1933

The development of the Arthurian story in English and American literature from 1800 to the present time

Lucy Willeford McMahan

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARTHURIAN STORY IN ENGLISH AND
AMERICAN LITERATURE FROM 1800 TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY

LUCY WILLEFORD MCMAHAN

A

THESIS

submitted to the faculty of the
SCHOOL OF MINES AND METALLURGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
in partial fulfillment of the work required for the
Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
(English)
Rolla, Mo.
1933

Approved by

Professor of English
FOREWORD

In the preparation of this essay, more friendly help has been accorded than can be suitably or specifically acknowledged. It is a pleasant duty to speak of the suggestions both general and minute of the following persons: Dr. J. W. Barley, Professors Johnson and Cagg, Mrs. Nadine Sease, and Mr. Paul Howard, Librarian.
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I

Introduction
The purpose of this essay is to show the development of the Arthurian story in the creative literature of the English language from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present with reference to: (1) the relation of the author's treatment of the subject to the spirit of the age, (2) the relation of the author's treatment to the treatment of the subject in his source and, (3) the relation of the author's treatment to his characteristic treatment of other subjects.

In such a study of the Arthurian stories, Thomas Malory's "Morte Darthur" may be considered both a landmark and a fountain head. This compilation which supplies, as it were, the last word and classic form to the medieval conception, has exercised much influence in after times. It seems that later writers draw here on a Welsh story, and there on a separate romance, but generally and essentially it is to Malory, with or without

1 In 1927 Madina Matlock Seace prepared an essay "The Origin and Development of the Arthurian Story," which presents a careful study of sources and developments of the story in English Literature to the close of the eighteenth century. At that point the present essay begins.

2 Matthew Arnold in his "Critical Essays", p. 192, says that Malory is not the most popular source of modern writers.
supplementary hints from others, that the greatest English writers have recourse.

During the last decade of the eighteenth century, Gothicism and chivalry were as popular as they had been unpopular during the reign of Pope. The love of chivalry and the revival of Gothic architecture on the one hand, and the tremendous impetus which Percy and Ritson gave respectively to ballad literature and antiquarian subjects on the other, formed two streams which flowed with increasing size until they finally unite in Walter Scott and his school.

As the leaven of things old and new worked into literature a revival of romanticism, the Arthurian stories came more and more to be seen not only, as they claimed a scholarly veneration in their bygone forms but to possess suggestions for the imagination of the present.

3 Joseph Ritson rendered a service to antiquarian scholarship by a controversy with Percy. Maynader p. 335

4 Southey, poet and man of letters was attracted in childhood to Spenser’s “Faerie Queen” and anything that pertained to old legends. He liked romance but the narrative must be simple and the proprieties observed. In both respects the Round Table stories leave much to be desired. When Southey published “Hadoe” in 1815 he was very “warm” to use a phrase from children’s games. Introduction “Hadoe”, Southey’s Poetical Works.
II

Writers Preceding Tennyson
In 1803 the Arthurian stories aroused the enthusiasm of John Leyden, who made two references of considerable length to the Arthurian legend in his "Scenes of Infancy", a volume of poetry written in heroic couplets. Leyden was more a scholar than a poet. With a seeming recognition of his limitations, he merely foreshadowed the interest and honor the Arthurian story was to enjoy under mightier inspiration, as the following lines indicate:

"Say, who is he with summon strong and high,  
Shall bid the charmed sleep of ages fly;  
Roll the long sound through Hilden's caverns vast,  
While each dark warrior rouses at the blast;  
The horn, the falchion grasp with mighty hand,  
And peal proud Arthur's march from Fairyland?  
.... Oh Scott! with whom in youth's serene prime  
I wave with careless hand the fairy rhyme  
Bade chivalry's barbaric pomp return  
And heroes wake from every mouldering urn!"  
The appeal to Sir Walter Scott was not misplaced  
and was not unheeded. Medievilism was a passion in his

6. "Scenes of Infancy" - Poetical Works of John Leyden (1875)
nature. His allusion to Arthur in "Marmion" is a sympathetic recognition that is scattered through his writings. He did not confine his treatment to references, however. In 1805 he edited the old metrical romance of Sir Tristam, and as the manuscript was defective, he supplied the final episode himself. Despite the changes that had taken place in the language, his verses do not have the air of being interpolated, as the following lines will testify:

"Ysoude of Britanye
With the white honde,
The schip she can see
Seyling to londe,
The white seyle tho' marked sche:
Yonder cometh Ysoude
For to reve fro me
Miin fals husbonde:
Ich swore
For it tho it sohal be
That sche her heder bare."
....To Tristam sche gan hye
O bed thare he layne:
....What sayle doth thare flain,
Dame, for God almight?
....Sche sayeth, ' Thai ben blake,
As pishe is thare hewe.'"
Scott did more: he sought in the Arthurian stories for original inspiration, and in the "Bridal of Triermain," the grand old legend passes into the framework of a rhymed romance. "The Bridal of Trierman", published anonymously in 1813, tells how a young baron daring the dangers and resisting the enticements of magic wins for his bride, Gyneth, the daughter of Arthur and the fay, Guendolen, who has been waiting ages for her deliverer in the fairy castle. The tale told by the aged Lyulphe, which tells of the birth of Gyneth, and explains to Triermain the nature of his task, occupies a large portion of the whole poem, and introduces us once more to the feats and personages of the Round Table. On leaving the enchantress, Guendolen, Arthur has sworn on behalf of their child:

"A summer day in lists shall strive
My knights, the bravest knights alive,
And he, the best and bravest tried
Shall Arthur's daughter claim for bride?"

Fifteen years elapse during which Arthur vanquishes the Saxons, Picts, and Roman Lucius.

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7 Scott contrived to suggest that his friend, Erskine was the author. Introduction "Bridal of Triermain", Scott's Poetical Works.

8 "The Bridal of Triermain", Canto II, Stanza 8
Gyneth appears to claim performance of her father's vow. The knights all forget the ladies of their love and prepare to battle for her hand.

"The champions, arm'd in martial sort,
Have thronged into the list
And but three knights of Arthur's court
Are from the tourney missed,
And still these lovers' fame survives
For faith so constant shown,
There were two who loved their neighbors' wives
And one who loved his own.
The first was Launcelot de Lac,
The second Tristem bold,
The third was valiant Carodac.

He as mate of lady love
Alone the cup could quaff."

Thus the fall of the Round Table is shown in the combat for Gyneth. Vanoc, a youth of Merlin's race, is slain; Merlin, rising from the ground in a whirlwind and earthquake, stops the carnage and sentences Gyneth to a magic sleep in the Valley of St. John, till she is awakened by a knight as famous as any of the Table Round. The knight is Triermain, the hero, and to
some extent the shadow of Sir Galahad.

"The Bridal of Triermain" is purely a tale of chivalry, a tale of Britain's Isle and Arthur's days when midnight fairies "danced the maze." The author never gives a glance of ordinary life nor of ordinary personages. From the splendid court of Arthur, we are conveyed to the halls of enchantment, and, of course are introduced to a system of manners perfectly appropriate but altogether remote from those of this vulgar world. The Bridal of Triermain is not so much an Arthurian poem as an Arthurian episode. Though many of the old names and much of the old mechanism is retained, the story of Gyneth is a free invention, of which there is no hint in the old romances (available to the writer of this essay) except in so far as she represents the "Unknown Lady" who appears in some of the tales. The sources of Scott's inspiration in this poem are somewhat scattered and indefinite, but he obtains much of his historical and legendary material from Burns' "Antiquities of West Moreland and Cumberland." Thus Scott has made his setting appropriate, Cumberland that favorite locality of the Arthurian ballad writers. Scott has, too, drawn on the common stock of European folklore; he has virtually told as an Arthurian story the tale of the Sleeping Beauty, or of the enchanted Brunhilda, or of Guinevere of whom the same was told as far back as
Ulrich's Lanzelet. What ever digressions he has made, he has consistently kept the romantic tone.

In view of this production the wonder is that Scott should have done so little with the Arthurian stories, so rich in the romantic coloring that attracted him in much of his other work. The truth seems to be that with all the medievalism and romance of Scott and his school, there was more interest in facts and externals than in the ideal and the spiritual. Thackeray talks of "The good humoured pageant" which Scott's tales of chivalry present, and pageantry seems the right description of them in contrast with the deep true life of his Scotch sketches. This preference for the outer facts of the Middle Ages as opposed to the inner, may explain the neglect of the Arthurian romances. The old stories of Arthur embodied the aspirations, but hardly the actualities of feudal life, and the characters were drawn from a remote past, but transformed from primitive Britons to chivalrous and artificial gentlement. Thus these stories offered little help to a writer with Scott's objective.

The same year that Scott was writing "The Bridal

of Triermain", a friend of his, Reginal Heber, was likewise finding inspiration for original poetry in the Arthurian legends. Heber was a churchman who wrote hymns, such as, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains." Accounts of his life show that he was always interested in stories of Arthur. Notwithstanding arduous parochial duties, he wrote a fragmentary "Morte d'Arthur" in Spenserian stanzas, and a still more fragmentary "Masque of Gwendolen", which tells virtually the same story as "The Marriage of Sir Gawain".

Heber's "Morte d'Arthur follows the story of Malory and yet it is noteworthy for its attempt to excuse Guineiver's (Ganora's) sin. He does not make Arthur the father of Modred. Ganora, as Heber chooses to call the great queen, is sent by her father, King of Carmelide (Malory’s Cameliard) to the vale of Derwent, where she, as a simple village maid, meets and loves a knight. Chance separates them. Ganora is courted and married to Arthur. Later in the Chapel of the Grail she recognizes Launcelot's picture as her lost knight. Heber broke off his story at this point.

In his other Arthurian poem "The Masque of

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11 Age of Wordsworth, p. 93: Hereford
Gwendolen," Heber goes back to an old story, not an essential part of the Arthurian legends, but already long connected with it in the ballad, "The Marriage of Sir Gawain" and its fifteenth century analogue, "The Marriage of Sir Gawain and Dame Hagnell." Both tell essentially the same story as the "Wife of Bath's Tale" (Chaucer).

When Scott and Heber sought inspiration in Arthurian legends, it is evident that they will be restored to favor. But for some time there was to be more appreciative allusion than new treatment. Perhaps the reason for this neglect was that the Arthurian stories were not widely known at this time. Whether this assumption is correct or not, the fact remains that Keats, Shelley, Byron, and Coleridge were not stirred to write Arthurian poems. However, the ignorance of the public in regard to Arthurian stories was about at an end. In 1816 began a resurrection of Malory's book by various editions. Robert Southey gave his name to an 18 edition of 1817.

Growing familiarity with the Arthurian stories and a growing antiquarian interest brought into existence a prose romance, "The Misfortunes of Elphin" by Thomas Love Peacock. His plot is based on the old
stories, but not on old English and old French. He relies on Welsh material, which he follows closely.

Peacock's Arthur is not the splendid medieval monarch whom we have come to know but a rough Welshman of the sixth century. He is a king, nevertheless, as in Geoffrey's History and the romances, and not simply a general, Dux Bellorum of Nennius. Peacock tries to reproduce Welsh society of the sixth century and to give not a romantic Logres, but the Britaire in which the historical Arthur really lived. Little as he changes the incidents of his stories, Peacock does give his own interpretation. By modernizing his characters, ironically, he gives his novel a contemporary meaning. He makes his characters the vehicle of excellent satire which is directed at contemporary abuses almost as indiscriminately, as is done by Mr. Bernard Shaw.

Only one character is well defined, Seithenym, whose carelessness let the flood overwhelm the country of Gwythno. One of the best things in the book is Seithenym's account of his escape when the sea, breaking thru the great dyke, which it was his duty to keep sound but

13 Romantic name for England in medieval Arthurian romances
14 Arthur of the English Poets, p. 546; Maynard
which he let decay. The account of the Queen's return to Arthur's court gives another characteristic example of Peacock's humor. Seithenyn who was instrumental in bringing her back assured Arthur she was "as pure as the day Melvas carried her off."

"'None here will doubt that', said Gwenvach, the wife of Modred. Gwenvach was not pleased with the compliment, and almost before she had saluted King Arthur, she turned suddenly round and slapped Gwenvach on the face, with a force that brought more "crimson into one cheek than blushing had ever done to both." This slap is recorded in the Bardic Triads as one of the Three Fatal Slaps of the Island of Britain. A terrible effect is ascribed to this small cause, for it is said to have been the basis of the enmity between Arthur and 15 Modred.

The "Misfortunes of Elphin" is a mixture of antiquarianism, old legends, humor, and satire with a dash of poetry, for there is verse scattered throughout. This novel is more readable than any other of Peacock's because he secured a good plot from old stories, and good plots Peacock could not construct. 16

15 "Misfortunes of Elphin"

16 Arthur of the English Poets, p. 545: Maynadier
The year after Peacock wrote his Arthurian novel, Wordsworth found inspiration in old legends for his semi lyrical story of the "Egyptian Maid". He says in his introduction that his treatment of the old material is free. "For the names and persons in the following poem, see the history of the Renowned Prince Arthur, and his Knights of the Round Table. For the rest the author is answerable."

Wordsworth is entirely of his own time in combining the old romantic spirit with a new moral meaning, as this brief synopsis is intended to show.

Merlin, seeing the ship in which the Egyptian Maid, who is a princess, is sailing to Britain, calls up a storm, apparently thru the mere wanton desire to show his magic. The Egyptian Maid alone of those on board is washed ashore. She is to all appearances dead, but it has been ordained that she is to become the bride of one of Arthur's knights; and, so is only in a trance from which her destined husband may rouse her by the touch of his hand. Various knights make trial, Gawain, Tristan, and Launselet. The royal Guinevere looked passing glad, when his touch failed," and last Galahad at whose touch the girl was quite restored. Because the Egyptian Maid personifies purity
she is destined to be the bride of only the purest.

In marrying off the ascetic, the medieval celibate, Wordsworth is modern with a vengeance. It would seem that such a radical change in an Arthurian character would belong to the age of "prose and reason" rather than to Wordsworth's.

That Wordsworth had the right feeling for Arthurian stories he proved as early as 1800 in lines of great beauty, comparing a stately fern on the beach of Grasmere to the

"Lady of the mere,

Sole-setting by the shores of old romance".

The Egyptian Maid published thirty years later showed that he still had the feeling the not expressed in his best manner.

In 1838 Lady Charlotte Guest brought out her translation of the Welsh Mabinogion. Here the world had a chance to see at last how the race to which Arthur belonged had treated in poetic story his achieve-

17 Arthur of the English Poets, p. 352: Maynardier

18 Poems on Naming Places, IV Stanza
ments. After such faithful scholarship and renewed interest in the spirit of the old romances, the work of Tennyson seems logical; but the work of Lord Lytton is a surprising anachronism.
III

Tennyson
In modern literature the story of Arthur occupies a somewhat peculiar position. On the one hand, it is among the themes, consecrated by a popularity long and wide, that the world cherishes and will not let die. It has been absolutely neglected only, when the poetic spirit was languishing; in periods of imaginative energy, it has never wanted its witnesses and never failed to attract great minds.

