A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

Sir Thomas Malory

LE MORTE DARThUR

or

The Hoole Book of Kyng Arthur and of His Noble Knyghtes of The Rounde Table

AUTHORITATIVE TEXT
SOURCES AND BACKGROUNDS
CRITICISM

Edited by

STEPHEN H. A. SHEPHERD
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY, INC.
Also Publishes

ENGLISH RENAISSANCE DRAMA: A NORTON ANTHOLOGY
edited by David Bevington et al.

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE
edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay et al.

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE
edited by Nina Baym et al.

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
edited by Jack Zipes et al.

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
edited by M. H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt et al.

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF LITERATURE BY WOMEN
edited by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY POETRY
edited by Jalal Ramezani, Richard Elmann, and Robert O'Clair

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY
edited by Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT FICTION
edited by R. V. Cassill and Richard Bausch

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF THEORY AND CRITICISM
edited by Vincent B. Leitch et al.

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD LITERATURE
edited by Sarah Lawall et al.

THE NORTON FACSIMILE OF THE FIRST FOLIO OF SHAKESPEARE
prepared by Charlton Hinman

THE NORTON INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE
edited by Alison Booth, J. Paul Hunter, and Kelly J. Meigh

THE NORTON INTRODUCTION TO THE SHORT NOVEL
edited by Jerome Beaty

THE NORTON READER
edited by Linda H. Peterson and John C. Breton

THE NORTON SAMPLER
edited by Thomas Cooley

THE NORTON SHAKESPEARE, BASED ON THE OXFORD EDITION
edited by Stephen Greenblatt et al.

For a complete list of Norton Critical Editions, visit
wwwnorton.com/college/English/nce_home.htm

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY * New York * London
Discovery by librarian Walter Oakeshott, in a safe in the Warden’s lodgings of Winchester College, of a fifteenth-century manuscript copy of Malory’s work (the “Winchester Manuscript”); the manuscript provides extra autobiographical information, divides and decorates the text differently from Caxton, and has thousands of readings at variance with Caxton. Stemming from these differences, a new era of Malory studies is born.

---

Reading Malory’s English†

Malory’s English is sufficiently late—some may prefer to call it “Early Modern” rather than “Middle” English—that it usually presents few persistent difficulties for new readers. The main challenges in reading come from negotiating unfamiliar syntax, discerning “false friends,” acquiring new (i.e., old) vocabulary, and establishing a sense of suitable pronunciation when reading aloud. The footnotes and Glossary (p. 907) are designed to address the first three of these challenges in most instances, but part I of this guide offers a more systematic understanding, which should reduce the frequency with which a new reader may have to turn away from the main text.

Malory’s work, like the Middle English verse romances that are sometimes his sources, has a strong oral/declamatory ethos—most evident in a heavy reliance on direct discourse—and can make for a shamelessly Falstaffian indulgence when read aloud. Perhaps a more immediate incentive for attending to the orality of the text, however, emerges from a consideration of the records of Malory’s life (p. xxiv): if they can be trusted as pertaining to the right man, one feature of his character that stands out is that he was able—it seems dangerously able, as far as those who wanted him in jail were concerned—to press rather large groups of people into following him; there can be little doubt that he was as compelling a speaker as he was a writer. To silence the sonic components of his surviving words against their inscribed signification, or to succumb to the ease with which one can modernize the sounds as one reads, risks being counterauthorial and countercontextual. In theory, at least, this principle must hold some conviction; it may not be wholly practicable, however, because, in the absence of a holograph of Malory’s writing, we cannot be as confident as possible of how he pronounced his words. A comprehensive analysis, moreover, of authorial dialectal features that may be preserved by or beneath the scribal forms of the Winchester Manuscript has yet to be published. Nevertheless, if we assume Malory’s origin in Warwickshire, the remarks in part II (p. xxxviii), based on a model of Midland English, should provide a serviceable approximation of Malory’s pronunciation.

† Portions of this section are reprinted, with extensive adaptation, from M. H. Abrams et al., eds., The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 7th ed. 2 vols. (New York, 1993), I: 15-18, with permission of W. W. Norton & Company, New York. Examples are taken from the text of the
1. Parts of Speech and Grammar

1. Nouns
The plural and possessive of nouns most often end in es, ys, or is, formed by adding es, ys, or is to the singular: knight, knyghtes; roote, rootes; syege, syegis; salve, salves, salys (sometimes s alone is added); a final consonant is sometimes doubled before es, ys, or is: God, Goddis. A common irregular plural is even (spelled variously, including eyn, yen, eghne, eyghen—"eyes").

2. Pronouns
Where they appear, the chief differences from Modern English are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modern English</th>
<th>Middle English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>I, but occasionally Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you (singular)*</td>
<td>thou (subjective); the(e) (objective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>she, but very occasionally he (from Old English hea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her</td>
<td>hir, hir, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it</td>
<td>hit(te), it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>its</td>
<td>his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you (plural)*</td>
<td>ye (subjective); you (objective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their</td>
<td>hir, hir(e), her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>them</td>
<td>hem, them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>those</td>
<td>tho(o)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: In formal speech, the second person plural is often used for the singular as a gesture of respect and deference, and conversely the second person singular is sometimes used disrespectfully or overfamiliarly where the more formal choice is appropriate; the observance of these distinctions is often a significant element in Malory's characterization: cf. n. 3, p. 649. The possessive adjectives say, thy take into before a word beginning with a vowel or h: thyn heale, wynne adventure.

3. Adjectives
Adjectives are compared by adding er(e) for the comparative, est(e) or ist(e) for the superlative. Sometimes the stem vowel is shortened or altered in the process: sweete, sweettere, sweetest; long, lenger, lengest.

4. Adverbs
Adverbs are formed from adjectives by adding ly, though sometimes are uninflected, as is the case for some instances of fair (courteously) and lyke (equally).

5. Verbs
Middle English verbs, like Modern English verbs, are either "weak" or "strong." Weak verbs form their preterites and past participles with a t or d suffix and preserve the same stem vowel throughout their systems, as in the present and past tenses:

- strong verb: love, loved; bend, bent; hear, heard; meet, met.
- weak verb: take, took, taken; begin, began, begun; find, found, found.

The inflectional endings are the same for strong verbs and weak verbs, except in the preterite singular and the imperative singular. In the following standardized paradigms (where not every example appears in Malory's text and additional spellings are attested), the weak verbs loven (to love) and hyren (to hear), and the strong verbs taken (to take) and slayne (to slay) serve as models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Indicative</th>
<th>Preterite Indicative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>love, hyre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thou</td>
<td>lovyest; heryst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he, she, it</td>
<td>lovyth, hyryth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we, ye, they</td>
<td>love(th), hyre(th)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take(e)</td>
<td>toke, sle(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Subjunctive</td>
<td>Preterite Subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>love, hyre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>love, hyre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The infinitive of most verbs is e or en: love(n), hyre(n), take(n), bynde(n).

The past participle of weak verbs is the same as the preterite without inflectional ending: loved, herde. In strong verbs the ending is either e or en: take(n), bounde(n). The prefix y- or i- often appears on past participles: i-horsed, y-fared, i-taught.

6. Prepositions
Malory often employs familiar prepositions with more senses than their modern counterparts:

- of can have the sense of "from," "in," or "on" (e.g., respectively, p. 27, line 19; p. 355, line 35; p. 289, line 2).
- at can mean "of" (e.g., p. 14, line 13).
- for can mean "about" (e.g., p. 372, line 37).
- in can mean "on" (e.g., p. 68, line 38).
- with can mean "by" (e.g., p. 190, line 31).

The prepositional senses of "to" and "unto" can apply to tyll(e) (e.g., p. 675, line 33; p. 470, line 5).

7. Conjunctions
Malory's conjunctions conform predominantly with modern usage, but the following common variations are worthy of note:
And very often carries the sense of "if" (e.g., p. 65, line 41)
The phrase but if typically carries the sense of "unless" (e.g., p. 22, line 33; p. 647, line 37)
Without can carry the sense of "unless" (e.g., p. 261, line 20)

8. Syntax

Often as a result of the exigencies of translation or adaptation of sources, sometimes perhaps as a result of scribal miscopying, Malory's sentences can seem "experimental" to the point of chaos; in such cases the footnotes will provide guidance. A few normative features of Malory's writing that might, however, seem persistently irregular to the modern reader are listed here:

Double- and sometimes triple-negatives are the usual form of negation (e.g., p. 184, lines 31–32; p. 594, line 16).
Indirect and direct discourse can be combined without notice (e.g., p. 179, lines 14–15; p. 115, line 1; p. 509, line 16).
Grammatical discontinuity can arise between adjacent clauses (i.e., anacoluthon; e.g., p. 55, lines 14–15; p. 228, lines 2–3; p. 690, lines 20–22).
Essential sense components—subjects, objects, nouns, pronouns, verbs—are often left implicit (i.e., ellipsis; e.g., p. 101, line 15; p. 104, line 1; p. 495, line 12; p. 614, line 4; p. 636, line 2).

II.A. The Sounds of Middle English: General Rules

The following general analysis of the sounds of Middle English will enable the reader who does not have time for detailed study to read Malory's text aloud so as to preserve some of its most essential characteristics, without, however, giving heed to many important details. Section II.B, "Detailed Analysis," is designed for the reader who wishes to go more deeply into the pronunciation of Middle English. Malory's English differs from Modern English in two principal respects: (1) the pronunciation of the long vowels a, e, i (or y), o, and u (spelled ou, ow); and (2) the fact that all Middle English consonants are sounded.

