

AI-Generated Graded Readers

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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

Content Note

This adaptation is based on a historical literary work. It may contain expressions, attitudes, or depictions that some readers may consider inappropriate or offensive by today's standards. Such elements have been retained or reflected where necessary in order to preserve the historical and literary character of the original work.

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Anonymous, *The Mabinogion* (Medieval Welsh Tales of Chivalry, c. 11th–13th centuries; English Translation by Lady Charlotte Schreiber; Simplified Edition by ChatGPT)

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The Lady of the Fountain

Part 1

King Arthur was in his hall at Caerlleon upon Usk. One day he sat in his private room with Owain son of Urien, Kynon son of Clydno, and Kai son of Kyner. Queen Gwenhwyvar was there too, and her young women sat near the window, busy with their needlework. Arthur's court had many servants, but there was no common porter at the door. A great man named Glewlwyd stood there instead, and it was his work to welcome strangers, guide visitors, and show each guest where to go.

Arthur sat in the middle of the room on a seat covered with rich cloth. He looked pleased and at ease, and after a time he said, "If you will not think less of me, I will sleep a little before the meal is ready. While I rest, you may tell stories to one another, and Kai can bring you food and drink." Then Arthur lay down and soon fell asleep. Kynon turned to Kai and asked for the food the king had promised them. Kai answered, "I want my story too." Kynon smiled and said that Kai should first do as Arthur had asked, and then they would pay him with the best tale they knew.

So Kai went out and came back with mead, a golden cup, and hot meat on skewers. The men ate and drank together while Arthur slept. When they had begun to feel warm and cheerful, Kai said again, "Now give me my story." Owain turned to Kynon and said, "You should tell it." Kynon first tried to push the task back to Owain, saying that Owain was older and had seen more of the world. But Owain would not take it, and at last Kynon said, "Very well. I will tell you what once happened to me."

Kynon said that he had been his father's and mother's only son, and that in those days he was proud, bold, and eager for adventure. He thought there was nothing in the world too hard for him. After he had finished all the adventures he could find in his own land, he armed himself and rode far away through lonely countries. At last he came into the most beautiful valley he had ever seen. Trees

grew thick on both sides, a river ran through the valley, and a path followed the water. He rode on through that lovely place until evening, and then he saw, at the end of the plain, a great shining castle with a stream rushing below it.

When he came near the castle, he saw two handsome young men outside. Their yellow hair curled around their faces, and each wore a band of gold on his head. They were dressed in fine yellow cloth, and their bows and arrows were rich and strange, made with ivory, gold, and bright feathers. Near them stood another man, grown and strong, with a short beard and rich clothes of yellow satin. Kynon greeted him politely, and the man answered at once with equal courtesy. Then he led Kynon into the castle.

Inside, Kynon saw a great hall and many beautiful young women working with silk and shining cloth. They rose together when he entered, and they served him with such grace that he thought he had never seen anything like it before. Some took his horse and removed his armor. Some cleaned his weapons until they shone. Some prepared the tables, and others brought him fresh clothes to wear. Everything in that place was splendid. The table was rich, the dishes were fine, and all the food and drink were better than any he had known elsewhere.

At first no one spoke while he ate. But when the meal was half done, the lord of the castle began to ask Kynon who he was and why he had come so far from home. Kynon told him the truth. He said that he was looking for wonders, danger, and some man stronger than himself. At this, the lord smiled in a strange way. He said that if Kynon truly wanted to find such a thing, he could be shown the road. Kynon became very eager, and the lord then told him what to do the next morning.

He said that Kynon must ride farther up through the valley and into the wood. There he would find a road turning to the right, and that road would lead him to a wide open place. In the middle of that place stood a mound, and on the mound sat a black man of terrible size. He had only one foot and one eye in the middle of his forehead, and he carried an iron club so heavy that several strong men would struggle to lift it. Around him grazed many wild animals. The lord said that this black man was master of the wood, and that he would show Kynon the way onward.

The next morning Kynon rose early and followed the road exactly as he had been told. Soon he reached the open place, and there he saw the black man. The man was even larger and uglier than Kynon had imagined. Around him stood more animals than Kynon could count. When Kynon asked what power he had over them, the black man struck a stag with his club, and at the sound of its cry the beasts came crowding together from every side. There were deer, serpents, and many other wild creatures. Then the black man ordered them away again, and they obeyed him like servants obeying a lord.

After that Kynon asked for the road. The black man answered roughly, but he did answer. He told Kynon to ride upward until he came to a green tree standing in an open space. Beneath the tree there would be a fountain, a slab of marble, and a silver bowl hanging there by a silver chain. Kynon was to take the bowl, throw water from the fountain onto the marble, and then wait. The black man warned him that thunder would break over his head, a terrible storm of hail would follow, the leaves would be stripped from the tree, and then birds would come and sing more sweetly than any birds in the world. But after the song, said the black man, a black knight would appear and ride against him. If Kynon stayed, he would be beaten. If he fled, he would still be caught.

Kynon rode on and found everything exactly as the black man had said. He saw the tree, the fountain, the marble stone, and the silver bowl. He filled the bowl and threw the water onto the slab. At once the sky broke open with thunder, and a storm fell so hard that he thought neither man nor beast could live through it. Great stones of hail struck him and his horse. Kynon turned his horse sideways to the storm and held his shield over both of them as best he could. When at last the storm passed, he looked up and saw that not one leaf remained on the tree.

Then the birds came. They settled on the bare branches and began to sing. Kynon told the men in Arthur's room that he had never heard such music before and never had since. Yet while he was still listening, he heard a voice full of anger and sorrow. The voice asked why he had come there and what wrong had been done to him, that he should destroy the peace of that land. Then the black knight appeared, riding fast on a black horse and dressed all in black. Kynon met him

bravely, but the fight was short. The knight threw him down, took both horses, and rode away, leaving Kynon standing there in shame.

Kynon said that this was the worst part, worse even than the beating. The black knight did not think him worth killing, taking prisoner, or even robbing. He simply left him behind like a man of no value. Kynon walked back by the road he had come, burning with shame. When he reached the black man again, that strange giant laughed at him. Kynon felt then that he might melt away from shame before his eyes. Still he went on and returned that night to the castle where he had first been welcomed.

There, to his surprise, he was treated with even greater kindness than before. He was given good food, warm company, and a place to sleep, but no one spoke a single word about his defeat. Kynon himself said nothing either. The next morning he found a fine horse made ready for him, and he rode home at last. He ended his tale by saying that no adventure had ever brought him more shame, and that he still wondered how such a place could lie inside Arthur's lands while so few men knew of it. When he finished, the room was quiet for a moment, because all who had heard him understood that he had spoken honestly of his own defeat.

Part 2

The next morning Owain left the yellow lord's castle and rode on until he came to the open place in the wood. There he saw the black man sitting on the mound, just as Kynon had said. He was huge, ugly, and frightening, and the great iron club rested in his hand. All around him wild animals moved and fed in the grass. Owain asked him the road, and the black man pointed the way without kindness but without delay.

Owain rode up through the wood until he reached the high ground. There he found the open place, the green tree, the fountain, the marble slab, and the silver bowl hanging by its chain. Everything stood before him exactly as it had stood before Kynon. Owain did not turn back. He took the bowl in his hand, filled it with water from the fountain, and threw the water onto the slab.

At once the sky broke open with a crash of thunder. Then came a storm more violent than any storm Owain had known in all his life. Great hailstones struck down with such force that they seemed able to break flesh and bone. Owain bent low, turned his horse as well as he could, and held his shield above them both. When the storm at last had passed, he looked up and saw that every leaf had been torn from the tree.

Then the air grew calm and bright. Birds came down onto the branches, and they sang so sweetly that Owain stood still and listened with wonder. He had never heard such music before. But while the song still filled the air, another sound began to move through the valley. It was the sound of anger, grief, and complaint, and it came nearer and nearer until a black knight on a black horse rode out before him.

The knight rushed at him at once, and Owain did not move aside. Their horses met with great force, and their lances broke. Then they drew their swords and fought hand to hand. The fight was hard and fierce, but Owain struck the stronger blow. His sword cut through the knight's head armor and wounded him so deeply that the man knew he had received a deadly hurt.

Then the black knight turned his horse and fled toward his castle. Owain followed close behind him, not willing to lose him after such a fight. Ahead of him he saw a great shining castle, rich and strong, and the wounded knight reached its gate first. The gate opened for that knight and closed again at once. Owain rode in after him, but the heavy iron gate crashed down before he could pass through safely.

It struck his horse behind the saddle and cut the poor animal in two. Owain himself was trapped between the outer gate and the inner one, with no clear way forward and no way back. He stood there in great danger, knowing that the people of the castle would soon come and kill him. As he waited, he looked through an opening and saw a street and houses inside. Then he saw a young woman coming toward the gate.

She had yellow curling hair, rich clothes, and quick bright eyes. When she came near, Owain spoke to her and said he could not open the gate and feared

there was no hope for him. The maiden answered that she was sorry for him and that every woman should help such a man. She said she had never seen anyone more true in service to women, more loyal as a friend, or more devoted as a lover. Then she gave him a ring and told him to hide the stone inside his hand, because if he did so, no one would be able to see him.

She told him what would happen next. Men would come to take him and kill him, but they would search in vain. She said she would wait for him by a mounting stone, and though she would not be able to see him, he would be able to see her. He was to follow her quietly and place his hand on her shoulder so that she would know he was near. Owain did exactly as she told him, and soon the castle men came in anger to look for him. They found only half his horse, and they cried out in frustration because the man they wanted had vanished.

Owain moved unseen through the middle of them and went to the maiden. He touched her shoulder, and she led him through the castle until they reached a large beautiful room. There she shut the door and brought him food, drink, water, and rest. The room was rich with color and gold, and everything in it showed the wealth of the lord who had lived there. Owain ate in silence for a long time, and later that day he heard a loud noise rise through the castle.

He asked the maiden what it meant, and she told him that the wounded lord of the castle was dying. In the night another cry rose up, louder and more terrible than before, and she said the man was dead. At daybreak there came a third great sound, full of grief, weeping, and holy song. Owain rose and looked out through the window. The streets below were full of armed men, women on foot and on horseback, priests singing, and many nobles walking with the dead lord's body.

Then Owain saw a woman following the bier. Her yellow hair fell over her shoulders, and her hands were bloody because she struck them together again and again in her grief. Her clothes were torn, and her cry was so deep and bitter that it seemed to rise above all the other sounds in the city. Even in sorrow she was more beautiful than any woman Owain had ever seen. He asked the maiden who she was, and the maiden said, "She is my lady, the Countess of the Fountain, and she is the wife of the man you killed yesterday." At that moment Owain loved her

with all his heart, and the maiden, who was called Luned, looked at him and said that perhaps the Countess would love him too. Then she cared for him kindly, gave him a better meal than before, and at last said, "Sleep now. I will go and speak for you."

Part 3

While Owain slept, Luned went to her lady. The whole castle was still full of mourning, and the Countess could hardly bear to see anyone because her grief was so great. Luned greeted her, but at first the Countess did not answer. Then Luned bent close and asked why she would not speak. The Countess replied that Luned had failed her by staying away in such a dark hour, after all the kindness she had once received in that house.

Luned answered more boldly than most servants would dare. She said grief for the dead was useless when the living still had urgent needs. The Countess grew angry and said there was no man in the world equal to her lost husband. Luned replied that another man could be just as good, or better, if he were strong enough to protect the land. The Countess was so offended that she said she should banish Luned, and perhaps would have killed her if Luned had not been dear to her since childhood.

Luned did not give way. She said the Countess needed wisdom more than tears, because an earldom could not be kept safe by sorrow alone. If the fountain was left without a defender, then the lands around it would soon be lost. Only a very brave knight could hold that place, and such a man must be found quickly. At last the Countess, though still full of pain, admitted that Luned should say what she truly meant.

Then Luned told her plan. She said she would go, or seem to go, to Arthur's court and bring back a knight strong enough to guard the fountain and defend the whole land. The Countess doubted that such a thing could be done, but she allowed Luned to try. So Luned returned, not to Arthur's court, but to the room where Owain waited. She stayed with him long enough to make it seem as if she

really had taken the journey and come back again.

When the right time had passed, Luned returned to her mistress and said she had succeeded. The Countess was eager, though careful, and ordered that the knight should come before her the next day at noon, when the people of the town could also gather. So the next day Owain dressed himself in rich yellow clothes and came with Luned into the Countess's chamber. The Countess looked at him closely from head to foot. Then she said at once that he did not look like a man who had simply come from a long road.

Luned answered calmly and asked what harm there was in that. But the Countess said she was nearly certain that this was the very man who had killed her husband. Luned did not deny it. She only said that if he had killed the former lord, then he must have been the stronger man, and there was no use fighting against what had already happened. The Countess listened, sent them away for a time, and took counsel with herself and with the men of her land.

The next day she called her people together and spoke to them openly. She said her country had been left without a protector, and everyone knew that such a place could not be held without arms, skill, and courage. So she gave them a choice. One of her own men could marry her and defend the fountain, or they could agree that she should marry a stranger who was able to do what was needed. After hearing this, they decided that it would be best for her to take a husband from elsewhere.

So bishops and churchmen were called, and Owain married the Countess of the Fountain. The men of the land swore loyalty to him, and from that time he became lord there. He defended the fountain with spear and sword, and no knight could come there without being beaten by him. When he overcame those men, he treated them according to custom and shared what he gained with his own followers. Because he was brave, generous, and strong, all the people loved him, and he lived with the Countess in honor and joy for three full years.

But far away, at Arthur's court, the king had begun to feel sorrow for the loss of Owain. One day Gwalchmai saw that Arthur was deeply troubled and asked the reason. Arthur said he had not seen Owain for three years and feared that some

harm had come to him because of Kynon's tale. Gwalchmai answered that Arthur did not need to raise all Britain for this matter. Arthur and the men of his household would be enough either to avenge Owain, free him, or bring him home alive if he still lived.

So Arthur rode out with Kynon as guide and came at last to the fountain. There Kai threw the water and was defeated by the black knight. One after another Arthur's men tried their strength and failed, until only Arthur and Gwalchmai were left. Then Gwalchmai, hidden under a rich robe, fought the knight for three long days, and at last the two men recognized one another. The black knight was Owain. There was great joy when Arthur embraced him, and Owain welcomed the whole company to the castle of the Countess with a feast that lasted a long time. At last Arthur asked that Owain might return with him to Britain for three months only, so that his friends and the noble ladies of the island might see him again. The Countess gave her consent, though it hurt her deeply, and Owain went with Arthur. But once he was back among his own people, he stayed not three months but three years.

Part 4

One day, while Owain sat at Arthur's court, a young woman rode suddenly into the hall. Her horse was covered with foam, and her clothes were bright yellow. She came straight to Owain, pulled the ring from his hand, and said that this was the reward for a false and faithless man. Then she turned and rode away at once. In that moment Owain remembered the Countess, the promise he had broken, and the long years he had wasted.

Shame fell on him so heavily that he could not stay another day at court. He left Arthur's hall and wandered alone through wild lands and empty mountains. His clothes wore out, his body grew thin, and his hair grew long. For a long time he lived like a wild man among beasts, and he became so weak that at last even they left him behind. Then, half dead, he came down into a fair valley and fell near a park that belonged to a widowed Countess.

The Countess found him there and felt pity for him. She sent one of her maidens with rich ointment, a horse, and clean clothes, and told her to anoint the stranger and see whether life still remained in him. The maiden poured the whole ointment over Owain, and after a time he began to move and rise. He was ashamed of the wild shape he had become, yet he put on the clothes, mounted the horse with difficulty, and went with the maiden to the Countess's castle. There he was fed, warmed, and cared for until he slowly became strong again.

After three months he was well once more, stronger and more handsome than before. Then an enemy earl came with an army to force the Countess to yield her land. Owain asked for horse and armor, and the Countess gave them, thinking there was little hope but no better use for them. He rode out, found the earl under four yellow banners, pulled him from the saddle, and carried him back as a gift to the Countess. To save his life, the captured earl gave back the lands he had taken and paid a great ransom.

After this Owain went wandering again, for he still could not rest. In a wood he heard terrible cries and saw a serpent attacking a black lion near a rock. Owain drew his sword and cut the serpent in two. The lion was saved, and from that moment it followed him like a loyal hound. At night it brought him wood for his fire and meat for his supper, and it would not leave him.

While Owain sat beside his fire with the lion, he heard deep sighs coming from nearby. A voice answered him from a stone prison, and the prisoner was Luned, the maid who had once saved his life. She told him that because she had spoken well of him, two young men had called him false and had shut her up there. If Owain did not come to save her by the fixed day, she would be burned. Owain asked whether she truly believed that this knight would come, and Luned said she was sure of it.

The next day Owain went to a nearby castle, as Luned advised him, and there he found another house full of sorrow. The earl of that place told him that a giant had taken his two sons and would kill them before his eyes unless the earl gave up his only daughter. Owain armed himself and went out to fight the giant. The lion attacked too, and when Owain shut it inside the castle so that he could fight

fairly, the beast broke free, leaped from the walls, and helped him kill the giant. Then Owain gave the earl back his sons and rode at once to the meadow where Luned waited for death.

There he saw a great fire and the two young men leading Luned to it. They said that Owain had failed her and that the law must now be carried out. Owain offered to fight in that knight's place, and they agreed. The struggle was hard, and even when Owain shut the lion away so that the fight would be equal, the lion broke out again when it heard him in danger. It rushed on the two young men, killed them, and so Luned was saved.