In so far it might be compared with conceptions like the medieval visions of a future state, or the Reformation legend of Dr. Faustus. The Arthurian cycle of legends emerging from Welsh and Briton mythology seized upon by French romancers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who made Arthur the pattern king; Launcelot, the pattern knight; and the Round Table, the ideal institution of chivalry; gathering accretions like the Grail Quest and the Tristam story; passing by translation into many tongues but retaining always the scene in Britain, furnished it would seem, a groundwork for a national epic. No quite supreme genius has ever dedicated himself to its treatment—such as correspond to the Charlemagne epic or the Nebelung Hero Saga. It is noticeable that Chaucer and Shakespeare pass it by without using it save for
casual allusions, mostly of a humorous kind; Milton and Dryden take it up to let it fall. It remained for Tennyson to give the Arthurian stories the nearest epic development that it has as yet attained; still no one will deny that the "Idylls" hardly occupy a first place in literature of the world like the works of Dante or Goethe. It may be maintained, however, that the peculiar merits and defects of the "Idylls" correspond so closely with the inherent limitations and excellences of Tennyson's genius that in him the story has found a predestined interpreter. It is from this point of view that his work is to be considered in this essay.

Whatever changes may occur in the fame of Tennyson, he can never be deprived of the honor of representing, more almost, than any other single poet of England - unless it be Dryden - a whole period of national life: Tennyson is the Victorian Age: he is the mouthpiece of his generation, a generation "provincial and sentimental".

20 Professor Nichols in Westminster Review 1859 says: "The Idylls are essentially fragments; they have in their vague connection neither unity nor the grasp of the epic".

21 Literature of the Victorian Era, p. 4: Hugh Walker.
There is about his creations the mark of daintiness which has been, and is, the flaw of British art. This statement may also be verified by glancing thru the works (pictures) of Landseer, Millais and Foster, where one observes scenes of maiden love, tender home partings, and reconciliations, children and a kitten floating down a placid stream in a flower bedecked cradle. It would seem that such an attitude is a deliberate blinking at what makes life austere and in a sense beautiful and complete.

To carry this argument further, consideration may be given to a conspicuous example of Tennyson's sentimentality in the idyll, "Launcelot and Elaine." This is a nobly planned work but somehow to all its charm there clings a taint of daintiness, what Walt Whitman calls the "beauty disease." Note the words of Gawain to the lily maid of Astolat: "Nay by mine head, said he, I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven, O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes". A dainty compliment, but the same figure has been somewhat overworked by those less poetical.

Further citations demonstrate that in Tennyson's lines, the something, designated as Victorianism, is seldom absent. There is in the above mentioned poem another scene, one of those most pic-
turesque in all the Idylls, where Elaine's brother and Launcelot ride away from the ancient castle to join the tournament.

"She stay'd a minute,
Then made a sudden step to the gate".

Here is the picture of the sentimental maiden at the arch, gazing with shaded eyes after two departing knights, while some blossoming vine of an English summer drops from the stone about her graceful form. It would, no doubt, be the opinion of present day critics that this art lacks virility.

Undoubtedly the fame of Tennyson in his own day was due largely to his expression of the official philosophy in a sort of compromise between the new school of science and the established creed. To the new currents of thought Tennyson was responsive. He accepted the new point of view. He felt the terrifying doubt, as shown in "In Memoriam", but still he clung to the creed which it seems humanity cannot give up. Tennyson found this combination of faith not outside the new science, but at its very heart, in a bold conception of evolution by the theory of indefinite progress, as men "move upward, working out the beast";

22 "Launcelot and Elaine", line 57
23 "In Memoriam", line 52
and by a vision of a magnificent consummation, wherein the sacrifices of the present will be compensated, somehow, somewhere, somewhen, and to him, as his own Arthur, the

"Visions of the night or of the day
Come, as they will"

This reconciliation of dogma and science further confirms Tennyson as the voice of his age and makes him the exponent of the Victorian Compromise. Such was the official message of Tennyson, but by its side there comes thru his works an utterly different view, mysticism, which is scarcely English and certainly not Victorian. For the fullest expression and the most artistic utterance of this view, it is necessary to turn to the "Idylls of the King". There will also be found evolution in an application to the progress of human society.

Tennyson himself has explained the meaning of the whole poem in his "To the Queen", a dedication poem.

24 "The Holy Grail"
25 The Victorian Period: Chesterton
26 An Introduction to English Literature, p. 608; Pancoast
But thou, my Queen, not for itself
but thru thy living love
For one to whom I made it o'er his grave
Sacred; Accept this old imperfect tale
New old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul
Rather than that gray king, whose name, aghast
Streams like a cloud, manshaped from mountain peak
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still:
Or him
Of Geoffrey's books, or him of Malary's one
Touched by the adulterous finger of Time
That hovered between war and wantoness
And crownings and dethronements".

Tennyson's treatment of the Arthurian stories
is called an allegory. But the late Henry Van Dyke,
in "The Poetry of Tennyson" speaks of the poem as a
parable, because it is a story of "living men and
women" told so as to teach a lesson and reflect a
deeper truth. He admits that there are allegorical
passages and features in it.

Stopford Brooke, in Tennyson; His Art and
Relation to Modern Life, discusses"The Idylls of the
King" as an allegory in which the Soul of man is por-
trayed as warring with Sense and passing on its way
thru life to death, and thru death to resurrection.
The great rulers of the kingdom of human nature, the intellect, the conscience, the will, the imagination, the divine spirit in man are delineated in mystic personages. The historic powers which stand outside the soul and help it to reign and work, the Church, the Law, and the graces of God, are also discussed in their proper relations. The various conditions of human nature in its growth from brutality to an ordered kingdom, that which saves or loses true life, the general desires and tendencies of man, his temptations, the wise and the unwise views of the purpose of life, the love which saves and the which ruins, the religious passion that leads aright or astray - are all mystically symbolized in the personages which Tennyson invents for his allegorical treatment.

According to Brooke's interpretation, Arthur is the rational soul, not the son of Uther and Ygine, but sent mysteriously from heaven and washed into Merlin's arms by a great wave. Merlin, who educates him, is intellectual power with all the magic power of science. Arthur's kingship is opposed by the brutal and sensuous powers in human nature, but the soul beats them down and sheds light and justice over human nature where "the ape, the tiger, and the bandit lurk".
Guinevere is the heart and all that we make it signify. The soul to do its work must be knit to the heart in noble marriage. Arthur must be wed to Guinevere.

The knights are the high faculties in man that the soul builds into an order round it to do its reforming.

When the king is married, three great fairies that stand by are Faith, Hope, and Charity, and the Lady of the Lake who gives the soul Excalibur, (the sword of the Spirit) is the Church.

Stopford Brooke also makes a comparison of Tennyson’s allegory to Spenser’s “Faerie Queen”, “The Romance of the Rose”, and Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress”. His conclusions, in this connection, are that in Tennyson’s poem, “the story is often greater than the allegory, it still breathes and moves”; the names are not allegorical, it is necessary at times to search for the allegory; the story and allegory do not fit; they clash and confuse. Others have invented a story to suit a conception. Tennyson took an old story and inserted his conception.

27 Tennyson: His Art and Relation to Modern Life, p. 270; Stopford A. Brooke
It seems a safe conclusion that the story will always interest, but the allegory be forgotten. The humanity and not allegory has kept Malory's work alive. It is the experience of most readers that the real Arthur of Malory seems closer than the Arthur of the "Idylls" where one must consider him a "rational soul".

Both Malory and Tennyson attempt to show a struggle of man of good will against the baseness and cruelty of the world.

Malory turned the Arthurian stories into a nemesis action, perfectly developed and profoundly satisfying to the human craving for justice; and as a result brought the story closer to the average human being. The Christian conception of responsibility, not the Pagan conception, underlies his work. The web which entangles his characters is of their own weaving, and the doom which overtakes them is a solemn witness to the freedom they have enjoyed. The nation is destroyed but the individual is saved, a characteristic point of Renaissance thought. He shows that one life only, which insures the love of God, is the life of penitence, and on that note of penitence, therefore the note of hope, "Morte Darthur" concludes and Tennyson's Idylls open.
Tennyson so obviously takes most of his material from Malory, that comparisons between "Morte Darthur" and "The Idylls" will now receive some consideration. Tennyson's indebtedness is very great at first sight and this fact has led to his being described as a copyist, under whose hands the grand features of the story are weakened or obliterated.

Henry Van Dyke protests against such views. He admits that Tennyson has often followed Malory in plot, in idea, even in expression, but these matters are heightened and strengthened under his touch; and the most and finest are his own, while the method of treatment is entirely original.

The adventures in Malory's romance are of very uneven value. Tennyson changes the ethical balance. Launcelot is the real hero of Malory. It would seem that even a feminist age would understand why the perfect lover took precedence in medieval affections. Launcelot is the least modernized of Tennyson's characters and may easily be mistaken for Malory's Launcelot. Launcelot is never ignoble in either version. As Sir

Poetry of Tennyson", p. 170: Van Dyke
Ector said after Launcelot's death (in Malory's romance) "Thou wert the truest friend to thy love that ever bestrode a horse and thou wert the kindest that ever stroke a sword". In Malory's "Morte Darthur", Guinevere goes almost uncensured. Tennyson not only makes Arthur the blameless king, ideal of royal knighthood, but virtually a Christ man. Malory gives a more earthly touch to his character.

The sin of Sir Launcelot and the Queen draws after it the treachery of Modred, bringing on a catastrophe. This conception is latent in Malory's book, but central in Tennyson's "Idylls".

It is true that in Malory's version Arthur in his fury condemns Guinevere to the stake and would "shamefully slay" Sir Launcelot, but it is more because their crime was against the state - treason - than immorality. Arthur is miserable, not because Guinevere is false, but because he has lost Sir Launcelot. There is nothing in the original story of Arthur's moral indignation, found in the "Idylls". That passage in "The Idylls" where Arthur says that he holds the man the worst public foe who lets the wife he knows to be false, abide with him and rule his house is utterly at variance with the original, but is superbly Victorian.
Arthur in the original story is anxious to have Guinevere again, and does receive her with honor. Society and the church differ from Tennyson's conception.  "When the Pope hears of the war between Arthur and Launcelot, he gave Arthur bulls under seal charging him to take Guinever, his Queen, to him again and accord with Launcelot".

Tennyson, a Christian poet, has in two Idylls, "Launcelot and Elaine" and "Guinevere" drawn a picture of marriage in which the latter is everything, spirit nothing, form essential, sentiment nonessential. The question might arise that when he wrote so eloquently of the three beings thru whom came both the glory and the downfall of the symbol of chivalry and Christian graces, known as the Round Table, is he loyal to truth? The answer is probably found in the fact that he wrote according to Victorian influences.

When Arthur is taking farewell of a woman who by his own admission never loved him, he sounds a bit like the Victorian curate, especially when he holds out to her the remote but glamorous possibility:

"Perchance and so thou purify thy soul
And so, thou lean on our fair father Christ.
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and
Thou wilt spring to me and claim me thine
And know I am thine husband."

Tennyson makes chastity to a legal bond outweigh proofs of soul’s greatness which Launcelot demonstrates in his loyalty to Guinevere and his parting from the exquisite Elaine. Any one who wonders that the trouble "grew and stirred" must be without the powers of logical deduction.

Censure and praise have been freely bestowed upon Tennyson’s dealings with Malory. Some have said Tennyson’s Arthur is a "curate", "a prig" whose virtue is too conscious, that the harlot, Vivien is a poor substitute for the Damsel of the Lake, who puts Merlin to sleep under a rock; that the figure of Gawain suffers degradation from the application of an effeminate moral standard; that modern conveniences are imposed upon a society in which they do not belong, and whose joyous naivete is hurt by them.

Matthew Arnold in "Critical Essays" says that Tennyson lost the magical charm of the Middle Ages; while Mrs. Browning speaks of the "enchanted reverie" as Tennyson’s grand characteristic in describing the "dream-like mood" in which he treated the legends.
More definite comparison between "The Idylls" and their sources will be made at another point in this paper, when each Idyll will be considered in that connection.

The reader of Tennyson's poetry, struck by the obvious charm and perfection of his art, is apt to underestimate the solid substratum of philosophic thought. Two elements, the close communion with the life of nature, the broader sympathy with the life of man, which took their rise in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, became the motive force in literature of modern times. (Both elements are broadly treated by Tennyson.) Tennyson is impressed with the order underlying the processes of nature, with the "law which cannot be broken" and he is not insensible to the aloofness and even apparent antagonism of nature to man.

"......nature is one with rapine, a harm no preacher can heal;

The May fly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow speared by the shrike.30

Tennyson is no less scientific in his consideration of man. Yet as one turns over the pages of Tennyson, he sometimes finds himself wondering whether Tenny-
has ever suffered deeply. The agony of severed love
which comes to all, he has known, but the sorrow of
disappointment and rebuff which does far more to ed-
ucate men into broadmindedness and charity, does not
seem to have touched him. The puppets on his stage
know little of the great throbbing heart of the common
people. He is usually found in the company of lords
and ladies. When he alludes to trade it is with aris-
tocratic contempt, and the ear of the merchant,

"Is crammed with his cotton, and rings
Even in dreams, to the chink of his pence."

Though Tennyson is considered one of the
most patriotic Englishman, there is little in his pat-
riotism that could feed a flame in a time when men act-
ually have to fight and die for liberty. Perhaps like
his own Maud, he has too long

"Fed on the roses and lain in the lilies of life."

However, he has given admirable pictures of
homely life in "The Northern Farmer", "May Queen", "Dora",
and "Enoch Arden". In the last mentioned the reader is
struck by the elaborate and stiff expression. For in-
stance, to express the homely circumstance, that Enoch
was a fisherman and sold fish, we are told that he "vended
ocean spoil in an ocean smelling osier". In "The Idylls of the King", Tennyson shows the same strength and weakness that are found in his other productions.

The Arthurian story attracted Tennyson quite early in his career. He touched it lightly in three 31 lyrics before he completed "The Idylls": "The Lady of Shallot" (which is the story of Elaine in ballad form), "Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere", and "Sir Galahad". He took it up more seriously in "Morte Darthur" which was published in 1834. Tennyson, in the ballads employed the Pre-Raphaelite style but passed beyond it in "Morte Darthur". Thereafter whatever in Malory is the stuff of romance rather than epic or drama, Tennyson discards. His spirit of the new time seemed to aim at combining the classical with the medieval.

