

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

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The vision of Sir Launfal by James Russell Lowell

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JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

**THE VISION
OF SIR LAUNFAL**

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THE VISION

OF

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Sir Launfal.

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SEVENTH EDITION.

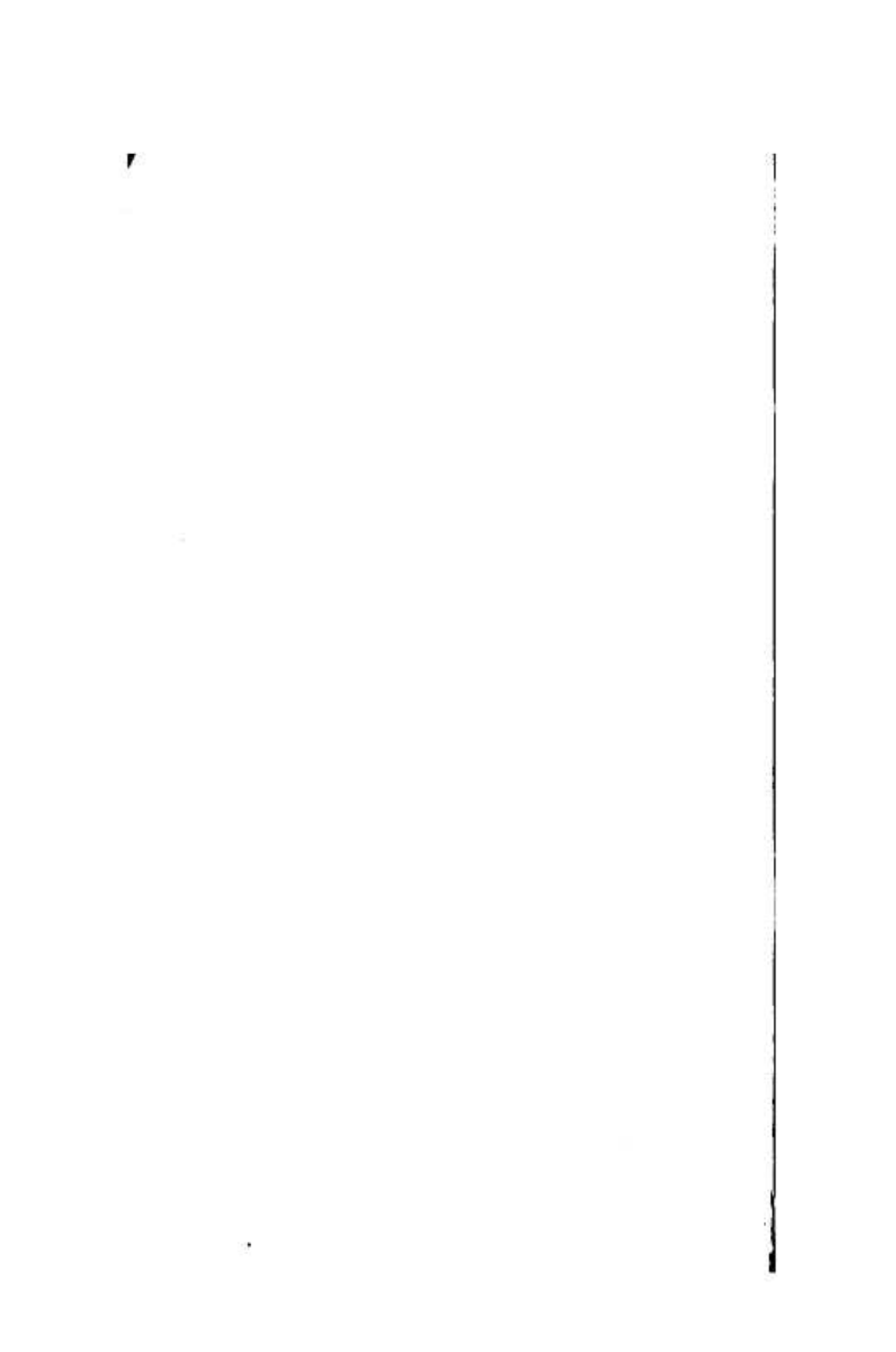
BOSTON:
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C.S.C.

NOTE.

ACCORDING to the mythology of the Romancers, the San Greal, or Holy Grail, was the cup out of which Jesus partook of the last supper with his disciples. It was brought into England by Joseph of Arimathea, and remained there, an object of pilgrimage and adoration, for many years in the keeping of his lineal descendants. It was incumbent upon those who had charge of it to be chaste in thought, word, and deed; but one of the keepers having broken this condition, the Holy Grail disappeared. From that time it was a favorite enterprise of the knights of Arthur's court to go in search of it. Sir Galahad was at last successful in finding it, as may be read in the seventeenth book of the Romance of King Arthur. Tennyson has made Sir Galahad the subject of one of the most exquisite of his poems.

The plot (if I may give that name to any thing so slight) of the following poem is my own, and, to serve its purposes, I have enlarged the circle of competition in search of the miraculous cup in such a manner as to include, not only other persons than the heroes of the Round Table, but also a period of time subsequent to the date of King Arthur's reign.