1. Long Vowels

Middle English vowels are long when they are doubled (aa, ee, oo) or when they are terminal (he, to, holy); a, e, and o are long when followed by a single consonant plus a vowel (name, mete, note). Middle English vowels are short when they are followed by two consonants.

Long a is sounded like the a in Modern English father: maker, pass (pace).
Long e may be sounded like the a in Modern English name (ignoring the distinction between the close and open vowel): be, pees.
nonnery, and ther she lerned so moche that she was a grete clerke of nygromanye—and after she was wedded to Kyng Uther of the lord of Gore that was Syre Owain le Blanche Mynys fader.

Thenne Quene Irwyn waxid daly greter and greter. So it befel after within half a yere, as Kyng Uther lay by his quene, he asked hir, by the feith she ought to hym whos was the child within her body. Thenne was she sore abashed to yeve answyr. "Desmaye you not," said the Kyng, "but telle me the truthe, and I shall love you the better, by the feyth of my body. "Syre," saide she, "I shalle telle you the truthe. The same nyghte that my lord was dede—the houre of his deth, as his knyghtes record—ther came into my castel of Cornwall a man kyde my lord in speche and in countenance, and two knyghtes with hym in lykenes of his two knyghtes Bardas and Jordan. And soo wente to bed with hym as I ought to do with my lord; and the same nyghte, as I shal answyr unto God, this child was begunen upon me. "That is truthe," saide the Kyng, "as ye say, for it was I myself that cam in the lykenesse—and therfor desmaye you not, for I am fader to the child." And ther he told her alle the cause, how it was by Merlyn counsell.

Thenne the Quene made grete joye when she knewe who was the fader of her child. Sone come Merlyn unto the Kyng and said, "Syr, ye must purvey you a for the nourisshynge of your child." As thou wolt," said the Kyng, "be it." "Wel," said Merlyn, "I knowe a lord of yours in this land that is a passyng true man and a feithful, and he shal have the nourysshynge of your child; and his name is Sir Etor, and he is a lord of fair lyvelode in many partes in England and Walse. And this lord Sir Etor, let hym be sent for, for to come and speke with you, and desyre hym yourself, as he loveth you, that he will put his owne child to nourysshynge to another woman, and that his wyf nourishe yours. And when the child is borne, let it be delveryd to me at yonder praye postern, uncyrstumed." So like as Merlyn deveyd it was done.

And whan Syre Etor was come he made fayence to the Kyng for to nouryssh the child lyke as the Kyng desyred; and there the Kyng grantyed Syre Etor grete rewardes. Thenne when the lady was delveryd the Kyng commanded two knyghtes and two ladys to take the child, bound in a cloth of gold, "and that ye delvery hym to what poure man ye mete at the postern yate of the castel." So the child was delveryd unto Merlyn, and so he bare it forth unto Syre Etor and made an holy man to crysten hym, and named hym Arthur. And so Sir Etors wyf nourysshed hym with her owne pappe.

Thenne, within two yeres, Kyng Uther felle seke of a grete maladye. And in the meanwhile hys enemies usurpped upon hym and dyd a grete bataylle upon his men and slewe many of his peple.

Sir," said Merlyn, "ye may not lye so as ye doo, for ye must to the feld, though ye ryde on an hors-lytter; for ye shall never have the better of your enemies but if your persone be there, and thenne shall ye have the victory."

So it was done as Merlyn had devisyd, and they caryed the Kyng forth in an hors-lytter with a grete hooste towards his enemies; and at Saynt Albons ther mete with the Kyng a grete hooste of the North. And that day Syre Uther and Sir Bevis dyd grete dedes of armes, and Kyng Uther and men overcome the Northern bataylle and slewe many peple and put the remenant to flight.

And thenne the Kyng returned unto London and made grete joye of his victory. And thenne he fell passyng sore seke, so that three dayes and three nyghtes he was specheles; wherfore alle the barons made grete sorow and asked Merlyn what counsell we were best. "There ys none other remedye," said Merlyn, "but God wil have His wille. But lye ye al barons be before Kyng Uther tomorow, and God and I shalle make hym to speke."

So on the morn alle the barons with Merlyn came tofore the Kyng. Thenne Merlyn said aloud unto Kyng Uther, "Syr, shall your sonne Arthur be kyng, after your dayes, of this realme with all the appertenance?" Thenne Uther Pendragon torneym hym, and said in herynge of them alle, "I gyve hym Gods blissynge and myne, and byd hym pray for my soule, and righteousely and worshipsfully that he clayne the crowne, upon forseture of my blessing"—and therewith he yede up the ghost. And thenne was he enterid as longed to a kyng, wherfore the Quene, fayre Iwlyn, made grete sorowe, and alle the barons.

Thenne stood the reame in grete jeopardy long whyle, for every lord that was myghty of men made hym strong, and many wende to have ben kyng. Thenne Merlyn wente to the Archebisopp of Canterbury and counseleyd hym for to sende for all the lordes of the reame and alle the gentilmen of armes, that they shold to London come by Cristmas, upon payne of cursynge, and for this cause: that Jesu, that was borne on that nyghte, that He wold of His grete mercy shewe some myracle, as He was come to Kyng of Mankynde, for to shewe somme myracle who should be rightwyng kyng of this reame.

So the Archebisopp, by the adys of Merlyn, sende for alle the lordes and gentilmen of armes that they shold come by Crystmasse

3. I.e., go to.
4. I.e., against.
5. Turned himself.
6. Upon forseture of my blessing: i.e., upon my death.
7. Belitned.
8. Theyne stood the reame... wende to have ben kyng: The observation is not matched in Malory's source, but strikes a familiar ring as a sanguine reflection of the motivations behind the dynastic conflicts—the so-called Wars of the Roses—of Malory's own time. For a summary of the major events of the wars, see p. xvi. Cf. Malory's direct comments on his own times at p. 680, lines 25–40.
9. The supreme head of the Church in England and the most appropriate choice to preside over the coronation of the king.
10. Men with family coats of arms, ambitious gentry.
even unto London; and many of hem made hem clene of her lyf, that her prayer myght be the more acceptable unto God. Soo in the grettest chirch of London (whether it were Powlis or not, the Frenshe booke maketh no menecyon) alle the estaste were longe or day in the chirche for to praye. And when matins and the first Masse was done, there was sene in the chyrcheyarde aynst the hyhe aultar a grete stone four square, lyke unto a marbel stone; and in mydles therof was lyke an anvydele of steale a foot on hygehe, and theryn stack a fatere sworde naked by the poynet—and letters there were wryten in golde about the sword that saindeth thus:

Whoso pulleth oute this sword of this stone and anynyl is rightwys Kynge borne of all Englynde.

Thenne the peple mervellde and told it to the Archebisshop. "I commande, said th'Archebissiph, "that ye kepe yow within your chirche and pray unto God still, that no man touse the swerd till the Hyhe Masse be al done." So when all Masses were done, all the lorde wente to belode the stone and the swerd. And when they saw the scripture, som assayed, suche as wolde have ben Kyng, but none myght sterre the swerd nor meye hit. "He is not here," said the Archebissiph, "that shall encheve the swerd—but doubte not God will make hem knowen. But this is my councell," said the Archebissiph, "that we lete purge yen knyghtes, men of good fame, and they to kepe this swerd." So it was ordeyned, and thenn ther was made a crye that every man shold assaye that wold for to wynne the swerd.

And upon Newe yeers Day the barons lete make a justes and a tourney, that alle knyghtes that wold juste or tourneye there myght playe. And all this was ordeyned for to kepe the lorde togidurs, and the comyns, for the Archebissiph trusted that God wolde make him knowe that he shall wynne the swerd. So upon Neues Yeres Day, when the servyce was done, the barons rode unto the feld, some to juste and som to torney. And so it happed that Syre Geron, that had grete lycyde aboute London, rode unto the justes, and with hym rode Sir Kay, his sone, and yong Arthur that was his nourished broder (and Sir Kay was made knyght at Al Halowmas afore).

So they rode to the justes-ward, Sir Kay had lost his swerd, for he had lefte it at his fader lodgyng, and so he pryad yong Arthur

for to ryde for his swerd. "I wyll wel," said Arthur, and rode fast after the swerd. And when he cam home, the lady and al were out to see the joustynge. Thennhe was Arthur wroth, and said himself, "I will ryde to the chyrcheyarde and take the swerd with me that styketh in the stone. For my broder Sir Kay shall not be without a swerd this day." So when he cam to the chyrcheyarde Sir Arthur alight and tayed his hors to the style, and so he wente to the tent and fownd no knyghtes there, for they were atte justynge. And so he handled the swerd by the handels, and lightly and fiersly pulled it out of the stone, and took his hors and rode his way untill he came to his broder Sir Kay, and delvered hym the swerd.

And as sone as Sir Kay saw the swerd, he wist wel it was the swerd of the stone; and so he rode to his fader Sir Geron and said, "Sire, lo! here is the swerd of the stone—wherfor I must be kyng of this land?" When Syre Geron beheld the swerd, he returned ageyne and cam to the chirche, and there they alighte, al thre, and wente into the chirche; and anon he made Sir Kay to swepe upon a book how he came to that swerd. "Syr," said Sir Kay, "by my broder Arthur, for he brought it to me."

"How gate ye this swerd?" said Sir Geron to Arthur. "Sire, I will telle you. When I cam home for my broders swerd, I fond nobody at home to delver me his swerd, and so I thought my broder Sir Kay shold not be swerdles; and so I cam hyder elegry and pulle it out of the stone withoute any payn. "Found ye any knyghtes about this swerd?" said Sir Geron. "Nay," said Arthur.

