Summer 6-1-1905

The Use of the Arthurian Legend

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THE USE OF THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND
BY THE
PRE-RAPHAELITES

A THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

BY
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BOULDER, COLORADO
JUNE, 1905
PREFACE.

The following pages are the result of many happy hours spent in the library, in an earnest endeavor to become better acquainted with Truth and Beauty. The author does not pose as a critic for she has little knowledge of literary art either theoretical or practical, and none of pictorial. Should this self-imposed task prove to be of even the slightest benefit to other students, the pleasure to the writer would be multiplied many fold. 

MATILDA KREBS.
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THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND AS USED BY THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

The Arthurian story is familiar to all readers of English literature, particularly to readers of Tennyson; nevertheless it may not be amiss to review briefly the growth of the legend, inasmuch as the present discussion deals with the epic in its early forms rather than in its finished state.

How the story first arose, whether it has any historical foundation, or whether it is pure mythology, are questions which no one can answer definitely. There is a tradition of an historical Arthur, who, with the aid of brave and devoted followers, after Rome had withdrawn her protection from Britain, fought twelve successful battles against the invading heathen. But where he reigned and where these battles were fought is yet to be ascertained. The best scholars identify Arthur as the “Guledig” or “Dux Bellorum” of Cumbria and Strathclyde (the old divisions of Western Britain, stretching from the Severn to the Clyde) some time in the sixth century; and the “heathen,” as the encroaching Saxons from the east, and the Picts and Scots from the north. In the course of five or six centuries Arthur’s name became the synonym for wisdom, chivalry and prowess, not only in England but in France and Germany.

About this time (1125?), a certain Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, brought from Brittany—the birthplace of many of the Arthurian legends—a collection of Breton stories, and gave them to one Geoffrey of Monmouth, a Benedictine monk. The latter, sometime between 1130 and 1147, compiled a fabulous Latin “Historia Britonum” out of the fragments his friend had brought, together with certain Armorican records, and current local traditions. This chronicle at once became popular and had many imitators; among them, Gaimar, who translated the text into the French “Estorie des Engles;” and a Jersey poet, Wace, (1155) who added details to the original Monmouth edition and gave to his metrical version of 14,000 lines, the title, “Geste des Bretons” or “Brut d’Angleterre.” By this time the heathen legends had become confused with the stories of the Cross brought by Roman missionaries, and the original legend of animal courage and passion had taken on a moral tone.

The moral and spiritual element expanded, when, in 1196, Walter Map (Mapes), chaplain to Henry II. and later Archdeacon at Oxford, added the story of the ‘Holy Graal,’ the search for which typified the search for perfect knowledge of truth and of God. Mixed with this religious element was the chivalrous influence which had come from the worked-over English and new French songs of the Norman Trouveres and Provencal Troubadours. So we find towards the close of the twelfth
century that the legend has all the features of feudal chivalry: the crusades, the jousts, the magic forests, the elaborate armoury of knights, the matchless devotion to ladies; the virtues of faith, courage, humility, charity; in short, all the features that made the age one when

“All the men were brave and all the maids were fair,
And thru all the year ‘twas summer everywhere.”

In 1190 Chrestien of Troy wrote the story of Parcival in his “Conte del Graal.” In 1200 (?) Layamon, a priest at Areley Regis on the Severn in north Worcestershire, enlarged upon Wace’s version, using alliterative verse of the O. E. kind with interspersed rhyming couplets. Under his hand the Arthurian legend begins to assume the shape in which we know it. Sir Gawaine and Sir Bedivere first appear; the mysterious birth and departure of Arthur are given poetical expression; Merlin and Guinevere assume important places. (Guinevere and Lancelot had not been mentioned by Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Wace was the first to have a Table Round.) The military exploits, so prominent in the Historia Britonum recede, and the stories of the Graal and of the guilty Guinevere, are put in the foreground of the developing legend.

Finally, we have the compilation of Sir Thomas Malory, of stories taken from various “Frensshe books.” It is necessary at this point to remember that England received back from France many stories on English subjects, for Latin and French, not English, was the language of the reading people of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in England. Consequently, traditional English stories were often first cast into French and later—after the fourteenth century—came back in English form, often modified by association with the earlier legends of Charlemagne and Alexander the Great. Because of the fact just stated it is quite possible that Sir Thomas Malory gathered his material, indirectly from Welsh, French and English sources, but that the works he used for his compilation, were, as he says, “Frensshe.” In most cases, the stories have been traced by literary antiquaries to their original sources, showing that Malory made few additions of his own. The “Morte d’Arthur” was printed by Caxton in 1485, presumably fifteen years after the original manuscript was written.

Of the author of this well selected, sympathetic collection little is known save that he was probably an adherent of the Earl of Warwick, and, in consequence, an outlaw under Edward IV. (1468), in the ninth year of whose reign, he tells us in his Introduction, he finished his book.

In Malory we first find the legend somewhat epic in style; there is a certain crude unity in events, in places, in characters. Though his work was that of a simple compiler, he read in the old tales a lesson differing but slightly from that which Tennyson has reminted in his “Idylls of the King.” (1) Malory says of his book: “Herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, sin. Do after the good and leave the

(1) Dedication of the “Idylls.”
evil and it shall bring you to good fame and renommee.” (2) Tennyson’s poem is an allegory of “Sense at War with Soul.”

The Arthurian legend has been a mine from which artists of all kinds have gathered treasures of inspiration and suggestion. The Italian poets, Dante, (3) Ariosto and Tasso used Arthur and Merlin and Guinevere; “Parzival” by Wolfram von Eschenbach, “Tristram” by Gottfried from Strassburg, and “1wein” by Hartmann von Aue, all attest to the magnetic charm of the “lying romances;” likewise in Spain and France, the tales of chivalry influenced the early romanticists, Cervantes, Ronsard and La Fontaine.

In England, in spite of Roger Ascham’s vehement denunciation of the Morte c’Arthur and similar “bookes of cheualrie * * * made in monasteries by idle monks or wanton chanones,” the stories of patient Enid, of wily Vivien, of knightly Lancelot, of treacherous Mordred, of peerless Guinevere, have been read and remodeled by many of the great poets since Malory’s time. A few authors go back to Monmouth’s version but the vast majority follow the outline of Malory’s “prose poem.” Sir Walter Scott says in his introduction to “Marmion” that Arthurian characters

“* * * gleam thru Spenser’s elfin dream
And mix in Milton’s (5) heavenly theme;
And Dryden, (6) in immortal strain
Had raised the Table Round again,
But that a ribald king and court
Bade him toil on to make them sport.”

Scott (7) himself makes use of Arthurian material, and Southey, (8) Wordsworth (9) and Matthew Arnold (10) have allusions to this epitome of the age of chivalry. Tennyson, beyond a doubt, has used the original Malory with the happiest result in his Idylls, where the series of legends for the first time deserves the name of epic.

However, it is to a Pre-Raphaelite that we owe the conception of the Tennysonian allegory as a whole. It was Gabriel Dante Rossetti’s water-color of “King Arthur’s Tomb,” painted in 1854, that revived the interest in the Arthurian story; an interest that inspired the poet-laureate to sing in 1859, (11) of

(2) Malory’s Morte d’Arthur, Introduction.
(3) Inferno. XXXII. 62; Par. XVI. 15.
(3) Inferno. V. 128; Inf., V. 67.
(4) Faerie Queene.
(5) Paradise Lost.
(6) Arthur.
(7) Bridal of Triermaine.
(8) Madoc in Wales.
(9) Egyptian Maid, Artegal and Elidure.
(10) Tristram and Iseult.
(11) Tennyson’s Guinevere.
"* * * that fair Order of a Table Round
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time"

when they would

"* * * reverence the King, as if he were

Their conscience, and their conscience as their king;” (12) an interest which fired the genius of a Morris whose spirit-life was lived in the land “east of the sun and west of the moon;” an interest that animated the chisel of a Woolner, and furnished visions to a Burne-Jones for making “storied windows richly dight.”

