

PREFACE OF WILLIAM CAXTON

After that I had accomplished and finished divers histories, as well of contemplation as of other historial and worldly acts of great conquerors and princes, and also certain books of ensamples and doctrine, many noble and divers gentlemen of this realm of England came and demanded me many and oft times, wherefore that I have not do made and imprint the noble history of the Saint Greal, and of the most renowned Christian king, first and chief of the three best Christian, and worthy, King Arthur, which ought most to be remembered among us Englishmen to-fore all other Christian kings; for it is notoyrly known through the universal world, that there be nine worthy and the best that ever were, that is to wit, three Paynims, three Jews, and three Christian men. As for the Paynims, they were to-fore the Incarnation of Christ, which were named, the first Hector of Troy, of whom the history is comen both in ballad and in prose, the second Alexander the Great, and the third Julius Caesar, Emperor of Rome, of whom the histories be well known and had. And as for the three Jews, which also were to-fore the incarnation of our Lord, of whom the first was duke Joshua which brought the children of Israel into the land of behest, the second David king of Jerusalem, and the third Judas Machabeus, of these three the Bible rehearseth all their noble histories and acts. And since the said Incarnation have been three noble Christian men, stalled and admitted through the universal world into the number of the nine best and worthy. Of whom was first the noble Arthur, whose noble acts I purpose to write in this present book here following. The second was Charlemain, or Charles the Great, of whom the history is had in many places, both in French and in English. And the third and last was Godfrey of Boloine, of whose acts and life I made a book unto the excellent prince and king of noble memory, King Edward the Fourth.

The said noble gentlemen instantly required me to imprint the history of the said noble king and conqueror King Arthur, and of his knights, with the history of the Saint Greal, and of the death and ending of the said Arthur; affirming that I ought rather to imprint his acts and noble feats, than of Godfrey of Boloine, or any of the other eight, considering that he was a man born within this realm, and king and emperor of the same: and that there be in French divers and many noble volumes of his acts, and also of his knights. To whom I answered that divers men hold opinion that there was no such Arthur, and that all such books as been made of him be feigned and fables, because that some chronicles make of him no mention, nor remember him nothing, nor of his knights. Whereto they answered, and one in special said, that in him that should say or think that there was never such a king called Arthur might well be aretted great folly and blindness. For he said that there were many evidences of the contrary. First ye may see his sepulchre in the monastery of Glastonbury. And also in Policronicon, in the fifth book the sixth chapter, and in the seventh book the twenty-third chapter, where his body was buried, and after found, and translated into the said monastery. Ye shall see also in the history of Bochas, in his book De Casu Principum, part of his noble acts, and also of his fall. Also Galfridus in his British

book recounteth his life: and in divers places of England many remembrances be yet of him, and shall remain perpetually, and also of his knights. First in the abbey of Westminster, at St. Edward's shrine, remaineth the print of his seal in red wax closed in beryl, in which is written, Patricius Arthurus Britannie, Gallie, Germanie, Dacie, Imperator. Item in the castle of Dover ye may see Gawaine's skull, and Cradok's mantle: at Winchester the Round Table: in other places Launcelot's sword and many other things. Then all these things considered, there can no man reasonably gainsay but there was a king of this land named Arthur. For in all places, Christian and heathen, he is reputed and taken for one of the nine worthy, and the first of the three Christian men. And also, he is more spoken of beyond the sea, more books made of his noble acts, than there be in England, as well in Dutch, Italian, Spanish, and Greekish, as in French. And yet of record remain in witness of him in Wales, in the town of Camelot, the great stones and the marvellous works of iron lying under the ground, and royal vaults, which divers now living have seen. Wherefore it is a marvel why he is no more renowned in his own country, save only it accordeth to the Word of God, which saith that no man is accepted for a prophet in his own country.

Then all these things aforesaid alleged, I could not well deny but that there was such a noble king named Arthur, and reputed one of the nine worthy, and first and chief of the Christian men. And many noble volumes be made of him and of his noble knights in French, which I have seen and read beyond the sea, which be not had in our maternal tongue. But in Welsh be many and also in French, and some in English but nowhere nigh all. Wherefore, such as have late been drawn out briefly into English I have after the simple conning that God hath sent to me, under the favour and correction of all noble lords and gentlemen, enprised to imprint a book of the noble histories of the said King Arthur, and of certain of his knights, after a copy unto me delivered, which copy Sir Thomas Malorye did take out of certain books of French, and reduced it into English. And I, according to my copy, have done set it in imprint, to the intent that noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days, by which they came to honour, and how they that were vicious were punished and oft put to shame and rebuke; humbly beseeching all noble lords and ladies, with all other estates of what estate or degree they been of, that shall see and read in this said book and work, that they take the good and honest acts in their remembrance, and to follow the same. Wherein they shall find many joyous and pleasant histories, and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalry. For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown. And for to pass the time this book shall be pleasant to read in, but for to give faith and belief that all is true that is contained herein, ye be at your liberty: but all is written for our doctrine, and for to beware that we fall not to vice nor sin, but to exercise and follow virtue, by which we may come and attain to good fame and renown in this life, and after this short and transitory life to come unto everlasting bliss in heaven; the which He grant us that reigneth in heaven, the blessed Trinity. Amen.

Then to proceed forth in this said book, which I direct unto all noble princes, lords and ladies, gentlemen or gentlewomen, that desire to read or hear read of the noble and joyous history of the great conqueror and excellent king, King Arthur, sometime king of this noble realm, then called Britain; I, William Caxton, simple person, present this book following, which I have enprised to imprint: and treateth of the noble acts, feats of arms of chivalry, prowess, hardiness, humanity, love, courtesy, and very gentleness, with many wonderful histories and adventures. And for to understand briefly the content of this volume, I have divided it into XXI Books, and every book chaptered, as hereafter shall by God's grace follow. The First Book shall treat how Uther Pendragon gat the noble conqueror King Arthur, and containeth xxviii chapters. The Second Book treateth of Balin the noble knight, and containeth xix chapters. The Third Book treateth of the marriage of King Arthur to Queen Guenever, with other matters, and containeth xv chapters. The Fourth Book, how Merlin was assotted, and of war made to King Arthur, and containeth xxix chapters. The Fifth Book treateth of the conquest of Lucius the emperor, and containeth xii chapters. The Sixth Book treateth of Sir Launcelot and Sir Lionel, and marvellous adventures, and containeth xviii chapters. The Seventh Book treateth of a noble knight called Sir Gareth, and named by Sir Kay Beaumains, and containeth xxxvi chapters. The Eighth Book treateth of the birth of Sir Tristram the noble knight, and of his acts, and containeth xli chapters. The Ninth Book treateth of a knight named by Sir Kay Le Cote Male Taille, and also of Sir Tristram, and containeth xliv chapters. The Tenth Book treateth of Sir Tristram, and other marvellous adventures, and containeth lxxxviii chapters. The Eleventh Book treateth of Sir Launcelot and Sir Galahad, and containeth xiv chapters. The Twelfth Book treateth of Sir Launcelot and his madness, and containeth xiv chapters. The Thirteenth Book treateth how Galahad came first to king Arthur's court, and the quest how the Sangreal was begun, and containeth xx chapters. The Fourteenth Book treateth of the quest of the Sangreal, and containeth x chapters. The Fifteenth Book treateth of Sir Launcelot, and containeth vi chapters. The Sixteenth Book treateth of Sir Bors and Sir Lionel his brother, and containeth xvii chapters. The Seventeenth Book treateth of the Sangreal, and containeth xxiii chapters. The Eighteenth Book treateth of Sir Launcelot and the queen, and containeth xxv chapters. The Nineteenth Book treateth of Queen Guenever and Launcelot, and containeth xiii chapters. The Twentieth Book treateth of the piteous death of Arthur, and containeth xxii chapters. The Twenty-first Book treateth of his last departing, and how Sir Launcelot came to revenge his death, and containeth xiii chapters. The sum is twenty-one books, which contain the sum of five hundred and seven chapters, as more plainly shall follow hereafter.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

First, How Uther Pendragon sent for the duke of Cornwall and Igraine his wife, and of their departing suddenly again.