"Now," said Sir Geron to Arthur, "I understande ye must be kyng of this land. "Wherfore?" said Arthur, "and for what cause?" "Sire," said Sir, "for God wille have hit soo, for ther shol never man have drawn oute this swerde but he that shall rightwise kyng of this land. Now lete me see whether ye can putte the swerd ther as it was and pulle hit out ageyne. "That is no mystyry," said Arthur, and soo he put it in the stone. Therwithalle Sir Geron assayed to pull oute the swerd, and fayled.

Paw assayed, said Syre Geron unto Syre Kay, and anon he pulle at the swerd with alle his myghte, but it wold not. "Now shal ye assayed," said Syre Geron to Arthur. "I wyll wel," said Arthur—and pull oute ite easilie. And therwithalle Syre Geron knelyd doune to the ethre, and Syre Kay. "Alas," said Sir, "myne owne dere fader and broder, why knele ye to me?" "Nay, nay, my lord Arthur, it is not so; I was never your fader nor of your blood, but I wote wel ye are of an highere blood than I wende ye were." And thenne Sir Geron tode hym all how he was bitaken hym for to nourishse hym, and by whos commandement, and by Alflyn delvererance.

Thenna Arthur made grete doole when he understood that Syre Geron was not his fader. "Sire," said Sir Geron unto Arthur, "woll ye be my good and gracius lord when ye are Kyng?" "El sere I wole to be,"
said Arthur, "for ye are the man in the world that I am most beholding to—and my good lady and moder your wyf, that, as well as her owne, hath fostered me and kepte. And ye ever hit be Goddes will that I be Kyngye, as ye saie, ye shall desyre of me what I may doo, and I shalle not fail ye woe—God forbede I shalle fail ye woe."

"Sir," said Sir Ector, "I will ask no more of you but that ye wille make my sone, your foster broder Syre Lep, senceall of alle your landes." "That shalle be done," said Arthur, "and more, by the feith of my body: that never man shalle have that office but he, whyle he and I lyve." Therewithall they went unto the Archebisshop and told hym how the swerd was encheved and by whome. And on Twelfth Day all the barons cam thyder, and to assay to take the swerd, who that wold assay.

But there, afores hem alle, ther myghte none take it out but Arthur—wherfor ther were many lorde wroth, and saide it was grete shame unto them all and the reame to be over-governed with a boye of no hyghye blood borne. And so they fell out at that tyme, that it was put of all Candelmas, and thence all the barons shold mete there ageyne; but alway the ten knyghtes were ordenede to watche the swerde day and nyght, and so they sette a pavellone over the stone and the swerd, and fyve alwayes watched.

So at Candelmasse many moo grete lorde came thyder for to have wonne the swerde, but myghte none prevale; and right as Arthur dyd at Cristmasse, he dyd at Candelmasse, and pulle oute the swerde easely—wherof the barons were sore agered and put it in of delay till the hyghye feste of Eester. And as Arthur sped afore, so dyd he at Eester. Yet there were some of the grete lorde had indigination that Arthur shold be kyng, and put it of in a delay till the feest of Pentecoste.1

Tennhe the Archebisshop of Canterbury, by Merlins provynce, lete purveye thenne of the best knyghtes that they myghte gete, and suche knyghtes as Uther Pendragon loved best and moost trusted in his dayes. And suche knyghtes were put aboute Arthur as Sye Banodown of Bretain, Syre Kaynes, Syre Ullyn, Syre Parstas—all these, with many other, were alweyse about Arthur, day and nyghte, till the feste of Pentecoste.

And at the feste of Pentecoste alle maner of men assayed to pull oute the swerde that wold assay; but-none myghte prevale but Arthur, and pulle it oute afore all the lorde and comyns that were there—wherof alle the comyns cryed at ones, "We wil have Arthur unto our kyng. We wilh put hym no more in delay, for we all seeth that it is Goddes wille that he shalle be our kyngge—and who that holdeth ageynst it, we wilh sley hym." And therewithal they kned at ones, both rych and poure, and cryed2 Arthur mercy bycause they had delayed hym so longe. And Arthur foray al hem, and took the swerde bitwene both his handes and offred it upon the aultar where the Archebisshop was; and so was he made knyghte of the best man that was ther.

And so anon was the corronacon made. And ther was he sworne unto his lorde and the comyns for to be a true kyng, to stand with true justyce fro thenforth the dayes of this lyf. Also thenne he made alle lorde that helde of the crowne3 to come in and to do servyce as they oughte to doo. And many complaynates were made unto Sir Arthur of grete wronges that were done syn the deethe of Kyng Uther, of many londe that were bereved lorde, knyghtes, ladys, and gentilmen; wherfor Kyngge Arthur maade the londe to be yeven ageyne unto them that oughte hem.

Quhanne this was done, that the Kyng had stablished alle the countries aboute London, thennhe he lete make Syre Lyppes Sencial of England, and Sir Banodown of Bretaine was made Constantle, and Sir Ullyn was made Chamberlayn, and sire Parstas was maade Wardayn to waynte upon the Northe, fro Trent forwarde, for it was that tyme the most party4 the Kynges enemies; but within feve yeres after, Arthur wan alle the Northe, Scotland, and alle that were under their obeissanence; also Walys, a parte of it, helde aynst Arthur, but he overcam hem al—as he dyd the remenuant, thourgh the noble prowesse of hymself and his knyghtes of the Round Table.5

Theenne the Kyng renemed into Walys and lete crye a grete feste, that it shold be holdyn at Pentecoste after the incoronacion of hym at the cyd of Caerleon. Unto the fest komm Kyng LeOF of Louthan and of Orkeney, with fyve hundred knyghtes with hym; also

---

1. January 6, the twelfth day after Christmas, and traditionally the last day of Christmas celebrations. It is also known as the festival of Epiphany, commemorating the manifestation of Christ's divine nature, as represented by the Magi, to the Gentiles.
2. i.e., asked of.
3. Helde of the crowne: held his lands and titles as given to them by the king.
4. The river Trent is here used to mark the border with the north. The most party: for the most part.
5. Malory is here referring to Arthur's future conquests. As with his first mention of Merlin (see n. 8, p. 4), Malory evidently assumes his readers' prior familiarity with the legendary status of the Round Table. For an account of its origin through the agency of Merlin, see
So, many lordys and barownes of thys realme were displeased for hir children were so loste; and many putte the wyght on Arthon more than on Arthure. So, what for drede and for love, they helde their pece.

But whan the messyngere com to the Kyng Romans, than was he woode oute of mesure, and purveyde hym for a grete oste, as hit rehereth aftir in the booke of Ballynt le Sancrage that folowith nexte aftir: that was the adventure how Balyn gate the swerde.

The Tale of Ballyn and Balan

Affir the deth of Wher regned Arthure, hys son, which had grete warre in hys dayes for to gete all Ingonde into hys bonde—

for there were many kyngis within the realme of Ingonde and of Scottonde, Walys, and Cornuwayne. So hit befelle on a tyme whan Kyng Arthure was at London, there com a knyght and tolde the Kyng tydyngis how the Kynges Romans of Northe Wallis had rered a grete numbr of peple and were entred in the londe and brente and slew the Kyngis trew lyege people. "If thy be trew," seyde Arthure, "hit were grete shame unto myne astate but that he were myghty withstonde."

"Hit ys trouthe," seyde the knyght, "for I saw the oste myself.

"Well," seyde the Kyng, "I shall ordayne to wythstonde hys malice. Than the Kyng lette make a cry that all the lordis, knyghtes, and jantilmen of armys shold draw unto the castell called Camelot in the dayes, and there the Kyng wolde lette make a councelle-generall and a grete justis. So whan the Kyng was com thidir with all his baronage and logged as they sended beste, also there was com [a damoysel] the which was sente from the grete Lady Le of Mylon. And whan she com before Kyng Arthure, she tolde fro whens she com and how she was sente on message unto hym for thys causis. Than she lette hir mantell falre that was rychly furred; and than was she gurde with a noble swerde, whereof the Kyng had mervayle and seyde, "Damesel, for what cause ar ye gurte with that swerde? Hit besemyth you nought."  

"Now shall I telle you," seyde the damesell. "Thys swerde that I am gurte withall doth me grete sorow and comberance, for I may nat be delysterde of thys swerde but by a knyght, and he muste be a passyng good man of hys hondys and of hys dedis, and without velony other trechory, and without treson. And if I may fynde

5. I.e., that.
6. Provided himself with a great army.
1. The title is taken editorially from the last sentence of this subsection (see p. 61). In the Winchester MS, only the two-line-high initital "A," without any blank line space separation, marks the beginning of the tale. Malory's principal source for this section is the French Suite de Merlin, for illustrative selections, see p. 709.
2. I.e., unless.
3. I.e., proclamation.
4. Blessith yow nought: does not befit you.
5. Deleveryde i.e., released. Others.
So, many lordys and barownes of thys realme were displeased for hir children were so loste; and many putte the wyght on Arthure more than on Arthure. So, what for drede and for love, they helde there picee.

But when the messyngar com to the Kyng Bayne, than was he woode oute of mesure, and purveyde hym for a grete ose, as hit hereshistine aitt in the booke of Balun le Boynge that folowith nexte aitt: that was the adventure how Balun gate the swerde.

The Tale of Balun and Balan

After the deth of Ather regned Arthure, hys son, which had grete warr in hys dayes for to gete all Ingolnde into hys honde—for there were many kyngis within the reame of Ingolnde and of Scoftonde, Walsy, and Cornuwayle. So hit befelle on a tyme when Kyng Arthure was at London, ther com a knyght and tolde the Kyng tydnyngs how the Kyngs of North Walis had rered a grete number of peple and were entred in the londe and brente and slew the Kyngis trew lyhte people. "Iff thys be trew," sayde Arthure, "hit were grete shame unto myne asstare bu2 that he were myghtyly withstonde.

