

CHARLES MORRIS



THE HISTORICAL  
TALES OF  
KING ARTHUR

VOLUME 2

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of King Arthur

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*The Historical Tales of King Arthur, Vol. 2*

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[admin@jazzybee-verlag.de](mailto:admin@jazzybee-verlag.de)*

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# **KING ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE.**

## **BOOK VIII. TRISTRAM AND ISOLDE AT JOYOUS GARD**

### **CHAPTER I. THE TREACHERY OF KING MARK.**

The story of Tristram's valorous deeds, and of the high honor in which he was held at Camelot, in good time came to Cornwall, where it filled King Mark's soul with revengeful fury, and stirred the heart of La Belle Isolde to the warmest love. The coward king, indeed, in his jealous hatred of his nephew, set out in disguise for England, with murderous designs against Tristram should an opportunity occur.

Many things happened to him there, and he was brought into deep disgrace, but the story of his adventures may be passed over in brief review, lest the reader should find it wearisome.

Not far had he ridden on English soil before he met with Dinadan, who, in his jesting humor, soon played him a merry trick. For he arrayed Dagonet, the king's fool, in a suit of armor, which he made Mark believe was Lancelot's. Thus prepared, Dagonet rode to meet him and challenged

him to a joust. But King Mark, on seeing what he fancied was Lancelot's shield, turned and fled at headlong speed, followed by the fool and his comrades with hunting cries and laughter till the forest rang with the noise.

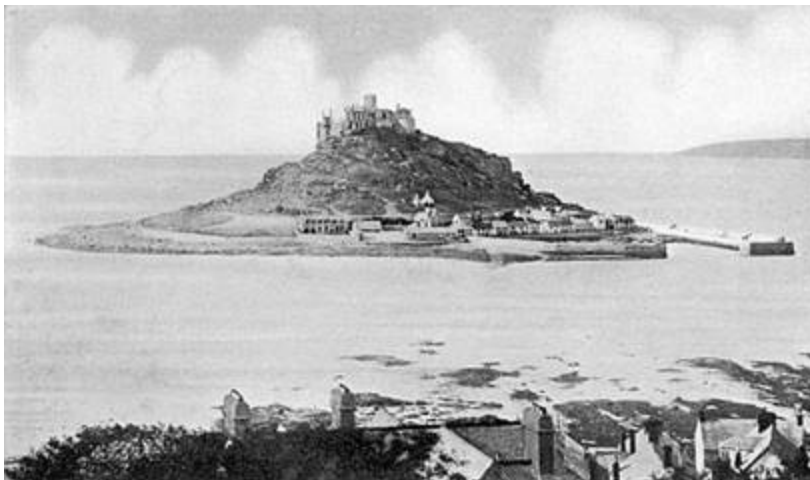
Escaping at length from this merry chase, the trembling dastard made his way to Camelot, where he hoped some chance would arise to aid him in his murderous designs on Tristram. But a knight of his own train, named Sir Amant, had arrived there before him, and accused him of treason to the king, without telling who he was.

"This is a charge that must be settled by wager of battle," said King Arthur. "The quarrel is between you; you must decide it with sword and spear."

In the battle that followed, Sir Amant, by unlucky fortune, was run through, and fell from his horse with a mortal wound.

"Heaven has decided in my favor," cried King Mark. "But here I shall no longer stay, for it does not seem a safe harbor for honest knights."

He thereupon rode away, fearing that Dinadan would reveal his name. Yet not far had he gone before Lancelot came in furious haste after him.



ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT, CORNWALL.

"Turn again, thou recreant king and knight," he loudly called. "To Arthur's court you must return, whether it is your will or not. We know you, villain. Sir Amant has told your name and purpose; and, by my faith, I am strongly moved to kill you on the spot."

"Fair sir," asked King Mark, "what is your name?"

"My name is Lancelot du Lake. Defend yourself, dog and dastard."

On hearing this dreaded name, and seeing Lancelot riding upon him with spear in rest, King Mark tumbled like a sack of grain from his saddle to the earth, crying in terror, "I yield me, Sir Lancelot! I yield me!" and begging piteously for mercy.

"Thou villain!" thundered Lancelot, "I would give much to deal thee one buffet for the love of Tristram and Isolde. Mount, dog, and follow me."