When Rossetti and Millais and Hunt in their enthusiasm over the frescoes of Lasinio, in 1848, dubbed themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and mysteriously affixed the letters P. B. R. to all their paintings, they innocently challenged the attack of the conservative artists and critics of their time, for the name suggested that true art existed only prior to Raphael.

As painters, the Pre-Raphaelites were disciples—if such a term may be applied to non-conformists—of the early Italian masters; notably Giotto, Ghiberti, Bellini and Fra Angelico, in whom they found the qualities that constituted their ideal.

As poets, they were admirers of Dante and Shelley and Keats, particularly of Keats, the best representative of the revival of mediaeval romanticism which Francke defines as “individualism, run mad.” However, the Pre-Raphaelites intensified, if such a thing were possible, the characteristic qualities of the Romanticists of the eighteenth century: the love for the mysterious, the far-away, the picturesque; the tendency to subjectivity; the revolt against the restraint of technique; the fascination for old times and places; the love of nature; and above all they intensified the color and emotion of life.

They believed in their own individuality; that nineteenth century artists were as truly inspired as the early Italian masters; that the true artist who has ideas to express must be taught of Nature to express these ideas; that he must abandon all canons and conventions that are not sincere and serious; and finally his aim must be nothing less noble than the perfection of his art.

Knowing the tenets of the Pre-Raphaelite creed, one can readily believe that they did not concern themselves with the vain task of proving an historical Arthur of Camelot, a geographical Lyonnessse, a geological rock of Glastonbury. To them the world of Romance was as real, to a few of the school, more real, than the material world, and the interests of it greater and more enduring. In general, they shared Burne-Jones’ ideal of a picture, viz., “a beautiful romantic dream of something that never was, never will be—in a light better than any light that ever shone—in a land no one can define or remember, only desire—

(12) Tennyson’s Guinevere, l. 460 ff.
and the forms divinely beautiful." Their idea of a poem was that of a "breath of beauty, flowing around the spiritual world, as the winds that wake up the flowers do about the material." They verified the statement of the bard of Avon that

"The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

So, although the choice of subjects by the Pre-Raphaelites was not confined to the favorite northern, mediaeval themes of the Romanticists, their treatment of southern, classic themes was almost invariably romantic. There is no question but that early in the history of the movement, the castle with its crowning turrets, the dense northern forests, the gay tournament, the caparisoned steed, the dauntless knight, and delicate lady had for them a fascination that surpassed the charm of classic Olympus, the haunts of Diana, the Bacchanalian revels, the winged Pegagus, the brave Orpheus and fair Eurydice.

Of all of William Morris' poems, none is so characteristically Pre-Raphaelite in its subject and treatment as "The Defence of Guinevere," the name poem of a collection of verse, published in 1858, anticipating Tennyson's "Idylls" by one year. The poem has none of the regular flow of the dreamy, opiate voluptuousness of his later "Earthly Paradise" and "The Life and Death of Jason." It is Pre-Raphaelite in its utter disregard of technical rules of composition, in its frank portrayal of the Catholic mediaeval religion in which unquestioning belief, blind devotion, childish superstition, and fear of hell existed side by side with primitive fleshly passions; in his loving observation of all the moods of Nature; and in his passionate painting of passionate love.

The simple, faithful narrative of Malory becomes in the hands of Morris a dramatic appeal from the stern justice of the Middle Ages to nineteenth century pity for erring love and human frailty. No other author—and there are many who have handled the attractive theme—has so fearlessly and so sympathetically taken up the cause of the sinning, sinned-against queen of King Arthur's court. Tennyson pictures her great guiltiness, not so much by direct charges as by showing us the injured, stainless Arthur and the shattered Round Table. He has infused into the tale nineteenth century ideals of the sanctity of marriage, of the moral laws of society. Morris reflects Malory's ideas, so akin to his own, on marital relations and shows his disrespect for the law that bids a man restrain his natural (primitive) instincts for the sake of conventionality. His Guinevere, then, is a real, flesh-and-blood woman, not a personification of abstract Sense, clad in alluring bodily charms.

He has chosen for his word picture the crucial moment of the trial, when, surrounded by her accusers, she stands to answer the charges for
which King Arthur has condemned her to be tried by fire,—for a knight must be true to his oath and to law whatever it may cost him. Tennyson passes over the trial scene, going at once from the chamber scene to the convent scene at Almesbury. Malory devotes his pages to the vindicating tournament wherein Sir Lancelot slew full many a knight—twenty-three are named. He relieves our suspense finally by mounting the rescued queen on the steed with Sir Lancelot, and by speeding them off to Joyous Gard. Morris, far more dramatic, keeps Lancelot in the background, until, at that moment when the queen must die, she hears her hero's steed approaching, and knows he will save her once more.

In Malory, (13) Gawaine defends Guinevere from Arthur, saying: "I dare say that my lady your queen is to you both good and true." And when, in spite of his urgent, repeated protests, the king gives his fatal order, Gawaine moans: "My heart will never serve me to see her die and it shall never be said that even I was of your counsel of her death." And at last, (14) realizing that his pleading is vain, he withdraws, weeping, to his chamber, unwilling to witness the suffering of his queen.

Morris, on the other hand, infers that Gawaine is the chief witness against Guinevere. Over and over again, in a frenzied attempt at self-vindication, the stormy, ravishly beautiful culprit cries:

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gawaine, lie, Whatever happened on through all these years, God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie."

Once, it is true, she seems to remember his old-time friendship, his tender heart, and in a bewitching, coaxing tone she pleads: (15)

"Gawaine, be friends now, speak me lovingly, Do I not see God's dear pity creep All through your frame and tremble in your mouth? I pray you pity!"

When her effort to beguile him with her powerful beauty fails, she tries threats:

"* * * Let me not scream out For ever after when the shrill winds blow Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout For ever after in the winter night When you ride out alone in battle-rout! Let not my rusting tears make your sword light!"

And then comes a moment, only one moment, of despair:

(13) Book XX. ch. 7.  
(14) Book XX. ch. 8.  
“Ah! God of mercy, how he turns away!
“So: let God’s justice work!

Then, with redoubled intensity:

“* * * Gawaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs.”

Following the pathetic recital of that fatal visit of Lancelot to her chamber, the ballad refrain comes once more, but this time with a mournful resignation, to what seems inevitable death.

“Nevertheless you, O Sir Gawaine, lie
Whatever may have happen’d these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.”

After this she would not speak a word but stood listening, listening for the hoof-beats of Death’s steed, or Lancelot’s, she scarce knew which, but her prophetic heart told her Lancelot would keep his word, and the blood returned to her cheek when the roan charger came in sight.

Such, in brief, is the story of the poem. Let us note in detail some of the above-mentioned Pre-Raphaelite characteristics. Perhaps the most obvious difference between the “Guinevere” of Morris and that of Tennyson is that Morris lays stress upon the mediaeval conception of chastity and fidelity, while Tennyson has put into it the higher conception of his own and Morris’ time. It suits the fantastic, thirteenth century taste of Morris to prove the virtue of Guinevere by making her champion victorious in combat; and to allow her wondrous grace and beauty to be a sufficient excuse and palliation for her sin. Tennyson’s strong sense of the sacredness of chastity and keen appreciation of the conflict that life must always be to the earnest person, has given us a Guinevere suffering the torture of remorse at Arthur’s feet, anxious to atone for her sin when she realizes it is her “duty to love the highest not Lancelot, nor another.” (16) Neither poet hides the natural affinity of souls; but while Tennyson restrains the unholy impulse of Guinevere by a Christian sense of morality, Morris dwells upon the validity of the law of natural, i. e., primitive instincts. (Were it not too much of a digression it would be interesting to contrast the Kantian philosophy with that of Shlegel and Tieck, respectively illustrated in the two poems.) Tennyson’s queen, in response to the child’s innocent prattle at the convent, says:

“But help me, heaven, for surely I repent.
For what is true repentance but in thought—
Not ev’n in inmost thought to think again
The sins that made the past so pleasant to us:
And I have sworn never to see him more;
To see him more.” (17)

(16) Tennyson’s Guinevere, l. 651 ff.
(17) ibid. l. 370 ff.
The queen prisoner of Morris says: (18)

"Behold my judge, then the cloths were brought; While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd, Belonging to the time ere I was bought By Arthur's great name and his little love; * * * for a little word, Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove Stone cold for ever?"