"Hit yf the testhte," sayde the knygthe, "for I saw the ose myself." "Well," sayde the Kyng, "I shall ordayne to wythstonde hys malise." Than the Kynglette lefte man a cry that all the lordis, knygthers, and jandilten of armys sholde draw unto the castell calleth Camelot in the dayes, and there the Kyng wolde lefte make a councele-lenerall and a grete justis. So when the Kyng was com thidir with all his baronage and logged as they semed beste, also there was com a damosel the which was sente frome the grete Lady Lyte at Rousion. And when she com before Kyng Arthure, she tolde fro when she com and how she was sente on message unto hym for thys causis. Than she lefte hir mantel falle that was rychely furred; and than she gurde with a noble swerde, whereof the Kyng had mervayle and sayde, "Damesel, for what cause ar ye gurte with that swerde? Hit besemyth you nought." "Now shall I telle you," sayde the damesell. "Thys swerde that I am gurte withall doth me grete sorow and comberance, but may not be delyverede of thys swerde but by a knygthe, and he must be a passynge good man of hys hondys and of hys dedis, and withoute velony other trechory, and withoute treson. And if I may fynde such a knygthe that hath all thes vertues, he may draw oute thys swerde oute of the sheethe. For I have bene at Kyngs Bayne, for hit was tolde me there were passynge good knygthes; and he and all his knygthes hath assaye and none can spede." "Thys ys a grete mervayle," sayde Arthure, "If thys be sothe, I wol assaye myselfe to draw oute the swerde, nat presumeyme myselfe that I am the beste knygth; but I wol begynne to draw youre swerde in gyngyn an insample to all the barownes, that they shall assaye everych one atte other when I have assaye." Than Arthure tok the swerde by the sheethe and gurde and pulled at hit egildy, but the swerde wolde nat oute.

"Sir," sayde the damesell, "ye nede nat for to pulle halfe so sore, for he that shall pulle hit oute shall do hit with litil myght." "Ye sey well," sayde Arthure, "Now assaye ye, all my barownes." "But beware ye be nat defoyled with shame, trechory, nather gyle, for than hit wol not anayle," sayde the damesell, "for he muste be a clene knygthe withoute ylony and of jantill strene of fadir syde and of modir syde." The moste parte of all the barownes of the Rounde Table that were there at that tymeye assaye all be rwe, but there myghte rone spede.

Wherefore the damesell made grete sorow oute of mesure, and sayd, "Alas! I wente in this courte had bene the beste knygthes of the worlde withoute trechory other treson." "Be my faythe," sayde Arthure, "here ar good knygthes as I deme as ony be in the worlde, but their grace ys nat to helpe you, wherefore I am sore displeased." Than hit befelle so that tymeye there was a poore knygth with Kyng Arthure that had bene presonere with hym half a yere for sleyng of a knygth which was coseynto Kyng Arthure. And the name of thys knygth was called Balun, and by good meane of the barownes he was delyverede oute of preson, for he was a good man named of his body, and he was borne in Northemhumbirconde. And so he wente pryvaly into the courte, and saw thys adventure, wheroff hit reysed his herte, and wolde assaye as othir knygthes ded—but for he was poore and poorly arayle, he put hymself nat far in prees. But in hys herte he was fully assured to do as well, if hys grace happed hym, as ony knygth that there was.

And as the damesell toke her leve of Arthure and of all the barownes, so departynge, thys knygth Balun calleth unto her and sayde, "Damesell, I pray you of youre curtesy suffir me as well to assaye as thes other lordis. Though that I be pourely arayed yet in my herte me semath I am fully assured as som of thes other, and me semath in myne herte to spede ryght welle." "Thys damesell than behelde thys poure knygth, and saw he was a lyckly man; but for hys poure araymente she thought he

5. I.e., that.
6. Provided himself with a great army.
7. The title is taken editorially from the last sentence of this subsection (see p. 61). In the Winchester MS., only the two-line-high initial "A," without any blank line-space separation, marks the beginning of the tale. Malory's principal source for this section is the French Suite de Merlin; for illustrative selections, see p. 709.
8. I.e., unless.
9. I.e., proclamation.
11. Velony other trechory, and withoute treson. And if I may fynde...
sholde nat be of no worship\ withoute vlyony or trechory. And than she seyde unto that knyght, "Sir, hit nedith nat you\ to put me to no more payne, for hit semythe nat you to spede there as all thys othir knyghtes have fayled."

"A, fayre damsells!" seyde $Balan$, "worthynes and good tacchis and also good dedis is nat only in araymente, but manhoode and worship [ys hyd] within a mannes person, and many a worshipfull knyght ys nat knownyn unto all peple—and therefore worship and hardynesse ys nat in araymente."

"Ye God, seyde the damsells, "ye sey sooth. Therefore ye shall assay to do what ye may."

"Than $Balan$ toke the swerde by the gurdyll and sethe, and drew hit oute ehetly; and when he loked on the swerde hit pleased hym muhly. Than had the Kyngge and all the baronnes grete mer-\ vayle that Balyne had done that aventure. Many knyghtes had grete despite at hym.

"Sertes, seyde the damsells, "thys ys a passynge good knyght and the beste that ever Y founde, and moste of worship, withoute treson, trechory, or felony—and many mervayles shall he do:

"Now, jantlyll and curtoyse knyght, geff me the swerde agoraayne.

"Nay!" seyde $Balan$, "for thys swerde wol I kepe, but\ hit be takyn fro me with force."

"Well, seyde the damsells, "ye ar nat wyse to kepe the swerde fro me, for ye shall selle with that swerde the beste frende that ye have, and the man that ye moste love in the world—and that swerde shall be youre destruccon. I shall take the aventure,"

"Balan", "that God wol ordayne for me:"

"But the swerde ye shall nat have at thys tyme, by the feythe of my body. "Ye shall repent hit within shorte tyme, seyde the damsells, "for I wolde have the swerde more for youre avantaget than for myne; for I am passynge hevy for yourake, for and ye wol nat leve that swerde, hit shall be youre destruccon—and that ys grete pite. So with that departed the damsells, and grete sorow she made.

"And anone affter, $Balan$ sente for his horse and armoure, and so wolde departe frome the courte, and toke his leve of Kyngge $Arthur$. "Nay," seyde the Kyngge, "I suppose ye wol nat departe so lyghtly from thys feleship. I suppose that ye ar dispyled that I have shewed you unkyndnesse. But blame me the lesse, for I was myssinforme ayenste you; but I wente ye had nat bene such a knyght as ye ar of worship and prouesse. And if ye wol abbye in thys courte amonge my feleship, I shall so avance you as ye shall be pleased. "God thanke youre hygnesse," seyde $Balan$. "Youre bounté may no man praye halff unto the valew, butt at thys tyme I muste nedis departe, beseczyngye you allwaye of youre good grace."

4. He would not be of any standing.
5. Hit nedith nat you: you need not.
6. I.e., unless.
7. Youre bounté may no man praye halff unto the valew: no man can estimate even half of the value of your generosity.
8. I.e., of him.
9. I.e., a sword that can cut through steel.
10. I.e., if.
11. I take no force though: I do not mind if.
12. What else you would have.
13. I.e., told you.
Therefore, withdraw you out of my courte in all the haste that ye may." Than Balyn toke up the hede of the lady and bare hit with hym to hys ostry, and there mette with hys squire, that was sory he had displeased Kyng Arthur; and so they rode forth out of towne.

"Now," seyde Balyn, "we muste departe; therefore, take thou thy hede and bere hit to my frendis, and tell hem how I have spepedde— AND tell hem in Northumbirland how my moste fooys dede. Also tell hem how I am oute of preson, and what adventure befell me at the getynge of this swerde." "Alas," seyde the squire, "ye ar greatly to blame for to displease Kyng Arthur." "As for that," seyde Balyn, "I wol lyge hyme in all the hastes that I may tote to Kyng Royne and destroy hym, othir ellis to dye therefore. And iff hit may happe me to wyne hym, than woll Kyng Arthur be my good frende." "Sir, where shall I mete with you?" seyde his squire. "In Kyng Arthur's courte," seyde Balyn. So his squire and he departed at that tymse. Than Kyng Arthur and all the courte made grete dole and had grete shame of the Lady of the Lake. Than the Kyng bured his rychely.

So at that tymse there was a knyght, the which was the Kynges son of Irelonde, and his name was Laurecor, the which was an orgulus knyght and acconyzed hymself one of the beste of the courte. And he had grete despite at Balyn for the enchevynge of the swerde, that ony sholde be accompted more hardy or more of prouesse; and he asked Kyng Arthur licence to ryde after Balyn and to revenge the despite that he had done. "Do youre beste," seyde Arthur. "I am ryght wrothe with Balyn. I wolde he were quytte of the despite that he hath done unto me and my courte." Than thys Laurecor wente to his ostry to mak hym redy. So in the meanwhile com Merlon unto the courte of Kyng Arthur, and anonde was tolde hym the adventure of the swerde and the deth of the Lady of the Lake.