Mark hastened to obey, and was thus brought like a slave back to Arthur's court, where he made such prayers and promises that in the end the king forgave him, but only on condition that he would enter into accord with Tristram, and remove from him the sentence of banishment. All this King Mark volubly promised and swore to abide by, though a false heart underlay his fair words. But Tristram gladly accepted the proffered truce with his old enemy, for his heart burned with desire to see his lady love again.

Soon afterwards Dinadan, with Dagonet and his companions, came to court, and great was the laughter and jesting at King Mark when they told the story of his flight from Arthur's fool.

"This is all very well for you stay-at-homes," cried Mark; "but even a fool in Lancelot's armor is not to be played with. As it was, Dagonet paid for his masquerade, for he met a knight who brought him like a log to the ground, and all these laughing fellows with him."

"Who was that?" asked King Arthur.



"I can tell you," said Dinadan. "It was Sir Palamides. I followed him through the forest, and a lively time we had in company."

"Aha! then you have had adventures."

"Rare ones. We met a knight before Morgan le Fay's castle. You know the custom there, to let no knight pass without a hard fight for it. This stranger made havoc with the custom, for he overthrew ten of your sister's knights, and killed some of them. He afterwards tilted with Palamides for offering to help him, and gave that doughty fellow a sore wound."

"Who was this mighty champion? Not Lancelot or Tristram?" asked the king, looking around.

"On our faith we had no hand in it," they both answered.

"It was the knight next to them in renown," answered Dinadan.

"Lamorak of Wales?"

"No less. And, my faith, a sturdy fellow he is. I left him and Palamides the best of friends."

"I hope, then, to see the pair of them at next week's tournament," said the king.

Alas for Lamorak! Better for him far had he kept away from that tournament. His gallant career was near its end, for treachery and hatred were soon to seal his fate. This sorrowful story it is now our sad duty to tell.

Lamorak had long loved Margause, the queen of Orkney, Arthur's sister and the mother of Gawaine and his brethren. For this they hated him, and with treacherous intent invited their mother to a castle near Camelot, as a lure to her lover. Soon after the tournament, at which Lamorak won the prize of valor, and redoubled the hatred of Gawaine and his brothers by overcoming them in the fray, word was brought to the victorious knight that Margause was near at hand and wished to see him.

With a lover's ardor, he hastened to the castle where she was, but, as they sat in the queen's apartment in

conversation, the door was suddenly flung open, and Gaheris, one of the murderous brethren, burst in, full armed and with a naked sword in his hand. Rushing in fury on the unsuspecting lovers, with one dreadful blow he struck off his mother's head, crimsoning Lamorak with her blood. He next assailed Lamorak, who, being unarmed, was forced to fly for his life, and barely escaped.

The tidings of this dread affair filled the land with dismay, and many of the good knights of Arthur's court threatened reprisal. Arthur himself was full of wrath at the death of his sister. Yet those were days when law ruled not, but force was master, and retribution only came from the strong hand and the ready sword. This was Lamorak's quarrel, and the king, though he vowed to protect him from his foes, declared that the good knight of Wales must seek retribution with his own hand.

He gained death, alas! instead of revenge, for his foes proved too vigilant for him, and overcame him by vile treachery. Watching his movements, they lay in ambush for him at a difficult place, and as he was passing, unsuspecting of danger, they set suddenly upon him, slew his horse, and assailed him on foot.

Gawaine, Mordred, and Gaheris formed this ambush, for the noble-minded Gareth had refused to take part in their murderous plot; and with desperate fury they assaulted the noble Welsh knight, who, for three hours, defended himself against their utmost strength. But at the last Mordred dealt him a death-blow from behind, and when he fell in death the three murders hewed him with their swords till scarce a trace of the human form was left.

Thus perished one of the noblest of Arthur's knights, and thus was done one of the most villanous deeds of blood ever known in those days of chivalrous war.

Before the death of Lamorak another event happened at Arthur's court which must here be told, for it was

marvellous in itself, and had in it the promise of wondrous future deeds.

One day there came to the court at Camelot a knight attended by a young squire. When he had disarmed he went to the king and asked him to give the honor of knighthood to his squire.

"What claim has he to it?" asked the king. "Of what lineage is he?"

"He is the youngest son of King Pellinore, and brother to Sir Lamorak. He is my brother also; for my name is Aglavale, and I am of the same descent."

"What is his name?"

"Percivale."

"Then for my love of Lamorak, and the love I bore your father, he shall be made a knight to-morrow."

