



The prose drafts of Tennyson's "Idylls of the king"

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The Prose Drafts of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*

David Staines

FOR MORE THAN SIXTY YEARS, the legends of King Arthur were to Alfred Tennyson a source of endless inspiration. In his early twenties, he was drafting lines for projected poems and a masque about Arthur.¹ At the age of twenty-four, he wrote the *Morte d'Arthur*, destined to become, thirty-five years later, the final member of the *Idylls of the King*. He did not incorporate *Balin and Balan* into the series until 1886, when he was nearing eighty. Even in 1891, he was still revising the *Idylls*. His interest in the Arthurian legends and his poetic attempt to recreate them span his entire literary career.

The *Idylls of the King* is a cumulative literary achievement, the culmination of Tennyson's interest in the Arthurian world. At the same time, the completed poem is the union of two different modes of composition. The *Morte d'Arthur* and the first quartet of *Idylls*² were first written out in poetic drafts. The ten-year delay in the progress of his Arthurian poem led to a new form of composition. For many of the remaining idylls, Tennyson wrote out his first drafts in prose. The prose drafts offer an important perspective on the poet's method of composition. They reveal the central ideas that form the nucleus of the idyll; they exhibit a closer dependence upon source material than the final poetic form suggests; they present the poet experimenting with different approaches to the stories he selects.

With one exception,³ all the extant prose drafts of the *Idylls of the King* are found in the Harvard College Library collection of Tenny-

¹ See Hallam, Lord Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir* (New York, 1897), II, 122-125.

² In 1859, Edward Moxon published *Idylls of the King*, a volume which contained *Enid*, *Vivien*, *Elaine*, and *Guinevere*. The next quartet of idylls, *The Coming of Arthur*, *The Holy Grail*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, and *The Passing of Arthur*, appeared in 1869 in the volume, *The Holy Grail and Other Poems*.

³ See footnote 14.

son's Notebooks.⁴ Despite their importance, no study of Tennyson's poetry has included an edition of these drafts.⁵ The purpose of this article is the presentation of an accurate transcription of all the prose drafts of Tennyson's Arthurian poetry.⁶

The Holy Grail

Harvard Notebook 38 is devoted entirely to the Grail idyll.⁷ The first half of the Notebook contains a long prose draft of the idyll with only a few short poetic passages interspersed throughout the narrative. The second half of the Notebook contains an early poetic rendering of the prose account. Near the end of the Notebook is a short prose account of the quest of Sir Bors.⁸

— [11] —

Now when Sir Percivale had come back from the Quest of the Holy Grail, he would have no more to do with tilt & tournament but entered into a monastery & presently after died.

⁴ The Harvard collection contains seventy-two Notebooks. These were acquired by the Library between 1947 and 1959 with funds from the bequest of Amy Lowell. For a description of the collection, see Edgar F. Shannon, Jr., and W. H. Bond, "Literary Manuscripts of Alfred Tennyson in the Harvard College Library," *HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN*, X (1956), 254-274.

⁵ In *Materials for a Life of A. T.* (London, no date), Hallam, Lord Tennyson included the beginning of the prose draft of *The Holy Grail* (III, 141-145). Joan Hattman made a close study of the drafts of *Gareth and Lynette*, "The Manuscripts of Tennyson's 'Gareth and Lynette,'" *HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN*, XIII (1959), 239-264. In "Tennyson Papers. III. 'Idylls of the King,'" *The Cornhill Magazine*, CLIII (1936), 534-557, Sir Charles Tennyson refers to the prose drafts and quotes a few selected passages. *A Variorum Edition of Tennyson's Idylls of the King*, edited by John Pfordresher (New York, 1973), which appeared after this article went to press, contains some of the drafts, though the transcriptions involve a number of misreadings and inaccuracies.

