

# SIR THOMAS MALORY

? 1406-71

## Le Morte d'Arthur

(Probably finished in 1469-70; Caxton edition published in 1485)

### BOOK XXI. CHAPTER IX

HOW SIR LAUNCELOT DEPARTED TO SEEK THE QUEEN  
GUENEVER, AND HOW HE FOUND HER AT ALMESBURY

... [THEN Sir Launcelot] departed and rode westerly, and there he sought a seven or eight days; and at the last he came to a nunnery, and then was Queen Guenever ware of Sir Launcelot as he walked in the cloister. And when she saw him there she swooned thrice, that all the ladies and gentlewomen had work enough to hold the queen up. So when she might speak, she called ladies and gentlewomen to her, and said: Ye marvel, fair ladies, why I make this fare. Truly, she said, it is for the sight of yonder knight that yonder standeth; wherefore I pray you all call him to me. When Sir Launcelot was brought to her, then she said to all the ladies: Through this man and me hath all this war been wrought, and the death of the most noblest knights of the world; for through our love that we have loved together is my most noble lord slain. Therefore, Sir Launcelot, wit thou well I am set in such a plight to get my soul-heal; and yet I trust through God's grace that after my death to have a sight of the blessed face of Christ, and at domesday to sit on his right side, for as sinful as ever I was are saints in heaven. Therefore, Sir Launcelot, I require thee and beseech thee heartily, for all the love that

ever was betwixt us, that thou never see me more in the visage; and I cōmmand thee, on God's behalf, that thou forsake my company, and to thy kingdom thou turn again, and keep well thy realm from war and wrack; for as well as I have loved thee, mine heart will not serve me to see thee, for through thee and me is the flower of kings and knights destroyed; therefore, Sir Launcelot, go to thy realm, and there take thee a wife, and live with her with joy and bliss: and I pray thee heartily, pray for me to our Lord that I may amend my misliving. Now, sweet madam, said Sir Launcelot, would ye that I should now return again unto my country, and there to wed a lady? Nay, madam, wit you well that shall I never do, for I shall never be so false to you of that I have promised; but the same destiny that ye have taken you to, I will take me unto, for to please Jesu, and ever for you I cast me specially to pray. If thou wilt do so, said the queen, hold thy promise, but I may never believe but that thou wilt turn to the world again. Well, madam, said he, ye say as pleaseth you, yet wist you me never false of my promise, and God defend but I should forsake the world as ye have done. For in the quest of the Sangreal I had forsaken the vanities of the world had not your lord been. And if I had done so at that time, with my heart, will, and thought, I had passed all the knights that were in the Sangreal except Sir Galahad, my son. And therefore, lady, sithen ye have taken you to perfection, I must needs take me to perfection, of right. For I take record of God, in you I have had mine earthly joy; and if I had found you now so disposed, I had cast to have had you into mine own realm. [Chapter x] But sithen

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SIR THOMAS MALORY

I find you thus disposed, I ensure you faithfully, I will ever take me to penance, and pray while my life lasteth, if I may find any hermit, either gray or white, that will receive me. Wherefore, madam, I pray you kiss me and never no more. Nay, said the queen, that shall I never do, but abstain you from such works: and they departed. But there was never so hard an hearted man but he would have wept to see the dolour that they made; for there was lamentation as they had been stung with spears; and many times they swooned, and the ladies bare the queen to her chamber. And Sir Launcelot awoke, and went and took his horse, and rode all that day and all night in a forest, weeping.

JOHN BOURCHIER, LORD BERNERS

1467-1533

Sir John Froissart: Of the Chronicles of England, France, Spain, Portugal, Scotland, Brittany, Flanders, and other places adjoining

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HOW KING RICHARD YIELDED HIMSELF TO THE EARL OF DERBY TO GO TO LONDON. VOL. II, PART IV, CAP. CCXLII

IN the mean season while the king sat at dinner, who did eat but little, his heart was so full that he had no lust to eat.

All the country about the castle was full of men of war. They within the castle might see them out at the windows, and the king when he rose from the table might see them himself. Then he demanded of his cousin what men they were that appeared so many in the fields. The earl answered and said, the most part of them be Londoners. What would they have quoth the king? They will have you quoth the earl, and bring you to London and put you in the Tower, there is none other remedy, ye can scape none otherwise. No quoth the king and he was sore afraid of those words, for he knew well that the Londoners loved him not, and said. Cousin, can you not provide for my surety: I will not gladly put me into their hands. For I know well that they hate me and have done long, though I be their king. Then the earl said, Sir, I see none other remedy, but to yield yourself as my prisoner: and when they know that ye be my prisoner they will do you no hurt, but ye must so ordain you and your company to ride to London with me, and to be as my prisoner in the Tower of London. The king, who saw himself in a hard case, all his spirits were sore abashed, as that he doubted greatly that the Londoners would slay him. Then he yielded himself prisoner to the earl of Derby and bound himself, and promised to do all that he would have him to do. In likewise all other knights, squires, and officers yielded to the earl, to eschew the danger and peril that they were in, and the earl then received them as his prisoners, and ordained incontinent horses to be saddled and brought forth into the court and the gates opened; then many men of arms and archers entered. Then the earl of Derby caused a cry to be made,

on pain of death, no man to be so hardy to take away anything within the castle, nor to lay any hands upon any person, for all were under the earl's safeguard and protection: which cry was kept; no man durst break it. The earl had the king down into the court talking together, and caused all the king's whole household and estate to go forward, as of custom they had done before, without changing or minishing of any thing. While everything was a-preparing, the king and the earl communed together in the court, and were well regarded by the Londoners. And as it was informed me, King Richard had a greyhound called Mathe, who always waited upon the king, and would know no man else. For whensoever the king did ride, he that kept the greyhound did let him loose, and he would straight run to the king and fawn upon him, and leap with his forefeet upon the king's shoulders. And as the king and the earl of Derby talked together in the court, the greyhound who was wont to leap upon the king, left the king and came to the earl of Derby, duke of Lancaster, and made to him the same friendly countenance and cheer, as he was wont to do to the king. The duke who knew not the greyhound, demanded of the king what the greyhound would do. Cousin, quoth the king, it is a great good token to you, and an evil sign to me. Sir, how know you that quoth the duke. I know it well quoth the king. The greyhound maketh you cheer this day as King of England, as ye shall be, and I shall be deposed: the greyhound hath this knowledge naturally, therefore take him to you, he will follow you and forsake me. The duke understood well those words and cherished the greyhound, who would