

Fiction/Literature

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A tale of chivalry and doomed, transcendent love, *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult* is one of the most resonant works of Western literature, as well as the basis for our enduring idea of romance. The story of the Cornish knight and the Irish princess who meet by deception, fall in love by magic, and pursue that love in defiance of heavenly and earthly law has inspired artists from Matthew Arnold to Richard Wagner. But nowhere has it been retold with greater eloquence and dignity than in Joseph Bédier's edition, which weaves several medieval sources into a seamless whole, elegantly translated by Hilaire Belloc and Paul Rosenfeld.

"A powerful rendition, an incomparable tale."

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THE ROMANCE OF TRISTAN & ISEULT



AS RETOLD BY JOSEPH BÉDIER

Translated by Hilaire Belloc and Completed by Paul Rosenfeld

*The Childhood
of
Tristan*

*M*y lords, if you would hear a high tale of love and of death, here is that of Tristan and Queen Iseult; how to their full joy, but to their sorrow also, they loved each other, and how at last, they died of that love together upon one day; she by him and he by her.

Long ago, when Mark was King over Cornwall, Rivalen, King of Lyonesse, heard that Mark's enemies waged war on him; so he crossed the sea to bring him aid; and so faithfully did he serve him with counsel and sword that Mark gave him his sister Blanchefleur, whom King Rivalen loved most marvellously.

He wed her in Tintagel Minster, but hardly was she wed when the news came to him that his old enemy Duke Morgan had fallen on Lyonesse and was wasting town and field. Then Rivalen manned his

ships in haste, and took Blanchefleur with him to his far land; but she was with child. He landed below his castle of Kanoël and gave the Queen in ward to his Marshal Rohalt, whom all men, because of his loyalty, called by a fair name, Rohalt the keeper of faith, and having summoned his barons set off to wage his war.

Blanchefleur waited for him continually, but he did not come home, till she learnt upon a day that Duke Morgan had killed him in foul ambush. She did not weep: she made no cry or lamentation, but her limbs failed her and grew weak, and her soul was filled with a strong desire to be rid of the flesh. Rohalt tried to soothe her:

"Queen," spoke he, "it is of no profit to pile grief on grief: those who are born, must they not also die? Pray God that he receive the dead and guard the living."

But she would not hear. Three days she awaited re-union with her lord, and on the fourth she brought forth a son; and taking him in her arms she said:

"Little son, I have longed a while to see you, and now I see you the fairest thing ever a woman bore. In sadness came I hither, in sadness did I bring forth, and in sadness has your first feast day gone. And as by sadness you came into the world, your name shall be called Tristan; that is the child of sadness."

After she had said these words she kissed him, and immediately when she had kissed him she died.

Rohalt, the keeper of faith, took the child, but already Duke Morgan's men besieged the Castle of Kanoël all round about. How was it possible for Ro-

halt to wage a long war? There is a wise saying: "foolhardy was never hardy," and he was compelled to yield to Duke Morgan at his mercy: but for fear that Morgan might slay Rivalen's heir the Marshal hid him among his own sons.

When seven years were passed and the time had come to take the child from the women, Rohalt put Tristan under a good master, the squire Gorvenal, and Gorvenal taught him in a few years the arts that go with barony. He taught him the use of lance and sword and 'scutcheon and bow, and how to cast stone quoits and to leap wide dykes also: and he taught him to hate every lie and felony and to keep his given word; and he taught him the various kinds of song and harp-playing, and the hunter's craft; and when the child rode among the young squires you would have said that he and his horse and his armour were all one thing. To see him so noble and so proud, broad in the shoulders, lean of flank, loyal, strong and right, all men glorified Rohalt in such a son. But Rohalt remembering Rivalen and Blanchefleur (of whose youth and grace all this was a resurrection) loved him indeed as a son, but in his heart revered him as his lord.

Now all his joy was snatched from him on a day when certain merchants of Norway, having lured Tristan to their ship, bore him off as a rich prize, though Tristan fought hard, as a young wolf struggles, caught in a gin. But it is a truth well proved, and every sailor knows it, that the sea will hardly bear a felon ship, and gives no aid to rapine. The sea rose

and cast a dark storm round the ship and drove it eight days and eight nights at random, till the marners caught through the mist a coast of awful cliffs and sea-ward rocks whereon the sea would have ground their hull to pieces: then they did penance, knowing that the anger of the sea came of the lad, whom they had stolen in an evil hour, and they vowed his deliverance and got ready a boat to put him, if it might be, ashore: then the wind and sea fell and the sky shone, and as the Norway ship grew small in the offing, a quiet tide cast Tristan and the boat upon a beach of sand.

Painfully he climbed the cliff and saw, beyond, a lonely rolling heath and a forest stretching out and endless. And he wept, remembering Gorvenal, his father, and the land of Lyonesse. Then the distant cry of a hunt, with horse and hound came suddenly and lifted his heart, and a tall stag broke cover at the forest edge. The pack and the hunt streamed after it with a tumult of cries and winding horns, but just as the hounds were racing clustered at the haunch, the quarry turned to bay at a stone's throw from Tristan: a huntsman gave him the thrust, while all around the hunt had gathered and was winding the kill. But Tristan, seeing by the gesture of the huntsman that he made to cut the neck of the stag, cried out:

"My lord, what would you do? Is it fitting to cut up so noble a beast like any farm-yard hog? Is that the custom of this country?"

And the huntsman answered:

"Fair friend, what startles you? Why yes, first I

take off the head of a stag, and then I cut it into four quarters and we carry it on our saddle bows to King Mark, our lord: So do we, and so since the days of the first huntsmen have done the Cornish men. If however, you know of some nobler custom, teach it us: take this knife and we will learn it willingly."

Then Tristan knelt and skinned the stag before he cut it up, and quartered it all in order leaving the crow-bone all whole, as is meet, and putting aside at the end the head, the haunch, the tongue and the great heart's vein; and the huntsmen and the kennel-hinds stood over him with delight, and the Master Huntsman said:

"Friend, these are good ways. In what land learnt you them? Tell us your country and your name."

"Good lord, my name is Tristan, and I learnt these ways in my country of Lyonesse."

"Tristan," said the Master Huntsman, "God reward the father that brought you up so nobly; doubtless he is a baron, rich and strong."

Now Tristan knew both speech and silence, and he answered:

"No lord; my father is a burgess. I left his home unbeknownst upon a ship that trafficked to a far place, for I wished to learn how men lived in foreign lands. But if you will accept me of the hunt I will follow you gladly and teach you other crafts of ventry."

"Fair Tristan, I marvel there should be a land where a burgess's son can know what a knight's son knows not elsewhere, but come with us since you will

it; and welcome: we will bring you to King Mark, our lord."

Tristan completed his task; to the dogs he gave the heart, the head, offal and ears; and he taught the hunt how the skinning and the ordering should be done. Then he thrust the pieces upon pikes and gave them to this huntsman and to that to carry, to one the snout to another the haunch to another the flank to another the chine; and he taught them how to ride by twos in rank, according to the dignity of the pieces each might bear.

So they took the road and spoke together, till they came on a great castle and round it fields and orchards, and living waters and fish ponds and plough lands, and many ships were in its haven, for that castle stood above the sea. It was well fenced against all assault or engines of war, and its keep, which the giants had built long ago, was compact of great stones, like a chess board of vert and azure.

And when Tristan asked its name:

"Good liege," they said, "we call it Tintagel."

And Tristan cried:

"Tintagel! Blessed be thou of God, and blessed be they that dwell within thee."

(Therein, my lords, therein had Rivalen taken Blanchefleur to wife, though their son knew it not.)

When they came before the keep the horns brought the barons to the gates and King Mark himself. And when the Master Huntsman had told him all the story, and King Mark had marvelled at the good order of the cavalcade, and the cutting of the stag,

and the high art of venery in all, yet most he wondered at the stranger boy, and still gazed at him, troubled and wondering whence came his tenderness, and his heart would answer him nothing; but, my lords, it was blood that spoke, and the love he had long since borne his sister Blanchefleur.

That evening, when the boards were cleared, a singer out of Wales, a master, came forward among the barons in hall and sang a harper's song, and as this harper touched the strings of his harp, Tristan who sat at the King's feet, spoke thus to him:

"Oh Master, that is the first of songs! The Bretons of old wove it once to chant the loves of Graëlent. And the melody is rare and rare are the words: master, your voice is subtle: harp us that well."

But when the Welshman had sung, he answered:

"Boy, what do you know of the craft of music? If the burgesses of Lyonesse teach their sons harp-play also, and rotes and viols too, rise, and take this harp and show your skill."

Then Tristan took the harp and sang so well that the barons softened as they heard, and King Mark marvelled at the harper from Lyonesse whither so long ago Rivalen had taken Blanchefleur away.

When the song ended, the King was silent a long space, but he said at last:

"Son, blessed be the master that taught thee, and blessed be thou of God: for God loves good singers. Their voices and the voice of the harp enter the souls of men and wake dear memories and cause them to forget many a mourning and many a sin. For our joy

did you come to this roof, stay near us a long time, friend."

And Tristan answered:

"Very willingly will I serve you, Sire, as your harper, your huntsman and your liege."

So did he, and for three years a mutual love grew up in their hearts. By day Tristan followed King Mark at pleas and in saddle; by night he slept in the royal room with the councillors and the peers, and if the King was sad he would harp to him to soothe his care. The barons also cherished him, and (as you shall learn) Dinas of Lidan, the seneschal, beyond all others. And more tenderly than the barons and than Dinas the King loved him. But Tristan could not forget, or Rohalt his father, or his master Gorvenal, or the land of Lyonesse.

My lords, a teller that would please, should not stretch his tale too long, and truly this tale is so various and so high that it needs no straining. Then let me shortly tell how Rohalt himself, after long wandering by sea and land, came into Cornwall, and found Tristan, and showing the King the carbuncle that once was Blanchefleur's, said:

"King Mark, here is your nephew Tristan, son of your sister Blanchefleur and of King Rivalen. Duke Morgan holds his land most wrongfully; it is time such land came back to its lord."

And Tristan (in a word) when his uncle had armed him knight, crossed the sea, and was hailed of his father's vassals, and killed Rivalen's slayer and was re-seized of his land.

Then remembering how King Mark could no longer live in joy without him, and as the nobility of his heart ever revealed the wisest course to him, he summoned his council and his barons and said this:

"Lords of the Lyonesse, I have retaken this place and I have avenged King Rivalen by the help of God and of you. Thus I have rendered to my father what is due him. But two men Rohalt and King Mark of Cornwall nourished me, an orphan, and a wandering boy. So should I call them also fathers. To those, too, must I not also render what is their due? Now a free man has two things thoroughly his own, his body and his land. To Rohalt then, here, I will release my land. Do you hold it, father, and your son shall hold it after you. But my body I give up to King Mark. I will leave this country, dear though it be, and in Cornwall I will serve King Mark as my lord. Such is my judgment, but you, my lords of Lyonesse, are my lieges, and owe me counsel; if then, some one of you will counsel me another thing let him rise and speak."