⁶ Since the primary purpose of this article is an accurate transcription of the drafts, explanatory comment has been kept to a minimum. The system of transcription employed throughout is as follows: all deletions in the manuscript appear within pointed brackets; additions above the lines in the manuscript appear in italics; the transcription of each folio begins with the folio number in brackets; an asterisk after the folio number indicates that the poet inverted the Notebook when he wrote the passage. The drafts from the Harvard Notebooks are printed by permission of the Harvard College Library.

⁷ Notebook 38, marbled board notebook, red oilcloth spine, 9½ × 7 inches; 36f., plain blue oval paper, watermarked: E. Towgood/1863, and Britannia in an oval.

⁸ Of all the critical studies of the *Idylls*, only J. P. Eggers, *King Arthur's Laureate* (New York, 1971) notes the significance of this later addition of Bors in the account of the Grail quests.

But ere this one of the holy fathers who was his chief friend in the monastery, would often ask him about this Quest of the Grail, & how it all came about, & one day Sir Percivale told him all he could remember.

O brother, this holy Grail, is the cup out of which our blessed lord drank at the last supper. Joseph of Arimathea brought it to Glastonbury & it healed many of their diseases & wrought faith in their hearts: but the times grew so wicked that it (pa) was caught up to heaven & disappeared.

O brother, I had a sister a nun in the nunnery at Camelot. No holier being ever wore the pavement with her knee. Shut out as she was from the world, the noise of an adulterous race beat thro' the gratings of her cell, & she prayd & fasted the more.

Now her confessor, a holy Father, a hundred winters old, told her this legend of the Holy Grail, which had been handed down from the times of our Lord, by six or seven old men, each a hundred winters old. If the Holy Grail (he said) should reappear, there might yet be hope for the world. O father she said would it appear to me if I pray'd & fasted? & he answered, 'Yea, daughter,

— [2r] —

who knows but it might, if thy heart be as pure as snow. & she prayd & fasted till the sun shone thro' her & the wind blew thro' her.

Then on a day she sent to me to speak with her: & I went to the nunnery, & behold her eyes were wonderful in the light of her holiness & she told me that she had seen the holy vessel. In the dead night, she had been waked by a strain of sweet music, & there came in a long beam of light, brighter than any sunbeam & down this beam slowly past the Holy Grail & the white walls of her cell were dyed in rose-colour, & the Grail past & the beam, & the rosecolour slowly faded away. Lo now, my brother, she said, fast thou also & pray & tell thy brother knights to fast & pray that peradventure the holy thing may come to you also, & the world be healed of its wickedness.

And I went away & spake of all this to my brother knights & many among us pray'd & fasted. Now there was a young man among us, Galabad, whom Arthur had knighted, & there never was so young a man knighted before — some said he was a son of Lancelot, some that he was begotten by enchantment — but when I spake with him of the Grail, his eyes look'd so like my sister's that I could have thought he was her brother.

And there stood a seat in our great Hall which

— [3r] —

Merlin had fashioned long ago before he past away; & it was carved with strange figures & in & out the figures there were letters in a tongue no man

could read; & Merlin call'd the seat The Siege Perilous for he said No man can sit there but he shall lose himself & Galahad said If I lose myself I shall save myself.

And it chanced one night when the banquet was spread in the Hall that Galahad would sit in the chair of Merlin.

And immediately there was cracking & riving & rending of the rafters, & there entered in a beam seven times more clear than day, & in the midst of the light the Holy Grail past thro' the Hall, *but it was hidden in a luminous cloud* & every man looked at his neighbour & behold his face was glorious, & we stared at one another like dumb men.

Then I arose among the knights & bound myself by a strong vow that because I had *not* seen the Holy Grail when it past I would go forth to the end of the world till I found it. And Galahad & most of the knights swore with me: & even Gawain swore.

Then said the monk to Sir Percivale
And what said Arthur? did he allow your vows?

— [4r] —

And Percivale answer'd

The King was not there albeit he had willed to be there: he was sacking a bandit-hold over the hills: howbeit he saw something of the marvel, for as he returned from the sacking, having slain the robbers, when the land was darkening he looked up & he cried aloud Behold the roofs of our great Hall are roll'd in thundersmoke: pray heaven they be not smitten by the thunderbolt: for the roofs of the Hall seemed to smoke & the Hall was dear to him seeing it is the costliest in the world.