The original four "Idylls" were published 32 in 1859. The series grew by successive additions and rearrangements up to the completed Idylls in 1888 - twelve in number with an epilog. Though entitled "Idylls", by reason of their episodic treatment, the finished product was a quasi-epic. "The Idylls" lack

31 Idylls of the King; Introduction: Henry Van Dyke
Gateway Series

32 "A trial copy of "Enid and Nimue", published in 1857 was withdrawn. It is now in the British Museum."
Stepford Brooke, "Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life."
the formal unity of "Paradise Lost" or "The Aeneid".  

It would seem that Tennyson relieved this lack by symbolical treatment.

A brief consideration will now be given to these ballads or preliminary experiments before passing to a study of "The Idylls".

"The Lady of Shalott" is fanciful and decidedly allegorical in treatment. The fair lady who sees all passing sights in her mirror and weaves them into her magic web, has been interpreted as a symbol of art which has to do properly only with the reflection of life, when the figure of Launcelot is cast upon the glass, a personal emotion, is brought into her life, which is fatal to her art. She is sick of shadow and looks through her window at the substance. Her mirror cracks and the curse comes. The poem is like the end of the dream life of childhood with its visions, music, and mimicry, when the hour of passion comes.

33 English Literature, p. 606: Fancoast
34 Tennyson and His Poetry, p. 7: Van Dyke
35 "Shalott" is from a variant of "Astolat" of the old metrical romance. "Tennyson and His Poetry:" VanDyke
36 The Arthur of the English Poets, p.142: Maynadier
In the other ballads, Tennyson again catches the spell of the old romances. There is a loss of this romantic music even though the blank verse is admirably adapted to the longer narrative of "The Idylls". "Morte Darthur" is later imbedded in "The Passing of Arthur". In "Morte Darthur", Tennyson begins to adapt Homeric practices, the repetition of phrase, the pictorial comparisons, the gnomic habit. "O purblind race of miserable men".

Beers, in *Romanticism of the Nineteenth Century*, says, "Just as Pope gave the finishing touch to poetry of wit and rhetoric which came in with the Restoration, so Tennyson gave the finishing touch to the romantic poetry that came with the French Revolution.

Malory tells of the birth of Arthur, Balin and Balian, of the king's marriage and acquisition of the Round Table, Merlin's fate, of Pelleas and Etard, of Arthur's expedition against Rome, of Gareth, Tristem, Launcelot and Elaine, of the Sangreal, the Maid of Astolat, the discovery of Guinevere's infidelity, and the death of Arthur.

Tennyson, on the other hand begins with "The Coming of Arthur" and tells of his wars with the Saxons and the rebels, his founding of the Round Table, his
marriage and his contest with Rome in this introductory poem. Then he proceeds to Gareth and Lynette, next to the poem that he interpolated from the Mabinogion, "Geraint and Enid", then to "Merlin and Vivien", "Launcelot and Elaine," and thus he comes to the Holy Grail. Then begin the poems that portray the dissolution of the Round Table: "Pelleas and Etarre", "The Last Tournament", (to which is added the Tristan story), "Guinevere", and "The Passing of Arthur". There is no hint of any such sequence in Malory's work. This is only one indication of Tennyson's reorganization to meet the requirements of contemporary thought. His deeper interpretation peoples the old romances with nineteenth century characters.

Malory took his facts from the old romances. The interesting fact is that he did not see fit to purify them and idealize them. That is what Tennyson has done and he has allowed himself a very free hand in doing so.

"The Coming of Arthur" is carved out of a wild romance of cruelty and lust. In the rude, old story of Malory, Uther Pendragon, King of all England, falls foully in love with the wife of the Duke of

37 Roger Ascham in his The Scholemaster of the century following Malory characterizes Malory's book as teeming with manslaughter and bawdry."
Cornwall. The Lady Igraine repulses Uther, so he makes war on her husband in Cornwall, slays him and takes his castle Tintagel. He then marries Igraine forcibly before her husband is buried. Soon afterward, King Uther dies, and the child of their marriage is kept hidden by the counsel of Merlin. After the death of the King, disorder reigns throughout the land. No one even knows who may be the rightful heir to the throne.

There was a great stone in a London churchyard, and embedded in this stone was a steel anvil, in the anvil was a sword on which was a graven in gold letters, "whoever can pull out this blade is the rightful heir to the throne of all England". Many tried but in vain. Arthur tries and draws the blade several times without effort.

In spite of opposition, Arthur's high gifts triumph. A band of the most knightly knights come about him. All revolted provinces are reconquered. Among his many exploits is the rescue of King Beodegrance, whose daughter, Guinevere, he makes his queen, whence all his sorrow.

Malory's Arthur is very far from being stainless; in fact, he makes Arthur the father of the traitor,
Modred by his own sister, the wife of one of his dukes. He even goes so far as to make Arthur a sort of Herod, who when Merlin tells him that his own miserable son shall be his "bane and death", tries to avoid the fulfillment of the prophecy by killing all the children in the neighborhood, born about the same time. All this sordid dreaming was not inconsistent with the minds, morals, and grotesque conscience of Malory's age.

Tennyson would have none of such foul imaginings. The real Arthur never did any wiliness of that sort. He unveils the stainless king and his circle of white souled knights;

"The Coming of Arthur" opens with a description of the invaded kingdom of Leodegrance. He calls on Arthur for help. Arthur sees and loves Guinevere. She is his reward for the services rendered. Thus does Tennyson introduce Arthur and Guinevere whose meeting in the high tide of youth and joy are to grow apart more and more as life moves on, and to meet in deep repentance and forgiveness at the end - a whole vista of failure, sin, and ruin of great hopes behind them: a common tragedy.

Another personage is introduced in the same idyll - Launcelot, friend of the King. In this friendship lies some of the tragic fate to come. A hint of
the pain Launcelot is to cause is given here and there by Tennyson. The first instance is when Launcelot is sent by Arthur to bring Guinevere to court. At this point Arthur's origin is discussed. Arthur's knights tell the old story of Uther and Ygerne to Guinevere's father. (thus Tennyson uses Malory's tale) But after that Tennyson invents, and Bellicent (Arthur's half sister) tells the story of Arthur's supernatural origin, then Arthur is further exalted by a magic story in poetry half nature and half legend.

The coming of Arthur embodies the thought of the whole poem in an artistic manner. The soft play of nature, shows that Tennyson has studied it first hand. He has seen the ancient yew-tree tossed by gusts of April

"That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke". He has noted the resemblance between a crippled, shivering beggar and "an old dwarfed elm. That turns its back on the salt blast". Not less exact is his knowledge of the birds that haunt the forests and the fields. He has seen the "Careful robins, the delvers toil, and listened to

"The great plover's human whistle," and
marked a sunset the marches - "The lone horn puts down his other leg and stretching, dreams "Of a goodly supper in the distant pool". He knows how the waters play and fall; how a brook .......

"Slopes o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it." Most remarkable of all his treatment of nature is his love of the sea.

Tennyson's Arthur is not the Arthur of Celtic legend, nor of romantic history, nor even of chivalrous romance, but he reflects and embodies a spiritual principle of which Tennyson sings throughout the Idyls. He makes this principle the ideal which governs the lives of men, the eternal pattern which they seek to realize; but in its various manifestations there is always something temporary and incomplete. When it discloses itself as an order that rises and passes, it is merely the transitory form that is broken, illustrating again the philosophy of Tennyson toward this life. Merlin says

"Though men may wound him, he will not die"

Tennyson makes Arthur like a new truth when it first appears among men. He has to prove his right to an existence as ruler. To some of those who accept
his origin is made spiritual, supernatural; to
others he is simply the lawful heir of Uther and
Ygerne. All of these ways of looking at Arthur's
origin are portrayed throughout the idyll, as when
Merlin answers Bellicent's questions: "From the
great deep to the great deep he goes". These
are the last words about his origin. They come to
the Queen's mind, however, when for the last time
she sees her lord ride away from Camelot. To Sir
Bedivere's mind similar thoughts come when he sees
the wounded king sailing away.

In the Coming of Arthur, Arthur is crowned,
throned, wedded, victorious over opposition and estab-
lished in his own new hall with his Table Round. "The
Idylls" in their succession reflect the story of the
order mentioned in this idyll, from its early days of
triumph until it loses its power.

38 "Coming of Arthur"
39 "Last Tournament"
40 "Passing of Arthur"
In Gareth and Lynette, noble hearts like
that of young Gareth long to fly

“To the Great Sun of Glory and thence swoop
Down upon all things base, and dash them dead”. The
story of Gareth’s adventures is but the story
of his education from instinct to duty, from feel-
ing to principle. It begins in his consenting to
disguise his nobility of nature and higher aims and
take up menial work for a hire of meat and drink.

But even when cheerily accepting for glory

“The sooty yoke of kitchen vassalage” his
motives are not unmingle. He bows to the King, but
he anticipates the reward. Then he endures Lynette’s
taunts. He perseveres. Eventually he is schooled
and disciplined. He masters the natural man — sets
his glory in service of the Ideal and loses all fear
in the thought of “a happier day from under ground”.42

Again the concluding note is characteristic of the
author.

“Gareth and Lynette” is to some extent realistic

41 “Gareth and Lynette”
42 “Gareth and Lynette”
but it is the most allegorical of all the idylls.
The greater part of it is taken from Malory's "Le
Morte Darthur", Book VII, which "treateth if a noble
knight called Sir Gareth and called by Sir Kay,
Beaumanis. Many changes are made by Tennyson in the
telling of the tale, in addition to his allegory.
The first four hundred lines are much like the story
of Peredur in "The Mabignogion".

The tone of this idyll is bright and hopeful. The time is spring in one of the years when the
Round Table was new.

In his description of Lynette, Tennyson
seems to repent for her rudeness, and proceed to im-
prove her by drawing another woman character. The
two do not agree. Malory does not divide the char-
acter. Lynette in Malory's hands is thoroughly con-
sistent. The story of Malory is clean, yet no hint
of spiritual things, and there is little intensity
of emotion. In both the Malory and Tennyson versions,
Gareth is the nephew of Arthur, flower of chivalry
and the embodiment of the early ideals of the Round
Table. This is the last story Malory presents which
is wholly happy, uninvaded by moral scruples or by the recognition of conflicting forces within chivalry. In this book of Malory the stage is set very much as Tennyson has done. Parts are assigned. The ply is on.

Tennyson derived his plots of the "Marriage of Geraint and Enid", and "Geraint and Enid" from Mabignogion translation of Chretian's "Erec". The story is the same that Boccaccio has told in the tale of Griselda, and Shakespeare in Othello - the story of a woman, sweet and true joined to a man who is exacting and suspicious.

Geraint wakens in the morning to find his wife weeping, and leaps at once to the conclusion that she is false! Enid is Tennyson's Griselda and favorite type of womanhood. However, she produces in the suspicious, but noble Geraint, a detestable condition, though finally she is his salvation. Though Tennyson follows the plot of the original closely, Geraint's conduct is not sufficiently motivated.

This idyll is full of beauty and pictorial passages of charm. It is skilfully introduced, continued and ended, but art fails Tennyson in the character drawing. However, he has written of womanhood
in this poem some very striking lines

And never yet, since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
Than lived thru her, who in that perilous time
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart
And felt him hers again; she did not weep
But o'er meek eyes came a happy mist
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
Before the useful trouble of the rain".
The idyll ends happily but in it is struck
the first real note of the tragic passion of Launcelot
and Guinevere.

"Balin and Balen; the idyll next in order
was the last published by Tennyson. In the Malory book,
the story narrates how Balin the unfortunate achieves
the sword brought to the court by the damosel of Lady
Lile; how with the sword he cuts off in full court the
head of the Lady of the Lake, who had slain his mother;
how exiled by Arthur he wins back to favor by capturing
the giant King Rience; and how he passes thru many ad-
ventures always well intentioned but always doomed to
disaster- till at the close in anonymous conflict with
his beloved brother, Balen, both fall, killed by each
other's swords. From the point of view of romantic
art this is one of Malory's best efforts. Balin is
one of Malory's strong character studies.

Tennyson follows the original plot rather
faithfully. A comparison for the purpose of noting
Tennyson's allegory, shows how skilfully he has painted.
An example is his treatment of the general idea of anger
as another enemy of the soul. The farewell of the bro-
ther, one representing force under the dominion of the
soul, the other force under dominion of sense, is one
of the most pathetic things Tennyson has written. At
that point the human element is greater than the alle-
gory. Balin's last words are:

"Good night! for we shall never bid again
Good morrow; Dark my doom was here and dark
It will be there."

Balan with diviner faith replies,
"Good night, true brother here! good morrow there".
Malory lets the intellect of Merlin fall into
dotage and become assotted by one of the Ladies of the Lake.
She turns him into a fool instead of a condition of living
death, as Tennyson has done in his "Merlin and Vivien".

43 Tennyson shows in this idyll his opinion relative
to heredity.
Malory's Vivien is quite pure but she grows weary and buries Merlin under a rock by a magic charm. Malory makes his story natural and human, and one to arouse pity. The story is rather disagreeable, but old as humanity - that of an old man allured to ruin by lust.

Tennyson treats the story allegorically - Merlin the incarnation of pure intellect is degraded by lust of flesh, but is as wise as ever. Knowledge, experience, and philosophy are made momentarily weak by flattery. Tennyson lets Merlin waver in passages between ruin and redemption. He lets Merlin see thru the wiles of Vivien and instead of loving her, he hates, yet he yields. Better sketches of both characters are drawn in other idylls.

Tennyson has made Vivien symbolize Lust of Flesh - and as such she is not so loathsome, but she is hardly endurable as a woman. The conditions of this idyll are out of nature and too ugly for art. The speeches are not even creative, the worst are Vivien's. One speech of Merlin on true love, fame, and their relation each to each is worthy. It is not only a strik-

Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life: Stopford Brooke
ing speech but tells us Tennyson's thoughts about
fame.

Merlin, before vanishing, in the prophetic
air of death speaks of all that is to follow.

It remains to say a word of the scenery
which is so artistically handled in this idyll. The
wild forests of Brocéliande in Brittany, great meadows
full of buttercups, sweet springs dripping from clefts
in the rocks are painted with poetic power. The de-
scription of the storm that overtakes Merlin and Vivien
is remarkable

"And ever overhead
Bellowed the tempest and the rotten branch
Swept in rushing of river rain
Above them".

Nature is made to reflect the passions of
man. This is a habit with Tennyson.

The story of "Launcelot and Elaine" is taken
mainly from Book XVIII of "Le Morte Darthur; in fact,
Tennyson does not change the plot to any extent. The
point to which the love of Launcelot and the Queen had
attained is introduced here. Elaine's story is simple.
It is not difficult to see why Elaine follows the char-
acter sketch of Vivien. Elaine is unconscious innocence -
Vivien conscious guilt.