After that Owain returned with Luned to the land of the Countess of the Fountain, and he was joined again with his wife. But his adventures were not yet fully ended. He went next to the court of the savage black man, and there he found twenty-four noble women in misery. They told him that this robber lord had welcomed them and their husbands, then had killed the husbands, taken all their goods, and kept the women there in sorrow and fear.

Owain went out and fought the savage black man, overcame him, and bound him. The defeated man begged for mercy and promised to change his life, and Owain spared him. On the next day he took the twenty-four women, their horses, their clothes, and all the wealth that had been stolen from them, and led them to Arthur's court. Arthur was filled with joy to see him again, greater joy even than before, and from that time Owain lived in high honor, loved by all, victorious wherever he went. And this is the end of the tale of The Lady of the Fountain.

Peredur the Son of Evrawc

Part 1

Earl Evrawc was lord of the North, and he had seven sons. He spent much of his life in war, in tournaments, and in hard fighting. At last he was killed, and six of his sons were killed with him. Only the youngest son lived, because he was still too young to go out to war. That last son was Peredur.

Peredur's mother was a careful and thoughtful woman. After losing her husband and almost all her sons, she became afraid for the boy who was left to her. So she left the settled country and went far away into wild lonely places. She took only women, boys, and weak men with her, people who knew nothing of war. No one was allowed to bring horses or weapons near Peredur, because she feared that the sight of them would make him wish for battle.

So the boy grew up in the woods, far from courts and soldiers. He spent his days running, throwing sticks, and playing in the forest. He was strong, quick, and simple in his thoughts, because he had seen little of the world. One day he saw the goats of his mother's flock, and near them were two deer. Since the deer had no horns, he thought they were goats that had gone wild and lost them.

Peredur chased the deer and the goats together and drove them all into the same place. Then he ran back proudly to tell his mother of the strange thing he had found. She and the others went out with him and saw the two deer. They were amazed, but the boy still did not understand what was strange about them. He had lived so long away from the world that even small things seemed new to him.

Not long after this, three knights came riding along the road near the edge of the forest. They were Gwalchmai, Geneir Gwystyl, and Owain son of Urien, though Peredur did not know their names. He looked at their horses, their bright arms, and their noble manner, and he asked his mother what they were. She answered in fear, "They are angels." But Peredur said at once that he wished to go and become an angel too.

He ran to the road and met the knights. Owain asked whether he had seen

another knight pass that way, and Peredur answered that he did not even know what a knight was. Then Owain, amused by the boy, showed him all the things on horse and man and told him their names and uses. Peredur asked about the saddle, the weapons, and all the rich gear he saw before him. The sight of these things filled him with wonder and desire.

Peredur went back to his mother and told her that the men were not angels but noble knights. At once she fainted, because she knew now that she could not keep him in the woods much longer. But the boy was already preparing to leave. He found a rough piebald horse, made a poor saddle from a pack, and copied as best he could the harness he had just seen. When his mother recovered, she saw that her last hope of hiding him had ended.

Then she spoke to him with sorrow and gave him counsel for the road. She told him to go to Arthur and ask for knighthood. She told him to honor churches and say his prayer when he saw one. She also gave him foolish advice that came from fear and not from wisdom: if he saw food, he should take it if he needed it; if he saw a fair jewel, he should take it and give it away; and if he met a beautiful woman, he should speak to her boldly. After that she kissed him and let him go, though her heart was breaking.

Peredur rode away carrying only a handful of sharp forks in his hand. For two days and two nights he traveled through wild lonely country with no food and no drink. At last he saw a tent in a fair open place. Thinking it was a church, he said his prayer to it and then went closer. At the door sat a beautiful young woman with a gold ring on her hand, and inside there was food and wine.

Peredur told her that his mother had said he should take food where he found it, so he ate half and left the rest for her. Then he knelt and said that his mother had told him to take any fine jewel he saw. The maiden, seeing how innocent and strange he was, let him take her ring, and he rode away again. Soon her lord returned, learned that Peredur had been there, and in anger blamed the lady, though she had done no wrong. He rode off to seek the boy, while Peredur kept going toward Arthur's court.

Before Peredur reached the court, a proud knight had already come there and

had insulted Queen Gwenhwyvar. He threw wine in her face, struck her, took her goblet, and rode out to the meadow, challenging any man to follow him and avenge the wrong. Yet no one in Arthur's hall moved, because they feared the knight's strength. Then Peredur entered the hall on his poor rough horse, crossed the whole room, and asked Kai which man was Arthur. Kai mocked him, but Peredur said simply that he had come to Arthur to receive knighthood.

The people laughed at his wild appearance and threw sticks at him. But then a dwarf, who had long remained silent at Arthur's court, cried out that Peredur son of Evrawc would become the flower of knighthood. Kai, angry at this, struck the dwarf and kicked the dwarf's wife as well when she said the same thing. Peredur then asked again which man was Arthur, and Kai told him to go after the knight in the meadow, take the goblet, and win the horse and arms. Peredur rode out at once, met the knight, and declared his purpose. When the knight struck him hard with his spear-shaft, Peredur answered with one of his sharp forks and drove it through the man's eye and out behind his neck, so that he fell dead at once. And so the wild boy from the forest entered the world of knights in his own fierce and simple way.

Part 2

After that first battle, Peredur did not yet return to Arthur's hall. He rode on through strange lands, still thinking of honor, weapons, and the insult done to the queen, the dwarf, and the dwarf's wife. Soon he met another knight and beat him as well. But this time he spared the man and said, "Go to Arthur's court and tell them that I beat you for Arthur's honor, and tell Kai that I will not come back until I have avenged the wrong done to the dwarf and his wife."

The knight swore to carry that message, and he did so. After that, Peredur kept riding forward and defeated many more knights in a single week. One after another they went to Arthur's court with the same words, and Arthur rebuked Kai for his proud and cruel behavior. Kai was deeply troubled by this, but Peredur did not know or care how angry he was.

Then Peredur came to a lonely wood, and beside it there was a lake. On the far side of the water stood a fair castle, and near the lake sat an old gray man on a rich cushion while his servants fished. The man was lame, and when he saw Peredur coming, he rose and went slowly back to the castle. Peredur followed him there and was welcomed with honor.

The old man gave him good food and a warm place by the fire. After the meal, he asked Peredur whether he knew how to fight with a sword. Peredur answered honestly that he did not, though he believed he could learn. Then the old man called for his two sons and had them play with shield and stick before Peredur so that he could judge which one fought better.

Peredur watched closely and said that the yellow-haired youth seemed the stronger of the two. Then the old man told him to take the shield and stick from the other son and try his own strength. Peredur rose at once and struck so hard that he drew blood from the stronger youth with a single blow. The old man looked at him with great approval and said that he would become one of the best fighters in the island.

Then the old man told Peredur the truth. He said, "I am your uncle, your mother's brother." He asked Peredur to stay with him for a while so that he could learn courtesy, noble behavior, and the customs of the world, and not live any longer by the rough habits of the forest. He also gave him one rule that would shape much of Peredur's life: if he saw something strange, he should not ask about it unless someone freely chose to explain it.

Peredur stayed there and was treated with kindness and honor. When morning came, he took his horse with his uncle's leave and rode on again. After a long ride through a waste wood, he came to another meadow, and beyond it stood another large castle. He entered it and found there another noble old man with many pages around him.

This second lord welcomed him warmly and set him at his side during the meal. After they had eaten, the lord asked Peredur whether he could use a sword. Peredur gave the same answer as before, so the old man pointed to a great iron bar lying on the floor and told him to strike it. Peredur struck with such strength

that both the iron and the sword broke, and when he put the broken parts together, they joined again.

He struck a second time, and again both things broke and were made whole. But at the third blow, though the old man told him to fit them together again, they would not join. Then the old man blessed him and said that he had already gained two parts of his full strength, and when the last part came, no man would be able to stand against him. He too was Peredur's uncle, and the brother of the first old lord with whom Peredur had stayed.

While Peredur sat there speaking with him, two young men entered carrying a great spear with blood running down from its point. All in the hall cried out in grief, but no one explained the sight. Then two maidens came in with a platter on which lay a man's head covered in blood, and again the whole hall broke into sorrow and wailing. Peredur remembered his uncle's advice and kept silent, though his heart was full of wonder; and the next morning, with permission, he rode away again into the world.

Part 3

The next day Peredur rode away from his uncle's hall. He still did not know the meaning of the bleeding spear or the severed head, but he carried those strange sights in his mind. Deep in a wood he heard loud crying and found a beautiful woman beside a dead man. She tried again and again to lift the body onto a horse, and each time it fell back to the ground.

When Peredur asked why she wept, the woman spoke with pain and anger. She told him that he had broken his mother's heart when he left her, and that she had died from grief. She also said that she herself was his foster-sister, and that the dead man beside her had been her husband. He had been killed by a knight in the glade nearby.

Peredur was struck with grief, but he did not turn away. He buried the dead man with his own hands and then rode with his foster-sister to the glade. There he met the proud knight who had done this wrong. The two fought at once, and

Peredur threw him down and won mercy from him.

After this Peredur rode on and came to another strange place. Above him stood a castle, and when he struck the gate, a handsome red-haired youth opened it. Inside he found a tall noble lady with many women around her. She welcomed him gladly, but after the meal she told him he would be safer if he left before night ended.

The lady then explained her danger. Nine sorceresses of Gloucester, together with their father and mother, had already laid waste almost all the land and would soon destroy this last refuge too. Peredur said he would not leave. He promised to stay through the night and do what he could for her and her people. At daybreak he heard the cries of battle and rode out to the meadow.

On the first day he defeated many of the enemy. At evening he overthrew a proud knight who was steward of the palace and ordered him to restore part of the lady's stolen land, and also to provide food, horses, and arms for two hundred men. On the second and third days Peredur defeated even more foes. At last he threw down the earl himself and forced him to return the maiden's whole earldom and add his own besides.

Peredur remained there for three weeks and made sure that tribute, obedience, and good order were restored. Only then did he prepare to leave. The maiden asked who he was, because he had served her so faithfully and yet had never spoken proudly of himself. Peredur told her his name at last and said that if she was ever again in danger, she need only send word to him.

As he rode onward, he met another troubled lady on a thin tired horse. She was the wife of the Lord of the Glade, the same woman from the tent whom her husband had wrongly blamed because of Peredur's innocent visit. Peredur told her plainly that she had suffered because of him, and that he would now set matters right. Soon her husband came up, searching for the knight who had brought shame to his house.

Peredur did not hide his name or his part in the matter. He said that the woman was innocent and that her husband had treated her badly. Then the two knights fought, and once more Peredur won. But instead of killing the man, he made him

swear to ride back, clear his wife's name, and admit before her that he had been beaten fairly. In this way Peredur began to do more than win battles. He also began to repair wrongs.

After that he rode to yet another castle. A noble lady there welcomed him, but she too lived in fear, for the sorceresses of Gloucester were near and meant death for all within the house. Peredur refused to flee, even when she urged him to save himself while there was still time. So he stayed the night, and when dawn came, he heard a dreadful outcry rising outside.

Part 4

At daybreak Peredur armed himself and rode out to meet the danger. A great host rose against him, and he fought them all day in the meadow before the castle. By evening many of them had fallen, yet the old lord still refused mercy. Then Peredur killed first one son and then the other, and only after that did the father yield and ask for peace.

The maiden went to Peredur and begged him to spare her father and the men who were left alive. Peredur agreed, and the old lord gave him broad lands and the hand of the maiden. Peredur thanked him, but he said he had not come there to seek a wife. Instead he asked for news of the Castle of Wonders, and he was told the road that led toward it.

So Peredur reached the Castle of Wonders, where he found a hall standing open and a chessboard that seemed to play by itself. The side he favored lost, and in anger he threw the board into the lake. Then a black maiden appeared and rebuked him, saying that he had caused the Empress to lose a priceless treasure. She told him that if he wished to set things right, he must go to the Castle of Ysbidinongyl and kill the black man who was laying waste to the Empress's lands.

Peredur went there and fought the black man bravely. At first he spared his life on condition that the chessboard be restored, but the black maiden told him that the work was not truly done. So he went back and killed the black man after all. After that he passed through further strange trials, and in one of them he killed a

dreadful water monster called the Addanc. The Empress then received him with favor, and the tale says that he remained with her for fourteen years.

In time Peredur came again to Arthur's court. There a hideous black maiden rode into the hall and spoke bitterly to him before everyone. She told him that when he was in the hall of the lame king and saw the bleeding spear and the severed head, he should have asked what those things meant. If he had done so, the king would have been healed and peace would have returned to the land. Instead, she said, widows, battles, and sorrow had continued because of his silence.

These words struck Peredur deeply, and they drove him back into wandering and battle. In later adventures he was imprisoned by a king, but the king's daughter secretly honored him and knew his worth. Peredur fought for that king in a scarlet robe with a yellow shield, killed the enemy earl, and won freedom by his courage. Yet even then he refused land, marriage, and ease, because he was still seeking the meaning of the great mystery and the true end of his task.

He was directed once more toward the Castle of Wonders and beyond it to a mountain grove where a strange black man rose from beneath a stone and fought him. The black man vanished as suddenly as he had appeared, taking Peredur's horse, and Peredur followed on until he reached another castle in a valley. There he found Gwalchmai and a lame gray-headed lord. Then a yellow-haired youth came before him and asked for his friendship.

The youth then revealed the truth that had long been hidden. He said that he was Peredur's cousin, and that he himself had appeared before in the shape of the black maiden. He had also borne the bloody head and the bleeding spear in the lame king's hall. The severed head, he told Peredur, had been the head of another cousin, killed by the sorceresses of Gloucester, and those same sorceresses had also lamed Peredur's uncle. There had long been a prophecy that Peredur would one day avenge these wrongs.

Then Peredur and Gwalchmai sent for Arthur and his household, and together they went against the sorceresses of Gloucester. In the fighting one of the sorceresses killed a man before Peredur's face, and he warned her to stop. She killed a second man, and again he warned her. But when she killed a third man

before him, Peredur drew his sword and struck her helmet so hard that it split apart.

Then the sorceress cried out to the others to flee, because this was Peredur, the man by whom they were fated to die. Arthur and his men fell upon them, and all the sorceresses of Gloucester were slain. In this way Peredur at last learned the meaning of the signs he had once failed to ask about, and he completed the revenge that had long awaited him. And this is the end of the tale of Peredur the Son of Evrawc.

Geraint the Son of Erbin

Part 1

Arthur was holding his court at Caerlleon upon Usk at Whitsuntide. As was the custom, the men of the court went out to hunt the stag. Arthur wanted to follow the hunt himself, but Gwenhwyvar asked leave to ride out too, and Geraint son of Erbin went with her to guard her on the way. So the queen, one maiden, and Geraint rode apart from the main company and followed the road through the forest.

Before long they saw a knight riding ahead with a lady and a dwarf. Gwenhwyvar wished to know who the knight was, so she sent her maiden forward to ask his name. But the dwarf struck the maiden and drove her back in shame. Then Geraint himself rode forward to ask, and the dwarf struck him too, because he was unarmed and could not take revenge at once.

Geraint was angry, but he would not leave the insult unanswered. He told Gwenhwyvar to remain where she was until Arthur came, and he began to follow the knight, the lady, and the dwarf. He followed them a long way, always keeping them in sight but never close enough to stop them. At last they reached a town where many people were gathering for a tournament and for the contest of the Sparrow-Hawk.

Geraint entered the town in poor condition, because he had no armor with him and no rich companions at his side. There he came to a poor old earl named Ynywl, who had once been great but had lost much of his land and wealth. Ynywl welcomed him kindly into his house, and Geraint saw there the earl's wife and his daughter, a very beautiful young woman dressed in worn and simple clothes. That maiden was Enid.

Geraint asked about the knight he had followed, and Earl Ynywl explained the custom of the place. Each year the knight called the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk claimed that the lady he loved was the fairest of women, and if anyone denied it, he had to fight in her name. That year the knight was Edeyrn son of Nudd, and the

proud dwarf who had struck Gwenhwyvar's maiden served him. Geraint then said that Enid had a better right to the hawk than Edeyrn's lady, and that he would fight for her.

Ynywl warned him that he had no fit arms for such a combat, but he still offered what little he had. Geraint answered that his own horse would do, and that Ynywl's old armor was enough for him. Then he made a solemn promise: if he lived through the combat, he would love the earl's daughter all his life; and if he died, her honor would still remain untouched. So it was agreed that at daybreak they would go together to the meadow where the contest would be held.

Early in the morning Edeyrn made the usual claim and called on his lady to take the Sparrow-Hawk. Then Geraint spoke out and said that another maiden was fairer, nobler, and more worthy. At once the challenge was accepted, and Geraint rode forward in poor, rusty, ill-shaped armor that seemed unfit for so great a contest. Yet he faced Edeyrn without fear.

They charged each other again and again and broke many lances. At first Edeyrn seemed to have the advantage, and his side shouted with joy, while Ynywl, his wife, and Enid watched in fear and sorrow. Then the old earl gave Geraint a lance that he had kept since the day he himself had first become a knight, and he said its point was still true. With that weapon Geraint rode in hard, broke Edeyrn's shield, burst his armor, and threw him from his horse to the ground.

The two men then fought on foot with swords, and the battle was long and fierce. Sparks flew from their blows, and both were covered with blood and sweat. When Geraint began to tire, the old earl cried out and told him to remember the insult done both to himself and to Gwenhwyvar's maiden. Those words woke all his strength again, and he struck Edeyrn on the head so terribly that the knight fell to his knees and begged for mercy.