The passion is strong, uncontrolled in Morris' heroine. While she moans: "If only I had known, known, how to choose the cloths," at the same time in absolute recklessness, remembering the mad kisses of a certain spring day, she flaunts: "After that day why is it Guinevere grieves?" How different is the tone of the sorrow-taught nun! It is passion too, but calmed and mastered.

"And mine will ever be a name of scorn
* * *
I yearn'd for warmth and color which I found In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou art, Thou art the highest and most human too, Not Lancelot, nor another."

In Morris' poem Arthur does not figure at all directly; in Tennyson's he is the denouncer of Guinevere; the pure, stainless knight, the injured husband, who generously forgives his wife, provides for her comfort but cannot kiss her; leaves her to her prayers, with the hope of reunion in Heaven, for his doom is to love her, despite her disloyalty. We cannot help but pity the intense, demonstrative, heart-hungry queen when we read of Arthur's calm, undemonstrative exacting affection, and Morris' garden scenes, so full of love and beauty, seem to us the proper environment for the ardent lovers. But an "Earthly Paradise" had no existence for Tennyson. To him there was a law higher than of earth, and though the allegorical interpretation of his story detracts somewhat from its charm as poetry, his message is a nobler one than Morris has to give, and appeals to struggling humanity because of its high ideals and inspiring tone, whereas Morris' poem is simply a marvellously realistic picture of human passion, restrained only by crude laws based upon physical force, and a vague dread of physical torture in a vague Hell.

All the PreRaphaelites were devotees of beauty; Morris in a lesser degree than others, but this poem abounds in praise of bodily beauty. Guinevere embodies all the distinctively Pre-Raphaelite features of physical perfection: long hair, that the enchantress looses before her judges; delicate, long hands, through which she lets the light pass; a

lithe body that she twists passionately; great eyes, that threaten to weep rusting tears; arms that move in "wonderful wise; long throat through which the words go up "in ripples" to her mouth.

Of the Pre-Raphaelite care for the details of Nature there are equally as many illustrations:

"And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail clouds."
"See * * * how in my hand
The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvellously colour'd gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,
And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses."

The following touches of mediaevalism will serve to show Morris' devotion to the Middle ages: "wall of stone," "castle-locks," "la Fausse Garde," "lists," "roan charger," "heralds," "tiled roofs."

Besides the poem, Morris has given us a beautiful canvas of "the pearl of beauty." He shows her to us in a dressing-room before her mirror in the act of putting on her girdle. Her dress is white with pink embroidery, and has red sleeves. On her head she wears a wreath of flowers. A minstrel, near her, is playing on a lute. The picture has a richness of color akin to Rossetti's portraits.

Thomas Woolner's statue of the queen, Tennyson said, was the stateliest figure he had even seen. An engraving of it is an attractive feature of the 1888 edition of the "Idylls of the King."

Another subject, painted by Rossetti during the period when (1859) he looked upon the Morte d'Arthur as second to the Bible, was the dramatic, climactic scene of "Lancelot Escaping from Guinvere's Chamber." Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred have laid a trap to catch Lancelot. Sir Bors warns the latter not to visit the queen but the lover replies: "I marvel me much why ye say thus, sithen the queen hath sent for me and wit ye well that I will not be so much a coward, but she shall understand I will see her good grace."

In front of the casement window stands the lover, in the armor stripped from his first victim, defying the two spies and their twelve assistants. His hair is flyng wildly about his face, similar to that of the angel in "St. Cecily." His face resembles that of Arthur in "King Arthur's Tomb." (Is it that of William Morris?)

Guinevere stands with face turned from her champion; her eyes are closed as if fearing to see the issue, but her features lack the intensity of feeling such a crisis would require; her long fingers are listlessly folded. She wears a rich cape of peacock feathers and a queer skirt held by as queer a girdle. Her hair flows unconfined, in the prevailing style of Rossetti's maidens.

On Lancelot's cuffs and coat is embroidered the favorite scroll design that Rossetti uses over and over again for adorning his female fig-
ues. A miniature apple tree grows in a pot in the lower left corner. Through the window one catches glimpses of a grove.

In the early part of this discussion we said that the revival of the Arthuriad was due, in large measure, to Rossetti's water-color of "King Arthur's Tomb," painted in 1854, inasmuch as Morris, Burne-Jones and Tennyson traced their interest in Malory's narrative, through this leader of the Pre-Raphaelites. It may be noted, in passing, that Rossetti's mission as an artist, both poetically and pictorially, was to suggest and inspire, rather than to create along the lines in which he was interested; for instance, although he rekindled the enthusiasm for the Arthurian legend after its long neglect, he himself did very little with it in comparison with his vast repertoire of Dantean themes. W. B. Scott, however, is of the opinion that the small painting of "King Arthur's Tomb," done entirely "without nature and a good deal in the spirit of illuminated manuscripts, with very indifferent drawing, and no perspective," is one of the finest of Rossetti's works. (19)

The artist has chosen for his theme the scene described in Malory's "Morte d'Arthur, Book XXI, chapters nine and ten. The original canvas is now the possession of Pepys Cockerell, who obtained it from Ruskin, the latter having disposed of it on the ground of its containing a flaw in the eyes, due to retouching.

There is Launcelot, gaunt and eager-eyed, bending over the marble effigy of Arthur, to beg a kiss of Guinevere. She repels his advances with uplifted hand, palm towards him. Her face is a mixture of regret, sadness, contrition and resignation. She reflects none of the intense passion of Lancelot's countenance and attitude of body—she has learned in the quiet convent to realize the enormity of her sin. There is no anger, no scorn for Lancelot, only a look that seems to say: "I would it had all been different, that our love had been holy, or might be now, or that I had loved this dead man as I have loved you and that he had given me the warm, lavish affection which you bestow upon me." Malory tells us that the kiss was refused, that there was "lamentation as they had been stung with spears, and many times they swooned;" that the queen was carried to her chamber and that Lancelot rode all that day and night in a forest weeping.

As for the discrepancy in having Lancelot come to Guinevere at Almesbury, and their meeting in the convent garden over Arthur's tomb,—which must have been at Glastonbury (20), thirty miles away,—Rossetti was as unconcerned as over the technical points of perspective and rules of drawing, in general. There was pathos in the lovers' story, there was beauty of coloring possible, and with passion and rich hues Rossetti could paint a picture after his own heart.

The scene is full of the symbolism in which the early Pre-Raphaelites delighted. Over the tomb the apple trees cast their shadows; in the grass lies a snake. The mediaeval influence is apparent in the series of knightly subjects engraved on the tomb; in Sir Lancelot's charger, crop-

(20) Morte d'Arthur, Book XXI. chapters 7 and 9.
ping the grass in the background; in the shield worn by the knight; Guinevere is clothed in the black and white garb of a nun. The gestures of both are stiff and conventional; perhaps, because of defective technical skill, but more probably because of an effort to reproduce faithfully crude, naive mediaeval art and to abandon the studied curves of the classics. Lancelot resembles William Morris; the original of Guinevere was presumably one of Rossetti's relatives or acquaintances, for the first disciples of this school drew and painted from living models, with little or no idealizing.