The central thought of the idyll is the conflict between a pure and simple love such as Elaine offers Launcelot and the false, disloyal tie which binds him to the Queen, and into which pride, jealousy and bitterness enter. The keynote to the poem is,

"His honor rooted in dishonor stood
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true",
The tale ends with Launcelot contrasting the pure love with proud passion - and resolving to break the bonds that made him false to the king.

Tennyson has drawn the character of Elaine with a peculiar tenderness even though her "swimming" and "dying for love" is very much Victorian. One may understand the character of Launcelot better if the complaint of Burns that it was "the light of heaven that lead him astray", is remembered. Malory's Launcelot can be fickle but Tennyson's cannot. Launcelot is like Arthur himself, a nursling of the great deep. His childhood, if not his birth has the halo of the super human, and she who keeps watch over the king has taken Launcelot too, for her own:

"Him,
the Lady of the Lake
Caught from his mother's arms, the wondrous one".
Tennyson, owing to his English indolence, his English aristocratic irresponsibility, his English vagueness in thought, always managed to make a poem mean exactly what he did not mean. Thus the two lines which say that
"Launcelot was the first in tournament
But Arthur—mightiest in the battlefield", do really express what he meant to express about Arthur being after all "the highest, yet most human too; not Launcelot nor another". But as his hero is developed, we have exactly the opposite impression; that poor old Launcelot with all his faults was much more of a man than Arthur. Tennyson was a Victorian.
And now comes the Holy Grail, the basis of which is to be found in the old tales, but whoever reads will see how imaginatively it has been conceived. It is full of the true romantic element, and it is close to the spirit of the old story of the Holy Grail. The story as Tennyson tells it is peculiarly his own. He seems to have invented it
for the sake of his allegory. The form is superior to that of the other idylls, and this has acted throughout upon minor inventions.

Sir Percival who has known the great world tells the story to Ambrosius, a simple monk of the monastery who knows nothing but his village. This invention enables Tennyson constantly to contrast the exalted with simple type of mind, the earth-loving with the heaven-loving soul.

Again in the remarks of Ambrosius are heard the same views as those which Arthur held concerning the quest, given not in the high words of the King, but in the simple manner of the uneducated monk who loved the daily life of men. This artistic touch leads up to, and accentuates the force of Arthur's view of the matter, and that seems to be Tennyson's view.

Unity is given to the story by the various episodes being knit into one tale. Even unity of place is preserved. The image of the war-worn knight sitting with Ambrosius in the quiet cloister is ever kept before the reader. The great adventures, the city of Camelot, the great hall and the
vision of the Grail that passed through it, the
ride of Percival, the passing of Galahad, the wild
voyage of Launcelot, all are brought into the quiet
spot where the two peaceful figures set.

"Beneath a world old yew tree, darkening half
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke
Above them ere the summer when he died
The monk Ambrosiaus questioned Percivale",

In reading the story of Malory it is a
relief to find that the eleventh book announces a
change of subject. It would be wearisome to consider
one more tournament or one more lover. At this point
there is seen mortal passion yielding to sacramental
mysticism. The Middle Ages abounded in pictures of
perpetual journeys, and the more the Grail literature
is studied the more connections appear with the "vis-
ion and pilgrimage" literature. Malory gains his
effects by contrasts; thus his work is marked by
hot earthly passions in opposition to the ascetic
ardour, while the Percivale tale is typically his-
torical, the Galahad story is a pure creation of
Catholic mysticism. Malory reflects Catholicism,
and Catholicism is mystical in its very fibre. His books assigned to the Quest have unique beauty.

The quest breaks up a realm, it sanctifies yet destroys the earthly life it seeks to save. It met the need of the period. It satisfied a restlessness which neither delight in arms nor love of women, nor loyalty to a mortal king could cure. Neither theology nor asceticism is considered conducive to art. Malory's book, however, certainly has art and it is full of theology and ascetic ideals at this point. Yet "True beauty may dwell in deep retreats" Wordsworth says. In Malory's treatment of the Grail story romance is gradually differentiated from fairy tale in the use of the Catholic supernatural; magic is the exception not the staple.

Tennyson reduces the spirit of the legend to simple terms. There is no fantastic previous history. He makes the meaning of the Grail story neither Church dogma nor highest spiritual life. He reflects his age! - a time when the Principle that had ruled the world was in decline. Its incapacity to correct all things had been disclosed. It was a time when disappointed souls fled to sanctuary as Sir Percival did, thus detaching themselves from earth. The same feeling
takes different forms in various minds. At such a
time one common trait pervades the minds of men. They
are not satisfied with what has hitherto passed for
certain. They are perplexed with a gleam of something
beyond the known. A time of spiritual discontent pre-
vailed as the life of ancient Greece decayed, then
transferred to Rome, and thus it came to the age of
Tennyson. Tennyson has made his Grail story reflect
this same spirit.

Tennyson cling's to the eclecsiastical form,
but his ideal is far from that of Malory who glorified
a life of complete asceticism and the conception that
woman is the plague of the world. Tennyson makes the
"Quest" a mistake and evil. The true life he demon-
strates in a combination of spiritual and earthly ele-
ments. He concedes that there are few beings who can
represent before mankind the ideal holiness.

Malory has made the Holy Grail ( a magic
talisman ) take on a Christian meaning and become the
symbol of the mightiest miracle of the Roman Church.
He describes the search for the Holy Grail ( a concep-
tion that had arisen as significant of the union with
Christ ) in a manner very much like Tennyson's.
When Arthur's knights see the vision "they
leap to their feet and swear for a year and a day
they will take up the Quest". Malory's story was
popular because the public of his day loved adventure,
and the Church liked it because it reflected the cen-
tral doctrine. Before the Grail story embodied full
religious or sacred meaning, while it was half Chris-
tian and half heathen, Percivale was the hero, but
with the introduction of absolute chastity as necessary
for a perfect union with Christ, Galahad the virgin in
body and soul was invented. Tennyson indirectly reverts
to the original importance of Percivale when he lets us
see Galahad through Percivale's story. In "The Idylls,
Galahad wins the Quest and not only sees the Grail but
goes with it to the spiritual city which is the Chris-
tian representation of the Welsh Avalon.

Neither does Malory permit Galahad to return.
He dies at Tarras: which said for the England of Mal-
ory's day, let monks stay monks. The sanctification of
the individual through detachment from the evil world
is shown by the three elect ones.

In Tennyson's version Sir Percivale's holy
sister, (one of the elect) incites Sir Galahad to go on the quest. Meanwhile in the absence of the King, Galahad sits in Merlin's seat, which Tennyson explains is a symbol of the spiritual imagination, wherein no man could sit but "he lose himself":

"And once by misadventure Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom
Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

And all at once as there we sat, we heard
A crackling and a riving of roofs
And reading, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry
And in the blast there shot along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All crowned with a luminous cloud".

The vision in other words signifies the dualism of the human soul in which the world overwhelms all but those purely spiritual and to whom earth is already unreal. It is characteristic of England and

47 "Holy Grail": Tennyson
the age of Tennyson that Arthur should deplore the search for the Grail as a wild idea that would bring impossible hopes and disappointments to those whose business it was to struggle among material forces.

Only Sir Galahad in whom was no attachment to the earth and who was bold enough "to lose himself" beheld the vision clearly. There is a mystical note in Sir Galahad's answer:

"But I, Sir Arthur saw the Grail" etc.

The lines of Tennyson that describe Sir Percivale's last sight of Sir Galahad fleeing over the bridges are powerful:

"And Galahad fled along then bridge by bridge
And every bridge as quickly as he crest
Sprang into fire and vanished tho I
Yearned to follow".

Sir Percivale received no divine transformation. He is made to illustrate one who sees and understands but cannot "lose himself". He seemingly suffers that common lack of courage to renounce the temporal for the eternal.

Another Sir Bors, simple, trusting gentleman who goes out on the word of others, following duty only and trusting in the honor of the act, sees, in
in adversity, the cup shining through his prison bars.

Still another, Sir Gawain finding the vision is not for him, sinks into sensual pleasures and declares his twelve months and a day a merry lark.

Most false of all is the experience of Sir Lamuelot, he the greatest, cannot disentangle his good and evil impulses

"My madness (his love) came upon me as of old
And whipt me into waste fields far away
There was I beaten down by little men
Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
And shadow of my spear had been enow
To scare them from me once."

"Pelleas and Etarre" of "The Idylls" describes the beginning of the end. The canker at the Court is no longer hidden from anyone but the unsuspicous King.

The story as told by Malory is natural, simple and common. The ground of the trouble in the

48 "Holy Grail": Tennyson
tale is also common. It is the bösdom of Etarre, wearied of being loved by Pelleas whom she does not love. "I have no peace for him" she cries. The Pelleas of Malory is an ordinary gentleman and his Etarre is a character peculiar to the romances. "Pelleas and Etarre" has the romantic air and it depicts pain and pleasure with adventures not uncommon to the age.

Tennyson's tale is much the same as Malory's, at least as far as that point where Pelleas leaves Etarre and rides away. It is here that Tennyson recasts the story. Pelleas in Malory's book departs furious with the treachery of Gawain and equally furious with Etarre, not for her unchastity, but because she has loved another than himself. Tortured by these two angers, Pelleas takes to his bed to die of rage and disappointment. He is then found by the Lady of the Lake who cures him and replaces his love of Etarre by love of herself and order to avenge Pelleas bewitches Etarre into a hopeless love of Pelleas. Pelleas cries out to Etarre "Begone traitress" and Etarre dies of sorrow. Then Pelleas and the Lady of the Lake live happily ever after, beginning immediately.
There is no moral nor any special purpose in Malory’s story. It is simply a cross section of human life recorded in an unaffected style. But Tennyson presented it with a moral aim. He represents the luxurious society which precedes the downfall of a nation, especially after the failure of a religious revival founded on the supernatural, such as the Grail Quest. The knights returned from the “quest” not better but worse. Religion and an ideal life they considered useless. First they are sensual, then cynical. Vivien, the embodiment of lust is full mistress of the world. Etarre represents this society. Pellens shows the effect of this society on innocence. Pellens, a simple country gentleman of high ideals, is thrown into society where the King is thought to be a fool, purity absurd, love a lust. Unprepared for the full force of disillusionment, he is driven distraught by the discovery of the Queen’s fraility. It would seem that Etarre is Tennyson’s ethical warning against luxurious and loose society, and as ethics her story is plainly expressed. The story which binds up modern warnings with a medieval tale is expressed allegorically.

Mr. Stopford Brooke in his “Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life” says, “The whole
idyll is too plainly a stop-gap, a tale inserted to represent the kind of society which intervened between the religious excitement of the Quest and the cynical languor of "The Last Tournament". It does not seem to have grown naturally out of Tennyson's original conception. There is little in it of the passion of an artist. The work of it seems jaded and even the verse is inferior to that of the other "Idylls". Even the natural description suffers from the artist's apparent want of interest in his conception.

When Pelleas comes face to face with the Queen and will not answer when she speaks, Tennyson, at least, is artistic enough to foreshadow what is to come. It is surely obvious that he means to show more than the cursing Pelleas.

"But Pelleas lifted up an eye so fierce
She quailed; and he hissing 'I have no sword'
Sprang from the door into the dark,
The Queen looked hard upon her lover,
he on her
And each foresaw, the dolorous day to be.
..... And Modred thought the time is hard at hand".

"The Last Tournament" like "Pelleas and
"Etarre" seems to have been an afterthought. Since "The Idylls" as a whole is a moral, it may be expected that parts will point out a moral but it would seem that each idyll should be an integral part of the whole as well as a moral. The first part of the story of "The Last Tournament" has a vital connection with the whole poem but in the second part, the story of Tristan is grafted on. Tristan has nothing to do with the Tennysonian mood and his plainly grafted story is nothing more than an example of adultery.

The first part of this idyll is based on material derived from Books nineteen and twenty of Malory which deal with the discovery of the Queen's infidelity, wars in the north and the treachery of Modred. The main events are followed closely by Tennyson.

In the second part, Tennyson's pruning of the story of Tristan is almost cruel. He follows Malory in the Tristan story instead of the finer versions, and he leaves out a number of Malory's beauties. "Tristan in Malory's book is degraded in order that the high light may fall on Launcelot". 49

49 Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur, p. 241; Scudder
The incident of the love drink which Malory used is left out by Tennyson because by excusing them, his ethical intent would have been spoiled. Malory's story reflects sex relations and the position of women in the Middle Ages.

The love of Tristan and Isolde in the hands of Tennyson is a very different type from that of Launcelot and Guinevere. Their passion has nothing spiritual about it. Tristan is unfaithful, Isolde is vulgarized. This mighty sorrow is left untouched by Tennyson. All the romance is taken out of them.

Stepford Brooke in *Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life* says, "No one has a right to alter out of recognition two characters in one of the great poetic stories of the world and to blacken them so. Tennyson ought to have had more reverence and more intuition."

When Tristan is introduced as victor, his soulless talk completely contradicts his character in the old stories. But his words artistically reflect a theory Tennyson had in mind:

*Free love - free field - we love but while we May
New life, new love to suit the newer day
New loves are sweet as those that went before.*
The introduction of the Tristam story enhances the ethical lesson but critics make strong objections to it from the point of view of art. The first part, in the opinion of a goodly number of critics, says all that is necessary.

The fact remains that the story of Tristam and Isouelt takes the reader away from the main contention at the very point where the whole theme of Tennyson should be concentrated around Arthur, Launcelot and Guinevere.

Tennyson makes the time of the "Last Tournament" departing autumn. This is Nature's reflection of the catastrophe. The degradation of society is drawn when the tale is done. Arthur knows of Guinevere's guilt, and Launcelot and all his kin are set against the King. True to the Victorian spirit, a social picture is introduced in the tales of Launcelot and Arthur riding through a mountain pass and hearing the cry of a child. Launcelot climbs for the child and round its throat lay a ruby circlet which, when the child died the Queen bade that the ruby circlet be tournayed for. The purest knight should win it for the purest maiden in the "Tournament of the Dead Innocence" by a court that did not know innocence.
The prize is won by the free lover, Tristan, and given to Isolt who abhors her husband.

Before the joust is held, Tennyson shows how the kingdom has broken down. A rival Round Table is set up whose leader tells Arthur

\[ \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \text{his hour is come} \]

The beathon are upon him, his long lance

\[ 50 \]

Broken, and his excalibur a straw".

Arthur rides away to chastise this usurper and when he returns all is in ruins. Before he goes he touches those two who have destroyed his work. He leaves Launcelot remorseful, the queen awe stricken:

"In her high bower the Queen

Working a tapestry lifted up her head

Watched her lord pass, and knew not that she sighed.