Geraint spared him, but only on one condition. Edeyrn must ride straight to Gwenhwyvar and make amends for the wrong done by the dwarf to her maiden, and he must not stop until he came into her presence. Edeyrn agreed, and only then did he ask the name of the man who had beaten him. Geraint told him who he was, and Edeyrn rode off toward Arthur's court, wounded and humbled, with

the dwarf and his lady going before him.

After the combat, the young earl of the place made peace with Ynywl at Geraint's command and restored to him his lands, his town, and all that he had lost. Then Ynywl offered Enid to Geraint, because he had fought for her before all the town. But Geraint said that he would first take her to Arthur's court, and Arthur and Gwenhwyvar would decide how she should be honored. So on the next day Geraint, Enid, and Ynywl's household set out for Arthur's hall, and thus the first part of their story came to its turning point.

Part 2

Geraint brought Enid to Arthur's court, and there she was received with great joy. Gwenhwyvar and her women welcomed her warmly, took away her worn travelling clothes, and dressed her as was fitting for a noble lady. Arthur too was pleased with all that had happened, for Geraint had avenged the insult done to the queen's maiden and had shown both courage and good judgment. In that court Enid's beauty and gentle nature were admired by all.

Before long Geraint and Enid were married with honor. After that, Arthur and his company went with them toward Geraint's own lands, because it was right that his people should see their new lady and do homage to him. The men of Cornwall were glad to receive him, and they said that nothing could give them greater joy than to welcome Geraint as their lord. So Geraint accepted their loyalty, and Enid stood beside him as his wife before all his people.

Then Geraint rode through the furthest parts of his country with trusted guides and chief men of the land. He made sure that every boundary was secure and that no one had taken what was his. As he had done in Arthur's court, he also went often to tournaments and met many strong and famous men. In all these things he gained so much honor that his name spread through the whole kingdom.

Geraint also made his court rich and splendid. He gave good horses, fine arms, and valuable gifts to his nobles and companions. For a time everything went well with him. But when he saw that no one near him seemed strong enough to

challenge him, he began to love ease and pleasure more than action and hard effort.

He loved Enid deeply, and at first this brought happiness to them both. Yet in time he stayed too long in his own chamber with her and gave up the company of his men. He stopped hunting, ceased to take joy in noble sport, and little by little lost the hearts of the warriors in his household. Soon there was murmuring and mockery in the palace, because people said that Geraint cared more for his wife than for honor, fame, or fellowship.

These reports came at last to old Erbin, Geraint's father. He spoke to Enid and asked whether she had caused Geraint to turn away from his people. Enid answered truthfully that nothing was more hateful to her than such a thing. She was deeply troubled, because it was hard to tell Geraint what people were saying, yet harder still to hear his name shamed and keep silent. So sorrow entered her heart, and she did not know what to do.

One summer morning they were lying together in their chamber, and Geraint slept near the edge of the bed while Enid remained awake. The sunlight came through the glass and fell across them. As she looked at him, she thought of the great fame he had once won in arms and of the shameful words now spoken about him. Tears fell from her eyes onto his breast, and in her grief she said softly that she was the cause of the loss of his former glory.

Her tears and words woke Geraint, but he misunderstood what he heard. He thought Enid spoke not out of sorrow for him, but because she longed for another man and another life. At once his mind filled with anger and bitter pride. He called for his squire and ordered his horse and heavy shining armor to be made ready.

Then he turned to Enid and commanded her to rise, dress herself in the worst riding clothes she had, and prepare her horse at once. He said darkly that she would soon learn whether he had truly lost all his strength, as she seemed to believe. Enid answered that she did not understand his meaning, but Geraint refused to explain. He then went to Erbin, said he was setting out on a quest, and asked his father to guard the land until he returned.

So Geraint and Enid rode out alone. He ordered her to go far ahead of him and never turn back, no matter what she saw or heard, unless he himself spoke first.

He did not choose an easy or safe road, but one that was wild, lonely, and full of danger. Soon they came near a great forest and saw four armed horsemen riding out from it, speaking together of how easily they could take the two horses, the armor, and the lady from a single gloomy knight. Enid heard every word, and fear seized her, for she now had to choose between obedience to Geraint and the wish to save his life.

Part 3

Enid heard the first riders speak of taking the horses, the armor, and herself as easy spoil. She was afraid to speak, because Geraint had ordered silence, yet she could not bear to let him be attacked without warning. So she turned and told him what she had heard. Geraint was angry, not because the men threatened him, but because Enid had broken his command again.

Even so, when the riders came on, he met them without fear. One after another they charged him, and one after another he threw them down. Enid watched with fear and relief together, because she saw both his danger and his great skill. When it was done, Geraint tied the captured armor onto the saddles, joined the reins, and gave the extra horses to Enid to lead onward.

After that they crossed a wide empty plain and came toward another great wood. From it rode out a second band, five bold horsemen, and Enid again heard them speaking greedily of the rich prize before them. Once more she warned Geraint, and once more he answered her with bitter words. Then he fought the five men and defeated them all, though the labor was heavy, and now Enid had even more horses and armor to lead before her.

Night came while they were still in the deep wood, so Geraint stopped there and slept in his armor while Enid watched the horses. At daybreak they rode on and met a young stripling carrying food and drink for men working in the fields. By him they learned of a city ahead, and soon they reached it and found lodging there. Yet Geraint was still restless, wounded in spirit as well as in body, and he would not stay quietly at ease.

Before long a very small but fully armed knight overtook him and asked whether he had crossed a forbidden road out of ignorance or pride. Geraint answered that he had known nothing of the rule, but the knight still demanded satisfaction. So they fought hard, and the struggle was difficult because the man was so small and quick. At last Geraint overthrew him, spared his life, and won his friendship; that knight was Gwiffert Petit, the Little King, who then promised to help Geraint whenever he heard he was in trouble.

Gwiffert urged him to come and rest at his court, because he was already weary, bleeding, and in danger if fresh trouble came upon him. But Geraint refused, as he had refused all gentler counsel since the journey began. He mounted again though he was in pain, and Enid rode before him as always. So they went on into the wood, with Geraint growing weaker under his wounds and stubborn pride.

There Kai came upon him first, heard there was a wounded knight in the wood, and rode out roughly to question him. Geraint would not go with him, and when Kai attacked, Geraint struck him down but did not punish him further. Then Gwalchmai came, armed and more courteous, and he too asked the wounded knight who he was and where he was going. This time Gwalchmai looked closely and knew him at last.

Geraint still would not willingly come to Arthur, so Gwalchmai secretly sent word ahead and had Arthur's tent moved beside the road. In this way Arthur met him almost by force and would not let him ride past to his own death. Enid was taken kindly to Gwenhwyvar, who received her with joy and changed her poor riding clothes for better ones. Arthur then ordered that Geraint should be cared for at once and that the best physicians should attend him.

Geraint remained there nearly a month while his wounds were healed. Though he wished to leave sooner, Arthur refused to let him go until the physicians themselves said he was well enough. At last they declared that he had recovered, and only then did Arthur give permission for the journey to begin again. So Geraint rose, armed himself once more, and prepared to continue the hard road with Enid.

Even after this kindness and healing, his mind had not yet softened. He still

ordered Enid to ride before him in silence, and she still obeyed because love held her there even under unjust blame. Thus they left Arthur and went forward once more along the road, carrying with them the same sorrow, pride, and danger that had driven them into the wilderness from the start.

Part 4

After Geraint left Arthur's care, he still made Enid ride ahead of him as before. Soon they heard loud weeping near the road, and Geraint went to see the cause. In a glade he found a dead knight, a grieving young woman, and signs that three giants had passed that way. When she told him that the giants had killed her husband without cause, Geraint at once followed them and fought them, killing two with his spear and the third with his sword, though in the struggle his old wounds were torn open again and his blood flowed heavily.

He came back to Enid after the fight, but when she saw him, he fell lifeless from his horse. Her cry was so sharp and full of grief that it drew the Earl of Limours and his company out of their own road. The earl buried the dead knight and ordered Geraint to be carried with them on a shield and a bier, because he believed some life might still remain in him. In that way Enid, the other widow, and the half-dead Geraint were all brought to the earl's court.

Once there, the Earl of Limours at once began to speak wrongly to Enid. He urged her to change her clothes, take comfort, eat, drink, and accept his earldom and his hand, whether Geraint lived or died. Enid refused every offer and said that she would neither eat nor drink until the man on the bier did so too. At last, when she still would not bend, the earl struck her across the face, and that insult was more than her heart could bear.

Enid cried out with such pain that Geraint woke from his swoon. He rose from the bier like a dead man returning to life, seized his sword, and struck the Earl of Limours so hard on the head that he split him in two over the table. At this, everyone fled the hall in terror, not only because of Geraint's rage, but because they thought a dead man had risen to kill their lord. Then Geraint looked at Enid

and understood two things at once: she had suffered greatly, and she had been right.

Geraint asked where the horses were, found his own, lifted Enid up behind him, and rode away before the earl's men could gather themselves. But soon they heard the sound of a force behind them, and Geraint placed Enid on the far side of the hedge so that she would be safer. A knight then came riding hard toward him with lowered spear, and Enid cried out to ask what honor there could be in striking a man who was as good as dead already. The knight checked at once, for he was Gwiffert Petit, the Little King, who had come to help Geraint after hearing he was in danger.

The Little King told Geraint that if he had followed wiser advice, much suffering would have been spared. Even so, he did not scold him long. Instead he led Geraint and Enid to the nearby house of a baron related to him, and there they were received with great care and kindness. Physicians were called, Geraint's armor was repaired, and he stayed there until his strength fully returned.

They remained there a long while, and when Geraint was once more well, the Little King suggested that they now go to his own court and rest in peace. But Geraint said he wished to ride one day farther before turning back. Enid, who had suffered so much, now traveled more gladly than she had for a long time, because Geraint's spirit had softened and the darkness between them had begun at last to lift. At a place where the road divided, they met a man who warned them that one road led to a hedge of mist and to enchanted games from which no man returned.

Geraint chose that very road. In the town beyond, he and the others were brought to the court of Earl Owain, who received them with honor. During the meal Geraint fell silent, thinking of the deadly game, and the earl guessed his meaning at once. He said that if Geraint wished, no man need go to the games again, but Geraint answered that nothing was dearer to him than to see them and face whatever lay inside.

So all the company rode with him to the high hedge, where many stakes stood and almost all bore the heads of men who had failed there before. Geraint went in alone through the mist, found a red tent in an orchard, and sat in a chair that

belonged to another man. Soon a proud knight came in anger and demanded satisfaction. They fought fiercely with lances, and Geraint threw him down and gained mercy from him.

Geraint then asked for only one thing: that the hedge of mist, the games, the magic, and the enchantment should end forever. The defeated knight agreed and told him to sound the horn hanging on the tree. When Geraint blew it, the mist vanished at once, all the hosts came together, and they were reconciled. After that Geraint turned homeward to his own land, and from then on he and Enid lived in honor, peace, and lasting fame. And this is the end of the tale of Geraint the Son of Erbin.

Kilhwch and Olwen

Part 1

Kilydd son of Prince Kelyddon wanted a wife, and the woman he married was Goleuddydd, daughter of Prince Anlawdd. The people prayed that they would have a child, and in time a son was born to them. During her pregnancy Goleuddydd lost her peace of mind and wandered far from home, but when the hour of birth came, her mind returned for a little while. She came to a mountain where a swineherd was keeping pigs, and there her son was born. Because the child was found near the pigs, he was named Kilhwch. He was noble by birth, and he was also cousin to Arthur.

Not long after this, Goleuddydd fell sick and knew that she would die. She called her husband to her and made him promise that he would not take another wife until a briar with two flowers grew on her grave. She also asked that her grave should be cared for every year so that nothing would grow there. Kilydd promised this, and after that she died. For many years he kept his word, and each day a servant was sent to see whether anything had grown on the grave. But at the end of the seventh year the promise was not kept with full care. One day Kilydd went there himself, and he saw the briar with two flowers.

Then he asked his advisers where he might find a new wife. One of them told him of a queen, the wife of King Doged, and Kilydd went after her by force. Doged was killed, his wife was taken away, and her land was conquered. After some time this new queen learned that Kilydd had a son hidden from her. She spoke with an old woman, then asked that Kilhwch should be brought to court. When he came, she told him that it was time for him to marry, and said that her own daughter was desired by many famous men. Kilhwch answered that he was not yet ready to marry.

Then the stepmother spoke words that changed his life. She said that it was his fate never to have a wife until he won Olwen, daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr. At once love for that unknown girl entered Kilhwch's heart, though he had never

seen her face. He became troubled and ashamed, and his father asked what had happened. When Kilhwch told him, Kilydd answered that Arthur was his cousin and could help him. So Kilhwch was sent to Arthur's court to have his hair cut in the royal way and to ask this great favor.

Kilhwch rode out in great beauty and splendor. His horse was fine and strong, his bridle and saddle were rich with gold, and in his hand he carried bright spears. Two swift greyhounds ran before him, and everything about him shone with noble wealth and youth. At last he came to Arthur's gate and called for the porter to open it. The porter, Glewlwyd, refused, saying that no man entered while the court was at feast unless he had a right to do so. He offered food, drink, and rest in the guest house instead. But Kilhwch would not accept that answer.

Kilhwch warned Glewlwyd that if the gate stayed shut, he would cry out so terribly that all the pregnant women in the court would lose their children and the others would never bear any. Glewlwyd then went inside and told Arthur that a very great man stood at the gate, greater in dignity than any he had seen in all his long life. Arthur ordered that the stranger should be welcomed at once. Kai objected and said the law of the court should not be broken for one man, but Arthur answered that honor grew through courtesy. Then the gate was opened, and Kilhwch rode straight in without getting down from his horse.

Arthur greeted him warmly and offered him a place of honor, music, and the rights of a prince while he stayed. Kilhwch answered that he had not come for feasting. He had come for a boon, and if Arthur gave it, he would praise him everywhere, but if not, he would carry Arthur's shame to the ends of the earth. Arthur then swore to grant whatever he asked, except only a few things that were most his own. First Kilhwch asked Arthur to bless and cut his hair. Arthur did so with a golden comb and silver scissors, and then asked who the young man was. Kilhwch named his father and mother, and Arthur said at once, "You are truly my cousin."

Then Kilhwch made his real request. He asked Arthur to help him win Olwen, daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr, and he called on Arthur's best men by name to help in that task. Arthur said he had never heard of the girl before, but he promised

to search for her. Messengers were sent through all his lands, yet after a year they came back with no news. Then Kilhwch said bitterly that all men had received their boons except him. Kai rose at once and said that they would not stop until Kilhwch either learned that the girl did not exist or else won her. So Arthur sent Kai, Bedwyr, Gwalchmai, Gwrhyr who knew all tongues, Menw who could cast magic, and others with Kilhwch on the quest.

They traveled a long way until they came to a vast plain and saw a great castle far ahead. Near it they found a mighty flock of sheep and a fierce herdsman named Custennin, who turned out to be Yspaddaden's own brother, driven low by his cruelty. Custennin warned them that no one who came seeking Olwen had ever returned alive. Still he gave them shelter. There they met his wife and learned another sorrowful thing: Yspaddaden had already killed twenty-three of their sons, and only one was left, hidden in a stone chest. The next day Olwen herself came secretly to them, and Kilhwch knew at once that she was the girl he loved. She told him to ask her father for her openly and to promise whatever he demanded, for only in that way could she be won.

Then Kilhwch and his companions followed her to the giant's castle. They killed the guards and dogs in silence and came into the hall before Yspaddaden Penkawr. The giant had such heavy eyebrows that his servants had to lift them with forks so that he could see. When they asked for Olwen for Kilhwch, he first put them off until the next day, then the next, and then the next again. Each time he threw one of his poisoned spears at them as they rose to leave, and each time one of Arthur's men caught the spear and hurled it back, wounding him more and more badly. So the quest had truly begun, and Kilhwch now stood face to face with the terrible father whose daughter he meant to win.

Part 2

On the next three days Kilhwch and Arthur's men came back again and again to Yspaddaden's hall. Each day they asked for Olwen, and each day the giant delayed his answer and reached for another poisoned spear. Bedwyr caught the

first and threw it back through his knee. Menw caught the second and drove it through his chest. On the third day Kilhwch himself caught the last spear and struck Yspaddaden through the eye, so that the giant was left half blind and full of pain.

At last Yspaddaden stopped pretending that he only needed more time. He looked straight at Kilhwch and said that the girl could be his only if every condition he named was met. Kilhwch gave his word before all the hall that he would do what was just and would attempt every task. Then the giant began to speak, and his demands seemed to have no end.

First he pointed to a great wild hill and said that it must be torn up, burned, ploughed, sown, and brought to harvest all in a single day, so that food and drink for the wedding feast could be made from it. Then he added that no common farmer could do that work. Only Amaethon son of Don could plough such land, and only Govannon son of Don could prepare the iron needed for the labor. After that he demanded the two dun oxen of Gwlwlyd, yoked together for the plough. Each time Kilhwch answered steadily that the thing would be done, even when Yspaddaden said it could not be.

The giant went on naming marvel after marvel. He wanted rare honey, special vessels, a cauldron, and many other things that lay far away or belonged to dangerous men. He asked also for tools and treasures that could not be found by ordinary strength. Among the hardest of all were the comb, scissors, and razor that had to be taken from the head of the boar Twrch Trwyth, and these things would be needed at the very end when Yspaddaden's beard was to be cut. It was clear that the giant was not setting a bride-price. He was trying to make the marriage impossible.

