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APPENDIX

The Lady of Shalott

Part I

| | |
|---|----|
| On either side the river lie Long fields of barley and of rye, That clothe the wold and meet the sky; And thro' the field the road runs by To many tower'd Camelot; | 5 |
| And up and down the people go, Gazing where the lilies blow Round an island there below, The island of Shalott. | |
| Willows whiten, aspens quiver, Little breezes dusk and shiver Thro' the wave that runs for ever By the island in the river Flowing down to Camelot. | 10 |
| Four gray walls, and four gray towers, Overlook a space of flowers, And the silent isle imbowers The Lady of Shalott. | 15 |
| By the margin, willow-veil'd, Slide the heavy barges trail'd By slow horses; and unhail'd The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd Skimming down to Camelot: | 20 |
| But who hath seen her wave her hand? Or at the casement seen her stand? Or is she known in all the land, The Lady of Shalott? | 25 |
| Only reapers, reaping early Inamong the bearded barley, Hear a song that echoes cheerly From the river winding clearly Down to tower'd Camelot: | 30 |
| And by the moon the reaper weary, Piling sheaves in uplands airy, Listening, whispers, 'Tis the fairy Lady of Shalott.' | 35 |

Part II

There she weaves by night and day
 A magic web with colours gay.
 She has heard a whisper say,
 A curse is on her if she stay 40

To look down to Camelot.
 She knows not what the curse may be,
 And so she weaveth steadily,
 And little other care hath she,
 The Lady of Shalott. 45

And moving thro' a mirror clear
 That hangs before her all the year,
 Shadows of the world appear.
 There she sees the highway near
 Winding down to Camelot: 50
 There the river eddy whirls,
 And there the surly village-churls,
 And the red cloaks of market girls,
 Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad, 55
 An abbot on an ambling pad,
 Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
 Or long hair'd page in crimson clad,
 Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
 And sometimes thro' the mirror blue 60
 The knights come riding two and two:
 She hath no loyal knight and true,
 The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights 65
 To weave the mirror's magic sights,
 For often thro' the silent nights
 A funeral, with plumes and lights
 And music, went to Camelot:
 Or when the moon was overhead, 70
 Came two young lovers lately wed;
 'I am half sick of shadows,' said
 The Lady of Shalott.

Part III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
 He rode between the barley-sheaves,
 The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves, 75

- And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott. 80
- The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like so much branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily 85
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armor rung,
Beside remote Shalott. 90
- All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot. 95
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.
- His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd; 100
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river 105
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra lira,' by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.
- She left the web, she left the loom
She made three paces thro' the room, 110
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side; 115
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Part IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
 The pale yellow woods were waning,
 The broad stream in his bank complaining, 120
 Heavily the low sky raining

 Over tower'd Camelot;
 Down she came and found a boat
 Beneath a willow left afloat,
 And round about the prow she wrote 125
 The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
 Like some bold seer in a trance,
 Seeing all his own mischance—
 With a glassy countenance 130
 Did she look to Camelot.

And at the closing of the day
 She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
 The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott. 135

Lying, robed in snowy white
 That loosely flew to left and right—
 The leaves upon her falling light—
 Thro' the noises of the night—
 She floated down to Camelot: 140
 And as the boat-head wound along
 The willowy hill and fields among,
 They heard her singing her last song,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy, 145
 Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
 Till her blood was frozen slowly,
 And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
 Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.

For ere she reach'd upon the tide 150
 The first house by the water-side,
 Singing her last song she died,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony
 By garden-wall and gallery, 155
 A gleaming shape she floated by,

Dead-pale between the houses high,
 Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs the came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame, 160
And around the prow they read her name,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer; 165
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
 All the knights at Camelot.

But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, 'She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace, 170
 The Lady of Shalott.'

Morte d'Arthur Book 18**Chapter IX**

How Sir Launcelot rode to Astolat, and received a sleeve to wear upon his helm at the request of a maid.