"Now shall I sey you," seyde Merlon, "thys same dameisel that here stondith, that brought the swerde unto youre courte, I shall telle you the cause of hir commyngye. She ys the falsist damesel that hybeth—she shall nat sey nay—2 For she hath a brothir, a pasynge good knyght of proues, and a full trew man; and thys damesel lover anothir knyght that hydelde her as paramoure. And thys good knyght, her brothir, mete with the knyght that helde hir to paramoure, and slew hym by force of hys hondis. And when thys false damesel undirstoode this, she wente to the Lady Lyle of Avlyon and besought hir of helpe to be revenged on hir owne brothir. And so thys Lady Lyle of Avlyon toke hir swerde that she brought with hir, and tolde there sholde no man pule hit out of the sheethe but yf he be one of the beste knyghtes of thys realme, and he sholde be hardy and full of prouesse—and with that swerde he sholde sle hys brothir. Thys was the cause, damesel, that ye com into thys courte—I know hit as well as ye! God wolde ye had nat com here, but ye com never in felshyp of worshipful folke for to do good, but allwayes grete harme. And that knyght that hath enchewed the swerde shall be destroyed thorow the swerde, for the which woll be grete damage, for there lyvit nat a knyght of more prouesse than he ys. And he shal do unto you, my Lorde Arthur, grete honoure and kyndness; and hit ys grete pitie he shall nat endure but a whyle, for of his streneth and hardinesse I know hym nat lyveynge his maecche."3

So thys knyght of Irelonde armed hym at all poyntes and dresser hym in schyle on hys hondir and mounted upon hys hors and toke hys glayve in hys honde, and rode after a grete pace as muche as hys hors myght drayve. And within a litel space on a mountaine he had a syght of Balyn, and with a lowde voice he cryde, "Abyde, knyght! for ells ye shall abyde, whethir ye woll other no. And the shede that ys tofore you shall nat helpe you," seyde thys Iryshe knyght, "therefore com I affter you!" 4

"Peradventure," seyde Balyn, "ye had bene bettir to have holde you at home. For many a man wenyth to put hys enemy to a rebuke, and ofte hit failleth on hymself. Oute of what courte be ye com fro?" seyde Balyn. "I am com frome the courte of Kyng Arthur," seyde the knyght of Irelonde, "that am com hydr to revenge the despite ye dud thys day unto Kyng Arthur and to his courte." "Well, seyde Balyn, "I se well I muste have ado with you, that me forthynketh that I have greved Kyng Arthur or any of hys courte. And youre quarel ys full sympe," seyde Balyn, "unto me,4 for the lady that ys dede dud to me grete damage—and ells I wolde have bene lothe as any knyght that lyvit for to slay a lady." "Make you redy," seyde the knyght Laurecor, "and dresse you uno me, for that one shall abyde in the fylde." Than they fretted their spears in their restis and com togidirs as muche as their horsis myght drayve. And the Iryshe knyght smote Balyn on the shyle on that all went to shyers of his speere. And Balyn smote hym agayne five thorow the shyle—and the hawbirk peryshed—and so bore hym thorow the bodye and over the hors rowan; and anonde turned his horse fersely and drew oute hym swerde, and wyt pant that he had slayne hym.

Then he saw hym lye as a dede corse, he lokked aboute hym and was ware of a damesel that com rydyng ful faste as the horse
might drye, on a faire palfere. And when she aspyed that Launcelot was slayne, she made sorow oute of mesure, and seyde, "A, Balyn! two bodyes thou haste slayn in one herte, and two heretes in one body, and two soules thou hast loste." And therewith she toke the swerde frome hir love that lay dede, and felle to the grounde in a swoghe.

And when she arose, she made grete dole oute of mesure, which sorow greved Balyn passyngly sore. And he wente unto hir for to have tane the swerde oute of hir honde; but she helde hit so faste he myght nat take hit oute of hir honde but yf he sholde have hurt hir—and suddenly she sette the pomme to the grounde, and rove hirself thorowoute the body.

"Whan Balyn aphysed hir dedis he was passyng huy in his herte and ashamed that so faire a damesell had destroyd hirselfe for the love of hys deth. "Alas!" seyde Balyn, "me repentis sore the deth of thys knyght for the love of thys damesell, for there was muche trew love betwixe hem." And so for sorow he myght no lenger beholde them, but turned hys horse and loked toward a faire foreste. And thon was he ware by hys armes that there com rydyng hys brothir Balyn. And whan they were mette they put of hir helmeys and kyssed togyders and wepte for joy and pite.

"Than Balyn seyde, "Brothir, I tille wende to have mette with yow at thys suddayne adventure, but I am ryght glad of youre delyveraunce of youre dolorous presonment—for a man tolde me in the Castel of Foure Stonys that ye were delyvered, and that man had seyne you in the counte of Kyng Arthure; and therefore I com hydri into thys contrey, for here I supposed to fynde you." And anon Balyn tolde hys brothir of hys adventure of the swerde and the deth of the Lady of the Laake, and how Kyng Arthure was displeased with hym. "Wherefore he sente thys knyght affirme me that lyethe here dede—and the deth of thys damesell greveth me sore." "So doth hit me," seyde Balyn, "but ye must take the adventure that God wull ordayne you."

"Truly," seyde Balyn, "I am ryght huy that my lorde Arthure ys displeased with me, for he ys the moste worshipfullist kyngge that regnith now in erthe; and hys love I wol wete—othir elles I wol putte my lyff in adventure." For Kyng Arthure ladyth at the sege of the Castel Tarrable, and thidir wull we draw in all goddel haste to preve our worship and prouesse uppon hym. "I wol well," seyde Balyn, "that ye so do, and I wol rydlye with you and put my body in adventure with you, as a brothir ought to do."

"Now go we hense," seyde Balyn, "and well we beth mette." The meanwhile, as they talked, thon com a swerde frome the cite of Camelot on horsebacke as much as he myght, and founde the dede bodyes, wherefore he made grete dole, and pulled hys huye for sorowe, and seyde, "Which of two knyghtes have done this dede?" "Whereby askst thou?" seyde Balyn. "For wolde wete!" seyde the dwarr. "Hit was I," seyde Balyn, "that slew this knyght, in my defendaunte; for hyder he com to chase me, and othir I muste sle hym, othir he me. And this damesse slayw hirselfe for his love, which repenth me. And for hir sake I wol owge all women the bettor wylle and servyse all the days of my lyff."

"Alas," seyde the dwarr, "thou hast done grete damage unto thyself. For thys knyght that ys here dede was one of the mooste valiantis men that lyved—and truste well, Balyn, the kynee of thys knyght wolle thourow the worldye tylle they have slayne yow."

"As for that," seyde Balyn, "them I fere nat grete but I am ryght huy that I sholde displeasse my lorde, Kyng Arthure, for the deth of thys knyght. So as they talked togyders there com a Kynge of Carmynowe rydying, which hyght Kyng Marke. And thon saw thes two bodyes dede, and understond howe they were dede, by the two knyghtes abovenysede, thenne made the kyng grete sorow for the trew love that was betwixe them, and seyde, "I wolnot deparke tyllye I have on thys erth made a towmbel. And thon he pyght his pavybons and sought all the contrey to fynde a towmbel, and in a chireh they founde one wyfey and ryche. And than the kyng lette putte hem bothe in the erthe, and leyde the tombel uppon them, and wrote the namys of hem bothe on the tombel—how

---

Here lyeth Launcelot, the Kyngis son of Irelonde, that at his owne rekeyste was slayne by the hondis of Balyn.

—and how

This lady Columbe, and paramour to hym, slew hirself with hys swerde, for dole and sorow.

The meanwhile as thys was adoyng, in com Merliun to Kyng Marke and saw all thys doyng.

"Here shall be," seyde Merliun, "in this same place, the grettest batelye betwixe two men that ever was or ever shall be, and the trewst lovers—and yette none of hem shall see other." And there Merliun wrote hir namys upon the tombel with letties of golde, that shall feygth in that place, which namys was Launcelot ou Luke and Estramond. "Thou art a marveles man," seyde Kyng Marke unto Merliun, "that spekist of such merveles. Thou arte a
boysteous man and an unlyckyly, to telle of such dedis. What ys thy name?" seyde Kyngre Marke. "At this tymre," seyde Merlioun, "I woll nat telle you. But at that tymre Sir Cristan ys takyn with his soveraigne lady," thor shall ye here and know my name—and at that tymre ye shall here othir tydynge that shall nat please you.

A. Balyne," seyde Merlioun, "thou hast done thyself grette hurtre that thou saved nat thys lady that slewe herrself; for thou myghtyst have saved hir and thou haddist wold." "By the fayth of my body," seyde Balyne, "I myght nat save hir, for she slewe hirself suddeynly.

"Me repents hit," seyde Merlioun. "Because of the deth of that lady, thou shalt stryke a stroke moste dolorous that ever man stroke—excepte the stroke of Oure Lorde Jesu Criste—for thou shalt hurte the trewys knyght and the man of moste worship that now lyvith. And thorow that stroke three kyngdoms shall be brought into grette povereté, miseri, and wrecchenedes, twelve yerere—and the knyght shall nat be hole of that wounde many a yere." Than Merlioun toke hys leve.

"Nay!" seyde Balyne, "nat so! For and? I wiste thou seyde soth, wolde do so perlesse a dede that I wolde sle mysselfe to make the' a lyer!" Therewith Merlioun vanysshed suddeynly, and than Balyne and his brother toke their leve of Kyngre Marke. "But first," seyde the knyght, "telle me youre name." "Sir," seyde Balyne, "ye may se be beryth two swerdys, and therebye ye may calle hyme the Knyngh with the Two Swerdys."

And so departed Kyngre Marke unto Camelot to Kyngre Arthur. And Balyne toke the wyay to Kyngre Rovys, and as they rode togydery, they mette with Merlioun disgyssyd so that they knew hym nought. "But wheroward ryde ye?" seyde Merlioun. "We had litil ad to telle you," seyde thys two knyghtes. "But what ys thy name?" seyde Balyne. "At this tymre," seyde Merlioun, "I woll nat telle." "Hit ys an eyvyl sygne," seyde the knyghtes, "thou shalt arte a trew man, that thou wolt nat telle thy name." "As for that," seyde Merlioun, "be' as hit be may. But I can telle you wherefore ye ryde thys wyay: for to mette with Kyngre Rovys. But hit wolt nat avayle you without ye have my councele." "Ay!" seyde Balyne, "ye ar Merlioun. We woll be ruled by youre councele." "Com on," seyde Merlioun, "and ye shall have grette worship—and loke that ye do knyghtly, for ye shall have

"Nede."