But all the barons praised him, though they wept; and taking with him Gorvenal only, Tristan set sail for King Mark's land.

*The Morholt
out of
Ireland*

When Tristan came back to that land, King Mark and all his Barony were mourning; for the King of Ireland had manned a fleet to ravage Cornwall, should King Mark refuse, as he had refused these fifteen years, to pay a tribute his fathers had paid.

For know you, certain old treaties gave the men of Ireland the right to levy on the men of Cornwall one year three hundred pounds of copper, another year three hundred pounds of silver, a third year three hundred pounds of gold. When came the fourth year they might take with them three hundred youths and three hundred maidens, of fifteen years of age, drawn by lot among the Cornish folk.

Now that year this King had sent to Tintagel, to carry his summons, a giant knight; the Morholt, whose

sister he had wed, and whom no man had yet been able to overcome: so King Mark had summoned all the barons of his land to Council, by letters sealed.

On the day assigned, when the barons were gathered in hall, and when the King had taken his throne, the Morholt said these things:

"King Mark, hear for the last time the summons of the King of Ireland, my lord. He arraigns you to pay at last that which you have owed so long, and because you have refused it too long already he bids you give over to me this day three hundred youths and three hundred maidens drawn by lot from among the Cornish folk. My ship, anchored in the port of Tintagel, will bear them away that they may become our serfs. Nevertheless—and I except only yourself, King Mark, as is meet—if it so be that any one of your barons would prove by trial of combat that the King of Ireland receives this tribute without right, I will take up his wager. Which among you, my Cornish lords, will fight to redeem this land?"

The barons glanced at each other but all were silent. This one said to himself: "Unhappy man, behold the statue of the Morholt of Ireland: he is stronger than four robust men. Behold his sword: know you not that by magic it has struck off the heads of the bravest champions in all the years since the King of Ireland has sent this giant to carry his challenges among the vassal lands? Weakling, do you court death? To what end would you tempt God?" That one thought: "Is it to become serfs that I have reared you, my dear sons, and you, my dear daugh-

ters, to become harlots? But my death would not save you."

And all were silent.

Again the Morholt spoke:

"Lords of Cornwall, which among you accepts my challenge? I offer him a noble battle. Three days hence we will go by boats to the islet of St. Samson's in the offing of Tintagel. There your champion and I will fight in single combat, and the glory of the battle will honour all his kin."

Still they were silent, and the Morholt resembled an hawk shut in a cage with small birds: when he enters, all grow mute.

For the third time the Morholt spoke:

"Very well, rare Cornish lords, since this course seems the nobler to you: draw your children by lot that I may bear them away. But I did not believe this land was inhabited only by serfs."

Then Tristan knelt at the feet of King Mark and said:

"Lord King, by your leave I will do battle."

And in vain would King Mark have turned him from his purpose, thinking, how could even valour save so young a knight? But he threw down his gage to the Morholt, and the Morholt took up the gage.

On the appointed day he had himself clad for a great feat of arms in a hauberk and in a steel helm. The barons wept for pity of the valiant knight and for shame of themselves. "Ah, Tristan," said they to themselves, "fearless baron, fair youth, why have not

I rathermore than you, undertaken this battle? My death would bring less sorrow to this earth!"—The bells pealed, and all, those of the nobility and those of low degree, old men, children and women, weeping and praying, escorted Tristan to the shore. They still had hope, for hope in the heart of men lives on lean pasture.

Tristan entered a boat and drew to the islet of St. Samson's, where the knights were to fight each to each alone. Now the Morholt had hoisted to his mast a sail of rich purple, and coming fast to land, he moored his boat on the shore. But Tristan pushed off his own boat adrift with his feet.

"Vassal, what is it you do?" said the Morholt, "and why have you not fastened your boat with a mooring-line as I have done?"

"Vassal, why should I?" Tristan answered. "One of us only will go hence alive. One boat will serve."

And each rousing the other to the fray they passed into the isle.

No man saw the sharp combat; but thrice the salt sea-breeze had wafted or seemed to waft a cry of fury to the land. Then in sign of mourning the women beat their palms in chorus, and massed to one side before their tent, the companions of the Morholt laughed.

Then at last towards the hour of noon the purple sail showed far off; the Irish boat appeared from the island shore, and there rose a clamour of distress: "The Morholt! The Morholt!" When suddenly, as the boat grew larger on the sight and topped a wave, they saw that a knight stood at its prow. Each of his

hands brandished a sword: it was Tristan. Immediately twenty boats launched forth and the young men swam out to meet him. The good knight leapt ashore, and as the mothers kissed the steel upon his feet he cried to the Morholt's men:

"My lords of Ireland, the Morholt fought well. See, here, my sword is broken and a splinter of it stands fast in his head. Take you that steel, my lords; it is the tribute of Cornwall."

Then he went up to Tintagel and as he went the people he had freed waved green boughs, and rich cloths were hung at the windows. But when Tristan reached the castle amid a jubilation, a pealing of bells, a sounding of horns and trumpets so lusty that one could not have heard God had He thundered, he drooped in the arms of King Mark, for the blood ran from his wounds.

The Morholt's men, they landed in Ireland quite cast down. For when ever he came back into Whitehaven the Morholt had been wont to take joy in the sight of his clan upon the shore, of the Queen his sister, and of his niece Iseult the Fair, the golden-haired, whose beauty already shone like the breaking dawn. Tenderly had they cherished him of old, and had he taken some wound, they healed him, for they were skilled in balms and potions. But now their magic was vain, for he lay dead, sewn in a deer hide, and the splinter of the foreign brand yet stood in his skull till Iseult plucked it out and shut it in an ivory coffer, precious as a reliquary. And, bowed over the tall corpse, mother and daughter ceaselessly repeated

the praises of the dead man, ceaselessly hurled an imprecation at the murderer, and by turns led the women in the funeral dirge.

From that day Iseult the Fair knew and hated the name of Tristan of Lyonesse.

But over in Tintagel Tristan languished, for there trickled a poisonous blood from his wound. The doctors found that the Morholt had thrust into him a poisoned barb and as their potions and their theriac could never heal him they left him in God's hands. So hateful a stench came from his wound that all his dearest friends fled him, all save King Mark, Gorvenal and Dinas of Lidan. They always could stay near his couch because their love overcame their abhorrence. At last Tristan had himself carried into a hut apart on the shore; and lying facing the sea he awaited death. He thought: "Have you thus abandoned me, King Mark, me who saved the honour of your land? No, I know, fair uncle, that you would give your life for mine: but what avails your tenderness? I must die. Yet it is good to see the sun and my heart is still high. I would like to try the sea that brings all chances. . . . I would have the sea bear me far off alone, to what land no matter, so that it heal me of my wound. And perchance some day I will once more serve you, fair uncle, as your harper, your huntsman and your liege."

He begged so long that King Mark accepted his desire. He bore him into a boat with neither sail nor oar, and Tristan wished that his harp only should be placed beside him: for sails he could not lift, nor oar ply, nor

sword wield; and as a seaman on some long voyage casts to the sea a beloved companion dead, so Gorvenal pushed out to sea that boat where his dear son lay; and the sea drew him away.

For seven days and seven nights the sea so drew him; at times to charm his grief, he harped; and when at last the sea brought him near a shore where fishermen had left their port that night to fish far out, they heard as they rowed a sweet and strong and living tune that ran above the sea, and feathering their oars they listened immovable.

In the first whiteness of the dawn they saw the boat at large. "Thus," said they to themselves, "did supernatural music surround St. Brandan's ship while it sailed to the Fortunate Isles over a sea as white as milk." They rowed towards the boat. She went at random and nothing seemed to live in her except the voice of the harp. But as they neared, the air grew weaker and died; and when they hailed her Tristan's hands had fallen lifeless on the strings though they still trembled. The fishermen took him in and bore him back to port, to their lady who was merciful and perhaps would heal him.

It was that same port of Whitehaven where the Morholt lay, and their lady was Iseult the Fair.

She alone, being skilled in philtres could save Tristan, but she alone wished him dead. When Tristan knew himself again (for her art restored him) he knew himself to be in a land of peril. But he was yet strong to hold his own and found good crafty words. He told a tale of how he was a seer that had taken pas-

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

sage on a merchant ship and sailed to Spain to learn the art of reading all the stars,—of how pirates had boarded the ship and of how, though wounded, he had fled into that boat. He was believed, nor did any of the Morholt's men know his face again, so hardly had the poison used it. But when, after forty days, Iseult of the Golden Hair had all but healed him, when already his limbs had recovered and the grace of youth returned, he knew that he must escape, and he fled and after many dangers he came again before Mark the King.

*The Quest of the
Lady with the
Hair of Gold*

My lords, there were in the court of King Mark four barons the basest of men, who hated Tristan with a hard hate, for his greatness and for the tender love the King bore him. And well I know their names: Andret, Guenelon, Gondoïne and Denoalen. Like Tristan, Andret was a nephew of King Mark's. They knew that the King had intent to grow old childless and to leave his land to Tristan; and their envy swelled and by lies they angered the chief men of Cornwall against Tristan. They said: "There have been too many marvels in this man's life: but you are men of wit, my lords, and without doubt you can explain them. It was marvel enough that he beat the Morholt, but by what sorcery did he try the sea alone at the point of death, or which of us, my lords, could voyage without mast or sail? They

say that warlocks can. It was sure a warlock feat, and that is a warlock harp of his pours poison daily into the King's heart. See how he has bent that heart by power and chain of sorcery! He will be king yet, my lords, and you will hold your lands of a wizard."

They brought over the greater part of the barons, for most men are unaware that what is in the power of magicians to accomplish, that the heart also can accomplish by dint of love and bravery. These barons pressed King Mark to take to wife some king's daughter who should give him an heir, or else they threatened to return each man into his keep and wage him war. But the King turned against them and swore in his heart that so long as his dear nephew lived no king's daughter should come to his bed. Then in his turn did Tristan (in his shame to be thought to serve for hire) threaten that if the King did not yield to his barons, he would himself go over sea and serve some great king. At this, King Mark made a term with his barons and gave them forty days to hear his decision.

On the appointed day he waited alone in his chamber and sadly mused: "Where shall I find a king's daughter so fair and yet so distant that I may feign to wish her my wife?"

Just then by his window that looked upon the sea two building swallows came in quarrelling together. Then, startled, they flew out, but had let fall from their beaks a woman's hair, long and fine, and shining like a beam of light.

King Mark took it, and called his barons and Tristan and said:

"To please you, lords, I will take a wife; but you must seek her whom I have chosen."