MADAM, said Sir Launcelot, I allow your wit, it is of late come since ye were wise. And therefore, madam, at this time I will be ruled by your counsel, and this night I will take my rest, and tomorrow by time I will take my way toward Winchester. But wit you well, said Sir Launcelot to the queen, that at that jousts I will be against the king, and against all his fellowship. Ye may there do as ye list, said the queen, but by my counsel ye shall not be against your king and your fellowship. For therein be full many hard knights of your blood, as ye wot well enough, it needeth not to rehearse them. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, I pray you that ye be not displeased with me, for I will take the adventure that God will send me.

And so upon the morn early Sir Launcelot heard mass and brake his fast, and so took his leave of the queen and departed. And then he rode so much until he came to Astolat, that is Guildford; and there it happed him in the eventide he came to an old baron's place that hight Sir Bernard of Astolat. And as Sir Launcelot entered into his lodging, King Arthur espied him as he did walk in a garden beside the castle, how he took his lodging, and knew him full well. It is well, said King Arthur unto the knights that were with him in that garden beside the castle, I have now espied one knight that will play his play at the jousts to the which we be gone toward; I undertake he will do marvels. Who is that, we pray you tell us? said many knights that were there at that time. Ye shall not wit for me, said the king, as at this time. And so the king smiled, and went to his lodging.

So when Sir Launcelot was in his lodging, and unarmed him in his chamber, the old baron and hermit came to him making his reverence, and welcomed him in the best manner; but the old knight knew not Sir Launcelot. Fair sir, said Sir Launcelot to his host, I would pray you to lend me a shield that were not openly known, for mine is well known. Sir, said his host, ye shall have your desire, for meseemeth ye be one of the likeliest knights of the world, and therefore I shall shew you friendship. Sir, wit you well I have two sons that were but late made knights, and the eldest hight Sir Tirre, and he was hurt that same day he was made knight, that he may not ride, and his shield ye shall have; for that is not known I dare say but here, and in no place else. And my youngest son hight Lavaine, and if it please you, he shall ride with you unto that jousts; and he is of his age strong and wight, for much my heart giveth unto you that ye should be a noble knight, therefore I pray you, tell me your name, said Sir Bernard. As for that, said Sir Launcelot, ye must hold me excused as at this time, and if God give me grace to speed well at the jousts I shall come again and tell you. But I pray you, said Sir Launcelot, in any wise let me have your son, Sir Lavaine, with me,

and that I may have his brother's shield. All this shall be done, said
 Sir Bernard. 45

This old baron had a daughter that was called that time the Fair
 Maiden of Astolat. And ever she beheld Sir Launcelot wonderfully;
 and as the book saith, she cast such a love unto Sir Launcelot that she
 could never withdraw her love, wherefore she died, and her name
 was Elaine le Blank. So thus as she came to and fro she was so hot in 50
 her love that she besought Sir Launcelot to wear upon him at the
 jousts a token of hers. Fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, an if I grant
 you that, ye may say I do more for your love than ever I did for lady
 or damosel. Then he remembered him he would go to the jousts
 disguised. And because he had never fore that time borne no manner 55
 of token of no damosel, then he bethought him that he would bear
 one of her, that none of his blood thereby might know him, and then
 he said: Fair maiden, I will grant you to wear a token of yours upon
 mine helmet, and therefore what it is, shew it me. Sir, she said, it is a
 red sleeve of mine, of scarlet, well embroidered with great pearls: 60
 and so she brought it him. So Sir Launcelot received it, and said:
 Never did I erst so much for no damosel. And then Sir Launcelot
 betook the fair maiden his shield in keeping, and prayed her to keep
 that until that he came again; and so that night he had merry rest and
 great cheer, for ever the damosel Elaine was about Sir Launcelot all 65
 the while she might be suffered.

Chapter XIII

How Launcelot was brought to an hermit for to be healed of his wound, and of other matters.