It befell in the days of Uther Pendragon, when he was king of all England, and so reigned, that there was a mighty duke in Cornwall that held war against him long time. And the duke was called the Duke of Tintagil. And so by means King Uther sent for this duke, charging him to bring his wife with him, for she was called a fair lady, and a passing wise, and her name was called Igraine.

So when the duke and his wife were come unto the king, by the means of great lords they were accorded both. The king liked and loved this lady well, and he made them great cheer out of measure, and desired to have lain by her. But she was a passing good woman, and would not assent unto the king. And then she told the duke her husband, and said, I suppose that we were sent for that I should be dishonoured; wherefore, husband, I counsel you, that we depart from hence suddenly, that we may ride all night unto our own castle. And in like wise as she said so they departed, that neither the king nor none of his council were ware of their departing. All so soon as King Uther knew of their departing so suddenly, he was wonderly wroth. Then he called to him his privy council, and told them of the sudden departing of the duke and his wife.

Then they advised the king to send for the duke and his wife by a great charge; and if he will not come at your summons, then may ye do your best, then have ye cause to make mighty war upon him. So that was done, and the messengers had their answers; and that was this shortly, that neither he nor his wife would not come at him.

Then was the king wonderly wroth. And then the king sent him plain word again, and bade him be ready and stuff him and garnish him, for within forty days he would fetch him out of the biggest castle that he hath.

When the duke had this warning, anon he went and furnished and garnished two strong castles of his, of the which the one hight Tintagil, and the other castle hight Terrabil. So his wife Dame Igraine he put in the castle of Tintagil, and himself he put in the castle of Terrabil, the which had many issues and posterns out. Then in all haste came Uther with a great host, and laid a siege about the castle of Terrabil. And there he pight many pavilions, and there was great war made on both parties, and much people slain. Then for pure anger and for great love of fair Igraine the king Uther fell sick. So came to the king Uther Sir Ulfius, a noble knight, and asked the king why he was sick. I shall tell thee, said the king, I am sick for anger and for love of fair Igraine, that I may not be whole. Well, my lord, said Sir Ulfius, I shall seek Merlin, and he shall do you remedy, that your heart shall be pleased. So Ulfius departed, and by adventure he met Merlin in a beggar's array, and there Merlin asked Ulfius whom he sought. And he said

he had little ado to tell him. Well, said Merlin, I know whom thou seekest, for thou seekest Merlin; therefore seek no farther, for I am he; and if King Uther will well reward me, and be sworn unto me to fulfil my desire, that shall be his honour and profit more than mine; for I shall cause him to have all his desire. All this will I undertake, said Ulfius, that there shall be nothing reasonable but thou shalt have thy desire. Well, said Merlin, he shall have his intent and desire. And therefore, said Merlin, ride on your way, for I will not be long behind.

CHAPTER II.

How Uther Pendragon made war on the duke of Cornwall, and how by the mean of Merlin he lay by the duchess and gat Arthur.

Then Ulfius was glad, and rode on more than a pace till that he came to King Uther Pendragon, and told him he had met with Merlin. Where is he? said the king. Sir, said Ulfius, he will not dwell long. Therewithal Ulfius was ware where Merlin stood at the porch of the pavilion's door. And then Merlin was bound to come to the king. When King Uther saw him, he said he was welcome. Sir, said Merlin, I know all your heart every deal; so ye will be sworn unto me as ye be a true king anointed, to fulfil my desire, ye shall have your desire. Then the king was sworn upon the Four Evangelists. Sir, said Merlin, this is my desire: the first night that ye shall lie by Igraine ye shall get a child on her, and when that is born, that it shall be delivered to me for to nourish there as I will have it; for it shall be your worship, and the child's avail, as mickle as the child is worth. I will well, said the king, as thou wilt have it. Now make you ready, said Merlin, this night ye shall lie with Igraine in the castle of Tintagil; and ye shall be like the duke her husband, Ulfius shall be like Sir Brastias, a knight of the duke's, and I will be like a knight that hight Sir Jordanus, a knight of the duke's. But wait ye make not many questions with her nor her men, but say ye are diseased, and so hie you to bed, and rise not on the morn till I come to you, for the castle of Tintagil is but ten miles hence; so this was done as they devised. But the duke of Tintagil espied how the king rode from the siege of Terrabil, and therefore that night he issued out of the castle at a postern for to have distressed the king's host. And so, through his own issue, the duke himself was slain or ever the king came at the castle of Tintagil.

So after the death of the duke, King Uther lay with Igraine more than three hours after his death, and begat on her that night Arthur, and on day came Merlin to the king, and bade him make him ready, and so he kissed the lady Igraine and departed in all haste. But when the lady heard tell of the duke her husband, and by all record he was dead or ever King Uther came to her, then she marvelled who that might be that lay with her in likeness of her lord; so she mourned privily and held her peace. Then all the barons by one assent prayed the king of accord betwixt the lady Igraine and him; the king gave them leave, for fain would he have been accorded with her. So the king put all the trust in Ulfius to entreat between them, so by the entreaty at the last the king and she met together. Now will we do well, said Ulfius, our king is a lusty knight and wifeless, and my lady Igraine is a passing fair lady; it were great joy unto us all, an it might please the king to make her his queen. Unto that they all well accorded and moved it to the king. And anon, like a lusty knight, he assented thereto with good will, and so in all haste they were married in a morning with great mirth and joy.

And King Lot of Lothian and of Orkney then wedded Margawse that was Gawaine's mother, and King Nentres of the land of Garlot wedded Elaine. All this was done at the request of King Uther. And the third sister Morgan le Fay was put to school in a nunnery, and there she learned so much that she was a great clerk of necromancy. And after she was wedded to King Uriens of the land of Gore, that was Sir Ewain's le Blanchemain's father.

CHAPTER III.

Of the birth of King Arthur and of his nurture.

Then Queen Igraine waxed daily greater and greater, so it befell after within half a year, as King Uther lay by his queen, he asked her, by the faith she owed to him, whose was the body; then she sore abashed to give answer. Dismay you not, said the king, but tell me the truth, and I shall love you the better, by the faith of my body. Sir, said she, I shall tell you the truth. The same night that my lord was dead, the hour of his death, as his knights record, there came into my castle of Tintagil a man like my lord in speech and in countenance, and two knights with him in likeness of his two knights Brastias and Jordanus, and so I went unto bed with him as I ought to do with my lord, and the same night, as I shall answer unto God, this child was begotten upon me. That is truth, said the king, as ye say; for it was I myself that came in the likeness, and therefore dismay you not, for I am father of the child; and there he told her all the cause, how it was by Merlin's counsel. Then the queen made great joy when she knew who was the father of her child.

Soon came Merlin unto the king, and said, Sir, ye must purvey you for the nourishing of your child. As thou wilt, said the king, be it. Well, said Merlin, I know a lord of yours in this land, that is a passing true man and a faithful, and he shall have the nourishing of your child, and his name is Sir Ector, and he is a lord of fair livelihood in many parts in England and Wales; and this lord, Sir Ector, let him be sent for, for to come and speak with you, and desire him yourself, as he loveth you, that he will put his own child to nourishing to another woman, and that his wife nourish yours. And when the child is born let it be delivered to me at yonder privy postern unchristened. So like as Merlin devised it was done. And when Sir Ector was come he made fiaunce to the king for to nourish the child like as the king desired; and there the king granted Sir Ector great rewards. Then when the lady was delivered, the king commanded two knights and two ladies to take the child, bound in a cloth of gold, and that ye deliver him to what poor man ye meet at the postern gate of the castle. So the child was delivered unto Merlin, and so he bare it forth unto Sir Ector, and made an holy man to christen him, and named him Arthur; and so Sir Ector's wife nourished him with her own pap.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the death of King Uther Pendragon.