Still he had not finished. To hunt Twrch Trwyth, he said, they must first find Mabon son of Modron, because no man living was born with greater skill for hunting. But Mabon had been taken from his mother when he was only three nights old, and no one knew where he was. So the task spread from one impossibility into another, and every answer opened the door to a new and harder demand.

Arthur did not turn away. He gathered his men and sent them through many lands to seek knowledge. At last they began to ask the oldest living creatures in the world, each one older than the last. They went from the Blackbird of Cilgwri to the Stag of Rhedynfre, from the stag to the Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd, from the owl to the Eagle of Gwernabwy, and from the eagle to the Salmon of Llyn Llyw. Only the salmon knew anything certain, and he carried Kai and Bedwyr to the place where Mabon was held in a stone prison.

There, from inside the wall, they heard Mabon speak, and they knew they had found the man they sought. Arthur and his company then attacked the strong place and broke him free. Once he was released, Mabon joined the quest gladly, because he was noble and eager for action after so long an imprisonment. This was a great step, because now they had the hunter whom even Yspaddaden had named as necessary.

Other marvels were gained in other ways, often by wit more than by force. Arthur's men won the nine bushels of flax-seed that had been demanded, and even the smallest missing seed was brought in before night by a lame ant. Kai and Bedwyr also found Dillus the Bearded, and from his beard they took the leash that alone could hold Drudwyn, the hunting dog needed for the greater chase still to come. These things were strange, difficult, and often cruel, but the work moved forward step by step.

Yet the gathering of marvels had a cost. When Arthur later mocked Kai in a short verse about Dillus's beard, Kai grew bitterly angry, and peace had to be made between them with difficulty. From that time on, Kai no longer helped Arthur as freely as before. Even in the middle of great labor, pride and anger could still wound the company from within.

So Kilhwch's quest widened across the whole world. It was no longer only the story of one young man seeking one bride. It had become a vast labor for Arthur and his companions, who now had to gather hunters, animals, tools, blood, seeds, leashes, and countless other wonders before the final hunt could even begin. And at the center of it all stood Twrch Trwyth, the great boar from whose head the last needed treasures still had to be taken.

Part 3

At last the quest reached its greatest labor, the hunt for Twrch Trwyth. This was no common boar but a terrible enchanted beast, and between his ears were the comb, the scissors, and the razor that Yspaddaden had demanded. Arthur's men learned that he and his savage companions would cross from Ireland and bring destruction wherever they went. Arthur therefore gathered ships, horses, hounds, and warriors, and prepared to meet the beast as soon as it touched the land of Wales.

Twrch Trwyth came ashore in Dyved, and Arthur followed him at once. Before Arthur could catch him, the boar had already killed cattle, destroyed whole places, and left death behind him. Then Arthur sent out hunters in different companies, with famous hounds and famous men among them, while he himself pressed on with the main host. The chase moved across hills, valleys, and river lands, and nowhere was the boar easy to stop.

At Cwm Kerwyn the boar made a stand, and there the cost of the hunt became clear. Twrch Trwyth killed four of Arthur's champions in that one place. Then he made another stand and killed still more, among them Gwydre, Arthur's own son. Even when wounded, the boar remained terrible, swift, and almost beyond human strength to face.

The next morning some of Arthur's men came up with him again, but the slaughter continued. More of the king's people died, including attendants of Glewlwyd and Arthur's chief builder. Later, at Pelumyawc and then at Aberteivi, the boar slew still more warriors. Everywhere the hunt passed, it left mourning behind it.

At one stage the hunters lost the boar altogether, and Arthur had to seek further help. Yet even then the trouble grew worse, because Grugyn and Llwydawg, who were with the boar, struck down the hunters until almost no one escaped. When Arthur set all his dogs on them, Twrch Trwyth came rushing back to help his own. Then the whole wild company broke away again and drove toward the mountains,

with Arthur still following.

One by one the younger boars were killed in the long pursuit. Some fell in one valley, some in another, until at last only the fiercest remained with Twrch Trwyth. But even these losses did not make the great boar easier to master. He still broke through men and dogs, and wherever he turned, noble warriors fell. By this time the hunt had become a war across the whole land.

Then Arthur resolved that the beast must not escape into Cornwall. He set tried men across the island and arranged the chase so that Twrch Trwyth would be forced toward the Severn. There, at the river, Mabon son of Modron, Goreu son of Custennin, Menw, and many other champions came up with him. Arthur himself closed in with the best warriors of Britain, and at last they seized the boar and plunged him into the water.

In the river the struggle was desperate. While the beast was held down, Mabon rode in and snatched away the razor. On the other side Kyledyr Wyllt took the scissors. But before anyone could seize the comb, Twrch Trwyth got his feet under him again, broke free, and reached the shore. Once he had regained the land, no man, horse, or hound could catch him.

Even winning those two treasures had nearly drowned the men who took them. Kacmwri was dragged down into the deep, and Osla too was almost lost in the water. Yet Arthur did not give up. He followed the boar onward into Cornwall, where the struggle for the last jewel, the comb, was harder than all that had come before. Still, after great labor and danger, the comb was won at last.

After that, Twrch Trwyth was driven out into the deep sea, and no one knew where he went from there. Arthur then turned aside to rest and recover, but the quest was not yet fully ended. When he asked whether any marvel still remained to be won, his men answered that one thing was still lacking: the blood of the witch Orddu, daughter of the witch Orwen, on the borders of Hell. So even after the great boar hunt, one final dark task still stood between Kilhwch and Olwen.

Part 4

After the great boar had been driven into the sea, Arthur went to rest in Cornwall and asked whether any task still remained undone. One of his men answered that there was still one last marvel to be won: the blood of the witch Orddu, daughter of the witch Orwen, on the borders of Hell. So Arthur turned northward at once and came to the cave where that dreadful witch lived.

At the cave Gwyn son of Nudd and Gwythyr son of Greidawl advised Arthur first to send other men in. So Kacmwri and his brother Hygwyd entered to fight the witch. But Orddu was too strong for them. She seized Hygwyd by the hair, threw him down, and drove both men out with blows and kicks.

Arthur was angry to see his companions so badly handled, and he wanted to go in himself. Yet the others said it was not fitting for a great king to wrestle with an old witch if other men could do the work. So Hiramreu and Hireidil were sent next. But they fared even worse than the first pair and had to be carried away helpless.

Then Arthur would wait no longer. He rushed to the mouth of the cave and struck at the witch with Carnwennan, his dagger. He cut her in two, and so at last she fell. Kaw of North Britain then took and kept the blood that had been demanded. With that, the final marvel was won.

Now Kilhwch was ready to return to Yspaddaden Penkawr. Goreu son of Custennin went with him, and so did all the men who wished the giant ill. They carried the marvels, the treasures, and all the hard-won things to the giant's court. There was no more delay now, because every demand had been answered.

Then Kaw of North Britain came forward to perform the last act. He shaved Yspaddaden's beard, and he did not stop at the beard alone. He shaved away beard, skin, and flesh from ear to ear down to the bone. Then Kilhwch asked, "Are you shaved now?" and the giant answered, "I am."

Kilhwch then asked the question for which he had crossed all those lands and endured all those dangers. He said, "Is your daughter mine now?" Yspaddaden answered that she was. But he added bitterly that Kilhwch should thank Arthur, not him, because by his own will he would never have given her, and with her he was losing his life.

At once Goreu son of Custennin seized Yspaddaden by the hair of his head. He dragged him to the keep and cut off his head. Then he placed the head on a stake high on the stronghold. After that, the castle and all its treasure were taken.

That same night Olwen became Kilhwch's bride. At last the young man who had first loved her before ever seeing her had won her in truth. She remained his wife for as long as she lived. Then Arthur's great host broke up, and each man went back to his own land.

So the quest that had seemed impossible was completed in the end. Kilhwch won Olwen, daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr, not by his own strength alone, but through Arthur and the labor, courage, and suffering of many companions. The tale closes in marriage, blood, and victory, with the giant dead and the hard-won bride safely gained at last. And this is the end of the tale of Kilhwch and Olwen.

The Dream of Rhonabwy

Part 1

Madawc son of Maredudd ruled Powys within its old borders. He had a brother named Iorwerth son of Maredudd, but Iorwerth did not share his brother's honor or power. This caused him deep anger and sorrow. He gathered his friends and foster-brothers and asked what he should do.

Some men advised him to seek wealth and standing elsewhere. Madawc himself offered him a high place in the household, with horses, arms, honor, and a life almost equal to his own. But Iorwerth would not accept this. Instead, he chose violence.

He rode into Loegria and made war there. He killed people, burned houses, and carried away prisoners. Then Madawc took counsel with the men of Powys, and they decided to send large search parties across the best parts of the plain to find him and stop his attacks.

One of the men in that search was called Rhonabwy. He was traveling with Kynwrig Vrychgoch and Cadwgan Vras when the three of them came to the house of Heilyn Goch son of Cadwgan son of Iddon. As they drew near, they saw an old black hall with smoke pouring from it. The place looked poor, dark, and unfriendly from the start.

When they went inside, they found the floor full of puddles, mud, and heaps of dirt left by cattle. Holly branches had been spread over the ground, but the animals had already eaten much of them. The little rooms off the hall were dusty and gloomy. On one side an old woman sat making a fire, and whenever she felt cold, she threw chaff onto it so that a terrible smoke filled the air.

On the other side of the hall lay a yellow calf-skin on the floor. It seemed to be thought a special honor to sit or lie on that hide. Rhonabwy and his companions asked the old woman where the people of the house were, but she only muttered and did not give a clear answer.

Soon the people of the house came in. A rough red-faced man entered carrying

a burden of firewood, and with him came a pale thin woman holding another bundle. They barely welcomed the travelers, but they did make up the fire and prepare food for them. The meal was poor and simple: barley bread, cheese, and milk mixed with water.

Then a great storm of wind and rain rose outside. It became almost impossible to leave the hall in safety, so the three men had to stay the night where they were. They were already tired from the journey, and they wished only for rest, but the place offered little comfort.

Their bed was miserable. It was made of a little coarse straw full of dust and vermin, with broken stalks and branches sticking through it. Over it lay an old ragged rug, a torn rough sheet, a badly stuffed pillow, and a worn cover. Rhonabwy's companions suffered for a long time and then fell into heavy sleep from weariness.

Rhonabwy could not sleep on such a bed. He thought he might suffer less on the yellow calf-skin that lay on the floor, so he left the couch and stretched himself there instead. At last, on that strange hide in that filthy hall, sleep came over him. And there his dream began.

Part 2

As soon as Rhonabwy fell asleep on the yellow calf-skin, he dreamed that he was riding with his companions across the plain of Argyngroeg toward Rhyd y Groes on the Severn. Then he heard a great sound behind him, louder than anything he had ever heard before. When he looked back, he saw a fierce young rider in shining yellow and green clothes on a strong chestnut horse, and the sight of him filled the travelers with fear.

The rider came after them with strange power. When his horse breathed out, the men were driven away from him, and when it breathed in, they were pulled back toward its chest. At last he caught them, but instead of harming them, he gave them mercy. When Rhonabwy asked his name, the man said that he was Iddawc son of Mynyo, though most people knew him by another name.

That other name was Iddawc Cordd Prydain. Rhonabwy asked why he was called that, and Iddawc answered that long ago he had carried messages between Arthur and Medrawd before the battle of Camlan. Arthur had sent him with gentle words to seek peace, but he had changed those words into angry ones because he wanted war. So he had helped bring about the ruin of Britain, and afterward he had done penance for seven years until he gained pardon.

While they were still riding together, another splendid horseman appeared, bright red and yellow, young, noble, and very beautiful. He asked Iddawc for a share in the company of the “little men” who rode with him, and Iddawc allowed it. Then the rider went on ahead. When Rhonabwy asked who he was, Iddawc said that this was Rhuvawn Pebyr son of Prince Deorthach.

Then they came near the ford of Rhyd y Groes, and for a mile on each side of the road they saw tents, lines of camp, and the noise of a mighty host. At the edge of the ford Rhonabwy saw Arthur himself sitting on a flat island below the crossing, with Bedwini the bishop on one side and Gwarthegydd son of Kaw on the other. A tall fair youth stood before him with a sheathed sword in his hand.

Iddawc and the others went before Arthur and greeted him. Arthur smiled sadly and said that it was a pity that men as small as Rhonabwy and his companions now held Britain, after the mighty men who had guarded it in the old days. Then Iddawc pointed out a ring with a stone on Arthur’s hand and said that because Rhonabwy had seen that stone, he would later be able to remember all that he saw in the dream. Without it, the vision would have been lost from his mind.

After this Rhonabwy looked across the field and saw two wonderfully ordered troops coming toward the ford. One troop was white with black borders, and the other was black with white points on the banners. Iddawc explained that the white host was the men of Norway under March son of Meirchion, and the black host was the men of Denmark under Edeyrn son of Nudd. Everything in this dream world seemed full of color, order, and meaning.

Soon there was loud movement in Arthur’s army, and Rhonabwy feared that the host might be fleeing. But Iddawc said no, for Arthur never fled. The noise came because Kai was riding through the army, and he was such a splendid

horseman that men ran from one side to the other just to see him pass. Then Kadwr, Earl of Cornwall, was called, and he brought Arthur's sword, a marvelous weapon with golden serpents on it that seemed to breathe out flames when it was drawn.

Next Arthur's servant Eirywych brought out a great golden chair and a rich carpet called Gwenn. The carpet had strange power: whoever sat upon it could see everyone else, but no one could see him. Arthur sat there, and Owain son of Urien stood before him. Then Arthur asked Owain whether he would play chess, and Owain agreed, so a silver board and golden pieces were brought to them.

While they were deeply engaged in the game, a page came from a white tent with a red top and a black serpent on it. He greeted Owain and said that Arthur's young men were troubling Owain's ravens. Owain asked Arthur to stop them, but Arthur only said, "Play your game." A second messenger soon came from another rich tent with the same complaint, and Arthur again answered in the same calm way. Then, as another great tent came into view, even stranger and more splendid than the rest, the dream moved toward an even deeper confusion of signs, messages, and hidden meaning.

Part 3

Arthur and Owain kept playing chess while the strange dream-world moved around them. Then a young man came from a rich white tent with a red top and a black image upon it. He told Owain that Arthur's men were attacking Owain's ravens and killing them. Owain asked Arthur to stop the fighting, but Arthur only answered, "Play your game."

Soon a second messenger came from another fine tent and brought the same complaint. Again Owain asked Arthur to command peace, and again Arthur told him only to go on with the game. Rhonabwy could not understand why Arthur, who was lord over all, seemed to care so little. Yet in the dream no one around him seemed surprised.

Then a third rider came, far more splendid and fierce than the others. His horse and armor shone with many colors, and the point of his spear was fresh with blood.

He came before Arthur in anger and said that Owain's ravens had killed his household and the sons of noble men of Britain. This time Arthur did act.

Arthur asked Owain to call off his ravens. Then, instead of giving a long command, he crushed the golden chessmen in his hand until they broke into dust. Owain at once ordered Gwres son of Rheged to lower his banner, and when the banner was lowered, peace returned. So in this dream even the game of chess seemed tied to the movement of war.

Rhonabwy then asked Iddawc who the first three men had been, the ones who came to Owain to say that Arthur's men were killing the ravens. Iddawc explained that they were loyal friends of Owain, men who truly grieved at his loss. Then Rhonabwy asked about the last three who had gone to Arthur, and Iddawc said that they too were among the best and bravest men, loyal this time to Arthur and grieving for the king's losses. So both sides in the quarrel had noble men speaking for them.

After that, four-and-twenty knights came from Osla Gyllellvawr to ask Arthur for a truce for a month and a fortnight. Arthur rose from his place and went to hold counsel with his chief men. Rhonabwy saw them gather around a tall man with auburn curling hair, and among them were many of the greatest names in Arthur's world. The dream now changed from battle and marvel into counsel and rule.

Rhonabwy asked who the auburn-haired man was, and Iddawc said that he was Rhun son of Maelgwn Gwynedd, a man who had the right to enter every council. Rhonabwy also noticed a very young man there and wondered why someone so young had been admitted among such great lords. Iddawc answered that this was Kadyriaith son of Saidi, and that no man in Britain was wiser in counsel. In the dream, wisdom and rank did not always belong to age alone.

Then bards came before Arthur and recited verses in his praise. No one understood those verses except Kadyriaith, so his wisdom was proved at once. After that there arrived four-and-twenty asses carrying gold and silver as tribute from the islands of Greece, each beast led by a tired and travel-worn man. Even in the middle of truce talks and dream-battle, gifts, poetry, and distant kingdoms

all appeared together before Arthur's court.

Kadyriaith then gave his counsel. He asked that Osla should receive the truce he wanted, and that the asses and all the gold and silver they carried should be given to the bards as payment for their poetry during the time of peace. Arthur accepted this advice. Iddawc then turned to Rhonabwy and asked whether it was not right that such a wise young man should be admitted to the councils of his lord.

At last Kai rose and cried out that whoever wished to follow Arthur should be with him that night in Cornwall, and whoever would not should stand against him even during the truce. A great tumult broke out at once, and the noise was so loud and sudden that Rhonabwy woke in fright. When he opened his eyes, he was still lying on the yellow calf-skin in the filthy hall, and he had slept for three days and three nights. And this is the end of the tale of The Dream of Rhonabwy.