"Fair lord we wish it all," they said, "and who may she be?"

"Why," said he, "she whose hair this is; nor will I take another."

"And whence, lord King, comes this hair of gold; who brought it and from what land?"

"It comes, my lords, from the lady with the hair of gold, the swallows brought it me. They know from what country it came."

Then the barons saw themselves mocked and cheated, and they turned with sneers to Tristan, for they thought him to have counselled the trick. But Tristan, when he had looked on the hair of gold, remembered Iseult the Fair and smiled and said this:

"King Mark, can you not see that the doubts of these lords shame me? You have designed in vain. I will go seek the lady with the hair of gold. The search is perilous and it will be more difficult for me to return from her land than from the isle where I slew the Morholt; nevertheless, my uncle, I would once more put my body and my life into peril for you; and that your barons may know I love you loyally, I take this oath, to die on the adventure or to bring back to this castle of Tintagel the Queen with that fair hair."

He fitted out a great ship and loaded it with corn and wine, with honey and all manner of good things; he manned it with Gorvenal and a hundred young knights of high birth, chosen among the bravest, and

he clothed them in coats of home-spun and in hair cloth so that they seemed merchants only: but under the deck he hid rich cloth of gold and scarlet as for a great king's messengers.

When the ship had taken the sea the helmsman asked him:

"Lord, to what land shall I steer?"

"Sir," said he, "steer for Ireland, straight for Whitehaven harbour."

The helmsman trembled. Did not Tristan know that, since the murder of Morholt, the King of Ireland harried all Cornish ships, and seizing their sailors, hung them at the crossroads? Nevertheless the helmsman obeyed and reached the dangerous land.

At first Tristan made believe to the men of Whitehaven that his friends were merchants of England come peacefully to barter; but as these strange merchants passed the day in the useless games of draughts and chess, and seemed to know dice better than the bargain-price of corn, Tristan feared discovery and knew not how to pursue his quest.

Now it chanced once upon the break of day that he heard a cry so terrible that one would have called it a demon's cry; nor had he ever heard a brute bellow in such wise, so awful and strange it seemed. He called a woman who passed by the harbour, and said:

"Tell me, lady, whence comes that voice I have heard, and hide me nothing."

"My lord," said she, "I will tell you truly. It is the roar of a dragon the most terrible and dauntless upon earth. Daily it leaves its den and stands at one of the

gates of the city: Nor can any come out or go in till a maiden has been given up to it; and when it has her in its claws it devours her in less time than it takes to say a Pater Noster."

"Lady," said Tristan, "make no mock of me, but tell me straight: Can a man born of woman kill this thing?"

"Fair sir, and gentle," she said, "I cannot say; but this is sure: Twenty knights and tried have run the venture, because the King of Ireland has published it that he will give his daughter, Iseult the Fair, to whomsoever shall kill the beast; but it has devoured them all."

Tristan left the woman and returning to his ship armed himself in secret, and it was a fine sight to see so noble a charger and so good a knight come out from such a merchant-hull: but the haven was empty of folk, for the dawn had barely broken and none saw him as he rode to the gate. And hardly had he passed it, when he met suddenly five men at full gallop flying towards the town. Tristan seized one by his red braided hair, as he passed, and dragged him over his mount's crupper and held him fast:

"God save you, my lord," said he, "and whence does the dragon come?" And when the other had shewn him by what road, he let him go.

As the monster neared, he showed the head of a bear and red eyes like coals of fire and hairy tufted ears; lion's claws, a serpent's tail, and a griffin's body.

Tristan charged his horse at him so strongly that, though the beast's mane stood with fright yet he

drove at the dragon: his lance struck its scales and shivered. Then Tristan drew his sword and struck at the dragon's head, but he did not so much as cut the hide. The beast felt the blow: with its claws he dragged at the shield and broke it from the arm; then, his breast unshielded, Tristan used the sword again and struck so strongly that the air rang all round about: but in vain, for he could not wound and meanwhile the dragon vomited from his nostrils two streams of loathsome flames, and Tristan's helm blackened like a cinder and his horse stumbled and fell down and died; but Tristan standing on his feet thrust his sword right into the beast's jaws, and split its heart in two. The dragon uttered his hideous scream a last time and died.

Then he cut out the tongue and put it into his hose, but as the poison came against his flesh the hero fainted and fell in the high grass that bordered the marsh around.

Now the man with the braided red hair whom he had stopped in flight was Aguynguerran the Red, the seneschal of Ireland, and he desired Iseult the Fair; and though he was a coward, yet such is the power of love that every morning he placed himself in ambush, fully armed, in order to attack the monster. But when he heard its cry even at a distance the good knight fled. That day he had dared so far as to return with his companions secretly, and as he found the dragon vanquished, the horse dead, the shield broken, he thought that the victor had died in some lonely spot. So he cut off the monster's head and

bore it to the King, and claimed the great reward.

The King could credit his prowess but hardly, yet wished justice done and summoned his vassals to court, so that there, before the barony assembled, the seneschal should furnish proof of his victory won.

When Iseult the Fair heard that she was to be given to this coward first she laughed long, and then she wailed. But on the morrow, doubting some trick, she took with her Perinis her squire and Brangien her maid, and all three rode unbeknownst towards the dragon's lair: and Iseult saw such a trail on the road as made her wonder—for the hoofs that made it had never been shod in her land. Then she came on the dragon, headless, and a dead horse beside him: nor was the horse harnessed in the fashion of Ireland. Some foreign man had slain the beast, but they knew not whether he still lived or no.

They sought him long, Iseult and Perinis and Brangien together, till at last Brangien saw the helm glittering in the marshy grass: and Tristan still breathed. Perinis put him on his horse and bore him secretly to the women's rooms. There Iseult told her mother the tale and left the hero with her, and as the Queen unharnessed him, the dragon's tongue fell from his boot of steel. Then, the Queen of Ireland revived him by the virtue of an herb and said:

"Stranger, I know you for the true slayer of the dragon: but our seneschal, a felon, cut off its head and claims my daughter Iseult for his wage; will you be ready two days hence to give him the lie in battle?"

"Queen," said he, "the time is short, but you, I

think, can cure me in two days. Upon the dragon I conquered Iseult, and on the seneschal perhaps I shall reconquer her."

Then the Queen brewed him strong brews, and on the morrow Iseult the Fair got him ready a bath and anointed him with a balm her mother had conjured. Her glance lingered on the face of the wounded man; she saw that he was beautiful and thought to herself: "Truly, if his prowess equals his beauty, my champion will fight a brave battle." Restored by the warmth of the water and the vigour of the spices, Tristan looked at her, and as he looked at her he thought: "So I have found the Queen of the Hair of Gold," and he smiled as he thought it. But Iseult, noting it, thought: "Why did this stranger smile? Have I done something unsuitable? Have I omitted one of the services which a maiden owes a guest? Perhaps he smiled because he thinks I forgot to burnish his armour which the poison tarnished?"

She went to where Tristan's armour lay. "This helmet is of good steel," thought she, "and will not fail in the hour of need. And this coat of mail is strong, light, worthy to be worn by a brave knight." She took the sword by the hilt: "Truly, this is a fine blade, and one which fits a daring baron." To wipe it clean, she drew the blood-stained sword from its rich sheath. She saw that it was heavily notched; noticed the shape of the dent: was not this the blade that had broken off in Morholt's skull? She balanced a moment in doubt, then she went to where she kept the steel she had found in the skull and she put it to

the sword, and it fitted so that the join was hardly seen.

She ran to where Tristan lay wounded, and with the sword above him she cried:

"You are that Tristan of the Lyonesse, who killed the Morholt, my mother's brother, and now you shall die in your turn."

Tristan strained to ward the blow, but he was too weak; his wit, however, stood firm in spite of evil and he said:

"So be it, let me die: but to save yourself long memories, listen awhile: King's daughter, my life is not only in your power but is yours of right. My life is yours because you have twice returned it me. Once, long ago: for I was the wounded harper whom you healed of the poison of the Morholt's shaft. Nor repent the healing: were not these wounds had in fair fight? Did I kill the Morholt by treason? Had he not defied me and was I not held to the defence of my body? And now this second time also you have saved me. It was for you I fought the beast. . . .

"But let us leave these things. I would but show you how my life is your own. Kill me then, if you think thus to win praise and glory. Doubtless, when you are lying in the arms of the brave seneschal, it will be sweet for you to think of your wounded guest, who wagered his life to conquer you, and did conquer you, and whom you slew defenceless in this bath."

Iseult replied: "I hear strange words. Why should he that killed the Morholt seek me also, his niece? Doubtless because the Morholt came for a tribute of

maidens from Cornwall, so you came to boast returning that you had brought back the maiden who was nearest to him, to Cornwall, a slave."

"King's daughter," said Tristan, "no. . . . One day two swallows flew, and flew to Tintagel and bore one hair out of all your hairs of gold, and I thought they brought me good will and peace, so I came to find you over seas. So I braved the monster and his poison. See here, amid the threads of gold upon my coat your hair is sown: the threads are tarnished, but your bright hair still shines."

Iseult put down the sword and taking up the coat of arms she saw upon it the hair of gold and was silent a long space, till she kissed him on the lips to prove peace, and she put rich garments over him.

On the day of the barons' assembly, Tristan sent Perinis privily to his ship to summon his companions that they should come to court adorned as befitted the envoys of a great King, for it was his hope that very day to reach the goal of his adventure. Gorvenal and the hundred knights had grieved for four days now, thinking Tristan lost. The tidings delighted them.

One by one the hundred knights passed into the hall where all the barons of Ireland stood, they entered in silence and sat all in rank together: on their scarlet and purple the gems gleamed.

The Irishmen spake among themselves: "Whoever are these splendid lords? Who knows them? Behold these sumptuous cloaks trimmed with sable and with embroideries. Behold the shimmer, at the hilts of

their swords, the buckles of their garments, of rubies, beryls, emeralds and many stones of very names we do not know. Who ever has seen splendour equal to this? Whence come these lords? Whose are they?" But the hundred knights said nothing and did not move from their seats, no matter who entered.

When the King had taken his throne, the seneschal arose to prove by witness and by arms that he had slain the dragon and that so Iseult was won. Then Iseult bowed to her father and said:

"King, I have here a man who challenges your seneschal for lies and felony. Promise that you will pardon this man all his past deeds, no matter what they were, for here he stands to prove that he and no other slew the dragon, and grant him forgiveness and your peace."

The King reflected and did not hurry to respond. In mass the barons cried:

"Grant it, Sire, grant it!"

The King said: "I grant it." But Iseult knelt at his feet and said: "Father, first give me the kiss of peace and forgiveness, as a sign that you will give him the same."

