JAUFRY THE KNIGHT AND THE FAIR BRUNISSENDE:

"A Tale of the Times of King Arthur"

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By

Mary Lafon

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JAUFRY THE KNIGHT
AND THE FAIR BRUNISSENDE
"A TALE OF THE TIMES OF KING ARTHUR"

BY MARY LAFON

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH VERSION
BY ALFRED ELWES.

ILLUSTRATED WITH TWENTY ENGRAVINGS
BY GUSTAVE DORE

MDCCCLVI

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They reached the lofty rock, where, at the summit, they beheld the king hanging thus helpless from the monster's horns.

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Translator's Preface

The description given by one of the authors of *Jaufry* about the origin of the romance, and the evidence afforded by the French adapter concerning the Mss. wherein it is contained, make it unnecessary for me to dwell upon these particulars.

The veneration in which King Arthur's name is held by all lovers of the early romantic history of Britain will give the tale a strong recommendation in such eyes; while the personages with which it deals render the appearance of its characters in an English dress the more pleasing and appropriate.

As answerable for the fashion and material of the costume, I may be permitted to say a few words concerning the rule which has guided me in producing it. Keeping in view that the original romance is a poem in form and composition, I have endeavoured, in my translation, still to preserve the poetic character; and though compelled to base my work upon a prose version, I have tried, within certain limits, rather to restore its original shape, than allow it, by the second ordeal to which it is thus subjected, to lose it altogether. Whether such attempt, however honestly conceived, has been properly carried out, must be determined by my readers.

A.E.

King's Arms, Moorgate Street, London.

Author's Preface

Now of a tale of chivalry, of proper fashion, great allurement, full of-wise and courteous instances, and wherein abound acts of great prowess, strange adventures, assaults, encounters, and dread battles, you may list the telling. An it amuse you, I will relate thereof all that I do know, or that it please you to give ear unto. Let me know only that which ye desire, and if ye be inclined to listen in good sooth. When the minstrel doth indeed recite, neither should hearers buy nor sell, nor in low voice hold council; for thus the recital is lost to him who speaketh, and they methinks who listen cannot find therein great pleasure.

I come, then, to recount to you tidings of the court of good King Arthur; he who was so worthy, so valiant, and so wise, that his name shall never die, but whereof shall eternally be spoken the mighty things he did; and the good knights, all for their prowess known, whom he did gather at his famed Round Table. In that court, the fairest and most loyal that ever shone beneath the stars, all men did find that counsel and that aid of which they stood in need. There triumphed right, and there were wrongs redressed.

There dames and damsels, widows and orphans attacked unjustly, or disinherited by force, ne'er failed to meet with champions. The oppressed of all conditions there did find a refuge, and none e'er sought protection there in vain. Give, then, sweet welcome to a poem the fruit of such good place, and deign to listen unto it in peace.

The troubadour who rhymed it never knew King Arthur; but he heard the entire story told at the court of the king of Aragon, the best of monarchs in this world. *

Don Pedro III., killed in 1213 at the battle of Muret.

A worthy father and a famous son, lord of goodly fortunes, humble in heart, and frank in nature as in mind, the king of Aragon loveth God and feareth Him; he maintaineth faith and loyalty, peace and justice: thus God protecteth him, giveth him the victory when he raiseth his banner against the infidel, and placeth him above all those who are alike worthy and bold. Where shall we seek youthful brows wearing a crown which emitteth rays of greater splendour?

He giveth good gifts to minstrels and to knights, and his court is the resort of all those who are esteemed brave and courteous. It was before him the troubadour heard related, by a stranger-knight of kin to Arthur and Sir Gawain, the song he here hath rhymed; and whereof the first adventure occurred while the king of the Round Table held his court at Carlisle on the day of Pentecost.

Chapter I. The Adventure of the Forest

Twas on the day of Pentecost, a feast which to Carlisle had drawn a host of knights, that Arthur, King of Briton's isle, his crown placed on his brows, and to the old monastic church proceeded to hear mass. And with him went a brilliant train, the Knights of the Round Table. There were Sir Gawain, Lancelot du Lac, Tristrem, and Ivan bold, Eric frank of heart, and Quex the seneschal, Percival and Calogrant, Cliges the worthy, Coedis the handsome knight, and Caravis short i' the arm; the whole of his bright court, indeed, was there, and many more whose names I have forgot.

When mass was done, they to the palace home returned 'mid laughter and loud noise, the thoughts of each on pleasure only bent. Each on arrival gave his humour play. Some spoke of love, and some of chivalry; and some of ventures they were going to seek. Quex at this moment came into the hall, holding a branch of apple in his hand. All made room for him; for there were few who did not fear his tongue and the hard words which it was wont to utter. This baron bold held nothing in respect. E'en of the best he ever said the worst. But this apart, he was a brave stout knight, in council sage, a valiant man of war, and lord of lineage high; but this, his humour and his biting words took from him much that was of right his due.