AND when the hermit beheld him, as he sat leaning upon his
 saddle-bow ever bleeding piteously, and ever the knight-hermit thought
 that he should know him, but he could not bring him to knowledge because
 he was so pale for bleeding. What knight are ye, said the hermit, and where
 were ye born? My fair lord, said Sir Launcelot, I am a stranger and a 5
 knight adventurous, that laboureth throughout many realms for to win
 worship. Then the hermit advised him better, and saw by a wound on his
 cheek that he was Sir Launcelot. Alas, said the hermit, mine own lord why
 lain you your name from me? Forsooth I ought to know you of right, for ye
 are the most noblest knight of the world, for well I know you for Sir 10
 Launcelot. Sir, said he, sith ye know me, help me an ye may, for God's
 sake, for I would be out of this pain at once, either to death or to life. Have
 ye no doubt, said the hermit, ye shall live and fare right well. And so the
 hermit called to him two of his servants, and so he and his servants bare
 him into the hermitage, and lightly unarmed him, and laid him in his bed. 15
 And then anon the hermit staunched his blood, and made him to drink
 good wine, so that Sir Launcelot was well refreshed and knew himself; for
 in those days it was not the guise of hermits as is nowadays, for there were
 none hermits in those days but that they had been men of worship and of

prowess; and those hermits held great household, and refreshed people that were in distress. 20

Now turn we unto King Arthur, and leave we Sir Launcelot in the hermitage. So when the kings were come together on both parties, and the great feast should be holden, King Arthur asked the King of Northgalis and their fellowship, where was that knight that bare the red sleeve: Bring him afore me that he may have his laud, and honour, and the prize, as it is right. Then spake Sir Galahad, the haut prince, and the King with the Hundred Knights: We suppose that knight is mischieved, and that he is never like to see you nor none of us all, and that is the greatest pity that ever we wist of any knight. Alas, said Arthur, how may this be, is he so hurt? What is his name? said King Arthur. Truly, said they all, we know not his name, nor from whence he came, nor whither he would. Alas, said the king, this be to me the worst tidings that came to me this seven year, for I would not for all the lands I wield to know and wit it were so that that noble knight were slain. Know ye him? said they all. As for that, said Arthur, whether I know him or know him not, ye shall not know for me what man he is, but Almighty Jesu send me good tidings of him. And so said they all. By my head, said Sir Gawaine, if it so be that the good knight be so sore hurt, it is great damage and pity to all this land, for he is one of the noblest knights that ever I saw in a field handle a spear or a sword; and if he may be found I shall find him, for I am sure he nis not far from this town. Bear you well, said King Arthur, an ye may find him, unless that he be in such a plight that he may not wield himself. Jesu defend, said Sir Gawaine, but wit I shall what he is, an I may find him. 25
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Right so Sir Gawaine took a squire with him upon hackneys, and rode all about Camelot within six or seven mile, but so he came again and could hear no word of him. Then within two days King Arthur and all the fellowship returned unto London again. And so as they rode by the way it happed Sir Gawaine at Astolat to lodge with Sir Bernard thereas was Sir Launcelot lodged. And so as Sir Gawaine was in his chamber to repose him Sir Bernard, the old baron, came unto him, and his daughter Elaine, to cheer him and to ask him what tidings, and who did best at that tournament of Winchester. So God me help, said Sir Gawaine, there were two knights that bare two white shields, but the one of them bare a red sleeve upon his head, and certainly he was one of the best knights that ever I saw joust in field. For I dare say, said Sir Gawaine, that one knight with the red sleeve smote down forty knights of the Table Round, and his fellow did right well and worshipfully. Now blessed be God, said the Fair Maiden of Astolat, that that knight sped so well, for he is the man in the world that I first loved, and truly he shall be last that ever I shall love. Now, fair maid, said Sir Gawaine, is that good knight your love? Certainly sir, said she, wit ye well he is my love. Then know ye his name? said Sir Gawaine. Nay truly, said the damosel, I know not his name nor from whence he cometh, but to say that I love him, I promise you and God that I love him. How had ye knowledge of him first? said Sir Gawaine. 45
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Chapter XIV

How Sir Gawaine was lodged with the lord of Astolat, and there had knowledge that it was Sir Launcelot that bare the red sleeve.