Then she found Tristan and led him before the barony. And as he came the hundred knights rose all together, crossed their arms upon their breasts and bowed, and arrayed themselves beside him, so the Irish knew that he was their lord.

But among the Irish many knew him again and cried: "Tristan of Lyonesse that slew the Morholt!" They drew their swords and clamoured for death.

But Iseult cried: "King, kiss this man upon the lips as your oath was," and the King kissed him, and the clamour fell.

Then Tristan showed the dragon's tongue and offered the seneschal battle, but the seneschal looked at his face and dared not.

Then Tristan said:

"My lords, you have said it, and it is truth: I killed the Morholt. But I crossed the sea to offer you a good blood-fine, to ransom that deed and get me quit of it.

"I put my body in peril of death and rid you of the beast and have so conquered Iseult the Fair, and having conquered her I will bear her away on my ship.

"But that these lands of Cornwall and Ireland may know no more hatred, but love only, learn that King Mark, my lord, will marry her. Here stand a hundred knights of high name, who all will swear with an oath upon the relics of the holy saints, that King Mark sends you by their embassy offer of peace and of brotherhood and goodwill; and that he would by your courtesy hold Iseult as his honoured wife, and that he would have all the men of Cornwall serve her as their Queen."

When the lords of Ireland heard this they acclaimed it, and the King also was content.

Then, since that treaty and alliance was to be made, the King her father took Iseult by the hand and asked of Tristan that he should take an oath; to wit that he would lead her loyally to his lord, and Tristan took that oath and swore it before the knights and the barony of Ireland assembled. Iseult

the Fair trembled for shame and anguish. Thus Tristan, having won her, disdained her; the fine story of the hair of gold was but a lie; it was to another he was delivering her.

Then the King put Iseult's right hand into Tristan's right hand, and Tristan held it for a space in token of seizing for the King of Cornwall.

So, for the love of King Mark, did Tristan by guile and by force conquer the Queen of the hair of gold.

The Philtre

When the day of Iseult's livery to the lords of Cornwall drew near, her mother gathered herbs and flowers and roots and steeped them in wine, and brewed a potion of might, and having perfected it by science and magic, she poured it into a pitcher, and said apart to Brangien:

"Child, it is yours to go with Iseult to King Mark's country, for you love her with a faithful love. Take then this pitcher and remember well my words. Hide it so that no eye shall see nor no lip go near it: but when the wedding-night has come and that moment in which the wedded are left alone, pour this essenced wine into a cup and offer it to King Mark and to Iseult his queen. Oh! Take all care, my child, that they alone shall taste this brew. For this is its power: they who drink of it together love each other with

their every single sense and with their every thought, forever, in life and in death."

And Brangien promised the Queen that she would do her bidding.

The ship, ploughing the deep waves, bore off Iseult. The farther it bore her from the soil of Ireland, the more sadly the young girl bewailed her lot. Seated under the tent in which she had secluded herself with Brangien her maid, she wept, remembering her land. Where were these strangers dragging her? Towards whom? Towards what fate? When Tristan approached her and sought to soothe her with soft words, she angered, repulsed him, and hate swelled her heart. He had come to Ireland, he the ravisher, he the murderer of the Morholt; with guile he had torn her from her mother and her land; he had not deigned to keep her for himself, and now he was carrying her away as his prey, over the waves, to the land of the enemy. "Accursed be the sea that bears me, for rather would I lie dead on the earth where I was born than live out there, beyond. . . ."

One day when the wind had fallen and the sails hung slack Tristan dropped anchor by an island and the hundred knights of Cornwall and the sailors, weary of the sea, landed all. Iseult alone remained aboard and a little serving maid, when Tristan came near the Queen to calm her sorrow. The sun was hot above them and they were athirst and, as they called, the little maid looked about for drink for them and found that pitcher which the mother of Iseult had given into Brangien's keeping. And when she came

on it, the child cried "I have found you wine!" Now she had found not wine—but Passion and Joy most sharp, and Anguish without end, and Death.

The child filled a goblet and presented it to her mistress. The Queen drank deep of that draught and gave it to Tristan and he drank also long and emptied it all.

Brangien came in upon them; she saw them gazing at each other in silence as though ravished and apart; she saw the almost emptied pitcher standing there before them, and the goblet. She snatched up the pitcher and cast it into the shuddering sea and cried aloud: "Cursed be the day I was born and cursed the day that first I trod this deck. Iseult, my friend, and Tristan, you, you have drunk death together."

And once more the bark ran free for Tintagel. But it seemed to Tristan as though an ardent briar, sharp-thorned but with flower most sweet smelling drove roots into his blood and laced the lovely body of Iseult all round about it and bound it to his own and to his every thought and desire. And he thought: "Andret, Denoalen, Guenelon and Gondoïne, felons, that charged me with coveting King Mark's land, I have come lower by far, for it is not his land I covet. Fair uncle, who loved me orphaned ere ever you knew in me the blood of your sister Blanchefleur, you that wept as you bore me to that boat alone, why did you not drive out the boy that was to betray you? Ah! What thought was that! Iseult is yours and I am but your vassal; Iseult is yours and I am your son; Iseult is yours and may not love me."

But Iseult loved him, though she would have hated. Had he not basely disdained her? She could not hate, for a tenderness more sharp than hatred tore her.

And Brangien watched them in anguish, suffering more cruelly because she alone knew the depth of evil done.

Two days she watched them, seeing them refuse all food or comfort and seeking each other as blind men seek, wretched apart and together more wretched still, for then they trembled each for the first avowal.

On the third day, as Tristan neared the tent on deck where Iseult sat, she saw him coming and she said to him, very humbly, "Come in, my lord."

"Queen," said Tristan, "why do you call me lord? Am I not your liege and vassal, to revere and serve and cherish you as my lady and Queen?"

But Iseult answered, "No, you know that you are my lord and my master, and I your slave. Ah, why did I not sharpen those wounds of the wounded singer, or let die that dragon-slayer in the grasses of the marsh? Why did I not, while he lay helpless in the bath, plant on him the blow of the sword I brandished? But then I did not know what now I know!"

"And what is it that you know, Iseult? What is it that torments you?"

"Ah, all that I know torments me, and all that I see. This sky and this sea torment me, and my body and my life."

She laid her arm upon Tristan's shoulder, the light of her eyes was drowned and her lips trembled.

He repeated: "Friend, what is it that torments you?"

"The love of you," she said. Whereat he put his lips to hers.

But as they thus tasted their first joy, Brangien, that watched them, stretched her arms and cried at their feet in tears:

"Stay and return if still you can. . . . But oh! that path has no returning. For already Love and his strength drag you on and now henceforth forever never shall you know joy without pain again. The wine possesses you, the draught your mother gave me, the draught the King alone should have drunk with you: but that old Enemy has tricked us, all us three; it is you who have drained the goblet. Friend Tristan, Iseult my friend, for that bad ward I kept take here my body and my life for through me and in that cup, you have drunk not love alone, but love and death together."

The lovers held each other; life and desire trembled through their youth, and Tristan said, "Well then, come Death."

And as evening fell, upon the bark that heeled and ran to King Mark's land, they gave themselves up utterly to love.

OLD PHILTRE: C11446

*Brangien Delivered
to the Serfs*

As King Mark came down to greet Iseult upon the shore, Tristan took her hand and led her to the King and the King took seizing of her, taking her hand. He led her in great pomp to his castle of Tintagel, and as she came in hall amid the vassals her beauty shone so that the walls were lit as they are lit at dawn. Then King Mark blessed those swallows which, by happy courtesy, had brought the hair of gold, and Tristan also he blessed, and the hundred knights who, on that adventurous bark, had gone to find him joy of heart and of eyes; yet to him also that ship was to bring sting, torment and mourning.

And on the eighteenth day, having called his barony together he took Iseult to wife. But on the wed-

ding night, Brangien to conceal the Queen's dishonour and save her from death, took her place in the nuptial couch. The loyal maid sacrificed the purity of her body to her friend, in remorse of the poor watch she had kept at sea, and out of love of Iseult. The darkness of the night hid her trick and her shame from the king.

Here the romancers insist that Brangien had not cast into the sea the flagon of spiced wine, which the lovers had not quite emptied; that, in the dawn, after her lady in turn had entered King Mark's bed, she poured into a cup what remained of the philtre and presented it to the pair; that Mark drank heavily of it and that Iseult secretly threw her share away.

But know, my lords, that these romancers have tampered with the tale and falsified it. They conceived this lie for the reason that they did not understand the marvellous love in which Mark ever held the Queen. In truth, as you shall see, never, despite anguish, torment and terrible reprisals, could Mark expel either Iseult or Tristan from his heart; yet know that he had not drunk the spiced wine. Neither poison nor sorcery, only the tender nobility of his heart, moved him to love.

Then Iseult lived as a queen, but lived in sadness. She had King Mark's tenderness and the barons' honour; the people also loved her; she passed her days amid the frescoes on the walls and floors all strewn with flowers; good jewels had she and purple cloth and tapestry of Hungary and Thessaly too, and songs

of harpers, and curtains upon which were worked leopards and eagles and popinjays and all the beasts of sea and field. And her love too she had, love high and splendid, for as is the custom among great lords, Tristan could ever be near her. At his leisure and his dalliance, night and day: for he slept in the King's chamber as great lords do, among the lieges and the councillors. Yet still she feared; for though her love were secret and Tristan unsuspected (for who suspects a son?) Brangien knew. And Brangien seemed in the Queen's mind like a witness spying; for Brangien alone knew what manner of life she led, and held her at mercy so. And the Queen thought: Ah, if some day she should weary of serving as a slave the bed where once she passed for Queen. . . . If Tristan should die from her betrayal! So fear maddened the Queen, but not in truth the fear of Brangien who was loyal; her own heart bred the fear.

Hear now, my lords, the great treachery she planned; but God, as you shall see, had pity on her; be you also indulgent with her.

That day, Tristan and the King hunted afar, and Tristan knew nothing of this crime. Iseult had two serfs called before her, promised them freedom and sixty gold bezants if they swore to do her will. They swore an oath.

"I shall give you," said she, "a young girl; take her into the forest, it matters not whether far or near, but to some spot where none will ever learn what happened: there, kill her and bring me back her tongue. Remember, so that you can repeat them to

me, the words which she will have said. Go now; when you return you will be freemen and rich."

Then she called Brangien. "Friend, you see how my body languishes and suffers: will you not go seek in the forest the plants which satisfy this sickness? Here are two serfs who will lead you; they know where the simples grow. So follow them; sister, know well that if I am sending you into the forest, it is for the sake of my peace and my life."

The serfs led her away. Once in the woods, she wished to stop, for the healing plants grew about her in abundance. But they led her ever farther: "Come, this is not the proper place."