If "painting is silent poetry and poetry is speaking painting," as Simonides said, no better illustration of such mutual relation can be found than "King Arthur's Tomb" painted by Rossetti and sung by Morris. Not only do we find among the Pre-Raphaelites, poet-painters, such as Rossetti and Morris, but frequently the painter illustrated or interpreted the poem; and the poet versified the picture of his fellow-artist. Morris' "The Blue Closet" and "The Tune of Seven Towers" were the interpretations of Rossetti's poems, and Rossetti's "Arthur's Tomb" was inspired by Morris' poem of the same name. In fine, it is this close relation between poetry and painting that gave importance to the Pre-Raphaelite movement in the development of the romantic literature of the nineteenth century.

The time of Morris' poem (21) was a hot August noon, a day during which Lancelot had gone leagues of way, in a dazed fashion, knowing only "* * * that where

The Glastonbury gilded towers shine
A lady dwelt, whose name was Guinevere."

As he rode along he mused of the happy garden days at Camelot and of the time long eons back when "she dwelt up in heaven * * * And ruled all things but God." At last he reached a * * "place of apple trees, by the thorn-tree "Wherefrom St. Joseph in the days past preached," and here Guinevere met him, for it was the trysting-place she had named. The painter works under the disadvantage of being able to merely suggest all the antecedent circumstances of the particular event he is depicting; the poet leads us to the crisis. So Morris tells us in a graphic manner of the alternate moods of insatiable longing for Lancelot that Guinevere passed through, and the pitiful struggle of giving him up. Again, as in the "Defence of Guinevere" he dwells upon the magic touch of her fingers, on the beauty of her long golden hair, the "doubtful green" of her gown,—in the glad days. Now her robe is "black, with a long white veil only," and "the glow has left her face and hands." So changed is she that he says: * * * fling

Your arms and hair about me, lest I fear
You are not Guinevere but some other thing."

The passionate and outspoken love of material beauty which has given the epithet, "Fleshly School" to the Neo-Romanticists is here markedly obvious. Guinevere, in her defense before the judges, pleads:

"* * * Dost thou reck
That I am beautiful, Lord, even as you
And your dear mother?"

When Morris wrote this poem he was a new and ardent follower of Rossetti whose ideal type of beauty was one

"Whose speech Truth knows not from her thoughts
Nor Love her body from her soul."

There is a strain, though brief and fitful, of conventional morality here, not found in his "Defense." Guinevere tells of her struggle to forget Arthur's favorite knight, while all the court and all the world sang his praises.

"Was it nought, my agony and strife,
When as day passed by day, year after year,
I found I could not live a righteous life!

She is an expression, too, of the mediaeval religious ideas, an embodiment as one has said of "passionate sin and passionate repentance." There is something pitifully human and strikingly pagan in the cry:

"* * * O yet
If even I go to hell, I cannot choose
But love you, Christ, yea, though I cannot keep
From loving Lancelot; O Christ! must I lose
My own heart's love? see, though I cannot weep,
Yet am I very sorry for my sin."

The resolution to break with Lancelot is still strong when she meets him, and in the strength of this resolution she greets him as he leans upon the tomb:

"* * * Well done, to pray
For Arthur, my dear Lord, the greatest king
That ever lived."

The human craving for love and the living promptings to purity are soon at war again, however, and the beautiful, sensuous queen yields to Lancelot's wild entreaties.

Morris evidently forgot that in mediaeval times the vows of a widow were more sacred than those of a wife. In his later poems, he changes
this note of dramatic, fatalistic realism to a brooding, idealistic realism. Swinburne, who mirrors so many of Morris' moods, says of this bit of poetry: 'Where among other and minor poets of his time and country is one comparable for perception and experience of tragic truth, of subtle and noble, terrible and piteous things? Where, a touch of passion at once so broad and so sure?'

The passages quoted will suffice to show what intensity of passion, what wild, ungovernable emotion, Morris has put into the poem, that are not found in Rossetti's picture, save in the hungry eyes of Lancelot, and his eager gesture. Rossetti's Guinevere is a melancholy martyr; Morris', a proud beauty, fearing sin only because of its consequences.

Of the two artists, Morris has followed Malory the more closely in his description of their demonstrative agony at parting. In the end—invisible in the painting—Guinevere conquers by slaying, as she thinks, Arthur at his request. But Lancelot had only swooned and when he rose, he heard the ever present mediaeval bell: the bell, we read in Malory, that called him to live henceforth a life of prayer and alms-giving.

It is interesting to note in concluding our remarks on this part of the Arthurian legend, that Tennyson has avoided all grounds for criticisms, both artistic and moral, by omitting the farewell scene between Lancelot and Guinevere, lest it detract from the interest in his hero, Arthur, and lest he seem to sanction in the nineteenth century—for his epic is allegorical as well as romantic—the crude morality of the thirteenth. Unlike Morris he had no inclination to introduce mediaeval customs and beliefs into his own time, however charming they might be in certain features, viewed through the imagination over the lapse of a half dozen centuries. Morris painted the primitive human instincts at war with pagan ideas of retribution; Tennyson, the Christianized human soul at war with temporal, material interests. We feel pity for the weak humanity of Morris' characters; we are inspired by the heroic struggles of Tennyson's. We can imagine how the reading of Morris' tale could lead to a Paola-and-Francesca tragedy, but Tennyson's lines resound with brave, optimistic faith in the superior beauty and nobility of spiritual love and renunciation. The Pre-Raphaelite has perhaps best reproduced the mediaeval spirit but his poetry will probably not be as universally loved as that of his more conservative, broader-minded contemporary, who was "* * * true to nature, true to art; lover of Immortal Love, uplifter of the human heart!"

Another instance of interpretative painting is that of Rossetti's "Mythic Uther's Wounded Son," an engraving of which accompanies "The Palace of Art" in the Moxon edition of Tennyson. The latter informs us that:

"* * * mythic Uther's deeply wounded son
In some fair space of sloping green
Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
And watched by weeping queens."
The first glance at the picture gives one an impression of a conglomerate mass of figures, an impression similar to that which the first look at Sargent’s “History of Monotheism” in the Boston library leaves. A closer study reveals nine variously crowned queens surrounding the king, who lies sleeping in a barge. His hands are folded in prayer.

Pre-Raphaelitism, more correctly, Rossetti-isms, are literally crowded into this strange composition. The tresses of the queen are long, but not crimped in the conventional waves of his “Proserpine” or “La Donna Della Finestra.” The dreamy faces and drooping eye-lids belong to the ideal of this modern mystic. So do the abnormally long fingers. He has not forgotten to adorn both the coverlet of the king and the rich garments of the queens with his tell-tale scroll design. The apple, too, has been given its due prominence, and poppies peep out of the grass on the shore from which this funeral procession is moving. The barge has impossible sails and rigging, and a censer-like lantern is suspended from the prow. A bell tolls the dirge of the dying knight.

The landscape is a weird composite of Salisbury, the point of embarkation and Glastonbury, the point of destination. It has all the shadow of Malory’s and Tennyson’s conceptions of the beginning of the journey, but none of the sunshine of the landing at Avalon of which the poet-laureate sings. The dusky barge moves mournfully to the opposite shore, on the desolate and barren bank of which stands a little chapel, the only evidence of habitation. If this be Avalon, it is not the

“* * * island valley,
Where falls not hail or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly,” nor does it lie
“Deep meadow’d, happy, fair with orchard lawns,
And bowery hollows crown’d with summer seas.”

It is instead, “a strange gloom in a strange land,” a morbid fancy, morbidly expressed.

Sir Edward Burne-Jones has followed more closely the Malory version (22) of the mysterious departure of the king. The chronicler records that a body brought by strange women in a strange ship, had been buried by a hermit in the chapel at Glastonbury. This statement gave Burne-Jones an opportunity to exercise his architectural tastes. In a court surrounded by three walls, lies Arthur on a canopyed couch, watched over by weeping queens. The roof of the cloister is panelled and richly carved with the exploits of the king, and is upheld with trabeate arches. The painting, never finished, is the possession of C. S. Goldman.