Then ran across her memory the strange rhyme

Of bygone Merlin, 'Where is he who knows

From the great deep to the great deep he goes'".

Then comes the tournament on a day of storm and cloudy skies that Tennyson fashions to reflect the last days of luxury and adultery. When Tristan comes for the prize, Launcelot who is presiding in the King's absence, asks, "Art thou the purest?" and
Tristem scoffs "Be happy in your fair queen as I am in mine". Even courtesy is dead. In the wild unrestrained revels that follow, the queen retires humiliated and sorrowful. The expiring Round Table retains most evidence of its former power in Dagonet, the Fool. Tristem before his death at the hands of King Mark tells Dagonet that his regeneration by Arthur has left him worse than a fool - "A naked aught". It seems here that Tennyson demonstrates the truth that it is the poor simple penitent creatures who keep longest to the traditions of a declining faith. So Dagonet the "sole follower of the vows, the half-witted jester and mock knight bears reverence to Arthur in the face of scorn. He greets Arthur on his return

"I am thy fool
And I shall never make thee smile again".

In the idyll "Guinevere", Tennyson's story is essentially the same as Malory's concluding books, except that in Malory the Queen is condemned to be burned and is rescued by Launcelot, and under injunctions from the Pope, Arthur takes her back: In the old story the ecclesiastical element is predominant. Natural impulse is set over against the excited de-
votion of chivalry, and they do not blend.

Tennyson subdues the character of Guinevere throughout "The Idylls". When shame overwhelms her, she and Launcelot ride away, he to his castle, she to the convent. "Guinevere" properly opens with her entrance into the convent incognito. Here she is alone with her love and her sin. "Sometimes she grew half guilty in her thoughts again". Here Arthur finds her and tells her in characteristic Victorian manner:

"The children born of thee are sword and fire
Red ruin and the breaking up of laws.
The craft of kindred, and the godless hosts
Of heathen swarming o'er the northern sea".

He also magnanimously forgives her as the Eternal Father forgives but will not touch her here on earth! Guinevere moved by his forgiveness at last loves him and truly repents. Tennyson seems to make Guinevere a woman who could not repent without replacing her guilty love by something else. When she loves her husband, she forgets the past, and looks to heaven. Good deeds and kindness mark

51 "Guinevere": Tennyson
the rest of her life.
At last she goes

"To where beyond these voices there is peace".
Very little of a spent romance is reflected in this poem. Rather it reminds one of some of the high powered sermons of two decades past.

It seems strange that at a time when personal feeling should have been supreme, that even a King would turn aside to lecture on national purity! Notwithstanding the existence of this quality, there are episodes of this idyll that are full of color and beauty. An air of old romance pervades Guinevere's soft regretful memory of her ride with Sir Launcelot from her father's castle in the sinless May time. As nature fitted the rapture of the beginning, so it fits the tragic end:

"The white mist, like a face cloth to the face
Clung to the dead earth and the land was still,
The moony vapor rolling round the King
Who seemed the phantom of a giant in it
Enwound him fold by fold and made him gray
And grayer till himself became as a mist 52
Before her, moving ghost like to her doom".

"Guinevere": Tennyson
As Arthur departs, the words of Guinevere almost convinces one that she really loves the King.

"Ah my God, what might not have made of
Thy fair world
Had I but loved thy highest creature here
Not Launcelot nor another?"

"The Passing of Arthur" is the crown of the Idylls. It corresponds in general to Book XXI of Malory's "Le Morte Darthur". But there are many points of difference. Some arise from the fact that Malory is closing the story of Launcelot as well as the story of Arthur, while Tennyson tells only of the passing of the King. Others arise from the form which Tennyson chose to give to his poem as a parable of the soul. Thus he leaves out all about Modred's being the unlawful son of Arthur and makes him simply the traitor leading the forces of misrule and rebellion against the King. He leaves out, too, what Malory tells about the body which was brought by night to the hermits chapel for burial, and which Sir Bedivere thought was the body of Arthur. Tennyson shows only the King sailing away across the lake in the black barge attended by three queens. Swinburne in
an eloquent criticism of this "Idyll" asserts that Tennyson has weakened and obliterated the fine features of the old story.

The general course of the story is the same in both and the similarity extends even to minutiae details. Tennyson bases his story on Chapter V of Book XXI of Malory's "Morte Darthur". Malory's Arthur says to Bedivere "But yf thou do not as Ibyd the, yf ever I may see thee, I shall slea thee with myn owne hands". Tennyson keeps the expression, though it now has a different force and he must give a new turn to the sentence to make it relevant: -

But, if thou spare to flinde Excalibur, I will arise and slay thee with my hands". There is as much difference as resemblance between the two versions as, "Syr", says Bedivere in the prose, "I saw no thynge but the waters wappe and the waves warne" which in the poem becomes the famous couplet:

"I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds".

When the King is put on board the barge, Malory says: "And there recyved hym thre queens wyth grete mornynge" which is to Tennyson's lines
quit a inferior "And from them rose,
    A cry that shivered to the tingling stars
    And as it were one voice, and agony
    Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
    All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
    Or hath come, since the making of the world".

The description of the place, the "broken
chancel with a broken cross upon the strait of barren
land" between the two expanses of water and Sir Bedivere striding over the ice bound cliffs is all Tenny-
son's own with hardly a hint from Malory. It is the
same if the psychology of the situation is considered.
The adapter leaves his authority behind. In Malory,
Sir Bedivere on his first errand "beshelde the noble
swordes and thought the pomel and the haft were all
of pacyous stones and then sayd to himself: "If I
throwe this rych swordes in the water there of shall
never come good, but harme and losse"; and the same
idea is repeated on his second expedition. Tennyson
tells it thus

"There drew he forth the brand excalibur
    And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon
    Brightening the skirts of a long cloud
    Ran forth
    And sparkled keen with frost against the
    hilt
    For all the haft twinkled with diamond
    sparks
Myriads of topaz lights and jacinth work
Of subllest jewelry". On the second oc-
casion it is care for the King's own honor that
makes him fail

"What record or what relic of my lord
Should he to after time, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? But were this kept
Stored in some treasure house of mighty kings
Some one might show it at a joust of arms
Saying, 'King Arthur's sword Excalibur
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the lake'".

Or again the two versions may be contrasted
in the last words of the King. In Malory it runs

"Comfort thyself and doe as well as thou mayst for in
me is no truste to truste in. For I wyse to the vale
of Avylyon to helpe me of my grevyous wounde. And yf thou
here never more of me, praye for my soule". In Tennyson
the farewell is thus:

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new
And God fulfills himself in many ways
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world".

There is surely a depth of meaning in these
lines in Malory's prose. Malory has made the downfall
of the Round Table follow a great wrong the King him-
self committed, the betrayal of his sister, Modred's mother. Tennyson traces the ruin to the sin of Lancelot and Guinevere, and the corruption of the court by Vivien. Tennyson sends Arthur to his eternal home untroubled about the overthrow of the Round Table. To his followers he seems to leave aspirations for immortality.

The pageant has passed, for as such it seems when one reads "The Idylls" in order. Bedivere, the last survivor hears

"Like the last echo born of a great cry
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a King returning from his wars".

In his later years, Tennyson wrote "Merlin and the Gleam", a poem which is considered autobiographical. The Gleam is the poetic ideal, which Merlin, representing the poet, ever seeks: And when Merlin, himself, is no longer able to keep up the quest, he gives the ideal to his successor.

"Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Not of the starlight
O young Mariner,
Down to the haven
Call your companions
Launch your vessel
And crowd your canvas;

Merlin and the Gleam is conceived without reference to "The Idylls" and seemingly in contradiction to their conception. This poem may be said to bear the same relation to the cycle when completed, that "The Lady of Shalott" bears to the cycle not yet conceived. Here, however, the theme is derived not from visionary romance but from legendary history.
IV

Tennyson's Contemporaries
The method of treating the Arthurian Legends as used by Lord Lytton belongs, in spirit, to the period preceding Tennyson. Chronologically, he follows Tennyson's first efforts.

In his King Arthur, an epic fable in twelve books, he treats the old legends as freely as Spenser did, perhaps because of his love for that poet. Like Spenser, Lytton associates Arthurian characters with non-Arthurian, supernatural, and mythological people. Thus his poem is Arthurian in name and not in spirit. "If Lord Lytton lives in the annals of English literature, it will be for his novels and not for his King Arthur".

Lord Lytton's treatment of the Arthurian stories is the stranger, because already for nearly twenty years, the medieval tendency of romanticism had been exceedingly strong in England in thought and in art. It was in the middle of the nineteenth century that the Pre-Raphaelite treatment of the Arthurian themes began.

Pre-Raphaelitism was the manifestation of medievalism in two of the fine arts, poetry and painting.

52 *The Arthur of the English Poets*, p.352: Maynadier
53 *English Romanticism, Twentieth Century*: Beers
It grew up in a coterie of painters and sculptors, some of whom were also poets; the so called Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of which the world has considered Daniel Gabriel Rossetti as the leader. One would have expected Rossetti to write a notable Arthurian poem since his illustrations for the poems of Tennyson and his frescoes for the Oxford Union show he had an appreciation for the pictorial beauties of the story. The fact remains that he produced no such poem, but left the first Pre-Raphaelite treatment of Arthurian material in verse to William Morris. The main importance of the Pre-Raphaelite movement to Arthurian literature thus resides in the inspiration Rossetti’s poetry and paintings communicated to younger men, like Morris and Swinburne.

Various critics of Browning have suggested that his “Child Roland to the Dark Tower Came” is based on Arthurian material, or at least on the mysticism of the Sir Galahad theme. Roland Fletcher in Tennyson and Browning says that Browning’s own statement relative to the source and meaning of the poem, as reported by different witnesses, seems to have been inconsistent. “The poem is a borrowing from the ballad

54 *English Romanticism, Twentieth Century: Bears*
snatch sung by the "Pom" in *King Lear*. It is a weird study of landscape symbolism and history of some dark enterprise the real nature of which is undiscoverable to the average reader.

James Russell Lowell in "The Vision of Sir Launfal" has attempted to combine old and new, which is really a later conception of the Arthurian stories than the Pre-Raphaelite spirit, though his production is not chronologically in agreement with this statement.

Lowell has exaggerated the moral he would teach, and as his own note on the "Vision of Sir Launfal" explains, he virtually rejected all old material and invented new incidents which may be termed Arthurian only so far as the Grail is sought by Lowell's hero. To this newly invented "Grail Quester", Lowell gives the name "Launfal" from Marie's "Lanvil". He has kept the best spirit of the Grail story and constructed a poem much criticized but of which the sweetness lingers long after reading it.

Some of the reproaches which critics bring against this poem are: the castle in the north country
of England is surrounded by a New England country; the famous "day in June" is all New England June; and the little December brook is a New England brook in winter - moreover the verse becomes commonplace or academic. Lowell in his essays speaks more than once of Wolfram Von Eschenbach with admiration. One may be justified in wondering if the American poet was indebted to the thirteenth century Bavarian in whose "Parsival", the Grail legend is exceedingly beautiful.

Four years after the publication of the "Vision of Sir Launfal", Matthew Arnold's "Tristam and Iseult", a production that appeared to have been composed in a mood of discontent, a common characteristic of his poetry, appeared. He sums up his impression of the old world history in a melancholy reflection in "Iseult of Brittany".

"And yet, I swear, it angers me to see
How this fool passion galls men potently;
Being, in truth, but a diseased unrest,
and an unnatural overheat at best.
Now they are full of languor and distress
Not having it; which when they possess,
They straightway are burnt up with fume and care".

56 The Arthur of English Poets, p. 379; Maynadier
This mood is illustrated in the three parts of the poem which have respectively as their central figures Tristam and the two Isuult; Tristam subdued by a "tyrannous single thought" sees on his death bed all that "he did before shadow and dream". In his delirium he lives through his former life at fever speed, calling up scene after scene; the draining of the cup, the last sad meeting, the war with Rome, the return to the Briton forest. He wakens to a recognition of Isuult (not of Ireland the Isuult who has been watching, overhearing his unconscious chatter.)

Then Isuult of Ireland arrives and unhindered by her magnanimous rival exchanges with Tristam the bitter sweet of their vain love and regret. She has escaped from the feasts of Titangal where she was "dogged by fear and fought by shame" to the quest of death, which serves as a balm alike for her abstraction and Tristam's brooding. She is presented as a great lady, worn with passion, and weary of life, yet more introspective than the Middle Ages would permit. She has been in the

"Gradual furnace of the world,
In whose hot air our spirits are upcurl'd
Until they crumble, or else grow like steel".
When on her arrival, Tristan begs her to sit but not to speak, fearing he will find her tone altered, she replies sadly:

"Alter'd, Tristan? Not in courts, believe me,
Love like mine is alter'd in the breast;
Courtly life is light and cannot reach it -
Ahh! it lives, because so deep-suppress'd.

Arnold thus making Iseult arrive just before Tristan dies instead of after is characteristic of the deeper sympathy of the nineteenth century. It would seem to nineteenth century philosophy an unnecessarily cruel fate to forbid lovers a last word. Again in true nineteenth century spirit Arnold gives Iseult of Brittainy two children, which is more Victorian than romantic.

He makes his hero at once the peerless hunter, harper knight, and a nineteenth century gentleman who in his youth loved deeply, though not wisely. Subsequently he has not neglected his wife and children, but his old passion lives for Iseult of Ireland, who suffers in nineteenth century surroundings in a nineteenth century way.

Nevertheless in reading "Tristan and Iseult" we catch some of the charm of the Middle Ages. The castle in which Tristan dies is medieval; so is the
picture of Tristam and the two Iseults. But when
they speak and act they are not medieval but nine-
teenth century nobility. Thus Arnold’s poem has
slight connections with the older versions. His medi-
evalism being confined to a few touches is very dif-
ferent from the intense medievalism of William Morris.
The medieval effect of Tristam and Iseult owes much to
the prominence given the legend of Merlin with which
it concludes.

Mr. Andrew Lang says that the passage which
haunts us all, and is entirely Arnold’s inventions, is:

"But they sleep in shelter’d rest,
Like helpless birds in the warm nest,
On the castle’s southern side”;
Arnold changes the other Iseult more than
the Iseult of Ireland or Tristam. In the old stories
she is petty in spirit (as knowingly misrepresenting
the color of the sail.) However, only medieval callous-
ness could be indifferent to her real wrongs. It was
but natural that Arnold should change her to suit nine-
teenth century thought. He becomes so interested in
satisfying nineteenth century readers that he makes her
the real heroine.