O brother had you known our mighty hall
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago.
For four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the Hall
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts
And in the third are warriors perfect men
And in the fourth are men with growing wings
And on the top a statue in the mould
Of Arthur, made by Merlin with a crown
And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern Star.

& the statue faces the East & the crown & the wings are golden & shine far over the land at sunrise.

— [5r] —

Then the great King & his company rode swiftly up to the Hall. And the King rode into the hall & I looked up & saw the golden dragon blaze on his head.

And he spoke to me O Percivale / for there was a tumult among us / what is this.

And I told him what had chanced & his face darkened & he said had I been here ye would not sworn [*sic*] & he said O Percivale didst thou see the Grail

Nay Lord I said I heard the sound & I saw the light but the Grail was covered with a cloud.

And the King spoke again & asked us knight by knight whether any had seen the holy Grail

And they answer'd & said Nay Lord for the Grail was hidden & therefore we have taken our vows

(For) And Galahad cried out in a shrill voice

But I Sir Arthur saw the Holy Grail

I saw the Holy Grail & heard a cry

O Galahad & O Galahad follow me!

Ah Gawain, Gawain said the king. Is this vision for thee? but now O Percivale thou & the holy nun, thy sister, have broken up the fair order of my Table Round which I founded for pure life, & the redressing of human wrong. For many among you have taken this vow, who will never see this vision, & many among you will follow wandering fires & be lost in the quagmire, & this same goodly company of knights will never meet again in my hall.

— [6r] —

Wherefore my heart is sad unto death: but since I may not disallow the vows ye have taken, lo now, let us come together in the morning for one last tilt & tourney of gracious pastime that I may see you once more all together & rejoice in your prowess & the order which I have made.

Then we met together in the morning & I & Sir Galahad overthrew most of the knights for the strength of the Vision was in us.

And when this was over the King & the Queen & many Ladies rode with us to the gates, & the women wept & the men, & rich & poor wept, & the King could scarce speak for weeping & the Queen shrieked & wailed & said Alas for our sins this has come upon us.

Then we parted & went each his own way: & I was glad at heart, & I thought of my prowess in my lists & how I had beaten down (the) *many* knights, & the sun never seemed so bright, nor the sky so blue, nor the earth so green, & I felt that I should come upon the Holy Grail.

Then after awhile my mind was darkened & every evil word I had spoken, & every evil thought I had thought, & every evil deed I had done stood round about me like fiends & cried aloud The Holy Grail is not for thee. And I lifted up my eyes & I was in a land of sand & thorns, & I was athirst even unto swooning & I said 'This quest is not for thee!

— [7r] —

And I thought my thirst would have slain me: when behold as I rode on I saw lawns of deep grass, & a running brook which made a sound among the stones, & great appletrees with golden apples on either side of the brook & among the lawns. and I said I will rest here: I am not worthy of the quest. And I began to drink of the brook & to eat of the golden apples, & while I was eating, it all fell away into dust, & I was again among the sand & the thorns.

And again I rode on & suddenly I was aware of a fair woman, & she sat by the door of a house: & the house was fair & pleasant to look upon, & the eyes of the woman were kind & innocent & her ways were gracious & she opened out her arms to me, as tho' she would say rest here & I went up & touched her & lo she fell into dust & the house became a ruined shed & in it there was a dead babe, & I was again among the sand & the thorns

And again I rode forward & there fell a yellow gleam over the world, & it past over the plough'd field & the plowman left his plough & fell down before it & the milkmaid left milking her kine & fell down before it & I thought it was the rising sun but the Sun had risen & I turned & behold a giant with a jewell'd helmet & in golden armour & his horse in golden armour studded with jewels. & he seemed the Lord of all the world he was so huge & I thought he would slain me & I made ready to do battle with him & behold he opened his arms wide to embrace me & I touch'd him & he fell into dust, & I was among the sand & the thorns