One of the serfs strode before her, the other followed her. No more a beaten path, but brambles, thorns and tangling thistles. Suddenly the man who went before drew his sword and faced about; she turned to the other to seek help; he also held a naked sword by the hilt and said: "Young girl, we must kill you."

Brangien fell to the grass and with her arms sought to thrust the swordpoints aside. The voice in which she begged mercy of them was so piteous and soft that they said:

"Young girl, if Queen Iseult, your lady and ours, wishes that you die, doubtless it is because you have done her some great wrong."

She answered: "I know not, friends; I remember only one misdeed. When we left Ireland, each of us took with her, as the chief of her ornaments, a snow-white shift, a shift for her wedding night. On

the sea it happened that Iseult tore her white shift, and for her wedding night I loaned her mine. Friends, that was the sole wrong I did her. Yet since it is her wish that I die, tell her that I send her greetings and love and that I thank her for all the goodness and honour she has shown me since as a child and stolen by pirates I was sold to her mother and placed in her service. May God in his goodness preserve her honour, her person, and her life. Brothers, now strike."

The serfs took pity. They held council and deciding that a misdeed such as hers perhaps did not merit death, they bound her to a tree. Then they killed a young dog: one of them cut out its tongue, tied it in the flap of his kirtle, and thus both reappeared before Iseult.

"Did she speak?" she inquired anxiously.

"Yes, Queen, she spoke. She said you were angered by a single wrong: that on the sea you had torn a snow-white shift which you had brought with you from Ireland, and on your wedding night she had loaned you hers. That, said she, was her only crime. She sent you thanks for many benefits received from you since childhood, she prayed God to protect your honour and your life. She sends you her greetings and her love. Queen, here is her tongue which we bring you."

"Murderers!" cried Iseult, "give me back Brangien, my beloved maid. Did you not know she was my only friend? Murderers, give her back to me!"

"Queen, it is said in sooth 'Woman changes in a few

hours; in a single hour woman laughs, weeps, hates, loves.' We killed her, since you bade us to."

"How could I have bidden you? What wrong had there been: was she not my dear companion, sweet, loyal, beautiful? You knew it, murderers: I sent her to cull simples and confided her to your care that you might protect her on the way. But I shall say you killed her and you will be burned alive on coals."

"Queen, know that she is alive and that we will bring her back safe and sound to you."

But she did not believe them and like one deranged alternately cursed the murderers and herself. She had one of the serfs kept by her side while the other sped toward the tree to which Brangien was bound.

"Mistress, God has been merciful to you and your lady calls you back to her."

When she appeared before Iseult, Brangien knelt, begging her to pardon her faults; but the Queen also fell to her knees before her, and, clasped in one another's arms, both swooned deeply away.

The Tall Pine-Tree

Not Brangien who was faithful, not Brangien, but themselves had these lovers to fear, for hearts so stricken will lose their vigilance. Love pressed them hard, as thirst presses the dying stag to the stream; love dropped upon them from high heaven, as a hawk slipped after long hunger falls right upon the bird. And love will not be hidden. Brangien indeed by her prudence saved them well, none ever surprised the Queen in her lover's arms. But in every hour and place every man could see Love terrible, that rode them, and could see in these lovers their every sense overflowing like new wine working in the vat.

The four felons at court who had hated Tristan of old for his prowess, watched the Queen; they had guessed that great love, and they burnt with envy

and hatred and now a kind of evil joy. They planned to give news of their watching to the King, to see his tenderness turned to fury, Tristan thrust out or slain, and the Queen in torment; for though they feared Tristan their hatred mastered their fear; and, on a day, the four barons called King Mark to parley, and Andret said:

"Fair King, your heart will be troubled and we four also mourn; yet are we bound to tell you what we know. You have placed your trust in Tristan and Tristan would shame you. In vain we warned you. For the love of one man you have mocked ties of blood and all your barony. Learn then that Tristan loves the Queen; it is truth proved and many a word is passing on it now."

The royal King shrank and answered:

"Coward! What thought was that? Indeed I have placed my trust in Tristan. And rightly, for on the day when the Morholt offered combat to you all, you hung your heads and were dumb, and you trembled before him; but Tristan dared him for the honour of this land, and took mortal wounds. Therefore do you hate him, and therefore do I cherish him beyond thee, Andret, and beyond any other; but what then have you seen or heard or known?"

"Naught, lord, save what your eyes could see or your ears hear. Look you and listen, Sire, if there is yet time."

And they left him to taste the poison.

King Mark could not shake off the evil spell. Contrary to his heart, in his turn he kept watch on his

nephew, kept watch on the Queen; but Brangien noting it warned them both and the King watched in vain, so that, soon wearying of an ignoble task, but knowing (alas!) that he could not kill his uneasy thought, he sent for Tristan and said:

"Tristan, leave this castle; and having left it, remain apart and do not think to return to it, and do not repass its moat or boundaries. Felons have charged you with an awful treason, but ask me nothing; I could not speak their words without shame to us both, and for your part seek you no word to appease. I have not believed them . . . had I done so would I not long since have flung you to a shameful death? But their evil words have troubled all my soul and only by your absence can my disquiet be soothed. Go, doubtless I will soon recall you. Go, my son, you are still dear to me."

When the felons heard the news they said among themselves, "He is gone, the wizard; he is driven out. Surely he will cross the sea on far adventures to carry his traitor service to some distant King."

But Tristan had not strength to depart altogether; and when he had crossed the moats and boundaries of the castle he knew he could go no further. He stayed in Tintagel town and lodged with Gorvenal in a burgess' house, and languished oh! more wounded than when in that past day the shaft of the Morholt had tainted his body. Lately, when he had lain helpless in the hut built at the sea's edge and all had fled from the stench of his wounds, three men nevertheless attended him, Gorvenal, Dinas of Lidan and King

Mark. Now, Gorvenal and Dinas still watched by his bed; but King Mark no longer came there, and Tristan groaned:

"In truth, fair uncle, my body now exhales the smell of a more repulsive poison, and your love no longer knows how to overcome your horror."

But in the fire of his fever, desire without redress bore him like a bolting horse towards the well-girdled towers which shut in the Queen; horse and rider broke upon the walls of stone; but horse and rider picked themselves up and ceaselessly threw themselves into the selfsame ride.

In the close towers Iseult the Fair drooped also, but more wretched still. For it was hers all day long to feign laughter and all night long to conquer fever and despair. And all night as she lay by King Mark's side, fever still kept her waking, and she stared at darkness. She longed to fly to Tristan and she dreamt dreams of running to the gates and of finding there sharp scythes, traps of the felons, that cut her tender knees; and she dreamt of weakness and falling, and that her wounds had left her blood upon the ground. Now these lovers would have died, but Brangien succoured them. At peril of her life she found the house where Tristan lay. There Gorvenal opened to her very gladly, knowing what salvation she could bring.

So she found Tristan, and to save the lovers she taught him a device, nor was ever known a more subtle ruse of love.

Behind the castle of Tintagel was an orchard fenced around and wide and all closed in with stout and

pointed stakes and numberless trees were there and fruit on them, birds and clusters of sweet grapes. And furthest from the castle, by the stakes of the palisade, was a tall pine-tree, straight and with heavy branches spreading from its trunk. At its root a living spring welled calm into a marble round, then ran between two borders winding, throughout the orchard and so on, till it flowed at last within the castle and through the women's rooms.

And every evening, by Brangien's counsel, Tristan cut him twigs and bark, leapt the sharp stakes and, having come beneath the pine, threw them into the clear spring; they floated light as foam down the stream to the women's rooms; and Iseult watched for their coming, and on those evenings she would wander out into the orchard and find her friend. Lithe and in fear would she come, watching at every step for what might lurk in the trees observing, foes or the felons whom she knew. Tristan, as soon as he saw her, would spring towards her with outspread arms. And the night and the branches of the pine protected them.

And so she said one night: "Oh, Tristan, I have heard that the castle is fairy and that twice a year it vanishes away. So is it vanished now and this is that enchanted orchard of which the harpers sing. A wall of air girdles it on all sides; there are flowering trees, a balmy soil; here without vigil the hero lives in his friend's arms and no hostile force can shatter the wall of air."

Even as she spoke, from the towers of Tintagel

there resounded the bugles of sentinels announcing the dawn.

"No," said Tristan, "the wall of air already lies shattered and this is not the enchanted orchard. But, one day, friend, we shall go together to a fortunate land from which none returns. There, rises a castle of white marble; at each of its thousand windows burns a lighted candle; at each a minstrel plays and sings a melody without end; the sun does not shine there but none regrets his light: it is the happy land of the living."

But high on the towers of Tintagel the dawn illuminated alternate great blocks of vert and azure.

Iseult had refound her joy. Mark's thought of illness grew faint; but the felons felt or knew which way lay truth, and they guessed that Tristan had met the Queen. Till at last Duke Andret (whom God shame) said to his peers:

"My lords, let us take counsel of Frocin the dwarf; for he knows the seven arts, and magic and every kind of charm. At the birth of a child he knows so well to observe the seven planets and the courses of the stars that he can foretell the events of his life. By the power of Bugibus and of Noiron he can discover hidden things. He will teach us if he will the wiles of Iseult the Fair."

In hate of beauty and of prowess, the little evil man drew signs for them and characters of sorcery; he cast the fortunes of the hour and then at last he said:

"Sirs, high good lords, this night shall you seize them both."

Then they led the little wizard to the King, and he said:

"Sire, bid your huntsmen leash the hounds and saddle the horses, proclaim a seven days' hunt in the forest and seven nights abroad therein, and hang me high if you do not hear this night what converse Tristan holds."

So did the King unwillingly; and at fall of night he left the hunt taking the dwarf in pillion, and entered the orchard, and the dwarf took him to the tall pine-tree, saying:

"Fair King, climb into these branches and take with you your arrows and your bow, for you may need them; and bide you still. You will not have long to wait."

"Begone, dog of the Evil One!" answered Mark.

And the dwarf departed, taking the horse.

He had spoken truly; the King did not wait long. That night the moon shone clear. Hid in the branches the King saw his nephew leap the palisades and throw his bark and twigs into the stream. But Tristan had bent over the round well to throw them and so doing had seen the image of the King. He could not stop the branches as they floated away, and there, yonder, in the women's rooms, Iseult was watching and would come. May God protect the lovers!

She came, and Tristan watched her motionless. Above him in the tree he heard the click of the arrow when it fits the string.

She came, but lightly and carefully, as was her wont, thinking: "What has passed, that Tristan does not come to meet me? He has seen some foe."

She stopped short, scanned with a glance the thick black wood. Suddenly, by the clear moonshine, she also saw the King's shadow in the fount. She showed the wit of women well, she did not lift her eyes.

"Lord God," she said, low down, "grant I may be the first to speak."