Then within two years King Uther fell sick of a great malady. And in the meanwhile his enemies usurped upon him, and did a great battle upon his men, and slew many of his people. Sir, said Merlin, ye may not lie so as ye do, for ye must to the field though ye ride on an horse-litter: for ye shall never have the better of your enemies but if your person be there, and then shall ye have the victory. So it was done as Merlin had devised, and they carried the king forth in an horse-litter with a great host towards his enemies. And at St. Albans there met with the king a great host of the North. And that day Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias did great deeds of arms, and King Uther's men overcame the Northern battle and slew many people, and put the remnant to flight. And then the king returned unto London, and made great joy of his victory. And then he fell passing sore sick, so that three days and three nights he was speechless: wherefore all the barons made great sorrow, and asked Merlin what counsel were best. There is none other remedy, said Merlin, but God will have his will. But look ye all barons be before King Uther to-morn, and God and I shall make him to speak. So on the morn all the barons with Merlin came to-fore the king; then Merlin said aloud unto King Uther, Sir, shall your son Arthur be king after your days, of this realm with all the appurtenance? Then Uther Pendragon turned him, and said in hearing of them all, I give him God's blessing and mine, and bid him pray for my soul, and righteously and worshipfully that he claim the crown, upon forfeiture of my blessing; and therewith he yielded up the ghost, and then was he interred as longed to a king. Wherefore the queen, fair Igraine, made great sorrow, and all the barons.

CHAPTER V.

How Arthur was chosen king, and of wonders and marvels of a sword taken out of a stone by the said Arthur.

Then stood the realm in great jeopardy long while, for every lord that was mighty of men made him strong, and many weened to have been king. Then Merlin went to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and counselled him for to send for all the lords of the realm, and all the gentlemen of arms, that they should to London come by Christmas, upon pain of cursing; and for this cause, that Jesus, that was born on that night, that he would of his great mercy show some miracle, as he was come to be king of mankind, for to show some miracle who should be rightwise king of this realm. So the Archbishop, by the advice of Merlin, sent for all the lords and gentlemen of arms that they should come by Christmas even unto London. And many of them made them clean of their life, that their prayer might be the more acceptable unto God. So in the greatest church of London, whether it were Paul's or not the French book maketh no mention, all the estates were long or day in the church for to pray. And when matins and the first mass was done, there was seen in the churchyard, against the high altar, a great stone four square, like unto a marble stone; and in midst thereof was like an anvil of steel a foot on high, and therein stuck a fair sword naked by the point, and letters there were written in gold about the sword that said thus:—Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil, is rightwise king born of all England. Then the people marvelled, and told it to the Archbishop.

I command, said the Archbishop, that ye keep you within your church and pray unto God still, that no man touch the sword till the high mass be all done. So when all masses were done all the lords went to behold the stone and the sword. And when they saw the scripture some assayed, such as would have been king. But none might stir the sword nor move it. He is not here, said the Archbishop, that shall achieve the sword, but doubt not God will make him known. But this is my counsel, said the Archbishop, that we let purvey ten knights, men of good fame, and they to keep this sword. So it was ordained, and then there was made a cry, that every man should assay that would, for to win the sword. And upon New Year's Day the barons let make a jousts and a tournament, that all knights that would joust or tourney there might play, and all this was ordained for to keep the lords together and the commons, for the Archbishop trusted that God would make him known that should win the sword.

So upon New Year's Day, when the service was done, the barons rode unto the field, some to joust and some to tourney, and so it happened that Sir Ector, that had great livelihood about London, rode unto the jousts, and with him rode Sir Kay his son, and young Arthur that was his nourished brother; and Sir Kay was made knight at All Hallowmass afore. So as they rode to the jousts-ward, Sir Kay lost his sword, for he had left it at his father's lodging, and

so he prayed young Arthur for to ride for his sword. I will well, said Arthur, and rode fast after the sword, and when he came home, the lady and all were out to see the jousting. Then was Arthur wroth, and said to himself, I will ride to the churchyard, and take the sword with me that sticketh in the stone, for my brother Sir Kay shall not be without a sword this day. So when he came to the churchyard, Sir Arthur alighted and tied his horse to the stile, and so he went to the tent, and found no knights there, for they were at the jousting. And so he handled the sword by the handles, and lightly and fiercely pulled it out of the stone, and took his horse and rode his way until he came to his brother Sir Kay, and delivered him the sword. And as soon as Sir Kay saw the sword, he wist well it was the sword of the stone, and so he rode to his father Sir Ector, and said: Sir, lo here is the sword of the stone, wherefore I must be king of this land. When Sir Ector beheld the sword, he returned again and came to the church, and there they alighted all three, and went into the church. And anon he made Sir Kay swear upon a book how he came to that sword. Sir, said Sir Kay, by my brother Arthur, for he brought it to me. How gat ye this sword? said Sir Ector to Arthur. Sir, I will tell you. When I came home for my brother's sword, I found nobody at home to deliver me his sword; and so I thought my brother Sir Kay should not be swordless, and so I came hither eagerly and pulled it out of the stone without any pain. Found ye any knights about this sword? said Sir Ector. Nay, said Arthur. Now, said Sir Ector to Arthur, I understand ye must be king of this land. Wherefore I, said Arthur, and for what cause? Sir, said Ector, for God will have it so; for there should never man have drawn out this sword, but he that shall be rightwise king of this land. Now let me see whether ye can put the sword there as it was, and pull it out again. That is no mastery, said Arthur, and so he put it in the stone; wherewithal Sir Ector assayed to pull out the sword and failed.

CHAPTER VI.

How King Arthur pulled out the sword divers times.

Now assay, said Sir Ector unto Sir Kay. And anon he pulled at the sword with all his might; but it would not be. Now shall ye assay, said Sir Ector to Arthur. I will well, said Arthur, and pulled it out easily. And therewithal Sir Ector knelt down to the earth, and Sir Kay. Alas, said Arthur, my own dear father and brother, why kneel ye to me? Nay, nay, my lord Arthur, it is not so; I was never your father nor of your blood, but I wot well ye are of an higher blood than I weened ye were. And then Sir Ector told him all, how he was betaken him for to nourish him, and by whose commandment, and by Merlin's deliverance.

Then Arthur made great dole when he understood that Sir Ector was not his father. Sir, said Ector unto Arthur, will ye be my good and gracious lord when ye are king? Else were I to blame, said Arthur, for ye are the man in the world that I am most beholden to, and my good lady and mother your wife, that as well as her own hath fostered me and kept. And if ever it be God's will that I be king as ye say, ye shall desire of me what I may do, and I shall not fail you; God forbid I should fail you Sir, said Sir Ector, I will ask no more of you, but that ye will make my son, your foster brother, Sir Kay, seneschal of all your lands. That shall be done, said Arthur, and more, by the faith of my body, that never man shall have that office but he, while he and I live. Therewithal they went unto the Archbishop, and told him how the sword was achieved, and by whom; and on Twelfth-day all the barons came thither, and to assay to take the sword, who that would assay. But there afore them all, there might none take it out but Arthur; wherefore there were many lords wroth, and said it was great shame unto them all and the realm, to be overgoverned with a boy of no high blood born. And so they fell out at that time that it was put off till Candlemas and then all the barons should meet there again; but always the ten knights were ordained to watch the sword day and night, and so they set a pavilion over the stone and the sword, and five always watched. So at Candlemas many more great lords came thither for to have won the sword, but there might none prevail. And right as Arthur did at Christmas, he did at Candlemas, and pulled out the sword easily, whereof the barons were sore aggrieved and put it off in delay till the high feast of Easter. And as Arthur sped before, so did he at Easter; yet there were some of the great lords had indignation that Arthur should be king, and put it off in a delay till the feast of Pentecost.