— [8r] —

And again I rode onward & far off behold there was a city on the top of a great hill: & the towers & pinnacles (thereof) were unbelicavable [*sic*] for the height thereof, for they pierced thro' the clouds of heaven. And as I drew near I saw a great company before the gates of the city & they cried out to me as I clomb the hill Come up Sir Percivale welcome thou greatest knight among men. but when I came to the top there was no man there & I went into the city & it was waste & desolate & there was only one man in it of an exceeding old age & I spake to him where is that great company that cried

out (to me) upon me. and he had scarce any voice to answer but he said
Whence art thou & who art thou & even while he was speaking he fell into
dust & disappeared & I cried out

Lo if I find the Holy Grail itself & touch it it also will crumble to dust

Then I went down into valley on the other side of the hill & the valley was as
low as the hill was high & in at the bottom was a little chapel & a hermitage
& a hermit & when I had told him all that chanced to me he answered me & said

O Son thou hast not true humility
The highest virtue, mother of them all,
For when the Lord of all things made himself
Naked of Godhead for his mortal change
Take thou my robe O lord she said tis pure
And all her form shone forth in sudden light
So that the angels were amazed & she

— [91] —

Follow'd him down & like a flying star
Led on the grayhaired wisdom of the East
But her thou hast not known: for what is this
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess & thy sins
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad. And Sir Galahad as he spake

Rode up to the chapel: & when I lookd on the bright *faced* boy knight his eye
had power upon me, & I believed (what) *as* he believed & my fear left me.
And the Holy man took away my burning thirst, & at the sacring of the mass,
& I saw but the blessed Elements but he said

I saw the fiery face as of a child
That smote itself into the bread & went

And we left our horses with the hermit for there was a mountain before us
which none could climb but man. And as we clomb the mountain I told Sir
Galahad all that I had told the hermit & he said Care not thou for thou shall
see the Grail even tho far away & I go to be a crowned king in the Spiritual
city.' And when we came to the top of the mountain there brake on us a
thunder & a lightening so that I never saw the like of it; & as we went down
again, the lightening was so fierce it struck here & there to the left & to the
right, & the old trunks & stems of trees that were dead brake into fire; & at the
bottom of the mountain there was a foul & black swamp, & by the lightening
I saw that in it there (were) *lay* the bones of men. And there were seven piers
built across the marsh & seven light bridges from pier to pier. & every one
of the bridges was veiled in with

— [10r] —

roses. (And Gal) and at the end of the piers was a boat and beyond it the Great Sea.

And Galahad ran along them bridge by bridge
And every bridge as soon as he had past
Sprang into fire & vanished

& he leapt into the boat & I was alone for I would not follow, and the boat went with an exceeding swiftness & thrice over him the Heavens opened & blazed with thunder like the shoutings of all the sons of God, and when first they opened I beheld him far out on the Great sea & over his head was the holy vessel clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud, & when they blazed I beheld him very far away & over him the holy vessel redder than any rose whereby I knew that the veil had been withdrawn from it: & when the Heavens opened & blazed the third time I saw him no bigger than the point over an i & far away behind him in a clear spot of sky I saw the gates of the Spiritual City no larger than a pearl & over it a tiny bloodred spark, & *dwelt there* & I knew it it [*sic*] was the Holy Grail. Then the Heavens came down as tho they would drown the world & I saw no more & *I was glad at heart* & I went back to the Hermitage & took my charger & so rode back to the Court of the King, & I had been from him twelvemonth & a day.