So when the morrow dawned, the king ordered that the youth should be brought into the great hall, and there he knighted him, dealing him the accolade with his good sword Excalibur.

And so the day passed on till the dinner-hour, when the king seated himself at the head of the table, while down its sides were many knights of prowess and renown. Percivale, the new-made knight, was given a seat among the squires and the untried knights, who sat at the lower end of the great dining-table.

But in the midst of their dinner an event of great strangeness occurred. For there came into the hall one of the queen's maidens, who was of high birth, but who had been born dumb, and in all her life had spoken no word. Straight across the hall she walked, while all gazed at her in mute surprise, till she came to where Percivale sat. Then she took him by the hand, and spoke in a voice that rang through the hall with the clearness of a trumpet,—

"Arise, Sir Percivale, thou noble knight and warrior of God's own choosing. Arise and come with me."

He rose in deep surprise, while all the others sat in dumb wonder at this miracle. To the Round Table she led him, and to the right side of the seat perilous, in which no knight had hitherto dared to sit.

"Fair knight, take here your seat;" she said. "This seat belongs to you, and to none other, and shall be yours until a greater than you shall come."

This said, she departed and asked for a priest. Then was she confessed and given the sacrament, and forthwith died. But the king and all his court gazed with wonder on Sir Percivale, and asked themselves what all this meant, and for what great career God had picked out this youthful knight, for such a miracle no man there had ever seen before.

Meanwhile, King Mark had gone back to Cornwall, and with him went Sir Tristram, at King Arthur's request, though not till Arthur had made the Cornish king swear on Holy Scripture to do his guest no harm, but hold him in honor and esteem.

Lancelot, however, was full of dread and anger when he heard what had occurred, and he told King Mark plainly that if he did mischief to Sir Tristram he would slay him with his own hands.

"Bear this well in mind, sir king," he said, "for I have a way of keeping my word."

"I have sworn before King Arthur to treat him honorably," answered Mark. "I, too, have a way of keeping my word."

"A way, I doubt not," said Lancelot, scornfully; "but not my way. Your reputation for truth needs mending. And all men know for what you came into this country. Therefore, take heed what you do."



Then Mark and Tristram departed, and soon after they reached Cornwall a damsel was sent to Camelot with news of their safe arrival, and bearing letters from Tristram to Arthur and Lancelot. These they answered and sent the damsel back, the burden of Lancelot's letter being, "Beware of King Fox, for his ways are ways of wiles."

They also sent letters to King Mark, threatening him if he should do aught to Tristram's injury. These letters worked harm only, for they roused the evil spirit in the Cornish king's soul, stirring him up to anger and thirst for revenge. He thereupon wrote to Arthur, bidding him to meddle with his own concerns, and to take heed to his wife and his knights, which would give him work enough to do. As for Sir Tristram, he said that he held him to be his mortal enemy.

He wrote also to Queen Guenever, his letter being full of shameful charges of illicit relations with Sir Lancelot, and dishonor to her lord, the king. Full of wrath at these vile charges, Guenever took the letter to Lancelot, who was half beside himself with anger on reading it.

"You cannot get at him to make him eat his words," said Dinadan, whom Lancelot took into his confidence. "And if you seek to bring him to terms with pen and ink, you will find that his villany will get the better of your honesty. Yet there are other ways of dealing with cowardly curs. Leave

him to me; I will make him wince. I will write a mocking lay of King Mark and his doings, and will send a harper to sing it before him at his court. When this noble king has heard my song I fancy he will admit that there are other ways of gaining revenge besides writing scurrilous letters."

A stinging lay, indeed, was that which Dinadan composed. When done he taught it to a harper named Eliot, who in his turn taught it to other harpers, and these, by the orders of Arthur and Lancelot, went into Wales and Cornwall to sing it everywhere.

Meanwhile King Mark's crown had been in great danger. For his country had been invaded by an army from Session, led by a noted warrior named Elias, who drove the forces of Cornwall from the field and besieged the king in his castle of Tintagil. And now Tristram came nobly to the rescue. At the head of the Cornish forces he drove back the besiegers with heavy loss, and challenged Elias to a single combat to end the war. The challenge was accepted, and a long and furious combat followed, but in the end Elias was slain, and the remnant of his army forced to surrender.