Then the Archbishop of Canterbury by Merlin's providence let purvey then of the best knights that they might get, and such knights as Uther Pendragon loved best and most trusted in his days. And such knights were put about Arthur as Sir Baudwin of Britain, Sir Kay, Sir Ulfius, Sir Brastias. All these, with many other, were always about Arthur, day and night, till the feast of Pentecost.

CHAPTER VII.

How King Arthur was crowned, and how he made officers.

And at the feast of Pentecost all manner of men assayed to pull at the sword that would assay; but none might prevail but Arthur, and pulled it out afore all the lords and commons that were there, wherefore all the commons cried at once, We will have Arthur unto our king, we will put him no more in delay, for we all see that it is God's will that he shall be our king, and who that holdeth against it, we will slay him. And therewithal they kneeled at once, both rich and poor, and cried Arthur mercy because they had delayed him so long, and Arthur forgave them, and took the sword between both his hands, and offered it upon the altar where the Archbishop was, and so was he made knight of the best man that was there. And so anon was the coronation made. And there was he sworn unto his lords and the commons for to be a true king, to stand with true justice from thenceforth the days of this life. Also then he made all lords that held of the crown to come in, and to do service as they ought to do. And many complaints were made unto Sir Arthur of great wrongs that were done since the death of King Uther, of many lands that were bereaved lords, knights, ladies, and gentlemen. Wherefore King Arthur made the lands to be given again unto them that owned them.

When this was done, that the king had stablished all the countries about London, then he let make Sir Kay seneschal of England; and Sir Baudwin of Britain was made constable; and Sir Ulfius was made chamberlain; and Sir Brastias was made warden to wait upon the north from Trent forwards, for it was that time the most party the king's enemies. But within few years after Arthur won all the north, Scotland, and all that were under their obeissance. Also Wales, a part of it, held against Arthur, but he overcame them all, as he did the remnant, through the noble prowess of himself and his knights of the Round Table.

CHAPTER VIII.

How King Arthur held in Wales, at a Pentecost, a great feast, and what kings and lords came to his feast.

Then the king removed into Wales, and let cry a great feast that it should be holden at Pentecost after the incoronation of him at the city of Carlion. Unto the feast came King Lot of Lothian and of Orkney, with five hundred knights with him. Also there came to the feast King Uriens of Gore with four hundred knights with him. Also there came to that feast King Nentres of Garlot, with seven hundred knights with him. Also there came to the feast the king of Scotland with six hundred knights with him, and he was but a young man. Also there came to the feast a king that was called the King with the Hundred Knights, but he and his men were passing well beseen at all points. Also there came the king of Carados with five hundred knights. And King Arthur was glad of their coming, for he weened that all the kings and knights had come for great love, and to have done him worship at his feast; wherefore the king made great joy, and sent the kings and knights great presents. But the kings would none receive, but rebuked the messengers shamefully, and said they had no joy to receive no gifts of a beardless boy that was come of low blood, and sent him word they would none of his gifts, but that they were come to give him gifts with hard swords betwixt the neck and the shoulders: and therefore they came thither, so they told to the messengers plainly, for it was great shame to all them to see such a boy to have a rule of so noble a realm as this land was. With this answer the messengers departed and told to King Arthur this answer. Wherefore, by the advice of his barons, he took him to a strong tower with five hundred good men with him. And all the kings aforesaid in a manner laid a siege to-fore him, but King Arthur was well victualed. And within fifteen days there came Merlin among them into the city of Carlion. Then all the kings were passing glad of Merlin, and asked him, For what cause is that boy Arthur made your king? Sirs, said Merlin, I shall tell you the cause, for he is King Uther Pendragon's son, born in wedlock, gotten on Igraine, the duke's wife of Tintagil. Then is he a bastard, they said all. Nay, said Merlin, after the death of the duke, more than three hours, was Arthur begotten, and thirteen days after King Uther wedded Igraine; and therefore I prove him he is no bastard. And who saith nay, he shall be king and overcome all his enemies; and, or he die, he shall be long king of all England, and have under his obeissance Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, and more realms than I will now rehearse. Some of the kings had marvel of Merlin's words, and deemed well that it should be as he said; and some of them laughed him to scorn, as King Lot; and more other called him a witch. But then were they accorded with Merlin, that King Arthur should come out and speak with the kings, and to come safe and to go safe, such surance there was made. So Merlin went unto King Arthur, and told him how he had done, and bade him fear not, but come out boldly and speak with

them, and spare them not, but answer them as their king and chieftain; for ye shall overcome them all, whether they will or nill.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the first war that King Arthur had, and how he won the field.

Then King Arthur came out of his tower, and had under his gown a jesseraunt of double mail, and there went with him the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Baudwin of Britain, and Sir Kay, and Sir Brastias: these were the men of most worship that were with him. And when they were met there was no meekness, but stout words on both sides; but always King Arthur answered them, and said he would make them to bow an he lived. Wherefore they departed with wrath, and King Arthur bade keep them well, and they bade the king keep him well. So the king returned him to the tower again and armed him and all his knights. What will ye do? said Merlin to the kings; ye were better for to stint, for ye shall not here prevail though ye were ten times so many. Be we well advised to be afeared of a dream-reader? said King Lot. With that Merlin vanished away, and came to King Arthur, and bade him set on them fiercely; and in the meanwhile there were three hundred good men, of the best that were with the kings, that went straight unto King Arthur, and that comforted him greatly. Sir, said Merlin to Arthur, fight not with the sword that ye had by miracle, till that ye see ye go unto the worse, then draw it out and do your best. So forthwithal King Arthur set upon them in their lodging. And Sir Baudwin, Sir Kay, and Sir Brastias slew on the right hand and on the left hand that it was marvel; and always King Arthur on horseback laid on with a sword, and did marvellous deeds of arms, that many of the kings had great joy of his deeds and hardiness.

Then King Lot brake out on the back side, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and King Carados, and set on Arthur fiercely behind him. With that Sir Arthur turned with his knights, and smote behind and before, and ever Sir Arthur was in the foremost press till his horse was slain underneath him. And therewith King Lot smote down King Arthur. With that his four knights received him and set him on horseback. Then he drew his sword Excalibur, but it was so bright in his enemies' eyes, that it gave light like thirty torches. And therewith he put them a-back, and slew much people. And then the commons of Carlion arose with clubs and staves and slew many knights; but all the kings held them together with their knights that were left alive, and so fled and departed. And Merlin came unto Arthur, and counselled him to follow them no further.

CHAPTER X.

How Merlin counselled King Arthur to send for King Ban and King Bors, and of their counsel taken for the war.

So after the feast and journey, King Arthur drew him unto London, and so by the counsel of Merlin, the king let call his barons to council, for Merlin had told the king that the six kings that made war upon him would in all haste be awroke on him and on his lands. Wherefore the king asked counsel at them all. They could no counsel give, but said they were big enough. Ye say well, said Arthur; I thank you for your good courage, but will ye all that loveth me speak with Merlin? ye know well that he hath done much for me, and he knoweth many things, and when he is afore you, I would that ye prayed him heartily of his best advice. All the barons said they would pray him and desire him. So Merlin was sent for, and fair desired of all the barons to give them best counsel. I shall say you, said Merlin, I warn you all, your enemies are passing strong for you, and they are good men of arms as be alive, and by this time they have gotten to them four kings more, and a mighty duke; and unless that our king have more chivalry with him than he may make within the bounds of his own realm, an he fight with them in battle, he shall be overcome and slain. What were best to do in this cause? said all the barons. I shall tell you, said Merlin, mine advice; there are two brethren beyond the sea, and they be kings both, and marvellous good men of their hands; and that one hight King Ban of Benwick, and that other hight King Bors of Gaul, that is France. And on these two kings warreth a mighty man of men, the King Claudas, and striveth with them for a castle, and great war is betwixt them. But this Claudas is so mighty of goods whereof he getteth good knights, that he putteth these two kings most part to the worse; wherefore this is my counsel, that our king and sovereign lord send unto the kings Ban and Bors by two trusty knights with letters well devised, that an they will come and see King Arthur and his court, and so help him in his wars, that he will be sworn unto them to help them in their wars against King Claudas. Now, what say ye unto this counsel? said Merlin. This is well counselled, said the king and all the barons.