And there sat the King in his hall which Merlin & all his knights were before him, they that (nev) had not gone out on the Holy Quest, & they had gone; & of these not ten had returned, but among them were Sir Gawain & Sir Lancelot

— [9v] —

Then Ambrosius askd him again. O brother for in our old books I find many such marvels & (like) miracles like unto these — only I find not this Holy Grail; & when I have read til my eyes are dazed & my head swims, & when our holy offices have been accomplish'd, then I go forth into our little thorpe & stand in the market, & have joy in the chaffering & chattering of the men & the women, & I gossip with them about all things, delighting myself yea (not) even with their hens & their eggs. O brother, didst not thou also find men & women in thy quest, or (did) phantoms only

O brother, said Percivale, to one so bound by vow as I was women & men are but as phantoms. Why wilt thou shame me to make me confess to thee that I faltered in *my* quest & my vow. (for the Vision had not come to me, &) *for* I had lain many nights in the thicket, & I (had) was lean & meagre & the Vision had not come: & happened one night that I drew near a goodly town with a great dwelling in midst of it, & I went into it & I was disarmed by fair maidens & when I came into the banquet hall, behold the Princess of the Castle, was

the one & that one only which had *ever* made my heart leap. For I was a slender page in her father's hall & she a slender damsel & my heart went after with longing.

— [10v] —

But we never had kissd lips or claspt hand. & lo I had found her again & one had wedded *her* & (s) he was dead & she had all his possessions and I dwelt there & she gave her [*sic*] me banquet each richer than before, for her longing was to me; & one day when I sat under the castle in an orchard she came toward me & *embraced me & call'd me the greatest of all the knights* & gave herself with all her wealth to me, & I remembered Arthur's words & the Quest faded in my heart. And her people came to us & said we have heard of thee, do thou wed our lady, & rule over us & be as Arthur in the land. But one night I arose for I remember'd the vow I had sworn, & past from her but I waild & wept & I hated myself & the Holy Grail to which I had sworn.

I walking in her orchard underneath
The castle walls, she came upon there
Lo now I came upon her once again
And one had wedded her & he was dead
And all his wealth & land & state was hers.

And calling me the greatest of all knights
Embraced me & so kiss'd me the first time
And gave herself and all her wealth to me
And I remember'd Arthurs warning to us
That most of us would follow wandering fires
And the Quest faded in my heart. Anon
The heads of all her people came to me
Rejoicing
And there I dwelt & everyday she (set) made
A banquet richer than the day before,
For all *her* longing after many years
Was toward me, as before.

Wed thou with her, & rule thou over us
And show sh

— [11r] —

Then spake the King to Sir Gawain O Gawain was this quest for thee?

Nay, Lord, said Sir Gawain, & I spake with a holy man & he told me: 'This quest is not for thee, & I was weary of the quest but I chanced upon merry maidens & the twelvemonth & a day were pleasant to me.

And the King bow'd his head nor answered him but turned to me & (spake)
ask'd me O Percivale, pure knight & true, what hath chanced to thee?

And I told him all that chanced & the King bowed his head toward me, but
answered *me* not & spake to Sir Lancelot

Thou also, Sir Lancelot, in whom I have most love & most affiance, hast
thou seen the holy vision.

And Sir Lancelot dropt his head upon his breast, & his colour wanned upon his
face & till after a while he spake not, & then he groaned & said

O king, my friend — happier are those that welter in their sin & are covered
like the swine with the mud of the ditches: but my sin was of so strange a kind
that all that was noble in me, & all that was knightly (at) grew to it & twined
about it till the wholesome flower & the poisonous flower were each as either
& could not be rent asunder. And I therefore took my vow with the rest, that
peradventure, if I might see & touch the Holy Vessel, they would be rent
asunder. And I went forth & I too spake with a holy man & he told me that
save I could rend them asunder my Quest was in vain: & I swore to him to do
according to all that he

— [121] —

willed: & I past forth from him & in striving to rend them asunder I fell into
my madness as of old: & my madness drove me into waste fields where I was
beaten down by mean knights, who should have fallen before the whiff of
my sword & the shadow of my lance: & I came to the naked sea-shore, & the
land was flat & barren & nothing grew on the banks of the sea but a little coarse
grass but a blast blew along the sea & the shore.