He, going straightway to the king, thus said:

"Sire, an it please you, it is time to dine."

"Quex," replied Arthur, in an angry tone, "sure thou wast born but to awake my wrath, and out of season ever to discourse. Have I not told thee, ay, a thousand times, naught should induce me to partake of food, when thus my court had met, till some adventure had turned up, some knight were vanquished, or some maid set free. Go sit thee down at bottom of the hall."

Quex went without a word among that joyous throng, where men of all conditions, knights and lords, minstrels and mountebanks, ceased not their tricks, their gay discourse, their laughter, till the hour of noon. At noon, King Arthur called Sir Gawain, and thus spoke:

"Fair nephew, cause our chargers to be brought; for since adventure cometh not to us, we must fain seek it in the open field; for should we longer stay, our knights, indeed, would have a right to think that it were time to dine."

"Your will, my lord," Sir Gawain said, "shall be obeyed."

And at the instant he the squires bade to saddle horses and their armour bring. Soon were the steeds prepared, the nobles armed. The king then girded on his famous sword, and at the head of his bold barons placed, set out for Bressiland, a gloomy wood. Having along its deep and shady paths awhile proceeded, the good king drew rein, and 'mid the greatest silence bent his ear. A distant voice was then distinctly heard, calling at intervals for human help, and turn by turn invoking God and saints!

"I will ride yonder," bold King Arthur cried; "but with no company save my good sword."

"An it please you, my lord," Sir Gawain said, "I fain would ride with you."

"Not so, fair nephew," the king made reply; "I need no company."

"Since such your wish," said Gawain, "have your will."

Arthur called quickly for his shield and lance, and spurred right eagerly towards the spot whence came the plaintive voice. As he drew near, the cries the sharper grew. The king pricked on with greater speed, and stopped before a stream by which a mill was placed. Just at the door he saw a woman stand, who wept, and screamed, and wrung her trembling hands, while she her tresses tore in deep despair. The good king, moved to pity, asked her why she grieved.

"My lord," she weepingly replied, "oh! help me, in God's name! a dreadful beast, come down from yonder mount, is there within devouring all my corn!"

Arthur approached, and saw the savage beast, which truly was most frightful to behold.

Larger than largest bull, it had a coat of long and russet fur, a whitish neck and head, which bristled with a pile of horns. Its eyes were large and round, its teeth of monstrous size; its jaws were shapeless, legs of massive build; its feet were broad and square. A giant elk were not of greater bulk. Arthur observed it for a certain time with wonder in his

mind; crossing himself, he then got off his horse, drew forth his sword, and, covered with his shield, went straight into the mill. The beast, however, far from being scared, did not so much as even raise its head, but from the hopper still devoured the corn. Seeing it motionless, the king believed the beast was lack of spirit, and, to excite it, struck it on the back: but still the creature moved not. He then advanced, and standing right in front, lunged at the beast as though to run it through. It did not even seem to note the act. Arthur then cautiously laid down his shield, replaced his sword, and, being stout and strong, he seized it by the horns, and shook it with great force; natheless he could not make it leave the grain. In rage, he was about to raise his fist, so as to deal it on the head a blow; but lo! he could not then remove his hands,—they were as riveted unto its horns.

Soon as the beast perceived its foe was caught, it raised its head; and issued from the mill, bearing, pendant from its horns, the king, aghast, distracted, and yet wild with rage. It then regained the wood at easy pace; when Gawain, who, by good fortune, happed to ride before his Mends, beheld it thus his uncle carrying off,—a sight which half-deprived him of his wits.

"Knights!" he exclaimed aloud, "hie hither! help to our good lord! and may the laggard never sit at his Round Table more! We should indeed deserve dishonoured names were the king lost for want of timely aid." As thus he spoke, he flew towards the beast, not waiting for the rest, and couched his lance as though to strike at it.

But the king, fearing harm would come to him, addressed him thus:

"Fair nephew, thanks; but e'en for my sake halt. If thou do touch it, I am surely lost; and if thou spare it, saved. I might have slain it, and yet did not so; something now tells me I held not my hand in vain. Let it, then, go its course; and keep my men from coming on too near."

"My lord," Sir Gawain answered him with tears, "must I, then, let you perish without help?"

"The best of help," the king rejoined, "will be to do my bidding."

Sir Gawain was at this so much incensed, he cast down lance and shield, he tore his cloak and handfuls from his hair.

Just at this time Ivan and Tristrem came, with lances lowered, and at top of speed; Gawain threw up his hands, and loudly cried:

"Strike not, my lords, for his, King Arthur's sake; he's a dead man if you but touch the beast."

"What, then, are we to do?" inquired they.

"We'll follow it," quoth Gawain: "if the king be hurt, the beast shall die."

The monster still kept on its even way, not seeming to remark the knights, until a rock it reached, lofty and round and high. It scaled it, as a swallow, rapidly; and Gawain and his friends, who at a distance followed, sad and full of