This great service added to the seeming accord between Tristram and the king, but in his heart Mark nursed all his old bitterness, and hated him the more that he had helped him. His secret fury soon found occasion to flame to the surface. For at the feast which was given in honor of the victory, Eliot, the harper, appeared, and sang before the king and his lords the lay that Dinadan had made.

This was so full of ridicule and scorn of King Mark that he leaped from his seat in a fury of wrath before the harper had half finished.

"Thou villanous twanger of strings!" he cried. "What hound sent you into this land to insult me with your scurrilous songs?"

"I am a minstrel," said Eliot, "and must obey the orders of my lord. Sir Dinadan made this song, if you would know, and bade me sing it here."

"That jesting fool!" cried Mark, in wrath. "As for you, fellow, you shall go free through minstrels' license. But if you lose any time in getting out of this country you may find that Cornish air is not good for you."

The harper took this advice and hastened away, bearing letters from Tristram to Lancelot and Dinadan. But King Mark turned the weight of his anger against Tristram, whom he believed had instigated this insult, with the design to set all the nobles of his own court laughing at him. And well he knew that the villanous lay would be sung throughout the land, and that he would be made the jest of all the kingdom.

"They have their sport now," he said. "Mine will come. Tristram of Lyonesse shall pay dearly for this insult. And all that hold with him shall learn that King Mark of Cornwall is no child's bauble to be played with."

The evil-minded king was not long in putting his project in execution. At a tournament which was held soon afterwards Tristram was badly wounded, and King Mark, with great show of sorrow, had him borne to a castle near by, where he took him under his own care as nurse and leech.

Here he gave him a sleeping draught, and had him borne while slumbering to another castle, where he was placed in a strong prison cell, under the charge of stern keepers.

The disappearance of Tristram made a great stir in the kingdom. La Belle Isolde, fearing treachery, went to a faithful knight named Sir Sadok, and begged him to try and discover what had become of the missing knight. Sadok set himself diligently to work; and soon learned that Tristram was held captive in the castle of Lyonesse. Then he went to Dinas, the seneschal, and others, and told them what had been done, at which they broke into open rebellion against King Mark, and took possession of all the towns and castles in the country of Lyonesse, filling them with their followers.

But while the rebellious army was preparing to march on Tintagil, and force King Mark to set free his prisoner, Tristram was delivered by the young knight Sir Percivale, who had come thither in search of adventures, and had heard of King Mark's base deed. Great was the joy between these noble knights, and Tristram said,—

"Will you abide in these marches, Sir Percivale? If so, I will keep you company."

"Nay, dear friend, I cannot tarry here. Duty calls me into Wales."

But before leaving Cornwall he went to King Mark, told him what he had done, and threatened him with the revenge of all honorable knights if he sought again to injure his noble nephew.

"What would you have me do?" asked the king. "Shall I harbor a man who openly makes love to my wife and queen?"

"Is there any shame in a nephew showing an open affection for his uncle's wife?" asked Percivale. "No man will dare say that so noble a warrior as Sir Tristram would go beyond the borders of sinless love, or will dare accuse the virtuous lady La Belle Isolde of lack of chastity. You have let jealousy run away with your wisdom, King Mark."

So saying, he departed; but his words had little effect on King Mark's mind. No sooner had Percivale gone than he began new devices to gratify his hatred of his nephew. He sent word to Dinas, the seneschal, under oath, that he intended to go to the Pope and join the war against the infidel Saracens, which he looked upon as a nobler service than that of raising the people against their lawful king.

So earnest were his professions that Dinas believed him and dismissed his forces, but no sooner was this done than King Mark set aside his oath and had Tristram again privately seized and imprisoned.

This new outrage filled the whole realm with tumult and rebellious feeling. La Belle Isolde was at first thrown into



the deepest grief, and then her heart swelled high with resolution to live no longer with the dastard who called her wife. Tristram at the same time privately sent her a letter, advising her to leave the court of her villanous lord, and offering to go with her to Arthur's realm, if she would have a vessel privately made ready.

The queen thereupon had an interview with Dinas and Sadok, and begged them to seize and imprison the king, since she was resolved to escape from his power.

Furious at the fox-like treachery of the king, these knights did as requested, for they formed a plot by which Mark was privately seized, and they imprisoned him secretly in a strong dungeon. At the same time Tristram was delivered, and soon sailed openly away from Cornwall with La Belle Isolde, gladly shaking the dust of that realm of treachery from his feet.

