played at arms to demonstrate their joy.

But that night as King Languis slept, he dreamed that his daughter was sitting on a throne of ivory and crystal and wore on her head a crown of gold and precious stones, while all the people did her great honor. And it seemed that Tristano came and took off the crown Isotta wore and threw it on the ground, and took off her robes so that she was naked, and put her in front of him and rode with her through every land. When morning came, King Languis summoned his astrologer, who was called Segrellos the Foreigner, that is, Sir Hugo. The king told him the vision, and he said, "Sire, know that if you send Isotta to Cornovaglia she will suffer the greatest dishonor in the world."

King Languis was very upset by this, but still he did not want to make Tristano angry. Still, according to what is found in the book of Sir Gaddo, the king's dream was true and sure, for it showed Isotta sitting on a throne of ivory and crystal, because she was, one could say, crystal in her beauty, polished as sapphire, colored like a lovely pomegranate, and pure, without blemish. She was the most beautiful, graceful, and charming maiden ever found, or whom nature ever made. She was ivory in that she was cool in her virginity; never had a wicked thought touched her heart. And the dream showed that Tristano took the crown from her head, which was true. As gold is superior to other metals, so the head is over other parts of the body, and so the virginity which Tristano took from Isotta is over all other virtues in beauty, charm, and courtesy. With her chaste manner, soft speech, and angelic glances she was a precious pearl, and was truly the most perfect in beauty that could be found, or who ever would come after.

The dream also showed that Tristano stripped her naked, and this was true, for they took pleasure with each other and all was known between them and nothing was hidden. And each of them took a crown from the other's head, that is, the memory and the will, for they thought of nothing

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else but of pleasing and delighting each other, and there never was anything that could shatter their love.

Staying in that court, Sir Tristano soon wanted to leave, so he had a ship well provisioned, and summoned his people. Queen Lotta gave Isotta crowns and jewels, and had put into the ship many robes, more than there were months in the year, all worked delicately in silk, and most of them in gold, with pearls and precious stones. She gave her a girdle decorated with eighty precious stones of which the least was worth more than 100 marks of silver. Then the king and the queen, with other ladies and barons, went with Isotta to the port, where the princess boarded the ship attended by sixty ladies, all daughters of counts and barons.

At that point, Queen Lotta called Brandina and Governale to her side, and gave them a little silver bottle, praying that they would guard it very well because it was full of a love potion. She told them to give it to King Marco and Isotta to drink on the first night that they went to bed together, and to guard it well so that no one else would taste it for any reason.

Then Tristano had the sails lifted to the wind. The weather was good so that in a little while they were well out to sea. Queen Lotta, staying behind, was so sad in her heart to see her daughter leave that she had her likeness drawn in a tablet, so well that it seemed as though nature had made it. A gentleman of Petitta Bretagna carved it, then the queen set it in her chamber in front of her bed, and from then on, whenever she went or stayed in her room she looked at it, and took great comfort and pleasure.

XXXIII.



he storytellers say that as Tristano sailed over the high seas with his companions, they were all celebrating and showing the greatest joy in the world. Tristano honestly and with great skill served Isotta in every way he thought she might want; like a loyal and courteous knight he saw to it that she had pleasure and solace so that she would not grow melancholy. He did not yet have one foolish or sinful thought about her, and it was as if she were his sister. Know that the book of Sir Piero, Conte of Savoia speaks of Tristano's loyalty, saying, "As the world is sustained by four columns, so Tristano had in himself four strengths, from which comes

the honor and the great worthiness of chivalry. It is certain that the world, that is the sky, earth, water, and air, is maintained by God the Father, powerful, son of the Virgin Maria, she of purity, humility, and faith; before giving birth virgin pure and pleasing; in giving birth virgin beneficent, glorified in the beginning, now, and at the end. And this benign lord, God the Father, who took on human flesh, is such that with his power and bounty and wisdom, he keeps and nourishes and satisfies the world and its creatures. But in time, and speaking materially, the people of the world keep the world, and it is sustained by four columns; that is, loyalty, prowess, love, and courtesy.

These four virtues descended to Tristano, and are appropriate to the four elements, because the earth gives prowess, air gives loyalty, fire gives love, and water gives courtesy. These four columns were strong in the person of Sir Tristano, for he was the most loyal mortal who could be found: never was he guilty of treachery or deceit, rather he was deceived. Tristano was truly deceived in ignorance by the love potion, a bond which constricts the heart, the will, and the mind, so that one can do nothing but love the one the potion has bound him to, even if he never before had any guilty thought. And so the loyal Sir Tristano is excused of all causes, for he did not ask to drink out of desire for the potion itself, but asked because he was thirsty, and by mistake the love potion was given to him.

Sir Tristano's second quality was courtesy and largesse. Never did he refuse anything that was asked of him, and he never desired a crown for the sake of lordship. He wanted to be a knight and not a king, in order that others might have cause to command him more powerfully and make demands on his chivalry. Tristano was generous in what he gave, and courteous in what he did not take.

The third quality Sir Tristano had was love and charity, in that he loved everyone in his essence, and never hated or envied anyone. He was sympathetic, and gave compassion where it was needed.

The fourth column which upholds the world is prowess, and this truly did not fail in the person of Sir Tristano, for in him was prowess with great humility. He endured much, and never became too angry, though he could of course become angry in the way a knight must to endure. Thus it could truly be said that Tristano had prowess without meanness or deceit, love without envy, largesse and courtesy without avarice or villainy. Thus he showed that he was from first to last worthy of courtly love. The holy scripture spoke of this when it said that none can or ought to be content in this world, or perfect; but Sir Tristano, being so handsome, noble, rich, and gentle, was the most unfortunate knight in the world, for he did not have one happy hour that he did not also have a day of sorrow and care.

As the story tells, Tristano had been travelling with his companion four days on the high seas, and when the fifth day came, they sat down at the chessboard after dinner, to play as they usually did. They played there most of the day. It was very hot because of the season and the seawater, so that after they had played for such a long time they wanted something to drink, and called for wine to be brought. Then Governale and Brandina went to a cabin of the ship where clothes were kept, and by mistake they took the flask that held the love potion and gave this to Tristano and Isotta to drink. Afterwards, when Governale and Brandina took the flask to put it away, they suddenly realized that it was the one Queen Lotta had entrusted to their care. How miserable they were when they saw what they had done! Governale said to Brandina, "Our sorrow is worth nothing, for what is done cannot be undone."

Then Governale, because of his great anger and pride, threw what was left in the bottle against the ship's planks, saying that he did not want to keep it. At that moment, Idonia, a little dog of Isotta's, licked that scattered potion, and forever after was one of the companions of the two loyal lovers, and never left them in her whole life. After they had died and were buried, on the third day she was found dead on their grave. So well-made was that potion and so able to cause love that just smelling it bound Brandina and Governale to Tristano and Isotta completely; they could never fail the two lovers, so tightly had the potion bound them together. Here says a doctor that Tristano, having Isotta, Governale, Brandina, Passabrunello, and Idonia, had the most beautiful lady, the most faithful and loyal attendants, the strongest horse, and the best little dog of any baron in the world.

And there where the potion was spilled arose a vapor and a silver-colored foam, and wherever it scattered it clung so tightly that it could not be scraped up by all the iron in the world. I have heard that that place on the ship never wore out because of the power of that potion. Another book tells that the potion was made of such a strong powder and of so many precious stones that if you guessed its worth, it would be more than a hundred marks of gold.

When Tristano had drunk the potion, he marvelled very, very much, because he could no longer control his thoughts or his will in any way. In the same way my lady Isotta was inflamed, that is, toward him. They gazed at each other, and as they did, each one recognized the desire and the will of the other. At that point, they forgot the game of chess, for when Tristano meant to move a pawn many times he played the queen, and Isotta, thinking to play the king, moved the knight. They had confused the game so much that each one thought himself beaten, and they were so taken by love

Tristan and
Isotta

that the smallest move on the chessboard seemed to them the greatest. All of this happened because of the love potion, which was so well made that it was no wonder their hearts were one thing, but it was marvellous that their hearts did not actually leave their places and join together to become one in form as they were one in will. For know that if this potion had been tasted by a hundred creatures all of diverse natures, such as Christians, Saracens, lions, and serpents, all would be made into one thing and never would they abandon each other. Further, it is no wonder that the hearts of the two young lovers were constrained so; the marvel is that the two hearts did not break in pieces and come back together as one thing. Now, each gazing into the other's amorous and pleasing face, they could not get enough of staring at each other. Know that the potion had been made so to work on carnal delight and pleasure that no matter how many knights and squires or ladies and maidens might be lovable, Tristano and Isotta would not give them so much as one intemperate glance or thought, for the potion was made to compel nature, and to set the reason under the will, and awake the will to pleasure.

It was as if one chain bound the hearts of the two lovers so that the two became one heart, that is, one thought, and of the two bodies made one will. Whatever pleased Isotta delighted Tristano, and whatever Isotta wanted, Tristano also desired; whatever one of them despised, the other also hated. The two lovers had one life and went to one death, and it is believed now that the two souls dwell together in one place.

At that point, the two lovers did not trouble themselves with many words, but left the chess game and went into the ship's cabin. Tristano said, "My hope, Isotta, delight of my thoughts, what has come over me to make me think now that I love you more than I love myself?"

Isotta answered, "Tristano, my delight and my consolation, my refuge and the life of my heart, if you love me, then I love you with all the desire of my heart, and as much more as I can, I love you." Then they embraced and kissed, and lay down on a rich silken bed. They stayed a long time in solace and delight, with no thought for anything except what was happening; it was a great sadness for them, for there where it is better to make a long argument, in a short time the quarrel was contested. In this contest without crowning¹⁷ Tristano received much from Isotta, and turned the honor of her youth into the sweetness of love. Each was content with other, and thus was the love begun that was perfect in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end.

Brandina, when she saw what had happened, said to Governale, "Alas, we are all ruined, for King Marco will not find his wife to be truly a virgin. I am certain evil will come of this!"

Governale replied, "Leave it to me, and I will make such a plan that King Marco will not notice the lack. You must be secret, and not tell any of the

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companions or anyone else what you have seen or heard, for there is great danger in it for my lord Tristano and your lady Isotta, and also for us. Then Brandina calmed herself and was a little comforted, hearing Governale's wise counsel.

XXXV.

It happened that Tristano and his companion were on the high seas six days. On the seventh, four contrary winds arose which tossed the ship around in such a way that they were all in danger of death. It was of no use to throw anything overboard, nor could they control the ship by its tiller or its sails, so as a last resort the sailors took hope, and let the ship go as it would under the lordship of the winds. The great tempest and terrible storm lasted three days, but when it subsided they found themselves inside a beautiful strong harbor. When they reached the river's mouth, the entrance to the port was blocked and closed behind them with a strong chain, and they landed by a tower on the shore, from which were hanging giant cudgels.

Then Tristano asked the master mariner where they had come, and the man began to groan, saying that they had come to the worst country in the world: "For this is called the Isola della Malvagia Usanza, and that strong castle you see there is the Castello del Proro."

At that point, there appeared eighty knights and a good four hundred foot soldiers all armed, and they came shouting, "Surrender yourselves as prisoners and come out of the ship at once and come to the castle!"

Tristano, seeing it would not be worth much to demonstrate his valor here, followed the counsel of the wise man who said, "Where a man cannot get up, let him learn how to sit down," and disembarked with his companion. All of them were led to the Castello del Proro and put into a dungeon of the sort where no one who enters comes out again until he is dead. They passed that night with many sighs, and when morning arrived two knights came to their prison. When Tristano saw them he said, "Tell me, sires, and God save you, do we have to stay in this prison forever?" The knights said yes, that it was according to the custom of the island. Then Tristano said, "What? Is there no remedy by which we can attempt to get free?"

And then the knights said yes, "by one such way: if among you there happens to be, or if into this country should come, some brave knight with boldness and strength enough to fight our lord and win, he can come out

and thus deliver all the people from the prison. Or, truly, if you have among you a lady who happens to be more beautiful than the lady of our lord, than it could happen that she alone will be set free."

Then Tristano, hearing such words, took comfort and said, "Here among us is a knight who will gladly fight with your lord for his own freedom and that of his friends, and we have also a lady of most high beauty and grace. But gladly would I know why you have seized us and imprisoned us, since we have never done anything to offend you."

The two knights smiled at Tristano, and told him the reason and the way this custom had been decreed and was maintained, saying, "And rest assured that we know what we are talking about, since we are officials of this lord." Then one said, "We tell the truth; we are the seneschals of this island, and because of this it behooves us to act as our lord pleases. Still, gracious sire, we would advise and tell you that in ancient times this land was held by giants only; that is, until the time that Cristo was crucified. Then, the lord of this land was a mad Jewish giant called Dialantes who had twelve sons. It happened that after the death of Cristo there arrived here a great baron of saintly life, called Giuseppe of Bramanzia; he went about preaching and showing the Christian faith, and soon he had converted a fourth part of the people on this island.

"Then our lord Dialantes, seeing how he was losing his people, thought about reconquering them. He took all twelve of his sons, who had been converted to Christianity, and had their heads cut off and had the heads and bodies thrown into the main piazza, to give others reason to fear his law.

"Then he sent out a great proclamation, and made it known that anyone else who believed Giuseppe would suffer the same fate as his sons. He had all his people armed, on horseback and on foot, and they went into the great wilderness. Here they captured Giuseppe and all who followed him, and cut off their heads. Afterwards, he had this castle built, and had its foundation made. That is, in its foundations are the bones and flesh of Christians, and he gave orders that their blood be mixed into the sand and lime with which it is walled and finished. Those who were beheaded numbered 76,432, and this was how Dialantes recaptured his people.

"And because it was foreigners who had done such great damage, he decreed that any foreigner arriving in this country should be seized and put in prison, and no one could ever be freed except by the event I described to you. Then if the lord wins, he will cut off the stranger's head, and if the stranger wins, he must do it to the lord. Then he will be the lord, and must maintain the same custom, and fight with any foreigner who comes and demands the contest.

"And if a lady comes who does not want to stay in prison, she must be compared to the lady of our lord. Whichever of them is the uglier will have her head cut off by the victorious knight and the other will become his lady."

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At that, Tristano said to them, "My lords, I understand the conditions very well. I am ready to fight as you have said, and to have my lady judged, for she is very beautiful."

Then the two knights took Tristano and Isotta out of prison and brought them to a beautiful palace. Then they went to their lord, who was called Brunoro the Brown, father of the high prince Galeotto and a knight of the Tavola Vecchia. He also had come to this island by fortune of the wind and had fought with Sir Mago, the count, and nephew of Dialantes, who was at that time lord of the island. He had cut off his and his lady's heads, and afterwards he had cut off the head of another knight who had arrived from Gaules, and had married his lady because she was more beautiful than the lady of Sir Mago.

When the two seneschals were before their lord, they said, "Sir Brunoro, among the prisoners is a knight who wants to fight for his freedom. Therefore be on the field in the morning and bring your lady with you, for this knight has his. And be warned, for we believe, sire, that he can get the better of you."

At once Brunoro said, "I am ready." Even though he had not ordained this custom, he had to maintain and augment it, in compliance, with all his power, and for this necessity he readied himself.

XXXVI.

When the next day came, Tristano armed himself to great advantage, and had the beautiful and pleasing Isotta arrayed in fine, rich silken robes, and courteously had her mounted on one of her gentle palfreys. When they went to the place where the battle was to be, Brunoro and his lady Bagotta arrived on the other side. Afterwards, there came two knights, one old and the other young, and also two ladies, one young and the other old; they began to measure and compare the lady of Brunoro with the lovely Isotta. They said that the lady Bagotta was beautiful and noble, but truly she did not seem to be beautiful at all next to Isotta, who had in herself all that a lady ought to have of nobility and beauty. Thus the two knights and the two ladies agreed that Isotta was by far the more beautiful, and was the most beautiful who had ever entered the harbor or come to the castle. They pronounced the sentence, and said to Tristano and Brunoro that whichever of them won the battle would have to cut off Bagotta's head and take the

beautiful Isotta: "Therefore, noble lords," said these four, "whichever of you is the victor will take this more beautiful one and cut off the head of this Bagotta."

Brunoro felt the greatest sorrow about this, and said to himself, "If I lose the battle, I will be dead, but if I win, I will have to cut off my lady's head." At that he was very miserable, but Sir Tristano also lamented strongly, saying, "If I lose this battle, I will be dead, that's for sure; but I will die two deaths: one when my head is cut off, and the other, more terrible one when the beautiful Isotta will be delivered into Brunoro's hands, and he takes with her his pleasure and delight." It made him very sad.

The two noble knights rode onto the field. When they came face to face they challenged each other, then they struck each other so fiercely with their lances on their shields that each sent the other to the level ground, horse and all. Then vigorously they leapt up, swords in hand, and began a cruel exchange, giving each other such heavy blows that just to watch it was a marvel. Brunoro was taller than Tristano, and on horseback had the advantage because of his height, but Tristano, who was a wise and experienced fighter, conserved his strength so that he had it to draw on at need; Tristano many times wearied the opponents who fought him before he showed the extent of his own force and valor. In this first encounter, however, each knight proved himself well.

When they had rested from the first assault they began the second, giving each other great, cruel blows, the greatest that could be described. Their armor was all torn and broken, and they struck flesh with their swords so much that blood flowed to the earth. Their hauberks, their coats of mail, and most of the rest of their armor could be seen lying in great pieces on the ground. This second assault was so fierce that few battles have ever been as strong between two fighters. Even their powerful horses could not stay on their feet, they were so weary.

The beautiful Isotta, seeing her friend Tristano in such a dangerous battle, seeing him lose so much blood, and seeing his armor cut right off his back, was almost dead with fright. Then she lifted her heart and thoughts to heaven, saying these fair and pious words to God:

XXXVII.

You blessed Iesu Cristo who
 Through your noble and courteous kindness
 Descended from heaven to earth
 And was born of the pure virgin Maria,
 Incarnating yourself within her by your own will
 And the pleasure of your heavenly Father;
 And then were born on Christmas Day;
 And allowed yourself to be killed to save the people;
 And ordained baptism among faithful Christians;
 And were adored by the three Magi,
 Barons from beyond the mountains;
 Gold, incense, and myrrh they brought to give you;
 You escaped into Egypt when Herod wanted to seize you;
 You were born and bred in fear and poverty:
 You had neither bed nor cover nor house to live in,
 Little to drink and little to eat;
 Your mother raised you with such nobility
 Each trouble she took seemed like nothing to her;
 She was content
 To see you preaching before the people
 The law of God, your Father.
 When you were lost in the temple, you gave her a mortal sorrow;
 You disappeared among the Philistines when you wanted to help them;
 You lodged in the house of Simone the leper;
 You pardoned the Maddalena, this is the truth;
 And you brought buried Lazzero back to life.
 You set free the adulteress the Scribes had brought you,
 Saying *Qui sine peccato*, let him take up a stone.
 You left soon, such was your saintliness,
 For envy of which, the people accused you;
 And for money the disloyal Giuda betrayed you.
 On Holy Thursday you made communion,
 At that holy table a celestial meal;
 And went into the garden with your disciples to pray.
 As you remained in this holy prayer
 The Jews and Scribes and Pharisees came to take you:
 The power of your potent name
 Made them fall upon the ground;
 You showed that if you wanted you could save yourself from them.

That night, to Anna's house they led you,
 And your mother saw you crowned with thorns;
 Saw you nailed with great nails to the cross;
 Vinegar and gall you had for your drink;
 A sad way your mother had to take
 That Giovanni for himself should accept you;
 She had to see pierced your holy side,
 And then she fainted from mortal sorrow.
 You were laid to rest in Niccodemo's tomb:
 At the hour of compline she saw you interred;
 On holy Saturday you came back to life,
 And went to comfort your sweet mother.
 You delivered your servants out of hell,
 And at the Ascension you arose into heaven;
 You sent the Holy Spirit to your apostles,
 So they would become ennobled and bold to preach,
 That none need fear death who have your grace.
 You left us your doctrine and the evangelists to preach,
 How to be saved and be your good servants.
 We believe in you the Creator and Cristo the Redeemer;
 Honored Holy Spirit;
 Thus I make devotedly,
 To you, my Lord, devotedly,
 This prayer, devotedly:
 Have pity on and guard my Tristano
 From death and endless prison,
 That he need not stay here, that he won't have to stay.

In herself, the lovely Isotta made this prayer as she watched the two knights fight so bitterly together.

This battle was perilous and very exhausting, because Tristano was one of the best knights in the world, and Sir Brunoro was one of the noblest fighters to have sat at the Tavola Vecchia. By then they were both wounded so that blood flowed to the ground; they had both lost much blood, but to tell the truth, Brunoro had lost more than Tristano. Certainly the armor of both of them was scarred and broken by the great blows each baron gave.

But, as the true story tells, Sir Tristano, who was by nature wise and wonderfully brave, best of fencers and most confident of all knights, and compactly made, had reserved his strength well. He began to want to show all of his courage and his power, and advanced with his sword leading Brunoro to left and to right, doing many deeds that showed his skill in battle. Soon so strong and so hard that it cut through the helmet and the cap of mail,

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cleaving his head to the teeth. That blow was so mighty that it made both the man and his horse fall dead to the ground.

Tristano, seeing Brunoro dead, turned to the knights of the castle, who were there to make sure it was all done according to custom. He said to them, "Sires, am I now freed from your prison?" But they said no, that he could not be free until he had cut off the heads of Brunoro and the lady. "And take your own lady to wife, for such is the custom of this island, that the bravest knight have the most beautiful lady."

Tristano replied, "My lords, in no way will I do such evil and such villainy. It is not right that a knight errant behead a lady or a dead knight. Furthermore, this damsel can in no way be my wife, for she is promised in marriage to another."

But they said, "Truly, knight, rest assured that it can be no other way; we will not betray our custom for your sake. Even if this maiden were your daughter, you would have to marry her. But wisdom will come later. Do as you please, we won't force you. But this custom is an established thing, and you ought to honor it."

Sir Tristano replied, "I would sooner go back to prison before I would cut off this lady's head; it would be too great a madness and villiany to cut off a lady's head. I am a knight errant; in no way will I do such a thing."

They answered him, "Please yourself, knight, but you must do one thing or the other. Cut off this lady's head or go back to prison with your companions and stay there the rest of your life on bread and water, and never come out until you are dead."

Then Sir Tristano, seeing himself in such an extreme and bitter situation, and that here his prowess as a fighter was worth nothing, reluctantly made up his mind to cut off the lady's head, but only hers and Brunoro's, since he could do nothing else. Then he married his lady Isotta.¹⁸

Afterwards they were led to the Castello del Proro, where the seneschals made him take the oath, and gave him the scepter of lordship. Tristano immediately let all of his people out of prison, but still there was no way that any of them could leave the island. Then Tristano lived in great delight with the beautiful Isotta, lacking nothing except a means of leaving the island.

XXXVIII.

The storytellers say that to Sir Brunoro remained a daughter, who was called Dalis. When she saw that her mother and father were dead, she came before the lords of the castle, that is, Tristano and the ten seneschals of the island, and asked their permission to leave the island with two of her maidens. They granted her request and had a boat brought from storage, giving it to her with four men to sail it. Know that all the ships of the island were stored away under ten separate keys of which each seneschal held one.

Then Dalis took the two heads and put them in a casket in the ship and set out for the high seas. The weather was fine so that she found herself on land within eight days. She had come to the kingdom of Longres, to that part that was held by the King of a Hundred Knights.

Then the maiden disembarked and took horse to go searching for her brother, the high prince Galeotto, to tell him of the great wrong that had been done to the two of them. She rode for a week, searching everywhere, but still she could find no sign of him. Not discovering any news, she spent the night in the castle of the Enchantresses, where she met an armed knight. She asked him for news, and whether he had encountered a knight known as the high prince Galeotto, and the knight said, "Maiden, why do you ask about him?"

She responded, "Truly, I want to tell him of his great injury."

He asked, "What injury has been done him?"