Arnold’s verse is not so melodious as that
of Morris and Swinburne, yet it is among some of the best
poetry he has done and has in it qualities that are lack-
ing in that of Morris and Swinburne. Though the spirit of Arnold's poem is modern, it contains pictures of peculiar medieval charm: "What knight is this so weak and pale,

Though the locks are yet brown on his noble head,
Prompt on pillows in his bed,
Gazing seaward for the light
Of some ship that fights the gale
On this wild December night?
Over the sick man's feet is spread
A dark green forest-dress;
A gold harp leans against the bed,
Ruddy in the fire's light.
I know him by his harp of gold,
Famous in Arthur's court of old;
I know him by his forest-dress -
The peerless hunter, harper, knight,
Tristam of Lyonesse."

To repeat the poetical fancies of the Middle Ages in day dreams of the nineteenth century seems to have been a congenial task for William Morris. He does not copy but reincarnates the spirit of the past. He has treated the Arthurian stories in four poems. In his, "Defense of Guinevere" the story is so faithful to Malory's "Morte Darthur" that to understand it one needs a knowledge of Malory's work. There is a reference to

57 Romanticism of Nineteenth Century, p. 304-5: Beers
Melligrance and his abduction of Guinevere which would be almost incomprehensible without a knowledge of the old story. Yet he follows to some extent Tennyson's "Lady of Shallot", but accentuates the medievalism in the fashion of the Pre-Raphaelite school.

Morris does not adhere very closely to his authorities; indeed, he often contradicts them. For instance, Guinevere, in her self vindication speaks as though she were answering he chief accuser,

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

But in Malory Gawaine is her friend and will have nothing to do with proceedings against her. It is only after the accidental slaughter of Sir Gareth that he runs on Sir Launcelot, but his enmity does not extend to the Queen.

In stead of the refined ethics of Tennyson and purely modern spiritual ideals, Morris endeavors to render the genuine Catholic medieval temper as it appears in Malory where unquestioning belief, childish superstition, and fear of hell co-exist with fleshly love and hate.

Guinevere's defense is at the bottom the same as Phryne's:
"See through my long throat how the words go up
In ripples to my mouth: how in my hand
The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvellously colour'd gold".

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

Morris, in his Sir Galahad, a Christmas Mystery, does not make Galahad the mild youth that Tennyson does. Morris's Galahad is not the rapt seer of the vision beatific, but a more flesh and blood character who sometimes has fits of doubt whether the quest is not a fool's errand, and whether even Sir Palomyde in his unrequited love, and Sir Launcelot in his guilty love, do not have greater comfort than he does. Morris lets us know that only to Galahad, however, sight of the Grail is to be granted. On the whole the poem presents a Galahad who, with all the purity of the medieval knight, is more human.

In his "King Arthur's Tomb", Morris makes Guinevere a creature of flesh and blood, the picture

58 "King Arthur's Tomb"

59 *Romanticism of the English Poets*, p.325: Beards
of a penitent going to meet Launcelot at the tomb of the husband they have both wronged, with her spirit torn between the sense of sin and the desire, almost determination, to sin again. This poem is remarkable in Morris’s work because it is Victorian. Morris makes the last interview of Launcelot and Guinevere take place at Arthur’s tomb.

"So Guinevere rose and went to meet him there,
In Arthur’s head, till some of her long hair
Brushed on the new cut stone, well done, to pray
‘For Arthur, my dear Lord, the greatest king
That ever lived. Guinevere, Guinevere,
Do you not know me, are you gone mad? fling
Your arms and hair lest I fear
You are not Guinevere, but some other thing,’
‘Pray you forgive me fair Lord Launcelot;
I am not mad but I am sick; they cling,
God’s curses into such as I am; not
Ever again shall we twine arms and lips.’"
cept that the quaint dignity of Malory's narrative
has given place to Pre-Raphaelite passion illustrated
in the above quoted lines. Malory's Launcelot says:
"Lady, I insure you faithfully I will ever take me to
pence, and pray while my life lasteth". Malory says
nothing of Guinevere's trial, while it seems Norris is
troubled by such questions: How did she act? What
was the reaction of others?

Thus Norris lets a situation grow in his im-
agination. Sometimes a mere name is enough. Sir Osana
le Cure Hardy is an indefinite person in Malory's book,
but even his initials interest Norris and he becomes
the center of the little mystery, "The Chapel of Lyen-
esse", a romantic performance with the somewhat defective
composition of his sources exaggerated. Sir Osana
tells us,

"All day long and every day
From Christmas-Eve to Whit-Sunday,
Within that Chapel-aisle I lay
And no man came anear".

There he lay with the truncheon of a spear in his breast,
no meat ever passing his lips, speechless, trance like,
and yet not sleeping; and there Sir Galahad had watched
him day by day, till at last, by plucking a faint wild
rose and laying it across Ozana's mouth, he brought the wounded knight out of the half-mad trance. Then Sir Ozana died in peace, and Sir Bors who stood by, looking at Sir Galahad's great blue eyes which stared dreamily, as if they saw what mortal man may not often behold, heard Sir Galahad:

"Ozana, shall I pray for thee?
Her cheek is laid to thine;
No long time hence, also I see
Thy wasted fingers twine
Within the tresses of her hair
That shineth gloriously.

Morris treated a subject of the Mabinogion under the title of "Love is Enough" in the style of a fifteenth century morality play. There is a musical accompaniment, a prolog, and a chorus. Like his poetry, dramatic qualities are lacking.

In the final impressions of Morris's poetry one is struck by a resemblance to Spenser, who was his master in many phases. Especially is he like Spenser in that they both stand at a distance from their own time. In this indifference to contemporary questions, he resembles his fellow Pre-Raphaelites, but they, in only a slight degree show his practical interests, cap-
italism and socialism. His poetry seems to come from his pen as naturally as if he, who hated sly, polluting factories, and the roar and clatter of machinery, had lived in the earlier ages of which he wrote.

In a sense the medievalism of Stephen Hawker (1804–75) was even more complete than that of Morris. Mr. Barings-Gould in his "Biography of the Vicar of Morwinstow" (1878) defines his position, "He was an anachronism. He did not belong to this century nor this country. His mind and character pertained to the Middle Ages and the East. This resulted, no doubt, from his life in remote villages of Cornwall, where there were many influences toward medieval mysticism. He believed in witch craft, the power of the evil eye, and special providence".

Such was the man who six years before Tennyson undertook to sing of the quest of the San Grael. Cherishing the traditions of Cornwall, and among them the traditions of Arthur, he could hardly avoid being attracted. A man who believed as he did would find it difficult to translate the Quest into Modern thought, and so his meaning is not clear, yet no one can fail to be impressed by the force of the
mystical spirit.

"Ho for the Sangrael, vanished vase of God. Ye know that in old days, that yellow Jew Accursed Herod; and the earthwide judge, Pilate the Roman; doomster for all lands — Or else the judgement had not been for all-Bound Jesu-Master to the world's tall tree Slowly to die, — Ha, sirs, had we been there They durst not have essayed their felon deed, — Exsalibur had elfed them to the chine".

Then Arthur, son of Uter and the Night, turns to the mighty men of the Table and goes on to tell the story of Joseph of Arimathe (as Hawker spells it), how the Grail came to Britain and passed away when the land was tainted with the "garbage of sin"; but Arthur says it is to be achieved again.

"Hark stern Dundagel softens into song. They meet for solemn severance, Knight and King Hear, how the minstrels prophesy in sound, Shout the King’s washbael and drink hael the Queen".

This fragmentary work is hastily muddled into a
conclusion, and the charm is lost.

Hawker's "King Arthur's "Waes-Hael" celebrates the Christ child in a musical little poem.

"To dream that thus her bosom smiled
And learn the lip of Bethlehem's child", 61

Hawker seemed to recognize that Tennyson rather than he was elected to give the Arthurian stories their genuine immortality. He expresses this sentiment in a poem to Tennyson (1859) in compliment of Tennyson's earliest Idylls:

"They told me in their shadowy phrase
Caught from a tale gone by,
That Arthur king of Cornish praise
Died not and would not die.

"Dreams had they, that in fairy bowers
Their living warrior lies;
Or wears a garland of the flowers
That grow in Paradise.

"He -- would great Arthur's name rehearse
On gray Dundagel's shore;
And so the king, in laurelled verse,
Shall live, and die no more".

61 Oxford Book of English Verse, p. 786
Hawker's one important Arthurian poem appeared five years after Morris's "Defense of Guinevere". He may be classed, on the whole, with the Pre-Raphaelites poets, for his inspiration, like Morris's was drawn from the Middle Ages. But Hawker did not take the sensuous delight in their picturesque beauty which Morris took; he was inspired by their ascetic, religious zeal.

One effect of the resurrection of Arthurian subjects was to call forth the attention of a number of minor writers. Some of their work might have endured but for the achievements of Tennyson. A specimen is "Arthur's Knights" published anonymously in 1859 which deals with the quest and the ruin of the order and the land brought about by the sin of the questers.

A. L. Gordon, the poet of the Australian race course, in his "Rhyme of Joyous Garde" (1866) depicts the remorse of Launcelot and gives one some grand thoughts of that renowned knight. His poetry has Tennyson's manner and style:
"If ever I smote as a man should smite,
If I struck one stroke that seem'd good in thy sight,
By thy loving mercy prevailing,
Lord, let her stand in the light of Thy face,
Cloth'd with Thy love and crowned with thy grace,

When I gnash my teeth in the terrible place
That is filled with weeping and wailing."

One of the most interesting of the minor contributions to the Arthurina subject is the "Farewell of Ganore", by G. A. Simcox, published in 1869. It suggests the poem "King Arthur's Tomb" by William Morris. It describes the last meeting of Launcelot and the Queen, but the roles which Morris assigns are reversed; Simcox makes the remorse of Launcelot demand their parting, and Ganore (as Simcox calls Guinevere) interprets his penitence as weakened devotion. Tennyson's influence is visible. A fragment of the poem shows the character of the Queen as it is depicted by a number of writers:

63 A. L. Gordon's Poems 1887
64 Poems and Romances: G. A. Simcox
"I asked of Arthur what he could not give,
I gave what Launcelot could not repay;
My God, what shall I say?
And Arthur asked of me
To live in dreams, hoping what shall not be
And Arthur asked in vain."

In "Gawain and the Lady of Avalon," Simcox is quite independent of Tennyson's influence because he uses material that Tennyson never touched. The ballad on the marriage serves as a groundwork on which are woven stories of a Beauty transformed into a monster, of a fair lady who grants her love for a time to earthly men; and of the immortal stranger whose name must not be asked. The atmosphere of this piece is suggestive of Gracian gods and dragons.

In 1868 appeared another Grail poem, "The Quest of the Sangreall," by Thomas Westwood. With remarkable ability to write lines poetical and musical, he does not seem able to make a definite whole. Twice Westwood touched on Arthurian theme. His first attempt, "The Sword of Kingship," was more successful in one respect than the "Quest of Sangreall"; it was more distinct. "In 'The Sword of Kingship' the difficulty of holding the story together is not so apparent, because
Westwood follows the definite story of the first book of Malory. Almost as medieval as Morris and Hawker, Westwood, unlike them, did not draw his inspiration from medieval material, but rather from the medievalism of his contemporaries. "To Hawker and Morris he owes something, and to Tennyson he owes so much that had Tennyson not written, it is doubtful whether Westwood's Arthurian poems had ever been."

Frank Millard (1870) seems to have caught a breath of Tennyson's manner and style in his "Tristan and Iseult", when he accounts for Tristan's marriage:

"His love
Dwelt in the dreary chambers of his brain
And made the seeming faithful inly false--"

Another minor poet (American), Annie Fields, took as a text for her poem "Little Guinevere."

"When Queen Guinevere of Brittany was a little wench" (Loves Labors Lost). In this short poem, both Arthur and Launcelot are related to her childhood and womanhood, and her preferences in both instances seems to be Launcelot.

"Thus she passed the merry day,
Thus her woman spake and smiled,
'All we see we need not say
For Guinevere is but a child."

65 The Arthur of the English Poets: Maynadier
Newer Spirit
After 1870 the number of Arthurian poems decidedly falls off. By that year, Tennyson had given his "Idylls" a connected form and by 1872 it was complete. He had taken the whole cycle for his province. His achievement may have seemed a challenge or a warning to others to keep off the domain. It had been necessary for Tennyson to trim and dock the luxuriance of material; thus there was opportunity for other poets to take up what he neglected, and handle such material on its own merits. Mr. Simcox, discussed above, represents this transition of Arthurian themes. This new poetry seems to almost a reaction from the Idylls.

Among the poets who after the Idylls appeared in collective form, adapted a variant of the stories was Sebastian Evans. In 1875 he took from the old romances the subject of two pieces for his volume, "In the Studio." Neither shows much attempt at plot. "King Arthur's Knighting" tells how Arthur is Armed by Ginevra at the wedding feast held by King Leodogan at Camelot. Yet a shadow lies across the scene which seems to blight the promise of love and honor:

"Then Arthur turned as one but half awake,
Drunken with that deep draught of loneliness,
Dazed with his dreams of conquest for her sake and bliss to be."

But at the moment "he felt the glittering blue of Merlin's eye," and flushed in conscious guilt beneath it;

"For well the bridegroom knew that Merlin knew His lawless other love and its wild sin."

The other poem, "The Eve of Morte Arthur", describes the twilight of the Order of the Round Table. The departure of Galahad, the death of Tristam, the beguiling of Merlin are described. The plot dwells on the glories of the kingdom before the decadence began.

The reaction was soon exemplified by a more famous Arthurian theme - one which Tennyson pruned cruelly. Perhaps stimulated by the injustice it had undergone, Swinburne in 1882 composed the gorgeous poetry of "Tristam of Lyonesse." Unfettered by scruples of dogma, he has kept close to the medieval type, only curtailing the most tedious passages, and fixing as it were on the main scenes, as texts for lyrical efforts. Those who look for epic narrative will be disappointed, but not so, in looking for an emotional symphony of verse.
Indebted most to Malory, he does not take
his material entirely from one romance but seems to
have been familiar with several, and with both ver-
sions of the Tristam legend. In the title, for in-
stance, he follows the Baroul version, which makes
Lyonesse, Tristam's native land; and this source
he is following when he makes Tristam and Iseult
guests of Launcelot at his castle Joyous Garde. In
giving the love potion lasting power, he followed
the Thomas version, and so he does in making Tristam
receive his mortal wound while rendering service to
his namesakea Tristam of Brittany. To both he may
be indebted for his conclusion for both are sub-
stantially the same.

Swinburne has a keen feeling for the changing
moods of the romances, and he expresses himself with
utter abandon - sometimes a little more reticence
would not be out of place when sensuous passion is
the theme.

"Her mouth
Was as a rose athirst that pants for drouth
Even while it laughs for pleasure of desire."