"As for that, seyde Balyne, "dreyd you nat, for we wol do what we may."

Than there lodged Merlioun and thys two knyghtes in a woode amonage the leves, besyde the hyghway, and toke of the hrydys of their hores and putte hem to grasse, and leyde hem downe to rest. Tyl hit was nyghte mydnyght. Than Merlioun bade hem ryse and made hem rey—"for here commyth the kyngre ngyhehonde, that was stooyn away frome hys ooste with a three score hrosys of hys beste knyghtes." And twenty of them rode tofore the lorde to warne the Lady de Vaunce that the kyngre was commynge—for that nyght Kyngre Rovys sholdhe have lyen with hir.

"Which? ys the kyngre?" seyde Balyne. "Abyde," seyde Merlioun, "for here in a strete ye shall mette with hym." And therewith he shewed Balyne and hys brothir the kyngre. And anone they mette with hym and smote hym downe, and woundyd hym freyschyly and layde hym to the growunde. And there they slewe on the ryght honde and on the lyftte honde mo than fourty of hys men; and the remaynant fledde.

"Than wente they agaynne unto Kyngre Rovys and wolde have slayne hym, had he nat yelded hym unto hir grace. Than seyde he thus: "Knyghtes full of prowess, sle me nat, for be' my lyf ye may wynne, and by my deth litty." "Ye sey sothe," seyde the knyghtes, and so leyde hym on an horse lwitter. So with that Merlioun vanysshed, and com to Kyngre Arthur aforehonde and tolde hym how his moste enemy was talkynd and discomfitte. "By whom?" seyde Kyngre Arthur. "By two knyghtes," seyde Merlioun, "that wolde fayne have youre lordship—and tomorow ye shall know what knyghtis they ar."

So anone aftar com the Knyngh with the Two Swerdys and hys brothir, and brought with them Kyngre Rovys of North Waals, and there delyverde hym to the porters, and charged hir hem with hym; and so they two returned ayen in the dawnyng of the day. Than Kyngre Artur com to Kyngre Rovys and seyde, "Sir Kyngre, ye ar welcom. By what adventure com ye hydry?" "Sir," seyde Kyngre Rovys, "I com hydryr for an harde adventure."

"Who wann ye?" seyde Kyngre Arthur. "Sir," seyde he, "the Knyngh with the Two Swerdys and hys brothir, which ar two merzayles knyghtes of prowess. "I know hem nat," seyde Arthur, "but much am I beholdeynge unto them. "A, sir!" seyde Merlioun, "I shall telle you. Hit ys Balyne that encheved the swerde, and his brothir Balan, a good knyght—there lyvith nat a bettir of prowess, nother of wortynesse. And hit shall be the grettist dole of hym that ever Y knew of knyght, for he shall nat longe endure."
“Alas,” sayde Kyngge Arture, “that ys grete pité, for I am muche beholdyng unto hym, and I have evill deserved hit agayn4 for hys kyndnesse.”

“Nay, nay,” sede Merlione, “he shall do much more for you—and that shall ye know in haste—but, sir, ar ye purvevede?” sayde Merlione, “for tommorne the oste of Kyngge Ærò, Kyngge Banus brothir, wol sette on you, or none,5 with a grete ooste. And therefore make you redy, for I woll departe frome you.”

Than Kyngge Arture made hys ooste redy in ten batayles; and Ærò was redy in the fyld afore the Castell Terrath with a grete ooste—and he had ten batayles with many mo peple than Kyngge Arture had. Than Ærò had the vawarde with the moste party of the people. And Merlione com to Kyngge Lott of the Isle of Orkeney, and helde hym with a tale of the prophecye tylle Ærò and his peple were destroied. And there Sir Bar the Senesciall dud passyngely well, that dayes6 of hys lyff the worship wente nevere frome hym; and Sir Bertis de Revel, that dud noyveleuy deys of arnys that day with Artur; and Kyngge Artur slew that day twenty knyghtes, and maymed fourty.

So at that tyme com in the Knyght with the Two Swordys and his brothir, but they dud so mervayloosly that the Kyngge and all the knyghtes mervayled of them; and all they that behelde them seyde they were sente fronte hevnyn as angels—other7 devilles fronte helle. And Kyngge Artur seyde hyselym they were the doughtyster knyghtes that evere he sawe, for they gaff such strokes that all men had wondir of hem.

“So in the meynwhyle com one to Kyngge Lott and tolde hym whyle he tarried there how Ærò was destroyed and slayned with all his ooste. “Alas,” seyde Kyngge Lott, “I am aished; for in8 my deute there ys [many a worshipful man slayne—for and9 we had ben togyders, there hadde ben] none ooste ister hevnyn were able to have macched us—but thys paytour with hys prophecye hath mocked me!”

“All that dud Merlione, for he knew well that, and Kyngge Lott had benn with hys body at the first batayle, Kyngge Artur had be slayne and al hys peple distressed.10 And well Merlione knew that one of the Kynges shoeld be dede that day; and lothe was Merlione that ony11 of them bothe shoeld be slayne, but of the twyne he had levir Kyng Lott of Orkeneye had be slayne than Artur. “What ys beste to do?” seyde Kyngge Lott. “Whether ys me bettr12 to trete with Kyngge Artur othir to fygght? For the gretter party of oure people ar slayne and distresse.”

“Sir,” seyde a knyght, “sette ye on Artur, for they ar wery and

1. Evill deserved hit agayn: badly repaid.
2. Or none: before noon.
3. I.e., of all the days.
4. I.e., or.
5. I.e., through.
6. I.e., if.
7. I.e., in person. Distressed: i.e., defeated.
8. I.e., any one.
9. Whether ys me bettr: Is it better for me.
10. Raise their battle flags.
12. In Malory’s source, Lot’s enmity is said to stem from his resentment over Artur’s killing of the May Day children (see, p. 39), not his adultery.
13. Off promesse as few: among few of such prowess.
14. I.e., separate from that of the other kings.
overcom. All thys made Merion by hys subtile craufite—and there he tolde the Kyng how that whan he was dede, thes tapers shold brene no longer, "aftir the adventures of the Sankgreall" that shal come amonge you and be encheved. Also he tolde Kyng Arthur how Balyn, the worshipfull knyght, "shall gyff the Dolerous Stroke—whereof shall fallre grete vengeaunce."4

C"Al! where ye Balyn, Balan, and Helionere?" "As for Kyng Helionere," seyde Merion, "he wold mete with you soone. And as for Balyn, he wold not be longe frome you. But the other brothir wold departe; ye shall se hym no more." "Be my fayth," seyde Arthur, "they ar two manly knyghtes, and namely that Balyn passith of proues off any knyght that ever Y founde—for much am I beholde unto hym. Wolde God hew wold abide with me!" "Sir, seyde Merion, "lote ye kepe well the scawber of Excaliber, for ye shall lose no bloode whyle ye have the scawberde uppon you, though ye have as many wondris uppon you as ye may have."

So aftir, for grete truste, Arthur betoke the scawberde unto Morgan le Fay, hys sister. And she loved another kynight bettrir than hir husbande Kynges Uriens—othir Arthur. And she wolde have hir Arthur hir brother slayne; and therefore she lete make anothir scawberd for Excaliber [lyke it, by enchantement, and gaf the scawberd Excaliber to her love] and the knyghtes name was called Amolon, that aftir had nere slayne Kynges Arthur. But aftir thys Merion tolde unto Kynges Arthur of the prophecy that thare shold be a grete batayle besydes Balyn, and Morgan hys owne some shold be agaynst hym. Also he tolde hym that Mageuenas was his cosyne germayne, and unto Kynges Uriens. So within a day or two Kynges Arthur was somwhat syke, and he lete pycch hys pavillion in a medow, and there he leyde hym downe on a paylet to slepe, but he myghte no reste.

C"Ryght so he herde a grete noyse of an horse, and therewith the Kyng lokad oute at the porche doire of the pavillion and saw a knyght commynge eryn by hym makynge grete dole."

C"Abye, saye sir," seyde Arthur, "and telle me wherfore thou makest this sorow." "Ye may liitil amend me," seyde the knyght, and so passed forth to the Castell of Meliot. And anone aftir that coom Balyn, and when he saw Kyng Arthur he alight of hys horse and coom to the Kyng one foote, and salewed hym. "Be my hede," seyde Arthur, "ye be welcom:

C"Sir, ryght now com rydyng thys way a knyght makynge grete mone, and for what cause I can nat telle. Wherefore I wolde desire of you, of your curtesie and of your jantilnesse, to fecche agayne that knyght, othir by force othir by his good wyll."

C"I shall do more for youre lordeship than that," seyde Balyn,

"othir ellis I wold greve hym." So Balyn rode more than a pace and founde the knyght with a damesell undir a foreyste, and seyde, "Sir knyght, ye muste com with me unto Kynges Arthur for to telle hym of youre sorow." "That wold I nat," seyde the knyght, "for hit wold harne me gretyly and do you none avayle." "Sir," seyde Balyn, "I pray you make you redy, for ye muste go with me, othir ellis I muste fight with you and bryngye you by force—and that were me lothe to do."

C"Woll ye be my warrante," seyde the knyght, "and I go with you?"

C"Yee," seyde Balyn, "othir ellis, by the fayth of my body, I wold dye therefore." And so he made hym redy to go with Balyn, and lefte the damesell stytle. And as they were evyn before Arthuris pavillion, there com one invisible, and smote the knyght that wente with Balyn thorowoute the body with a spere.