In due time the vessel touched shore in King Arthur's dominions, and gladly throbbed the heart of the long-unhappy queen as her feet touched that free and friendly soil. As for Tristram, never was lover fuller of joy, and life seemed to him to have just begun.

Not long had they landed when a knightly chance brought Lancelot into their company. Warm indeed was the greeting of those two noble companions, and glad the welcome which Lancelot gave Isolde to English soil.

"You have done well," he said, "to fly from that wolf's den. There is no noble knight in the world but hates King Mark and will honor you for leaving his palace of vile devices. Come with me, you shall be housed at my expense."

Then he rode with them to his own castle of Joyous Gard, a noble stronghold which he had won with his own hands. A royal castle it was, garnished and provided with a richness which no king or queen could surpass. Here Lancelot bade them use everything as their own, and charged all his people to love and honor them as they would himself.

"Joyous Gard is yours as long as you will honor it by making it your home," he said. "As for me, I can have no greater joy than to know that my castle is so nobly tenanted, and that Tristram of Lyonesse and Queen Isolde are my honored guests."

Leaving them, Lancelot rode to Camelot, where he told Arthur and Guenever of what had happened, much to their joy and delight.

"By my crown," cried Arthur, joyfully, "the coming of Tristram and Isolde to my realm is no everyday event, and is worthy of the highest honor. We must signalize it with a noble tournament."

Then he gave orders that a stately passage-at-arms should be held on May-day at the castle of Lonazep, which was near Joyous Gard. And word was sent far and near that the knights of his own realm of Logris, with those of Cornwall and North Wales, would be pitted against those of the rest of England, of Ireland and Scotland, and of lands beyond the seas.

## CHAPTER II. HOW TRISTRAM BEFOOLED DINADAN.

Never were two happier lovers than Tristram and Isolde at Joyous Gard. Their days were spent in feasting and merriment, Isolde's heart overflowing with joy to be free from the jealousy of her ill-tempered spouse, and Tristram's to have his lady love to himself, far from treacherous plots and murderous devices.

Every day Tristram went hunting, for at that time men say he was the best courser at the chase in the world, and the rarest blower of the horn among all lovers of sport. From him, it is said, came all the terms of hunting and hawking, the distinction between beasts of the chase and vermin, all methods of dealing with hounds and with game, and all the blasts of the chase and the recall, so that they who delight in huntsmen's sport will have cause to the world's end to love Sir Tristram and pray for his soul's repose.

Yet Isolde at length grew anxious for his welfare, and said,—

"I marvel that you ride so much to the chase unarmed. This is a country not well known to you, and one that contains many false knights, while King Mark may lay some plot for your destruction. I pray you, my dear love, to take more heed to your safety."

This advice seemed timely, and thereafter Tristram rode in armor to the chase, and followed by men who bore his shield and spear. One day, a little before the month of May, he followed a hart eagerly, but as the animal led him by a cool woodland spring, he alighted to quench his thirst in the gurgling waters.

Here, by chance, he met with Dinadan, who had come into that country in search of him. Some words of greeting passed between them, after which Dinadan asked him his name, telling his own. This confidence Tristram declined to return, whereupon Dinadan burst out in anger.

"You value your name highly, sir knight," he said. "Do you design to ride everywhere under a mask? Such a foolish knight as you I saw but lately lying by a well. He seemed like one asleep, and no word could be got from him, yet all the time he grinned like a fool. The fellow was either an idiot or a lover, I know not which."

"And are not you a lover?" asked Tristram.

"Marry, my wit has saved me from that craft."

"That is not well said," answered Tristram. "A knight who disdains love is but half a man, and not half a warrior."

"I am ready to stand by my creed," retorted Dinadan. "As for you, sirrah, you shall tell me your name, or do battle with me."

"You will not get my name by a threat, I promise you that," said Tristram. "I shall not fight till I am in the mood; and when I do, you may get more than you bargain for."



"I fear you not, coward," said Dinadan.

"If you are so full of valor, here is your man," said Tristram, pointing to a knight who rode along the forest

aisle towards them. "He looks ready for a joust."

"On my life, it is the same dull-plate knave I saw lying by the well, neither sleeping nor waking," said Dinadan.