It seems that Swinburne justifies these passages as
furnishing contrast between the short life of delight

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66 The Arthur of the English Poets, p.370: Maynadier
and the weary time of regret. "Ye light washing weed" says Tristam,

"Bland waifs of the dull sea
Do ye thirst and hunger and aspire,
Are ye moved, and with such strong desire
In the ebb and flow of your sad life,
and strive
Still toward some end ye shall not see alive."

The death of the lovers is brought about by the Iseult whom they thought they could neglect.

"Nought, it is nought, O husband, O my knight,
O strong man, and indomitable in fight,
That one more weak than foam bells on the sea
Should have in heart such thoughts as I of thee.

Thou art bound about with stately strengths for hands;
What strength shall keep thee from strengthless hands?"

Swinburne makes the lot of the lovers less tragic than happy. They pass away before their love has lost its bloom:

"Death shall not take them drained of true dear life"

67 "Tristam of Lyonesse", VII.
Already, sick or stagnant from strife,
Quenched: not with dry drawn veins and
lingering breath
Shall these through crumbling hours crouch
down to death". 68

Swinburne's poetry has some of the splendor
of Shelley's. He does not describe in picture like
Rosetti and Morris but by metaphors. However, all
the sensuousness of Malory which Tennyson touches
lightly, Swinburne gives at full length plus digres-
sions. The following appears to be a typical passage-
a portrait of Iscult: -

"Iscult, more fair than foam or dawn was white.
Her gaze was glad past love's own singing of,
And her face lovely past desire of love
Past thought and speech her maiden motions were,
And a more golden sunrise was her hair.
The very veil of her bright flesh was made
As of light woven and moonbeam - colored shade
More fine than moonbeams;"..............
The symbolism which characterizes a great deal
of the Pre-Raphaelite art is not conspicuous in Swin-
burne whose spirit is not mystical. But two marks of

68 "Tristam of Lyonesse" VI.
Pre-Raphaelitism and of the romantic manner, generally are present in his Arthurian poetry—one is a fondness for microscopic detail at the expense of the obvious; another is the intensity of sense and spirit.

One of the beautiful passages is the one that deals with the drinking of the love draught. The contrasts are very interesting; for instance, the same innocent strength and loyalty of the pair, the bright girlliness of Issult, before the drinking and the delirious joy when they have drunk from "the sinless source of all their sin." Swinburne has given the old Tristan romance sympathetic treatment but it would be almost impossible to reconcile this interpretation with the Arthurian stories as a whole. Perhaps that is an excuse for Tennyson's neglect. Swinburne was, like Morris, affected by another art, which in his case is music.

In the exquisite close of "Tristan of Lyonesse", Swinburne reaches the heights of poetry....

"And over them; while death and life shall be
The light and sound and darkness of the sea."

Mr. Andrew Lan says that Swinburne's fluency and fondness for analysis become faults. He also states
that "Swinburne's "Tristem of Lyonesse" showed that among Swinburne's many gifts, the gift of narration is not one." But Swinburne can be rapid when he chooses, for instance, at the end of "Tristem of Lyonesse". In less than one page from Tristem's wondering on his bed of fever, if Iseult of Ireland will come to him, his wife has given him the false information about the color of the sail and he and his Irish Iseult are dead.

Like Swinburne there were others who treated incidents that Tennyson did not attempt. Again, they might treat themes in some different fashion, dramatically or lyrically. Thus Mr. Comyn Carr soon after Tennyson's death retold in his play of "King Arthur" the story of Guinevere's jealousy of Elaine. Since then Mr. Davidson wrote his ballad of the love of Launcelot and Guinevere, which was colored by a deep irreligious tone, a reaction to rigid Presbyterian training. Recent treatment of the Arthurian story may indicate that he pointed the way in his poem "The

69 Carr also wrote a play "Tristem and Iseult" presented in London 1906. His plays prove that there is dramatic material in stories.

70. The Arthur of the English Poets, p. 406; Maynadier
"The Last Ballad". Poets have not tried to tell the Round Table stories comprehensively as simple narrative — except in the case of the American poet, Richard Hovey who attempted to retell virtually the whole of them to a generation which had reached maturity before Tennyson died. Hovey wrote what critics probably regard as his best work in poems for Dartmouth dinners and other college reunions.

Despite Hovey's plan as announced on his title pages, to write an Arthurian "poem in drama", his work may rather be regarded as a long narrative poem made up, like "The Idyls", of various significant incidents; for each play that he completed is more a closet drama than one suited to stage presentation. Only four of these dramas have been published, two masques, "The Quest of Merlin", and "Taliesin", and two five-act plays, "The Marriage of Guinevere" and "The Birth of Galahad".

Hovey has a remarkable command of verse forms. There is poetry in his verse but of uneven distribution; at worst his verse is little better than doggerel as in "The Quest of Merlin":—

70 The Arthur of the English Poets, p. 406 Maynader
"Foxes in the poultry yard
Making free with chickens;
Crows in the cornfield
Pecking like the dickens."

There is now and then a suggestion of Tennyson;
there is often imitation of Shakespeare; a female
Polonius speaks:

Camaldana. So far, my daughter, you have
walked your way,
Self-willed, imperious, like a wanton child
That will not let her parents hold her hand;
Yet knows them near to save her if she fall.
Now they will not be near, and you may find
That freedom lays a weight upon our souls
That often we would like to shift to others.
I fear that counsel is poured out on your
Like an effectless wind; yet hear my words.
Take you no woman in your confidence,
But seem to do so.

The love making of Launcelot and Guinevere in the
"Marriage of Guinevere" reminds one of Romeo and
Juliet, and the watchman in the same play are remi-
niscant of Hogberry and his crew.

Hovey may be compared to Swinburne in his
tendency to drag in unnecessary incidents. In the
Quest of Merlin, for example, there is a scene of
the sage's getting drunk (Merlin does not get drunk
pleasantly) which is not only disagreeable, but seem-
ingly purposeless. These lines from the Quest of
Merlin call to mind the philosophy of Browning,

"Why should we strive for heaven
If earth fulfilled our hope?"

Again, he is decidedly modern in reflecting the re-
volt of women,

"Why, what a thing is woman, she is
brought
Into the world unwelcome. The mother
weeps
That has borne a daughter to endure
A woman's fate, The father knits his
brows
And mutters "pish", 'tis but a girl," A
boy

The very hounds had bayed for with delight.
Her childhood is a petty tyranny
Her brothers cross her; she must not resist,
Her father laughs to see the little men
So masterful already. Even the mother
Looks on her truculent sons with pride
and bids
Her yield not thwart them..."You are but a
girl." 71

71 "Launcelot and Guinevers"
In the use of romantic material Hovey is anachronistic. He is before, and not of the nineteenth century, in introducing into his masques all sorts of supernatural and mythological characters, Norse, Greek, and Christian, who never in the medieval days so much as heard of Arthur. A glance at the dramatis personae of the Quest of Merlin will demonstrate this peculiarity.

However free with the old story he was in his masques, in his five-act dramas Hovey was faithful enough to please the literary conscience of his time. Such departures were in accord with nineteenth century tendencies in treatment of the stories. Moreover, he shows that the center of interest for him as for others was in the two guilty lovers rather than in Arthur, and so the name of his completed poem is "Launcelot and Guinevere". He does not idealize Arthur, but makes him a gay fellow of the nineteenth century.

"No fickle lover
Can prove the glory and the might of love.
The King has loved... and more than twice,
I think."

Lionel: "Ay, he has been a gay dog in his day."

Borrowing from Heber and others who attempted to ennoble their love, Hovey, it would seem, would have
us think of the Queen as really Launcelot's bride, rather than Arthur's. He also makes Galahad not the son of Launcelot and Elaine, but Launcelot and Guinevere. This change does not seem to fit either the medieval or modern taste. As the old love story was told it was immoral rather than immoral. Tennyson changes as much as is wise; he excuses the beginning of their love but still makes it a crime. With Hovey it is not a crime or so the end of Taliesen gives us to understand.

"Better the rose of love out of the dung-hill of the world's adulteries

Than the maid icicle that keeps itself from stain of earth where no life is

In the aloof of splendors boreal."

Hovey at times seems almost vulgar, but these lines remind one of the Doxology

"Holy, Holy, Holy,

Which wert and which art and which shalt be,

World without end, Alleluia!

These lines sound very much like a paraphrase of Biblical language.

"In Thyself is the end

And the cause of Thy being,

O Thou beyond name."

72 "Taliesen"
Hovey intersperses lines of prose and Anglo Saxon verse in his plays. Merlin's discussion of state craft and Fate are interesting. American nature is introduced, which seems odd in connection with Camelot; the lakes are still ice bound in April - a condition of affairs truer of Hovey's New Hampshire than of Arthur's Britain. After all, such departures from the old legend, which did not essentially change its spirit, were in accord with the tendencies of the nineteenth century; they are not more radical than the changes of Morris, Hawker, Westwood, Arnold.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century another tendency in the treatment of Arthurian material is seen. In 1889 Mark Twain, the great American humorist, turned his attention to the Arthurian stories and the result was the burlesque, "A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court." Traces of the frontier spirit can be seen in all of Mark Twain's books. Jeffersonian equalitarianism distinguishes "A Connecticut Yankee". The story is marked by sharp social satire and a cold hatred of tyranny, injustice and inhumanity. As one proceeds with the story, it becomes less uproarious, and there is no more tendency to laugh than there is over the madness of Lear.
The story tells of a Yankee, former employee in a munitions factory, who had received a blow on the head. This Yankee of most modern type is plumped down in the middle of King Arthur’s England, and a series of farcical incidents ensue. The serious purpose seems to be stripping off the glamour and tinsel of chivalry, and to show the evils and miseries that actually existed.

"A Connecticut Yankee" gives Twain’s fullest expression of his innate frontier spirit. The book simply sweeps away thirteen hundred years and dumps an enterprising American into the atmosphere of chivalry and aristocracy. The Yankee finds everything wrong at Camelot. Aristocratic ideals cramp and hamper the development of natural ability, injustice and sheer cruelty flourish everywhere, the groveling of the lower classes before the clerics and nobles is disgusting; chivalric ideals outrage every suggestion of common sense, and not the least of the worries is the primitive method of working at all tasks. Twain spilled page after page of mordant criticism upon the social order of Arthur’s realms, and beside every glaring wrong, he conspicuously displays the ideals of frontier America. Western individualism and initiative replace class-mindedness; justice and humanitarianism alleviate social wrongs; and
liberty and personal freedom are exalted far above
the chivalric ideals of group loyalty. Thus Twain
would substitute for a static, stratified society,
one that was closely modeled upon that of the West!
Furthermore, into the archaic industry of Camelot
the Yankee introduced modern American inventions and
enterprises. In all these criticisms and innovations
Mark Twain was voicing the ideas of the pioneer whose
spokesman he certainly was.

Among the modern writers who have treated the
Arthurian themes most freely is Eugene Field, who, in
his pleasant and clever burlesque, "Proper Trewe Idyll
of Camelot", has used a method similar to that of Mark
Twain. However Field's satire is not so bitter. Though
written in a light vein, Field's poem seems to have been
influenced by the father of English poetry, Chaucer, both
in form and content:

"Whenas ye plaisaunt Aperille shoures
have washed and purged away

Ye poysons and ye rheums of earth to
make a merrie May,

Ye shraddy boscage of ye woods ben full
of birds that syng

Right merrilie a madrigal unto ye waking
spring,

Ye whiles that when ye face of earth
ben washed and wiped yeleame

Her peeping posies blink and stars like
they had ben her een;"
Then: wit ye well, ye harte of men ben
turned to thoughts of love,

And, tho' it ben a lyon rest, it now ben
like a dove."

Yet there are other lines more reminiscent of the
tabloids or the West of Bret Harte:

"Save only that same damosel ye straunger
called ye crow,

And she allowed with moche regret she ben too
lame to go;

And when that she had wept full sore, to
Arthur she confess'd

That Guernevere had left this word for
Arthur and ye rest:

Tell them, she quod, we shall return to
them whan we've made

This little deal we have with ye Chicago
Bourses of Trade."

It is not al all surprising that the Arthur-
ian story should interest Ralph Waldo Emerson; es-
pecially would this be true of episodes relating to
the mysticism of Merlin. Emerson's "Merlin" is very
much like Tennyson's "Merlin and the Gleam", since it,
too, seems to make Merlin personify the poet. His con-
ception of the poet and his mission is virtually the
same as that of Tennyson:

"Great is the art,
Great be the manners, of the bard.
He shall not his brain encumber
With the coil of rhythm and number;
But, leaving rule and pale forthought,
He shall aye climb
For his rhyme.
Pass in, Pass in, the angels say,
Into the upper doors,
Nor count compartments of the floors
But mount to paradise
By the stairway of surprise."

W. H. Babcock (1898) in *Chian of the Chariots*, tells a story of the days of King Arthur and his campaigns as recorded by Nennius. He gives a picture of the condition of London when the Saxons had seized most of Essex of Kent, Sussex, and of the North. In the course of the story a very interesting account is given relative to time when city folks of York and other civilized places were driven for refuge to caves and like strongholds. Roman influences and Celtic revivals are noticeable, but the land is mainly a desolation, overrun by heathens. This book has no marked characteristics as a romance of the days of Arthur. It is intended for juveniles.

Another juvenile production relating to the Arthurian stories is "A Story of King Uther and of His Son King Arthur", by Allen French in 1902. It is very
similar in treatment to Cian, being a story of the wars in the land of Begraine, with other episodes studied both in matter and the language of Malory.

The "Story of King Arthur and His Knights", by Howard Pyle (1903), another juvenile production, is a compilation of episodes of the Arthurian stories.

Warwick Deeping, whose novels are marked by picturesque and impressionistic narrative, has written two interesting novels on Arthurian subjects. His Uther and Igraine has for its theme the chequered love romance of King Arthur's father and mother. It is modelled on Hewlett's Forest Lovers, but is, in effect, a prose idyll of the King.

Deeping seems to have a genius for description, a sensuous rhythmical pictorial style. In other novels he has touched the strife between Catholic and Protestant. It seems that historical and sociological subjects have an appeal for him as shown by his Arthurian stories, Roper's Row and Doomsday.

His characters are, in Uther and Igraine, poetically imagined, the passion hot and intense. They are neither ancient Britons, nor Arthurian Knights and damsels, as pictured by Malory, but modern young
VI

Recent Writers
ladies and gentlemen who no doubt, have read their Tennyson.

Deeping's other Arthurian novel is Love Among the Ruins. This story is a romance with the Arthurian atmosphere and is centered in Avalon, but really is quite indefinite as to time. The story is told of a rising of the poor against their kingly oppressors, its transitory success, and final disaster. There is much word painting in a flamboyant style of pageants, battles and carnage. Love Among the Ruins, in the words of one critic, is a "riot of pictorial adjectives".