She drew still closer. Hear how she overtook and warned her friend:

"Tristan," she said, "what have you dared to do, calling me hither at such an hour? Often have you called me—to beseech, you said. And Queen though I am, I know you won me that title—and I have come. What would you?"

"Queen, I would have you pray the King for me."

She was in tears and trembling, but Tristan praised God the Lord who had shown his friend her peril.

"Queen," he went on, "often and in vain have I summoned you; never since the King drove me away have you deigned to come at my call. Take pity; the King hates me and I know not why. Perhaps you know the cause and can charm his anger. For whom can he trust if not you, chaste Queen and courteous, Iseult?"

"Truly, lord Tristan, you do not know he doubts us both. And I, to add to my shame, must acquaint you of it. Ah! My lord believes I love you with a guilty love. God nonetheless knows, and if I lie, may He cover my body with disgrace, that I have

never given my love to any man saving only him who first took me, a maiden, into his arms. And would you have me, at such a time, implore your pardon of the King? Why, did he know of my passage here to-night he would cast my ashes to the wind."

Tristan groaned:

"Fair uncle, the world says 'No man is villainous if he commits no villainy.' But in what manner of heart could such a suspicion arise?"

"Sir Tristan, what do you mean? No, the King my lord would not of himself have conceived such villainy. But the felons of this land made him believe this lie, for it is easy to deceive the loyal heart. 'They love each other,' they told him, and the felons charged us with crime. Yes, you love me, Tristan, why deny it? Am I not your uncle's wife and did I not twice save you from death? Yes, I love you in return, for are you not of the royal blood and have I not oftentimes heard my mother declare that no woman loves her lord so long as she does not love his kin. It is for love of the King that I love you, Tristan; from this time forth, should he take you into grace again, I would be happy. My body trembles and I am afraid. I go, for I have waited too long."

In the branches the King smiled and had pity.

And as Iseult fled: "Queen," said Tristan, "in the Lord's name help me, for charity. The cowards would remove from the King's side all those who love him; they have succeeded and now mock him. So be it; I will go from this land, far away, poor as I once came into it: but at the very least, do you prevail upon the

King that in recognition of past services, so that I can ride into other countries without shame, he give me enough of his goods to discharge my obligations, to redeem my horse and arms."

"No, Tristan, you should not have made this request of me. I am alone in this land, alone in this palace where none loves me, unsupported, at the mercy of the King. Do you not see that should I say a word for you to him, I would risk a shameful death? Friend, God aid you! The King wrongs you but the Lord God will be by you in whatever land you go."

So she went back to the women's rooms and told it to Brangien, who cried: "Iseult, God has worked a miracle for you, for he is compassionate and will not hurt the innocent in heart."

Under the tall pine-tree, Tristan, leaning against the rim of marble, bemoaned his fate:

"May God have pity on me and repair the great injustice which I suffer from my dear lord."

And when he had left the orchard, the King said smiling:

"Fair nephew, blessed be this hour. Only see: that long ride you planned this morning is over now."

But in an open glade apart, Frocin, the dwarf, read in the clear stars that the King now meant his death; he blackened with shame and fear and fled into Wales.

The Dwarf Frocin

OR

King Mark made peace with Tristan. Tristan returned to the castle as of old. Tristan slept in the King's chamber with his peers. He could come or go, the King thought no more of it. But who can long keep his love a secret? Love alas cannot be hid.

curious Mark had pardoned the felons, and as the seneschal, Dinas of Lidan, found the dwarf wandering in a forest abandoned, he brought him home, and the King had pity and pardoned even him.

But his goodness did but feed the ire of the barons, who freshly having surprised Tristan and the Queen swore this oath: If the King kept Tristan in the land they would withdraw to their strongholds as for war, and they called the King to parley.

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

"Lord," said they, "love us, hate us, as you will, but we desire that you drive Tristan forth. He loves the Queen as all who choose can see, but as for us we will bear it no longer."

* And the King sighed, looking down in silence. *

"King," they went on, "we will not bear it, for we know now that this is known to you and that yet you will not move. Parley you, and take counsel. As for us if you will not exile this man, your nephew, and drive him forth out of your land forever, we will withdraw within our bailiwicks and take our neighbours also from your court: for we cannot endure his presence longer in this place. Such is your balance: choose."

"My lords," said he, "once I hearkened to the evil words you spoke of Tristan, yet was I wrong in the end. But you are my lieges and I would not lose the service of my men. Counsel me therefore, I charge you, you that owe me counsel. You know me for a man neither proud nor overstepping." *

"Lord," said they, "call then Frocin hither. You mistrust him for that orchard night. Still, was it not he that read in the stars of the Queen's coming there and to the very pine-tree too? He is very wise, take counsel of him."

And he came, did that hunchback of Hell; the felons greeted him and he planned this evil.

"Sire," said he, "let your nephew ride hard to-morrow at dawn with a brief drawn up on parchment and well sealed with a seal: bid him ride to King Arthur at Carduel. Sire, he sleeps with the peers in

THE DWARF FROGIN

your chamber; go you out when the first sleep falls on men, and if he love Iseult so madly, why, then I swear by God and by the laws of Rome, he will try to speak with her before he rides. But if he do so unknown to you or to me, then slay me. As for the trap, let me lay it, but do you say nothing of his ride to him until the time for sleep."

And when King Mark had agreed, this dwarf did a vile thing. He bought of a baker four farthings' worth of flour, and hid it in the turn of his coat. That night, when the King had supped and the men-at-arms lay down to sleep in hall, Tristan came to the King as custom was, and the King said:

"Fair nephew, do my will: ride to-morrow night to King Arthur at Carduel, and give him this brief, with my greeting, that he may open it: and stay you with him but one day."

And when Tristan said: "I will take it on the morrow;" the King added: "Aye, and before day dawn."

But, as the peers slept all round the King their lord, that night, a mad thought took Tristan that, before he rode, he knew not for how long, before dawn he would say a last word to the Queen. And there was a spear length in the darkness between them. Now the dwarf slept with the rest in the King's chamber, and when he thought that all slept he rose and scattered the flour silently in the spear length that lay between the bed of Tristan and that of the Queen. Should one of the lovers go to join the other, the flour would retain the imprint of his steps. But as he strewed it about, Tristan, who lay awake, saw him: "What does

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

only a fool would let him take the imprint of his steps.
this mean? This dwarf is not in the habit of working for my weal, but he shall be deceived: only a fool would let him take the imprint of his steps."

At midnight, when all was dark in the room, no candle nor any lamp glimmering, the King went out silently by the door and with him the dwarf. Then Tristan rose in the darkness and judged the spear length and leapt the space between, for his farewell. But that day in the hunt a boar had wounded him in the leg, and to his bad luck the wound was unbandaged, and in this effort bled. He did not feel it or see it in the darkness, but the blood dripped upon the couches and the flour strewn between; and outside in the moonlight the dwarf read the heavens and knew that the lovers were together. He trembled with joy at the thought and cried:

"Enter, my King, and if you do not find them together, hang me high!"

Then the King and the dwarf and the four felons ran in with lights and noise, and though Tristan had regained his place there was the blood for witness, and though Iseult feigned sleep, and Perinis too, who lay at Tristan's feet, yet there was the blood for witness. And the King looked in silence at the blood where it lay upon the bed and the boards and trampled into the flour.

And the four barons held Tristan down upon his bed and mocked the Queen also, promising her full justice; and they bared and showed the wound whence the blood flowed.

Then the King said:

THE DWARF FROCIN

"Tristan, now nothing longer holds. To-morrow you shall die."

And Tristan answered:

"Have mercy, Lord, in the name of God that suffered the cross!"

But the felons called on the King to take vengeance, saying:

"Do justice, King: take vengeance."

And Tristan went on, "Have mercy, not on me—for why should I stand at dying?—Truly, but for you, I would have sold my honour high to cowards who, under your peace, have put hands on my body—but in homage to you I have yielded and you may do with me what you will. But, Lord, remember the Queen!"

And as he knelt at the King's feet he still complained:

"Remember the Queen; for if any man of your household make so bold as to maintain the lie that I loved her unlawfully, I will stand up armed to him in a ring. Sire, in the name of God the Lord, have mercy on her."

Then the barons bound him with ropes, and the Queen also. But had Tristan known that trial by combat was to be denied him, certainly he would not have suffered it.

For he trusted in God and knew no man dared draw sword against him in the lists. And truly he did well to trust in God, for though the felons mocked him when he said he had loved loyally, yet I call you to witness, my lords who read this, and who know

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

of the philtre drunk upon the high seas, and who understand whether his love were disloyalty indeed. For men see this and that outward thing, but God alone the heart, and in the heart alone is Crime and the sole final judge is God. Therefore did He lay down the law that a man accused might uphold his cause by battle, and God himself fights for the innocent in such a combat.

Therefore did Tristan claim justice and the right of battle and therefore was he careful to fail in nothing of the homage he owed King Mark, his lord.

But had he known what was coming, he would have killed the felons. Lord God, why did he not kill them!

The Chantry Leap



ark was the night, and the news ran that Tristan and the Queen were held and that the King would kill them; and wealthy burgess, or common man, they wept and ran to the palace.

"Alas, well must we weep! Tristan, fearless baron, must you die by such shabby treachery? And you, loyal and honoured Queen, in what land was ever born a king's daughter so beautiful, so dear? Is this, humped-back dwarf, the work of your auguries? May he never see the face of God who, having found you, does not drive his spear into your body! Tristan, fair dear friend, when the Morholt, come to ravish our children, set foot on these shores, not one of our barons dared arm himself against him, and all were silent like mutes. But you, Tristan, you fought for us, the men of Cornwall, and you slew the Morholt; and

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

he struck you a wound with his spear of which you almost died for us. To-day, in memory of these things, can we consent in your death?"

And the murmurs and the cries ran through the city, but such was the King's anger in his castle above that not the strongest nor the proudest baron dared move him.

Night ended and the day drew near. Mark, before dawn, rode out to the place where he held pleas and judgment. He ordered a ditch to be dug in the earth and knotty vine-shoots and thorns to be laid therein.

6AM At the hour of Prime he had a ban cried through his land to gather the men of Cornwall; they came with a great noise and none but did weep saving only the dwarf of Tintagel. The King spoke them thus:

"My lords, I have made here a faggot of thorns for Tristan and the Queen; for they have fallen."

But they cried all, with tears:

"A sentence, lord, a sentence; an indictment and pleas; for killing without trial is shame and crime. King, respite and mercy for them!"

But Mark answered in his anger:

"Neither respite, nor delay, nor pleas, nor sentence. By God that made the world, if any dare petition me, he shall burn first!"

He ordered the fire to be lit, and Tristan to be called.

The flames rose, and all were silent before the flames, and the King waited.