Pwyll Prince of Dyved

Part 1

Pwyll was lord of the seven cantrevs of Dyved, and one time he was staying at Narberth, his chief palace. He decided to go hunting in Glyn Cuch, and so he set out from Narberth the night before and slept on the way. Early the next morning he rose, entered the wood, let loose his dogs, sounded the horn, and began the chase. As he followed the hounds, he lost sight of his companions and rode on alone.

While he listened for his own dogs, he heard the cry of another pack coming from the opposite side. Soon he reached a level glade in the wood and saw a stag running before those strange hounds. They caught it in the middle of the open ground and brought it down. Then Pwyll looked closely at the dogs and forgot even the stag for a moment, because they were more wonderful than any hounds he had ever seen. Their bodies were shining white, and their ears were bright red.

Pwyll did a foolish and proud thing. He drove off the white hounds with the red ears and set his own dogs upon the stag they had already killed. Just then a rider came toward him on a pale horse, wearing gray hunting clothes and a horn around his neck. The man spoke sharply and said that Pwyll had shown bad manners and had done him a great wrong.

Pwyll asked who he was, and the rider answered that he was Arawn, king of Annwvyn. He said that there was a man named Havgan who was always at war with him, and that Havgan would destroy him in time unless something changed. Then Arawn offered Pwyll a strange agreement. If Pwyll would take Arawn's shape for one year and one day, rule Annwvyn in his place, and fight Havgan at the end of that time, Arawn would take Pwyll's shape and rule Dyved for him in return.

Pwyll agreed to this at once. Arawn told him exactly what to do. He must go to Annwvyn in Arawn's form, rule kindly and well, and at the end of the year meet Havgan at the ford for single combat. Arawn also gave him one strict command

about the queen: though she would share his room every night, he must not touch her at all, because if he did, their friendship would be broken.

So they exchanged shapes, and Pwyll went to Annwvyn while Arawn went to Dyved. In Annwvyn no one guessed the truth. The court, the nobles, and even the queen believed that Pwyll was Arawn himself. Yet Pwyll ruled so well that everyone was pleased with him, and although the queen welcomed him each night, he kept his promise with complete faithfulness and never touched her once through the whole year.

The year passed in hunting, feasting, music, and talk with the companions of Annwvyn, until at last the night came that had been fixed for the meeting with Havgan. Men remembered that day in every part of the land, and Pwyll rode to the ford with the nobles of the kingdom. When he arrived, a knight declared that the battle was a matter between two kings alone, and that no other man should join in it. So the two rulers rode forward by themselves.

Pwyll, still in Arawn's shape, met Havgan in the middle of the ford and struck him at the first charge with such force that he broke shield and armor and threw him far from the saddle with a deadly wound. Havgan begged him to finish the killing, but Pwyll refused. He said that though he had wounded him, he would not strike a second blow. Then Havgan's men carried him away, and Arawn's side at once accepted Pwyll as lord over the whole kingdom.

By the next noon the two kingdoms of Annwvyn were in his power. Then Pwyll went to Glyn Cuch at the place and time agreed for the meeting. There Arawn was waiting for him, and both were glad to see the other again. They praised each other warmly, exchanged back their true shapes, and each returned to his own land.

When Pwyll came home to Dyved, he asked his nobles how the land had been ruled during the past year. They answered that never had he seemed wiser, kinder, more generous, or more just. Then Pwyll told them the whole truth and said they should thank the friend who had ruled in his form. After that the friendship between Pwyll and Arawn became firm forever, and because Pwyll had ruled Annwvyn so well and had won both kingdoms in one day by courage, he was no

longer called only Pwyll Prince of Dyved, but Pwyll Chief of Annwvyn.

Part 2

Some time after Pwyll returned from Annwvyn, he was again at Narberth with a great company around him. After the first meal he went to sit on the mound above the palace, the one where a man must either suffer a blow or see a wonder. While he sat there, a lady came riding toward him on a large white horse, dressed in shining gold. Her horse moved at a slow, even pace, yet no one who was sent after her could catch her.

At last Pwyll himself called out and asked the lady to stop for the sake of the man she loved best. Then she halted at once and said that she had come because of her love for him. Her name was Rhiannon, daughter of Heveydd Hen, and she said that men wanted to give her to another husband against her will. She asked Pwyll to meet her one year later at her father's palace, and he gladly promised that he would come.

When that year had passed, Pwyll went with a hundred knights to Heveydd's palace. He was received with joy, and everything was made ready for the marriage. But while the feast was going on, a tall noble young man came into the hall and asked Pwyll for a boon. Before hearing the request, Pwyll rashly promised to grant whatever was asked.

Then the young man said that the lady he loved best was to be Pwyll's bride that very night, and he asked for Rhiannon herself, along with the feast and the wedding preparations. That man was Gwawl son of Clud. Pwyll was ashamed and could not answer, because he had trapped himself with his own generous words. Then Rhiannon rebuked him for his foolish promise, but she also gave him a plan to undo the wrong.

Rhiannon told Pwyll to let Gwawl think that he had won. A year later there would be another feast, and Pwyll must come in poor ragged clothes with a magic bag in his hand. He was to ask only for a bagful of food, but the bag would never fill until a man of rank stepped into it and pressed the food down with both feet.

Then Pwyll was to turn the bag up over that man's head, tie it shut, blow a horn, and call in his hidden knights.

So Gwawl came to the later feast thinking that Rhiannon would now be his bride. In the middle of the joy, Pwyll entered alone in rough old clothes and asked for a small favor, just as Rhiannon had taught him. The servants tried again and again to fill the bag, but it stayed empty. Then Gwawl himself stepped into it to press the food down, and Pwyll quickly pulled the bag over him and tied him fast.

Pwyll's men rushed in at the sound of the horn, seized Gwawl's company, and struck the bag again and again, calling the game "Badger in the Bag." Gwawl begged for mercy, and in the end Pwyll spared him. Gwawl had to give rich gifts and swear never to take revenge. After that, Pwyll married Rhiannon at last, and the marriage was full of honor and joy.

The years passed well for them, but they had no child for a long time. At last, in the third year after the wedding, a son was born to them at Narberth. Six women were left to watch the child through the night. But they grew sleepy, and fearing punishment if the child should come to harm while they slept, they made a wicked plan.

There was a dog with young ones in the court, and the women killed some of the little animals. They smeared the blood on Rhiannon's face and hands and laid the bones near her. Then, when she woke and asked for her child, they claimed that she herself had killed and eaten him in the night. Rhiannon begged them not to accuse her falsely, but they would not change their story.

The tale spread through the land, and the nobles asked Pwyll to put his wife away. But Pwyll refused to send her from him. Since there was no way to prove the truth, Rhiannon accepted a cruel penance instead of fighting with the women. She had to sit every day by the horse-block outside the gate at Narberth, tell her shameful story to strangers, and offer to carry them on her back into the palace if they wished. And so sorrow entered her life, even after all her courage and wisdom.

Part 3

While Rhiannon sat at the horse-block and suffered her cruel shame day after day, another story was unfolding far from Narberth. There was a lord named Teirnyon Twryf Vliant, and no man in his land was more honorable or more generous than he. Yet one strange sorrow troubled his house: every year, when his best mare foaled on the night of May Eve, the foal disappeared before morning, and no one could discover what took it.

At last Teirnyon decided to keep watch himself. He armed himself and sat awake in the hall beside the mare. Near midnight the foal was born, strong and beautiful, and while Teirnyon watched, he heard a loud noise outside and saw a huge claw come in through the window, reaching toward the colt.

Teirnyon struck at the claw with his sword and cut off the arm at the elbow. Then he rushed out into the night after the creature, but the darkness was too deep, and he could not follow it far. When he came back to the door, he found not only the foal safe, but also a small boy lying there wrapped in fine silk.

Teirnyon carried the child inside and gave him to his wife to be cared for. They had no children of their own, and they loved the boy at once. They raised him tenderly in their house, and he grew faster than any child had ever grown before. The foal too was reared there, and as the years passed, the horse became one of the finest in all the land.

When the boy was old enough to walk, talk, and ride, Teirnyon began to notice something striking in his face and form. The child looked exactly like Pwyll. Then news came to Teirnyon of the false shame laid on Rhiannon and of the child she had supposedly destroyed. At once he understood that the boy in his house must be the lost son of Pwyll and Rhiannon.

Teirnyon was troubled that he had kept the child so long without knowing the truth, though he had done no wrong. He decided to return the boy at once. So he and his wife set out for Narberth with the child and with the horse that had grown up beside him. As they came near the palace, they saw Rhiannon still sitting by the horse-block under her penance.

Rhiannon offered, as she always had to strangers, to carry them into the court on her back. But Teirnyon refused with honor, and the boy too refused, saying that

he would not allow such a thing. Then they entered the hall, where Pwyll had just come back from the far borders of Dyved, and there was great joy at Teirnyon's arrival. Pwyll welcomed him warmly and placed him between himself and Rhiannon at the feast.

After the meal, Teirnyon told the whole story in order. He spoke of the mare, the monstrous claw, the child found at the door, and the years in which he and his wife had lovingly reared him. Then he said plainly to Rhiannon, "Lady, here is your son, and great wrong was done to you by those who laid that lie upon you." Everyone in the hall looked at the boy and agreed at once that he truly was the son of Pwyll.

Rhiannon said that if this were true, then at last her long sorrow had ended. The boy had first been called Gwri Wallt Euryn in Teirnyon's house, but another name was now chosen for him. Because Rhiannon had spoken of the end of her trouble when she received him again, he was named Pryderi. Pwyll and all the nobles were pleased with that name, and so it remained.

Pwyll thanked Teirnyon with all his heart and promised that as long as he lived, Teirnyon and his house would never lack his support. The boy was then given to Pendaran Dyved to be brought up with the greatest care, and Teirnyon returned home in joy and honor. Pryderi grew to be the fairest and most skillful youth in the kingdom, and after Pwyll's death he ruled Dyved well and enlarged his lands besides. And this is the end of the tale of Pwyll Prince of Dyved.

Branwen the Daughter of Llyr

Part 1

Bendigeid Vran son of Llyr was king of the Island of the Mighty, and one afternoon he sat on the rock at Harlech looking out over the sea. With him were his brother Manawyddan and his two half-brothers, Nisien and Efnysien. Nisien was gentle and always made peace when anger rose among his kin. Efnysien was the opposite, for he loved to stir up trouble even where all was calm.

As they sat there, they saw thirteen ships coming swiftly from the south of Ireland. The ships were beautiful, with fine flags, and one of them showed a shield held up in sign of peace. Men went down from the court to ask their purpose, and they learned that Matholwch, king of Ireland, had come as a suitor. He wished to marry Branwen daughter of Llyr, so that Ireland and Britain might be joined in friendship and strength.

Bendigeid Vran welcomed the proposal and invited Matholwch to land. Counsel was taken, and Branwen was given to him in marriage. She was one of the three chief ladies of the island and the fairest woman in the world. The wedding feast was then set to take place at Aberffraw, and both hosts went there in great honor and joy.

At Aberffraw the feast was held under tents, because no house in the world was large enough to hold Bendigeid Vran. Branwen sat beside Matholwch, and that night she became his bride. Everything seemed to have gone well. The two kings spoke together happily, and peace appeared to stand firm between the islands.

But on the next day Efnysien came by chance to the place where Matholwch's horses were being made ready. When he learned that his sister had been given in marriage without his knowledge or consent, he was filled with fury. He rushed among the horses and cruelly cut off their lips, ears, tails, and eyelids, ruining them all. By that savage act he turned a marriage feast into the beginning of hatred.

When Matholwch heard what had been done, he was deeply shamed. He said

that it was strange indeed to be honored with so noble a bride and then insulted in the same court. In bitter anger he prepared to leave at once and go back to his ships. Messengers from Bendigeid Vran followed him and asked why he was departing without leave.

Matholwch answered that no man had ever been treated worse, and that such an insult could not simply be forgotten. Then Bendigeid Vran sent another embassy after him with a richer offer. Matholwch would receive a good horse for every horse that had been ruined, and besides that a silver staff as tall as himself and a plate of gold as broad as his face. The messengers also explained clearly that the deed had been done against Bendigeid Vran's will, though he could not easily kill Efnysien because he was his half-brother.

Matholwch took counsel with his men and decided to accept the payment. So he returned in peace, and the feast began again. Yet Bendigeid Vran noticed that he was still not cheerful. Thinking the payment had not been enough, he asked what more could be done to heal the wrong completely.

Matholwch's advisers then gave another answer. Since no house had ever before been large enough to contain Bendigeid Vran, they said a special house should be built for him. There, with both hosts inside, Matholwch would honor him properly and make peace. Bendigeid Vran accepted this plan, and Branwen too supported it, because she wished to keep the land from falling into war.

So peace was made for the moment, and the great house was prepared. Outwardly all seemed well again between Ireland and the Island of the Mighty. Yet the tale has already shown what kind of man Efnysien was, and how quickly joy could turn toward ruin. Thus the marriage of Branwen began in splendor, but beneath that splendor anger had already been planted.

Part 2

After peace had been made, the feast went on in joy, and when it ended, Matholwch sailed back to Ireland with Branwen beside him. There was great happiness in Ireland at their coming. Branwen was generous to everyone who

visited her, whether man or woman of rank, and she gave rich gifts freely, so that people spoke well of her everywhere. For a year she lived there in honor, friendship, and peace.

During that time Branwen became pregnant, and in due course she gave birth to a son. The child was named Gwern son of Matholwch. He was sent to be fostered among some of the best men in Ireland, as was the custom. For a while it seemed that Branwen's marriage had truly succeeded and that the trouble at the wedding feast had been left behind.

But in the second year the old insult returned with force. The foster-brothers of Matholwch and the men closest to him began to reproach him openly for the shame done to his horses in Britain and for the payment he had accepted in return. They said he had suffered disgrace and had not avenged it. Day by day they troubled him more, until he could no longer live in peace among them.

At last their revenge fell not on Bendigeid Vran, but on Branwen. She was taken out of the chamber she had shared with Matholwch and was made to work in the kitchen like a servant. Every day, after the butcher had cut up the meat, he came to her and struck her on the ear. In this way she was shamed and hurt again and again, though she had done no wrong.

The Irish then made the wrong even harder to escape. They urged Matholwch to forbid all ships, ferry-boats, and coracles from sailing between Ireland and Britain. They also ordered that any men coming from Britain should be seized and kept there, so that no report of Branwen's suffering might ever reach her brother. Matholwch allowed this, and so she was cut off from help for no less than three years.

Yet Branwen did not give way to despair. She found a starling and raised it secretly in the cover of a kneading trough, hiding it where no one would suspect. She taught the bird to speak and taught it the name and nature of her brother. Then she wrote a letter telling of her misery and the dishonor done to her, tied it beneath the bird's wing, and sent it out toward Britain.

The starling flew across the sea and at last found Bendigeid Vran at Caer Seiont in Arvon, where he was in counsel. The bird came down upon his shoulder and

ruffled its feathers until the hidden letter could be seen. Those around him understood at once that this was no wild bird, but one that had been raised by human hands. So Bendigeid Vran took the letter and read it for himself.

When he learned how Branwen had been treated, he grieved deeply and was filled with anger. He did not delay. At once he sent messengers throughout the island to gather the strength of Britain together. Then he himself told the assembled men of his sister's suffering, and they took counsel about how that insult should be answered.

The decision was made to go to Ireland in force and seek revenge for the blow done to Branwen. Yet Britain could not be left without rulers, so seven men were appointed to remain behind as princes in the island. Caradawc son of Bran was made chief among them, with seven knights beside him. Thus the land was guarded at home while the great host prepared to cross the sea.

So the sorrow of one woman began to draw whole kingdoms into war. Branwen had gone to Ireland in honor as a queen, but now she had become the cause of a vast and terrible rising of men. Her message had reached her brother at last, and Bendigeid Vran was already moving toward Ireland with vengeance in his heart. The full ruin, however, had not yet begun.

Part 3

Bendigeid Vran and the great host of Britain crossed the sea and came to Ireland. The Irish saw ships on the water, and beyond them they saw what looked like a forest and a mountain. Branwen explained that the forest was the masts of the ships, and the mountain was her brother himself, for no ship could carry him. Then the Irish grew afraid and pulled back across the river, breaking the bridge behind them.

When Bendigeid Vran reached the river, his men said that no ship could pass it and no bridge remained. Then he said that a chief must become a bridge when needed. So he lay down across the water, hurdles were laid over him, and the whole host crossed on his back. After that the Irish sent messengers and tried to

make peace.

Matholwch offered the kingdom of Ireland to Gwern, his young son by Branwen, and said that he himself would live wherever Bendigeid Vran wished. At first Bendigeid Vran would not agree, but a second message followed. The Irish promised to build a house large enough for Bendigeid Vran and all his host, and there they would honor Gwern and confirm the peace. So the men of Britain entered the great house, though danger was still hidden there.

Inside the house Efnysien noticed sacks hanging on the pillars and asked what was in them. The Irish said that each held meal. But Efnysien felt one of the sacks and found a man hidden inside. Then he crushed that man's head, and he did the same to the others, until nearly all the hidden warriors were dead. Even there, just before open war began, Efnysien was both destroyer and protector.

Then the feast began, and for a short time peace seemed real. The kings sat together, and the kingdom was given to little Gwern. The child moved lovingly from Bendigeid Vran to Manawyddan and to the others who welcomed him. But when Efnysien asked why his sister's son was not brought to him too, no one guessed what was in his heart.

As soon as the boy came near, Efnysien seized him by the feet and threw him headfirst into the fire. Branwen tried to leap into the flames after her son, but Bendigeid Vran held her back with one arm while he took up his shield with the other. In a moment the whole house burst into battle, and peace was gone forever. Thus Gwern's death lit the war at last.