THEN she told him as ye have heard to-fore, and how her father betook him her brother to do him service, and how her father lent him her brother's, Sir Tirre's, shield: And here with me he left his own shield. For what cause did he so? said Sir Gawaine. For this cause, said the damosel, for his shield was too well known among many noble knights. Ah fair damosel, said Sir Gawaine, please it you let me have a sight of that shield. Sir, said she, it is in my chamber, covered with a case, and if ye will come with me ye shall see it. Not so, said Sir Bernard till his daughter, let send for it. 5

So when the shield was come, Sir Gawaine took off the case, and when he beheld that shield he knew anon that it was Sir Launcelot's shield, and his own arms. Ah Jesu mercy, said Sir Gawaine, now is my heart more heavier than ever it was to-fore. Why? said Elaine. For I have great cause, said Sir Gawaine. Is that knight that oweth this shield your love? Yea truly, said she, my love he is, God would I were his love. So God me speed, said Sir Gawaine, fair damosel ye have right, for an he be your love ye love the most honourable knight of the world, and the man of most worship. So me thought ever, said the damosel, for never or that time, for no knight that ever I saw, loved I never none erst. God grant, said Sir Gawaine, that either of you may rejoice other, but that is in a great adventure. But truly, said Sir Gawaine unto the damosel, ye may say ye have a fair grace, for why I have known that noble knight this four-and-twenty year, and never or that day, I nor none other knight, I dare make good, saw nor heard say that ever he bare token or sign of no lady, gentlewoman, ne maiden, at no jousts nor tournament. And therefore fair maiden, said Sir Gawaine, ye are much beholden to him to give him thanks. But I dread me, said Sir Gawaine, that ye shall never see him in this world, and that is great pity that ever was of earthly knight. Alas, said she, how may this be, is he slain? I say not so, said Sir Gawaine, but wit ye well he is grievously wounded, by all manner of signs, and by men's sight more likelier to be dead than to be alive; and wit ye well he is the noble knight, Sir Launcelot, for by this shield I know him. Alas, said the Fair Maiden of Astolat, how may this be, and what was his hurt? Truly, said Sir Gawaine, the man in the world that loved him best hurt him so; and I dare say, said Sir Gawaine, an that knight that hurt him knew the very certainty that he had hurt Sir Launcelot, it would be the most sorrow that ever came to his heart. 10 15 20 25 30 35

Now fair father, said then Elaine, I require you give me leave to ride and to seek him, or else I wot well I shall go out of my mind, for I shall never stint till that I find him and my brother, Sir Lavaine. Do as it liketh you, said her father, for me sore repenteth of the hurt of that noble knight. Right so the maid made her ready, and before Sir Gawaine, making great dole. 40

Then on the morn Sir Gawaine came to King Arthur, and told him how he had found Sir Launcelot's shield in the keeping of the Fair Maiden of Astolat. All that knew I aforehand, said King Arthur, and that caused me 45

I would not suffer you to have ado at the great jousts, for I espied, said King Arthur, when he came in till his lodging full late in the evening in Astolat. But marvel have I, said Arthur, that ever he would bear any sign of any damosel, for or now I never heard say nor knew that ever he bare any token of none earthly woman. By my head, said Sir Gawaine, the Fair Maiden of Astolat loveth him marvellously well; what it meaneth I cannot say, and she is ridden after to seek him. So the king and all came to London, and there Sir Gawaine openly disclosed to all the court that it was Sir Launcelot that jousted best.

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Chapter XV

Of the sorrow that Sir Bors had for the hurt of Launcelot; and of the anger that the queen had because Launcelot bare the sleeve.