"This is not the first time I have seen that covered shield of azure," said Tristram. "This knight is Sir Epinegris, the son of the king of Northumberland, than whom the land holds no more ardent lover, for his heart is gone utterly out to the fair daughter of the king of Wales. Now, if you care to find whether a lover or a non-lover is the better knight, here is your opportunity."

"I shall teach him to grin to more purpose," said Dinadan. "Stand by and you shall see."

Then, as the lover approached, he cried,—

"Halt, sir knight, and make ready to joust, as is the custom with errant knights."

"Let it be so, if you will," answered Epinegris. "Since it is the custom of you knight-errant to make a man joust whether he will or no, I am your man."

"Make ready, then, for here is for you."

Then they spurred their horses and rode together at full speed, Dinadan breaking his spear, while Epinegris struck him so shrewd a blow that he rolled upon the earth.

"How now?" cried Tristram. "It seems to me that the lover has best sped."

"Will you play the coward?" queried Dinadan. "Or will you, like a good knight, revenge me?"

"I am not in the mood," answered Tristram. "Take your horse, Sir Dinadan, and let us get away from here, where hard blows are more plentiful than soft beds."

"Defend me from such fellowship as yours!" roared Dinadan. "Take your way and I will take mine. We fit not well together."

"I might give you news of Sir Tristram."

"Sir Tristram, if he be wise, will seek better company. I can do without your news, as I have had to do without your help," and he rode on in high dudgeon.

"Farewell, then," cried Tristram, laughing. "It may happen we shall soon meet again."

Tristram rode back in much amusement to Joyous Gard, but on coming near he heard in the neighboring town a great outcry.

"What means this noise?" he asked.

"Sir," he was told, "a knight of the castle has just been slain by two strangers, and for no other cause than saying that Sir Lancelot was a better knight than Sir Gawaine."

"Who would dispute that?" said Tristram. "It is a small cause for the death of a good man, that he stands for his lord's fame."

"But what remedy have we?" said the towns-men. "If Lancelot had been here, these fellows would soon have been called to a reckoning. But, alas, he is away."

"I may do something in his service," answered Tristram. "If I take his place, I must defend his followers."

Thereupon he sent for his shield and spear, and rode in pursuit of the two knights, whom he overtook before they had gone far.

"Turn, sir dastards," he cried, "and amend your misdeeds."

"What amends wish you?" asked one of the knights. "We are ready with spear and sword to make good whatever we have done."

He rode against Tristram, but was met so sturdily in mid career that he was thrust over his horse's tail. Then the other rode against him, and was served in the same rough manner.

They rose as quickly as they could, drew their swords, and challenged him to battle on foot.

"You shall tell me your names," he said, sternly. "I warn you that if it comes to sword-play you will find more than your match. Yet you may have that in your lineage which will keep you from my hands, however much you deserve punishment for your evil deeds."

"As for our names, we dread not to tell them. We are Agravaine and Gaheris, brothers to the good knight Gawaine, and nephews of King Arthur."

"For Arthur's sake, then, I must let you pass unscathed. Yet it is a crying shame that men of such good blood as you should play the part of murderers. You slew among you a better knight than the best of your kin, Lamorak de Galis, and I would to God I had been by at that time."

"You would have gone the same road," said Gaheris.

"Not without more knights to do it than you had in your murderous crew."

With these words he turned from them and rode back towards Joyous Gard. When he had gone they regained their horses, and feeling themselves safe in the saddle their courage returned.

"Let us pursue this boaster," they said, "and see if he fares so much better than Lamorak."

They did so, and when they came near Tristram, who was jogging slowly along, Agravaine cried,—

"Turn, traitor knight!"

"Traitor in your teeth!" cried Tristram, in a rage. "I let you off too cheaply, it seems." And drawing his sword, he turned upon Agravaine and smote him so fiercely on the helm that he fell swooning from his horse, with a dangerous wound.

Then he turned to Gaheris and dealt him a blow that in like manner tumbled him from his saddle to the earth. This done, Tristram turned and rode into the castle, leaving them like dead men in the road.

Here he told La Belle Isolde of his several adventures. When he spoke of Dinadan, she asked,—

"Was it not he that made the song about King Mark?"

"The same," answered Tristram. "He is the greatest jester at Arthur's court, but a good knight withal, and I know no man whom I like better as a comrade."

"Why did you not bring him with you?"

"No need of that. He is seeking me through this country, and there is no fear that he will give up the search lightly."

As they spoke, a servant came and told Tristram that a knight-errant had entered the town, and described the device on his shield.