Right so in all haste there were ordained to go two knights on the message unto the two kings. So were there made letters in the pleasant wise according unto King Arthur's desire. Ulfius and Brastias were made the messengers, and so rode forth well horsed and well armed and as the guise was that time, and so passed the sea and rode toward the city of Benwick. And there besides were eight knights that espied them, and at a strait passage they met with Ulfius and Brastias, and would have taken them prisoners; so they prayed them that they might pass, for they were messengers unto King Ban and Bors sent from King Arthur. Therefore, said the eight knights, ye shall die or be prisoners, for we be knights of King Claudas. And therewith two of them dressed their spears, and

Ulfius and Brastias dressed their spears, and ran together with great raundon. And Claudas' knights brake their spears, and theirs to-held and bare the two knights out of their saddles to the earth, and so left them lying, and rode their ways. And the other six knights rode afore to a passage to meet with them again, and so Ulfius and Brastias smote other two down, and so passed on their ways. And at the fourth passage there met two for two, and both were laid unto the earth; so there was none of the eight knights but he was sore hurt or bruised. And when they come to Benwick it fortuneth there were both kings, Ban and Bors.

And when it was told the kings that there were come messengers, there were sent unto them two knights of worship, the one hight Lionses, lord of the country of Payarne, and Sir Phariance a worshipful knight. Anon they asked from whence they came, and they said from King Arthur, king of England; so they took them in their arms and made great joy each of other. But anon, as the two kings wist they were messengers of Arthur's, there was made no tarrying, but forthwith they spake with the knights, and welcomed them in the faithfulest wise, and said they were most welcome unto them before all the kings living; and therewith they kissed the letters and delivered them. And when Ban and Bors understood the letters, then they were more welcome than they were before. And after the haste of the letters they gave them this answer, that they would fulfil the desire of King Arthur's writing, and Ulfius and Brastias, tarry there as long as they would, they should have such cheer as might be made them in those marches. Then Ulfius and Brastias told the kings of the adventure at their passages of the eight knights. Ha! ah! said Ban and Bors, they were my good friends. I would I had wist of them; they should not have escaped so. So Ulfius and Brastias had good cheer and great gifts, as much as they might bear away; and had their answer by mouth and by writing, that those two kings would come unto Arthur in all the haste that they might. So the two knights rode on afore, and passed the sea, and came to their lord, and told him how they had sped, whereof King Arthur was passing glad. At what time suppose ye the two kings will be here? Sir, said they, afore All Hallowmass. Then the king let purvey for a great feast, and let cry a great jousts. And by All Hallowmass the two kings were come over the sea with three hundred knights well arrayed both for the peace and for the war. And King Arthur met with them ten mile out of London, and there was great joy as could be thought or made. And on All Hallowmass at the great feast, sat in the hall the three kings, and Sir Kay seneschal served in the hall, and Sir Lucas the butler, that was Duke Corneus' son, and Sir Griflet, that was the son of Cardol, these three knights had the rule of all the service that served the kings. And anon, as they had washen and risen, all knights that would joust made them ready; by then they were ready on horseback there were seven hundred knights. And Arthur, Ban, and Bors, with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Ector, Kay's father, they were in a place covered with cloth of gold like an hall, with ladies and gentlewomen, for to behold who did best, and thereon to give judgment.

CHAPTER XI.

Of a great tourney made by King Arthur and the two kings Ban and Bors, and how they went over the sea.

And King Arthur and the two kings let depart the seven hundred knights in two parties. And there were three hundred knights of the realm of Benwick and of Gaul turned on the other side. Then they dressed their shields, and began to couch their spears many good knights. So Griflet was the first that met with a knight, one Ladinus, and they met so eagerly that all men had wonder; and they so fought that their shields fell to pieces, and horse and man fell to the earth; and both the French knight and the English knight lay so long that all men weened they had been dead. When Lucas the butler saw Griflet so lie, he horsed him again anon, and they two did marvellous deeds of arms with many bachelors. Also Sir Kay came out of an ambushment with five knights with him, and they six smote other six down. But Sir Kay did that day marvellous deeds of arms, that there was none did so well as he that day. Then there came Ladinus and Gracian, two knights of France, and did passing well, that all men praised them.

Then came there Sir Placidus, a good knight, and met with Sir Kay, and smote him down horse and man, where fore Sir Griflet was wroth, and met with Sir Placidus so hard, that horse and man fell to the earth. But when the five knights wist that Sir Kay had a fall, they were wroth out of wit, and therewith each of them five bare down a knight. When King Arthur and the two kings saw them begin to wax wroth on both parties, they leapt on small hackneys, and let cry that all men should depart unto their lodging. And so they went home and unarmed them, and so to evensong and supper. And after, the three kings went into a garden, and gave the prize unto Sir Kay, and to Lucas the butler, and unto Sir Griflet. And then they went unto council, and with them Gwenbaous, the brother unto Sir Ban and Bors, a wise clerk, and thither went Ulfius and Brastias, and Merlin. And after they had been in council, they went unto bed. And on the morn they heard mass, and to dinner, and so to their council, and made many arguments what were best to do. At the last they were concluded, that Merlin should go with a token of King Ban, and that was a ring, unto his men and King Bors'; and Gracian and Placidus should go again and keep their castles and their countries, as for [dread of King Claudas] King Ban of Benwick, and King Bors of Gaul had ordained them, and so passed the sea and came to Benwick. And when the people saw King Ban's ring, and Gracian and Placidus, they were glad, and asked how the kings fared, and made great joy of their welfare and cording, and according unto the sovereign lords desire, the men of war made them ready in all haste possible, so that they were fifteen thousand on horse and foot, and they had great plenty of victual with them, by Merlin's provision. But Gracian and Placidus were left to furnish and garnish the castles, for dread of King Claudas. Right so Merlin passed the sea, well

victualled both by water and by land. And when he came to the sea he sent home the footmen again, and took no more with him but ten thousand men on horseback, the most part men of arms, and so shipped and passed the sea into England, and landed at Dover; and through the wit of Merlin, he had the host northward, the priviest way that could be thought, unto the forest of Bedegraine, and there in a valley he lodged them secretly.

Then rode Merlin unto Arthur and the two kings, and told them how he had sped; whereof they had great marvel, that man on earth might speed so soon, and go and come. So Merlin told them ten thousand were in the forest of Bedegraine, well armed at all points. Then was there no more to say, but to horseback went all the host as Arthur had afore purveyed. So with twenty thousand he passed by night and day, but there was made such an ordinance afore by Merlin, that there should no man of war ride nor go in no country on this side Trent water, but if he had a token from King Arthur, where through the king's enemies durst not ride as they did to-fore to espy.

CHAPTER XII.

How eleven kings gathered a great host against King Arthur.

And so within a little space the three kings came unto the castle of Bedegraine, and found there a passing fair fellowship, and well beseen, whereof they had great joy, and victual they wanted none. This was the cause of the northern host: that they were reared for the despite and rebuke the six kings had at Carlion. And those six kings by their means, gat unto them five other kings; and thus they began to gather their people.