AND when Sir Bors heard that, wit ye well he was an heavy man, and so were all his kinsmen. But when Queen Guenever wist that Sir Launcelot bare the red sleeve of the Fair Maiden of Astolat she was nigh out of her mind for wrath. And then she sent for Sir Bors de Ganis in all the haste that might be. So when Sir Bors was come to-fore the queen, then she said: Ah Sir Bors, have ye heard say how falsely Sir Launcelot hath betrayed me? Alas madam, said Sir Bors, I am afeard he hath betrayed himself and us all. No force, said the queen, though he be destroyed, for he is a false traitor-knight. Madam, said Sir Bors, I pray you say ye not so, for wit you well I may not hear such language of him. Why Sir Bors, said she, should I not call him traitor when he bare the red sleeve upon his head at Winchester, at the great jousts? Madam, said Sir Bors, that sleeve-bearing repenteth me sore, but I dare say he did it to none evil intent, but for this cause he bare the red sleeve that none of his blood should know him. For or then we, nor none of us all, never knew that ever he bare token or sign of maid, lady, ne gentlewoman. Fie on him, said the queen, yet for all his pride and bobounce there ye proved yourself his better. Nay madam, say ye never more so, for he beat me and my fellows, and might have slain us an he had would. Fie on him, said the queen, for I heard Sir Gawaine say before my lord Arthur that it were marvel to tell the great love that is between the Fair Maiden of Astolat and him. Madam, said Sir Bors, I may not warn Sir Gawaine to say what it pleased him; but I dare say, as for my lord, Sir Launcelot, that he loveth no lady, gentlewoman, nor maid, but all he loveth in like much. And therefore madam, said Sir Bors, ye may say what ye will, but wit ye well I will haste me to seek him, and find him wheresomever he be, and God send me good tidings of him. And so leave we them there, and speak we of Sir Launcelot that lay in great peril.

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So as fair Elaine came to Winchester she sought there all about, and by fortune Sir Lavaine was ridden to play him, to enchafe his horse. And anon as Elaine saw him she knew him, and then she cried aloud until him. And when he heard her anon he came to her, and then she asked her brother how did my lord, Sir Launcelot. Who told you, sister, that my

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lord's name was Sir Launcelot? Then she told him how Sir Gawaine by his shield knew him. So they rode together till that they came to the hermitage, and anon she alighted. 35

So Sir Lavaine brought her in to Sir Launcelot; and when she saw him lie so sick and pale in his bed she might not speak, but suddenly she fell to the earth down suddenly in a swoon, and there she lay a great while. And when she was relieved, she shrieked and said: My lord, Sir Launcelot, alas why be ye in this plight? and then she swooned again. And then Sir Launcelot prayed Sir Lavaine to take her up: And bring her to me. And when she came to herself Sir Launcelot kissed her, and said: Fair maiden, why fare ye thus? ye put me to pain; wherefore make ye no more such cheer, for an ye be come to comfort me ye be right welcome; and of this little hurt that I have I shall be right hastily whole by the grace of God. But I marvel, said Sir Launcelot, who told you my name? Then the fair maiden told him all how Sir Gawaine was lodged with her father: And there by your shield he discovered your name. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, that me repenteth that my name is known, for I am sure it will turn unto anger. And then Sir Launcelot compassed in his mind that Sir Gawaine would tell Queen Guenever how he bare the red sleeve, and for whom; that he wist well would turn into great anger. 40 45 50

So this maiden Elaine never went from Sir Launcelot, but watched him day and night, and did such attendance to him, that the French book saith there was never woman did more kindlier for man than she. Then Sir Launcelot prayed Sir Lavaine to make aspies in Winchester for Sir Bors if he came there, and told him by what tokens he should know him, by a wound in his forehead. For well I am sure, said Sir Launcelot, that Sir Bors will seek me, for he is the same good knight that hurt me. 55

Chapter XIX

Of the great lamentation of the Fair Maiden of Astolat when Launcelot should depart, and how she died for his love.