And she said, "This is the news, true and certain. Sir Tristano of Cornovaglia came to the Isola dei Giganti and cut off the heads of Brunoro his father and Bagotta his mother, according to the custom of the island: I have both their heads here in my casket."

Then the knight began to weep and, lifting his visor, said, "Maiden, I am that Galeotto you were searching for."

The damsel lifted the veil from her face and they recognized each other at once; together they began to make the greatest complaint in the world. Galeotto then said, "My sister, don't cry any more, for crying does no good. There are other ways to take high vengeance for our shame."

At that, Galeotto sent for the King of a Hundred Knights, who was near the castle of the Enchantresses. When he came and heard such news he was very sorrowful, and had the two heads honorably buried in the abbey of Lanorio. Then Galeotto said to the king, "Know that I would have had my greatest wish in the world if I could have seen Sir Tristano, and seen him with love rather than with hatred. However, I am about to go to the Isola dei Giganti and take vengeance on him."

The king said, "Galeotto, I want to come with you."

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Galeotto answered that he was well pleased with that, "But instead of coming with me, come after me with a company of six hundred knights, and while my battle with Sir Tristano is going on, you land in another part of the island and take the Castello del Proro and put all the people to death. Then if I need your help, you can give it to me against Sir Tristano."

Then they took leave of each other, and Galeotto went alone to the harbor. Here he found a ship ready to go to Irlanda; he took passage on it, and the mariners hoisted the sails. The weather was good, and soon they were out to sea.

Then said Galeotto, "Noble lords, you must make a journey other than the one to Irlanda, because I want to go to the harbor of the Isola dei Giganti."

The captain said, "Why, sir, would you want to be taken there? Don't you know that anyone who goes there or comes there can never again depart or get away?"

And all of the sailors said, "We won't go there! In no way do we want to go there!"

Then Galeotto answered, "By my faith, we will go there together, whether you want to or not." But they still said they did not wish to go. Galeotto took his sword in hand and cut off two of the sailors' heads, so that the others agreed to go out of fear. The captain directed his tiller and used his skill so that he had the ship inside the harbor of Proro within nine days; as soon as they were inside the harbor, it was chained up.

In a little while, some hundred knights and three hundred foot soldiers came to the harbor crying, "Surrender yourselves our prisoners." Then Galeotto came out of the ship, saying to them, "My lords, it is not necessary to put me in prison, for I am the prince Galeotto the Brown, son of Sir Brunoro the Brown. I have come here for no other reason than to fight with Sir Tristano your lord, and take high vengeance on him. Therefore go to him and tell him to arm himself well when he comes to the field in the morning, to fight with me."

Then the two seneschals went to Sir Tristano, saying, "Sire, the high Prince Galeotto has come here only to take vengeance on you: thus in the morning you must be on the field of battle."

Tristano said to himself, "Now I am the luckiest knight in the world," and replied aloud that all would be done, saying, "Now I will encounter one of the bravest knights ever to bear arms, who through his excellence has already conquered more than twenty-eight kingdoms."

When the next day came, Tristano armed himself to great advantage, and coming to the field, found Galeotto already there. When Galeotto saw Tristano, he began to weep heavily, at the sight of the one who had killed his mother and father. At that point they faced each other and exchanged challenges; thus began the hard-fought battle between the two noble warriors who were the flowers of chivalry.

As soon as the two knights had saluted, they drew apart from each other and readied their lances. They met, giving such great blows on their shields that they broke each others' cinch and girth and breastband, sending each to earth, saddle and all. But the two good knights, who were quick and keen, got at once to their feet and gripped their iron maces, beginning a fierce battle before the people of the island who had gathered to look on. They exchanged such huge blows that their helmets rang on their heads and their shields shattered on their arms. For the second assault, they used swords, and began to strike each other, giving such blows without stint that in a short time they had nearly destroyed each other's armor. The brave knights had so many wounds on their bodies that their blood flowed down and redened the ground. You could see their bruised and livid flesh, marked by blows and sweat, as each one struggled to stay up.

The people marvelled greatly at that noble battle and those noble blows, and the fine things the knights did in this encounter. But well and truly each one said under his breath that Tristano proved himself better and more nobly, and was gaining the advantage in the battle. For still, even though Galeotto expected help, it was always he who spoke, that is, to ask for respite. Tristano had not yet asked for a rest, because he had naturally the greatest endurance, and was much wiser than his opponent in battle. When Galeotto called for time, Tristano would say, "Knight, don't rest for my sake; let it be according to your will."

Then they rested a little, to recover their strength and endurance, and afterwards began their battle again. They fought so vigorously that neither gave the other a moment's rest or any mercy. As this battle raged between them, a knight rode up, shouting, "Help, flee, alas! We are all dead! We have lost the Castello del Proro—the King of a Hundred Knights and his companions are doing great damage!"

Then the people of the island who had gathered to watch the battle all ran away, so that soon only the two combatants remained, and the lady Ivotta, who prayed to Galeotto and Tristano to cease their battle and make a true or true peace between themselves.

At that, here came the King of a Hundred Knights with more than 600 soldiers; twenty were riding in front, their lances ready, crying "Death to Tristano of Cornovaglia!" At that, Ivotta nearly fainted, but she threw herself before these knights, clinging to their bridles and crying for mercy. Her dread and suffering were so great that none could look at her without weeping.

The prince Galeotto, seeing his knights, said to Tristano, "Now you are as good as dead, for these people have come for no other reason except to put you to death."

Tristano replied, "Galeotto, I understand what you say, but you are only saying it to frighten me. For I well know that you are a great baron who has done high deeds, and you will never consent that our battle be finished except between you and me. We began it, and we should finish it; I will not guard myself against any knight but you. Then if I am the victor and these knights want to fight me, I will by no means disappoint them."

At that point, here came some dozen knights ready to strike Tristano with their lances, but Tristano made a great leap and came to Galeotto's side. Then Galeotto commanded his knights not to interfere with the fight, and following his orders, they drew back. Sir Tristano, seeing Galeotto's courtesy and remembering his own offense, humbled his heart and took his sword by the point and held it out for Galeotto to take, saying, "Sire, I ask you for courtesy's sake to pardon me the wrong I have done you, for I swear that what I did was not to injure anyone, but rather to free my companion and me. And I did not come to this island on purpose, but was blown here by the wind."

Galeotto, hearing Tristano's words, knew that he was telling the truth. And he saw that he himself would probably lose the battle because of wanting to kill Tristano without help, so he took his sword by the point and held it out for Sir Tristano to take, saying, "I pardon you, Tristano, all my evil will, and I do this for three reasons: first, I know that the great wrong you did me was not for hatred or ill will; you did it because you were bound by this island's evil customs, for there was no greater friendship in the world than that between your father and me. Another reason is that you are surely the best knight in the world, and I see quite clearly that you would win this battle if I tried to kill you without help. My third reason is for this damsel's sake, she who makes here such a lament and a piteous complaint; truly she has so touched my heart that I am about to weep myself."

Then Sir Tristano thanked Galeotto warmly, and each of them sheathed his sword and threw his shield on the ground, then ran to embrace the other, in peace and friendship, unlacing their helmets. Galeotto said to Tristano, "This angelic creature who makes such a plea for you so touched my heart that I could not bear her sorrow; truly, now that I see her beauty, I do not believe that she was born in this world, but was formed in paradise. I beg you to tell me what her lineage is."

Tristano told Galeotto truthfully what had happened, how she was the daughter of King Languis of Irlanda, and how he had won her as King Marco's wife. Galeotto said, "Now I see well that King Marco is lord of two kingdoms, for this is a greater treasure and worth more than the whole realm of Cornovaglia. But I say this to you: if you take her to him before you find out whether she feels love, I will call you the Knight of the Lost Cause."

Tristano replied, "It would be better for me to lose such a cause than to be thought disloyal in this matter."

The beautiful and gracious Isotta, seeing that the two knights had made peace, was very happy about it. She took Galeotto by the hand and led him to the palace where she treated their wounds. When Tristano had stayed on this island four months, he had his ship furnished with meat and biscuits, then took leave of Galeotto and the King of a Hundred Knights. Galeotto gave Isotta a ring whose precious stone was worth more than a good castle. Then Tristano and his companion got on board, and the captain directed the tiller of the ship toward the port at Cornovaglia.

Galeotto, remaining behind, wrote a letter to King Artù, describing the battle between Tristano and himself. Then he had the Castello del Proro torn down and forbade all evil customs. He ordered that any foreigner who came to the island could stay or come or go, safe and secure for ten days, at the expense of the lords of the island. He left as viceroy a knight of Scozia, who was called Sir Dolanzie; then, with all his people, he returned to his own country.

His squire so rode with the letter that he was soon before King Artù; he presented it to him on behalf of King Galeotto, and the letter said this:

XL.

Greetings to magnificent, illustrious, benign, esteemed, and gracious King Artù, the sum of all power, magnanimity, and honor, from your close friend and humble servant Galeotto, with all prayers, salutations and good love. Be it known that the young and gracious knight, Sir Tristano of Cornovaglia, by the fortunes of the weather and a great tempest of wind came to the Isola degli Giganti, where he fought and killed my father Brunoro and cut off my mother's head, according to the custom of the island, by which he was bound. To vindicate my shame I sailed to this island and fought with him, courage for courage and strength for strength. I was losing this fight, for he is surely the bravest, boldest, and best warrior in the world; because of his prowess I offered him peace. I then stayed on the island with the forces of the King of a Hundred Knights, tearing down the fortress of Proro, and putting an end to their evil custom."

When King Artù heard this letter, he was sad about the death of Brunoro, but very glad about the good news of Sir Tristano. As for Lancilotto, he vowed that he would go to Cornovaglia at once, not returning until he had seen and spoken to Sir Tristano.

Meanwhile, Tristano was on the high seas, he and his beautiful companion Isotta. The winds and the weather were with them, so that in nine days they were inside the harbor at Tintoile. Then Tristano had King Marco informed of his return.

King Marco was unhappy to hear it, for he had hoped Tristano would never come back; he had sent the young knight away out of envy, when he had seen that he was so brave and courteous and good. But he changed his mind when he saw the lady Tristano had brought. Seeing Isotta so beautiful, courteous, and charming, dressed in such elegant and becoming clothes, he became far happier than anyone alive. Then he valued Tristano over all other knights, for his loyalty and wisdom and prowess. When he heard the truth about the great trouble he had endured, and the high deeds he had done, he and all his barons marvelled at it. When they came to the palace, all the people made a great feast and celebration.

When evening came, Governale summoned Brandina and said to her, "Lady, you know how things stand between Tristano and Isotta, and how you and I are to blame because we were unwise and incautious. When Isotta goes tonight to King Marco's bed, he will find out that she is not a virgin; she will be the most disgraced lady in the world, and Tristano will be blamed for it. This danger can't be avoided by anyone's sacrifice but yours. So I pray that for the love you bear your lady Isotta, and for the services Tristano might do for you, that you will go this first evening to King Marco's bed, and so ransom the error that Tristano and Isotta have made."

Then the loyal and faithful Brandina said to Governale, "With God's help, I had hoped to keep and preserve my virginity until my death, but since such a need and such a mistake have occurred, and so that my lady will not be disgraced or found guilty by the king, you plan how it may be done, and I am ready to do as you command me."

On the evening of the next day, when it was time to go to sleep, the ladies went with Isotta as far as her chamber door, and certain ones went in to put her to bed, then each one went to her own sleeping quarters and no one remained except Brandina and Governale. At that, here came into the room King Marco and Tristano, and the king lay down beside Isotta. Then Sir Tristano put out all of the lamps in the room, and when the king asked why he did this, he replied, "Sire, it is the Irish custom that when a maid lies with her husband for the first time, all the lights are put out, because in the first experience, virgins are too much ashamed."

Then the king said, "That is a good custom, for it comes of great courtesy."

While the king was speaking with Tristano, Governale softly and courteously lifted Isotta out of bed, and Brandina got in where her lady had been. Tristano and Isotta lay down on another bed that had been prepared nearby. And the king that first night made love to Brandina with good will, thinking that he embraced the beautiful Isotta, and that he took solace with her.

When the king had behaved thus with Brandina, he called to Governor dina got out of bed, then the beautiful Isotta lay down. At that moment the lights went on, with great celebration and much noise of laughter, so that the king would not notice anything.

Then the king, left with Isotta and seeing her so beautiful, and knowing and seeing proof of her virginity, was very happy, and slept soundly until morning. In the morning he got up and summoned all his barons and ladies and knights and maidens to the great hall, where he crowned Isotta with half his kingdom, and gave the other half to Tristano because he had brought him Isotta, who pleased him so much.

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honored the beautiful Isotta, and had more faith in her than in myself." But the two squires said, "We assure you that you must die. We were sent here with you for no other reason."

Then Brandina began loudly to weep and make a great lament for her life, for she saw she was going to lose it, and she did not know why. Then the other squire said, "Brandina, what has happened that the queen would desert you and want you killed in this way?"

Brandina answered, "In good faith, I do not know at all, for I have loved her loyally with all my heart, more than I love myself, more than any other creature who may be. But I think that something may have happened to me as happened here: know that there were two maidens who left their country, and each one had a lily in her care. One of them lost hers through misfortune, and the one who had kept hers, out of pity lent it to the other, and for that she had to die. I pray you, take these words to my lady the queen, and pray to God for my soul, for I die without guilt or cause. Now do with me as you must and as you will; but know that I die unjustly."

The servants, seeing Brandina so piteous and hearing the lament she made, drew a little aside and took counsel with each other. "You kill her," said one, and the other said, "No, you kill her." And because she had made them feel so sorry for her, neither one of them would kill her or touch her or put a hand on her. They decided between them not to kill her with swords but to take her and tie her to a tree, saying, "We feel so much pity we don't want to put you to the sword." So they tied her to a tree and left her, saying, "The wild beasts will devour her."

Thus they left her, and went back to the queen, saying, "We have done as you commanded; she is dead." And they told the queen what Brandina had said, and about her great lamentations. Then the queen took thought and realized that Brandina had been the most loyal and faithful servant in the world; she began to make the greatest lament and complaint in the world, greatly bewailing and repenting her sin. It was the story she told that made the queen see how loyal and faithful Brandina had been.

Then she commanded the same servants that she had ordered to kill Brandina to go at once for her body and bring it back so that she could see that Brandina was truly dead, and could have her buried with great honor. The servants went back to the wilderness, but they did not find Brandina. They returned to the queen and said that they could not find her anywhere; then day and night the queen wept and lamented.

It is told that when Brandina was left thus tied in the wilderness, she saw that night was coming, and began the loudest wailing in the world. She cried with all her strength to God to guard her soul, for she had lost hope for her body. But by the will of God, who does not desert the faithful Christian who hopes in Him, while Brandina was tied thus and in such trouble, by His will there was passing through the wilderness a knight who heard

xli.

The storytellers say that in the course of things King Marco was talking with Brandina, asking her about the customs, practices, and manners of Irlanda. Hearing their conversation, Queen Isotta became very suspicious, and was afraid that Brandina might tell the king what had happened between Tristano and her. Such spite proves the words of the wise man and creates the proverb which says, "Whoever is guilty thinks he's being stared at." Because of her suspicion, the queen wanted to have Brandina killed.

She summoned two of her most trustworthy squires and commanded that they go in the morning with Brandina to the wilderness of Palalun, and said, "When you are inside the forest, kill her."

The two squires said, "We will obey your command."

At that, Isotta summoned Brandina, and asked her to go to the forest to gather certain herbs for the bath—"and take these two squires with you for company." Brandina said that she was ready to go.

When morning came, she and the two squires mounted and set out on their errand, but when they rode into a very deep valley of the wilderness, one of them said to her, "Look here, Brandina, we have to kill you right now. You may be sure that our lady the queen sent us with you for no other purpose. You have to die right away."

Brandina said, "Did the queen command this?" And the two squires said that she did.

Brandina replied, "That is a great marvel, certainly, for I have loved and

her cries, and went toward the sound of them. When Brandina saw the knight, she threw herself on his mercy, and he took pity on her. *Tristan and Palamidesso, the Pagan.*

He untied her and lifted her up behind him. Then he recognized her, whom I saw at the court of King Languis of Irlanda? She has driven me mad, for never have I had one good day since Tristano took her to Cornovaglia."

She answered him, "Truly, knight, I am that Brandina whom you say servant of Isotta." And then she told him all about the orders given the two squires.

Palamidesso said, "What do you want me to do? Shall I take you to Isotta or to a nunnery that is nearby?"

Brandina replied, "Since I have lost my lady's favor, I know of nothing better than to serve God."

Then Palamidesso took her to the convent, which was a royal one five leagues from Tintoile, and asked that she be cared for there. Then he left and rode toward Tintoile to tell Queen Isotta what had happened. As he was riding, he met the queen with her ladies amusing themselves near a spring. When Palamidesso recognized her, he said, "Lady, lady, if you please, I have a message for you."

The queen drew a little apart from the other ladies, saying, "Knight, what do you have to say?"

Palamidesso answered, "As God will save you, what have you done to Brandina, your good servant who loves you so much, and who has cared for you since you were a little girl?"

Queen Isotta, when she heard Palamidesso's words, could not keep herself from bursting into tears. She said, "Knight, Brandina has gone into such a country that I do not hope ever to see her again."

Then Palamidesso said, "Queen, what would you give to the one who brought Brandina back, alive, unhurt, and healthy?"

The queen answered, "Truly, knight, if you will return Brandina to me alive as you have said, there would be nothing you could ask of me that I would not give."

Palamidesso left at once and rode quickly to the convent, where he found Brandina and said to her, "Brandina, I want to ask you please to come back to your lady the blonde Isotta; know that for your sake she is the most penitent and sorrowful lady in the world."

Brandina replied, "I want to come back with you, since I had rather have trouble and pain from my lady than good treatment from anyone else."

Then Palamidesso had her mounted on a rich palfrey, and they turned back toward Tintoile. When they came before the queen, he said, "Lady,

Tristan and Palamidesso, the Pagan.

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you see here your good servant Brandina. Now I pray that you will give me the gift you promised."

The queen replied, "Ask, knight, without hesitation." Then Palamidesso went before King Marco, saluting him courteously and saying, "I am a knight errant called Palamidesso, and I go travelling through many countries, but now in your court I have found the adventure which suits me best, for I have served your lady the queen. For this she should give me a gift, and she has promised it gladly; but because she is obligated to you, she can promise nothing without your consent. Therefore I have come to you, to be sure you agree to the gift she has promised me."

The king said, "Any gift the queen has promised you, I also promise you." And as they spoke thus, the queen said, "I truly promised him."

Then Palamidesso said, "I ask for Queen Isotta, for I have desired her a long time."

At once the king cried, "What? You would take my lady in this way?" "I surely will," said Palamidesso, "because I had rather you go mad throughout the world than I. For thus have I gone for a long time, needing and thinking of nothing else. I have not done the deeds of arms I should for my honor's sake, I have thought of her so much, and been so tormented by love."

The king was very unhappy about this and said, "Knight, since I promised you the gift, I cannot take it back. But if another knight takes her from you, I don't want to be blamed for it."

Then Palamidesso said, "Certainly, if any knight is bold enough to overcome me, she is his."

He put the queen on a rich palfrey, then left and went on his way. Know that Palamidesso had asked for this gift after dinner, and not without cause, since the human spirit is more agreeable and less melancholy then, because eating and drinking makes man happy. As they rode, the queen was crying continually and praying to God and His mother that they send her their grace, so that they might meet Sir Tristano, who had gone out that morning to hunt.

Meanwhile the king, left full of sorrow, looked over his hall and found there no knight courageous enough to take arms to rescue the queen except one knight errant called Sir Sagris the Small, who had come there for Isotta to treat his wounds: he was already much better. Looking through the court, Sir Sagris saw so many handsome and well-dressed knights who were full of such cowardice that he cursed the day and the hour that kingdom was formed, and at once called for his armor, so that he could arm himself and ride out after Palamidesso. His squires said, "My lord Sagris, how can you go into battle when you are not yet cured of the wounds Brunoro the Black has given you?"

"Still, I must do this," said Sagris, "To disgrace the knights who lead this country."

Then he armed himself, mounted, and rode so swiftly that he caught up with Palamidesso on the edge of the forest of Praugli, near the River Briziano. Then Sir Sagris shouted, "Hail, knight; hail, knight! Either release the queen or make ready to joust."

At that shout, Palamidesso turned his horse and without another word the two knights rode at each other, striking two such great blows that each one broke his lance. Then they put their hands to their sharp swords and began a mighty battle.

Isotta, seeing the battle between the two knights, did not linger, but drew away little by little and soon began to flee; at that she met a local knight who was called Guirlandot. When he saw the queen, he recognized her and asked her where she was going. She answered that she was going to drown herself, and that she was fleeing from Palamidesso, who had taken her from King Marco. The knight took her by her horse's bridle across the river and brought her to his retreat, called the tower of Madrana. He left her in the care of his family, commanding that the queen be served and honored well. Then he took the road to Tintoile, to tell the news to the king.

As Palamidesso and Sagris were fighting, soon Sagris could no longer endure because of the blood he had lost from his previous wounds as well as from those he got from Palamidesso, and he fell to the ground. Palamidesso looked around, and when he could not see Isotta, he was the saddest knight in the world. Quickly he ran in the direction where she had been, and met the knight, to whom he said, "Have you seen a lady who is mine?"

And the knight said, "You do not speak the truth, Palamidesso, when you say she is your lady. But I have taken her to my tower."

Then Palamidesso, in his great sorrow, drew his sword and struck the unarmed man on the head, and killed him. That was one of the worst things Palamidesso ever did, to strike an unarmed knight. Afterwards, he crossed the river and approached the tower, but he found the gates locked and the drawbridge raised. Isotta leaned out a window, calling, "Go away, Palamidesso, for you have had of me all that I promised; now you must hope for nothing more but looking. You ought to know that Sir Tristano will soon be here, and I promise he will give you great trouble and pain."

Palamidesso answered her, "Be certain I won't leave here without you. If Tristano comes and wants to fight with me, I will not fail him."

Then he dismounted and sat down to rest in front of the tower. The queen left the window saying, "Palamidesso, stay as long as you please, I will never care anything about you."

When Tristano returned that evening from the hunt, he found the king and the barons all angry and disconsolate. Tristano asked them where all this anger and sorrow came from, and why so suddenly? The king said, "Tristano, after we had eaten a knight errant came, one called Palamidesso, and said that the queen owed him a gift. Suspecting no treachery, I agreed to it, and then he demanded the queen. Hearing this, I tried to give him gold or silver, but he would take nothing. Instead, he took her away. In all my court there was no knight brave enough to want to rescue her except Sagris. He went after them, but I don't know what might have happened to him."

Tristano, hearing such news, looked like a madman and went shouting through the court, "Arms! My arms!" and saying, "Oh, Palamidesso, Palamidesso, how happy you must be now that you have gained the treasure you have wanted for so long!" Thus Tristano grieved and made the greatest lament in the world; so great was his sorrow that he could scarcely stand on his feet. He would have shown it even more had he not been afraid of making the king suspicious; because of that he restrained himself somewhat.

He had his arms brought at once, and mounted a good horse. The king prayed that he not ride that night, and instead wait until morning, but Tristano answered him sharply, saying, "Cristo has made you mad for my great sorrow!" and swore he would never return to that kingdom if he did not first find Queen Isotta.

Then he and Governale mounted their horses and left by the shortest way. They soon encountered Sagris, who was returning badly wounded. He told them how Isotta was guarded in that place, how she had fled, and what had happened afterward. Then Tristano set out at great speed, crossing the river and coming to the tower where he found Palamidesso asleep. When Tristano woke him and called him to fight, Palamidesso got up, mounted, and rode to the joust. They struck each other with such vigor that they broke their lances, then they grasped their swords and began a great, cruel battle by the clear light of the moon, exchanging many huge and terrible blows.