The servants ran to the room where watch was kept on the two lovers; and they dragged Tristan

THE CHANTRY LEAP

by his hands which were bound with ropes. By God it was vile to fetter him thus! He wept at the insult, but of what use were his tears? Ignominiously they marched him off, and the Queen called after him, almost demented with anguish:

"To be killed, friend, that you might live, that would be great joy!"

The guards and Tristan went down from the city towards the stake. But, behind them, a knight galloped up and joined them: it was Dinas the good seneschal. At the news of the misfortune, he had come from his castle of Lidan, and foam, sweat and blood streamed from his horse's flanks:

"Son, I haste towards the King's sitting. God there perhaps will grant me to hit upon some plan that will help both of you; already he permits me to serve you by a slight act of courtesy. Friends," he said to the servants, "I wish you to lead him without these fetters." And Dinas cut the shameful ropes. "Should he try to flee, do you not have your swords?"

He kissed Tristan on the lips, sprang into his saddle, and his horse bore him off.

Now, hear how full of pity is God. He who does not desire the sinner's death heard the lament and the prayers of the common folk, beseeching him for the tormented lovers. Near the road where Tristan passed was a chantry upon a rock. It stood at a cliff's edge steep and sheer, and it turned to the sea-breeze; in the apse of it were windows of stained glass, the skilful work of a saint. Then Tristan said to those with him:

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

"My lords, see you this chantry? Permit me to enter it. My death is near, I shall ask God that he have mercy on me, who so offended him. There is but one door to the place, my lords, and each of you has his sword drawn. So, you may well see that, when my prayer to God is done, I must come past you again: when I have prayed God, my lords, for the last time."

And one of the guards said:

"Why, let him go in."

So they let him enter to pray. But he, once in, dashed through and leapt the altar rail and the altar too and forced a window of the apse, and leapt again over the cliff's edge. So might he die, but not of that shameful death before the people.

Now learn my lords, how generous was God to him that day. The wind took Tristan's cloak and he fell upon a smooth rock at the cliff's foot, which to this day the men of Cornwall call "Tristan's leap."

His guards still waited for him at the chantry door, but vainly, for God was now his guard. And he ran, and the fine sand crunched under his feet, and far off he saw the faggot burning, and the smoke and the crackling flames; and fled.

Sword girt and bridle loose, Gorvenal had fled the city, lest the King burn him in his master's place: and he found Tristan on the shore.

"Master," said Tristan, "God has saved me, but oh! master, to what end? For without Iseult I may not and I will not live, and I rather had died of my fall. I have escaped, Iseult, and they will kill you. They

THE CHANTRY LEAP

will burn her for me, then I too will die for her."

"Lord," said Gorvenal, "take no counsel of anger. See here this thicket with a ditch dug round about it. Let us hide therein where the track passes near, and comers by it will tell us news; and, boy, if they burn Iseult, I swear by God, the Son of Mary, never to sleep under a roof again until she be avenged."

"Good master, I have not got my sword."

"Here, I have brought it to you."

"Well done, master; I fear nothing now, save God."

"Son, under my tunic I have something else which will rejoice you: this light and solid coat of mail, which may come handy."

"Give it me, fair master. By the God in whom I believe, I go now to free my friend."

"No, do not hurry," said Gorvenal. "God without doubt has reserved some surer vengeance for you. But think that it is not in your power to approach the stake; the burghers surround it and fear the king: the very man who wishes your freedom will be the first to strike you. Son, it is well said 'Folly is not prowess.' Wait. . . ."

There was a poor man of the common folk that had seen Tristan's fall, and had seen him stumble and rise after, and he crept to Tintagel and to Iseult where she was bound, and said:

"Queen, weep no more. Your friend has fled safely."

"Then I thank God," said she, "and whether they bind or loose me, and whether they kill or spare me, I care but little now."

And though blood came at the cord's-knots, so

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

tightly had the traitors bound her, yet still she said, smiling:

"Did I weep for that when God has loosed my friend I should be little worth."

When the news came to the King that Tristan had leapt that leap and was lost he paled with anger, and bade his men bring forth Iseult.

They dragged her from the room, and she came before the crowd, held by her delicate hands, from which blood dropped, and the crowd called:

"Have pity on her—the loyal Queen and honoured! Surely they that gave her up brought mourning on us all—our curses on them!"

But the King's men dragged her to the thorn faggot as it blazed.

Then Dinas, lord of Lidan, knelt before the King.

"Sire, hear me; I have served you many years, without stint and loyally, without benefit to myself, for there is no poor man nor orphan nor old woman who would give me a penny for your stewardship, which I have held all my life. In reward, grant me your mercy for the Queen. You wish to burn her without trial: that is malfeasance, since she has not acknowledged the crime of which you accuse her. Think, too. If you burn her body, there will no longer be safety in your lands: Tristan has escaped; well does he know the plains, the woods, the fords, the ways, and he is fearless. Most certainly, you are his uncle and he will not lay hand on you; but every baron, every vassal he chances upon, he will kill."

The four felons blanched to hear him: already

THE CHANTRY LEAP

they saw Tristan in ambush, lying in wait for them.

"King," said the seneschal, "since it is true that I have served you well all my life, yield Iseult to me: I will answer for her as her guard and her warrantor."

But the King took Dinas by the hand and swore by the names of the saints forthwith to do justice.

Dinas arose:

"King, I am going back to Lidan and I cast off your service."

Iseult smiled sadly at him. He mounted his charger and rode away, sorry, bowed and dejected.

Iseult stood up before the flame, and the crowd cried its anger and cursed the traitors and the King. None could see her without pity, unless he had a felon's heart: she was so tightly bound. The tears ran down her face and fell upon her grey gown where ran a little thread of gold, and a thread of gold was twined into her hair.

Just then there had come up a hundred lepers, deformed men with pitted and livid faces, limping on crutches to the clatter of hand-rattles. They crowded to the stake, and under their swollen eyelids, their blood-shot eyes gleamed at the sight. Yvain, the ugliest of them all, cried to the King in a piercing voice:

"O King, you would burn this woman in that flame, and it is sound justice, but too swift, for very soon the fire will fall, and her ashes will very soon be scattered by the high wind and her agony be done. Would you have me show you a worse punishment,

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

by which she would live, but in great shame and ever desiring death? Would you, King?"

"Yes, life then for her, but in great shame and worse than death—I could love him who showed me such a torture."

"Sire, in a few words here is my thought. See, I have a hundred comrades here. Give Iseult to us, so that we may have her in common. Our sickness fans our desires. Give her to your lepers: never will a lady have come to a worse end. See, our rags stick to our sores that ooze. She who at your side delighted in rich stuffs trimmed with fur, in jewels, in halls decked with marble, she who enjoyed fine wines, marks of esteem and merriments, when she beholds the court of your lepers, when she has to enter our hovels and lie with us, then Iseult the Fair, the Beautiful, will recognize her sin and will regret this fine black-thorn fire."

And as the King heard them, he stood a long time without moving; then he ran to the Queen and seized her by the hand, and she cried:

"Burn me! rather burn me!"

But the King gave her up, and Yvain took her, and the hundred lepers pressed around. At the sound of their cries and yelpings, all hearts melted for pity. But Yvain had an evil gladness, and as he went he dragged her out of the borough bounds, with his hideous company.

Now they took that road where Tristan lay in hiding, and Gorvenal said to him:

"Son, here is your friend. Will you do naught?"

THE CHANTRY LEAP

Then Tristan mounted the horse and spurred it out of the bush, and cried:

"Yvain, you have been at the Queen's side a moment, and too long. Now leave her if you would live."

But Yvain threw his cloak away and shouted:

"Your clubs, comrades, and your staves! Crutches in the air—for a fight is on!"

Then it was fine to see the lepers throwing their capes aside, and stirring their sick legs, and brandishing their crutches, some threatening: groaning all; but to strike them Tristan was too noble. There are singers who sing that Tristan killed Yvain, but it is a lie. Too much a knight was he to kill such things. Gorvenal indeed, snatching up an oak sapling, crashed it on Yvain's head till his blood ran down to his misshapen feet. Then Tristan took the Queen.

Henceforth near him she felt no further evil. He cut the cords that bound her arms so straightly, and he left the plain so that they plunged into the wood of Morois; and there in the thick wood Tristan was as sure as in a castle keep.

And as the sun fell they halted all three at the foot of a little hill: fear had wearied the Queen, and she leant her head upon his body and slept.

But in the morning, Gorvenal stole from a woodman his bow and two good arrows plumed and barbed, and gave them to Tristan, the great archer, and he shot him a fawn and killed it. Then Gorvenal gathered dry twigs, struck flint, and lit a great fire to cook the venison. And Tristan cut him branches and

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

made a hut and garnished it with leaves. And Iseult slept upon the thick leaves there.

So, in the depths of the wild wood began for the lovers that savage life which yet they loved very soon.

*The Wood
of
Morois*

T

hey wandered in the depths of the wild wood, restless and in haste like beasts that are hunted, nor did they often dare to return by night to the shelter of yesterday. They ate but the flesh of wild animals, and missed the taste of salt. Their faces sank and grew white, their clothes ragged, for the briars tore them. They loved each other and they did not know that they suffered.

One day, as they were wandering in these high woods that had never yet been felled or ordered, they came upon the hermitage of Ogrin.

The old man limped in the sunlight under a light growth of maples near his chapel: he leant upon his crutch, and cried:

"Lord Tristan, hear the great oath which the Cor-

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

nish men have sworn. The King has published a ban in every parish: Whosoever may seize you shall receive a hundred marks of gold for his guerdon, and all the barons have sworn to give you up alive or dead. Do penance, Tristan! God pardons the sinner who turns to repentance."

"And of what should I repent, Ogrin, my lord? Or of what crime? You that sit in judgment upon us here, do you know what cup it was we drank upon the high sea? That good, great draught inebriates us both. I would rather beg my life long and live of roots and herbs with Iseult than, lacking her, be king of a wide kingdom."

"God aid you, Lord Tristan; for you have lost both this world and the next. A man that is traitor to his lord is worthy to be torn by horses and burnt upon the faggot, and wherever his ashes fall no grass shall grow and all tillage is waste, and the trees and the green things die. Lord Tristan, give back the Queen to the man who espoused her lawfully according to the laws of Rome." — *DRAGON ON GOD*

"She is no longer his. He gave her to his lepers. From these lepers I myself conquered her with my own hand; and henceforth she is altogether mine. She cannot pass from me nor I from her."

Ogrin sat down; but at his feet Iseult, her head upon the knees of that man of God, wept silently. The hermit told her and re-told her the words of his holy book, but still while she wept she shook her head, and refused the faith he offered.

"Ah me," said Ogrin then, "what comfort can one

THE WOOD OF MOROIS

give the dead? Do penance, Tristan, for a man who lives in sin without repenting is a man quite dead."