"That is our man now," said Tristram. "That is Dinadan. Send for him, Isolde, and you shall hear the merriest knight and the maddest talker that you ever spoke with. I pray you to make him heartily welcome, for he is a cherished friend of mine."

Then Isolde sent into the town with a message to Dinadan, begging that he would come to the castle and rest a while there, at a lady's wish.

"That will I, with a good will," answered Dinadan. "I were but a churl else."

He hastened to mount and ride to the castle, and here he was shown to a chamber where he laid aside his armor. Then he was brought into the presence of La Belle Isolde, who courteously bade him welcome.

"Whence, come you, and what name do you bear?" she asked.

"Madam," he answered, "I am from King Arthur's court, and am one of the small fry of Round Table Knights. My name is Dinadan."

"And why came you hither?"

"I am seeking my old friend and comrade, Sir Tristram, who I am told has made his way to this country."

"That I cannot answer for," said Isolde. "He may and he may not be here. Sir Tristram will be found where love leads him."

"I warrant me that. Your true lover has no will of his own, but is led like an ox, with a ring in his nose. I marvel what juice of folly gets into the pates of these lovers to make them so mad about the women."

"Why, sir," said Isolde, "can it be that you are a knight and no lover? I fancy that there can be no true man-of-arms



who seeks not by his deeds to win the smiles of the fair."

"They who care to be fed on smiles are welcome to them, but I am not made of that fashion," answered Dinadan. "The joy of love is too short, and the sorrow thereof too long, to please my fancy."

"Say you so? Yet near here but to-day was the good knight Sir Bleoberis, he who fought with three knights at once for a maiden's sake, and won her before the king of Northumberland."

"I know him for a worthy fellow," said Dinadan, "as are all of Lancelot's kindred. Yet he has crotchets in his head, like all that crew."

"Now, I pray you," said Isolde, "will you not do me the grace to fight for my love with three knights that have done me great wrong? As you are a knight of King Arthur's, you can never say me nay in such a duty."

"Can I not?" cried Dinadan. "This much I will say, madam, that you are as fair a sample of womankind as ever I saw, and much more beautiful than is my lady Queen Guenever. And yet, heaven defend me, I will not fight for you against three knights; and would not, were you Helen of Troy herself."

At these words, and the odd grimace which he made, La Belle Isolde burst into a merry peal of laughter, and broke out with,—

"I know you better than you fancy, Sir Dinadan. And well you keep up your credit of being a merry fellow. You are very welcome to my castle, good sir."

They had much more of gameful conversation together, and Dinadan was treated with all honor, and slept serenely at the castle that night. But Tristram took good care to keep out of his sight.

Early the next day Tristram armed himself and prepared to ride away, saying to the Lady Isolde that he would contrive to meet with Dinadan, and would ride with him to Lonazep, where the tournament was to be held. He

promised also to make arrangements to provide her with a good place from which to see the passage-at-arms. Then he departed, accompanied by two squires, who bore his shield and a brace of great and long spears.

Shortly afterwards Dinadan left the castle, bidding a merry adieu to the lady, and rode so briskly forward that he soon overtook Tristram. He knew him at sight for his yesterday's comrade, and made a sour grimace at beholding him.

"So," he said, "here again is my easy-going friend, who wears his armor for a holiday parade. You shall not get off so lightly to-day, fellow. You shall joust with me, despite your head."

"Faith, I am not eager," said Tristram, "but a wilful man will have his way; so let us have it over, if fight we must."

Then they rode at each other, and Dinadan broke a spear on Tristram's shield, but Tristram purposely missed him.

Dinadan now bade him draw his sword.

"Not I," he answered. "What makes you so warlike? I am not in the humor to fight."

"You shame all knights by your cowardice."

"So far as that goes, it troubles me little," said Tristram. "Suppose, my good sir, you take me under your protection. Though I bear arms I shall gladly accept the patronage of so worthy a knight as you."

"The devil deliver me of you!" cried Dinadan. "You are a fellow of goodly build, and sit your horse like a warrior; but heaven knows if you have blood or water in your veins. What do you propose to do with those great spears that your squire carries?"

"I shall give them to some good knight at the tournament. If you prove the best there, you are welcome to them."

As they thus conversed they saw a knight-errant in the road before them, who sat with spear in rest as if eager to joust.