Next to the Guinevere and Arthur legend, none has been more popular than the Sir Galahad and its auxiliary, the Holy Grail, story. Poets and painters and decorators have found in this knight and his wonder-

(22) Malory’s “Morte d’Arthur, Book XXI. chapters 6 and 7.
ful visions, a subject at once rich in suggestive material and replete with fanciful traditions.

"Sir Galahad, a Christmas Mystery," is the third poem in the edition of "The Defence of Guinevere." Morris has here painted Nature in sympathy with the weary, disheartened Galahad. The winter wind "sang a moody tune that went right well" with the knight's own thoughts; the bell sounded dreamy, far-off, in keeping with the lonely wanderer's fancies. The snow drips from his steel-shoes, unheeded; the weeds between the tiles are unnoticed. Here are touches of nature, neither wearisome because of minuteness, nor tedious in number, yet sufficient in accuracy and quantity to give us the hero's environment ere his story is told.

The art of Morris is always that of "creative emotion rather than analyzing intellect." Unlike Holman Hunt, he never has a didactic motive; there is no purely spiritual tone in any of his work, so we are not surprised to find in this poem as in the "Earthly Paradise," instead of moral philosophy, that pathetic emotional conflict between sense and soul, which no writer has described so vividly as Morris. His emotion is contagious. For the time being we feel with Sir Galahad that Palomydes and Lancelot have "chosen the better part," at least, the happier part. For Palomydes will never know Iseult

"* * * to be worse

Than in his happiest dreams he thinks she is;" and Father Lancelot has always the strengthening vision of Guinevere's arms, warm and lithe, about his neck; while Galahad, on the other hand, with no past to comfort him and no future of promise, is alone, unloved, in this indifferent world. A very human pang of envy seizes him when he recalls the scene of the lovers' parting, east of the Palace-pleasure; a pang from which he is aroused by the sharp clang of the chapel bell.

The Christ, with half blood-red and white raiment, appears to comfort the discouraged knight and to remind him of the brevity and shallowness of human happiness. The words are typically Morrisonian:

"But would you for a little time be glad
To make Me sorry long, day after day?"

The Divine Man pictures graphically the remorse of Lancelot when his passion shall have been satiated; the repentance of Palomydes when Iseult shall be no longer a "care" to him. He leaves the knight with the promise of a songful future in a heavenly garden; presumably, the trim, gorgeous and bountiful one of the Middle Ages.

At this point a bier carried by four women in red and green, appears, having been announced by two scarlet-winged angels clad in white. A third angel, bearing a surcoat of white with a red cross, follows. One announces the coming of Sir Percival, Sir Bors, and the former's sister, and bids Galahad go to the north to meet Lancelot. The four women, Margaret of Antioch, Cecily, Lucy and Katherine, respectively, present
him with an hauberk, sword, basnet and surcoat. This is the only sym­bolism, so characteristic of Rossetti and Hunt, that we find in the poem, if we except the Graal itself. The whole scene glows with the abundant opulent color of the Pre-Raphaelites.

As Sir Bors, Sir Percival and his sister enter, we are told briefly and suggestively that

"* * * everywhere
The knights come foil'd from the great quest in vain;
In vain they struggle for the vision fair."

There is a pathetic despondency in the refrain "in vain," as if, Galahad, even after the inspiration of the vision, doubted whether the quest were worth while, since earth held so much that was bright and beautiful. Perhaps it would be as well to

"* * * seek the pleasure of his eyes,
And what his ears with sweetest sounds may fill,
Not fearing Love, lest these things he should kill."

In "The Chapel of Lyonesse," the last of Morris' Arthurian poems, Sir Galahad wonders why Ozana asks him to pray for him, for has he not seen Ozana in a vision, happy with his love's cheek laid to his, and the lover's

"* * * wasted fingers twine
Within the tresses of her hair
That shineth gloriously?"

These two poems have none of the Italian rich intensity of feeling that prevails in Rossetti's ballads and paintings; nor any of the languid tropicalness of the "Earthly Paradise." They resemble more closely the gray melancholy of the Gothic cathedral that this Norman mediaevalist loved, and they represent fairly well the sombre thoughtfulness of the early Pre-Raphaelites.

If we turn from Morris' Galahad to Tennyson's "mild knight," we see instead of a hopeless, despondent, doubting, regretful seeker of the Grail, a hopeful, enthusiastic, confident, glad heart that will not cease to ride

"All arm'd whate'er betide
Until he find the Holy Grail."

To him as to Morris' knight, the looks of ladies are sweet and he battles to save them from shame and thrall, but his heart is drawn above and he keeps it "virgin in work and will."

Tennyson's "Galahad" embodies in a far greater degree than Morris' the mediaeval praise of asceticism and virginity, a circumstance due to the fact that the social code of the Pre-Raphaelites was far too liberal to admit of such artificial restraint or limitation as monasticism imposed.
Happiness was the motive of William Morris’ philosophy; duty, that of Tennyson’s. The two views are clearly illustrated in the diverse treatment of the same theme by the two artists. One is keenly sensitive to the physical world; the other, only to the spiritual. Morris’ knight evokes our sympathy; Tennyson’s seems far beyond the need of it. We almost wish the saint-like knight had a few “warm faults.”

It is this peerlessly pure Sir Galahad that Rossetti drew for the 1867 Moxon edition of Tennyson. The picture, as a whole, is symbolic, a fine example of the contradiction of the original Pre-Raphaelite principle, to paint things as they are, to be simple and direct. Symbolism is a tax on the intellect and the idea of the charter Pre-Raphaelites was to let a picture tell its own story. The altar-rail is woven of thorn-wood; over its tiled roof the grape-vine is twining; the charger wears a blanket embroidered with a cross; Sir Galahad’s cape bears the same emblem; his staff is strung with crowns. Could the artist have packed more symbolism into a single composition? However, art has not suffered, and we have the happy union of art for art’s sake and art for story’s sake, though Rossetti probably had in mind only the first purpose.

Galahad is washing in some holy water at a shrine. (Such an act is not mentioned by Tennyson but Rossetti never posed as an illustrator, and Tennyson was an advocate of liberal interpretation.) The knight’s face is dreamy and delicate; he has a low, broad forehead, a Roman nose, a pointed chin, Rossetti lips and neck. His hair hangs loose over his shoulders.

Below the altar five maidens are praying, one of whom is ringing a bell. In both the Tennyson and Morris versions, the chapel is empty to Sir Galahad and the bell is a sharp summons to prayer. The silver vessels, the lighted tapers, the smoking incense, the snowy altar-cloth—all these Rossetti has carefully detailed as accessories of the Roman church which appealed so strongly to him. He loved its mysterious, gorgeous imposing ceremony with the same degree of intensity that Morris loved the crude simplicity and independence of the Teutonic faith.

Buchanan in his “Fleshly School of Painting” says that Rossetti noticeably shows himself an imitator rather than a creator in his illustrations of Tennyson (23), but there are few elements in this composition that interpret, much less translate, line for line, the poem. Indeed, Rossetti, least of any of the Pre-Raphaelites, adhered to orthodox interpretations of literature. For this reason he can hardly be correctly called an illustrator of aught save his own ideas and emotions. Tennyson’s hero is wide-awake, real, active; Rossetti’s is dreamy, mystical, and his listening attitude is correspondingly mild. His features resemble those of the hero of “Lancelot Escaping from Guinevere’s Chamber.” The maidens of the picture lack animation and at first glance can scarcely be distinguished as individuals, so indistinct are the outlines of the separate figures.