MY lord, Sir Launcelot, now I see ye will depart; now fair knight and courteous knight, have mercy upon me, and suffer me not to die for thy love. What would ye that I did? said Sir Launcelot. I would have you to my husband, said Elaine. Fair damosel, I thank you, said Sir Launcelot, but truly, said he, I cast me never to be wedded man. Then, fair knight, said she, will ye be my paramour? Jesu defend me, said Sir Launcelot, for then I rewarded your father and your brother full evil for their great goodness. Alas, said she, then must I die for your love. Ye shall not so, said Sir Launcelot, for wit ye well, fair maiden, I might have been married an I had would, but I never applied me to be married yet; but because, fair damosel, that ye love me as ye say ye do, I will for your good will and kindness show you some goodness, and that is this, that wheresomever ye will beset your heart upon some good knight that will wed you, I shall give you together a thousand pound yearly to you and to your heirs; thus much will I 5 10

give you, fair madam, for your kindness, and always while I live to be your own knight. Of all this, said the maiden, I will none, for but if ye will wed me, or else be my paramour at the least, wit you well, Sir Launcelot, my good days are done. Fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, of these two things ye must pardon me. 15

Then she shrieked shrilly, and fell down in a swoon; and then women bare her into her chamber, and there she made over much sorrow; and then Sir Launcelot would depart, and there he asked Sir Lavaine what he would do. What should I do, said Sir Lavaine, but follow you, but if ye drive me from you, or command me to go from you. Then came Sir Bernard to Sir Launcelot and said to him: I cannot see but that my daughter Elaine will die for your sake. I may not do withal, said Sir Launcelot, for that me sore repenteth, for I report me to yourself, that my proffer is fair; and me repenteth, said Sir Launcelot, that she loveth me as she doth; I was never the causer of it, for I report me to your son I early ne late proffered her bount(e') nor fair behests; and as for me, said Sir Launcelot, I dare do all that a knight should do that she is a clean maiden for me, both for deed and for will. And I am right heavy of her distress, for she is a full fair maiden, good and gentle, and well taught. Father, said Sir Lavaine, I dare make good she is a clean maiden as for my lord Sir Launcelot; but she doth as I do, for sithen I first saw my lord Sir Launcelot, I could never depart from him, nor nought I will an I may follow him. 20
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Then Sir Launcelot took his leave, and so they departed, and came unto Winchester. And when Arthur wist that Sir Launcelot was come whole and sound the king made great joy of him, and so did Sir Gawaine and all the knights of the Round Table except Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred. Also Queen Guenever was wood wroth with Sir Launcelot, and would by no means speak with him, but estranged herself from him; and Sir Launcelot made all the means that he might for to speak with the queen, but it would not be. 40

Now speak we of the Fair Maiden of Astolat that made such sorrow day and night that she never slept, ate, nor drank, and ever she made her complaint unto Sir Launcelot. So when she had thus endured a ten days, that she feebled so that she must needs pass out of this world, then she shrived her clean, and received her Creator. And ever she complained still upon Sir Launcelot. Then her ghostly father bade her leave such thoughts. Then she said, why should I leave such thoughts? Am I not an earthly woman? And all the while the breath is in my body I may complain me, for my belief is I do none offence though I love an earthly man; and I take God to my record I loved never none but Sir Launcelot du Lake, nor never shall, and a clean maiden I am for him and for all other; and sithen it is the sufferance of God that I shall die for the love of so noble a knight, I beseech the High Father of Heaven to have mercy upon my soul, and upon mine innumerable pains that I suffered may be allegeance of part of my sins. For sweet Lord Jesu, said the fair maiden, I take Thee to record, on Thee I was never great offencer against thy laws; but that I loved this noble knight, Sir Launcelot, out of measure, and of myself, good Lord, I might not withstand the fervent love wherefore I have my death. 45
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And then she called her father, Sir Bernard, and her brother, Sir Tirre, and heartily she prayed her father that her brother might write a

letter like as she did indite it: and so her father granted her. And when the letter was written word by word like as she devised, then she prayed her father that she might be watched until she were dead. And while my body is hot let this letter be put in my right hand, and my hand bound fast with the letter until that I be cold; and let me be put in a fair bed with all the richest clothes that I have about me, and so let my bed and all my richest clothes be laid with me in a chariot unto the next place where Thames is; and there let me be put within a barget, and but one man with me, such as ye trust to steer me thither, and that my barget be covered with black samite over and over: thus father I beseech you let it be done. So her father granted it her faithfully, all things should be done like as she had devised. Then her father and her brother made great dole, for when this was done anon she died. And so when she was dead the corpse and the bed all was led the next way unto Thames, and there a man, and the corpse, and all, were put into Thames; and so the man steered the barget unto Westminster, and there he rowed a great while to and fro or any espied it.