And now they sware that for weal nor woe, they should not leave other, till they had destroyed Arthur. And then they made an oath. The first that began the oath was the Duke of Cambenet, that he would bring with him five thousand men of arms, the which were ready on horseback. Then sware King Brandegoris of Strangore that he would bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Then sware King Clariance of Northumberland he would bring three thousand men of arms. Then sware the King of the Hundred Knights, that was a passing good man and a young, that he would bring four thousand men of arms on horseback. Then there swore King Lot, a passing good knight, and Sir Gawain's father, that he would bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Urience, that was Sir Uwain's father, of the land of Gore, and he would bring six thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Idres of Cornwall, that he would bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Cradelmas to bring five thousand men on horseback. Also there swore King Agwisance of Ireland to bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Nentres to bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Carados to bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. So their whole host was of clean men of arms on horseback fifty thousand, and a-foot ten thousand of good men's bodies. Then were they soon ready, and mounted upon horse and sent forth their fore-riders, for these eleven kings in their ways laid a siege unto the castle of Bedegraine; and so they departed and drew toward Arthur, and left few to abide at the siege, for the castle of Bedegraine was holden of King Arthur, and the men that were therein were Arthur's.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of a dream of the King with the Hundred Knights.

So by Merlin's advice there were sent fore-riders to skim the country, and they met with the fore-riders of the north, and made them to tell which way the host came, and then they told it to Arthur, and by King Ban and Bors' council they let burn and destroy all the country afore them, there they should ride.

The King with the Hundred Knights met a wonder dream two nights afore the battle, that there blew a great wind, and blew down their castles and their towns, and after that came a water and bare it all away. All that heard of the sweven said it was a token of great battle. Then by counsel of Merlin, when they wist which way the eleven kings would ride and lodge that night, at midnight they set upon them, as they were in their pavilions. But the scout-watch by their host cried, Lords! at arms! for here be your enemies at your hand!

CHAPTER XIV.

How the eleven kings with their host fought against Arthur and his host, and many great feats of the war.

Then King Arthur and King Ban and King Bors, with their good and trusty knights, set on them so fiercely that they made them overthrow their pavilions on their heads, but the eleven kings, by manly prowess of arms, took a fair champaign, but there was slain that morrowtide ten thousand good men's bodies. And so they had afore them a strong passage, yet were they fifty thousand of hardy men. Then it drew toward day. Now shall ye do by mine advice, said Merlin unto the three kings: I would that King Ban and King Bors, with their fellowship of ten thousand men, were put in a wood here beside, in an ambushment, and keep them privy, and that they be laid or the light of the day come, and that they stir not till ye and your knights have fought with them long. And when it is daylight, dress your battle even afore them and the passage, that they may see all your host, for then will they be the more hardy, when they see you but about twenty thousand men, and cause them to be the gladder to suffer you and your host to come over the passage. All the three kings and the whole barons said that Merlin said passingly well, and it was done anon as Merlin had devised. So on the morn, when either host saw other, the host of the north was well comforted. Then to Ulfius and Brastias were delivered three thousand men of arms, and they set on them fiercely in the passage, and slew on the right hand and on the left hand that it was wonder to tell.

When that the eleven kings saw that there was so few a fellowship did such deeds of arms, they were ashamed and set on them again fiercely; and there was Sir Ulfius's horse slain under him, but he did marvellously well on foot. But the Duke Eustace of Cambenet and King Clariance of Northumberland, were alway grievous on Ulfius. Then Brastias saw his fellow fared so withal he smote the duke with a spear, that horse and man fell down. That saw King Clariance and returned unto Brastias, and either smote other so that horse and man went to the earth, and so they lay long astonied, and their horses' knees brast to the hard bone. Then came Sir Kay the seneschal with six fellows with him, and did passing well. With that came the eleven kings, and there was Griflet put to the earth, horse and man, and Lucas the butler, horse and man, by King Brandegoris, and King Idres, and King Agwisance. Then waxed the medley passing hard on both parties. When Sir Kay saw Griflet on foot, he rode on King Nentres and smote him down, and led his horse unto Sir Griflet, and horsed him again. Also Sir Kay with the same spear smote down King Lot, and hurt him passing sore. That saw the King with the Hundred Knights, and ran unto Sir Kay and smote him down, and took his horse, and gave him King Lot, whereof he said gramercy. When Sir Griflet saw Sir Kay and Lucas the butler on foot, he took a sharp spear, great and square, and rode to Pinel, a good man of arms, and smote horse

and man down, and then he took his horse, and gave him unto Sir Kay. Then King Lot saw King Nentres on foot, he ran unto Melot de la Roche, and smote him down, horse and man, and gave King Nentres the horse, and horsed him again. Also the King of the Hundred Knights saw King Idres on foot; then he ran unto Gwiniart de Bloi, and smote him down, horse and man, and gave King Idres the horse, and horsed him again; and King Lot smote down Clariance de la Forest Savage, and gave the horse unto Duke Eustace. And so when they had horsed the kings again they drew them, all eleven kings, together, and said they would be revenged of the damage that they had taken that day. The meanwhile came in Sir Ector with an eager countenance, and found Ulfius and Brastias on foot, in great peril of death, that were foul defoiled under horse-feet.

Then Arthur as a lion, ran unto King Cradelment of North Wales, and smote him through the left side, that the horse and the king fell down; and then he took the horse by the rein, and led him unto Ulfius, and said, Have this horse, mine old friend, for great need hast thou of horse. Gramercy, said Ulfius. Then Sir Arthur did so marvellously in arms, that all men had wonder. When the King with the Hundred Knights saw King Cradelment on foot, he ran unto Sir Ector, that was well horsed, Sir Kay's father, and smote horse and man down, and gave the horse unto the king, and horsed him again. And when King Arthur saw the king ride on Sir Ector's horse, he was wroth and with his sword he smote the king on the helm, that a quarter of the helm and shield fell down, and so the sword carved down unto the horse's neck, and so the king and the horse fell down to the ground. Then Sir Kay came unto Sir Morganore, seneschal with the King of the Hundred Knights, and smote him down, horse and man, and led the horse unto his father, Sir Ector; then Sir Ector ran unto a knight, hight Lardans, and smote horse and man down, and led the horse unto Sir Brastias, that great need had of an horse, and was greatly defoiled. When Brastias beheld Lucas the butler, that lay like a dead man under the horses' feet, and ever Sir Griflet did marvellously for to rescue him, and there were always fourteen knights on Sir Lucas; then Brastias smote one of them on the helm, that it went to the teeth, and he rode to another and smote him, that the arm flew into the field. Then he went to the third and smote him on the shoulder, that shoulder and arm flew in the field. And when Griflet saw rescues, he smote a knight on the temples, that head and helm went to the earth, and Griflet took the horse of that knight, and led him unto Sir Lucas, and bade him mount upon the horse and revenge his hurts. For Brastias had slain a knight to-fore and horsed Griflet.

CHAPTER XV.

Yet of the same battle.