The Irish then used the great cauldron of restoration. They threw their dead men into it, and the next day those men came out alive and ready to fight again, though they could no longer speak. The men of the Island of the Mighty were being destroyed while the Irish kept rising again. Then Efnysien, seeing the ruin he had helped cause, made one last terrible choice.

He hid himself among the Irish dead and let himself be thrown into the cauldron. Once inside, he stretched himself with all his strength until the cauldron burst into pieces and his own heart broke too. Because of that act, the Irish lost their greatest advantage, and the men of Britain gained some success. But the

victory was no true victory, because almost everyone on both sides had been destroyed.

Only seven men of Britain escaped alive, and Bendigeid Vran himself had been wounded in the foot by a poisoned spear. He ordered the survivors to cut off his head and carry it with them to the White Mount in London, where it was to be buried facing France. He told them that on the road they would spend seven years at Harlech listening to the birds of Rhiannon, and after that eighty years at Gwales, unless they opened the forbidden door that looked toward Cornwall. Branwen went with them from Ireland, but when they reached Aber Alaw, she looked toward both islands, cried that two lands had been destroyed because of her, and died of a broken heart.

The seven men then went on to Harlech, where the birds of Rhiannon sang to them for seven years, and after that to Gwales, where joy held them for eighty years until the forbidden door was opened. Then all sorrow came back to them, and they carried Bendigeid Vran's head to London and buried it in the White Mount. In Ireland only five pregnant women had survived in a cave, and from them the land was peopled again and divided into the five parts still remembered there. And this is the end of the tale of Branwen the Daughter of Llyr.

Manawyddan the Son of Llyr

Part 1

After the seven survivors from Ireland had buried the head of Bendigeid Vran in the White Mount in London, Manawyddan looked over the city and gave a deep sigh. He said sadly that, among all who stood there, he alone had no true home to go to that night. His brother was dead, the old greatness of their house was broken, and he could not bear the thought of living under another ruler in the place where Bendigeid Vran had once stood above all men.

Pryderi, son of Pwyll and Rhiannon, answered him with kindness. He said that seven cantrevs still remained to him in Dyved, and that Rhiannon his mother dwelt there in honor. He offered Manawyddan both the land and Rhiannon's hand, saying that no fairer or richer land could be found. Manawyddan accepted this gladly, and so the sorrow of Bran's death led to a new joining of families.

Then they set out together toward Dyved. With them went Pryderi's wife Kicva, daughter of Gwynn Gloyw, and the four of them came at last to Narberth. There Manawyddan married Rhiannon, and a feast was held. The next day another feast was given by Pryderi and Kicva, and after that Manawyddan asked the nobles of the land to let him see all the seven cantrevs that had now become his home.

So the company rode through Dyved and visited every part of it. They hunted, feasted, and looked with pleasure on the beauty of the country. Everywhere the land seemed rich, peaceful, and full of life. No lord could have wished for a better beginning in a new home.

At last they returned to Narberth, and one evening they sat together on the Gorsedd Arberth. As they talked there, a great peal of thunder sounded over their heads, followed by a heavy fall of mist. When the mist cleared, they looked around and saw that the whole country had changed. The land was empty.

No man, no beast, no house, no smoke, no fire, and no dwelling could be seen anywhere in all the seven cantrevs. The noble courts had vanished, the halls were gone, and even the cattle and sheep had disappeared. Only the four of them

remained at Narberth, standing in the silence of a land that had been stripped bare in a single moment. Yet the houses and food already within the palace still remained, and so they lived there for a time on what had been left behind.

They stayed in Narberth together and made the best life they could in the empty land. During that first year they hunted with their dogs and ate the food they were able to find. No other people came to them, and no answer to the mystery appeared. Manawyddan watched carefully and thought much, but he could not yet discover who had cast such a spell over Dyved.

One morning Pryderi and Manawyddan rose to hunt, and their dogs ran ahead toward a small bush. But when the dogs came near it, they sprang back in fear, with their hair standing up. Then a white boar rose from the bush. The men set the dogs after it, and the boar kept just far enough ahead to draw them on.

They followed it until they came to a great new castle, tall and beautiful, standing in a place where no building had ever stood before. The boar ran into the castle, and the dogs went in after it. Manawyddan and Pryderi climbed up on the mound and listened for the noise of the hounds, but they heard nothing at all. Then Pryderi said he would go inside to get news of the dogs.

Manawyddan warned him not to enter, saying that the castle was surely part of the enchantment laid on the land. But Pryderi would not give up his dogs and went in despite the warning. Inside he found no boar, no dogs, and no living thing, but only a fountain with marble around it and a golden bowl resting on a slab. The beauty of the bowl drew him forward, and when he touched it, his hands stuck fast to it and his feet to the stone, so that he could neither move nor speak.

Manawyddan waited until evening, but when Pryderi did not return, he went back to the palace and told Rhiannon all that had happened. She cried out that he had lost a good companion and at once set off for the castle herself. There she found Pryderi fixed to the bowl, and when she laid hold of it too, she was caught in the same way. Then thunder came, mist fell, and the castle vanished with Pryderi and Rhiannon inside it. So Manawyddan and Kicva were left alone in the empty land, with the mystery of Dyved now darker than before.

Part 2

When Kicva saw that Pryderi and Rhiannon were gone and that she was alone with Manawyddan in the empty palace, she was overcome with grief. Manawyddan spoke to her gently and told her not to fear him. He said that he would keep faith with Pryderi and with her, and that while Heaven left them in that sorrow, she would find no truer friend than he. His words gave her some courage, and little by little she grew calmer.

Then Manawyddan said that they could not stay there with no dogs, no people, and no way to live. It would be easier, he said, to go into Lloegyr and earn their support by skill of hand. Kicva agreed, though she was still heavy with sorrow. So the two of them left Dyved and went into England to seek some quiet town where no one would know them.

On the road Kicva asked what craft he meant to follow, because it should be one fitting for a noble man. Manawyddan answered that he would make shoes. Kicva said again that such work did not seem worthy of him, but he held to his decision. In the town where they settled, he bought the finest leather, found a goldsmith to gild the clasps, and began to make shoes of such beauty and strength that no one in the place wanted any others.

For a whole year they lived there well enough. Manawyddan shaped the work, and it was so fine that the other shoemakers could not match it. But when the cordwainers saw that their trade was failing and that buyers went only to him, they became envious and angry. At last they joined together and agreed to kill him.

Manawyddan received warning of their plan. Kicva asked why they should bear such treatment from common men, but Manawyddan would not answer violence with violence. He said they would not stay in Lloegyr any longer, so the two of them returned to Dyved. He took a burden of wheat with him, thinking that perhaps he could now live quietly by his own labor in the land he loved.

Back at Narberth he was happier than he had been for a long time, for he saw again the woods where he had hunted with Pryderi and Rhiannon. He fished, hunted deer, and also prepared three small fields for wheat. The grain grew

wonderfully well, and no man had ever seen finer crops than those three crofts. After so much loss and wandering, it seemed at last that the land might sustain them again.

But when the first field became ripe, Manawyddan went out at dawn to reap it and found only bare straw. Every ear had been cut away and carried off in the night. He was astonished, yet he still hoped the loss might be chance or trick. Then the same thing happened to the second field, and now he knew that some hidden enemy was finishing the ruin that had already fallen on Dyved.

The third field ripened too, and Manawyddan swore that this time he would watch and learn the truth. So he armed himself and kept guard through the night while Kicva remained at the palace. At midnight there rose a great noise, and suddenly he saw an enormous host of mice pouring into the field. Each mouse climbed a stalk, bent it down, cut off one ear of wheat, and carried it away, leaving the stalk behind.

Manawyddan rushed at them in anger, but the mice were too swift for him. They scattered from his reach like birds rising into the air. Yet one mouse was slower than the rest, heavy and sluggish, and though it still ran quickly, he was able at last to catch it. He put it into his glove, tied the glove shut with a string, and carried it back with him.

When he came to the hall, he hung the glove from a peg and told Kicva that he had brought home the thief that had robbed him. She was astonished when he showed her that the thief was only a mouse and urged him not to shame himself by harming so small a creature. But Manawyddan answered that if he could have caught them all, he would have hanged them all, and that this one at least would die. Thus he made up his mind to take the mouse to the Gorsedd of Narberth and hang it there before the day was done.

Part 3

The next day Manawyddan took the mouse to the Gorsedd of Narberth. He set up two forks in the highest place and made a gallows there, still fully determined

to hang the little thief. Kieva had warned him that such an act would look strange in a man of his rank, but he would not change his mind. To him the mouse was not small at all, because it had come as part of the ruin of his land.

While he was preparing the gallows, he saw a poor scholar coming toward him in old torn clothes. This itself was a wonder, because in that place he had seen no one for seven years except the few companions who had once lived there with him. The scholar greeted him and asked what he was doing. Manawyddan answered plainly that he was hanging a thief he had caught robbing him.

The scholar looked more closely and saw that the thief was only a mouse. He said that rather than see such a thing done, he would gladly buy the creature's freedom. But Manawyddan refused at once. The scholar offered three pounds, yet Manawyddan would not take them and said the mouse would be hanged as it deserved. Then the scholar went on his way.

After that, as Manawyddan was putting the noose around the mouse's neck, a priest came riding up on a fine horse. He asked the same question and received the same answer. The priest too tried to ransom the mouse, first with three pounds, but Manawyddan again refused. The priest could not move him and at last rode away.

Then a bishop came with a whole train of servants, baggage, and horses. He too begged Manawyddan not to shame himself by hanging such a creature. His offers grew larger and larger. First he offered money, then much more money, and at last all the horses and baggage in the plain. Still Manawyddan would not let the mouse go.

At last the bishop said that Manawyddan should name his own price. Then Manawyddan spoke the words he had been waiting to speak. He demanded first that Pryderi and Rhiannon should be freed. The bishop agreed. Manawyddan then demanded that the enchantment and illusion should be lifted from the seven cantreys of Dyved. The bishop agreed to that as well, yet even then Manawyddan still refused to release the mouse.

He now said that he must know who the mouse truly was. Then the bishop confessed everything. The mouse, he said, was his own wife. He himself was

Llwyd son of Kilcoed, and it was he who had cast the spell over Dyved. He had done it out of friendship for Gwawl son of Clud, to avenge the old trick played on Gwawl by Pwyll in the game called “Badger in the Bag.”

Llwyd then explained how the corn had been stolen. On the first night he had turned his own household into mice and sent them to destroy the first field. On the second night they had destroyed the second. On the third night his wife and the ladies of his court had begged to go too, and he had transformed them as well. Because his wife was pregnant, she was slower than the others, and so Manawyddan had been able to catch her.

Even after hearing all this, Manawyddan was still careful. He said that Dyved must not only be freed now, but must also remain free forever, with no new spell laid upon it again. Llwyd agreed to that final condition. Then Manawyddan at last released the mouse. At once Pryderi and Rhiannon were restored, the land became peopled again, and all the houses, courts, cattle, and life of Dyved returned as before.

After that Pryderi and Rhiannon ruled their own lands in peace, and Manawyddan and Kicva also lived there in honor. The friendship among them was renewed, and no further enchantment troubled the seven cantreys. Thus the cleverness and patience of Manawyddan succeeded where force alone would have failed. And this is the end of the tale of Manawyddan the Son of Llyr.

Math the Son of Mathonwy

Part 1

Math son of Mathonwy was lord of Gwynedd, while Pryderi son of Pwyll ruled the rich lands of the South. Math had a strange condition on his life: unless war called him away, he could not live unless his feet rested in the lap of a maiden. The maiden who served him in this way was Goewin daughter of Pebin, and she was known as the fairest young woman in that land. Because Math had to remain so often at Caer Dathyl, much of the work of riding through the country fell to his nephews and their households.

One of those nephews was Gilvaethwy son of Don, and he fell deeply in love with Goewin. His love was not peaceful or honorable. It consumed him so completely that his face, his strength, and even his whole manner changed. His brother Gwydion saw what was happening and pressed him until Gilvaethwy's desire was understood.

Gwydion then said that sighing would not help and that he himself would make a great disturbance in the kingdom if that was what was needed. He went with Gilvaethwy to Math and spoke of a new wonder in the South: animals called pigs, strange creatures whose flesh was said to be better than ox meat. These pigs, he said, belonged to Pryderi and had come from Annwryn. Gwydion offered to go in disguise as a bard and bring them back.

So Gwydion, Gilvaethwy, and ten others went south in the dress of bards and were welcomed by Pryderi. Gwydion charmed the court with his storytelling and gained Pryderi's trust. Then he asked directly for the pigs. Pryderi said he could not give them away because of an agreement tied to the land, but Gwydion urged him to wait until the next day and see what exchange might be offered.

That night Gwydion used magic. He made twelve splendid horses appear, along with twelve black greyhounds with rich collars and leashes, and twelve shining shields. Everything looked wonderfully real and richly made, but the shields were formed from fungus and the whole gift was no true treasure. Pryderi

and his men accepted the bargain, and Gwydion left quickly with the pigs before the false gift could be tested.

When the truth of the trick became clear, Pryderi rose in anger and followed after them. War broke out between the North and the South. During the campaign, while Math was away with his host, Gwydion and Gilvaethwy returned secretly to Caer Dathyl. There Gilvaethwy took Math's bed, drove the other women from the room, and forced Goewin to remain unwillingly with him.

The fighting was heavy and bloody. At last, to save their people from further slaughter, it was agreed that Pryderi and Gwydion would meet each other in single combat. They came forward and fought, and Pryderi was slain through Gwydion's strength, fierceness, and magic. Then the men of the South went home in sorrow, and the men of Gwynedd returned in triumph.

When Math came back, he wished at once to go to his chamber and put his feet, as always, into Goewin's lap. But Goewin rose before him and said that his feet should now seek another place. Math understood at once that some deep wrong had been done. He asked who had dishonored her, and she told him the truth: Gilvaethwy had forced her while the war was on and while Math was away from home.

Math answered that no payment of cattle or wealth could repair such a wrong to a woman of her rank. The only honorable remedy he could give her was to take her as his own wife at once, and so he did. In that way Goewin was raised from her shame, though the evil done to her could never truly be undone. Then Math turned from care for her to judgment on the men who had caused all this ruin.

He placed the blame first where it belonged, on Gilvaethwy, but he also condemned Gwydion, who had planned the deceit, stolen the pigs, and made the war that gave his brother the chance for that crime. Math then began a terrible punishment upon them, changing them from men into wild beasts and driving them into a life of shame under his power. So the tale, which had begun with desire and trickery, now turned fully toward judgment.

Part 2

Math did not kill Gwydion and Gilvaethwy at once. Instead he chose a punishment full of shame. First he struck them with his magic wand and turned them into a stag and a hind, and drove them into the wild. At the end of the year he called them back, and the hind had borne a fawn. Math changed the fawn into a human boy and named him Hyddwn. Then he turned the two brothers into a boar and a sow for the second year.

At the end of that second year he called them back again, and this time the sow had borne a young pig. Math took that young one into human form as well and named him Hychdwn. Then he changed the two guilty brothers once more, this time into a wolf and a she-wolf, and drove them away for a third year. When they returned again, the she-wolf had borne a cub, and Math made that one human too and named him Bleiddwn. Only after all this did he restore Gwydion and Gilvaethwy to their own shapes and let them return to court.

By then Math still had the old problem that had always ruled his life. He needed a maiden in whose lap he could rest his feet whenever war did not keep him away. Gwydion therefore suggested a new maiden, his sister Arianrhod daughter of Don, saying that she seemed fit in rank and beauty for such a place. Math agreed and sent for her to come before him.

But before taking her into that office, Math wished to test whether she was truly a maiden. So he handed Gwydion his magic wand and told him to strike her with it. As soon as Gwydion did so, two children came from her. One was a strong fair boy, and Math at once said that he would have that child baptized and that his name should be Dylan.

As soon as Dylan was baptized, he ran to the sea and took on its nature at once. He swam through the waves as well as the best fish in the water, and under him no wave ever broke. For that reason he was called Dylan son of the Wave. His fate was strange from the start, and the story says that he later met death from a blow given by his uncle Govannon.

The second child was harder to understand. Before anyone fully saw what had happened, Gwydion wrapped something up and hid it in a chest at the foot of his

bed. Some time later he heard a cry from that chest, opened it, and found there a baby boy stretching out his arms from the folds of the cloth. Gwydion took the child away at once and secretly placed him with a woman who could nurse him.

The boy grew with unnatural speed. At the end of one year he was as large as a child of two, and by the second year he was already strong enough to come to court by himself. Gwydion watched him closely and loved him more than anyone else. When the boy reached four years of age, he was as large and able as an eight-year-old child.

Then Gwydion took the boy with him to the castle of Arianrhod. When she saw them, she asked who the child was, and Gwydion answered plainly that he was her son. Arianrhod cried out in anger and shame, accusing Gwydion of holding this dishonor over her for years. When Gwydion said the boy had not yet been given a name, she laid a curse upon him at once: he would never have a name unless she herself gave it.

Gwydion left in anger, but he did not forget the insult. In time he and the boy returned again to Arianrhod in disguise, and through Gwydion's skill the boy showed such quickness of hand that Arianrhod cried out the words that became his name, calling him Llew of the Sure Hand. Yet her anger had not ended. She then laid another curse on him, saying that he would never bear arms unless she herself armed him.