Chapter XX

How the corpse of the Maid of Astolat arrived to-fore King Arthur, and of the burying, and how Sir Launcelot offered the mass-penny.

SO by fortune King Arthur and the Queen Guenever were speaking together at a window, and so as they looked into Thames they espied this black barget, and had marvel what it meant. Then the king called Sir Kay, and showed it him. Sir, said Sir Kay, wit you well there is some new tidings. Go thither, said the king to Sir Kay, and take with you Sir Brandiles and Agravaine, and bring me ready word what is there. Then these four knights departed and came to the barget and went in; and there they found the fairest corpse lying in a rich bed, and a poor man sitting in the barget's end, and no word would he speak. So these four knights returned unto the king again, and told him what they found. That fair corpse will I see, said the king. And so then the king took the queen by the hand, and went thither.

Then the king made the barget to be holden fast, and then the king and the queen entered with certain knights with them; and there he saw the fairest woman lie in a rich bed, covered unto her middle with many rich clothes, and all was of cloth of gold, and she lay as though she had smiled. Then the queen espied a letter in her right hand, and told it to the king. Then the king took it and said: Now am I sure this letter will tell what she was, and why she is come hither. So then the king and the queen went out of the barget, and so commanded a certain man to wait upon the barget.

And so when the king was come within his chamber, he called many knights about him, and said that he would wit openly what was written within that letter. Then the king brake it, and made a clerk to read it, and this was the intent of the letter. Most noble knight, Sir Launcelot, now hath death made us two at debate for your love. I was your lover, that

men called the Fair Maiden of Astolat; therefore unto all ladies I make my moan, yet pray for my soul and bury me at least, and offer ye my mass-penny: this is my last request. And a clean maiden I died, I take God to witness: pray for my soul, Sir Launcelot, as thou art peerless. This was all the substance in the letter. And when it was read, the king, the queen, and all the knights wept for pity of the doleful complaints. Then was Sir Launcelot sent for; and when he was come King Arthur made the letter to be read to him. 30

And when Sir Launcelot heard it word by word, he said: My lord Arthur, wit ye well I am right heavy of the death of this fair damosel: God knoweth I was never causer of her death by my willing, and that will I report me to her own brother: here he is, Sir Lavaine. I will not say nay, said Sir Launcelot, but that she was both fair and good, and much I was beholden unto her, but she loved me out of measure. Ye might have shewed her, said the queen, some bounty and gentleness that might have preserved her life. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, she would none other ways be answered but that she would be my wife, outhere else my paramour; and of these two I would not grant her, but I proffered her, for her good love that she shewed me, a thousand pound yearly to her, and to her heirs, and to wed any manner knight that she could find best to love in her heart. For madam, said Sir Launcelot, I love not to be constrained to love; for love must arise of the heart, and not by no constraint. That is truth, said the king, and many knight's love is free in himself, and never will be bounden, for where he is bounden he looseth himself. 35 40 45

Then said the king unto Sir Launcelot: It will be your worship that ye oversee that she be interred worshipfully. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, that shall be done as I can best devise. And so many knights yede thither to behold that fair maiden. And so upon the morn she was interred richly, and Sir Launcelot offered her mass-penny; and all the knights of the Table Round that were there at that time offered with Sir Launcelot. And then the poor man went again with the barget. Then the queen sent for Sir Launcelot, and prayed him of mercy, for why that she had been wroth with him causeless. This is not the first time, said Sir Launcelot, that ye had been displeased with me causeless, but, madam, ever I must suffer you, but what sorrow I endure I take no force. So this passed on all that winter, with all manner of hunting and hawking, and jousts and tourneys were many betwixt many great lords, and ever in all places Sir Lavaine gat great worship, so that he was nobly renowned among many knights of the Table Round. 50 55 60