Palamidesso fought joyfully, because it gave him the strength of two knights to see Isotta in the tower window, and he was a good and noble knight. You should know that at the same time there were six categories of knights, each kind known for its prowess. The first group was that of Sir Sigurans the Brown, Sir Brunoro the Brown, Sir Tristano, Sir Lancilotto, and the high prince Galeotto. The second was that of Sir Prezzivale lo Galese, Sir Palamidesso, Sir Brunoro the Red, and Amoroldo di Irlanda; the third, of

Amorotto di Gaules, Sir Briobris, and Bordo; the fourth of Sir Astore di Mare, and Sagris; the fifth of Sir Ivano, Sir Calvano, Sir Arecco, and all the other knights errant; and the sixth was of Sir Eris Meliagardo, the King of Scoria, the King of a Hundred Knights, Pinibello, and all the other foreign knights.

Thus Tristano and Palamidesso fought, finishing the first and second assaults and wounding each other seriously in the third. Isotta, from her balcony, saw that Palamidesso was getting the worst of it and could not last long, and well she knew that he would die before he would give her up. So she came between the two knights, saying, "Palamidesso, I ask you for courtesy's sake to grant me a boon. Please take a message for me to Queen Ginevra, and tell her the greatest wish I have is to see her."

Palamidesso said that he would do it gladly, but he knew well that she asked it more to make him leave than to have a message taken. He left at once in great anger and sorrow, because he loved Isotta with all his heart, and thought of nothing else except how he might have her.

Tristano and Isotta went back to the tower, for morning had come and they wanted to rest. During the day, they returned to Tintoile. Inside the palace, Tristano took Isotta by the hand and presented her to King Marco, saying, "My lord, take your lady, and another time don't be so courteous, for it is more trouble to get her back than to give her away." And the king swore to promise no more boons, and especially not to give away his wife, but about other things he would not be miserly.

XLIII.

The true story tells that King Marco was maintaining his court in great joy and delight with his barons when a lady in waiting, a confidante of Queen Isotta, fell in love with Tristano. Her name was Girida, and she said to him, "My lord, I wish to be the lady of your heart, for I love you more than anyone else alive."

But even though she was very beautiful, Tristano did not want to listen to her; on the contrary he said, "What, evil lady, do you think I would love you with an unlawful love?" Tristano showed himself then to be a wise and loyal knight, not wanting to change his condition, or give up the precious thing for the unworthy one, for he knew their worth. He did not want to leave the precious one, that is, Isotta, for any other, because she was the

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precious pearl, the virtuous gem, the noblest sapphire. As the panther excludes more perfume than any other beast, and the rose is valued over all other flowers, so the blonde Isotta was above all other women in beauty.

The maiden Girida, seeing that Tristano cared nothing for her love, hated him very much, and was from then on disdainful and hostile toward him. One day she spoke with Adriette, the son of King Marco's sister, who hated Tristano very much for envy of his chivalry, and she said to him that it seemed to her that Tristano loved Queen Isotta with an unlawful love. He was glad of it, and went at once to tell King Marco, but the king said that he would never believe such a thing. Then Adriette said, "I will make you see it clearly."

Then he took six sharp scythes, and when the queen had gone to bed he laid them on the floor of her room. (Know that the king and queen had rooms of their own, and only stayed together one night a week; this they did to increase their delight.) During the first sleep, Tristano came into the room of Isotta the queen, as he usually did, to take solace with her. As he came near, he ran into one of those scythes and made a great gash in his leg. When he felt this, he cried out, "Isotta, we are betrayed! Surely these things have been put here for no other reason than to prove our meetings."

The queen said, "Go back to your room and leave this to me." Then Tristano left without further words, and the queen got up and purposely wounded her leg a little on one of the scythes, so that the blood Tristano had shed would seem to be hers. Then she began to cry out, so that her cries brought the king and other barons. The king said, "What is the matter, Isotta? Why are you crying?"

And the queen said, "I did not see these scythes, and I hate whoever put them here very much."

And the king, who loved the queen so much, said that either Tristano or Adriette had put them there, for no one else had access to her chamber. "But in good faith," he said, "if I find out which, I will take revenge on him."

Thus life went on, and the king had three fine pavilions raised on the shore, and had announcements sent out that anyone who wanted solace, pleasure, and good times should gather there. Then the king, the queen, Sir Tristano and many other barons and knights went down, where everyone played at chess and backgammon, some fenced and practiced at arms, and they danced and sang and had a good time.

Then two knights errant arrived. One was Amorotto of Gaules, the other was Sir Crausan. Seeing Queen Isotta and becoming aware of her beauty, Amorotto said, "By my faith, this is the most beautiful lady in the world, more beautiful, it seems to me, than the Queen of Organia."

Crausan answered Amorotto, "Sire, you were mistaken before, or love has bound you, for there is a hundred times more beauty in Queen Isotta than in the Queen of Organia."

Then Amorotto said, "Crausan, shall we find out how well these men of Cornovaglia can joust? And this Sir Tristano, we'll find out if he is as bold as they say."

Then, without further words, they drew some distance apart from the pavilions and called out, "A joust, a joust!" as was the custom. Then King Marco had Adriette and another knight arm themselves, and sent them to the joust, but the two Cornish knights could not endure at all against the two knights errant. Then the king sent a dozen knights against them at once, but all were beaten: some killed, some wounded. At this, Tristano and Isotta had the biggest laugh in the world, and they much reproved the king, saying that he had brought disgrace on the country sending more than one knight against one other, and that it was not right to do that.

At that, the king commanded Tristano to arm himself and go to joust, but Tristano did not want to at all, to ride against knights so fatigued and exhausted. Still, the king said, "I command you: you hold your knighthood from me."

Tristano said, "Truly, I would not have been made a knight in this country for half of Liones, so that I would not have to be called Tristano of Cornovaglia."

But he armed himself, and rode against Amorotto. They challenged each other, and at the lowering of lances exchanged two great blows; Amorotto broke his lance against Tristano, but Tristano knocked him off his horse and afterwards, in another encounter, he sent Crausan dead to the ground. Then Amorotto came forward and asked Tristano for another exchange or two with swords, but Tristano did not want this at all. He refused, out of courtesy, because he saw that the other knight was worn out and exhausted and that there would be no valor in it. But Amorotto was disgusted, saying, "By my faith, I realize now that you are Tristano, but you aren't the sort of knight others have said you are, nor the sort you first appeared to be."

Then Tristano said, "Amorotto, if you would be pleased to stay here, we will have this knight buried with great honor; afterwards, I will have one exchange or two with you, or as many as you like, at your good pleasure."

Amorotto, who was a very proud man, said, "Before I would spend a night in this country, or let my companion be buried here, I would rather die, for you are the most cowardly people in the world."

Then he lifted Crausan's body across his horse, and departed, riding until he came to an abbey where he had the dead man buried, then he went on his way.

When he reached the great wilderness, he met a knight and a lady, and the lady wore around her neck a beautiful ivory horn, chased with fine gold and silver. Amorotto asked the knight what horn that was, and the knight, Fata Morgana to King Artù, for by the powers of this horn one could find

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out whether one's lady were loyal or disloyal, and which ones sinned against their husbands. The horn was enchanted in such a way that if it were filled with wine and held to the lips of a lady who had been false to her husband, by no effort in the world could she swallow anything from it, but her hand would tremble so much that the wine would spill on her breast; a loyal lady, though, could drink as much as she liked.

"By my faith," said Amorotto, "you will not take this horn to King Artū. Rather I would have you take it to King Marco of Cornovaglia, for it seems to me that Queen Isotta is guiltier than Queen Ginevara."

But the knight replied, "I would not for anything betray my trust." And Amorotto: "If you won't do it, truly I will challenge you to joust."

Then the two knights rode against each other, but Amorotto, who was stronger, sent the other knight off his horse to the ground, then put his hand to his sword, saying, "Either you take this horn to King Marco, and tell him about its powers, or I will cut off your head!"

So the knight swore he would do it. Then he and the lady rode out of their way and went to the city of Tintoile. Entering the palace, they came before King Marco and presented him with the horn as a gift from Amorotto of Gaules, and told him what its power was. The king was glad to have it. He summoned all the knights and barons to gather at the palace, and ladies and married damsels, and told them about the power of the horn. Then he had it filled with unwatered wine and commanded Queen Isotta to be the first to drink. The queen said, "By my faith, I will not drink, for this horn was made to spite a certain lady and no one else, and I don't want it to harm me. The enchantment on this horn could do me injury and other ladies as well."

But the king said, "Lady, your words are worth nothing, for by my faith, you will hold this horn and drink from it."

Then the queen, seeing that she could do nothing else, took the horn and brought it to her mouth, but at that point her hand shook, and in no way could she swallow; all the wine was spilled on her breast. Then the king had the horn given to the other ladies, but of the 686 only thirteen proved loyal, and these not by their own desires; they had fully as much will as the others, but they had not been invited, so they remained true.

I believe that such a thing happened in this country because the ladies were all such drunkards, liars, and gluttons, and were so fond of clothes, and more lecherous than other ladies. The men were handsome but cowardly, unskilled at arms and without valor, but they were very arrogant and greedy.

When he had seen this proof, King Marco said, "I command that the queen and all the other ladies here be seized, and that they be stripped and burnt as false and lying women."

Then Dinasso, the head seneschal, who was a great friend of Tristano, said, "My lord, it does not seem just to me that our ladies be burnt because

of an enchanted horn which was made on purpose to destroy some lady by great wrong and falseness. We don't want to have faith or belief in the enchantments that come out of Longres, which are all false and falsely made. If you want to bring judgement against your own lady, who is so good, chaste, beautiful, and loyal, just to satisfy King Artù, have her burnt; we care nothing for that. For my part, though, I give you this advice: our ladies should not be blamed because of a false enchantress, but rather should be honored as the good and loyal ladies they are. But Queen Isotta, even though she is not guilty, since it is for your pleasure and delight, let her be burnt."

The king then, full of pride, said, "Sir Dinasso, if you would have it that your ladies are so loyal, I say that mine is more loyal, more honest, and better; and it will be a great sorrow to you that you were ever born in this country. It is for the goodness of my lady the queen that I pardon all the others."

From then on, Tristano hated Amorotto bitterly, saying that he would find him wherever he was, and no longer would Amorotto lack combat with swords, but would get a lot more than he wanted.

XLIV.

The true story tells and says that King Marco went on for a time, suspecting Tristano more one day than the next, all because of evil rumors. For, with Tristano and Isotta, and was only made more suspicious by the plots of the maiden Girida and Adriette. Because he was so suspicious, he ordered permission or, indeed, without his being there himself.

Tristano was wise enough to know that the commandment was meant for him more than for any other, and then he became even more inflamed with love for the queen than he had been before, because the more a perfect love is crossed, the more it is inflamed, and the more uncertain it is, the more and greater is the delight; the more it is forced into secrecy, the more perfect it becomes. Thus it happened with Sir Tristano that when his love was the more troubled, he was the more ardent for it, and he searched for any and every way that he might speak with Queen Isotta. He could no longer go through the door of her room, so he went by way of a tree in the garden whose branches reached over her balcony. He went so often that

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the false Lady Girida spied him; at once she told Adriette, and he went to let King Marco know.

When the king heard this, he pretended not to believe it. Still, he had thirty knights armed, and took them with him to Queen Isotta's chamber. When Brandina, who was standing guard, saw him, she called at once to Tristano, who got up dressed in his silken tunic, wrapped a camel's hair cloak around his arm, and came out of the chamber, saw him, struck him a hard blow with the flat of his sword that he made him fall stunned to the ground. Afterwards, he struck Adriette in the face, giving him a serious wound, and he wounded two more knights, so that the rest fled out of fear.

Having done this, Tristano went back to his own palace, where he found four knights errant who had come on purpose to find him: one was Sagamorre the Orange, another Sagris, the third was Lionello and the fourth Agravano.

King Marco, coming to himself, had the beautiful Isotta seized, and had her imprisoned in the great tower of the city, and had the keys then brought to him. When Tristano found out what had happened, that the queen had been thus locked away, and that he could neither see her nor speak with her, he was the saddest man in the world. He swore that he would never come out of his palace until he had reason to believe he could see the beautiful Isotta, and always he was in great sorrow and mourning. He was in this torment and suffering a full thirty-six days, becoming confused because of his sorrow, scarcely eating or drinking. Then suddenly he became very sick, so that he was put to bed, and no doctor knew how to give him aid or comfort.

The king, hearing that Tristano was so ill, had himself attended by many barons and went to visit him. When he was beside the bed, he said to Tristano, "How do you feel?"

And Tristano answered and said, "My uncle, I feel so troubled that I don't want to eat or drink, and I can find no one who knows how to cure me."

The king said, "Tristano, your thoughts are surely playing you false, that you expect help from a place from which nothing will come. You will have to comfort yourself in some other way."

Sir Tristano answered, saying, "If I have no help, I will surely die. If I wish for the counsel of your lady Isotta, there is nothing wrong in that, for she knows my nature and my needs better than anyone else."

Then the king made no answer, except to tell Tristano to take comfort. Tristano, left in so much sorrow, did not cease to lament and weep. He said to himself, "If I could only speak one time with my beautiful Isotta, I know I would be cured."

Then he wrote a letter in his own hand, a few words, and gave it to Governorale, asking that he please arrange to send it to the tower where Isotta was

imprisoned. Governale did so, for he knew the tower so well that cleverly he could slip it in through a tiny opening. The queen, seeing that letter, opened it to see and to read what it said. The letter said exactly this:

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XLV.

Oh, sorrowful, wretched me, I am so unfortunate!
Alas cruel fortune, who has so abased Tristano!
Oh, sweet comfort, how you have abandoned me!
I can find no aid nor message by which I may reveal the cruel
 pain I bear;
Thus I send this letter to you, my sweet love, who has so in-
 flamed me;
That, you know, I must soon die if you do not help me,
And if your beautiful face is kept hidden from me.
And so I pray that your comfort soon will be sent to me,
If there is any way you can give it.
Now comfort yourself, sweet queen, and don't delay,
If you see any way in which I might be consoled.
Sweet my love, I pray that you will not neglect me;
And only of you, rose,
I think, and how I might be with you,
So that I would be comforted at once."

When Isotta read that letter, she was very sad, more for the sorrow she knew Tristano had than for her own, even though she was in prison. Then soon she sharpened her thoughts one way and another; in short, she spoke to Brandina, and prayed her dearly to go to Tristano, and arrange it to bring him in some way or another so it would not be known. Brandina went to Tristano and dressed him like a lady who had come from strange and distant parts, and that evening brought him to the tower where the beautiful Isotta lived imprisoned. When the king saw her, he asked who she was, and Brandina replied, "She is a lady who has come from Irlanda because she wishes to speak to Queen Isotta."

Then the king gave Brandina the keys, and she led Tristano inside. And when the two courtly lovers saw each other, courteously and sweetly they made the greatest celebration and rejoicing in the world. That night they

rested in a rich and noble bed, and Isotta, who was a fine doctor, cured Tristano and soothed his troubled mind at the same time, and gave him life and happiness. Tristano would have stayed on like that, if the false maiden Girida had not found him out and told the king. The king had eighty knights armed, who went at once to the tower and seized Tristano, who had no chance to defend himself because he did not have his sword with him. Adriette had Tristano and Isotta bound and afterwards, in the morning, had them brought before King Marco. When he saw them, he was the saddest king in the world, saying to himself, "Now I am deeply disgraced, and finally I see that these two have brought me much shame." Then he spoke, "Be certain that I must at once take high vengeance for this."

He sentenced Tristano to be beheaded, and the queen to be given to beggars, that is, lepers, so that no other person would ever have desire or reason to have anything to do with her. At that point, Adriette and many other knights and foot soldiers armed themselves and went out of the city, leading Tristano and Isotta to the shore, there where the sentences were to be carried out. Then the good and faithful Governale and the four friendly knights errant armed themselves and went secretly to the edge of the sea to rescue Tristano from death.

Adriette and his company rode to carry out the sentence, and half of them led Isotta, and the other half led Tristano, and when Tristano saw that the beautiful Isotta was leaving him, his sorrow was so great he nearly died. In a little while Tristano grew proud in his heart and, gathering all his strength and power he gave such a great wrench that he burst all the bonds that tied him; he dashed forward and took a sword from someone's side, striking that one so hard that he sent him dead to the earth with the blow, and then he killed a second and a third. As the knights gathered, Tristano did not wait for them, but dashed into a ruined chapel there by the side of the sea. Seeing that he was in danger and could not stay there, he threw himself into the water and swam more than three leagues, coming to rest on a little rock in the middle of the sea.

The knights who had followed him dismounted, thinking to find him inside the chapel, but he was not there. They said, "Surely he must be drowned." They returned to King Marco and told him that they had given the queen to the beggars and lepers, and that Tristano was drowned in the sea. Then the king closed himself in his room and said, "Now the noblest and bravest knight in the world is dead, and the most beautiful lady who ever lived in this world is disgraced." Thus he stayed for more than thirty days and did not come out of his room. But afterwards, when he would find out that they were alive and how it had gone he would be somewhat happier, as you will hear soon.

The story tells that Governale and the knights errant, waiting by the shore, saw that Tristano was not brought to justice, marvelled greatly at it, and

then left the beach. And as the queen was given to the lepers, that is, as she was set down among them, she ran quickly into a room that was there and closed herself in as well as she could, barring the place where she was so tightly that no one could get in to her by any way. Governale arrived there and called aloud to her, so that she knew him by his voice. She said, "Tell me the truth, now, how is Sir Tristano? I do not want to live any longer if he is dead, and if I have lost him, I will not stay alive!"

At once Governale answered, "Isotta, truly Tristano was not brought to justice at the appointed place, so we are going to find out what happened."

Then Isotta opened the door, and Governale took her on his horse so they could go searching along the shore. When they reached the ruined chapel, they found that much blood had been spilled there, and they were very worried about it. But Tristano, looking toward the shore and recognizing them, began to wave his sword. Sagramore was looking that way just then, and when he saw the sword waving so hard, he showed it to his companions. Then Tristano dove into the sea and swam, and so strove that he came to the shore; when he saw Isotta and found out what had happened, he became happy and joyful. Then Governale gave Tristano armor, a sword, and a horse: Tristano was delighted to see his sword and all his other armor, and said well that by his faith, he would yet make what had been done cost them dear.

Then they went on their way and rode until they came to the house of a vavasor, who showed them great honor and gave Isotta many clothes of wool and linen, and a noble palfrey. In the morning, Tristano thanked the vavasor very much, and they went on. Then Tristano said, "Isotta, what do you think we should do? Should we go to Liones or to some other country?"

Isotta said, "Tristano, because of what has just happened to us, I would be ashamed to go to a country where I am known."

So Tristano said, "Then we will go to a tower I know of on the border between Cornovaglia and Liones. It is a lovely place, and is known as the Tower of the Wise Maiden, or truly of Enchantment."¹⁹

Isotta agreed to this, and Tristano said to the four knights, "My lords, I must go on to a place where you cannot accompany me, therefore I recommend you to God. I am always yours to command."

Then they took leave of each other, and Tristano and Isotta rode through the wasteland until they came to the tower. When they had rested there a little, Governale rode to the castle of Orduale Besco, three leagues away, and bought food to eat and other necessary things. When he was returning, he encountered Brandina, who was searching for him, and he took her with him. When Tristano and Isotta saw Brandina, they were very happy about it. Governale prepared their supper and Brandina made them a place to rest, and when they had eaten they went to their beautiful bed to amuse themselves.

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When the next day came, Tristano and Governale went hunting and returned after noones with a catch of many wild beasts; and when Tristano and Isotta had eaten, for pleasure they began to play chess. Thus the two lovers lived for seventy-five days.

Then came a night when Tristano had a bad dream: that a stag gave him two wounds, and it seemed that he could not be cured of the one, so great was the pain of the other.

When they got up that morning, Tristano and Governale went hunting according to their custom, but even though they hunted all morning and into the afternoon, they took nothing, and Tristano grew melancholy about it. At that point, he dismounted, and gave his horse to Governale to watch. He went to the crest of a nearby hill, here to rest; in his melancholy, he went to sleep; he felt so much sorrow, and did not himself know where it was coming from. Governale stayed quietly not far away, watching the horse, with many brachets and hounds. Now the story stops speaking of Tristano, and we will tell about King Marco of Cornovaglia.

XLVI.

A good four months had passed after the departure of Tristano and Queen Isotta before King Marco found out that they had escaped, and were together, alive and well; still, he could not find out where they were living. Then he was the saddest, most sorrowful king in the world, saying, "Alas, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful Isotta! Gracious queen! My sweet lady! Now you live with your lover Tristano in great pleasure and delight. Now I know that you are finding solace while I am here lamenting my sorrow, for it has happened to me as it happens always, that the one who wants everything loses everything. Now I am brought to the point that I would be content with your friendship, and Tristano's, if I could speak to you one time in a month. I would like to be anywhere but here, if I could be with you, my sweet, beautiful lady; Tristano might wear the crown and be king in Cornovaglia.

"But the thing is done; words are worth nothing—though I wish they had value—for this wisdom I've gained after the act is worth nothing to me, and I am sad that I did not gain it before. For truly if I had foreseen that doing what I did would give me neither rest nor peace, I would not have cast off my lady, but would have locked her in a fine chamber. Oh, lovely queen, you are with your noble lover and your dear love and you are glorified, and I am sorrowful and sad; I cannot be consoled!"

He did not know where Tristano and Isotta were living, but he thought they might have gone to the kingdom of Longres. The day came when the king, to distract himself, went out hunting with a great company of barons and knights. Coming to the great wilderness of Dirlantes, they hunted through the countryside for six days, then on the seventh came near the tower where Tristano was living with the blonde Isotta.

The king and his barons had no idea they were living there. The king met a few shepherds and asked them, "Who lives in this place?" And they answered, "A handsome knight lives here now, and he has a beautiful lady as his companion."

Then the king said quickly to his barons, "By my faith, I believe my nephew Tristano is in this tower."

The shepherds said, "Truly, sire, we don't know his name; he is a fine-looking knight. But his attendant, we have heard him called by the name Governale—the lady also calls him Governale."

Then the king called his knights to him and said, "My lords, what do you think we should do?" He told them what the shepherds had said, then he stopped and said that he wanted to go back to Tintoile and arm all of his knights, and come back for the beautiful Isotta.

Then the shepherds spoke in good faith and said, "We are sorry that the lord is not at home, for surely he is a courteous knight and would show you great honor."

When the king heard their words he said, "What? Is the lord not in the tower now?"

And the shepherds answered, "No, truly, for every morning he goes hunting and never returns until after noones. There is no one in the tower but the lady and her maiden."

The king was delighted with those words. He went inside with his companions, and they all went in with lances ready. He ordered them that if they did not meet Tristano each one should be brave and ardent and fearless: "But if Tristano comes at us, or if we meet him in the way, each one must think how he can best escape or turn back; we will say that we were hunting, and were not looking for him."

Then they entered the tower, and the king had Adriette go up with twelve other knights. Finding the beautiful Isotta, they took her and set her on a rich palfrey; they took Brandina as well, and returned to Tintoile at a great pace. When they reached the palace, the king had the queen imprisoned in a big, luxurious chamber, locking her in with three keys; but still he saw that she lacked nothing for her comfort, and he went to speak with her whenever he pleased. Then the king sent out a proclamation that no one should dare approach the tower, and that anyone who remembered Tristano would have his head cut off: this he declared as the penalty.

The masters of the story tell that the moment Isotta was captured, Tristano was sleeping on the hilltop. As he was sleeping there a boy on horseback came by and, when he saw Tristano, recognized him as the one who had killed his father Antonio in the tournament in Irlanda. The boy dismounted, and when he was on foot he took his Syrian bow and fitted a poisoned arrow in it, then he cried, "Knight, beware of me!"

As Tristano awoke, the young man shot the arrow into his left arm, making a wound that caused Tristano great pain. When he saw that the one who had wounded him was a boy and not a knight, he did not want to strike with his sword, but rather dashed at him and grabbed his arm, throwing him to the ground with such force and such anger that he cracked his head so that his brains showed. Then he went to find Governale, and told him what had happened, saying, "This wound is giving me a lot of pain."

Governale said, "Don't worry about it. We'll mount at once and go back to Isotta. She'll soon cure you."

But Tristano said, "Governale, I'm worried we may find worse news, because of the dream I had last night."