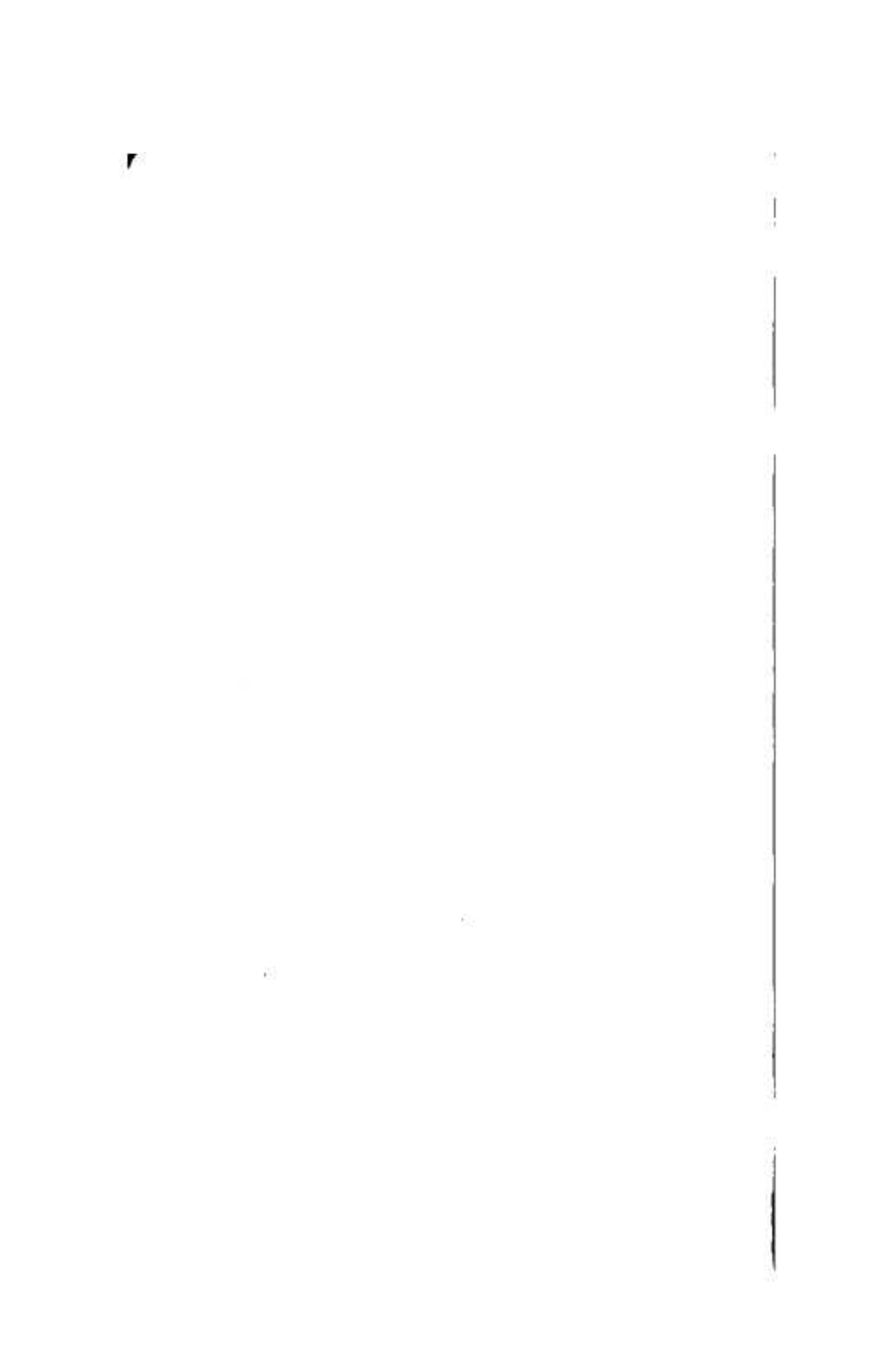
THE VISION

OF

Sir Launfal.



PART FIRST.



PRELUDE.



OVER his keys the musing organist,
Beginning doubtfully and far away,
First lets his fingers wander as they list,
And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his lay ;
Then, as the touch of his loved instrument
Gives hope and fervor, nearer draws his theme,
First guessed by faint auroral flushes sent
Along the wavering vista of his dream.



Not only around our infancy
Doth heaven with all its splendors lie ;
Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,
We Sinais climb and know it not ;

Over our manhood bend the skies ;
 Against our fallen and traitor lives
The great winds utter prophecies ;
 With our faint hearts the mountain strives ;
Its arms outstretched, the druid wood
 Waits with its benedicite ;
And to our age's drowsy blood
 Still shouts the inspiring sea.

Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us ;
 The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in,
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives us,
 We bargain for the graves we lie in ;
At the Devil's booth are all things sold,
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold ;
 For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
Bubbles we earn with a whole soul's tasking :
 'T is heaven alone that is given away,
'T is only God may be had for the asking ;
There is no price set on the lavish summer,
And June may be had by the poorest comer.