Then Lucas saw King Agwisance, that late had slain Moris de la Roche, and Lucas ran to him with a short spear that was great, that he gave him such a fall, that the horse fell down to the earth. Also Lucas found there on foot, Bloias de La Flandres, and Sir Gwinas, two hardy knights, and in that woodness that Lucas was in, he slew two bachelors and horsed them again. Then waxed the battle passing hard on both parties, but Arthur was glad that his knights were horsed again, and then they fought together, that the noise and sound rang by the water and the wood. Wherefore King Ban and King Bors made them ready, and dressed their shields and harness, and they were so courageous that many knights shook and bevered for eagerness. All this while Lucas, and Gwinas, and Briant, and Bellias of Flanders, held strong medley against six kings, that was King Lot, King Nentres, King Brandegoris, King Idres, King Uriens, and King Agwisance. So with the help of Sir Kay and of Sir Griflet they held these six kings hard, that unneth they had any power to defend them. But when Sir Arthur saw the battle would not be ended by no manner, he fared wood as a lion, and steered his horse here and there, on the right hand, and on the left hand, that he stinted not till he had slain twenty knights. Also he wounded King Lot sore on the shoulder, and made him to leave that ground, for Sir Kay and Griflet did with King Arthur there great deeds of arms. Then Ulfius, and Brastias, and Sir Ector encountered against the Duke Eustace, and King Cradelment, and King Clariance of Northumberland, and King Carados, and against the King with the Hundred Knights. So these knights encountered with these kings, that they made them to avoid the ground. Then King Lot made great dole for his damages and his fellows, and said unto the ten kings, But if ye will do as I devise we shall be slain and destroyed; let me have the King with the Hundred Knights, and King Agwisance, and King Idres, and the Duke of Cambenet, and we five kings will have fifteen thousand men of arms with us, and we will go apart while ye six kings hold medley with twelve thousand; an we see that ye have foughten with them long, then will we come on fiercely, and else shall we never match them, said King Lot, but by this mean. So they departed as they here devised, and six kings made their party strong against Arthur, and made great war long.

In the meanwhile brake the ambushment of King Ban and King Bors, and Lionses and Phariance had the vanguard, and they two knights met with King Idres and his fellowship, and there began a great medley of breaking of spears, and smiting of swords, with slaying of men and horses, and King Idres was near at discomforture.

That saw Agwisance the king, and put Lionses and Phariance in point of death; for the Duke of Cambenet came on withal with a great fellowship. So these two knights were in great danger of their lives that they were fain to return, but always they rescued themselves and their fellowship marvellously. When King Bors saw those knights put aback, it grieved him sore; then he came on

so fast that his fellowship seemed as black as Inde. When King Lot had espied King Bors, he knew him well, then he said, O Jesu, defend us from death and horrible maims! for I see well we be in great peril of death; for I see yonder a king, one of the most worshipfullest men and one of the best knights of the world, is inclined unto his fellowship. What is he? said the King with the Hundred Knights. It is, said King Lot, King Bors of Gaul; I marvel how they came into this country without witting of us all. It was by Merlin's advice, said the knight. As for him, said King Carados, I will encounter with King Bors, an ye will rescue me when myster is. Go on, said they all, we will do all that we may. Then King Carados and his host rode on a soft pace, till that they came as nigh King Bors as bow-draught; then either battle let their horse run as fast as they might. And Bleoberis, that was godson unto King Bors, he bare his chief standard, that was a passing good knight. Now shall we see, said King Bors, how these northern Britons can bear the arms: and King Bors encountered with a knight, and smote him throughout with a spear that he fell dead unto the earth; and after drew his sword and did marvellous deeds of arms, that all parties had great wonder thereof; and his knights failed not, but did their part, and King Carados was smitten to the earth. With that came the King with the Hundred Knights and rescued King Carados mightily by force of arms, for he was a passing good knight of a king, and but a young man.

CHAPTER XVI.

Yet more of the same battle.

By then came into the field King Ban as fierce as a lion, with bands of green and thereupon gold. Ha! a! said King Lot, we must be discomfited, for yonder I see the most valiant knight of the world, and the man of the most renown, for such two brethren as is King Ban and King Bors are not living, wherefore we must needs void or die; and but if we avoid manly and wisely there is but death. When King Ban came into the battle, he came in so fiercely that the strokes redounded again from the wood and the water; wherefore King Lot wept for pity and dole that he saw so many good knights take their end. But through the great force of King Ban they made both the northern battles that were departed hurtled together for great dread; and the three kings and their knights slew on ever, that it was pity on to behold that multitude of the people that fled. But King Lot, and King of the Hundred Knights, and King Morganore gathered the people together passing knightly, and did great prowess of arms, and held the battle all that day, like hard.

When the King of the Hundred Knights beheld the great damage that King Ban did, he thrust unto him with his horse, and smote him on high upon the helm, a great stroke, and astonied him sore. Then King Ban was wroth with him, and followed on him fiercely; the other saw that, and cast up his shield, and spurred his horse forward, but the stroke of King Ban fell down and carved a cantel off the shield, and the sword slid down by the hauberk behind his back, and cut through the trapping of steel and the horse even in two pieces, that the sword felt the earth. Then the King of the Hundred Knights voided the horse lightly, and with his sword he broached the horse of King Ban through and through. With that King Ban voided lightly from the dead horse, and then King Ban smote at the other so eagerly, and smote him on the helm that he fell to the earth. Also in that ire he felled King Morganore, and there was great slaughter of good knights and much people. By then came into the press King Arthur, and found King Ban standing among dead men and dead horses, fighting on foot as a wood lion, that there came none nigh him, as far as he might reach with his sword, but he caught a grievous buffet; whereof King Arthur had great pity. And Arthur was so bloody, that by his shield there might no man know him, for all was blood and brains on his sword. And as Arthur looked by him he saw a knight that was passingly well horsed, and therewith Sir Arthur ran to him, and smote him on the helm, that his sword went unto his teeth, and the knight sank down to the earth dead, and anon Arthur took the horse by the rein, and led him unto King Ban, and said, Fair brother, have this horse, for he have great myster thereof, and me repenteth sore of your great damage. It shall be soon revenged, said King Ban, for I trust in God mine ure is not such but some of them may sore repent this. I will well, said Arthur, for I see your deeds full actual; nevertheless, I might not come at you at that time.

But when King Ban was mounted on horseback, then there began new battle, the which was sore and hard, and passing great

slaughter. And so through great force King Arthur, King Ban, and King Bors made their knights a little to withdraw them. But alway the eleven kings with their chivalry never turned back; and so withdrew them to a little wood, and so over a little river, and there they rested them, for on the night they might have no rest on the field. And then the eleven kings and knights put them on a heap all together, as men adread and out of all comfort. But there was no man might pass them, they held them so hard together both behind and before, that King Arthur had marvel of their deeds of arms, and was passing wroth. Ah, Sir Arthur, said King Ban and King Bors, blame them not, for they do as good men ought to do. For by my faith, said King Ban, they are the best fighting men, and knights of most prowess, that ever I saw or heard speak of, and those eleven kings are men of great worship; and if they were longing unto you there were no king under the heaven had such eleven knights, and of such worship. I may not love them, said Arthur, they would destroy me. That wot we well, said King Ban and King Bors, for they are your mortal enemies, and that hath been proved aforehand; and this day they have done their part, and that is great pity of their wilfulness.

Then all the eleven kings drew them together, and then said King Lot, Lords, ye must other ways than ye do, or else the great loss is behind; ye may see what people we have lost, and what good men we lose, because we wait always on these foot-men, and ever in saving of one of the foot-men we lose ten horsemen for him; therefore this is mine advice, let us put our foot-men from us, for it is near night, for the noble Arthur will not tarry on the footmen, for they may save themselves, the wood is near hand. And when we horsemen be together, look every each of you kings let make such ordinance that none break upon pain of death. And who that seeth any man dress him to flee, lightly that he be slain, for it is better that we slay a coward, than through a coward all we to be slain. How say ye? said King Lot, answer me all ye kings. It is well said, quoth King Nentres; so said the King of the Hundred Knights; the same said the King Carados, and King Uriens; so did King Idres and King Brandegoris; and so did King Cradelment, and the Duke of Cambenet; the same said King Clariance and King Agwisance, and sware they would never fail other, neither for life nor for death. And whoso that fled, but did as they did, should be slain. Then they amended their harness, and righted their shields, and took new spears and set them on their thighs, and stood still as it had been a plump of wood.

CHAPTER XVII.

Yet more of the same battle, and how it was ended by Merlin.