Then they rode to the tower, and when they arrived they saw that the field outside was all marked by horses' hooves, and neither Isotta nor Brandina was in the tower.

Then, like the great heat that dries the leaves and the great wind that blows them to the ground, so the great sorrow and death-dealing news dried up in Tristano all strength and sensation, and with great force sent him to earth, where he fell like a dead body.

When he found out from the shepherds that King Marco had taken the queen, all five senses deserted him and he felt nothing, lying there like that for half an hour. When he finally came to himself he spoke in a soft, weak voice, saying, "Oh, my heart, who has taken you from me? Oh, hope of my thoughts, my repose, hope of my life! I have received a mortal blow, and if I cannot see you, I will be inconsolable forever!" And all that night Tristano never stopped lamenting.

Afterwards, at dawn, he summoned Governale to disarm him, for he had lost so much strength that he could scarcely mount his horse. Then they rode toward the city of Tintoile, and Tristano rode weeping, so the neck of Auserrante was bathed in tears. Governale tried to comfort him, but Tristano did not want to be comforted, he was so overflowing with sorrow. More than five times he fell off his horse, and it was with great difficulty that Governale helped him remount.

When they rode out of the wilderness, they met a damsel who was com-

ing from the castle at Cornasin. When she saw Tristano, she did him great honor, and Tristano said, "Lady, for courtesy's sake, will you carry a message from me to Brandina, and tell her to come speak with me?"

The damsel replied, "Certainly, sire; I will do it gladly." Then she went to the city where she found Brandina and delivered the message.

Brandina got on a horse and was soon beside Tristano; finding themselves together, they made the greatest lament in the world, and Brandina said, "Alas, sire, how pale you are! And how worn and weak you look!"

Sir Tristano answered and said, "Brandina, it is a great marvel that I am still alive, for I have borne the greatest sorrow and the greatest torment, and the pain in my heart is so great that little by little I am abandoning life. And I have been wounded in the arm by a poisoned arrow which torments me more and more, and I cannot find anyone to cure me; therefore I beg of you some counsel or remedy."

Brandina replied, "I do not know what counsel I can give you, or what comfort. The reason is that I cannot see or speak to Isotta in any way. And for the time being her love and comfort are forbidden to you. Thus I advise you that because of your great need you go now to Petitta Brettagna, because except for Isotta there is not a damsel in the world who knows more about medicine than the king's daughter there. You could be cured there, and come back afterward, when it may happen that in so great a time, Isotta will have been let out of prison."

Tristano replied, "Brandina, how can I go to a faraway land looking for a cure when I am so weak I am nearly dead and, as you see, I am not strong enough to ride?"

Brandina thought a little, then said, "Tristano, I know the king's nature, and thus I advise you this much: I counsel you to send to him and make humble supplication that he grant you grace and allow you to stay in the castle at Cornasin until your wound is healed. Then I will treat you with medicine as I have seen my lady Isotta do in Irlanda. After a while, the king's heart will be softened toward you; and I, if I can, will speak with Isotta and she will give me advice about you. I think this will work."

Then Sir Tristano said, "Brandina, you speak fair words."

Brandina returned to Tintoile, and Tristano went straight to the castle at Cornasin where he wrote a letter, or had Governale write it, and sent it to King Marco. When Governale went into the city, all the people bowed to him, but no one dared ask about Tristano for fear of the ban. When Governale reached the palace to go before the king, the king summoned him to his chamber where he was attended only by Brandina. Then Governale threw himself at his feet and began to make the greatest lament in the world, kissing his feet and hands and saying, "Sire, I must tell you that your nephew, the son of King Meliadus, who for love of you freed you from the Irish yoke, is near death. His end will come soon, for there is no way he can escape."

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It's because he was wounded the other day by a poisoned arrow, although Tristano killed the one who hurt him."

The king spoke and said, "If Tristano dies, I will be most contented and happy about it, and I will have him buried with great honor."

Then Governale gave him the letter, and the king opened it to find out what it said. The letter's contents were this:

XLVIII.

To his father and lord, with a thousand entreaties, your servant Tristano sends to you imploring. As God the father pardoned all the generations of humans for the primal sin, I pray that you will pardon me the crime I stand falsely accused of. You have raised me to noble heights in my life; now I entreat you as I die. I have been wounded in the left arm by a poisoned arrow, and I can find neither rest nor peace, so that I am nearly dead. Thus I beg of you for courtesy's sake, and by the honor of you and your crown, and the great worth of your kingdom, that you give me leave to rest in the castle at Cornasin until I am in a better state, or until I am a little mended. If I get well, though I don't believe I will, I will go to Liones and never come again to Cornovaglia."

When the king had read this letter, he began to sigh deeply, and said to Governale, "Is this the truth, that Tristano is so afflicted, and is as ill as he says in this letter?"

Governale replied, "Sire, I swear to you by everything I hold dear that Tristano is at death's door." And he told the king how it had happened that Tristano had been wounded, and what Tristano had done to the one who wounded him.

Then the king sent Tristano permission to stay in the castle at Cornasin while he was recovering, and to go wherever he pleased, except that he was not to come within a hundred feet of the city gates or walls. Then he asked Brandina to go and treat him and examine him as best she could. She could bring him medicine, but she could not bring him his best doctor.

Then Brandina and Governale returned to Tristano, and delivered their message, and Brandina began to treat Tristano the best ways she knew, so that in thirty days she had cured and healed the wound. That is, it seemed to be cured, but because she was not well trained a little of the poison remained inside; she needed better advice than she had had.

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Still, Tristano was better, and every morning he rode his palfrey near the city, to gaze at the tower where he knew Isotta the blonde lived imprisoned for love of him. Then he would make a lament, so humble and so pitiful that it was a great sorrow to hear. In his lament he said, "Alas, beautiful, beautiful Isotta, heart of my body, hope and sweetness of my delight, will I ever see you again? Alas, will we ever speak together again at our pleasure?" In such words he brought out his great sorrow and his great suffering, so that he brought to mind again all his good memories, then he would go back to the castle any way his palfrey would carry him, for he was not aware of anything, so great was the sadness and dole he had inside.

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and rode back to the knight. When he reached him, he saluted courteously and said, "Sir knight, you know there is not time to finish our battle, therefore I pray that you will come to rest at my castle, and in the morning we will fight." The knight replied, "I have no need of rest now. But for courtesy's sake, tell me one thing: if in that castle there lives a knight who is called Sir Tristano?"

Tristano replied, "Noble sir, I will tell you the truth. I saw him ride out this morning very downcast." And the knight said, "What? Is Queen Isotta not in the city?" As if to say, "How could Tristano be downcast when Isotta is near him?"

At this point, Tristano grew angry, saying, "Knight, why do you speak of Queen Isotta?" The knight answered, "That I remember her and mention her has nothing to do with you; you are no priest to whom I would confess my sins."

Tristano said, "Where have you ever seen Queen Isotta, that you mention her so much?"

And the knight answered, "I don't know where I may have seen her, but I love her very much and with a good heart."

At these words Tristano turned pale, saying, "Knight, let there be no more words between us. Take the field at your pleasure, because I challenge you."

At that point a townsman went to King Marco and told how Tristano had begun a battle with the knight errant near the stone; and the king and all his barons and knights went at once to the meadow to watch.

When the two knights had saluted, they rode apart from each other. Coming together to strike with their lances they gave each other two such great blows that the lances shattered, and the horses passed each other. The knights had struck each other on the shields and the visors with such great strength that they broke their saddle girths and breastbands and sent each other to earth, saddles and all, lying there stunned while their horses fell dead beside them.

Tristano was the first to get to his feet. When he saw that his good horse was dead, he was very sorry about it; still he summoned his opponent back to the fight. The knight got up at once, and they put their hands to their swords and began a cruel battle. They gave each other great, heavy blows, so that the noise of them resounded everywhere; in a little while their shields lay in pieces on the ground, and most of their armor was cut and bent.

In the second assault their helmets were ruined and broken and their flesh was all discolored: each one was bleeding badly. King Marco and his barons marvelled greatly at the two knights, seeing how well they did; they praised them as much as they knew how.

In the third assault, each one was badly wounded, and their blood flowed onto the ground, turning it red. After that, the knights rested from the third assault, and when they had rested a little they began their cruel battle again,

XLIX.

One morning Tristano turned toward the city of Tintoile and, looking toward the tower in which Isotta was imprisoned and thinking how he could not see her, became as unconscious as a madman. Then along the way there came a knight errant, who encountered Tristano in this state near a stone. This knight greeted Tristano courteously once, then twice, but Tristano, who was all wrapped up in noble thoughts, neither heard him nor understood him. The knight took his not responding as a great insult, so he took the ring of Tristano's bridle and pulled him back, and with that jolt, Tristano came to himself and said, "Knight, you're too arrogant to push my horse! By my faith, if I were armed, I would bring you to such repentance that you would never forget it."

Then the knight said, "Now I see that I was well advised that in this country are the most cowardly and insulting people in the world. Three times I saluted you, but you would not take the trouble to answer me. By my faith, if you were not unarmed, I would surely shame and dishonor you."

Tristano began to smile a little, and said, "Since you have gratified your honor by your words, what do you have to do with my words or my deeds? But I tell you this: if you will wait here while I go to arm myself, I will show you immediately by force of arms that there are bold and loyal knights in this country."

Then the knight stopped and said, "Why don't you just do it? Why not commit suicide? Go; do it quickly. I will wait for you; I will not move from this next stone."

Then Tristano rode back to the castle and armed himself quickly, mounted,

each one fighting even more fiercely, for each one had rather die than be the loser. Their visors had been knocked to the ground, so that each could see the other's face, and much they wondered at each other's strength; still they had no shields on their arms.

At that point the knight drew a little apart, saying to Tristano, "Sir, by my faith, we have fought so much that we are nearly dead. Thus, if it pleases you, I would like to know your name, and I will tell you mine. It is right that we should know each other's names, because if only one of us escapes alive, at least he will know who he has killed."

But Tristano said, "Knight, in no way can you find out my name, and I care nothing about yours, unless you first tell me why you asked about Queen Isotta."

The knight said to Sir Tristano, "If I could believe that you were such a loyal friend of Sir Tristano that you held his honor perfectly dear, I would surely tell you."

Tristano replied at once, saying, "Knight, by my faith, I believe I am the best friend Tristano has in this world."

And the knight said, "That, truly, I do not believe, because Tristano has a good and loyal friend in the land of Longres, one he has never seen, who loves him as much as he loves himself, or more, for love of chivalry. I am he who loves Sir Tristano, for the sake of his great worth and his good name, and because I love Sir Tristano I love Queen Isotta as if she were my blood sister. Know, knight, that I am called Lancilotto, son of King Bando of Benoich, and I have left the kingdom and the court of King Artù only to look for Tristano, and I am determined never to go back until I have seen him."

When Tristano realized that this was Lancilotto, the one he so much wanted to see, he was very happy about it. At once he took his sword by its point and held it out to Lancilotto, saying "Noble Sir Lancilotto, I am your servant Tristano, who loves you with all his heart."

Then Lancilotto, understanding that this was Tristano, cared no more for his sword's honor, but threw it away along with his helmet and shield, and they kissed and embraced each other more than a hundred times, and each insisted that the other had won the battle.

King Marco, having watched the cruel battle, and now seeing the knights honor each other so greatly, marvelled much about it with his barons. He sent to find out who the noble knight might be, and when he found out that it was Lancilotto, son of Bando of Benoich, the falcon and prize of the good knights errant, he surrounded himself with many of his barons and knights and approached the place where the pair had been fighting. He embraced Lancilotto, showing him great joy and honor, and invited him into the city.

But Lancilotto, who knew everything that had happened because Tristano

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had told him, said, "My lord, one of the great desires I have had in this world is to see you and deliver the greetings that King Artù and Queen Ginevara have sent to you through me. And doubly do they recommend Tristano to you, as much as they do themselves, but I have heard here such news that I do not care to come into your city. Rather I will return to court, and take Tristano with me."

Then the king answered and said, "I miss Tristano very, very much, but he has greatly offended me and tarnished my honor." Lancilotto said, "My lord, you don't want to believe those who speak evil, who out of envy would like to see all noble knights dead or disgraced. I am sure Sir Tristano would do nothing except what he justly ought to do. It is envy that has set others against him, and for courtesy's sake, and for love of me and the service I can do your high lordship, I beg you, my good lord, to offer peace, if it please you, to Sir Tristano, and let Isotta out of prison so she can cure our wounds."

The king, considering Lancilotto's great power, pardoned Sir Tristano, and to seal the peace between them gave him his good destrier, Passabrunello, who was the best horse in the world, and to Lancilotto he gave another, handsome and fine, almost as good. Then he had Isotta the Blonde let out of prison.

Meeting at the great palace, Isotta made Lancilotto the greatest honor in the world; she treated their wounds, and they were soon cured. Now that they were all well and free, the beautiful Isotta planned a great feast at the Palagio del Giardino, one league outside the city, toward the mountains. When the king and queen, Lancilotto and Tristano, and many other ladies and barons reached the palace, they went to eat at many feast tables, and when they were done, the tables were removed. Then Isotta and Lancilotto sang a sonnet that Lancilotto had made for Queen Ginevara, and King Marco, hearing the words, was somewhat comforted, saying, "Tristano is not the only lover; the wisest men can lose their good sense." He was glad to find out that King Artù kept him company in such matters.

After they had rested a while, the king, along with other barons and knights, mounted and rode back to Tintoile. At that point, Tristano and Isotta went to lie down in a beautiful chamber, and here they restored to each other the time they had been kept apart. But King Marco held them too well in his heart: when he reached the city and saw that Queen Isotta had not returned, he was consumed with worry. Then he planned a great treason, and he had Underigo his seneschal and eighty knights arm themselves, and ordered them to go to the Palagio del Giardino and seize Isotta and Tristano, saying that if anyone tried to prevent it, they should strike him fiercely.

Then they rode to the palace, but Brandina, becoming aware of their approach, went to call Lancilotto and told him of their plight. Lancilotto armed

himself quickly and met them in the great hall; facing them, he said, "What do you want? Who are you looking for?"

At once, some of them arrogantly drew their swords against Lancilotto. Lancilotto drew his, and there began a great battle. Brandina quickly ran from the room and told Tristano what was happening, then Tristano took his shield and helmet and sword at once—because of his hurry, he took no other arms—and found that Lancilotto had already killed six knights.

Tristano joined him, and well he seemed like a lion among beasts, so that in a short time, between the two of them, they had scattered or killed all who tried to pit themselves against them. When King Marco found out what had happened, he was very fearful; he sent out a clever proclamation that Underigo and the other knights who had attacked Lancilotto, along with those who had been killed, must take the loss, and that those who escaped were banished from the kingdom, on forfeit of their lives. In the morning, he mounted and rode to the palace with twenty unarmed knights. Brandina saw them coming and warned Tristano, who got up from beside Isotta and went to lie down by Lancilotto. When the king entered the hall he met Governale and asked for Lancilotto, and Governale told him, "They aren't up yet."

At that point, he led the king into a chamber where they found Lancilotto and Tristano in each other's arms, seeming to be asleep. Then the king lost his suspicions and called to them, and they acted as though they were just waking up, and put on their silken robes. Then Lancilotto said, "King Marco, I might much complain of you, for first you invite me, then you try to have me killed."

Then the king made the greatest vows in the world to Lancilotto that he knew nothing about it. And Tristano said to Lancilotto, "I'm sure the king knew nothing about it. He is telling us the truth, so we will have to excuse him. But he errs in one thing: he ought to send for the queen at once, for I am sure she was very frightened by the noise of the battle, and we have not yet heard anything from her."

Then the king went to the queen's chamber, where he found her surrounded by many ladies, and very pale; it would be easy to believe, because of the sweet struggle between Tristano and her, that they did not willingly go to bed with each other.

The king greeted her courteously, but at first she did not condescend to respond. Then she said, "An evil journey he made who first brought word that I was to come to Cornovaglia, for well I see that there is little faith in you, and that you scarcely love me, that at such an hour you send for me!"

Then they all mounted, and the king and the queen, Lancilotto and Tristano, and all the other people returned to the city. After Lancilotto had stayed thirty days, he took leave and returned to the city of Camellotto, for at all times his will and his desire was to solace himself with Queen

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Ginevara as Sir Tristano had done with the blonde Isotta.

Now the story stops telling about King Marco and Tristano, and we will tell about Sir Lancilotto, and how he brought Queen Ginevara to Gioiosa Guardia.

L.

The true story tells that when Lancilotto returned to the court of King Artù, he was received with great honor. Everyone asked him about Sir Tristano, and he said all that was suitable to say of such a high baron. After a few days, King Artù had a hunt proclaimed, saying that all the barons were to come with him into the wilderness of Andernantes. Lancilotto, who wanted so much to be with Queen Ginevara, said, "My lord, I am tired from the trip to Cornovaglia, which has so exhausted me that hunting doesn't appeal to me just now."

And the king said, "Very well; you may stay behind."

These words were overheard by a scurrilous knight who was called Sir Daniello, who was the brother of Sir Dinadano and the Knight of the Ill-cut Coat, who then secretly said to the king, "My lord, Lancilotto's staying behind will lead to great dishonor for you, as it usually has before."

At those words the king became very thoughtful and grave, and was very sorry about it, and said, "Then I will not go."

Daniello replied, "If you do not go, you will be dishonored, since you have already had the hunt announced. But if you like, I will stay behind with thirty knights to guard the palace, and if I see or hear anything that seems to dishonor you, I will act in such a way that your shame will be well vindicated." At this, the king said he was content.

Afterwards, the king rode toward the wilderness with his barons, and Lancilotto knew nothing of his other arrangements. When evening came, he went to bed with Queen Ginevara. Daniello found out about it, and in the morning attacked him with the thirty knights, shouting from the door of the room, "Come out, traitor Lancilotto, come out! Now you will be punished for your great treachery!"

Lancilotto did not hesitate one moment, but took leave of Queen Ginevara and ran out of the room with his naked blade in hand, and when he met Daniello he gave him such a blow on his helmet that he fell down dead to earth. Then he killed eight more knights, and the rest, out of fear, gave

way. Then Lancilotto went to the royal stable and, taking a strong horse, rode to his own city of Benoich.

When King Artù returned and heard the news, he was the saddest king in the world, and gave sentence that the queen should be burnt. And he gave her ten days, so that she might have time to consider her offense and repent of all her sins. Finding herself in such a situation, she was the saddest queen in the world, and sent to let Lancilotto know what had happened.

Then Lancilotto gathered all his kinsmen, saying to them, "My lords, if Queen Ginevara dies because of me, I do not want to live any longer."

Then hurriedly they mounted, eighty of them, all brothers, in-laws, and cousins, and went as secretly as they could to the deserted place called Grausin, near the royal meadow where they were going to burn the queen. It was one league outside Camellotto.

When the appointed day came, the king delivered the queen up to justice, and she went making the greatest lament in the world, surrendering herself in guilt to God her Father and Lord. The queen was accompanied by many mourners, and by a good sixty ladies who, along with her, went making great lamentations. They came to the meadow where she was to be burnt, but before any fire was brought Lancilotto and his kinsmen and brothers came out of ambush. "Onward, good people," Lancilotto cried to them, and they all shouted, "Death, death to King Artù, who has condemned the queen!"

Then on one side and the other they began to strike, and there was a cruel battle, because there were bold and worthy knights on both sides. More than twenty-six of King Artù's knights were killed, and Sir Gieus and the Knight of the Ill-cut Coat were wounded; on Lancilotto's side nine knights were killed, and Sir Astore di Mare was badly hurt. But in the end, Lancilotto managed to take his lady the queen, and ride away with his company to Gioiosa Guardia. King Artù was very sad about all this. He had all his men armed at once, and they rode after Lancilotto. Reaching Gioiosa Guardia, they closed in and began a siege, making Sir Calvano captain of the host.

From another side an army was led against Sir Lancilotto by his mortal enemy, Sir Lombardo, who brought seven hundred good knights. Lancilotto had 280 knights of high lineage, young and worthy, and had enough provisions for all their needs for one year, for that castle could not be taken in any other way than through a lack of provision, it was so strong.

When Lancilotto found himself thus besieged, he had Tristano informed of it, and sent to him asking for aid. Tristano, without delay, summoned a hundred good knights from Liones, and with these soon mounted, he needed no others. They rode in such a way as to come to Gioiosa Guardia so secretly that of the enemy troops, no one was aware of it. Then Lancilotto, seeing that this was Tristano, the flower of chivalry, had the gate opened at once. He took him by the hand, and they went to the palace; here, when

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Queen Ginevara saw Tristano, whom she had wanted to see for so long, she ran to him and embraced him, and made him great honor.

When Tristano and his company had rested three days, he spoke to Lancilotto and his people, saying, "Sire, it will not do to lose time, for every day, in one way or another, our provisions are used up, and the more knights we have, the more we will lack. So, my brothers, let us go outside and try something new, for staying here doing nothing gets us nowhere."

When morning came, they saw that all of their people were armed, then they rode out of the castle. Tristano attacked Sir Lombardo's men, and Lancilotto attacked the hosts of King Artù. The battle was fierce and dangerous, and many knights were killed. Before midday, Lancilotto went back to the castle, taking with him seventy-five prisoners, and Tristano came back in the evening, bringing a hundred and seven. He left lying dead one of his own uncles, who was called Sir Landres of Liones.

When the next day came, Sir Lancilotto had many gallows built on the walls of the castle, to hang all of the prisoners they had taken. At that point, Tristano mounted and rode out in the company of two unarmed squires. They approached King Artù's army and saluted courteously, saying, "Sire, for God's sake, and for mercy, and for the honor of your crown and the liberty of all your knights whom you see so near to death, I beg you, my dear lord, that you humble your heart, and pardon Sir Lancilotto your ill-will.

"You ought to do it, for three reasons. The first is the love you bear King Bando, for you know he was your ally. The second is that so many people will not die such a vile death as you see Lancilotto wants to have them die, because all knighthood will be shamed by it; and the third is to restore peace among all the knights errant, for you see that the Tavola is in great discord. Also I pray that you will do it for my sake, for I have never asked a boon of you—this is the first, my dear lord, that your Tristano has asked of you. Give it to him freely."

And the king, understanding that this was Sir Tristano of Liones, whom he had so much wanted to see, embraced him, and kissed him more than a hundred times, saying, "Welcome is the honor of all chivalry and the flower of all knight errantry, whom I have so much wanted to see. Know, my dear Tristano, that for the offense Lancilotto has done me, I would in no way pardon him. Nevertheless, not considering any offense, for love of you I will pardon and make peace with Lancilotto. Except that the fortress and castle must always be at my disposal because I have sworn it. I must not perjure myself, nor should I."

At that point, Tristano summoned Lancilotto to the field and had the prisoners released. The king pardoned Lancilotto, and pardoned Queen Ginevara. Thus all evil will was forgotten, and Sir Lancilotto gave King Artù the keys to the fortress and the castle, and put them in his power. The king freely gave them to Sir Tristano, and Lancilotto renounced them once

and for all; then Tristano began his tenure, and left as his vicar, Sir Lancilotto called Sir Gulistante.

When Tristano had stayed there ten days, he took leave and returned to Cornovaglia. King Artù, Queen Ginevara, Sir Lancilotto, and other barons went back to Camelotto, and they were all happy and rejoiced. Now the story stops talking about King Artū and Lancilotto, and we will tell about Sir Tristano: how he went to Petitta Bretagna, and how he found a wife.

II.

When Sir Tristano had returned from Gioiosa Guardia, having conquered it through graciousness and love, King Marco greeted him with great affection. He was truly happy about his nephew's honor and greatness, but he was worried that Tristano might take Isotta and go to live at Gioiosa Guardia, as Lancilotto had done with Queen Ginevara. Because of his suspicions, he had Isotta locked up in a tower as he had done before. He gave her everything she asked for, and once a week went to speak with her for delight, but he spoke to her in another way every day.