So the child who had come hidden from the chest now had a name, but his future was still bound by his mother's bitterness. He had become Llew, yet he had no arms, no clear standing, and no peace from Arianrhod's anger. Gwydion saw that the struggle was not over and that he would have to use still more skill and cunning if the boy was to receive what should have been his by right. Thus the tale moved from hidden birth into open conflict within the family itself.

Part 3

Gwydion would not let Arianrhod's curse stand. The next day he took the boy with him to the seashore between Caer Dathyl and Aber Menai. There he used

magic to make a small boat out of sedges and seaweed, and he and the boy then took the shape of shoemakers. In that form they went to Arianrhod's castle and brought fine shoes for her and her maidens.

While they were there, a wren flew by, and the boy struck it with a stone so neatly that it fell at once. Arianrhod cried out in surprise and praised the fair-haired boy for his sure hand. Gwydion answered quickly that she herself had now given him the name she had once denied him. From that day the boy was called Llew Llaw Gyffes.

Yet Arianrhod's anger did not end there. Gwydion next wanted her to arm the boy, and for that too he used trick and magic. He and Llew came again to her stronghold, and during the night Gwydion made a great noise of horns, shouting, and war, as if a huge host had landed from the sea and was rushing toward the castle.

In fear, Arianrhod came to the chamber and asked what danger was upon them. Gwydion said that there was no help except to shut the castle and arm themselves at once. So Arianrhod hurried away and brought armor for two men. She herself armed the youth gladly and quickly, not knowing that she was breaking the fate she had laid on him.

When both were fully armed, Gwydion told her to take the armor off again because there was in truth no army at all. The whole uproar, he said, had only been made to force her hand and win arms for her son. Arianrhod was furious when she understood what had been done. Then she laid yet another curse on Llew, saying that he would never have a wife from among the race that lived on earth.

Gwydion and Llew went back at once to Math and complained bitterly of Arianrhod's malice. Math agreed that the woman had acted with cruel hatred. Since no human wife could be won for Llew, Math and Gwydion decided to use magic once more. They gathered flowers from the oak, the broom, and the meadow-sweet, and from them they shaped the fairest woman anyone had ever seen.

They baptized that maiden and gave her the name Blodeuwedd. She was beautiful, graceful, and entirely new to the world, neither born in the common

way nor belonging to any human family. In this manner Math and Gwydion broke Arianrhod's third curse as they had broken the others. Then Blodeuwedd became Llew's bride, and a feast was held for them.

After the feast Gwydion said that a man could not live well on beauty and honor alone, but needed lands of his own. Math answered generously that he would give the young man the best cantrev he had. That land was the Cantrev of Dinodig, in the region later called Eifionydd and Ardudwy. There Llew received a court at Mur y Castell on the border of Ardudwy.

So Llew and Blodeuwedd went to live there, and he ruled the land as its lord. The people loved both him and his rule, for he was fair, strong, and noble, and there seemed to be no shadow over his life any longer. After hidden birth, curses, and many tricks, he at last had a name, arms, a wife, and a country of his own. For a time everything appeared settled and prosperous.

But the peace that had now been won was not as firm as it seemed. The story had moved Llew from shame and uncertainty into honor, yet the hard temper of his family and the strange way his life had begun were not matters easily left behind. Still, for the moment he and Blodeuwedd lived together at Mur y Castell, beloved in their land and outwardly happy.

Part 4

One day, while Llew was away visiting Math at Caer Dathyl, Blodeuwedd heard a hunting horn outside the court at Mur y Castell. A tired stag passed by with dogs and hunters after it, and a youth was sent out to learn who led the hunt. He came back and said that it was Gronw Pebyr, lord of Penllyn. Since evening was coming on, Blodeuwedd said it would be shameful to let such a man go elsewhere without welcome, and so she invited him in.

Gronw entered gladly, and as soon as he and Blodeuwedd looked at one another, love rose between them. They sat together, talked together, and before one evening had passed, each had already spoken openly of desire for the other. When Gronw tried to leave the next day, Blodeuwedd asked him to stay, and he

remained another night. Then they began to seek a way by which they might always be together.

Gronw told her that there was only one path open: she must learn from Lleu in what way he could be killed. So when Lleu came home, Blodeuwedd did not speak like an enemy. Instead she acted like a loving wife, saying that fear for his safety troubled her heart and that she wanted to know whether there was any hidden danger hanging over his life. Lleu, trusting her, answered what should never have been told.

He said that no one could kill him in an ordinary way. The spear that would wound him had to be made over a whole year, and work on it could be done only during the sacrifice on Sundays. He also said that he could not be slain indoors or outdoors, on horseback or on foot. Then, because she kept asking, he told her the one strange way in which his death could be brought about.

Lleu said that a bath would have to be made beside a river, with a roof tightly thatched over the cauldron, and a buck placed next to it. If he then stood with one foot on the buck's back and the other on the edge of the bath, and was struck at that moment, he could die. Blodeuwedd answered sweetly that it would be easy enough to avoid such a thing. But as soon as she had heard it, she sent word to Gronw.

Gronw spent a full year making the spear in the manner Lleu had named. When it was ready, Blodeuwedd tricked Lleu into showing her exactly how he could stand in that strange way. She had the bath prepared by the river Cynvael, gathered goats there, and told Gronw to hide on the hill now called Bryn Kyvergyr. Then Lleu stepped from the bath, placed one foot on the buck and the other on the edge of the cauldron, and Gronw rose from hiding and struck him with the poisoned spear.

The dart pierced Lleu's side, and at once he flew up in the form of an eagle with a terrible cry. No one knew where he had gone. Gronw and Blodeuwedd then went together to the palace, and on the next day Gronw took possession of Ardudwy. He ruled both Ardudwy and Penllyn as his own, while Math and Gwydion were left with grief and anger.

Gwydion would not rest until he found his nephew. At last, by following a sow to a tree where she fed on rotting flesh that fell from above, he discovered an eagle in the branches and knew it must be Lleu. He sang to him three times, and the eagle came down onto his knee. Then Gwydion struck him with his magic wand and restored him to human form, though he was nothing but skin and bone. Lleu was taken to Caer Dathyl, where the best physicians in Gwynedd healed him before the year was out.

Once Lleu had recovered, Math and Gwydion gathered the force of Gwynedd and marched into Ardudwy. Blodeuwedd fled with her maidens toward the mountains, but they fell into a lake in their terror, and all were drowned except Blodeuwedd herself. Gwydion caught her and said that he would not kill her, but would do worse. He changed her into an owl, doomed to hide from daylight and to be hated and chased by all other birds forever; and from that time the owl bore the name Blodeuwedd.

Gronw then sent messengers asking whether Lleu would accept land, gold, or silver for the wrong he had done. Lleu refused everything except one thing: Gronw must stand where Lleu had stood when he was struck, while Lleu stood in Gronw's old place and cast a dart at him in return. Gronw begged to place a great stone between himself and the blow, and Lleu allowed it. But Lleu's dart pierced both the stone and Gronw, killing him where he stood, and the stone with the hole through it was still remembered there as Llech Gronw. After that Lleu took back his lands and ruled prosperously, and the tale says that he later became lord over Gwynedd. And this is the end of the tale of Math the Son of Mathonwy.

The Dream of Maxen Wledig

Part 1

Maxen Wledig was emperor of Rome, and no emperor before him had been said to be more handsome, wiser, or better. One day he held a council with kings who were his vassals, and there he said that on the next day he wished to go hunting. So in the morning he went out with his retinue into the valley of a river that flowed toward Rome. With him rode two-and-thirty crowned kings, not because he needed so many men to hunt, but because he wished to meet them as equals in honor.

By midday the sun was high and the heat was heavy upon them. Sleep came over Maxen, and his men set up their shields around him on spear-shafts to keep off the sun. They laid a gold shield under his head, and there he fell asleep. While he slept, he saw a dream unlike any dream he had ever known.

In the dream he rode up the river toward its source and came to the highest mountain in the world. It seemed to rise as high as the sky. When he passed over it, he entered the fairest and smoothest land he had ever seen. Great rivers ran down from the mountain toward the sea, and he followed them until he reached the mouth of the greatest river of all.

There he saw a mighty city and within it a vast castle with many tall towers of different colors. At the river-mouth lay a fleet larger than any fleet on earth. One ship was far greater and fairer than all the rest, with one plank gilded and another covered in silver. A bridge made from the bone of a whale led from the ship to the land, and in the dream Maxen crossed over it and entered the ship.

Then the sail was raised, and the ship carried him over sea and ocean to the fairest island in the world. He crossed that island from shore to shore and saw valleys, steep rocks, and wild high cliffs such as he had never seen before. Beyond it he saw another island facing that rugged land, with a broad country lying between them and a river running from mountain to sea. At the mouth of that river stood another castle, more beautiful than any he had ever imagined, and its gate

stood open before him.

Maxen entered and found a hall whose roof seemed all gold, whose walls shone like precious stones, and whose doors were of gold. Golden seats stood there, and silver tables. Two red-haired youths sat playing chess on a golden bench with silver board and golden pieces. Beside a pillar sat a white-haired powerful old man in an ivory chair, carving chessmen with a gold rod and a steel file in his hand.

Before that old man sat a maiden in a chair of red gold, and Maxen thought it was harder to look upon her than to look upon the bright sun. She wore white silk, gold cloth, gems, pearls, and a shining belt, but all these things were less wonderful than her own beauty. She rose, and Maxen put his arms around her neck, and the two sat together in the golden chair as if it had been made for them both. Just then the noise of dogs, shields, horses, and spears broke in upon the dream, and he woke.

When Maxen awoke, he felt that neither life nor spirit remained in him because of the maiden he had seen. He rode back to Rome the saddest man alive. For a whole week he would not feast, drink, hear songs, or take pleasure in anything. He slept whenever he could, because only in sleep did he see the maiden again, and when he woke, he did not know where in the world she might be found.

At last the king of the Romans, who served as page of the chamber, told him that the people spoke badly of him because no one could get answer or message from their lord. Then Maxen called for the wise men of Rome and told them openly that he had seen a maiden in a dream and was dying of love for her. The wise men answered that he should send messengers for three years through the three parts of the world to seek what he had seen, because hope itself might keep him alive. So the messengers went out, but after the first year they returned knowing nothing more than when they had left.

Then the king of the Romans gave new advice. He told Maxen to go hunting again by the same road he had seemed to take in the dream, whether east or west. Maxen went and said that the dream-road had followed the river westward, and so thirteen messengers set out that way. They passed the high mountain, found the

great river, the city, the rich ship, the Island of Britain, Snowdon, Aber Sain, and at last the very hall Maxen had seen in his sleep. There they found the two youths, the old man, and the maiden herself. They greeted her as empress of Rome, but she said that if the emperor truly loved her, he should come himself to seek her. So the messengers hurried back to Rome and told Maxen that they knew the woman, her name, and her people, and that they would guide him to her across sea and land.

Part 2

As soon as Maxen heard that the maiden had truly been found, he gathered his men and set out from Rome with the messengers as guides. He crossed the sea to the Island of Britain and came first to the land they had described in the dream. Step by step he saw the same mountains, rivers, coast, and strong place that his mind had already known in sleep. So before he entered the hall, he knew that he had reached the end of his search.

When Maxen came into the hall, he saw the maiden again exactly as he had seen her in the dream. She was Helen, daughter of Eudaf Hen, and with her were the two young men and the old man who had sat before her in that vision. Maxen put his arms around her neck at once, and they sat together as they had seemed to do before in sleep. Then he asked Eudaf for Helen's hand.

Eudaf answered that he would gladly give the maiden, because no husband could be greater than the emperor of Rome. He also asked what Maxen sought besides the marriage. Maxen then gave a royal answer. He said that he would make Eudaf ruler over the Island of Britain, and that Helen's brothers too would receive rich honor from him.

So Maxen married Helen with great joy and honor. Her brothers were Kynan and Adeon, and Maxen loved them well because they belonged to the woman he had crossed the world to find. Peace and festivity then filled the land, for the emperor had gained the bride seen in his dream, and Helen had gained the mightiest husband in the world.

After this Maxen rewarded the family richly. He ordered a strong castle to be built for his father-in-law, and because such a host of men was used in building it, the place afterward was called Caervyrddin. He also gave gifts and high standing to Helen's brothers, and he ruled from Britain with no sign yet that fortune would turn against him.

Helen too left her mark upon the island. She caused great roads to be made from one strong place to another throughout Britain, so that the land might be more easily crossed and governed. Those roads were remembered afterward as the roads of Helen Luyddawc, and the tale says that the men of Britain would not have made such roads for any woman except one born of their own island as she was.

Maxen remained in Britain not for a few months, but for seven full years. During that time he lived in honor with Helen and her kin, and he was content to stay far from Rome. Yet in Rome there was an old custom: if an emperor remained away from the city longer than seven years, he would lose the empire and would never sit safely there again. So while Maxen enjoyed Britain, the men of Rome began to act against him.

At last the Romans made another emperor in his place. This new ruler sent Maxen a letter of threat containing only a few proud words, asking in effect whether he would ever come back to Rome at all. Maxen answered in the same spirit, saying little, but making clear that if he came, he would come as emperor still. In that short exchange, peace between them ended.

When Maxen understood that his empire had been taken from him, he did not remain idle in Britain. He made ready his host and prepared to march back toward Rome. Helen stood with him, and her brothers too were now tied to his cause, because his honor had become the honor of their own house. The marriage that had begun in dream and wonder now turned toward war and recovery.

So Maxen left the island with his army and began the long road back toward Rome. The years of joy in Britain had come to an end, and a harder labor now stood before him. He had won Helen and made her people great, but he still had to win back the empire itself.

Part 3

Maxen did not stay in Britain once he knew that Rome had cast him off. He set out with Helen's brothers, Kynan and Adeon, and with a strong host behind him. They marched and fought their way back toward the old heart of the empire, determined not to stop until Maxen sat again where he had once ruled.

At last Maxen and Helen came to Rome itself and demanded the city. The answer they received was proud and strange: no one there would simply hand the city over, and the men said that if the city was to be his again, it would be won by the men of the Island of Britain. Yet when the struggle was ended, the gates of Rome were opened, and Maxen sat once more upon the imperial throne.

Then all the men of Rome submitted themselves to him again. Maxen had recovered the empire that had been taken while he lingered in Britain. So the dream that had first led him to Helen had now led him through marriage, exile, and war back to the highest power in the world.

After this Maxen turned to Kynan and Adeon and rewarded them greatly. He said that now he held the whole empire once more, and he gave the great host into their hands. With that army, he told them, they might conquer whatever land in the world they wished to take.

So the two brothers set out and began to win lands, castles, and cities. They fought hard and long, and everywhere they overcame the men who stood against them. The tale says plainly that they killed the men and kept the women alive.

This conquest did not end quickly. It lasted so long that the young warriors who had first gone out with them grew gray-headed before the labor was done. At last Kynan spoke to Adeon and asked whether he would rather remain in that conquered land or return home to the Island of Britain.

Adeon chose to go back to his own country, and many men went back with him. But Kynan stayed where he was with the others and made his dwelling there. In that way the host divided, with one part turning home and the other remaining across the sea in the new land they had won.

Then those who remained took cruel counsel. They feared that the speech of the women of that land would change the language of the men from Britain. So they cut out the tongues of the women, so that the speech of Britain would remain strong among them.

Because of that, the men of Armorica were afterward called Britons. The tale says that from that time the language of the Island of Britain came often, and still came, into that land. In this way the story turns from Maxen's private dream of love into a legendary explanation of how another British people came to dwell across the sea.

So Maxen won Helen, lost Rome, and won it back again. Her brothers helped restore his power, and one of them remained abroad to found a new British people in Armorica. Thus the dream that began in sleep ended in empire, marriage, conquest, and the making of a new land. And this is the end of the tale of The Dream of Maxen Wledig.

The Story of Lludd and Llevelys

Part 1

Beli the Great, son of Manogan, had three sons: Lludd, Caswallawn, and Nynyaw. Some say he also had a fourth son, called Llevelys. After Beli died, the kingdom of the Island of Britain passed to Lludd, the eldest, and he ruled well and prosperously.

Lludd rebuilt the walls of London and surrounded it with many towers. He ordered the people to raise fine houses there, better than any in the kingdoms nearby. He was also a strong warrior and a generous ruler, always ready to give food and drink to those who came to him.

Though he had many castles and cities, Lludd loved London more than all the rest. He stayed there for most of the year, and because of him the city was first called Caer Lludd. In time that name changed and became London.

Lludd loved his brother Llevelys above all the others, because Llevelys was wise, thoughtful, and good in counsel. When the king of France died and left only a daughter to rule after him, Llevelys came to Lludd to ask for help and advice. He wished not only to better his own fortune, but also to increase the honor of their whole family by marrying the maiden and winning France.

Lludd approved this plan at once. Ships were made ready, armed knights were placed on them, and Llevelys sailed to France. There the nobles agreed to the marriage, the maiden was given to him, and with her came the crown of the kingdom.

Llevelys then ruled France wisely and happily. But after some time, three terrible plagues fell upon the Island of Britain while Lludd remained at home. No one there had ever seen anything like them before.

The first plague was the coming of a strange people called the Coranians. Their hearing was so sharp that if the wind carried even the softest words spoken anywhere in the island, they knew them at once. Because of this, no plan could be made against them, and no one could harm them.

The second plague was a dreadful cry that came every May Eve over every hearth in Britain. It passed through men's hearts with such fear that men lost their color and strength, women lost their children, young people lost their senses, and even beasts, trees, earth, and water became barren. The third plague was stranger still: however much food and drink was stored in the king's courts, everything vanished in a single night except what was eaten at once.