In 1907 Truda Crossfield wrote a juvenile romantic British story which is much like other Arthurian stories for young readers. It is marked by extraordinary adventures and a simple love story.

The Gates of Dawn, by Dorothy Senior (1908), seems to have been inspired by Malory. It is a tale of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, with Cormac, King of Leinster as a leading figure.

Edwin Arlington Robinson has appropriately been called "The Dean of the New Poetry". Before some of the pioneers of the new school were born, he was writing a firm, clear, close-clipped line that
definitely stamps his verse as of the new variety. Superficially his poetry is quite conventional, for he has never experimented in the use of extravagantly free verse. But the poet's adherence to conventional verse forms is no sign that his poetry is conventional. He always makes content and his individual style dominate any form that he may choose, and both are modern. At first glance it would seem that a wide acquaintance with books has modeled all of Robinson's verse. Hardy and Crabbe are his acknowledged masters, and he has an admiration for Zola. Zola may be responsible for some of Robinson's naturalistic tendencies, while the abbreviated lines, and in the gray autumnal tone of his verse. However, his economy of words comes partly from a mind that is naturally direct. Only to run through the table of contents of his collected poems will give one some idea of his interest in people, for a large number of the titles are the names of men, while others indicate the treatment of dramatic episodes in the lives of people.

Another influence upon Robinson is older literature. For instance, he levies upon the stories of Merlin and Launcelot, and in one of his finest efforts he gives a new version of Tristan and Isolt. But the use of leg-

73 American Literature, p. :Blankenship
Endary material often used by other poets is no sign of Robinson's bookishness, for he has so infused the medieval stories with his own personality and with the spirit of the modern world that the age-old legends become finely interpretative of contemporary life. He makes the scene Camelot and the subject Arthur's court, but he presents them neither heroic nor sentimental as most poets have done.

Robinson is a bleak, spare writer of gray moods. Assuredly if there is benevolently ordered power in the universe, it carefully conceals both the benevolence and the order, and reveals only strength. Still he presents the fact that life is worth living. He is aware of the undesirability of the real world, but before he comes to a final renunciation, some glimmer of New England faith or idealism holds him from the final gesture. In "Merlin" and "Launcelot" it is the vaguely defined Light or Glem that keeps the philosophy from turning unbearably bitter, while in the more plebeian characters the saving grace is old fashioned fortitude. Merlin says:

"No, Dagonet, you cannot leave me now
Nor would you if you could. You call yourself
A fool, because the world and you are strangers.
You are a proud man, Dagonet; you have suffered
What I alone have seen."
In "Merlin" episodes of the story relating to the magician are expressed in verse that must be read aloud to be appreciated. When read aloud one is struck by its mystical spirit. In this characteristic Robinson is like many present-day poets in their endeavor to acquire a less artificial mode of expression. He mirrors his philosophy in compact lines:

"Why all this new insistence upon sin?
She said" 'I wonder if I understand
This king of yours with all his pits and dragons;
I know I do not like him'"

or

"But now he knew that his cold angel's name
Was changed, and that a mightier will than his
Or Vivien's had ordained that he be there."

Robinson's modern language does not seem out of place on the tongues of the immortal characters of his poems.

"I've told you every story that I know,
Almost," he said, - "O, don't begin like that." -
"Well, once upon a time there was a King." -
That has a more commendable address;
Go on, and tell me all about the King;
I'll bet the King had warts on carbuncles,

74 "Merlin"
Or something wrong in his divine insides,
To make him wish that Adam had died young."

And

"I think I'll blow a horn for Launcelot;
For by my soul a man's in a sorry case
When Guinevere's are out with eyes to scorch him:
I'm not so ancient or so frozen certain
That I'd ride horses down to skeletons
If she were after me. Has Merlin seen him -
This Launcelot, this Queen-fed friend of ours?"

"Launcelot" is written in much the same style as
"Merlin", and tells the story of Guinevere's rescue
when her guilty love is discovered, and she is sentenced
to the stake. Launcelot's character is idealized somewhat stronger than in other versions. Guinevere seems
to resent Launcelot's desire to atone and she is somewhat penitent, but only at times.

"Guinevere looked at him,
And all that any woman has not said
Was in one look: "Why do you stab me now
With such a needless 'then'? If I am going -
And I suppose I am - are the words all lost
That men have said before to dogs and children
To make them go away? Why use a knife,
When there are words enough without your 'then'
To cut as deep as need be? What I ask you
I never more to ask me if my life
Be one that I could wish had not been lived—
And that you never torture it again,
To make it bleed and ache as you do now;
Past all indulgence or necessity."

The strength of Launcelot's character is portrayed when he resists Guinevere's pleading that he

"He shook his head,
Slowly, and raised her slowly in his arms;
Holding her there; and they stood long together.
And there was no sound then of anything;
Save a low moaning of a broken woman,
And the cold roaring down of that long rain."

It is interesting to note Guinevere's character which seems chastened when Launcelot visits her

for the last time in the nunnery:

"I shall not see you in this world again,
But I am not alone. No, - not alone.
We have had all there was, and you were kind—
Even when you tried so hard once to be cruel.
I knew it then - or now I do. Good-bye."

Robinson is decidedly modern when he raises

the question "Do Gentlemen Prefer Blondes?"
"Have you wished, I wonder
That I was more like Vivien, or Isolt?
The dark ones are more devious and more famous,
And men fall down more numerously before them—
Although I think more men get up again,
And go away again, than away from us."

Robinson's "Tristam" (1923) is the old love story presented in lines of poetic splendor. He makes the characters very human. No love draught is used to extenuate a mutually consuming love. The events of the story are somewhat different from the older versions, and much of the cruelty and horror of the Middle Ages is omitted, and even King Mark is Christianized:

"Isolt said then,

There was a time when I should have told God
Himself that he had made you without mercy.
Forgive me that. For there was your side, al-
ways;

There were your ways, which are the ways of
kings;

And there was blindness everywhere at first—
When there was all that time."

Isolt of Brittany of the White Hands reminds one of Tennyson's Elaine:

"In the morning

Your dreams, if you remember them, will all
Be less than one bird singing in a tree.
Isol’t of the white hands, unchangeable,
Half childlike and half womanly, looked up
Into her father’s eyes and shook her head,
Smiling, but less for joy that certainty;
Mankind these poems seem to hint, is made up
of doomed creatures all moving to their end according
to some scheme which they cannot understand, with no
consolation except that possibly they may be able to
perceive their fate and so not be duped by it into
cherishing false hopes. Such a view of life is very
old and has been held by some of the wisest of men,
though it was not common in the United States at the
opening of the twentieth century. Robinson, holding
it, seems something of an alien in his times. The
speech which he puts into the mouth of Shakespeare
comparing men to flies, in the dramatic monologue
called "Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford"
is characteristic of the spirit in which he examines
the ancient legends.

In 1927 Edna St. Vincent Millay wrote "The
King’s Henchman", which is based on an Arthurian theme,
as the libretto for an opera composed by Deems Taylor,
Dean of American Composers, which was produced at the Metropolitan Opera House. While the work was a distinct disappointment to many of the poet's admirers, and while many lines are not easy to sing, it is safe to say that Miss Millay succeeded in an almost impossible task. The libretto is poetic, and very few works of its kind possess that quality The King's Henchman, and, in fact, much of Miss Millay's work designates her as a modern woman speaking with unfettered frankness and power.

John Masefield as a writer on Arthurian themes may be classified like Tennyson as another satisfier of the intelligent middle class. He is also classed as a genuine literary innovator. His method of treatment is very different from that of Swinburne. A strong English sentiment pervades the poetry of Masefield. Since the Arthurian stories are the only cycle of English legends in which nearly every English boy is steeped, it is not strange that he was inspired by them. Though Masefield's subjects are bookish, his poetry is marked by deep music and furious movement. His greatest achievements have been the revival of narrative poetry.

75 American and British Literature Since 1890, p.152: Van Doren

76 American and British Literature Since 1890, p. 155: Van Doren
Masefield has modernized the language and interpretation of the old legends - "debunked" them, so to speak. Yet deeper thoughts may sometimes be discovered beneath the seeming frivolity. Each poem of *Midsummer's Night* is full of old pagan love. One poem of the volume carries the same title as the volume does; the same words form a line in the poem "The Begetting of Modred." While Queen Margause of Orkney was at Arthur's court as a spy,

"There she tempted Prince Arthur,
With beauty's delight
So that love was between them
For one summer night,

But in Orkney in winter
When waiting was done
She bare the boy Modred
From the evil begun
And the father, the uncle
Had a nephew for a son."

Masefield is realistic in much of his slipshod meter. He made constant use of Chaucer's seven line stanza:

77 *Living Age*, June 21, 1919
"And lo, a curse had fallen; fingers grew
Over the goddess in a lase of green;
No sparrows chirruped nor did pigeons coo,
And mat-weeds chokt the tank;
The smell of dying made the place unclean,
All withered were the myrtle of the Queen.
'This cannot be the garden that I knew,'
King Arthur thot; and yet his spirit sank."

And again he is the dreamer:

"Accept your lesser fortune; take your gem.
Then, with a sudden waft of holy scent,
That loviest flower of the immortal stem,
Venus herself; the Queen,
To Arthur from her golden saddle leant.
'Take back the truth plight that you never meant,'
She said, and gave it. 'Think not I condemn.
In exile I shall keep your memory green.'"

Masefield has made Ygraine the daughter of King
Merchyon, a revolting subject, and Elaine and Margouse
are her sisters; also Givenvach is her sister who be-
comes Modred's wife. King Merchyon speaks of Uther as
a Roman:

"But you, my Roman, come to the wrong man."

Uther sees Ygraine and loves her. Disguised as

78 "Arthur and His Ring"
her father, he gains entrance to the castle and carries her away, (quite willingly she goes)

"There in the little chapel of the well
By taper light, the hermit made them one."

In Masefield's "Birth of Arthur" there is often a mystic spirit, exemplified in the "Mysterious Apparition,

"as a seabird white pinioned"

"Who glides to her rest;
Her face had the quiet
Of night at an end."

She promises Arthur while he is a "laughing babe"

"And thrice in your kingship
Your manhood shall quail;
My beauty as Helper
Shall not let you fail.

And at passing, my Arthur,
I'll bring you to a fold
In the violet meadows
Where nothing grows old."

79 "Begetting of Arthur"
But use little Arthur
Like the green corn in pride,
And a Power shall fill you
And a Helper shall guide."

In the poem "Midsummer Night," Arthur, Guinevere, Launcelot and the baser characters make confessions. Each one assumes the blame for the disastrous end of the kingdom. The baser characters rather boast of the havoc they have created. Guinevere confesses that Launcelot is the father of her son Lachen, whom she wanted to see king. Arthur's speech sounds somewhat like Tennyson's interpretation when in "The Fight on the Beach", "Or the Passing" he seeks compromise:

"'I am your father, Modred, and your friend;
King Arthur pleaded, 'and your shot has sped.
I would have granted much of what you willed
Had you but told me: it is not too late
To come to some agreement, you and I.'"

"I spit upon your fatherhood and you.
You be my friend, who made me suffer scorn
From every living soul since I was born!"

answers Modred.

"Dust to Dust"; "South and East, and "Fulfilment"
are Arthurina only by reference. These poems are fanciful and full of the enchanters lore. "The Old Tale of the Begetting" illustrates above all the light manner in which Masefield treats the old stories.

"Uther saw Ygraine the Bright,
His heart went pit pat at sight.

He said to Merlin, "make her mine
Or you'll be hogs' meat for my swine.

Merlin wrought all day with pray'r,
With water, earth and fire and air."

As he climbed to the Queen's bed
Ygraine's Duke on the moors fell dead."

When John Erakine began writing the life history of characters whom most people would have thought, already had adequate biographers, his method of dealing with the subject was quite new, rather shocking, and amusing to some of his readers. There are people who were secretly delighted to see this almost blasphemous treatment of the heroes and heroines of antiquity, and rejoiced to see them brought down from their high estate, yet endowed with a few human qualities which in
the original had been left largely to the imagination.
Opinions differ, however. Another class of readers ab-
hor Erskine's method of showing everything up with cyn-
ical amusement, leaving nothing to the imagination, be-
ing painfully explicit about every little shade of emo-
tion in a way that to them seems indecent.

The sources of his novels Galahad and Tristan
and Isolde and Restoring Palamedes are vaguely the sto-
ries of Mallory. The reader of Erskine's books is cer-
tainly called up to decide if they are commentaries on
our times or novels. Unlike most singers of the Ar-
thurian cycle that have been treated in this paper,
Erskine has left none of the pleasant and mysterious
gray mists which belong to those seabound lands which
form a background for the old tales. No doubt it ap-
ppears to those who, when the idealism of their youth
began to stir, were charmed by the old tales that Er-
skine would rob youth of one of its joys. It seems safe
to say that now the novelty which was the chief attrac-
tion of Erskine's, has worn off the general scheme is
becoming a little tiresome to the more discerning
readers.
Part VII

Conclusion
This study of the Arthurian legends in the literatures of Great Britain and America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has attempted to show three things: (1) how the legends have been affected and changed by the spirit of the times, (2) how the authors' treatments compare with and contrast to the sources, and (3) how the authors' treatments compare with their treatments of other themes. In other words, how the Arthurian material has affected the authors under consideration.

First the Arthurian material has reflected the spirit of the times to a remarkable degree. For example, in Tennyson, Arthur becomes the typical Victorian gentleman acting against a sordid background politely sketched: In Morris, the material becomes Pre-Raphaelite. In Arnold, it reflects the cynicism and philosophical doubt that arose with the Darwinian discussions. In Swinburne, it shows the reaction against the Tennysonian Victorian treatment of illicit love relations. In Masefield the Arthurian material becomes the realism of the slangy type. Among the Americans, Lowell uses his Arthurian knight to express a fusion of Victorianism and Puritanism. Mark Twain used the legends to express his boisterous fron-
tier spirit. Eugene Field, another Middle Westerner, burlesqued Camelot. Edwin A. Robinson, the twentieth century New Englander, reflects the introspective psychology of his time, and turns the primitive knights into Freudian monologists. Finally, John Erskine reflects the age of jazz by treating the king and court with syncopated irreverence.

Second, comparisons and contrasts have been made seriatim. Authors following Tennyson have tended to go to pre-Malory sources. This is the result of the nineteenth century research, scholarship and literary "higher criticism". All of the authors considered have handled the material freely, but always have historical justification. The burlesquers may point back to Henry Fielding.

Finally, the writers who have considered the Arthurian stories since the eighteenth century have almost invariably dominated the Arthurian material and have made it express their times or personalities. The minor writers, however, have been influenced by the Tennysonian Arthurian spirit, either positively or negatively.

The adaptability of Arthurian material makes it highly probable that Arthur will live, and his knights continue to love and joust for centuries to come.
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