Tristano could find no way to see her, and because of that he was the saddest knight in the world. The wound in his arm began to swell again, the one that Brandina had treated before. Even though it had healed on the surface, inside it was infected, and made his arm very sore. So great was the inflammation, and so great was the pain, that day or night he could find neither rest nor repose, and because of that was nearly dead.

When Tristano saw that he could get no help from Isotta, he decided to go to Petitta Bretagna, to have himself treated by the king's daughter, as Brandina had advised him to. Then with great sorrow and grave leave-taking, he and his Governale got on board a ship and set out on the high seas. The weather was good, so that in sixteen days they reached the port of Petitta Bretagna.

Then Tristano had the horses taken ashore, and all his armor, and dressed himself in fine silken robes. Disembarking, he went directly to the city of Solona, where King Gilierchino, the lord of that country, lived. As he drew near, he saw that the city was all fortified, and as he rode toward it he met the king with a large company of knights, and over their heads flew a green banner with a vermilion stripe across it.

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Tristano approached the king, saluting and bowing courteously to him, saying, "Sir, I am a knight from a distant country in need of your good help. I am wounded in the arm, and I can find no treatment for it, but I have been told that in your court is a damsel who knows much about such things."

The king replied, "Knight, come to the palace, and we will see what can be done." When they had dismounted in the main hall, the king took Tristano by the hand, then led him before his daughter, who was called Isotta of the White Hands. The king said, "Daughter, here is a knight from a foreign country who, as you see, is wounded in the arm. Thus I pray that you take him into your care and treat him."

She answered and said that she would do it gladly; then she looked at the wound and said, "Knight, this is worse now than when you were first wounded, for the one who treated you then had more will than knowledge, and wanted to make it heal too quickly." Then she took her own salves and began to treat it. Tristano, looking at the maiden, said to himself that except for Isotta the Blonde, he had never seen anyone so beautiful.

Know that King Gilierchino had one son, who was called Gheddino, and was embroiled in a great war with his nephew, who was called Sir Albroino, count of the city of Gippa. At this time the king had summoned an army behind him; he left the city with all of his people and rode to the city of Gippa. Here he encamped with engines and pavilions, and vowed never to leave until the city was in his power. After ten days, the count assembled his own troops, rode out of his city, and with all his people fiercely attacked the army of the king.

The battle was bitter and hard, and many people died on one side and the other. But in the end the king was beaten, his son wounded, and most of his people scattered. The king, with a few of his people, escaped back to Solona, and the count and his barons followed them, besieging the city. Here the count set his own standard, a yellow flag with a green stripe across it.

The beautiful Isotta, seeing her father defeated, her brother wounded, and so many people dead, made the greatest lament in the world; and the king, seeing that he was besieged and unable to defend himself, was the saddest king in the world, saying to himself, "Alas, Lord God, would that you allow some bold knight to come here, as in many places such knights have come, and through his prowess set me free from so much sorrow! By my faith, I would give him the lordship of my kingdom!"

Five days passed, then the count put all his people in order, and had his troops prepared to attack the city, knowing that the people within could not defend themselves against the great host he had with him. Then the king, Gheddino, Isotta, and all the other ladies and knights and townspeople—of whom there were just 700, able to fight or otherwise—all

together made a great lament. They were very much afraid, because they could not defend themselves against such strength.

Then Governale felt great compassion for them, and thought it was a great shame. He said to the king, Gheddino, and Isotta, "Alas, don't complain and be so sorrowful, for by good fortune this will turn out better than you could imagine or believe. You have in your court a knight errant who is the best fighter in the whole world, and if you have your daughter Isotta go and ask him, and if he is quite cured, I am sure that he will fight for you against the Count of Gippa."

At once the beautiful Isotta went to Tristano, and wisely spoke to him, saying, "Noble sir, are you well cured?"

Sir Tristano answered her, "Through God's mercy and yours, I feel very well, and I seem to be completely cured, because you have treated me so well and so diligently. I will always be at your service."

Isotta then said, "I am very glad that you are cured, for if you were not, still you could no longer be treated or healed by me; I have to leave this city and all my possessions, and the kingdom, to wander wretchedly through the world, through other lands. You see that my father is defeated, and all our people; we are all scattered or dead, and the city is as good as lost. To receive great wrong, for I do not know if my father has the power to honor this his nephew more than he has done, this nephew who now, out of great pride, rebels against him, opposing all reason and duty. I am certain that he will cause us all to die in sorrow, for he is a person who does only evil."

Tristano, seeing the maiden weeping before him, and hearing her tell what had happened, out of great tenderness and great nobility of heart began also to cry. Nonetheless, he made her no response; instead he went at once through the city where all the people were making such a great lament. After a little, Tristano climbed up on the walls, where there were some ladies and a few ancient knights set to defend the city. Then Sir Tristano looked out over the count's troops, which were well prepared and well furnished with more than 800 knights. Then Sir Tristano said to himself, "Now I am the most disgraced knight in the world, to sit within these walls. For no cause would I want the world to find out that I might defend the walls of a country; surely there never will be such a need that I find myself among women prowess in my killing Brunoro the Brown, and in my fighting with the high prince Galeotto. It would be no great deed to put these three troops to route—there can't be more than a thousand knights."

Then Tristano came down at once and went back to his lodgings, where he armed and prepared himself in the way a good knight does, then girded himself with Vistamara, the best and sharpest sword in the world, while Governale prepared his good horse Passabrunello in the same way. At that,

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Sir Tristano mounted, for he needed no stirrup or step in order to get up on his horse, but at one stroke, in all his armor, he leaped on. Then Governale handed him his strong shield and gave him his lance.

Tristano rode out into the great piazza, where the king was with all his knights and armed people, 700 in all, and he said to the king, "Sire, and all you other knights and barons, I am sure that you recognize your situation, how you are besieged and surrounded and in danger of death. You have need of great nobility, and each one must be worth more than two, for it will be better to die with pride and courage than to live as cowards. If you help yourselves, God will help you, and if you help yourselves, you may be saved, but if you are slothful, you can expect to die."

"So now, if you will, open the gates of your city for me, because I want to go out alone at first and begin to fight. If you see that I am winning, follow me boldly and be brave and sure and give good strokes, but if you see that I am losing, close your gates, so that you will not be harmed because of me."

At those words the king was very, very happy. Then Tristano rode out of the city, and, warning the troops of the count, here began to deliver fierce blows. He lowered his good lance and rode against them, so that before it broke he had used it to send thirteen knights dead to the ground. Afterwards, he took his sharp Vistamara in hand and began to fight with great vigor. He came sending to earth knights and horses, and many barons; whoever felt one of his blows wanted no other, for they fell to the ground stunned or truly dead, so that they had no use for doctors or any other medicine.

The count, like a wise man, was terrified to see such prowess in the knight, and said, "This will be some knight errant, by whom I am defeated and shamed today. Then in great pride and anger he struck Tristano a strong blow on his helmet, wounding him slightly, but for Tristano's part, he struck the count such a great blow that he split his helmet exactly in the middle, slicing the iron cap and driving the good blade down to his teeth, so that he fell dead to earth from his horse at once, and then Tristano killed the standard-bearer too."

Now Tristano all alone had killed more than sixty knights. Then the king, seeing so much prowess in Tristano, and seeing that the count, whom he recognized, was killed and the people all dismayed, rode out of the city with his knights and began to do battle. Then the mêlée was long and serious, and many people died on both sides, but in the end the count's people were all defeated or killed, and the few who fled got back to their city as best they could.

The masters of the story tell that when Tristano saw the field emptied and most of the enemy dead, he went before the king, saying, "Sire, here you see the count dead on the plain and his people routed, so if you will take my advice you will surely have the count's city under your dominion."

Then the king got on his knees to Tristano and said, "Sir knight, you are father, lord, and governor of me, my kingdom, and all my people; therefore act, command, guide, like a captain and lord general, in any way you please."

Then Tristano commanded that they follow, and pursue the people back to the city of Gippa, thirteen leagues from Solona. Here they made such a siege that no one could go in or out of the city without being killed or taken prisoner. Thus they remained for ten days, and on the tenth day Tristano assembled his people, and formed some troops in order to attack the city. The people inside mounted the walls to defend themselves as best they could. Tristano and the king and three other old men were outside the gate, and the other barons and knights surrounded to fight as best they knew how. As they were fighting thus, out of the gates came a very old knight, called Maccabruno, who was the count's uncle. He came all unarmed, to be safer.

When he got near Tristano, he shouted, "Mercy, mercy, knight, for God and holy charity! There are not enough people in the city to do battle, for they have almost all died in the earlier defeat; but there is gold and silver enough in the country, and ladies and maidens, and all that there is, is at your service and command. We beg that you take the ladies and the knights and the citadel under your command."

Then Tristano turned to the king and asked that he pardon all those people and receive their obedience to his crown, so that they would be his servants and subjects, as they had been before. The king said to Tristano, "Sir knight, what are you saying to me? You pardon them, those who are penitent, and receive them as it seems best to you, for this is your city, and all the kingdom is yours."

At that, Tristano granted mercy to all the people, and left within a viceroy, a nephew of the king called Sir Antalino, to whom he gave a hundred knights. Afterwards, they struck camp, and all the people went back to the city of Solona. The king found his son cured, and told him how they had been delivered by the prowess of the knight; then Gheddino went to Sir Tristano, throwing himself at his feet and doing him the greatest honor in the world. Then the tables were brought out, and they went to eat. As they were eating, the king and Gheddino and Isotta prayed Tristano to tell them his name, and Tristano, seeing how gently they asked him, revealed himself honestly

and told them. When they heard that he was Sir Tristano of Cornovaglia, who was known all over the world for his goodness and courage, they were very happy and held themselves blessed if they could serve him well. As they were living thus, one day Tristano and Gheddino went hunting near the seaside, and riding, looking, imagining, Tristano began intensely to think of and remember the beautiful Isotta the Blonde. Thinking, he remembered called her beauty, and the great love she always bore him, and how she had left her father, mother, and all the world for him. And he remembered then how he had left her in prison because of her love, and he recalled the great delight they had had together; he grew so excited that his heart was broken; so ardently he desired to see her, that he fainted, and fell from his horse to the ground. He was unconscious, and a great time passed before he came to himself, so that Gheddino took him in his arms and began a lament. Then Tristano revived somewhat, and spoke, not thinking anyone could hear him. He said, "Alas, my beautiful and sweet Isotta, will I ever see you again in my life? Alas, noble, pleasing, beautiful lady, will the day come that I will hold you in my arms? Ah, most noble and precious jewel, when will I see you and hear your soft and gracious voice?"

Gheddino, hearing all this, marvelled greatly, because he heard him mention Isotta, and thought that Tristano spoke of his own sister Isotta. And he felt very sad about it, for he had rather his own sister was dead a hundred times than that Tristano should feel a single pain. As he was holding him there in his arms, Tristano returned to his senses, and then Gheddino said to him, "I marvel very much indeed that you have been in our court all this time loving my sister Isotta and have never said anything. That must be because you think I have no faith in you. Now let us go back to the palace, and I will make you her lord."

When Tristano heard these words, he began to think, saying to himself, "If I have this Isotta for my own, perhaps I will forget the beautiful Isotta." Then he spoke: "Gheddino, I don't want Isotta in any unlawful way, but if you will give her to me for a wife, I will take her."

Gheddino said, "I will give her to you in any way you want." Then they returned to the city. When they got back, Tristano went to his chamber and began to weep bitterly, saying to himself, "Alas, beautiful Isotta, if I take this Isotta as my wife, I do it to relieve you and me of so much sorrow, and to make peace between you and Marco, not because I don't love you above all other people."

Thus Tristano comforted himself, but his thoughts were vain, for he was in no way able to take joy with any other lady, that is, to have fulfillment, except with the one the love potion had put over him.

Then Gheddino told his lord the king how he had promised Isotta to Sir Tristano, because he wanted her for his wife, and the king was very happy at that news, saying, "What, Gheddino? I do not know a king in the world

Tristano and
who would not gladly give his daughter to Sir Tristano, for he is the most
valiant knight in the world, and nobler than anyone can say. He is hand-
some, wise, courteous, bold, strong, and well-mannered; he has all the qualities
in himself that a well-bred lord should have."

Then the king went to Tristano and said, "I give you my daughter Isotta
for your wife, if it pleases you." And Tristano said that he was well pleased.

Then the king summoned all his barons to the great palace, and had Isotta
come before him, accompanied by many ladies, for she had no mother.
The king then said to his daughter, "If you please, I would like you to become
the wife of Sir Tristano."

She replied, "Sire, if it pleases you, I will do it very gladly."

Then the king stepped forward and took her hand, putting it in the hand
of Sir Tristano, then Tristano embraced her and kissed her according to
the custom of the country. That evening when they had gone to bed, Tristano
again embraced and kissed his lady, but still he took with her no other delight.
Isotta, very happy to be in Tristano's arms, believed that by such doings
ladies became pregnant: she knew no more perfect love, so great was her
purity.

When the next day came, the king summoned to the great palace all the
ladies of high lineage, and the barons and knights, and then he said, "Tristano,
grant me a boon."

Tristano said, "Sire, ask boldly."

The king said, "Now give me your glove."

Tristano gave it to him and the king said, "I want you to take and wear
the crown of this realm."

Tristano answered, "Sire, I have not taken your daughter in order to take
your kingdom. I don't want to be anything but a knight, for if I were a king
I would not be as free to prove myself with deeds of arms. I had rather you
wear the crown all your days, then leave it to Gheddino, your son."

The king answered Tristano, "If you will not take the crown, I will never
be glad or happy, and there is nothing else you can do, for you have given
me your glove."

Tristano said, "I will take it, since only that will please you, but keep it
in reserve for me until I ask you for it."

Then the king had written down the day and the year, saying, "I want
everyone to know that from now on I wear the crown as the viceroy of King
Tristano."

Now the story stops talking about King Tristano, and the viceroy holding
his place and his wife Isotta, and all the matter of this country, and we will
tell of King Marco of Cornovaglia, and of his wife, my lady Isotta the Blonde.

The true story tells that when King Marco was at court, even though he
had no idea where Tristano might be nor what he might be doing, he was
still suspicious, and took great care to keep Isotta in prison. And she was
the saddest lady in the world, for she heard no news of Tristano, and had
no way to find out if he were living or dead.

While they were living like this, a knight called Sir Lambergus came one
day into the hall. He approached the king, saying, "Sire, I bring you truly
great and marvelous news. Know that your nephew Tristano is in Petitta
Brettagna, and has set that country free. He has conquered and killed the
Count of Gippa and taken his citadel, and he has married Isotta of the White
Hands, the king's daughter, who is the most beautiful and gracious lady in
the world. He has been made king, and has received the crown of the realm.
King Gilierchino himself is completely dispossessed, having given the crown
to him."

When King Marco heard this news, he was partly happy about it, and
partly sad. He was pleased because Tristano had praise and honor, and
because he had taken such a lovely, highborn wife that perhaps now he
would no longer think of Isotta.

He said, "Lambergus, you have brought noble and wonderful news, and
I am very pleased about it. But in one way it brings me sorrow: I know that
Tristano will never again do his chivalrous deeds for me. I do not know
of any king in the world who would not be sad to lose such a nephew."

Then because he felt secure he had Queen Isotta let out of prison, and
told her all that had occurred. He gave her permission to come and stay and
go as she pleased, as if to say, "Tristano is so well fed now he will not care
for other fodder."

When Isotta heard the cruel news, very wisely she answered the king with
joy on her beautiful face, though her heart was heavy with sorrow. She said,
"Sire, I am very glad of Tristano's honors, and glad to see that he has found
out where his advantage lies. For he has left your court, where he always
received nothing but dishonor and great shame. If God has given him any
sense, he will never come back to this country."

Even though this is what the queen said, she was really the saddest lady
in the world. In secret she mourned continually in great sorrow and pain,
saying to herself, "Now I am surely set adrift in a lost ship, with no comfort
or help, and with no pilot to guide me. Oh, woe is me, such sorrow and
sadness! I am indeed the most miserable of ladies! So great is the sorrow
of my heart, so much pain, my beautiful Tristano, you have brought me.
Alas, woe is me, wretched woman! I little thought my hope would be taken

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LIV.

TRISTAN AND ISOTTA

this way, or that I would be so abandoned. And still I cry alas! not just for my life, but because I believed you would not abandon me even in death. I believed we would die together, my beloved!"

Truly Isotta made for Tristano the greatest and bitterest lament that ever lady made for her lover. Then she summoned Brandina and said to her, "Ah, my loyal and faithful companion, my great comforter and secret counsellor, say you won't desert me now. Say you will carry a message to my Tristano, and take this letter to him where he lives now, at the king's court of Petitta Bretagna."

Brandina answered her, "My lady, I am always ready to do your will." Then with an escort of four young squires she crossed the sea to make her embassy.

Know that when Tristano accepted the lordship of Petitta Bretagna, all the people of the country were very joyful, because he maintained them in peace, justice, and great love. As he lived thus, one day he and the prince Gheddino rode out to amuse themselves beside the sea. As they looked out over the great harbor, all at once there disembarked a lady who seemed to be a noble and important messenger. Immediately upon seeing and recognizing Tristano, she lifted the beautiful veil from her face and began to call loudly, saying this: "Tristano, Tristano, never did I believe that this could ever happen, that for gold or silver or crown or kingdom you could ever abandon a love so loyal and so perfect!"

By those words and by her voice Tristano knew Brandina. He ran to her and embraced her, saying, "Oh, how welcome you are! What news do you bring of my lady Isotta? How is my sweet hope now?"

Then Brandina began the greatest lament in the world, and afterwards she said, "May God quell and scatter all disloyal knights who are false to loyal loves! Alas, Tristano, you traitor, how could you commit so great a sin? How have you left your sweet Isotta, the one you have known since you were both so young? Alas, wicked Tristano, I never believed that you would be false to the love of so noble a lady as Isotta the Blonde! Surely she loves you more than anyone else in the world, and surely she is more beautiful than any other lady, as beautiful as anyone could ever desire. How could you betray her and abandon her this way? She is near death because she sends you a thousand kisses, and this letter, and beseeches that you come back to her without delay."

Then with many tears and great sighs, Tristano reached out his hand for the letter, took it and opened it. This is what it said:

Beloved, beloved Tristano, loved by my heart and my loyal love over all others loved by anyone, your sorrowing Isotta sends you her greetings. I am Isotta, she who, because of you, abandoned father, mother, husband, and all other people, and who now lives only in hope of you, who have failed me. I am struck with wonder, for I did not think that anything could come between us. If Merlin the Prophet had said it was so, I would not have believed it. I would not have believed that you could so abandon your Isotta, who for your sake abandoned all others.

"If you have had no wife, I also have no husband, for by my own will I have truly known no other man. Since I live only in hope of your comfort, now that you have deceived me, I will die. I swear that since the cruel day I heard the doleful, deathbringing news there has been no comfort left for me except to bewail my pain and my great sorrow, which I will do continually while I believe you love another more than you love me.

"My fate will be decided at the moment I see Brandina again, for if you are with her my life will be glad once more. But if you have truly deceived me, this deception will bring me a cruel death; on the very moment of the day Brandina returns alone, my soul will leave my sorrowing body.

"It is nothing to marvel at, even if you have abandoned Isotta for Isotta, if I still love you much more than I love myself. Always and always your Isotta has made this prayer: 'Lord God, merciful and kind, you created me as it pleased you to and gave me rank and beauty. I have granted myself to one knight only, and never will I have delight or knowledge of any other.' Now I have lost him, and I am so unfortunate and sad that never again will I be happy. And it was not my fault, but the fault of evil fortune.

"Thus I pray to you, my dear delight, that you send me comfort in my pain, for the tongue cannot tell nor the heart contain the seventh part of all my sorrow. It has so affected me that I have lost the power and memory and strength to write it. But you, for you are wise, must imagine and know how much pain and sorrow I bear for you, my dear delight, my gentle hope, solace and harbor of all my thoughts. Remember me now my love, gentle Tristano. Alas, remember your Isotta, who lives and dies in hope of you. Alas, Tristano, noble knight, how sad my heart is without you! How news of you would comfort the one who has been imprisoned so long for love for you! And so I beg that you provide me, your miserable lady, with some measure of your comfort, and do it soon, before it is too late."

Be sure that as Tristano read this letter, he stopped after every line to weep and sigh. His heart grew weak, his hand trembled, and he could no longer read. When he got to the part that said, "Remember me now my

love, gentle Tristano," he let himself fall from his horse, lying for a long time unconscious on the ground, so that he felt nothing. Brandina, Gheddino and the others were afraid he might truly have died, but after a while he came to himself and began the greatest lament in the world.

"Oh, alas, I am miserable! Does my lady bear so much pain and misery on my account? Alas, my beautiful, sweet Isotta, who for my sake never shrank from fear or shame! I have forgotten myself in this foolish act, but even so, our loyal love has not been betrayed!"

Tristano was making so great a moan that Gheddino questioned him, saying, "Where has all this new sadness come from?"

Tristano answered him, "Gheddino, I love and am loved by a lady who is queen of Cornovaglia. Her name is Isotta the Blonde, and she is the most beautiful lady nature ever made. And so I now return your sister to you as pure as when you gave her to me, for I must go back to see my gentle lady, who is so beautiful that she makes all others disappear, and no other lady, no matter how noble or chaste or lovely she may be, can come close to equalling her."

When Gheddino heard how Tristano loved Isotta the Blonde, he fell in love with her himself, for he had heard many times the things that Tristano had been saying about her, and how she surpassed all others in beauty. He begged Tristano to take him along to Cornovaglia.

Tristano agreed, and told him some things about that country. Then he said that if anyone asked who Brandina was, Gheddino should say she was a messenger sent to bring him back to his own country because his barons were in great discord.

Then the three of them returned to the city, and as soon as they reached the palace the king and Isotta wanted to know who the lady might be. Just as he had planned, Tristano said that she had come for him from his own country of Liones, because his barons were fighting among themselves. Then Isotta and her father were both very sad that Tristano had to go away, but the reason for it consoled them a little.

The king begged Tristano to return very soon, and to go well attended, but Tristano told him, "I want no other companion except Gheddino, your son."

When she met Brandina, Isotta received her with much honor; still, the young princess was greatly tormented by Tristano's going away.

And know that before Tristano left he had a statue made of Isotta the Blonde, because he so much wanted to look at her. A master from the city of Gippa sculpted it, just like the one he earlier had made for Queen Lotta in the city of Londres in Irlanda. He made her image so true to life and in his room.

One day when Gheddino came into the room, for a joke Tristano said,

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"The beautiful Isotta has come to visit me!"

And Gheddino, seeing the statue from across the room, thought it was truly she. Bowing low, he greeted her, "My lady, you are welcome, a thousand times welcome! It is such a great honor that you have journeyed to see your Tristano, who has been so longing to see you."

Then Tristano and Governale began to laugh with the greatest mirth in the world, and Gheddino, who saw his mistake, soon joined in. Still, he earnestly persuaded Tristano to begin their journey soon, because of his desire to see Isotta and find out if she was as beautiful in life as she was in art. And know that the master sculptor who shaped that image was knighted by Sir Tristano. He was dubbed for his art, Sir Stuano, and given the lordship of the city of Gippa for ten years.

As the time approached for Tristano to leave, he said farewell to the king, to Isotta, and to all his subjects. Then he and Gheddino, Governale and Brandina boarded a well-provisioned ship and caught the wind in their sails. The weather was right so that in a short time they were on the high seas.

Then Isotta climbed the tallest tower in the city and stayed there to watch Tristano's ship as long as she could see it. She prayed fervently to God to watch over him, then with many tears she came down again to the ground.

IV.

Now in this part the story tells how Tristano fared on the high seas. The good weather lasted until they were three days out from Petitta Bretagna, but on the fourth day two winds arose which blew contrary to each other, tossing and turning the helpless ship. For five days they were in great torment, until finally they found themselves on dry land in a savage and deserted country in some part of Longres.

Tristano asked the captain of the ship what country they had reached, and the old sailor told him that fortune had brought them to the country of King Artù. "And this wilderness you see before you, so vast and terrible, is the proving ground for the Tavola Ritonda. It is called the Wilderness of Andernantes, and it is where many, many have been led on to new and high adventures."