C"Alas!" seyde the knyght, "I am slayne undir youre condeute with a knyght called Garlond. Therefore take my horse, that is bettrir than yours, and ryde to the damesell and folowe the queste that I was in as she wolde lede you—and revenge my deth wyne may." "That shall I do," seyde Balyn, "and that I make avow to God and knyghthode." And so he departed from Kynges Arthur with grete sorow. So Kynges Arthur lette brye this knyght rychely, and make mencioun on his tombe how

HERE WAS SLAYNE PEREUS

—by whom the trechory was done—

OF THE KNIGHT GARLONDE

But ever the damesell bare the trunchion of the sperre with hir that Sir Martus to Pereus was slayne withall. 5

O Balyn and the damesell rode into the foreyste, and there mette with a knyght that had bene an hoyntyng. And that knyght asked Balyn for what cause he made so grete sorow.

C"Meye nat to telle," seyde Balyn. "Now," seyde the knyght, "and I were armed as ye be, I wolde fight with you but iFF ye tolde me." "That shold be litel rede," seyde Balyn, "I am nat aferde to telle you," and so tolde hym all the case how hit was. "Alas!" seyde the knyght, "ys thys all? Here I ensure thee by the feyth of my body never to departe frome thee whyle my lyff lasthe." And so they wente to their ostré and armed hem, and so rode forthe with Balyn. And as they com by an ermytage evyn by a chyrche-yeorde, there com Garlond invisible and smote this knyght, Pereus de Mounte Belyarde, thorowoute the body with a glayve. "Alas!"
seyde the knyght, “I am slayne by thys traytoure knyght that rydith invisible.”

“Alas,” sayde Bätyn, “thys ys nat the firste despite that he hath done me.” And there the ermyte and Bätyn buryed the knyght undir a rych stone and a tombe royall. And on the morn the founde letters of golde wretyn, how that

SIR GAWAINE SHALL REVENGE HIS FADIRS DETHE ON KYNGE PELLYMORE.

And anone aftir this Bätyn and the damesell rode forth tylle they com to a castell, and anone Bätyn alghte and wente in. And as sone as [Bätyn came within the castels yate] the portecolys were lette downe at his backe, and there felle many men aboute the damesell and wolde have slayne hir.

[When Bätyn saw that, he was sore greved, for he myght nat helpe her. But than he wente up into a towre, and lepte over the wallis into the dychy, and hurt nat hymself; and anone he pulled oute his swerde and wolde have foughtyn with them. And they all seyde nay, they wolde nat fylght with hym, for they ded nothyng but the olde custom of thys castell; and tolde hym that his lady was syke and had leyne many yeris, and she myght nat be hole but yf she had bloode in a sylyr dysche full, of a clene mayde and a kynges daughter—“and therefore the custom of thys castell ys that there shal no damesell passe thys way but she shal blede of hir bloode a sylyr dysche full.”

“Wyll,” sayde Bätyn, “she shal blede as much as she may blede, but I wol nat lose the lyff of hir whyle my lyff lastith.”

“And so Bätyn made hir to blede by hir good wyll; but hir bloode holpe nat the lady. And so she and he rested therall that myght and had good chere, and in the mornynge they passed on their wayes (and as hit tellith affir in the Shankgreat, that Sir Perwol stysster holpe that lady wyth hir bloode, whereof she was dede). Than they rode three or foure dayes and nevir mette with adventure. And so by fortune they were lodged wyth a jantilman; and as they sate at souper Bätyn herde on complayne grevaly by hyn in a chambr.

“What ys thys noisy?” sayde Bätyn. “Forsothye,” sayde his oste, “I wolde telle you. I was but late at a justynge, and there I justed with a knyght that ys brothir unto Kyng Pellyam, and twayne I smote hym downe; and than he promised to quyte me on my beste frende. And so he wounded thus my son, that can nat be hole tylle I have of that knyghtes bloode—and he rydith all invysible, but I know nat hys name.” “Al” sayde Bätyn, “I know that knyghtes name, which ys Garlonne, and he hath slayne two knyghtes of myne in the same maner—therefore, I had levr mette with that knyght than all the golde in thys realme for the despyte he hath done me.”

“Wyll,” sayde oste, “I shall tell thee how: Kyng Pellyam off Lesternype hath made do cry1 in all the contrey a grete feste that shalbe within thys twenty dayes, and no knyght may com there but he brynge hys wyff with hym, othir hys paramoure—and that your enemy, and myne, ye shal se that day.” “Than I promysse you,” sayde Bätyn, “parte of his blode to hele youre sonne withall.”

“Than we wol besse forewarde tomorone,” sayde he. So on the morn they rode all three toward Kyng Pellyam, and they had fyftene dayes journey or they com thyclir. And that same day began the grete feste; and so they alght and stabled their horsis and wente into the castell, but Bätyn oste myght not be lette in because he had no lady.

[But Bätyn was well receyved and brought unto a chambr, and unarmyd hym. And there was brought hym robis to his pleasere—and wolde1 have had Bätyn leve his swerde behynde hym. “Nay,” sayde Bätyn, “that wol I nat, for hit ys the custom of my contrey a knyght allwey to kepe hys wypyn with hym. Other ells,” sayde he, “I wol departe as I cam.”

Than they gaff hym wyth his swerde, and so he wente into the castell and was amonge knyghtes of wership, and hys lady aforess hym. So aftir this Bätyn asked a knyght and sayde, “Ys there nat a knyght in thys courte which his name ys Garlonne?” “Yes, sir, yondir he goth, the knyght with the blacke face—for he ys the cmerwylyste knyght that ys now lyving; and he destoryeth many good knyghtes, for he goth invisible.”

“Wyll,” sayde Bätyn, “ys that he?” Than Bätyn avised hym longe, and thought, “If I sle hym here, I shal nat ascape; and if I leve hym now, peraventure I shal not mete with hym agayne at such a stevyn, and muche harme he wol do and he lyve.”

And therewith thys Garlonne aspyed that Bätyn wysaged hym, so he com and slappe hym on the face with the backe of hys honde, and sayde, “Knyght, why beholdist thou me so? For shame, est thy mete and do that’ thon com fore.”

“Thou seyst sooth,” sayde Bätyn, “thys ys nat the firste spite that thou haste done me—and therefore I wol do that I come fore”—and rose hym up fresely and clave his hede to the sholdirs.

“Now gaff me youre troncheon,” sayde Bätyn, “that he sleye youre knyght with.” And anone she gaff hit hym, for allwy she bare the troncheoun with hir; and therewith Bätyn smote hym thorow the body, and sayde openly, “With that troncheoun thou sleweste a good knyght, and now hit stykithe in thy body.” Than Bätyn called unto hys oste and sayde, “Now may ye fecche bloode inowghe to hele youre sonn withall.”

So anone all the knyghtes rose frome the table for to settene on

1. Caused to be proclaimed.
2. I.e., himself.
3. I.e., his hosts would.
4. I.e., war ahead of.
5. Avised hym; considered to himself.
So when Balyn saw the speere, he gatte hit in his hond, and turned to Kyng Petall and felde hym and smote hym passingly sore with that speere, that Kyng Petall felle downe in a sowghe. And therewith the castell brake, rooffe and wallis, and felle downe to the erthe. And Balyn felle downe and myght nat styre handle nor foote; and for the moste partye of that castell was dede thorow the Dolorous Stroke—

"Ryght so ley Kyng Petall and Balyn three dayes. Than Merion com thydir, and toke up Balyn and gate hym a good horse, for yrs was dede, and bade hym voyde oute of that contraye.

"Sir, I wolde have my damesell," seyde Balyn, "Loo," seyde Merion, "where she leyth, dede." And Kyng Petall lay so many yere sore wounded, and myght never be hole tylle that Gauland the haute prynce hele hym in the Queste of the Sankgreel. For in that place was parte of the bloode of Oure Lorde Jesu Criste, which Joseph off Aramathe brought into thys londe, and there hymself lay in that ryche bedde. And that was the speere whych Longus smote Oure Lorde with to the herte. And Kyng Petall was nyghte of Joseph his kynde, and that was the moste worshipfullist man on lyve in thys dayes—and grette pit hit was of his hurte, for thorow that stroke hit turned to grette dole, tray, and tene.

1. Asunder.
2. I.e., someone.
3. I.e., because.
4. For the episode, see p. 584. Malory's account of the maining of Petall here seems to be unique to his version of the story of Balyn and Balan and does not match at all with his later account of it given during the Grail Quest (p. 563); for such discrepancies, cf. n. 9, p. 39. For the corresponding passage from the French Suite de Merlin, see p. 709. The story of the Dolorous Stroke has mythic origins and is related to stories of the Fisher King and the Waste Land; see n. 6, p. 563. 6. Thik.
7. To my powere: to the best of my ability.
8. Two leaves are missing in the Winchester MS at this point; text is supplied from the corresponding passages in Caxton.
9. I.e., will ye.
other, and under their hedes grasse and herbes. Whan Balyn sawe her lye so—with the fowlest knyght that ever he sawe, and she a fair lady—thenne Balyn wente thurgh alle the chambers ageyne and told the knyghte how he fon her as she hadde fast, and so brought hym in the place there she lay fast slepeynge.

And whan Carmyn beheld hir so lyeng, for pure sorou his mouth and nose brast oute on bledynge—and with his swerd he smote of bothe their hedes; and thenne he maade sorowe oute of mesure, and sayd, "O, Balyn, moche sorow hast thou brought unto me, for haddest thou not shewed me that syght I should have passed my sorow." "Forsoth," said Balyn, "I did it to this entent, that it sholde better thy courage, and that ye myght see and knowe her falsede, and to cause yow to leve love of suche a lady. God knoweth, I dyd none other but as I wold ye dyd to me."