What is true of Rossetti as an interpreter of Tennyson, is true, like—

(23) Layard’s “Tennyson and his Pre-Raphaelite Illustrators.”
wise, of Burne-Jones. His “Sir Galahad, of 1858, is a pictorial rendering
of his vision of the second and last stanzas as Rossetti’s was of the third
stanza of the poem, rather than a translation of words into a pen and
ink sketch. The background of his picture was suggested by the verses:

“How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favors fall!” and

“So pass I hostel, hall and grange;
By bridge and ford, by park and pale.”

“All armed I ride” was sufficient for this accurate student of armor
to clothe his maiden knight in all the paraphernalia of a soldier of the
Middle Ages, and to provide the proud charger with trappings equally
handsome and elaborate.

The pure, spiritual face of Sir Galahad is the one Burne-Jones sees
behind the words:

“But all my heart is drawn above * * *”
“So keep I fair through faith and prayer * * *
Until I find the Holy Grail.”

These data he compounded for his drawing. Sir Galahad rides by
a park in which a multitude of maidens are playing on musical instru-
ments. He appears oblivious to all their charms, for his gaze is straight
ahead, his thoughts far from the fair, lithe maidens and their sweet
music. His face has a tender feminine beauty, but is strong with the
strength of youth and purity. It is interesting to note that each of the
three Pre-Raphaelites who have used this subject, has chosen a differ-
ent mood of the knight. Morris has turned his poetical lens upon him
in his doubting moments; Rossetti has painted him, rapt in glorious
visions; Burne-Jones has sketched him absorbed in action.

Several of the distinguishing traits of Burne-Jones’ peculiar genius
are found in this so-called illustration: the strange musical instruments,
the armor of the knight, the trappings of his steed, the absence of
head-dress for all the figures, the flowers—are they roses?—tucked away
in one corner, the Burne-Jones clinging drapery about the maidens, and
lastly, the weary doleful countenances of the musicians and the unearth-
ly look of the knight.

Burne-Jones has used the Grail motif in decorative as well as in
pictorial art. On a tapestry at Stanmore Hall, designed for Mr. D’Arey
and executed by William Morris, we see the knight successful in his
search. The central figures are three angels with enfoldiing Burne-Jones
wings. In the background naked trees tower towards the sky; in the
foreground bloom a few flowers. To the right is an altar, reached by
three steps and roofed by a segmented arch. On the altar stands the ta-
bble with the Holy Grail. Three winged maidens kneel with bowed heads

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behind the sacred table. At the left are the two companions of Sir Gala-
had. The knight has prostrated himself in front of the altar, the large
well-made gate of which is open; his shield lies in the dust at his feet.
One wonders at the inconsistency of having a heavy iron gate at the front
of the altar since it is easily accessible from the three other sides.

Below the panels of the Stanmore tapestry is a verdura representing
deer in a thicket. On the branches of the trees hang the shields of Ar-
thur’s knights, each with its proper heraldic design. The border, very
conventional, is interesting only to connoisseurs of heraldry and as a
fantastic expression of Burne-Jones’ knowledge of the subject. In 1895
he devised all the scenery, fittings, and costumes for Sir Henry Irving’s
presentation of “King Arthur” at the Lyceum Theatre. His creative
imagination loved to produce rare forms of armor based on leafage
of plants and scales of serpents. He often combined chain and mail armor.

A similar treatment was used by him in the decoration of the title
page of Sebastian Evans’ translation from the French of “The High His-
tory of the Holy Grail.” His architectural instincts, not so strong as
those of his fellow-craftsman, Morris, are nevertheless, easily discerned.
Over the sacred cup is the ecclesiastical ciborium, supported by six
baseless, tapering pillars. The conventional screen drapery at the back
of the altar hides the mystery. The blood drips from the vaulted dome
into the cup. Outside the sacred enclosure, stars light the dark sky, and
a border of irises, daisies and lilies completes the beautiful page.

Besides this design he has others on Arthurian subjects, all executed
at Kelmscott; one of Syr Percyville of Gales, one of Sire Degravaunt,
and another of Syr Yasambraces. Of them all, those for the bindings of
“Morte d’ Arthur” are the most artistic. The front represents the
Round Table, with the king and queen and two knights, sitting around
it. The vacant Seat Perilous occupies a position between the two groups.
A priest enters, reading. The back cover represents the revelation of
the Grail by an angel to some knight. The background is rich blue;
the rest is in soft greys, blues, pink and heliotrope. The angel looks un-
supported in his flight and the knight is ragged and emaciated. The
architecture in the design is some church-like edifice which the angel
is about to enter.

As a true illustrator, however, of the Grail legend, Henry Ryland—
not a member of the P. R. B.—deserves more praise than the Pre-Ra-
phaelites just cited. He has taken Malory’s description of the “Proces-
sion of the Sangreal” (Book XVII. ch. 20) for his theme. As in Burne-
Jones’ tapestry, the principle of unity in grouping is very obvious. The
narrative states that four angels bore the bishop in his chair, that two
held candles at the shrine of the Sangreal, and a second pair preceded
the four bearing the chair. So we have four figures in each side of the
composition, and the chair of the bishop balancing the table of the San-
greal. The angels, like those of Burne-Jones, are sexless; like his are the
strong wings, the aureoles, the swathing drapery, bare feet reflected in
the polished floor, and figured tapestry for a background. But the face
of the bishop is more masculine than Burne-Jones would have had it, and the angels with two exceptions, are more cheerful of countenance than those of Burne-Jones' dreams.

Ryland has omitted none of the details of Malory. He has the bishop's cross, the angel's towel, the bleeding spear, the box with the sacred "ubbly," the motto "Ye shall see now a part of my secrets and of hid things," and the three vessels of incense. A la Burne-Jones he has added as an ornament to the platform, the shields of Sir Galahad, Sir Percival and Sir Bors, the three successful seekers. We will now turn to Rossetti's treatment of the Grail story.

"The nebulous splendours and fervours of the Morte d'Arthur," says Stephens, "suited Rossetti well." In his "Damsel of the San Grael" he has his favorite full length figure, erect, quiet, with brooding eyes directed to a "something" seen over her shoulder. She wears quaint gauntlets, carries the mystic bread with a napkin over it in a basket, and a wafer poised on the thumb of one hand. She is clad in a simple, flowing robe. A dove is in the aureole encircling her head. The theme is one that appeals to the spiritual rather than the sensuous nature, and consequently Rossetti is less at home with it than with some of his other themes.

Rossetti's design for the decoration of the Oxford library dealt with Lancelot in his search for the Grail. This figure too is life-size. The forbidden knight lies asleep before the shrine which he can not enter. In his dreams he sees Guinevere, standing in gay apparel, with arms stretched up to an apple-tree, looking at her lover with pride and pity.

Rossetti's "How Sir Galahad, Sir Bors and Sir Percival were fed with the San Grael" is a fourth pictorial translation of Malory's story. On the right is the altar from which the damsel of the San Grael hands the cup to Sir Galahad, who is stooping over the body of Percival's sister. The latter has a green robe and red mantle. An aureoled lily grows at her feet. A dove behind the altar carries the sacred casket. Beyond the altar rail one sees a row of white-robed, scarlet-winged, cloud-surrounded angels. The Rosstti-isms, mentioned frequently in previous pages, need no further comment.

Of the lesser, purely Arthurian stories, that of Merlin and Vivien has been the most popular among the Pre-Raphaelites.

"Mythic Uther's diddled son
Packed in a trunk with cramp'd limbs awry,
Spell-fettered by a Siren, limp and lean,
And at least twelve heads high,"

is the description given by Mr. Punch of the painting that brought Burne-Jones three thousand seven hundred and eighty guineas. It is one of the few cases of this idealist's pictorial interpretations of another's literary production.

The gray-haired seer, fantastically turbaned, reclines on a curiously gnarled trunk of a hawthorn tree. He looks with bewildered, ques-
tioning eyes at his fair charmer to whom he has just handed the precious volume of enchantments. His mouth is very serious. He seems surprised at his own lack of resisting power. There is not a trace of lover's look, pride or passion in his countenance. One hand hangs heavy and listless at his side; the other plucks nervously at some shrubbery.