When Tristano heard that this was the Wilderness of Andernantes he was very glad, for he had heard of it, and knew that it was the testing place where all the knights errant competed with each other. He said, "By my

faith, I will go and test myself in this wilderness against the brave knights errant."

Then he said to Brandina and Governale, "It would please me if you would sail on to Cornovaglia. When you come to the castle at Cornasin, you, Brandina, go to Queen Isotta and tell her how I have left Petitta Brettagna and that I will be with her soon. And tell her the truth about what you know, that I have never been unfaithful to her.

"Then you, Governale, go to King Marco and tell him that I am in Petitta Brettagna with my wife Isotta, and give him this letter. After you have received his reply, go back to Dinasso's castle and wait there in secret for my return.

"And if the reply he makes to me is favorable, I will be very glad, but if it is not the one I want, I will discover another way to speak with Isotta."



lvi.

Now the story tells that Tristano and Gheddino, with two squires to carry their shields, disembarked and went on horseback through the great wilderness of Andernantes. Governale and Brandina went on over the high seas, and within ten days reached the land of Cornovaglia and Cornasin Castle.

Brandina went secretly to the queen and told her everything that had happened, and told her that Tristano had not been false to her in any way.

On the next day, Governale went before King Marco, bowing low and greeting him very courteously on Tristano's behalf, and presented him the letter. The king opened it and read it, to find out what it contained. The letter said this: "To the just and powerful lord, the magnificent and merciful King Marco, Tristano your nephew and servant, with good will and particular obedience, commends himself to you. In happiness and prosperity one remembers one's elders and relatives; now that I am myself again I remember you, my nearest kinsman. Gladly would I come to visit you again in your court, and bring with me my brother-in-law to make a month's celebration."

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After he had read the letter, the king said to Governale, "I won't write back, because you are a confidential messenger. But go back now to Petitta Brettagna, and greet King Gilierchino and his daughter Isotta on my behalf. Then say this to my nephew Tristano: 'Into the kingdom you have conquered sword in hand, you may come and go, inviting anyone you desire to be here and stay here.' And keep well in mind to greet Isotta for me, Isotta whom I hold as my own daughter."

Then Governale took leave of King Marco and went back to the castle of Dinasso. There he stayed in secret awaiting Tristano's return, which was delayed forty-two days.

lvii.

Now the story tells that as Tristano and his brother-in-law Gheddino were riding through the great desert of Andernantes, all that day they saw neither house nor habitation. Finally they rode to the top of a hill at sunset, then on their left they caught sight of a hermitage. They rode on that way, and when they reached the door they called out the name "Grisostimo," because they had been told before that in this part of the wilderness lived a holy hermit so named.

In a minute the hermit appeared, and his hair was pale white: it was this same Grisostimo. He asked them what they wanted, and Tristano replied: "Fortune has brought us here. We are knights from a foreign country in need of hospitality, for we have had nothing to eat all day."

The hermit said, "I came into this cell eighty-six years ago, and since then I have eaten nothing but herbs and wild fruit, and drunk nothing but water."

Then the knights unbridled their horses and turned them out to graze, and went inside and rested. Sir Tristano asked the hermit, "Servant of God, where in this wilderness may we find the most chivalrous adventures, and where do they practice the customs of chivalry? We come from a distant land and have never been in this country before."

The hermit replied, "Sir knight, truly it was but twelve days ago that two knights errant rode by. They told me that King Artù himself was lost in this forest and could nowhere be found, not alive nor dead. All the knights errant have answered the call to search for him, so if that is what you are looking for, you will find adventure enough on every side."

"But this desert belongs to knights errant, and no one may be called a

knight errant who has not first proved himself. It was in this very place that the Tavola Ritonda was discovered and dedicated. This is a very strange country, a place where ladies and maidens and other people without power were terrorized. It is known as a place outside of reason, a place where people rob and steal. At first it was called Merlin's Wilderness, because Merlin the Prophet built it, and set it here by magic, but now it is known as the Wilderness of Andernantes because the knights of Irlanda first took it under their protection.

"The garden of the Tavola Ritonda is here, a place very dear to King Artù and the knights of the Tavola. And three kinds of people are found here, ladies and maidens, knights errant, and foreign knights who refuse neither swordplay nor joust; for in this forest, people practice the uses of arms to serve God and do penance for their sins.

"And so I advise you, if you are not a knight of great name and mighty deeds, you should not presume to go armed. If you do, you will have to fight with whomever challenges you, but if you go unarmed you can pass safely through the whole wilderness, 300 leagues across."

Hearing these words made Tristano very happy. He said to Gheddino, "Now we are very fortunate knights, for we find ourselves here among the greatest adventures in the world!" Then he asked the hermit, "Servant of God, in what part of the forest will we find chivalrous adventures most quickly?"

The holy hermit answered him, "Keep to your left as you ride through the forest, and you will come to the Fontana Avventurosa, where more chivalry is practiced than anywhere else in the world."

The knights passed that night as best they could, eating fruit and wild greens, badly seasoned. When morning came, they armed themselves, mounted, took leave and rode on their way. They rode all day without sight of house or dwelling, and had nothing to eat but wild fruit. That night they took refuge on the crest of a high hill.

Gheddino said to Tristano, "You told me that we would find more adventures in this wilderness than in any other place, but by my faith I believe it is full of great misadventures, for we have ridden for two days and found nothing to eat."

Tristano answered, "These are the adventures of knights errant, to go through strange provinces and unfamiliar countries. The wilder a country is, the more likely are we to find chivalrous adventures there. On the day of rantry, he vows to ride through strange lands and wild forests, to protect others against harm. The wilder a country is, the more likely it is to be lawless; when a knight errant knows this, the more he should try to make it secure and familiar."

Then Gheddino was quiet, but he was not sure he agreed with Tristano,

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because he was very hungry and could find nothing to eat. They passed the night restlessly, and in the morning rode on through the great forest, so that at the hour of tierce they came to the Fontana Avventurosa. Tristano, who was keeping careful watch, soon saw a knight all armed. When this knight saw the two friends, he approached at once and demanded an encounter. Then Gheddino pressed Tristano to let him ride first against the knight errant. Then Gheddino and the knight rode against each other, but Gheddino had so little strength that the stranger unhorsed him, and he lay on the ground badly wounded.

Then Tristano rode to the joust, and the two knights struck each other with their lances in such a way that the weapons were shattered in many pieces. They drew their swords and began a terrible battle, each one striking the other with all his strength. But bold Sir Tristano struck his opponent on the helmet with such force that he knocked him to the earth. With that, he saw how bruised and wounded Gheddino was, and he was very angry.

He asked the stranger knight for his name, and the man answered, "I am called Amorotto of Gaules."

When Tristano found out that this was Amorotto, whom he hated so much, the very knight who had so misused and dishonored him, he got off his horse at once, saying, "Amorotto, Amorotto, I promise you will have need of all your prowess now, for here in front of you is Tristano of Cornovaglia in whose despite you sent the enchanted horn to King Marco, the horn by which Queen Isotta was almost killed. Defend yourself now, for I challenge you to the death!"

Amorotto, hearing that this was indeed Tristano, was very afraid. He said, "Tristano, I swear to you that I did not send the horn in your despite, but only to insult the Cornish nation."

But Tristano said, "Amorotto, Amorotto, your excuse is worth nothing." Then he struck such a blow on his helmet that blood spurted from his nose and his mouth, and he fell heavily to the ground. Tristano was going to kill him then, until Amorotto cried for mercy for Lancilotto's sake. When he did that, Tristano pardoned him, and they made peace.

Then Amorotto, who knew the customs and the pathways of the great wilderness, led Tristano and Gheddino to a foreigner's dwelling. Here they were received with great honor, and rested while Gheddino was treated for his wounds.

Know that in those days there were three ways for a knight errant to find shelter, both they and the foreign knights who rode then through the world, proving themselves and seeking their fortune with deeds of arms. If they were going through a civilized country where there were cities and towns and castles they could, if they wanted, go to the palace of that country's

ruler. If they did not want to do that, they could go to the hostels maintained by the lords of the province, and here they would be well received. If they were in an uncivilized country, where there was neither town nor dwelling place, the lords who owned that section maintained dwellings there, and certain outposts where they had foreigners live. Finally, if the knights were sheltered the traveling knights who came by. Finally, if the knights were riding through deserted and savage country, where for fear of wicked wild beasts no one wanted to spend the night, they would find that the lords of those lands had built at certain outposts fine, large shelters furnished with oats and hay, biscuits, wines and meat. These would be locked with keys, and the keys would be fastened to rings outside the door so that all who came by could take what they needed.

Thus the knights of that time trusted themselves to fortune, and went about freeing the world. They were of great use, and because of them all the countries around were secure and at peace.

Now when Sir Tristano and Amorotto had rested a while in the foreigner's house, they took their leave. Gheddino, because of his wound, could not ride, and Tristano left him in the care of their host to have his hurts attended, because they thought they would soon come back.

And so Tristano and Amorotto rode on through the great wilderness. At the hour of nones they came to the Fountain of Bacino, where they let their horses drink. They had been there just a little while when they heard a great noise, and Amorotto said, "Tristano, have you ever seen the Beast Grisanti?"

When Tristano said no, Amorotto said, "Move away from here if you want to see her."

Just a little way from them the beast came to drink, and when she had drunk she continued on through the forest. Immediately there followed a knight in pursuit of her, one who was called Prezzivale lo Galese. When he came near, Amorotto, who was his brother, rode toward him and called him to joust. They rode against each other and struck blows of great strength, but it was Prezzivale who sent Amorotto sprawling to the ground. At that Tristano rode to the joust. They lunged at each other and exchanged strong blows, until their lances were shattered and both of them were unhorsed.

Then Prezzivale did not dare stay any longer, but rode away through the forest in pursuit of the Beast Grisanti. Tristano took leave of Amorotto and set out after Prezzivale; he wanted to make the acquaintance of one who could deal such great blows. Amorotto also rode on that same day, in the company of Sir Meliagans, son of King Bando of Magus, but a quarrel arose between them because Amorotto claimed that the Queen of Organia was more beautiful than Queen Ginevara.

In this part the story tells where Tristano went after he left Amorotto. First he went in search of the knight who pursued the Beast Grisanti, but he could not find him anywhere. Then as he was riding thus across a hillside in the wilderness he met an armed knight, and each of them greeted the other one courteously. This knight, noticing that Tristano was bearing insignia that he had never seen before, wondered greatly about him and asked him who he might be. Tristano replied that he was a knight from the kingdom of Cornovaglia.

Then the knight, who was a man of many words and something of a bully, said to Tristano, "Alas, what evil fortune! How can it be that a Cornish knight rides through this wilderness? Now I say that this country is badly dishonored to the disgrace of all knights errant, for by my faith among a hundred of you Cornishmen I don't value one in deeds of arms!"

Tristano, when he saw that this knight held him in contempt and was so insulting in his speech, answered him to the contrary, saying that he had come into the wilderness to prove himself in just such deeds of arms, and to find out whether the knights in this part of the world were as noble, courteous, and brave as those in Cornovaglia.

The knight responded, "In this country you will never find one thing called a knight to compare to those of King Marco of Cornovaglia, because the most despised and cowardly villain who ever lived in Longres could demolish King Marco and the ten best knights in his land."

At those words Tristano laughed out loud, and asked the knight his name. He said that he was called Chieso the Seneschal—"but since the hour that King Artù was lost in this forest I am called the king-seneschal, for I rule in Artū's place. But now I want you to profit by my wisdom, because you are not a man who should joust, nor are you accustomed to a country where jousts worth anything are held. I advise you, therefore, to ride unarmed so you can pass safely through the whole wilderness, since wherever you come from if you ride around armed like this you will be forced into encounters. If you joust, you will probably be killed, because right now all of the knights of the Tavola are in these woods; they have all come in search of King Artū, who is lost somewhere in the wilderness. Now I will lead you to a foreigner's house where you may eat and drink, then you should get out of here at once, and think about busying yourself with something besides deeds of arms."

Tristano answered him, "Sir, I have made up my mind that before I leave this country I will have proved myself through feats of arms. I came here for no other reason but to find out if King Artū's knights are as worthy as those of King Marco of Cornovaglia."

At that, Sir Chieso laughed the biggest laugh in the world, saying to Tristano, "You won't be able to find anyone to fight with you if you ride all alone, for Cornish knights are held at ten to one—ten are not worth one from this country."

So Sir Tristano and Sir Chieso rode on together, and Tristano, who saw very well that the knight held him in disdain, secretly delighted in it, and spoke in such a way that he would be disdained even more. As they were riding thus, they came to a great river, and Sir Chieso said to Tristano, "We need to get across this water if we expect to find shelter, so you go on in front, you go," said Tristano, "since you're familiar with the area. I'll follow behind you."

Then Chieso said to Tristano, "Which would you rather do, go first here or ride on to a bridge and fight with the knight who guards it?"

Tristano said he would rather challenge the knight, so the two of them rode on in that direction. They found the knight at the bridge who was indeed ready to joust, and Chieso said to Tristano, "Knight, there you see the guardian of the bridge. Go and joust with him."

Then Tristano, to have more fun with this man who held him in such disdain, said, "Noble sir, you go and fight with him. If you are victorious, we can then pass by well and lightly, and if you lose there are other roads here to take."

Then Sir Chieso summoned his squire and took his lance and his shield, saying, "I wish King Marco were dead and never a knight had been born in his country! The men are all cowardly, greedy, and proud, and the women are liars, drunks, and whores."

At once he rode out against the knight of the bridge, who was called Euput-talege, and that knight rode to encounter him. Each struck the other one great blow, and Chieso sent his opponent to the ground, badly wounded.

Then he said to Tristano, "Now, cross. And soon the Irish will cross into Cornovaglia, where they will leave neither villa nor castle nor house, but will put everything to fire and flame! For by my good faith I think rather well of myself that I don't take that horse there away from you—he seems good and strong—and make you go on foot."

Tristano answered, "Surely, sire, I will gladly cross, since God has sent us such good fortune and delivered us from that knight. I must say, I think you must be the best fighter in the world, because you overcame that knight so easily in the first encounter."

At those words, Chieso laughed loudly. Then they rode on until they came to a foreigner's house, where they rested from traveling. Inside the hall they found two knights errant. One was Sir Gariette and the other was Sir Agravano, who greeted Sir Chieso with much honor, and asked him if he were alone.

To this Chieso said, "I am not alone, but I am poorly attended. At the

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edge of this wilderness I met a Cornish knight—there you see him, right out there. He is big and strong and handsome, well armed and well mounted, but he is surely the least worthy, most cowardly knight that I have ever run across." And then he told them all the things that Tristano had said so that we can give him what he has coming. We can go a little ahead, then turn and meet him again and challenge him to joust. I have given him fair warning about the way things are done here, yet he insists he will still ride armed: in spite of what I have told him he will not leave off. I am sure, when we challenge him, he will run off at top speed."

The plan pleased and delighted the other knights, and they agreed to it. Gariette said, "By my faith, I am rather surprised at this, for I see that he is well made, so strong in body that rarely have I seen his equal, nor one who sat a horse so well. And I tell you, I think I have seen him somewhere before, but I can't remember where."

Tristano, who was lying down on the other side of the hall, heard all that they said, and made other plans for himself than the ones they were making. Then the tables were set out and they all took their places. The host, seeing that Tristano was scorned and held in disdain, made him sit at the foot of the table and to torment him said, "Now, eat, knight, so that you will grow strong, for tomorrow you must fight with a proud and valiant soldier." Tristano made no answer to that, but he ate valiantly indeed.

When morning came the four knights armed themselves, mounted, and rode on their way through the great wilderness. They came to a place where the road divided and continued on in two directions.

Chieso then said to Sir Tristano, "Knight, you choose one of these two roads, and the rest of us will follow the other. Take whichever one you like; it is just that we have to ride on more quickly."

Tristano replied, "Then you choose the one that pleases you. I will go more slowly on the other, so as not to tire my horse too much."

Then the three knights quickly chose one of the ways and rode on. A little way down they reached a place where the two roads joined again, and there they waited a moment until Tristano came along. Sir Chieso challenged him to joust, saying to his companions, "Now watch him run away!" as he rode against him. But Sir Tristano did not refuse the joust at all. Instead he accepted the challenge, and each of them struck the other a great blow on his shield. Tristano seemed not even to feel Sir Chieso's blow: he did not even bend over the saddlebow. Rather he hit Chieso such a blow that he fell heavily to earth, wounded. Then he overcame both Gariette and Agravano without even breaking his lance, and without another word rode off on his way.

Then the two younger knights got to their feet and helped Sir Chieso up, because he could not stand by himself. They put him on his horse and told

him to wait there, while they rode after Tristano. When they caught up to him, they said to him, "Knight, for courtesy's sake and the love of whatever you love most, and for the honor of chivalry, and by whatever vows you took on the day your sword was belted on you, we pray that you reveal your name." Tristano, when he heard how courteously they implored him, told them his name. Immediately they rode back to Sir Chieso and told him that the knight who had beaten them was called Tristano of Cornovaglia. Chieso was much comforted by that, saying, "My wound is already better, for it is in no way shameful to be beaten by the best knight in the world."

After that, they returned to the foreigner's house, and when the host saw them he asked what had happened with the Cornish knight who was so cowardly, saying, "Did you drown him in water?"

Gariette replied, "Alas, good host, if we insulted the knight from Cornovaglia, we cannot be held guilty of any villainy or crime, because he has shiven us well and nobly, and assigned us the penance we deserve. I assure you, my friend, we were all three beaten with one lance. If you don't believe me, look here at your king-seneschal wounded: two of his ribs are broken."

Then Sir Chieso said, "Noble host, by my faith, this wound troubles me a great deal, but when we think that we were beaten by the best knight in the world, we are not too much ashamed. That man was the worthy Sir Tristano of Liones, the most courteous, bravest, noblest knight in the world."

Then Sir Agravano attended Sir Chieso, for all the knights errant knew how to treat wounds and take care of other needs of that sort.

LIX.

The storytellers say that when Tristano parted from the three knights he had beaten, he rode through a deep valley, very dark and full of shadows, a place no one ever went because it was so dark and full of thorns. The air was so close and so dense down there that he could hardly see anything, and there were dangerous beasts. Soon he came to a place where he could not find out how to go any farther, and began to believe he would have to turn back.

At that moment, a maiden on horseback suddenly appeared on a narrow path in front of him. She was all disheveled and rode crying, making the greatest lament in the world. Tristano was astonished by this sight, and asked the maiden to tell him, for courtesy's sake, why she was so very sorrowful.

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He promised to do anyfeat of arms that lay within his power if he could be of use to her in any way. The maiden answered him, "Knight, if I cry and make lament, so ought all kings and barons and knights weep and worry, for today will occur the most horrible thing ever to happen since the Tavola Ritonda was formed. Know, then, that I ride in search of Sir Lancilotto, or Palamidesso, or Prezivale, for this adventure requires a proven knight—he will need great prowess. Now I give you good day; I must not linger."

Then Tristano was very reluctant for the maiden to ride away, so he said to her, "Lady, I want you to know that all knights can't be Lancilotto or Palamidesso, but I will tell you this much. I am one who, if you will allow it, would go with you and do for you all that is in the power of my arms. And I promise you I know of no knight or baron for fear of whom I would ever turn my shield."

In truth, Tristano made many great boasts to the maiden, and spoke very highly of himself. He did it so that she would believe in him and would take him on this adventure; he did not do it for any wrong reason. But indeed the story says that Tristano made great boasts.

The maiden, upon hearing such high, proud words, considered them, and decided that they were well spoken. She saw how well made his body was, and how noble, and how well his armor fit, and said to herself, "This man cannot be other than a knight of great prowess and skill."

She asked him his name, and Tristano told her frankly. When she heard that this was Tristano, about whose prowess and nobility she had heard so much, she took him along with her. And if anyone asks me why the maiden was weeping, I will say it was for King Artù, who was in danger of death if some proud knight would not come to his aid.

Riding together along the narrow path in the forest, Tristano and the maiden came to a rich palace, beautiful, strong, and delightful. It was in a great valley of the wilderness, encircled by four of the highest mountains, and full of fine gardens and the tallest of trees, the least of which was more than one hundred and sixty feet high. No one ever came to this place, so thick and dense was the forest around it, so dark and dangerous the valley, circled around by a very great river.

The palace in the middle of the great valley was the biggest and best guarded, circled around by walls of whitest marble. The palace was square, 666 feet on a side; it was a thousand feet high and had more than 150 rooms inside. At each corner there was a tower strongly made of diamond, and in the center a tower all of metal. This one had on every side ten windows of fine coral, and on top of each of its corners there was a carbuncle which sent as much splendor over the countryside as if 400 lights were continuously burning. At the entrance to the tower was a door made of jasper, so fashioned that anyone who went inside and closed it could see clearly if someone was

approaching, but those on the outside could see nothing within.
 In the very middle of the palace was the most elegant room: all the doors
 were made of striped ebony and adamant, so that fire could never burn them,
 and the floor was all of garnet, arnicolo, and topaz,²⁰ and shone brilliantly.
 No one who entered there could ever feel any pain in his body, and everything
 looked the same before as behind him. And there was a bed well furnished
 in every imaginable way, for the featherbed, sheets, and covers were perfectly
 clean, with many lovely things embroidered all over them. The bed was hung
 round with a curtain worked with images of ladies and maidens, knights
 and young men, all nude, who seemed truly to be alive and made of human
 flesh. Some of them were embracing, and some kissing, some sat and some
 were standing; thus they lay, taking pleasure and delight, enjoying each other
 in all of the ways love commanded.

When he looked at those images, no man could be so chaste that he would
 have the power to refrain. And sewn in the curtain were more than 400
 golden bells, so that by pulling a silver rope they could be made to resound
 throughout the valley. And in the hall of that tower there was a little dog
 who, with the sound of her bark, could summon all the beasts of the valley.
 At the head of the hall were chained two lions, and next to them two dragons.
 There was a metal parapet all around the palace, and the tower stood one
 hundred feet above the high walls.

In this valley there was also a fishpond which had in it every kind of fish
 anyone could possibly name. This place was the most delightful in the world,
 outside of paradise, and it was called the marvellous Palace of Grande Disio.
 Its lady was the maiden Elergia, daughter of the lady of the Island of Vallone.

This lady of Vallone had created the palace by her magic arts, intending
 to live in it with the prophet Merlino and take delight with him; but Merlino,
 who knew more about magic than she did, tricked her and sent her to live
 on the Island of Vallone which is in the Soriano Sea. Her daughter Elergia
 now lived in the palace, a maiden who well knew the seven arts of necromancy
 as well as the workings of enchantment.

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LX.

In this part the story says that as Tristano and the maiden approached
 the palace, they saw a knight lying on the ground, with three knights on
 foot and one on horseback standing over him. A lady stood beside them,
 commanding them thus: "Kill him! Kill this traitor who would leave here
 against my will!"

Then the maiden said to Tristano, "Knight, now you will have to display
 the greatest prowess you can summon. If you do, you will be the happiest
 knight in the world, knowing you have accomplished the greatest feat, the
 one that all knights errant have sought for a long time. For I assure you
 the knight on the ground is King Artù, and now it is up to you to save him."

When he heard this, Tristano was indeed the happiest knight in the world.
 With a bold and joyful heart he lifted his shield and grasped his lance, then
 rode to attack the mounted knight. The knight met his attack with great
 strength, but Tristano had so strong a desire to achieve the adventure that
 his great blow sent the stranger dead to the ground.

After that he dismounted, took his sword in his hand, and attacked the
 other three knights. He delivered such great blows that in a short time he
 had killed them all. The lady Elergia, when she saw that all four of her
 brothers were dead, began to flee toward the palace tower, but the maiden
 who had guided Tristano shouted to him, "Knight, knight! Capture that
 lady or else you will have accomplished nothing."

Tristano then leaped in front of the door and held the lady by her very
 blonde hair, giving her to the maiden to guard. The maiden brought her
 before King Artù who at once took his sword in hand and cut off her head.
 Tristano was very surprised by this; still, he said nothing just then. Instead
 he presented himself before the maiden, saying, "Lady, do you have more
 need of my services?"

