

**THE HOLY GRAIL,
AND OTHER
POEMS; PP. 5-93**

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The Holy Grail, And Other Poems; pp. 5-93 by Alfred Tennyson

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ALFRED TENNYSON

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AND OTHER
POEMS; PP. 5-93**

THREE four "Idylls of the King" are printed in their present form for the convenience of those who possess the former volume.

The whole series should be read in the following order :—

THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

THE ROUND TABLE.

GERAINT AND ENID.

MERLIN AND VIVIEN.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

THE HOLY GRAIL.

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE.

GUINEVERE.

*THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.**

* This last, the earliest written of the poems, is here connected with the rest, in accordance with an early project of the author's.

THE
HOLY GRAIL,

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY
ALFRED TENNYSON, D. C. L.,
POET LAUREATE.

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1870.

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THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

LEODOGRAN, the King of Camelard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land;
And still from time to time the heathen host
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was left.
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom one.
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty princedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reign'd.

And thus the land of Camelard was waste,
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,

And none or few to scare or chase the beast ;
 So that wild dog and wolf and bear and bear
 Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
 And wallow'd in the gardens of the king,
 And ever and anon the wolf would steal
 The children and devour, but now and then,
 Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat
 To human sucklings ; and the children, housed
 In her foul den, there at their meat would growl,
 And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
 Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-like men,
 Worse than the wolves : and King Leodegran
 Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
 And Cæsar's eagle : then his brother king,
 Rience, assail'd him : last a heathen horde,
 Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,
 And on the spike that split the mother's heart
 Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,
 He knew not whither he should turn for aid.

But — for he heard of Arthur newly crown'd,
 Tho' not without an uproar made by those
 Who cried, " He is not Uther's son " — the king
 Sent to him, saying, " Arise, and help us, thou !
 For here between the man and beast we die."

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,
 But heard the call, and came : and Guinevere
 Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass ;
 But since he neither wore on helm or shield
 The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
 But rode a simple knight among his knights,
 And many of these in richer arms than he,
 She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,
 One among many, tho' his face was bare.
 But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
 Felt the light of her eyes into his life
 Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitch'd
 His tents beside the forest : and he drove
 The heathen, and he slew the beast, and fell'd
 The forest, and let in the sun, and made

Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight,
And so return'd.

For while he linger'd there,
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
Of those great Lords and Barons of his realm
Flash'd forth and into war : for most of these
Made head against him, crying, " Who is he
That he should rule us ? who hath proven him
King Uther's son ? for lo ! we look at him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorlois, not the king.
This is the son of Anton, not the king."

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere ;
And thinking as he rode, " Her father said
That there between the man and beast they die.
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne, and side by side with me ?
What happiness to reign a lonsly king,
Vext — O ye stars, that shudder over me,
O earth, that soundest hollow under me —
Vext with waste dreams ? for saving I be join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
Victor and lord ; but were I join'd with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live."

And Arthur from the field of battle sent
Ulfin, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, " If I in aught have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife."

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
 Debating — "How should I that am a king,
 However much he help me at my need,
 Give my one daughter saving to a king,
 And a king's son" — lifted his voice, and call'd
 A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
 He trusted all things, and of him required
 His counsel: "Knowest thou aught of Arthur's birth?"

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,
 "Sir King, there be but two old men that know:
 And each is twice as old as I; and one
 Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
 King Uther thro' his magic art; and one
 Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bleya,
 Who taught him magic; but the scholar ran
 Before the master, and so far, that Bleya
 Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote
 All things and whatsoever Merlin did
 In one great annual-book, where after years
 Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth."

To him the King Leodogran replied,
 "O friend, had I been to-per half as well
 By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
 Then beast and man had had their share of me:
 But summon here before us yet once more
 Ulfus, and Brasias, and Bedivere."

Then, when they came before him, the king said,
 "I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,
 And reason in the chase: but wherefore now
 Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,
 Some calling Arthur born of Gerlois,
 Others of Anton? Tell me, ye yourselves,
 Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?"

And Ulfus and Brasias answer'd, "Ay."
 Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights,
 Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake, —