Wily Vivien looks innocent as she glances languidly from the book of charms to her victim. Her body from the waist down is abnormally long, measuring about four times the length from shoulder to waist. She wears twists of gold in her serpent-like coils of hair. Her draped gown is of purple with steel-gray light. Tennyson clothes her in

"Samite that more exprest than bid her;" in color
"* * * like the satin-shining palm
On sallows in the windy gleams of March."

She is true to Burne-Jones' ideal in being bare-headed, bare-footed, of long proportions; she is walking in a garden, reading a book.

She is not the Nimue of the old traditions (24) who was ever weary of Merlin and fain would have been delivered of him, for she was afeard of him because he was a devil's son." She is the Vivien that "clung to him * * * follow'd Merlin all the way. (25)

Ev'n to the wild woods of Broceliande * *" until he "* * yielded, told her all the charm and slept."

In the Malory legend the fair enchantress is the Lady of the Lake, whose victim disappears under a rock. Tennyson's Merlin is swallowed by an oak; and his Vivien is the jealous, slander-loving, unsuccessful seducer of King Arthur.

Frederick Sandys' conception of the witch is of a more voluptuous type. He has painted her as she muses in anticipation of her triumph over the great magician. If we look upon Vivien as the symbol of the sensuous in life, then Sandys has succeeded better than Burne-Jones. She has a calm confidence in her face; the beautiful siren eyes are half-closed, the upper lip is firm and slightly scornful. Her hair is dark and falls, unconfined, over her shoulders. The neck is Rossetti-like in circumference and length; the bosom, broad and full. In the execution of her hands, Sandys surpasses his master, Rossetti. They are perfect in form and proportion. The artist has over-estimated, however, the weight of the delicate lace scarf, which falls over the one wrist, indenting it abnormally. Vivien has the accessories of dress, too, of which Rossetti was so fond; beads, and ear-rings, and flowers in her hand. Peacock feathers form an appropriate background for the portrait. A suggestive apple lies on the sill. The painting is praiseworthy for its splendid color and careful technique.

Of the two compositions, that of Burne-Jones shows the greater originality and freedom of treatment; it serves both as a literary and

(24) Malory's "Morte d' Arthur." Book IV., ch. i.
(25) Tennyson's "Merlin and Vivien;" l. 50 ff.
an artistic picture. Sandys' highly conventional treatment shows the skill rather than the imagination of an artist. Burne-Jones' "Vivien" has the fascination of idealistic mystery lacking in Sandys' more realistic conception.

This last named Neo-Pre-Raphaelite has chosen another beautiful deceiver from Arthur's household, for pictorial representation—Morgan le Fay, (26) Arthur's sister and enemy. She had none of the soft persuasiveness or artful deception of Vivien; hers was a cruel, envious, revengeful nature. It is in depicting the deep, dark evil of the soul that Sandys is at his best. In his "Medea" and "Morgan le Fay" he "strikes the Wagnerian note of the tragedy of heroes, superhuman, elemental." Because of this sombre, tragic, Teutonic intensity, Sandys is not a popular artist.

Morgan le Fay not only envied Guinevere the love of Lancelot but she envied Arthur his guilelessness, the admiration and love of his knights, and his world-wide fame. The Excalibur entrusted to her for safe-keeping, she gave to Accolon, her lover, that with it he might slay the king. (27) Foiled of her purpose by Nimue she fashioned a poisoned mantle for her brother; but again, the Lady of the Lake thwarts her (28) diabolical plans.

Sandys comes upon Morgan le Fay at the moment when she is contemplating the Nessus shirt, just completed. The loom stands back of her in front of a window through which one sees the fields of Camelot. On the rush-strewn floor are books of charms and fantastically shaped vessels. The weaver stands, lamp in hand, viewing her work. Her body seems to shrink from her unnatural and yet voluntary task, and the repellant (?) attitude is further intensified by the forcible tossing back of the head. Her hands are slender, not so beautifully shaped as Vivien's; her fingers try the texture of the magic garment. Her beautiful face looks worn and weary with the conflict of love and hatred, of envy and revenge; her colorless lips are parted in a sigh of mingled remorse and deadly determination. Her dress, made of some rich weighty stuff and elaborately embroidered with graceful snakes, curious birds and peculiar designs, falls in a few heavy folds. She wears a leopard skin as an apron.

A handsome cabinet, richly carved, stands open, ready to receive the garment when Morgan le Fay shall have finished its inspection.

Among the later Pre-Raphaelites, Algernon Charles Swinburne in his "Tristram of Lyonesse" (1882) stands the closest to the early group of free, spontaneous, sincere artists. In his lyrical qualities he reminds us of William Morris, but his lyricism is of a more buoyant character than that of the "Earthly Paradise," and impregnated with the passion of Morris' Arthurian poems. His insatiable love of beauty leads him here, as elsewhere, into long, involved exaltations of his idol that weary the reader despite their grace and sweetness. In the last two qualities

(28) ibid, Book IV, ch. 8 ff.
he resembles his master, Keats. In his picturesqueness and vividness he reflects Dante. Unlike Morris and his other Pre-Raphaelite contemporaries he admires the classics, knows them well, and absorbs what is beautiful and artistic in them. "Tristram" abounds in alliterations and double epithets, Homeric in effect: "Sea-satiate," "bruised with buffets of the brine," "Grew April-hearted," "Burns not thy heart with righteousness of rage, Yet, and the royal rancour toward thy foe retributive of ruin?"

He fails, on the whole, to attain to classic simplicity and dignity and calmness, and is romantically unconventional. When all has been said, he is Swinburne, a combination of classicism and romanticism, whose claim to the title Pre-Raphaelite rests upon his fearless, masterly spirit of individualism. In the "Tristram" volume are included an Ode to Athens, an expression of his classic Grecian taste; and a poem to Victor Hugo, an expression of his love of modern liberalism.

Like the rest of the Pre-Raphaelites he found his inspiration for Arthurian subjects in the Morte d'Arthur. But his lovers of "fire and foam" seem but distantly related to the simple, mild creatures of Malory. The keynote is struck in the prelude in which the motif, love, resounds again and again in unforgettable cadence.

"Love that keeps all the choir of lives in chime;
Love, that is blood within the veins of time;

* * *
So strong that heaven, could love bid heaven farewell,
Would turn to fruitless and unflowering hell;
So sweet that hell, to hell could love be given,
Would turn to splendid and sonorous heaven."

Swinburne begins his lay with the record of Malory—Tristram's bringing Iseult from Ireland to be Mark of Cornwall's bride. Malory dwells upon the prowess of the knight, giving the love story as a mere incident in the series of tournaments and battles of which Tristram is the hero. Swinburne's theme is the fate-ordained love between the matchless Iseult and peerless Tristram.

Iseult's body sways flower-like from slight foot to slender head after the fashion of Burne-Jones' maidens, but unlike in this, that she is glad and her

Clear cheeks and throat and tender temples have (had)
Such maiden heat as if a rose's blood
Beat in the live heart of a lily-bud" (29) and

"What her light hand leant upon
Grew blossom-scented."

So Rossetti's Blessed Damozel transferred her life to all she touched.

(29) Tristram of Lyonesse I, 111 ff.
Swinburne’s Tristram “moved like the morning * * * a light to look on and be loved.” “Song sprang between his lips and hands” so that

“* * * all whose hearts were fed upon it sighed
Silent, and in them all the fire of tears
Burned as wine drunken not with lips but ears.” (30)

Is it a mere coincidence that he should use a romantic model for his heroine and a classic one for his hero? May it be that he was compelled to resort to classic masculine models because of their scarcity and inferiority among Pre-Raphaelites?

