

**ARTHURIAN ROMANCES,  
NO.IV:  
MORIEN. A METRICAL  
ROMANCE. PP. 1-150**

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Arthurian Romances, No.IV: Morien. A Metrical Romance. pp. 1-150 by Jessie L. Weston & Caroline Watts

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**JESSIE L. WESTON & CAROLINE WATTS**

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ARTHURIAN ROMANCES

Unrepresented in Malory's  
"Morte d'Arthur"

*No. IV.*

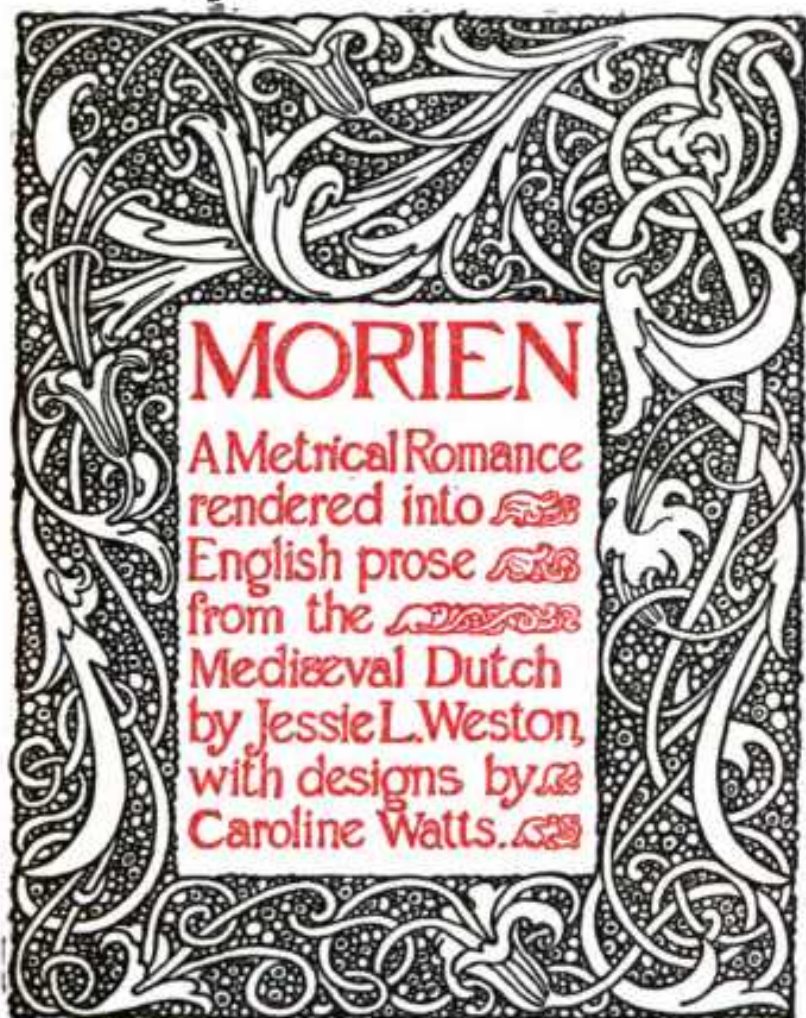
Morien



C. H. Wells.

**They deemed they had seen the Foul Fiend himself**

*Moriaen*



Published by David Nutt at the Sign of  
the Phoenix, Long Acre, London. 1901

11-30-34  
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## Preface



**THE** metrical romance of which the following pages offer a prose translation is contained in the mediæval Dutch version of the *Lancelot*, where it occupies upwards of five thousand lines, forming the conclusion of the first existing volume of that compilation. So far as our present knowledge extends, it is found nowhere else.

Nor do we know the date of the original poem, or the name of the author. The Dutch MS. is of the commencement of the fourteenth century, and appears to represent a compilation similar to that with which Sir Thomas Malory has made us



familiar, *i.e.*, a condensed rendering of a number of Arthurian romances which in their original form were independent of each other. Thus, in the Dutch *Lancelot* we have not only the latter portion of the *Lancelot* proper, the *Queste*, and the *Morte Arthur*, the ordinary component parts of the prose *Lancelot* in its most fully developed form, but also a portion of a *Perceval* romance, having for its basis a version near akin to, if not identical with, the poem of Chrétien de Troyes, and a group of episodic romances, some of considerable length, the majority of which have not yet been discovered elsewhere.\*

Unfortunately, the first volume of this compilation, which was originally in four parts, has been lost; consequently we are without any of the indications, so often to be found in the opening lines of similar compositions, as to the personality of the compiler, or the material at his disposal; but judging from those sections in which comparison is possible, the *Lancelot*, *Queste*, and *Morte Arthur*, the entire work is a

\* Cf. my *Legend of Sir Lancelot du Lac*; Grimm Library, vol. xii., chapter ix., where a brief summary of the contents of the Dutch *Lancelot* is given.

translation, and a very faithful translation, of a French original. It is quite clear that the Dutch compiler understood his text well, and though possibly somewhat hampered by the necessity of turning prose into verse (this version, contrary to the otherwise invariable rule of the later *Lancelot* romances, being rhymed), he renders it with remarkable fidelity. The natural inference, and that drawn by M. Gaston Paris, who, so far, appears to be the only scholar who has seriously occupied himself with this interesting version, is that those episodic romances, of which we possess no other copy, are also derived from a French source. Most probably, so far as these shorter romances are concerned, the originals would be metrical, not prose versions, as in the case of the *Lancelot* sections.

It is true that with regard to the romance here translated, *Morien*, the Dutch scholars responsible for the two editions in which it has appeared, MM. Jonckbloet and Te Winkel, the former the editor of the whole compilation, the latter of this section only, are both inclined to regard the poem as an original Dutch composition; but M. Gaston Paris, in his summary of the romance

(*Histoire Littéraire*, vol. xxx. p. 247) rejects this theory as based on inadequate grounds. It must be admitted that an original Arthurian romance of the twelfth or thirteenth century, when at latest such a poem would be written, in a language other than French, is so far unknown to us; and although as a matter of fact the central *motif* of the poem, the representation of a Moor as near akin to the Grail Winner, Sir Perceval, has not been preserved in any known French text, while it does exist in a famous German version, I for one find no difficulty in believing that the tradition existed in French, and that the original version of our poem was a metrical romance in that tongue.

So far as the story of *Morien* is concerned, the form is probably later than the tradition it embodies. In its present shape it is certainly posterior to the appearance of the *Galahad Queste*, to which it contains several direct references; such are the hermit's allusion to the predicted circumstances of his death, which are related in full in the *Queste*; the prophecy that Perceval shall "aid" in the winning of the Holy Grail, a quest of which in the earlier version he