Lludd was full of sorrow because he did not know how to free his land from these disasters. He called all the nobles of the kingdom and asked their advice. Together they decided that there was only one man wise enough to help him, and that was Llevelys, king of France.

So Lludd secretly prepared a fleet and chose only a few trusted men to go with him, lest the Coranians should learn the purpose of the journey. When Llevelys heard that ships were coming from Britain and did not know the cause, he came out to meet them with a great fleet of his own. The two brothers met each other in single ships, embraced with love, and then decided to speak through a long brass horn so that the wind could not carry their words away. But even there a demon troubled their speech until Llevelys had the horn washed with wine. Then at last the brothers could speak clearly, and Llevelys was ready to explain the truth behind the three plagues.

Part 2

Once the brass horn had been washed with wine, the demon troubling their speech was driven out, and the two brothers could finally hear one another clearly. Then Llevelys said that he already knew the true cause of all three plagues. He was ready not only to explain them, but also to tell Lludd exactly how each one could be overcome.

First he spoke of the Coranians. He said that Lludd should keep some special insects alive so that they might breed, but that others should be crushed in water. That water would become a poison to the Coranians, though it would not harm Lludd's own people at all.

Llevelys then explained how the water must be used. Lludd was to call together all his own people and all the Coranians as if for a great meeting of peace. When everyone was gathered in one place, he was to throw the charmed water over them all alike. Then the Coranians would die, while the men of Britain would remain safe.

After that Llevelys turned to the second plague, the terrible cry heard on every May Eve. He said that this cry came from two dragons, one of Britain and one of a foreign race, fighting fiercely against one another. The strength of that struggle was what passed through the hearts of men and beasts and left the land barren with fear.

He then gave Lludd a careful plan. The king must have the whole island measured in length and breadth and find its exact center. There a deep pit must be dug, and in it a cauldron full of the best mead in the kingdom must be placed, with a satin covering stretched over the top. Then Lludd himself must keep watch there in person.

Llevelys said that if Lludd did this, he would see the dragons fighting first as terrible animals, then as dragons in the air, and at last falling down in the shape of two pigs upon the satin cover. They would sink with it into the mead, drink deeply, and then sleep. When that happened, Lludd must wrap them at once in the covering and bury them in the strongest and safest place in all his kingdom.

As long as the dragons remained hidden there, said Llevelys, no such cry and no such plague would come again to the Island of Britain from elsewhere. In this way the second plague too could be brought to an end, not by open battle, but by patience, cunning, and exact timing. So the mystery of the shriek was no longer hidden.

Then Llevelys explained the third plague. He said that a mighty man of magic was stealing all the king's food, drink, and stored provisions. This enchanter used songs, charms, and illusion to make everyone sleep while he carried the goods away.

To defeat that enemy, Lludd would have to watch his stores himself. A vessel of cold water must stand beside him, and whenever sleep began to overcome him,

he must plunge into the water so that the magic could not master him. Only in that way would he stay awake long enough to see the thief and fight him.

Lludd listened to all this with great relief, because what had seemed like three impossible curses now had clear causes and clear remedies. He embraced his brother again, thanked him for his wisdom, and prepared to return at once to Britain. The hardest part was still ahead, but now he knew what must be done.

Part 3

When Lludd returned to Britain, he did exactly as his brother had told him. First he secretly called together both his own people and the Coranians, as if he meant to make peace between them. Then he took the charmed water and threw it over all alike. It harmed none of his own race, but the Coranians died from it, and in that way the first plague was removed from the island.

After that, Lludd caused the whole island to be measured in its length and breadth so that the exact middle might be found. The central point was discovered at Oxford. There he ordered a great pit to be dug, and in the pit he placed a cauldron full of the best mead in the kingdom, with a satin cover stretched over it. Then he himself kept watch through the night.

While he watched, he saw the two dragons fighting. At first they fought like terrible beasts, then they rose into the air in dragon form, and at last, when they were weary, they fell upon the satin in the shape of two pigs. The cloth and the creatures sank together into the mead, and there they drank deeply until sleep overcame them.

Then Lludd moved quickly. He folded the satin around the sleeping dragons and carried them away. In the strongest place he had in Snowdon he hid them in a stone chest under the earth. From that time the dreadful cry ceased in his kingdom, and the place where he buried them was afterward remembered as Dinas Emreis.

Once the outcry had ended, Lludd turned to the third plague. He prepared a great feast and had abundant food and drink laid out as before, but this time he set

a vessel of cold water beside him and watched the provisions in his own person, fully armed. In the middle of the night he heard wonderful songs and enchantments more sweet and strange than any he had known, and sleep pressed heavily upon him.

Yet whenever drowsiness began to master him, he plunged himself into the cold water and so kept awake. At last he saw a man of vast size enter, clad in heavy armor and carrying a hamper. The man began to put all the food and drink into the hamper, as he had done so many times before. Lludd marveled that so much could fit into one basket, but he did not let wonder delay him.

He followed after the thief and called on him to stop. Lludd said that the man had done great spoil and insult before, but that he would do so no more unless his strength in battle proved greater than the king's. Then the giant set down the hamper and turned to meet him. A fierce fight followed between them, with fire flashing from their arms as they struck.

In the end Lludd overcame him. He threw the enchanter to the earth and held him there, and then the man begged for mercy. Lludd answered that mercy was hard to give after all the wrongs that had been done to him and his land. But the enchanter offered full repayment for everything he had stolen and swore that he would never again trouble the island in that way. He also promised to become Lludd's faithful man from that time onward.

Lludd accepted those terms, and so the third plague came to an end. By courage in action and by careful obedience to wise counsel, he freed Britain from all three disasters. After that he ruled the Island of Britain in prosperous peace for the rest of his life. And this is the end of the tale of The Story of Lludd and Llevellys.

Taliesin

Part 1

Long ago, in Penllyn, there lived a noble man named Tegid Voel. His house stood in the middle of Lake Tegid, and his wife was called Caridwen. They had beautiful and strange children. Creirwy was the fairest girl in the world, but Avagddu was the ugliest man in the world, and because of that his mother feared that no noble court would ever welcome him. So she decided that if he could not be loved for his face, he must be honored for wisdom and deep knowledge instead.

Caridwen therefore planned a hard and dangerous work. By secret arts and powerful learning, she began to boil a great cauldron of inspiration and knowledge for her son. The cauldron had to boil for a year and a day without stopping. At the end of that time, only three blessed drops would remain from which true inspiration could be gained. All the rest of the liquid would be poison.

To keep the fire and stir the mixture, Caridwen set two servants to the task. A blind man named Morda was to keep the fire burning, and a boy named Gwion Bach was to stir the cauldron without rest. Caridwen herself spent the whole year gathering special herbs and using spells at the proper times, according to the stars and the old books of magic. Everything was done for one purpose only: to give Avagddu wisdom great enough to lift him above his ugly face.

Near the end of the year, while Caridwen was away gathering herbs, the great moment came. Three hot drops flew out of the cauldron and fell on Gwion Bach's finger. Because the drops burned him, he put his finger into his mouth at once. The instant he tasted them, all wisdom entered him. He understood the future, he understood the danger he was in, and above all he understood that Caridwen would never forgive him.

Then Gwion fled in terror. As soon as Caridwen came back, she saw that the whole labor of the year had been lost. The cauldron burst apart, and all the liquid left in it, except for those three drops, ran out as poison into the stream. She struck the blind Morda in her rage, but he told her truthfully that Gwion Bach had stolen

the blessing from her. At once she ran after him, full of fury.

Gwion saw her coming and changed himself into a hare. But Caridwen changed herself into a greyhound and ran after him. Then he leaped into a river and became a fish, but she became an otter and chased him through the water. When he burst upward from the river, he turned himself into a bird in the sky. At once she too changed shape and became a hawk, rising behind him and giving him no rest.

Seeing that he could not escape by speed, Gwion looked down and saw a heap of clean wheat on a floor below him. So he dropped among the grains and changed himself into one small white grain of wheat. But Caridwen knew him even then. She became a black hen, came down among the grain, scratched through it, found him, and swallowed him whole. In that way the chase ended.

Once she had swallowed him, Caridwen carried him inside her for nine months. During that time Gwion was changed within her. When the time came for him to be born again, she saw that he was so beautiful that she could not kill him, though she still hated what he had done. Her anger had not died, but pity was stronger than anger for one moment. So she chose a different punishment.

Caridwen placed the child in a bag of dark leather. Then she carried the bag out to the sea and threw it into the water. She meant to cast him away forever, to let the waves take him where they would. Yet the tale says that this too was part of a greater fate, because the child was not being sent only to death, but also toward a new life and a new name.

So the boy who had once been little Gwion Bach was carried away upon the wide sea inside the leather bag. The cauldron had been broken, Caridwen's long labor had been lost, and the child of wisdom was now alone upon the water. He had escaped death, but he had not yet found a home, a family, or the name by which the world would later know him.

Part 2

The leather bag did not sink in the sea. It was carried instead to the weir of

Gwyddno Garanhir, which stood on the shore between Dyvi and Aberystwyth. Every May Eve that weir usually brought in a catch worth a hundred pounds. Gwyddno had an only son, Elphin, and people thought him unlucky, poor, and born under an evil star.

To test whether luck might ever turn in his favor, Elphin's father gave him the weir for that year. So on the next day Elphin went to see what had been caught there. He found no fish at all. But as he turned away in disappointment, he saw the leather bag hanging on one of the poles of the weir.

The weir-keeper told him bitterly that he had ruined the good fortune of the place, which had always yielded rich profit on that night. Elphin answered that perhaps even this bag might hold something worth a hundred pounds. So they opened it. The first thing they saw was the shining forehead of the child inside.

The man who opened the bag cried out, "Look at that radiant brow!" Then Elphin said at once, "Taliesin shall he be called," and so the child received his name. Yet Elphin still thought first of his own bad fortune, and he lifted the boy sadly into his arms. Even then he carried him gently, as if he were something precious and delicate.

As Elphin rode home, the child suddenly began to speak. He did not speak like an ordinary infant, but with wisdom, comfort, and prophecy. He told Elphin not to weep, not to think himself cursed, and not to believe that the loss of fish meant the loss of all hope. He said that this strange find would profit Elphin more than three hundred salmon.

In this way Taliesin sang his first song. He told Elphin to trust in God, to dry his tears, and to stop fearing disgrace before the world. Though small and weak in body, he said, there was great power in his tongue, and while he remained with Elphin, no man would be able to harm him. So before Elphin even reached home, the child had already become his comforter.

When they came to Gwyddno's house, Gwyddno asked whether Elphin had made a good catch at the weir. Elphin answered that he had gained something better than fish: a bard. Gwyddno said sadly that a bard would bring him little profit. But Taliesin himself answered that he would help Elphin more than the

weir had ever helped Gwyddno.

Gwyddno was astonished that one so small could speak at all and asked whether the child was man or spirit. Taliesin then sang again and told of his strange journey. He spoke of being born more than once, of wisdom in his breast, and of all that had happened to him from Caridwen's cauldron to the sea and the leather bag. In this way he revealed that the child Elphin had found was no ordinary child of earth.

Elphin then gave the child to his wife, and she nursed him tenderly and with love. From that time forward Elphin's fortune began to change. Day after day he grew richer and stood higher in the favor of the king. Taliesin remained in his house and grew there until he was thirteen years old.

When Taliesin reached that age, Elphin went to the Christmas court of his uncle, Maelgwn Gwynedd, at Dyganwy. There the lords and nobles praised Maelgwn, his queen, and his court above all others in the world. In the middle of that proud praise, talk began about who had the bravest men, the wisest bard, and the worthiest wife. So the peace of Elphin's household was now about to be tested before the greatest court in the land.

Part 3

At Maelgwn's Christmas court, the nobles praised the king more and more until their words grew proud and foolish. They said that no ruler in the world was greater, that no queen was more excellent than Maelgwn's, and that nowhere could there be better men, horses, or bards. Elphin heard all this in silence for a time, but at last he spoke and said that, if the truth were known, his own wife was more faithful and better, and his own bard wiser, than any man in Maelgwn's court.

These words made a deep stir among the nobles. Maelgwn was angered that a guest should boast so boldly in his hall, especially against his court and household. So he ordered Elphin to be seized and shut in a tower, with a heavy chain on his feet. The tale says that the chain was silver because Elphin was of royal blood.

But Maelgwn did not stop there. He wanted not only to punish Elphin, but also

to prove him a liar. So he sent his son Rhun to Elphin's house to test the honor of Elphin's wife and bring back some clear proof that her virtue was less than her husband claimed.

Rhun was a bad man for such an errand. The story says there was hardly any wife or maiden with whom he had spoken and not brought shame. Yet Taliesin knew what was coming before Rhun arrived. He warned Elphin's wife and told her exactly why her husband had been imprisoned.

Then Taliesin helped her prepare a plan. He had one of the kitchen maids dressed in her mistress's clothes, covered with Elphin's best rings, and seated in the lady's place at the supper table. The true wife took the maid's place, and when Rhun arrived, he was received joyfully and led in to the false mistress, never guessing the trick that had been laid for him.

Rhun sat at table with the maid and made her drink until she fell into a deep sleep. Then he cut off her little finger, on which was Elphin's signet ring, and carried it back to Maelgwn as proof that Elphin's wife had been overcome and shamed. The king was delighted and called for Elphin to be brought out of prison, thinking the matter now settled.

Maelgwn showed him the finger and the ring and told him that no man should trust a wife beyond what his own eyes could see. But Elphin did not give way. He said that the ring was indeed his, yet the finger could not belong to his wife, and he gave three reasons: the ring would never fit her in that way, she always kept her nails well cut, and her hands did not do the rough rye-kneading shown by that finger.

Maelgwn grew even angrier when Elphin still stood by both his wife and his bard. So he sent him back to prison and said he would not be released until the boast had been proved true in full. In this way Elphin fell into deeper danger because he would not betray either the woman he loved or the child-poet he trusted.

Back at Elphin's house, Taliesin told his mistress that her husband suffered in prison because of them both, but he ordered her not to despair. He said he himself would go to Maelgwn's court and free his master. In song and in plain purpose alike, he promised to silence the proud bards, break the false wisdom of the court,

and bring Elphin out from his chains.

So Taliesin left Elphin's wife and went to Maelgwn's hall. When he entered, the king was already taking his seat to dine in full royal state. Taliesin did not rush forward at once, but slipped quietly into a corner near the place where the bards and heralds came in to perform their duties before the feast. There, small and silent, he prepared to bring the whole proud court into confusion.

Part 4

When Taliesin sat hidden in the corner of Maelgwn's hall, he quietly mocked the royal bards as they passed. They copied him without knowing why and stood before the king making foolish sounds with their lips instead of praising him properly. Maelgwn first thought they were drunk, but when they could not stop, even after being warned and struck, Heinin their chief said that some strange spirit in the hall had stolen their speech. Then Taliesin was brought before the king.

Maelgwn asked the child who he was and where he had come from. Taliesin answered not with fear but with a great song of his own nature and knowledge. He spoke as one who knew ancient things, heavenly things, and the hidden turns of the world. The nobles marveled that a boy so young could speak with such force and wisdom.

Then Maelgwn ordered Heinin, his wisest bard, to answer the child if he could. But when Heinin came forward, he could do nothing except make the same foolish lip-sound as before. The same happened to the other royal bards one after another. In that way Taliesin showed the whole court that their boastful learning was empty beside the power of his song.

Taliesin then made clear why he had come. In song after song he declared that Elphin was shut in a stony tower because he had praised his own household too boldly, and that he, Taliesin, had come to loosen those bonds. He also rebuked the bards harshly, saying that many of them used their art badly, loved ease and false praise, and could not truly judge between truth and lies. None of them dared answer him.

By the force of his words Taliesin won his master's freedom. Elphin was brought out of prison, and Taliesin also proved publicly that Elphin's wife was innocent, for she was shown before the court with every finger whole. So the trick of Rhun failed, Elphin's honor was restored, and both husband and wife were saved from shame. Right glad was Elphin, and right glad was Taliesin.

But Taliesin had not yet finished humbling the proud court. He told Elphin to wager that he had a horse better and swifter than all the king's horses. Maelgwn accepted the challenge, and a day and place were fixed for the race at Morva Rhiannedd. There the king brought four-and-twenty of his best horses against the single horse of Elphin.

Before the race Taliesin gave the rider of Elphin's horse four-and-twenty blackened holly twigs. He ordered him to let the king's horses go ahead at first, then, as he passed each horse, to strike it lightly with one twig and drop that twig behind. He also said that when Elphin's horse stumbled, the rider must throw down his cap to mark the place. Everything was done just as Taliesin had commanded.

Elphin's horse won the race. Then Taliesin took Elphin back to the place where the horse had stumbled and told him to dig there. In the earth they found a great cauldron full of gold. Taliesin said that this was a reward to Elphin for taking him from the weir and raising him with kindness from that day onward.

After this, Maelgwn asked Taliesin still more questions, and the boy answered with further songs about the making of the world, the first people, and his own strange history. He spoke of ancient times, of long memory, and at last of Caridwen's cauldron and his first name, saying that once he had been little Gwion and had now become Taliesin. Thus the child-poet revealed fully before the court who he was and from what wonder he had come.

So Taliesin freed Elphin, protected Elphin's wife, silenced the proud bards of Maelgwn, and brought wealth as well as honor to the house that had rescued him from the sea. From foundling child in a leather bag, he had become a bard greater than all the rest. And this is the end of the tale of Taliesin.