The maiden replied, "You have already done so much that it will be
 remembered as long as the world lasts: you have accomplished the greatest
 adventure in Grande Bretagna. But now it would be courteous of you to
 accompany the king until you meet some knights of his court."

Having said this, the maiden picked up the lady's head and rode toward
 Camellotto, to tell how King Artù had been set free. Tristano brought a
 horse for the king and helped him to mount, then they set out to ride through
 the great wilderness. The king thought that this might be one of the brave
 knights of his own court, and said to him, "Noble sir, tell me your name,
 for you have surely saved me from death."

Tristano answered him, "Sire, for courtesy's sake, I hope you will pardon
 me if I don't tell you my name just now." At that, the king was silent.

As they rode on, Tristano said to the king, "Sire, I marvel greatly that you cut off the lady's head. It doesn't seem fitting for a king to be involved in such a business." Tristano and

Then the king said, "Knight, know that I left Camellotto more than three months ago and set out to look for adventure in this wilderness. I had come to the Fontana Avventurosa and was resting there when that woman, the one I just killed, arrived and asked that I come a little way with her, to defend her from a great wrong which was done to her. I, as we are all bound to do, went with her, and she led me to that palace which you saw,

"When we dismounted she took me by the hand and led me to a chamber so beautiful and so noble that I could not restrain my desire. I asked her for her love, and she gave me a ring. As long as I wore it on my finger, I was so bound by love of her that I did not remember Queen Ginevra or any of my knights, and I took of that damsel all my delight.

"As we were living like that, the Dama del Lago sent to me the maiden you saw, the one who brought you here. When she met me at the door of the palace she greeted me, then came up to me and pulled the ring off my finger, then afterwards went away. At that point, I was free of the enchantment. I came to myself and knew my condition, then I tried to get brothers to prevent me. They took me and were going to kill me, but at that very moment the maiden who freed me from the ring brought you, and you readily came and delivered me from death. Then when I thought of the evil that woman had done, and how she would do it another time to someone else, I cut off her head."

Then Tristano saw that the king had done the right thing, that he had suffered enough to make the deed necessary.

LXI.

The true story tells that as King Artù and Sir Tristano were riding through that wild forest they encountered a fully armed knight, Sir Astore di Mare. As he drew near, this knight called upon Tristano to joust with him. They rode against each other at once and exchanged two great blows, but it was Tristano, the stronger, who sent the other quickly to earth. Then he approached the king and said, "Sire, I will bid you farewell and go now, since this knight can accompany you home."

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The king pressed him warmly to come to Camellotto, but Tristano did not want to do anything until he had returned to the place where he had left his wounded brother-in-law, Gheddino. When the defeated knight, Sir Astore, recognized the king, he ran to him, embraced him, and asked how he had been set free; then the king told him all that had happened. They rode until they reached the foreigner's house, where they found the king-seneschal, Gariette, and Agravano, who greeted the king with greatest honor and wanted to know the way he had been freed. The king told them his story, and said he was the saddest man in the world because he had not been able to find out the name of the knight who had saved him from death.

Gariette said, "Tell me what insignia he carried." And the king at once told him it was a golden lion on a blue field.

The three knights then told the king, "Truly, sire, you were delivered through the prowess of the noblest, bravest knight in the whole world (this is certain), who yesterday beat all three of us with one lance. He is dear to Sir Chieso, who held him in disdain to his own undoing, for as you can see he gave our seneschal such a wound that because of Tristano's valor Chieso will not be able to bear arms again for a month. And I tell you he has well deserved any service you can render him, because it was for his sake you pardoned Lancilotto and lifted the siege on Gioiosa Guardia. It was Sir Tristano, noble sire, the one you love so much."

The king was very happy at these words, and held himself greatly honored. As they were resting thus, in the evening Sir Lancilotto and Sir Ivano arrived. When they saw the king and heard how he had been set free, they made the greatest celebration in the world, and passed that night in great contentment. Much they talked of how it had been between Sir Tristano and Sir Chieso, and took great delight in the way the seneschal had held Tristano in such disdain.

Lancilotto said to Chieso, "You, by my faith, were wise indeed when you thought Sir Tristano would run away from a few words! But as I hear it, you would not believe this until you'd proven it by deeds!"

Chieso replied, "If I was slow to believe, he has paid me well, for I am now certain. Might you be sure of another such blow! But still I wouldn't blame you if you avoid an encounter, for I am sure he would give you trouble and hard work." And with this sort of teasing and joking, the knights entertained themselves with the best solace in the world.

LXII.

Tristano
and
Lancilotto

The story now tells that when morning came the knights left and rode on their way toward the city of Camellotto, and Lancilotto rode ahead to tell how Tristano had saved the king from death. After they reached the palace and rested a little, the king sent for nearly 300 workmen, commanding them to go to the Palace of Grande Disio and pull down the palace and the tower at once, to destroy it all, and scatter it on the ground. But knowing that the king was to be disappointed, because not for all the workmen he sent or ever will send would that tower be lessened a denier's worth, but would stand as long as the world shall last, according to the prophecy Merlino made when he set the great wilderness of Andernantes around it.

He prophesied that the tower would fall in the first thunder which signalled the end of the world, and would fall first before any other structure, to show that things made by art and worldly knowledge are sooner corrupted and made worthless than things made by faith. And the powerful lords who do not use their wisdom and power for justice will go sooner to the depths than things made by simplicity.

And so King Artù remained at court, full of joy to be home again. The tables were set, and water was brought for the washing of hands, then everyone sat down to eat, each one in his accustomed place.

You should know that in King Artù's court there were principally four kinds of seats. The first was a single one, the Seggio Periglioso: no one sat in it, because Merlino had prophesied that whoever sat there would dissolve and be corrupted in every limb unless he were the virgin knight who by the power of his virginity would achieve the adventure of the Sangradale. (This was going to be Sir Galasso, the son of Sir Lancilotto, who was born and brought up in a great convent of women.)

The second kind of seat was the Seggio Reale, where King Artù sat. The third was the Seggio Avventuroso, and in these sat the knights of adventure, those who never came to the table at great festivals without wonderful news, and who never refused a battle.

The fourth kind were seats of less prowess, and in them sat the knights who because of some accident could not take part in adventures. These four kinds of seats were in the great hall of the palace, which was all painted and decorated with ladies and maidens and other noble figures. In the middle of this hall was a thick column of jasper, made in three sections, and in the bottom of the third were thirty taps of gold and silver from which there continually ran rose water in which to wash their faces. At each tap hung a towel of clean white silk. In the middle part of the column were set beautiful mirrors to look in, and on the top part were carved the heraldic

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"To all the knights errant who desire the honor of chivalry. I reveal unto you that love is the condition and the way which leads all to prowess and courtesy, and love is the resting place for all fatigue. As you desire honor and a name for prowess, serve love loyally and well, and hold love in your heart."

And all the knights errant should know these words well, those who came every morning to the column to wash and look at their faces, and to read what was written there. By such customs was the Tavola Ritonda known. Around the seat where the king ate with many barons there was this custom: one who brought good news drank from a golden cup, but if the news were otherwise he drank out of silver. And the walls were this and the walls were all round, so that as they sat at the table and the hall could see the faces of all the others. When they were here within, they were a circle, that is to say, one thing, and all were at one post and faithful to one sign. They were at the post of obedience and bore one symbol, the sign of love. All of them were knights in love, who lived and were named for prowess throughout the world.

From every country they came here, each one seeking to prove himself through deeds of arms. They proved themselves many times over until they were found so excellent that they could be received as knights errant. If they were not good enough, they set out on their own adventures as foreign knights, since they could not yet be called knights errant.

If one of them had the care of a kingdom or city or castle, he could not then be sworn, because the cares of avarice do not accord with prowess. Also a knight errant could not be married, because the responsibilities and the laziness of that do not encourage prowess. He should give up all thoughts of himself, and have no concern for income, riches, treasure, or anything that could impede his deeds of chivalry.

Now the story stops talking about King Artù and the knights of the Tavola Ritonda, and turns to Sir Tristano's deeds.

In this part the tale tells that when Tristano took leave of King Artu he rode on through the forest until he met Prezzivale lo Galese, who was pursuing the Beast Gratisanti. When he saw him, Tristano recognized him and summoned him to joust. They rode against each other and exchanged two great blows, but Prezzivale's lance shattered at once and Tristano struck him with such force that he sent him to earth, horse and all.

Then Tristano asked his name, and he said, "I am called Prezzivale, son of King Pellinoro of Gaules." Tristano also told his name, and greatly they honored each other; still they soon took leave and went their separate ways. Tristano rode back to the forester's hut where he had left Gheddino, and found him cured and in high spirits. They rode on together across the kingdom of Cornovaglia until they reached Dinasso's castle. Here they found Governale, who told Tristano what answer King Marco had given. They rode to the city of Tintoile, and when they arrived at the palace the king received them with great honor, embracing Gheddino many times and asking all about King Gilierchino and his daughter Isotta.

Gheddino replied, "Sire, by my faith, we are yours to command, by God's grace and for Sir Tristano's sake, who freed everyone there."

Then the tables were laid and they sat down to eat. At that moment Isotta the Blonde came into the hall. When she met Gheddino she greeted him courteously and asked about his sister Isotta, and Gheddino gravely answered all her questions.

Time passed, and Tristano could think of nothing, day or night, except how to find a way to speak with the queen, and he managed it finally so that they met one night to talk under a pine tree in the middle of the queen's garden. When they were together they embraced passionately, and grew faint with desire for each other. Isotta lamented that Tristano had abandoned her, but Tristano excused himself and promised that he had never been unfaithful. As the two lovers lingered there and made each other suffer with their quarreling, soon they were pacified by their great desire and by the pleasures of love. Then afterwards, whenever they pleased, they met below that pine to speak together.

They went so often that spies approached King Marco and told him, but he did not believe them at once. Still, to make certain of it, he thought of a plan. When evening came the king went secretly to the garden and climbed the tree, waiting and saying to himself, "I want to find out the truth of this," whether or not his wife Isotta were betraying him again.

After he had waited a little the queen drew near, coming through a little wicket gate from the palace; soon after, Tristano climbed over the cloister

wall and approached the pine. At that moment the moon rose, beautiful and bright, and when the two lovers looked at the shadow of the pine they saw the outline of a man, and they both were very suspicious. At that, the queen, who was wise, stopped where she was and said, "Sir Tristano, I marvel greatly that you have suffered where she was and said, "Sir you know the imprisonment I have suffered and endured because of you, and a thing that could never happen for all the gold in the world, for I do not believe there is a lady in the world, nor do I hope to find one, who loves her lord more than I love mine. But there is only one way that the blame can quickly pass: where truth is, there truth should also appear to be. "When my lord learns the truth of my loyalty, he will no longer believe evil counsel, but will love me more than anyone else; for in good faith I can truthfully swear that I have never given my love to any man except the one who had my virginity, nor will I ever, ever, do so.

"But if the king knew I were here now, he would have me burnt at the stake, and no one would be able to stop his suspicions. Now tell me at once why you have sent for me, for truly the hour is neither good nor seemly, and I will never meet you here again."

Then Tristano said, "My queen, well I know that you have suffered and endured imprisonment because of me, but that was not my fault. You know that you have had nothing from me but comfort and good counsel, because I hold the king's shame and honor as my own. He should well know that if I loved you with a guilty love I would never have given you to him, but would have kept you for myself.

"But the king does not believe what is obvious; instead, he believes those who slander me out of envy. Know that I sent for you because this has happened. I want to return to Petitta Bretagna, for it has been too long since I saw my wife Isotta, whom I love more than I love myself. The king of Petitta Bretagna has given me his kingdom: because of this, I want Governale, who has served me so well, to be the king of Liones. As you know, King Marco inherited a fifth part of my kingdom, and Governale cannot be king unless he possesses the whole kingdom. Thus I ask, when it pleases you, that you would persuade the king to give up his part, so that Governale can be king of Liones in Marco's service.

"I sent for you to ask you to make this embassy to the king, for I am afraid to speak to him myself."

The queen, hearing this, looked irritated, saying, "Tristano, Tristano, I will not take this message at all. I have heard that the one is dead, if ever he was born, who loves someone more than he loves himself. It would not be wise for me—this is not good counsel you give me—to take from my own husband to give to Governale. I will not do your errand. Instead, I make

your suggestion: give the whole kingdom of Liones to my lord

King Marco, so that any time you are in need, he may have the means to serve you. In no way will I advise my lord to take from himself to give to another."

Tristano replied, "If you will not do this for me, I will ask someone else, "Do as you please," said Isotta. "I will certainly never do anything to lessen the honor of the one I am responsible to."

Then they left each other, showing dislike in their faces, though in truth they were very sad that they had not been able to speak together of other more sacred things.

The king, having heard their words, climbed down the tree, telling himself it was untrue that there had ever been an evil thought between Tristano and Isotta. He returned to his chamber to rest, and in the morning he got up and went into the great hall of the palace, where many barons and knights were gathered. He summoned Federumgotto, one of his counsellors who many times had accused Tristano, and struck him in the face with his glove, saying, "Alas, traitor, because of you I nearly lost my wife and my loyal nephew! I command you on pain of death that you leave here at once, and never again let yourself be found within the borders of my kingdom."

Then he called Tristano to him, saying, "Noble and dear nephew of mine, I have heard that you have from your wife the kingdom of Petitta Brettagna. Thus it seems to me that Governale, who has served you so well, ought to be king of Liones. I bequeath to him, from now on, all the rights which I may have to it."

Then Sir Tristano thanked the king over and over, and gave Governale the ring and the seal, and made him king of Liones. He sent him to King Artù to be crowned, for Artù ruled over all other kings, and it was from him that they received their first crowns. Governale accepted all, and set out to come before King Artù.

Tristan and
Isotta

The Round Table

LXIV.

Now the story tells that as Tristano continued his stay at Marco's court the king, because of evil gossip and because of the way Isotta sometimes looked, became more suspicious every day. And so, to reassure himself once again, he contrived a trick. He had three rich beds prepared in one chamber, then said to Tristano, "Noble nephew, this would be a good time for us to have ourselves bled. If it pleases you, let us have it done together; it will make us healthier in body."

Tristano replied that it pleased him well, so the thing was done for King Marco, Tristano, and also Isotta. That day they all ate well of good and delicate food, and that evening they rested in the chamber, each in his own bed. After their first sleep, the king got up and went through the room, secretly sprinkling flour between Tristano's bed and Isotta's. Then he spoke quietly to Tristano, saying that it was his pleasure to attend matins, and left the room.

When Tristano heard this he sat up, full of desire to go to the queen's bed. But he looked at the floor and saw that it was all white, and said to himself, "This has been done with great skill, and is directed against Isotta and me." Still, as a valiant and dextrous knight, he cared nothing for it, but made a great leap from his own bed to Isotta's. The effort was so great that a vein reopened in his arm, and quite a lot of blood spurted out. Then after they had taken their pleasure and delight, he made another leap back to his own bed.

After a little while, the king came back with a great flaming torch in his hand. Looking at the floor he saw that the flour had not been disturbed, but he also saw that the beds of Tristano and Isotta were stained with blood, and that made him very suspicious.

In the morning, the king summoned before him the archbishop of the city, a very wise and ancient man who led the life of a saint. The king told him all about his suspicions of Isotta, and how because of them he wanted to have her burnt.

The archbishop said, "To accuse someone or to have a person killed out of suspicion is not lawful. You say that you are not certain of their sin. But if it pleases you, I will give you other holy and just advice."

The king replied that he would be glad of it, and would pay careful attention.

The archbishop told him, "Sire, I give you this counsel. Take your wife to Petrone Vermiglio, twenty-five leagues from here by sea, on the island of Matufer. Here it was that the six fathers and the great prophet went to do penance. Many holy relics and prophecies are gathered in Petrone Ver-

miglio, according to the writings of Carbone, and among these is a virtuous stone which will not let anyone tell a lie. When you reach the place, command the queen to lay her hand on that stone and swear that she has done no wrong. Then you will know for certain whether she is virtuous or not, for she cannot speak other than the truth.

"But if you would be even more certain, have her grasp the hot iron, because if she is telling the truth then the power of the relic will keep the iron from harming her. After this, you will be absolutely certain and sure, because the power of the stone at Petrone forbids that any one lie, not even within the distance from Petrone as ten times a man and a woman are tall: this is a true thing proven by more than a thousand people."

"However, I ask that you promise me this. If you find the queen guilty, you will not have her killed, for I do not want that she or anyone be killed as a result of my counsel. Rather have her put in prison and fed on bread and water."

The king was very pleased with this advice. Then the archbishop went to Queen Isotta, and told her what had happened, and how in ten days she must be ready to go to Petrone and prove herself. Isotta showed pleasure in her face, but in her heart she was more wretched and sorrowful than any lady in the world, because she felt very guilty. Well she knew that at Petrone Vermiglio one had to answer truthfully to whatever was asked, and otherwise could not open her mouth or say anything at all. She sent for Tristano and told him about all of the things the king had set for her to do. Sir Tristano thought a little, then said, "Lady, don't worry about anything, for I know how to arrange it that you will be completely safe, and that the burning iron will do you no harm. I will be on the island myself, disguised in such a way, and I will do such and such a thing under such and such conditions—and if this plan fails, I will resort to my sharp sword."

At that point, Tristano left the queen, armed himself, mounted, and sought leave of the king, saying he wanted to go and visit Duke Bramante, who had invited him many times. The king gave him leave to be gone for a month. Then Tristano rode to the port, to the house of a townsman who was a dear friend of his. Here he took off his armor, except for his sword, and equipped himself with everything he thought he might need. He embarked in a small boat all alone, and sailed to the island of Matufer, where Petrone Vermiglio was.

When the time came for the queen to be tested, King Marco, the archbishop, Isotta, and twenty old friars, abbots, and religious men left the city. When they reached the shore of Matufer, they met a pilgrim with a great hood over his head and a heavy staff in his hand, dressed in thick robes and wearing a great beard, and his face and person were all covered up. Nobody else appeared on the island.

Tristan and the Round Table

When the queen saw the pilgrim she called to him, saying, "Servant of God, please help me off this ship."

The pilgrim waded into the water up to his thighs, took the queen in his arms, and carried her to dry land. Then all at once he embraced her tightly, then alone and barefoot disappeared into the dense forest. The king was very upset by this, but the archbishop and the others spoke to like wise ancients, saying, "Sire, don't be angry; truly he who embraced the queen is a sainted hermit, and did it to show that she is not guilty." (Here the words of Merlin are proved which say, "The ancients were brave, loyal, and pure, but since their time we know malice, treachery, and cruelty.")

At that point, the queen began to weep, for know that she was a very clever lady, and the king sighed a deep sigh, saying that never in his presence had such villainy been done. Then they continued on foot through the wild wood. As they approached the stone they encountered a madman, dressed in rags, with his hair in a heap, barefoot, and with a mottled face. This madman was crouching under a cross, and also held a cross of cypress over his body, for the woods were full of them.

When the king saw this, he marvelled greatly. The archbishop approached the madman and with great devotion knelt and kissed the cross which he held in his right hand, then the king did this also, and the other men. When the queen came forward the madman embraced her and kissed her, and the king was very upset by this. But the archbishop said, "My lord, there is truly no cause for alarm, for I believe this fool lives by the love of God and the Holy Spirit."

Then they came to the stone, and the king commanded the queen to lay her right hand on it and swear to tell the truth. The queen did so, saying, "I swear by this holy relic that no one has come to me and used my body basely except for King Marco, the pilgrim at the dock, and the madman you see here. As far as goes any other, I am clean and pure and loyal, and with no other person have I ever done wrong, except those I have named."

The king, because his mind was made up, did not accept this, but said, "Lady, you have sinned, and you must hold the hot iron."

Then the queen took the iron and held it in her hand a long time, so that the king gave up his suspicions. With great love he embraced and kissed the queen, and gave her three rich castles: these were Antriadin, Liorlinge, and Pontier del Monte.

Then the king asked the madman what he was called and the madman replied, "I have the name Tantri,²¹ and if the "Tri" were put before the "Tan," I would have the name Tritan." But the king made no sense out of this, for Tristano spoke very secretly. Then the king, the queen, and their companions returned to the city of Tintoile, and Tristano stayed behind to make this excuse: "I already have the name Tritan. If the king had really heard me he would have cut off my head, for here near the stone I cannot lie."

Then Tristano uncovered his head and went to his boat, returning to the house of his loyal friend. He rested here for a day, then armed himself and set out on his way.

Tristan and
the Round Table

LXV.

The master of stories tells that when the next day came Tristano armed himself, mounted, and rode so that at the end of six days he arrived at the city of Teneson. As he rode up to Duke Bramante's great palace, the duke recognized him and received him with the greatest honor in the world, embracing and kissing him tenderly, because he had been waiting to see him for a long time.

Know that this duke was a pleasure-loving lord, who took great delight in life and merrymaking. After Tristano had been staying in this court for twelve days, one day he began to think about his love for the beautiful Isotta, and fell into the greatest melancholy in the world. He was so weighed down by thoughts of her that nothing could give him pleasure.

Then the duke, trying to lift his spirits, had brought before them a puppy he kept for his own great delight. It was called Petitto Araviuto, and had been nursed and nurtured by magic arts. No one alive knew how to describe its beauty, or say for certain what color it was: from whichever angle it was seen, it seemed to be of more colors than could be named. It was softer than silk to the touch, and was born of a brachet and a leopard. The maiden sounds of all the birds that could ever be found. It was leashed with a fine silver chain which, when it was shaken, made the sounds of flocks of singing birds. Tristano, looking at the little dog, was filled with such delight that it drew him away from all other thoughts.

After Tristano had been at court a few more days, he got up one morning to find the duke and his barons all downcast. Then he heard a herald cry in the city that within two weeks time every person would have to pay the tribute claimed by the great giant Urgano the Hairy. Then Tristano asked the duke what all this meant and the duke replied, "Thirty-six leagues from here lives a giant who holds a fortress on a cliff above the sea. The fortress is called Fermoracco della Piemontana, and every year this giant, in his great pride, comes to claim as tribute a tenth part of all the animals that have been born in my realm."

Then Tristano cried, "By my faith and my loyalty, this is too much like

"slavery!" Then he said nothing more, until it seemed to him that the right time had come.

Then he armed himself well and secretly mounted his good war horse and rode out of the city. He went all alone along the road he knew the giant must pass, and waited for him at a bridge across a wide river. When the giant had collected the many animals that were his tribute, he came back along the road, herding them. When this herd approached the bridge, Tristano rode forward and would not let them pass.

Seeing the knight, the giant called out to him, "Who are you, vassal, who holds my booty off this bridge?" Tristano answered him bravely: "By my faith, I am called Tristano of Cor-novaglia, and I care nothing for your pride!"

The giant replied, "If you don't fear my pride you'll soon fear my mace, unless you get out of the way at once!"

Then he swung his mace, which weighed 130 pounds, and hurled it at Tristano. The blow missed Tristano, but it hit his horse on the shoulder in such a way that the animal died of the blow. Then Tristano was on foot, and very angry about it. He dropped his lance and took his sword in hand, and when the giant bent down to pick up his mace, quick as he could Tristano landed a blow that severed the giant's right hand just as it closed on the weapon. When he realized what had happened, the giant flew into a rage. He took the mace in his other hand and struck Tristano's shield with such force that the knight was knocked to the ground. Then Tristano grasped his good sword and began to attack the giant who was standing on the bank of the great river. As the giant was guarding himself with his shield, Tristano thought of a way to beat him by subtlety. He did no more with his sword, which was of little use, but instead pushed the giant with all his strength and made him fall into the valley of the great river. It was of that fall that the giant died.

Then Tristano picked up the giant's severed hand, gathered the scattered animals, and returned to Duke Bramante, saying, "Noble friend, here is Urgano's hand, which releases you from tribute forever and ever. Your Tristano has killed him for love of you, and it has cost me dearly, for he killed my good and loyal horse."