"Alas," said Carmyn, "now is my sorou double, that I may not endure—now have I slaye that I moost loved in al my lyf!" And therewith, sodenly, he rooafe hymself on his own swerd unto the hyltes. When Balyn sawe that, he dressid hym thensward, lest folke wold say he had slayne them, and so he rode forth.

And within thre dayes he cam by a crosse; and theron were letters of god wryten that said,

IT IS NOT FOR NOKYNT ALONE TO RYDE TOWARD THIS CASTEL.

Thenne sawe he an old hore gentilman comyng toward hym, that sayd, "Balyn le Suerwe, thou passyst thy bandes to come this waye; therfor towe ageyne, and it will availle the," and he vanysshed awaie anone. And soo he herd an horne blowe, as it had ben the dethe of a best.3 "That blast," said Balyn, "is blowne for me, for I am the pryse—and yet am I not deede." Anone withal he sawe an hundred ladys and many knyghtes that welcommed hym with fayr semblaunt and made hym passyng goode chere unto his syght, and ledde hym into the castel; and ther was daunsynge, and mynstralsye, and alle maner of joye.

Thenne the chieff lady of the castel said, "Knyghte with the Two Suerdys, ye must have adoo and juste with a knyght hereby that kepeth an iland, for ther may no man passe this way but he must juste or he passe." "That is an unhappy custome," said Balyn, "that a knyght may not passe this way but ye he juste." "Ye shalle not have adoo but with one knyght," sayd the lady.

"Wel!" sayd Balyn, "syn I shalle, thereto I am redy. But treavellynge men are ofte weary, and their horses to: but though my horses be weary, my hert is not wey—I wold be fayne ther my deth shold be."4 "Syr," said a knyght to Balyn, "me thinketh thy sheld is not good; I wille lene yow a bygger, therof I pray you." And so he toke the sheld that was unknouen and lefte his owne, and so rode unto the iland, and put hym and his hors in a grete boote.

And whan he came on the other syde he met with a damoysele, and she said, "O knyght Balyn, why ye haved lefte your owne sheld? Alas, ye haue put yourself in grete daunger, for by your sheld ye shold have ben knowen. It is grete pyte of yow as ever was of knyght, for of thy prowess and hardynes thou hast no felawe lyynge." "Me repenteth," said Balyn, "that ever I cam within this countrey; but I maye not torne now ageyne for shame, and what aventure shalle falle to me, be it lyf or dethe, I will take the adventure that shalle come to me." And thenne he lokid on his armour and understood he was wel armed, and therwith blessid hym5 and mounted upon his hors.

Thenne afore hym he sawe come rydynge oute of a castel a konynght, and his hors trapped all red,6 and hymselfe in the same colour. Whan this knyghte in the reed beheld Balyn, hym thought it shold be his brother Balyn bycause of his two swerdes, but bycause he knewe not his sheld he deded it was not he. And so they aventure their spere and came mervellosly fast togyder, and they smote other in the sheldes, but their spere and their coures were soo bygge that t bare doune hors and man, that they lay bothe in a sown. But Balyn was brysed sore with the falle of his hors, for he was wy of travaylle.

And Balyn was the forst that rose on foote, and drewe his swerd and wente toward Dalyn, and he aroos and wente ageynst hym. But Balyn smote Dalyn fyrist, and he put up his sheld and smote hym thorow the sheldes and tamed his helme. Thenne Balyn smote hym ageyne with that unhappy swerd, and wel-nynge had fellyd his broder Balyn—and so they fought ther togyders tyll their brotheres faylled. Thenne Balyn lokid up to the castel and sawe the towres stand ful of ladys. Soo they went unto bataille ageyne and wounded everye other doelefull, and thynne they brethed7 ofymes, and so wente unto bataille that alle the place there as they fought was bloode red. And att that tyne ther was none of them bolde but they hadde eyther smyten other seven grete woundes, so that the lest8 of them myght have ben the deth of the myghtyest gyant in this world.

Thenne they wente to bataille aegyn so mervellosly that doubte9 it was to here of that bataille for the grete bloodshedynge—and their hawberkes unnailed,10 that naked they were on every syde. Atte last Balan, the yonger broder, withdrew hym a lytel and leid hym dounne. Thynne said Balyn le Suerwe, "What knyghte arte thou? For or now I found never no knyght that matched me." "My name is," he said, "Balyn, broder unto the good knyght Balyn."

1. I.e., the one that.
2. Doreid hym thensward: led him away from there.
3. I.e., as if it had signified the killing of some beast (in a hunt).
4. I.e., before.
5. I.e., dire, objectionable.
6. Ther: i.e., there where. Shold be: i.e., is destined to be.
7. I.e., by the coat of arms on your shield.
8. Blessid hym: i.e., crossed himself.
9. Trapped all reed: all in red trappings.
10. I.e., naked.
"Alas!" sayd Blyn, "that ever I shold see this day," and therewith he felle backward in a swoone. Thenne Blyn yede on al four feet and handes, and put of the helme of his broder, and myght not knowe hym by the ysayge, it was so ful hewen and bleedde; but when he awoke he sayd, "O, Blyn, my broder, thou hast slayne me, and I the, wherfore alle the wyde world shalle speke of us bothe." "Alas! sayd Blyn, "that ever I sawe this day, that thow myshap I myght not knowe you—for I aspyed wel your two swerdys, but bycaus ye had another shild I demed ye had ben another knyght!"

"Alas!" saide Blyn, "all that maade an unhappy knyght in the castel, for he caused me to leue myn owne sheldre to our bothes destruction—and, yt I myght lyve, I wolde destroye that castel for ylle customes." "That were wel done," sayd Blyn, "for I had never grace to departe fro hem syn that I cam hyther, for here it happed me to sene a knyght that kept this iland, and syn myght I never departe—and no more shold ye, broder, and ye myght have slayne me as ye have and escaped yourself with the lyt!"

Ryght so cam the lady of the toure with four knyghtes and six ladys and six yomen unto them, and there she herd how they made her one eyther to other, and sayd, "We cam bothe oute of one wome, that to say one moderas hely, and so shalle we lyke bothe in one pytte." So Blyn prayd the lady of her gentlynesse, for his true servysse, that she wolde burye them bothe in that same place there the bataille was done, and she gaunted hem, with wepyng, it shold be done rychely in the best maner. "Now wile ye sende for a preest, that we may receve our sacrament and receve the blessid body of Our Lord Jesu Crist?" "Ye," sayd the lady, "it shalle be done." And so she sente for a preest and gaft hem her ryghtes. "Now," sayd Blyn, "when we are buryd in one tombe, and the mensyon made over us how two brethren sewe ech other, there wille never good knyght nor good man see our tombe but they wille pray for our soules"—and so alle the ladys and gentlywymen wepte for pytte. Thenne anone Blyn dyed, but Blyn dyed not tyl the myndyghe after. And so were they buryd bothe, and the lady leate a mensyon of Blyn, how he was ther slayne by his broders handes—but she knewe not Blynys name.

In the morne cam Merlyn leste wyte Blynys name on the tombe with letters of gold—that

HERE LYETH Blyn the Sabrecy
THAT WAS THE KNIGHT WITH THE TWO SWERDES
AND HE THAT SMOTE THE DOLOROUS STROKE

Also Merlyn lete make there a bedde, that ther shold never man lye therein but he wente oute of his wytte—yet Launcelot de Lake fordyd that bed thorow his noblesse. And anone after Blyn was dede, Merlyn toke his swerd and toke of the pomel and set on another pomel. So Merlyn hede a knyght that stood before hym to handyl all that swerde; and he assayde hit and myght nat handyl hit.

"Than Merlyn lowehe.
"Why lawghe ye?" sayde the knyght.
"Thys ys ys the cause," sayde Merlyn: "there shall never man handyl all this swerde but the beste knyght of the world, and that shall be Sir Launcelot, thib ellis Galahad, hys sonne. And Launcelot with this swerde shall sle the man in the worlde that he lovith beste—that shall be Sir Galahad." And all thys he lyte wyte in the pomell of the swerde.

Than Merlyn lette make a bryge of iron and of steele into that ilonde, and hit was but halff a foote brede—and there shall never man passe that bryge nother have hardynesse to go over hit but of he were a passyng good man withoute trechery or vylny." Also the scawberd off Blynys swerde, Merlyn lette hit on thys syde the ilonde, that Galahad shold fynde hit. Also Merlyn lette make bys surlently that Blynys swerde was put into a marbil stone stondynge uprigh, as grete as a mylstone, and hoved alwayes above the watir, and ded many yeres. (And so by adventure hit swamme downe by the streme upto the cité of Camelot, that ys in Englyshe called Winchester.) And that same day Galahad the haute prince com with Kyng Angure, and so Galahad brought with hym the scawberd and encheved the swerde that was in the marble stone howynge upon the watir. And on Whysnsday he encheved the swerde, as hit ys rehearsed in the booke of the Sankgreall.)

Sone aftir thys was done Merlyn com to Kyng Angure and tolde hym of the Dolorous Stroke that Blyn gaff Kyng Pelam, and how Blyn and Blynat fought togidurs the merveyleste batayle that ever was herde off, and how they were buryed bothe in one tombe.

"Alas," sayde Kyng Angure, "thys ys the gretest pité that ever I herde telle off of two knyghtes, for in thys worle I knewe never such two knyghtes."

Thus endith the tale of Blyn and Balyn, two brethirne that were borne in Northumbirleone, that were two passyng good knyghtes as ever were in th dayes.

Explicit.