"Come," said Tristram, "since you are so anxious for a fight, yonder is your man."

"Shame betide you for a dastard," cried Dinadan. "Fight him yourself. You can't get more than a fall."

"Not so. That knight seems a shrewish fellow. It will need a stronger hand than mine to manage him."

"Good faith, then, here's to teach you a lesson," said Dinadan, and he rode fiercely against the other knight, with the unlucky result that he was thrust from his horse, and fell headlong to the earth.

"What did I tell you?" said Tristram. "You had better have taken a lesson from my prudence, and let that good fellow alone."

"The fiends take you, coward!" cried Dinadan, as he started to his feet and drew his sword. "Come, sir knight, you are my better on horseback, let us have it out on foot."

"Shall it be in love or in anger?" said the other.

"Let it be in love. I am saving all my anger for this do-nothing who came with me."

"Then I pray you to tell me your name."

"Folks call me Dinadan."

"Ah, and I am your comrade Gareth. I will not fight with an old friend like Dinadan."

"Nor I with you, by my faith!" cried Dinadan, seizing Gareth's hand and giving it a warm pressure. "Beaumains is safe from my spear. Here is a chap now, if you want to try your skill; but if you can get him to fight you must first learn the art of converting a coward into a man of valor."

Tristram laughed quietly at this, and bided his time. Nor was there long to wait, for just then a well-armed knight rode up, on a sturdy horse, and put his spear in rest as he approached.

"Now, my good sirs," said Tristram, "choose between yourselves which will joust with yonder knight; for I warn you that I will keep clear of him."

"Faith, you had better," said Gareth. "Leave him to me."

And he rode against the knight but with such ill-fortune that he was thrust over his horse's croup.

"It is your turn now," said Tristram to Dinadan. "Honor requires that you should avenge your comrade Gareth."

"Honor does, eh? Then reason does not, and I always weigh reason against honor. He has overturned a much bigger fellow than I, and with your kind permission I will not stir up that hornet."

"Aha, friend Dinadan, your heart fails you after all your boasting. Very well, you shall see what the coward can do. Make ready, sir knight."

Then Tristram rode against the victorious knight, and dealt him so shrewd a buffet that he was thrust from his horse.

Dinadan looked at this in amazement. Was this the fellow that professed cowardice and begged protection? "The cunning rogue," he said to himself, "has been making game of me. The rascal! where has he learned the art of turning my weapons on myself?"

The dismounted knight rose to his feet in anger, and drawing his sword, challenged Tristram to a fight on foot.

"First, tell me your name?" asked Tristram.

"My name is Palamides."

"And what knight hate you most?"

"I hate Sir Tristram to the death. If we meet, one of us must die."

"You need not go far to seek him. I am Tristram de Lyonesse. Now do your worst."

At this Dinadan started, and struck his hand sturdily on his knee, like one who has had a shock of surprise. Nor was Palamides less astonished, and he stood before Tristram like one in a sudden revulsion of feeling.

"I pray you, Sir Tristram," he said, "to forgive my ill-will and my unkind words. You are a noble knight and worthy of the love of all honorable warriors. I repent my truculent

temper towards you, and, if I live, will rather do you service than assail you."

"I know your valor well," answered Tristram, "and that it is anything but fear makes you speak so. Therefore I thank you much for your kind words. But if you have any shreds of ill-will towards me I am ready to give you satisfaction."

"My wits have been astray," answered Palamides. "There is no just reason why we should be at odds, and I am ready to do you knightly service in all things you may command."

"I take you at your word," cried Tristram, as he grasped Palamides by the hand. "I have never been your enemy, and know none whom I would rather have as a friend."

"Would you?" cried Dinadan. "And would have me as your fool, mayhap? By my knightly faith, you have made a sweet butt of me! I came into this country for your sake, and by the advice of Sir Lancelot, though he would not tell me where to find you. By Jove's ears, I never thought to find you masquerading as a milk-brained coward."

"He could have told you," said Tristram, "for I abode within his own castle. As for my little sport, friend Dinadan, I cry you mercy."

"Faith, it is but one of my own jests, turned against me," said Dinadan, with a merry laugh. "I am pinked with my own dart. I forgive you, old comrade; but I vow I did not know you had such a jolly humor."

"It comes to one in your company," said Tristram, laughing. "The disease is catching."

And so the four knights rode gayly onward, conversing much as they went, and laying their plans for the tournament.