Then the duke embraced and kissed Tristano more than a hundred times, and gave him another good horse, the best and the noblest that then might be found. He also gave him Petitto Araviuto, which Tristano gladly took as a gift for Queen Isotta.

Then he took leave of the duke and returned to King Marco's court, where the king honored him greatly. Still, Tristano's love for the beautiful Isotta did not diminish, and he thought of nothing but how he could take delight with her. Great rumors about all this flew around the court, and King Marco and all the barons were aware of it.

LXVI.

TRISTAN AND
THE ROUND TABLE

The true story tells that as Tristano stayed on, living this way, one of the court counselors, a man called Mariadoco, gave the king this advice: "Sire, one sorrow is better than a thousand. Therefore, if you want to escape this sadness and give yourself peace, it would be good for you to do as the proverb says: 'Give the good share to the bad companion, and part ways with him.' If you want to bring your sorrow to an end, banish Tristano and Isotta out of your kingdom, and you will suffer no more unhappiness on their account."

Then the king, who was a man easily persuaded, acted on Mariadoco's advice. He commanded Tristano and Isotta to leave his kingdom at once and never return, on pain of perpetual imprisonment, because he would rather lose all than share part. Then with great sighs and lamentations Tristano and the queen rode out of the city and set out together.

As they rode, Isotta, who had cried as she came before the king, began to sing a sweet melody, and Tristano, who had sighed so heavily, began to laugh, saying, "God, we thank you for the good fortune you have given us. The king thinks he has done us great damage, but by my faith, he has never served us so well in his life!"

Then they rode into the great wilderness of Urgano. At the crest of a high hill they found a beautiful house. It pleased them very much because it had a lovely fountain, a garden full of wild and domestic plants, and was thirteen leagues outside of Tintoile: here the two courtly lovers decided to live.

Brandina rode out every day to the castle of Monte Albrano to care for their needs, and Tristano went hunting every morning until the hour of tierce, killing many beasts. When he returned, they had dinner, played a game or two of chess, and after midday they rested and took delight, not in bed, but because of the great heat they amused themselves on a giant table of cypress, very beautiful. And always when Sir Tristano slept, he kept his naked sword between Isotta and him as a sign of the cross, because the place was wild and uncivilized. The two lovers were very content to be together in such a way, and the birds went singing through the greenwood. Because of all this, Tristano and Isotta were very happy.

LXVII.

Now the tale here says that when King Marco found himself living alone, day and night he complained and lamented out loud, saying to himself, "Alas, Tristano, Tristano, now you may well be content. I was never so deceived as when I banished you from my court and from my city, on the advice of my false and evil counselor. If I had thought about it, I would have seen that it would have been better if you had banished me. I would be happier if you had stayed on as king and I had gone away with the beautiful Isotta. Oh, how my heart is sad for you!"

As the king stayed thus sorrowing, there came a holiday, and to pass the time he went hunting in the great wilderness, accompanied by many barons and knights. After they had been hunting for four days, the king spent most of one day following a single stag alone except for one companion. Because they were tired and it was very hot, they grew thirsty. Looking about, they found a stream of water, so they climbed down a bank to see where it was coming from. At the top of a slope they saw a beautiful fountain, and near it a rich and lovely house. Then the king dismounted and, giving his horse to his companion to watch, went to find out if anyone lived there.

As he came into the downstairs hall, he found Tristano and Isotta asleep, because it was midday, on their table; and between them lay the naked sword. Then the king was very puzzled, and marvelled to himself. He thought that the sword was between them as a symbol of chastity and, weeping, he said, "Alas, dear, noble nephew, alas my noble wife! How evil my thoughts have been, and how evilly was I advised! If you had any wicked desires, I think you would sleep in some other way. You would take your rest in another manner after pleasure and delight."

At that moment, a little ray of sunlight entered through a narrow window and struck the face of the beautiful Isotta, making her warm. This made her perspire, and made her face look like rosy milk, it was so flushed. The king gazed at her and thought about her great beauty, weeping heavily, sighing and trembling. Greatly he desired that angelic face.

Then he drew out an ermine glove and put it in the window where the sun shone through. Tenderly he kissed her, then with many sighs he went quietly out, returning to his companion and remounting his horse. He said nothing about all this, but met his barons and rode back to Tintoile.

There he sought out Mariadoco and stabbed him with a dagger, killing him at once, saying, "This I do to repay the evil and disloyal counsel you gave me against my lady Isotta and my loyal nephew Tristano."

This is how King Marco paid Mariadoco for the evil advice which he had given; thus will be paid all others who deceive their friends!

At that point, the king summoned Gheddino, Tristano's brother-in-law, and called Adriette and two other barons, and sent them to ask Tristano and Isotta to return to court. The four knights mounted and rode to the place where the lovers were staying and so managed it that they came back to the court. The king, when he saw them, honored them greatly, and for a time put all of his suspicions away.

TRISTAN AND
ISOTTA

LXVIII.

The true story tells that one day when King Marco and Tristano were in the great hall in the company of many other knights and barons, the winsome Isotta came through the chamber, attended by her ladies and maidens. She was dressed in a beautiful robe of delicate colors, and her blonde hair covered her shoulders and her back, as the fashion was. On her head she wore a lovely, dainty crown of gold and precious stones, and her face looked like a new rose, tender, chaste, and pleasing. She was as graceful as anyone could possibly describe, truly the most beautiful thing nature knew how to form. At that moment Gheddino, Tristano's brother-in-law, began to gaze at her, and refreshed himself in looking at Isotta. Seeing her so beautiful and of a loveliness so fine, he said to himself, "Never again could nature make a woman as lovely as this."

And he thought so hard about the beauties of Isotta, and they pleased him so much, that he fell madly in love with her. So strong and violent was this love that it struck him right through the middle of his heart. Suddenly a chill took him, one that made him tremble all over, and afterwards a wave of heat which, together with the chill, gave him the quartan fever, so that he nearly died. He couldn't eat or drink or sleep. So affected was his nature that he became very weak, and this happened because he loved and was not loved in return.

And in this be sure that Gheddino was a mirror to reflect all other lovers who love and are not rewarded for their love: Gheddino, loving so secretly and not being loved, was suddenly taken with fever so dangerous and wearisome that it brought him nearly to his death, and made him live in great fear and dread.

He thought to himself, "Am I joyful or not?" A steady melancholy gripped his heart and so depressed him that he lost all of his natural cheerfulness. Know that this quartan has three properties: the first is that it alternates

THE ROUND TABLE

heat and cold, the second is that it comes slowly and lasts a long time, and the third is that it is very strong and must go away by itself; there is no doubt that it is a cruel and unpleasant disease. Thus the man who loves is stricken with this fever, along with three cold qualities which he has within himself: melancholy, pensiveness, and fear. But in him also is heat, that is, the faith and hope that he will receive recompense.

All this is made manifest in that the faithful lover trembles, and for good reason, for the blow of love is so strong it would send anyone to earth. No knight is so worthy that he dares wait for it, and there is no king who, receiving such a blow, would not cease dispensing justice; it countenances nothing except obedience. The blow is so strong that anyone who cannot stand it had better fly: this is because the two lovers are in one pleasure, and the pleasure is one love, and the two lovers become one thing, joined in delight and pleasure.

Thus Gheddino, as long as he could hope, did not die and did not recover, but only took comfort in hoping. That is to say, when loving the beautiful Isotta had worn him completely out, he would die. In this he shows that he who loves and is rewarded recovers and lives, but he who is not compensated for his love dies with no remedy. Thus know that it is for his own sake that he loves, and for his own sake that he feels desire. To love is to be chaste and selfless and think of nothing but the other's pleasure; to be courageous, and humble where need be, happy, generous, courteous, and joyous in temper. Simply to desire is to love in vain, and lovers who do this disgrace themselves and others and bring dishonor upon courtly love. They are of no use to themselves and no service to anyone else.

But Gheddino so loved the beautiful Isotta that he neither slept nor rested, drank little and ate less. Sir Tristano, who did not know where such an illness came from, was very grieved by it, and continually tended him and had him treated by the best doctors he could find, but none of them knew how to cure this infirmity. No one knew where it came from, but that was no marvel. The sickness of lovers is in a vein in the middle of their hearts; that is, it runs from the top of the heart through all the other circuits of the body, so that when the lover's heart is sad, all of the other parts of his body are dolorous and melancholy, too. And because the lover's sickness is stronger and more dangerous than any other, so it is more concentrated and more hidden.

Gheddino suffered from this lovesickness for three months, and nearly died. Seeing himself thus affected and in bad straits, he declared himself and wrote a letter, sending it at once to Isotta to let her know about his great torment. Isotta and Brandina together opened the letter to find out what it said. It said this:

LXIX.

tristan and
isotta

To the queen of queens, lady of ladies, dearest and most noble, crowned with every nobility, pleasing star above all others, gleaming lily, fresh, frank sweet-smelling rose, new-blown flower, precious jewel, gem of purity, full of beauty, with all bounty and virtue ornamented, I, Gheddino, recommend myself to you. With humble prayers I beg of you, my lady Queen Isotta, For you are the only one who can bring me from death to life, since for your gentle love I am about to die. Thus I ask for your comfort, for the brightness of your lovely face has put me so much in your power that truly I can find neither peace nor rest. Only to imagine your beauty has brought me to this state, because I cannot possess you. If I could possess you, I am sure I would recover my life.

"Now I am sending you my sword, and if you intend to comfort me, keep it, but otherwise send it back to me, for surely when I see it I will use it to kill myself, and then it may well be said that I had the evil fortune to love without pity."

When Isotta read the letter she was very upset by it, saying to herself, "Alas, traitor Gheddino, how could you think I would abandon Tristano for you or any other man who lives?"

But Brandina said, "I am sure, my lady, that this Gheddino deserves a strong reproof, but I wish that for now you would send him a kind word of comfort, and when he is better we can speak to him in such a way that he will think no more of such folly."

Then Isotta wrote a letter, and sent it to Gheddino. It said this:

LXX.

To you, Gheddino, son of the king of Petitta Brettagna, from me, Isotta, queen of Cornovaglia. I have received a letter from you and I have read it seriously and with great love. Now I send to you to ask that you be comforted, be of good heart and let yourself be happy, for when you are well I will speak to you gladly of things I will not speak of now." When Gheddino read this letter, he was completely comforted, believing

that Isotta loved him with courtly love. He recovered very quickly, and always he carried the letter in his pocket, for it gave him great ease. Thus it went for about twenty days, until one day Tristano went to Gheddino's room to talk with him as he was used to do, and found him asleep, with Isotta's letter on the pillow beside him.

Then Tristano picked it up and read it at once, because he recognized his lady's handwriting. As he was reading it, he grew all dismayed and pale, saying to himself, "Alas beautiful Isotta, why have you deceived me like this? Alas, lord God, how can such a sin be?" Then he called to Gheddino as he was waking him and said to him, "Brother-in-law, brother-in-law, you have deceived me. I have confided so much in you, and you have betrayed me and killed me!"

At that, Tristano took his knife in his hand to kill Gheddino, and truly would have killed him at once, he was so angry and suspicious about the crime; but Gheddino, because he was so afraid, forgot that he was sick, and quickly threw himself out of the window. He fell into the garden, right before the king and queen who were playing chess together for their delight.

The king thought that Gheddino had fallen out of the window in his sleep, and at once had him carried inside and laid in a rich bed to rest, for the young man was all stunned.

But Tristano, for his great sorrow, lost his memory and could neither see nor feel; he became like a man afflicted. He went then into the hall and put on all of his armor, and he was greatly tormented. The queen, when she saw him so sad and melancholy, asked him the cause, and Tristano replied, "Alas, Isotta, how can it happen that you have so deceived and betrayed me? Who could believe this, that you would leave Tristano and abandon him for Gheddino? Certainly, I cannot believe such wickedness. I would never abandon you for anyone in the world. Alas! Now I see that I have been led to such a point and such a condition that never again will my heart or my body know any joy or any goodness. I see that I am so wrought upon that I am nearly dead."

Such a lament did Tristano make to the queen that nothing like it had ever been heard. The queen tried to explain herself, to tell him truly and effectively how great the need had been, but Tristano was so inflamed with anger that he would listen to nothing she said. Full of torment, he left her and went to the main stable, where he mounted the first palfrey he came to. He went out of the city and rode day after day without eating or drinking until he came into a deep valley of the forest of Urgano.

Then he let his horse walk, threw away all his arms, tore his clothes, soured his blonde hair, and disfigured his handsome face, and always, in his great sadness, made the greatest complaint in the world. He went naked and barefoot and neither drank nor ate; weeping and fasting sapped his natural strength; he lost his sense and recognition of everything, and came

to such a state that he pastured on grass. Once in a while, by some luck, he caught a beast with his bare hands and ate it raw.

He grew sunburnt, mottled, and thin, and was in such a condition that the mother who bore him would never have recognized him. Often he came to a certain spring much used by several shepherds. These men would sometimes give him bread and other things to eat, but sometimes they would beat him with their staffs. Tristano did not seem to notice whether he was treated well or badly, because he remembered nothing that had ever happened in the past, neither that he had been a knight, nor that he had done deeds of arms. He did not remember the beautiful Isotta or King Marco, he had lost his memory so completely that he did not remember anything that had happened in the world, and he lived like this more than seven months.

One day when he was at the spring with the shepherds, eight lions appeared, and the shepherds were so frightened that they fled, leaving their flocks. Only Tristano stayed behind with five big strong mastiffs. The lions attacked the sheep and ate as many as they wanted, and killed four of the dogs. The fifth dog, out of fear, came to Tristano and stayed beside him. Seeing this, Tristano picked up a big, hard, strong club and began to rain blows on these lions in such a way that he killed five of the eight, and the others fled into the wilderness. When the shepherds came back and found the dogs and the lions dead they marvelled greatly, and because of this gave Tristano more bread than they had ever given him before.

Tristano said nothing, but ate like a lunatic. Nonetheless, the shepherds began to think well of him and care for him; still he did not notice whether they treated him well and honored him or not. It was all the same to him.

While Tristano was living like this for seven months, neither King Marco nor Isotta nor anyone else knew what had happened. Everyone thought that Tristano had gone seeking adventures in a foreign land, although they wondered very much why he had not taken with him his good sword and his fine horse, as he always had before.

The master of stories tells how one day King Marco with his barons and knights went hunting in the great forest of Urgano. After hunting through the countryside for more than twelve days, King Marco went out alone one morning and came to the Fontana Serpilina, where Tristano lived with the shepherds. The king, who was rather tired, dismounted by the water to refresh himself. Looking around, he saw the madman there all nude, sleeping close by, and he was the most contemptible thing in the world to see. The king asked the shepherds who this wretched creature was, and the shepherds replied that it was a fool who had been living with them for some time. Then after the king had rested a little, he put a horn of ivory to his lips and sounded a great blast, so that his companions would come to find him.

At that the fool leaped up, all dismayed, and began to shout, "Catch, catch! Run, run! To them, to them!" He said whatever came out of his mouth. The shepherds, who feared that his noise would disturb the king, began to beat Tristano and strike him with great clubs, and they hit him so hard that—in a bad hour for them—they made him angry. No longer able to endure it, he threw himself among them and wrenched away one of their great thick clubs. He began to strike them, so hard and so angrily that he killed seven of the eighteen; the others all fled for fear of him.

The king, seeing all this, was much afraid. He took his sword in hand and leaped up on a corner of the fountain. In a moment Sir Adriette and the other knights arrived and asked who had killed these shepherds. The king told them, "That fool there, he killed them."

They all marvelled greatly at this, and Adriette asked the king to bring the fool to the city. They approached him, giving him bread and meat, and flattered and enticed him so that he followed after them. They rode back to the city of Tintoile, where no one recognized Tristano at all, he had altered so much. And he himself did not know where he was or where he went, either coming or going.

As Tristano the fool made his way through the city, he encountered a peasant driving a mule loaded with jugs of water; the man began to goad Tristano along with the mule as if he were also an animal. This made Tristano angry at once, so that he picked up the peasant and with great strength held him in the air and brought him down over the water jars, breaking his bones and his heart, killing the mule, and shattering all of the jars. He did all this just by holding the peasant in his bare hands.

When the king and the barons saw this, they marvelled at the great strength the fool displayed. With many bribes and with great care they lured him to the palace and closed him in the great hall. But whenever he got out

he went around tearing and breaking everything, and if he encountered horses and men he threw them to the ground, injuring the horses, and nobody dared to get in his way, for fear of feeling his club on their shoulders.

He still went naked, because whenever he was given clothes he would rip them off and throw the scraps around, and worry them with his teeth. He was all black and mottled, and it was the most disgusting thing in the world to look at him. Thus he lived in the city six days, until the king had the hall closed up. He did this to prevent more damage, for the madman had already killed more than twenty-four people with his fists and stones and clubs.

One day Tristano got away, escaping from the hall one morning and going down the stairs. He encountered a squire who was washing and grooming Tristano's horse. When the animal saw the fool, he knew him for his lord and at once began to paw and neigh and make such a disturbance that the attendant could in no way keep hold of him. At this the squire, thinking to show off his own strength, reached for the horse, intending to hold him by the bridle. But the beast reared, rising on his hind legs in such a way that he sent the boy dead to the ground, and broke the halter and reins by which he was tied to a great ring. At once he started after the fool, climbing seven steps of the staircase and putting both his feet on Tristano's shoulders. The fool picked up great stones which lay at hand and threw them at the horse, but the worst he could do did not drive the animal away. The horse stayed all the more at his side and showed great joy. Fleeing this, the fool went back into the hall and stayed there a few more days.

Another day, out of the queen's chamber came the little dog Idonia, a companion of the love potion. He began to bark when he saw the fool, for he also recognized him. He showed great joy and began to lick him, showing him the greatest honor in the world, and for the worst Tristano could do, the little dog would not leave him.

The king, when he saw how the dog was behaving, wondered at it. And because he looked a long, long time he began to recognize his nephew Tristano, knowing him for certain by a mark on his left arm. At that moment the king began to make the greatest complaint in the world, saying: "Alas, lord God, woe is me! I am so unfortunate that a dog has recognized his lord for his lord sooner than I have recognized my own nephew for who he is!"

Then he lifted the cloak from around his own neck and covered Sir Tristano with it, saying, "Alas, lord God! What have you come to, my nephew?"

When the barons recognized Tristano, they, too, began to make the greatest lament in the world, showing great sorrow, and thinking themselves blessed that they could touch him and treat him well. Then the king had him put in a chamber that was quiet and dark. He sent at once for the queen, who all this time had been the saddest lady in the world. From the day her Tristano had left her, she had not come out of her room, and she felt

very guilty because of the sorrow she had that he had left her in anger. She had no idea where he might have gone, and she wanted very much to see him and be near him.

LXXII.

In this part the story tells that when Queen Isotta came before King Marco he said to her, "Lady, see here my nephew Tristano. Do you see what he has come to and how he is living? Surely I can have neither joy nor gladness until he is cured and brought back to health, and so I recommend him to your care as much as I would myself."

Isotta, hearing that this was her loyal lover Tristano, felt suddenly faint, and was the saddest lady in the world to see him so dishonored. Still, she comforted the king for two reasons: because if she had charge of Tristano she thought she could cure him, and because she did not want the king to know her true feelings. She said to him, "Sire, I will do everything in my power to cure him for love of you."

Then Isotta had Tristano led to a room far from other people, and gave orders that no one enter the chamber except Brandina, who would guard him night and day. Then she had Tristano put into a comfortable bed, and made medicines to put on his head. She had him eat fine confections and comforting, restorative things; she gave him fine wine to drink, tempered with water, and so tended him day after day that he got back part of his memory and his health.

Then he began to look about. He gazed through the room and thought, "Where am I? Who am I? How am I here?" Then he began to wonder to himself, for he saw that Brandina was watching him, though he did not recognize her, and he saw that he was lying in a rich bed, but he did not know where. Then, somewhat bewildered, he asked, "Lady, for courtesy's sake, tell me where I am."

Brandina replied, "Certainly, sir. You are in the palace in the middle of Tintoile."

Then Tristano said, "In what manner or way did I come to be here? Am I at present a friend or an enemy of my lord and uncle, King Marco?"

Brandina answered, "Sir, you are his very dear friend."

And Tristano asked her, "Lady, who are you, tell me, who stays here inside with me?"

"Who are you who asks me such a thing?" said Brandina, and Tristano answered, "Surely I am called Tristano, the most unfortunate knight in the world."

Tristan and

Then she said, "Now know, Tristano, that I am Brandina, your faithful servant."

At that, Tristano remembered the L

"I ought to love you."

At that, Tristano remembered the beautiful Isotta. He said to Brandina, "I ought to love you very much for your faithfulness and loyalty, but I ought and can hate Queen Isotta just as much, she who has deceived and betrayed me. I never believed it could happen, that she could leave Tristano for Ched-dino, for I would never leave her for any other person."

But Brandina said to Tristano, "You yourself speak great evil and great wickedness when you blame the queen for so great a wrong. She has a greater reason to blame you and weep for you than you for her. You have nearly killed her for no reason, for since you left she has not had one hour of happiness or well-being, but your mad belief has brought pain to you both." "It is you who speak great evil," said Tristano, "because I read the letter Isotta sent to Gheddino, written in her own hand, and I know what it says, which are cut into my heart."

Brandina, written in her own hand, and I read those words which are cut into my heart."

Brandina answered, "He who believes lightly will be deceived. Because you believed falsely and would not listen to any excuse, nothing came of it but evil. Well you know that I have always been loyal to you, that I have never done you any wrong or told you any lies. Therefore if you will listen and believe me I will explain everything that happened. And I swear to you, my dear lord, that I will tell you the truth point by point."

Then Tristano said, "Speak Brandina. So I said.

Then Tristano said, "Speak, Brandina. Surely there is nothing in the world you could say that I would not believe. But alas! Tell me the truth."

Then Brandina told Tristano how matters stood, and how that letter had been written to give some small comfort to Gheddino, and not to do any wrong, or for any other reason. "And I promise you that the letter was sent according to my advice, since seeing that you loved Gheddino so much, we did not want to argue with him at that point, but so that he might recover, we gave him such words and such answers that he might never know scorn in Cornovaglia. And if you knew the pain and sorrow that Queen Isotta has suffered because of you, you would be certain that she is the most loyal lady in the world."

Then Tristano said, "Tell me the truth, Brandina, were all these things you just told me true?"

And Brandina again took an oath, and Tristano began to make the greatest complaint in the world, saying, "Alas, woe is me, oh sorrow! Alas that I have done my lady such a great wrong!" Then he asked, "That letter you sent, did it make Gheddingo recover?"

Brandina replied, "Now know that when he understood that the letter was only written to comfort him, he left at once to go back to Petitta Bret-

The Round Table
Tristano. And know that he was so burdened by his illness that he could not
speak. As they spoke together this way, King Marco came in with several other
barons to visit Tristano. When Tristano saw him, he was very puzzled, for
he had not yet gotten back all of his memory.
The king said, "Tristano, how do you feel now?"
Then Tristano began to shout, saying, "I don't know, I don't understand
you, who is it? I don't know, there is nothing I can do, who is it? Where
is my sword? Give me my sword!"
Then he lifted himself and tried to get out of bed. Thus the king saw that
Tristano had not yet recovered his good sense and his memory, and said,
"Surely I see that Tristano is much better, but he still is not cured, for he
speaks of crazy things."
The king did not want to disturb him any more, so he left him there,
in Medina not to leave his side, and to stay beside him always.
It lasted two months and a little more; then
Tristano died in secret.

The king did not want to disturb him any more, so he left him there, commanding Brandina not to leave his side, and to stay beside him always. The state Tristano was in then lasted two months and a little more; then began to ride out through the city. He was completely and went to speak with her in secret and the king, when

The state Tristano was in then lasted he was cured, and began to ride out through the city, reconciled with the beautiful Isotta, and went to speak with her in secret many times. Rumors about this flew through the court and the king, when he heard them, began to wear an evil countenance. This situation made him very pensive, and he thought constantly of ways he might banish Tristano or even have him killed, so that he could be more certain of his lady Isotta, and not be so unhappy all the time.