When Sir Arthur and King Ban and Bors beheld them and all their knights, they praised them much for their noble cheer of chivalry, for the hardiest fighters that ever they heard or saw. With that, there dressed them a forty noble knights, and said unto the three kings, they would break their battle; these were their names: Lionses, Phariance, Ulfius, Brastias, Ector, Kay, Lucas the butler, Griflet le Fise de Dieu, Mariet de la Roche, Guinas de Bloi, Briant de la Forest Savage, Bellaus, Morians of the Castle [of] Maidens, Flannedrius of the Castle of Ladies, Annecians that was King Bors' godson, a noble knight, Ladinus de la Rouse, Emerause, Caulas, Graciens le Castlein, one Blois de la Case, and Sir Colgrevaunce de Gorre; all these knights rode on afore with spears on their thighs, and spurred their horses mightily as the horses might run. And the eleven kings with part of their knights rushed with their horses as fast as they might with their spears, and there they did on both parties marvellous deeds of arms. So came into the thick of the press, Arthur, Ban, and Bors, and slew down right on both hands, that their horses went in blood up to the fetlocks. But ever the eleven kings and their host was ever in the visage of Arthur. Wherefore Ban and Bors had great marvel, considering the great slaughter that there was, but at the last they were driven aback over a little river. With that came Merlin on a great black horse, and said unto Arthur, Thou hast never done! Hast thou not done enough? of three score thousand this day hast thou left alive but fifteen thousand, and it is time to say Ho! For God is wroth with thee, that thou wilt never have done; for yonder eleven kings at this time will not be overthrown, but an thou tarry on them any longer, thy fortune will turn and they shall increase. And therefore withdraw you unto your lodging, and rest you as soon as ye may, and reward your good knights with gold and with silver, for they have well deserved it; there may no riches be too dear for them, for of so few men as ye have, there were never men did more of prowess than they have done today, for ye have matched this day with the best fighters of the world. That is truth, said King Ban and Bors. Also said Merlin, withdraw you where ye list, for this three year I dare undertake they shall not dere you; and by then ye shall hear new tidings. And then Merlin said unto Arthur, These eleven kings have more on hand than they are ware of, for the Saracens are landed in their countries, more than forty thousand, that burn and slay, and have laid siege at the castle Wandesborow, and make great destruction; therefore dread you not this three year. Also, sir, all the goods that be gotten at this battle, let it be searched, and when ye have it in your hands, let it be given freely unto these two kings, Ban and Bors, that they may reward their knights withal; and that shall cause strangers to be of better will to do you service at need. Also you be able to reward your own knights of your own goods whensomever it liketh you. It is well said, quoth Arthur, and as thou hast devised, so shall it be done. When it was delivered to

Ban and Bors, they gave the goods as freely to their knights as freely as it was given to them. Then Merlin took his leave of Arthur and of the two kings, for to go and see his master Bleise, that dwelt in Northumberland; and so he departed and came to his master, that was passing glad of his coming; and there he told how Arthur and the two kings had sped at the great battle, and how it was ended, and told the names of every king and knight of worship that was there. And so Bleise wrote the battle word by word, as Merlin told him, how it began, and by whom, and in likewise how it was ended, and who had the worse. All the battles that were done in Arthur's days Merlin did his master Bleise do write; also he did do write all the battles that every worthy knight did of Arthur's court.

After this Merlin departed from his master and came to King Arthur, that was in the castle of Bedegraine, that was one of the castles that stand in the forest of Sherwood. And Merlin was so disguised that King Arthur knew him not, for he was all befurred in black sheep-skins, and a great pair of boots, and a bow and arrows, in a russet gown, and brought wild geese in his hand, and it was on the morn after Candlemas day; but King Arthur knew him not. Sir, said Merlin unto the king, will ye give me a gift? Wherefore, said King Arthur, should I give thee a gift, churl? Sir, said Merlin, ye were better to give me a gift that is not in your hand than to lose great riches, for here in the same place where the great battle was, is great treasure hid in the earth. Who told thee so, churl? said Arthur. Merlin told me so, said he. Then Ulfius and Brastias knew him well enough, and smiled. Sir, said these two knights, it is Merlin that so speaketh unto you. Then King Arthur was greatly abashed, and had marvel of Merlin, and so had King Ban and King Bors, and so they had great disport at him. So in the meanwhile there came a damosel that was an earl's daughter: his name was Sanam, and her name was Lionors, a passing fair damosel; and so she came thither for to do homage, as other lords did after the great battle. And King Arthur set his love greatly upon her, and so did she upon him, and the king had ado with her, and gat on her a child: his name was Borre, that was after a good knight, and of the Table Round. Then there came word that the King Rience of North Wales made great war on King Leodegrance of Cameliard, for the which thing Arthur was wroth, for he loved him well, and hated King Rience, for he was alway against him. So by ordinance of the three kings that were sent home unto Benwick, all they would depart for dread of King Claudas; and Phariance, and Antemes, and Gratian, and Lionses [of] Payarne, with the leaders of those that should keep the kings' lands.

CHAPTER XVIII.

How King Arthur, King Ban, and King Bors rescued King Leodegrance, and other incidents.

And then King Arthur, and King Ban, and King Bors departed with their fellowship, a twenty thousand, and came within six days into the country of Cameliard, and there rescued King Leodegrance, and slew there much people of King Rience, unto the number of ten thousand men, and put him to flight. And then had these three kings great cheer of King Leodegrance, that thanked them of their great goodness, that they would revenge him of his enemies; and there had Arthur the first sight of Guenever, the king's daughter of Cameliard, and ever after he loved her. After they were wedded, as it telleth in the book. So, briefly to make an end, they took their leave to go into their own countries, for King Claudas did great destruction on their lands. Then said Arthur, I will go with you. Nay, said the kings, ye shall not at this time, for ye have much to do yet in these lands, therefore we will depart, and with the great goods that we have gotten in these lands by your gifts, we shall wage good knights and withstand the King Claudas' malice, for by the grace of God, an we have need we will send to you for your succour; and if ye have need, send for us, and we will not tarry, by the faith of our bodies. It shall not, said Merlin, need that these two kings come again in the way of war, but I know well King Arthur may not be long from you, for within a year or two ye shall have great need, and then shall he revenge you on your enemies, as ye have done on his. For these eleven kings shall die all in a day, by the great might and prowess of arms of two valiant knights (as it telleth after); their names be Balin le Savage, and Balan, his brother, that be marvellous good knights as be any living.

Now turn we to the eleven kings that returned unto a city that hight Sorhaute, the which city was within King Uriens', and there they refreshed them as well as they might, and made leeches search their wounds, and sorrowed greatly for the death of their people. With that there came a messenger and told how there was come into their lands people that were lawless as well as Saracens, a forty thousand, and have burnt and slain all the people that they may come by, without mercy, and have laid siege on the castle of Wandesborow. Alas, said the eleven kings, here is sorrow upon sorrow, and if we had not warred against Arthur as we have done, he would soon revenge us. As for King Leodegrance, he loveth Arthur better than us, and as for King Rience, he hath enough to do with Leodegrance, for he hath laid siege unto him. So they consented together to keep all the marches of Cornwall, of Wales, and of the North. So first, they put King Idres in the City of Nautes in Britain, with four thousand men of arms, to watch both the water and the land. Also they put in the city of Windesan, King Nentres of Garlot, with four thousand knights to watch both on water and on land. Also they had of other men of war more than eight thousand, for to fortify all the fortresses in the marches of Cornwall. Also they put more knights in all the marches of Wales

and Scotland, with many good men of arms, and so they kept them together the space of three year, and ever allied them with mighty kings and dukes and lords. And to them fell King Rience of North Wales, the which and Nero that was a mighty man of men. And all this while they furnished them and garnished them of good men of arms, and victual, and of all manner of habiliment that pretendeth to the war, to avenge them for the battle of Bedegraine, as it telleth in the book of adventures following.