"Oh no," said Tristan, "I live and I do no penance. We will go back into the high wood which comforts and wards us all round about. Come with me, Iseult, my friend."

Iseult rose up; they held each other's hands. They passed into the high grass and the underwood: the trees hid them with their branches. They disappeared beyond the curtain of the leaves.

Hear now, my lords, a good adventure. Tristan had reared a dog, a greyhound, fine, keen, fleet of foot: no count or king had a better for the chase with bows. He was called Hodain. It had been necessary to shut him in the donjon, fettered by a block hung to his neck: since the day he had ceased seeing his master he had rejected every scrap of food, scratched the earth with his paw, wept from his eyes and howled. Many had pity on him:

"Hodain," said they, "no animal ever has loved better than you: yes, Solomon wisely said 'My true friend is my greyhound.'"

And King Mark, recalling past days, thought in his heart:

"This dog shows wisdom in mourning for his master thus; for in all Cornwall is there anyone worth Tristan?"

Three barons came to the King:

"Sire, have Hodain unchained: well we know that his grief is caused by the loss of his master; if you do not, you will see him, as soon as he is set free, chasing

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

men and beasts with open maw and hanging tongue, to rend them."

They unchained him. He sprang out of the door and to the chamber where he lately used to find Tristan. He growled, wailed, hunted about, at last discovered his master's scent. Step by step he traversed the road by which Tristan had gone to the stake. All followed him. He yelped distinctly and climbed towards the cliff. Inside the chantry, he sprang on the altar; suddenly he leaped through the window in the apse, fell to the foot of the rock, on the sands recovered the trail, pointed an instant in the flowering copse where Tristan had concealed himself, then raced towards the forest. No one present was unmoved by the sight.

"Fair King," now said the knights, "let us not follow him; he might lead us to a spot whence it might be difficult to return."

They let him be and turned about. In the coverts the dog bayed and the forest echoed with the sound. From afar, Tristan, the Queen and Gorvenal heard it: "It is Hodain!" They took fright: they thought the King was hunting them, tracking them down like beasts with his greyhounds. . . . They buried themselves in a thicket. At its edge Tristan stood ready with bent bow. But no sooner had Hodain seen and recognized his master than he sprang to him, wagged his head and his tail, arched his back and cast himself in circles on the ground. Whoever saw such joy? Then he ran to Iseult the Fair, to Gorvenal, and also welcomed the horse. Tristan was deeply moved:

THE WOOD OF MOROIS

"Alas, by what ill fortune has he found us? Of what use is this dog, who cannot keep silent, to a harassed man? The King is beating plains and woods, all his lands, for us: Hodain will betray us with his bayings. It was for love of me, that in his noble nature he came to seek his death. Nevertheless we must protect ourselves. What is to be done? Give me your counsel."

Iseult stroked Hodain and said:

"Sire, spare him! I have heard tell of a Welsh woodman who had trained his dog to follow without barking the blood-trails of wounded stags. Friend Tristan, what joy it would be if in taking pains one could thus train Hodain."

For a while he hesitated, while the dog licked the hands of Iseult. Moved, Tristan said:

"I will try; I cannot bear to kill him."

Shortly, Tristan went hunting, started a buck, wounded him with an arrow. The dog darted on the buck's trail and barked so loudly that the woods re-echoed. Tristan silenced him by striking him; Hodain lifted his head towards his master in astonishment, dared not bark and dropped the pursuit; Tristan then took him between his knees and beat his own boot with his stick of chestnut-wood, as do the huntsmen to excite the dogs. At the signal Hodain again started to bark and Tristan again chastised him. Teaching him in this way at the end of scarcely a month he had trained him to hunt in silence: when his arrow had wounded a fallow deer or roebuck, without a sound Hodain followed the trace over snow, over ice or

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

turf; if he found the beast in a covert the dog knew enough to mark the spot by dragging boughs to it; if in the open, he laid grass on the fallen body and returned without a bark to find his master.

The summer passed and the winter came: the two lovers lived, all hidden in the hollow of a rock, and on the frozen earth the cold crisped their couch with dead leaves. In the strength of their love neither one nor the other felt these mortal things. But when the open skies had come back with the springtime, they built a hut of green branches under the great trees. Tristan had known, ever since his childhood, that art by which a man may sing the song of birds in the woods, and at his fancy, he would call as call the thrush, the blackbird and the nightingale, and all winged things; and sometimes in reply very many birds would come on to the branches of his hut and sing their song full-throated in the new light.

The lovers had ceased to wander through the forest, for none of the barons ran the risk of their pursuit knowing well that Tristan would have hanged them to the branches of a tree. One day, however, one of the four traitors, Guenelon, whom God blast! drawn by the heat of the hunt, dared enter the Morois. And that morning, on the forest edge in a ravine, Gorvenal, having unsaddled his horse, had let him graze on the new grass, while far off in their hut Tristan held the Queen, and they slept. Then suddenly Gorvenal heard the cry of the pack; the hounds pursued a deer, which fell into that ravine. And far on the

THE WOOD OF MOROIS

heath the hunter showed—and Gorvenal knew him for the man whom his master hated above all. Alone, with bloody spurs, and striking his horse's mane, he galloped on; but Gorvenal watched him from ambush: he came fast, he would return more slowly. He passed and Gorvenal leapt from his ambush and seized the rein and, suddenly, remembering all the wrong that man had done, hewed him to death and carried off his head in his hands. And when the hunters found the body, as they followed, they thought Tristan came after and they fled in fear of death, and thereafter no man hunted in that wood. And far off, in the hut upon their couch of leaves, slept Tristan and the Queen in one another's arms.

There came Gorvenal, noiseless, the dead man's head in his hands that he might lift his master's heart at his awakening. He hung it by its hair outside the hut, and the leaves garlanded it about. Tristan woke and saw it, half hidden in the leaves, and staring at him as he gazed, and he became afraid. But Gorvenal said: "Fear not, he is dead. I killed him with this sword. He was your foe."

Then Tristan was glad, and from that day no one dared enter the wild wood, for terror guarded it and the lovers were lords of it all: and then it was that Tristan fashioned his bow "Failnaught" which struck home always, man or beast, whatever it aimed at.

My lords, upon a summer day, when mowing is, a little after Whitsuntide, as the birds sang dawn Tristan left his hut and girt his sword on him, and took his bow "Failnaught" and went off to hunt in the

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

wood; but before evening, great evil was to fall on him, for no lovers ever loved so much or paid their love so dear.

When Tristan came back, broken by the heat, he embraced the Queen.

"Friend, where have you been?" *MULTI WOODS*

"Hunting a hart," he said, "that wearied me. I would lie down and sleep." *DEER*

VERY CLOSE
So she lay down, and he, and between them Tristan put his naked sword. To their good fortune they had kept on their clothes. On the Queen's finger was that ring of gold with emeralds set therein, which Mark had given her on her bridal day; but her hand was so wasted that the ring hardly held. Thus they slept, one of Tristan's arms beneath the neck of his friend, the other stretched over her fair body, close together; only their lips did not touch. And no wind blew, and no leaves stirred, but through a crevice in the branches a sunbeam fell upon the face of Iseult, and it shone white like ice. Now a woodman found in the wood a place where the leaves were crushed, where the lovers had halted and slept, and he followed their track and found the hut, and saw them sleeping and fled off, fearing the terrible awakening of that lord. He fled to Tintagel, and going up the stairs of the palace, found the King as he held his pleas in hall amid the vassals assembled.

"Friend," said the King, "what came you hither to seek in haste and breathless, like a huntsman that has followed the dogs afoot? Have you some wrong to right, or has any man driven you?"

THE WOOD OF MOROIS

But the woodman took him aside and said low down:

"I have seen the Queen and Tristan, and I feared and fled."

"Where saw you them?"

"In a hut in Morois, they slept side by side. Come swiftly and take your vengeance."

"Go," said the King, "and await me at the forest edge where the Red Cross stands, and tell no man what you have seen. You shall have gold and silver at your will."

The woodman went and sat himself beneath the Red Cross. God's curse on the spy! But he was to die miserably, as this story shortly will show.

The King had saddled his horse and girt his sword and left the city alone, and as he rode alone he minded him of the night when he had seen Tristan under the great pine-tree, and Iseult with her clear face, and he thought:

"If I find them I will avenge this awful wrong."

At the foot of the Red Cross he came to the woodman and said:

"Go first, and lead me straight and quickly."

The dark shade of the great trees wrapt them round, and as the King followed the spy he felt his sword, and trusted it for the great blows it had struck of old; and surely had Tristan wakened, one of the two had stayed there dead. Then the woodman said:

"King, we are near."

He held the stirrup, and tied the rein to a green

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

apple-tree, and saw in a sunlit glade the hut with its flowers and leaves. Then the King cast his cloak with its fine buckle of gold and his tall frame grew plain. Drawing his sword from its sheath he said again in his heart that they or he should die. And he signed to the woodman to be gone.

He came alone into the hut, sword bare, and watched them as they lay: but he saw that they were apart, and he wondered because between them was the naked blade.

Then he said to himself: "My God, I may not kill them. For all the time they have lived together in this wood, had it been with a mad love that they loved each other, would they have placed this sword between them? Does not all the world know that a naked sword separating two bodies is the proof and the guardian of chastity? If they loved each other with mad love, would they lie here so purely? No, I will not slay, for that would be treason and wrong; and if I wakened this sleeper and one of us twain were killed, men would speak long of it and to our dishonour. But I will do so that when they wake they may know that I found them here, asleep, and spared them and that God had pity on them both."

And still the sunbeam fell upon the white face of Iseult, and the King took his ermined gloves: "It was she," thought he, "who lately brought them to me from Ireland," and put them up against the crevice whence it shone. Then he softly withdrew the emerald ring which he had given the Queen; at that time he had had to press on it to slip it on her finger; now

THE WOOD OF MOROIS

her fingers were so thin that the ring came easily. In its place the King put the ring which Iseult once had given him. Then he took up the sword which separated the lovers, the very one ~~he recognized it~~ which had splintered in the skull of the Morholt; put his own in its place, quit the hut, leaped into the saddle and said to the woodman:

"Flee now and save your hide if you can!"

Then in her sleep a vision came to Iseult. She seemed to be in a great wood and two lions near her fought for her, and she gave a cry and woke, and the gloves fell upon her breast; and at the cry Tristan woke, and made to seize his sword, and saw by the golden hilt that it was the King's. And the Queen saw on her finger the King's ring, and she cried:

"O, my lord, woe is us! The King has found us here!"

And Tristan said:

"He has taken my sword; he was alone, he took fright and has gone for succour; he will return, and will burn us before the people. Let us fly."

So by great marches with Gorvenal alone they fled towards Wales, to the very edge of the wood of Morois. What sorrows love shall have caused them!