A second point of difference between the 1485 and 1882 versions is that Malory’s Iseult loves Tristram before she sets sail for Cornwall, while Swinburne, with artistic foresight places the exciting force in the magic potion. Not until Iseult has all unwittingly given the fatal cup to Tristram as a refreshment after his hard rowing against the storm, does the innocent mutual admiration change to burning, irresistible, deathless passion.

The first of the few touches of Christianity—a Pre-Raphaelite element due to the prevalence of mediaevalism—is the reference in both stories to the best wine’s being kept by the servants. Had Walter Scott, a sort of ante-PreRaphaelite, chosen this subject he would have dwelt on the encounter of Tristram at the Castle of Pluere, and on his multitudinous adventures before he reached King Mark’s. But Swinburne, who, unlike Scott, is always at ease in the presence of lovers, prefers to linger with the soul-satisfied pair during their “sea travel” and to escort them to the royal portal. Of the crafty deception practiced upon King Mark, the bitter-sweet joy of the guilty ones, there is merely a colorless record in Malory, who in turn quotes from the “Frensshe” book.

The entrance of Sir Palamede in Swinburne’s poem is appropriately clad in mystery and his bold request for Queen Iseult as a reward for his minstrelsy adds to the romanticism of the tale. In both narratives the sanctity of an oath holds precedence over all other moral obligations.

The bower scene, so strongly materialistic and sensuous, is Swinburne’s elaboration of the brief statement: “Thus they lived with joy and play a long time.”

A new motif enters to supplement the one of the prelude, viz., “As the dawn loves the sunlight I love thee.” A variation of it, bearing the burden of unrest and yearning, and of the transitoriness of beauty and love, occurs in Tristram’s soliloquy spoken while in exile in Brittany:

(30) Tristram of Lyonesse I., 1. 95 ff.
*The Blessed Damozel, 46-47.
“Night is kissed once of dawn and dies, and day
But touches twilight and is rapt away.” (31)

The close kinship with Nature, a part of the Pre-Raphalite creed, followed from afar by all save Morris, Swinburne feels in its intensity. His pantheism savors of Tieck's:

“Hath he (God) such eyes as, when the shadows flee,
The sun looks out with to salute the sea?

* * *
The heart of the ancient hills and his were one;
The winds took counsel with him, and the sun
Spake comfort; in his ears the shout of birds
Was as the sound of clear sweet-spirited words. (32)

The melodious strain sounds like an echo of the simple spontaneous music of Walter von der Vogelweide.

Not alone in his appreciative love of Nature but in his genial affection for children and his insight into and sympathy with animal life, Swinburne is superior to his Pre-Raphaelite predecessors. He pities the unloved Iseult who can

“* * * never know
The loveliness of laughing love that lives
On little lips of children.”

It is the hound Hodain that comforts the lonely, loved Iseult.

The prayer of Iseult at Tintagil is strikingly like that of Guinevere in Morris' "Defence." It is the second instance of mediaeval Christianity in the poem. As yet she does not know of Tristram's bride of the "fair hands."

“I, can I draw thee me-ward, can I seek,
Who love thee not, to love me? seeing how weak,
Lord, all this love I bear thee is,
And how much is my strong love more than this,
My love that I love man with, that I bear
Him sinning thru me sinning? wilt thou care,
God, for this love, if love be any, alas,
In me to give thee, though long since there was,
How long, when I too, Lord, was clean, even I,
That now am unclean till the day I die.” (33)

Interspersed among the wild pleading for mercy the pitiful yearning for love, and incoherent accusations of fate, are the ballad refrains

(31) Tristram of Lyonesse, III., b. 45, 46.
(32) Tristram of Lyonesse.
(33) Tristram of Lyonesse V., l. 52 ff.
from wind and sea, classically simple and grand. The climax of the intense strain is reached in Iseult's exultant, fearless devotion:

"Let all else, all thou wilt of evil be
But no doom, none, dividing him and me."

After the reunion of the lovers, the narratives diverge widely: Malory's to numerous jousts and tournaments in which Iseult of Cornwall is always a shining figure; Swinburne's to the happy days at Joyous Gard, the wife's weary vigil, and finally, Tristram's return to Brittany where he is nursed by the heart-broken but faithful wife.

When the Swan arrived bearing the loved Iseult to his dying bed "the far first refluent ray

Filled all the hollow darkness full with day,"

and both lay dead—in peace. The sea became their shroud. In the Malory version King Mark slays the lover as he is harping to his lady, who dies in a swoon upon Tristram's cross.

It is the latter tradition that Tennyson follows in his "Last Tournament." King Mark upon the pair just as Tristram has swung the ruby carcanet, Guinevere's tourney prize, about her throat as a love and peace offering; for he dared not tell his exacting lady of his marriage to that other Iseult across the sea. Tennyson's Mark is a more human husband than Arthur, but lacks the latter's finer qualities. He is jealous, cruel, vindictive; his one redeeming quality is his love for Iseult. The catastrophe is perhaps more true to life than Swinburne's, but not so strangely beautiful.

With the consideration of Swinburne's treatment of the Arthuriad, we come to the close, practically, of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, as such. Indeed, even the early Pre-Raphaelites, with the exception of Holman Hunt who remained a realist in treatment, gradually modified and finally abandoned their realistic principles, and became idealists, each guided by his own God-given light, and all more or less influenced by the great genius of the school, Rossetti.

The Neo-Pre-Raphaelites, notably Swinburne, were heirs to the spirit of individualism that pervaded the idealistic practise of the artist Pre-Raphaelites. They did not follow the realistic theories of the enthusiastic practitioners of the years immediately following the organization of the Brotherhood. Swinburne's cosmopolitan interest in the world about him is far removed from the ascetism of Rossetti, and his scholarly familiarity with the classic languages and his fluent use of them differentiates him from the Gothic Morris who hated everything named classic. Morris and Swinburne, however, were alike in sharing a love for the romantic past, a passion for sensuous beauty, a strain of ardent eroticism; and their art in common, was archaistic, ornate, rich and melodious.

No one who considers the increasingly large editions of their writ-
ings and the growing popularity of their paintings, can doubt that the Pre-Raphaelites succeeded in interesting the modern world in old themes, despite their so-called affectations, their crudities and their abnormal imagination.

While it is true that an artist should represent and reflect his own time, its ambitions, its needs, its meaning, it is also true as one of the revivers of the Arthuriad says, that “neither epic nor romance of chivalrous quest or classic war is obsolete yet, or ever can be; there is nothing in the past extinct. * * * (Life) is omnipresent and eternal and forsakes neither Athens nor Jerusalem, Camelot nor Troy, Argonaut nor Crusades, to dwell, as she does with equal good will, among modern appliances in London and New York.”

Since it is true that life is omnipresent and eternal, and made of many moods and many minds, and since there are “diversities of gifts,” it is both vain and unwise to demand that “the dreamer of dreams” shall “set the crooked straight” with strains of classic eloquence and lofty morality, for “* * if indeed

In some old garden ‘he’ has wrought
And made fresh flowers spring up from hoarded seed,
And fragrance of old days and deeds has brought
Back to folk weary; all was not for naught,
No little part it was for ‘him’ (me) to play
The idle singer of an empty day.”

Nor can it be denied that the storied canvases of the Pre-Raphaelites, with their profuseness of color and quaint expression have done more to brighten life and interpret its feeling, than the sombre, lifeless grays and browns of the academicians, who pronounced the work of the innovators vulgar and vague and inartistic.

It is probable that in accordance with past literary history, and pictorial also, that a reaction from fantastic romanticism to classic realism, will soon begin—perhaps has already begun. The literature and art of the future will always bear the mark of the brave sincerity, and the yearning desire for Truth and Beauty, that the Pre-Raphaelites sought in an age when selfish materialism and lifeless conventionality were sapping the sweetness and simplicity from English life and art.
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