& heap'd in mounds & ridges all the sea
Drove like a cataract & all the sand
Swept like a river & the cloudy sun
Was shaken with the motion & the sound

& there was a little boat tossing, brimful of seafoam, anchored with chain; &
I said to myself in my madness I will embark & wash away my sin in the great
sea

Seven days I drove along the dreary deep
And with me drove the moon & all the stars
And the wind fell & on the seventh day
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge
 & behold
A castle like a rock upon a rock

With mighty portals open to the sea
 And steps that met the breaker. There was none
 Stood near it but a lion on each side
 That kept the entry. & the moon was full.

— [13r] —

And from the boat I leapt & up the stairs
 Those two great beasts rose upward like a man
 Each seized a shoulder & I stood between
 And when I would stricken them came a voice
 Doubt not, go forward if thou doubt the beasts
 Will tear thee piecemeal; & with violence
 It smote the sword out of my hand & went.
 And up into the sounding hall I saw
 No bench nor table, painting on the wall
 Nor shield of knight only the rounded moon
 Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
 But always in the quiet house I heard
 Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark
 A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
 To the eastward: up I clomb a thousand steps
 With pain: as in a dream I seem'd to climb
 For ever: but I reach'd a little door
 A light was in the crannies & I heard
 Then in my madness I essay'd the door

& it yielded, & there came out a light 7 times more clear & therewithal a heat
 wh^h blasted my eyesight so that I swooned away: but thro' the light & the heat
 methought I saw the Holy Grail — all pall'd in crimson samite & around

Great Angels, awful shapes & wings & eyes
 And but for my madness & my swooning & my sin I s^d know that
 I saw what I saw: yet what I saw was covered, & I
 Count myself as having fail'd in the Quest.

— [14v] —

And the king said. O Lancelot thou hast erred with thy tongue. Never
 could all that was noble in a man & all that was cling round his one sin what-
 soever it be, but there was left a remnant of knighthood & of nobleness, that
 grew apart. see thou to that.

And said I not well that few of those who went out to the Holy Quest w^d
 return: that most of you would follow wandering fires & be lost in the quag-
 mire, & that ever after I should have to look at a barren board & a lean order.

and not ten among you have returned & of those to whom the Vision came, he, my greatest knight, holds himself as having failed to see it: & another has seen it afar off, & he will pass away into the Silent life & he lost to me, & another has had the vision face & has past away, & left his place empty here, however otherwise they may crown him.⁹

— [29v] —

Yea said Percivale for as I rode back thro' a wood that was half stript of the leaf I beheld before me whom afar off I knew for Sir Bors for I knew him by the breadth of shoulder & I rode up to him & we fell into talk & after I had told him all I had seen & besought him also to speak to me of his Quest The colour came into his visage & the water to his eyes & after a while he spake to me.

I went forth with the rest & wandering thro field & forest Sir Lancelot dash'd across me on his great black charger & I feard me that he had fallen into madness wh had seized on him before & made him the talk of the court & I cried out to him to say Ridest thou thus madly after so Holy Quest as ours? & he stayd not for a moment but cried out Withold me not: there is a lion in the way & he galloped on to the Great Sea & I lost him. & I rode on softly nor did I much vex my heart about the Quest, for I thought if it will come it will come & (the) I & the Quest are in the hands of God, but about my brother was I troubled for how should he ever come upon the Vision being as he was

And I rode on even until I came upon the Paynims of the West, our blood & our folk, to whom the message had not come but yet they dwelt in Pagan darkness & made their circles of stone, & struck up a straight stone to fall before it, & call'd it God & knew no God but the Sun. & when they saw a knight of the new faith & from A's court

— [30v] —

they mockd & told me that I followed a wandering fire — believing in the words of Arthur — but our God is no

By whom the blood beats, & the blossom blows
And the sea rolls & everything is done

& it would never be well for this Britain till the Xt were put down & the Sun-worship set up again

⁹ This line marks the end of the prose draft. Folio 15r contains a poetic version of Arthur's final speech to his knights, "And some among you said that if the king." The following folios, with the exception of 29v and 30v, contain a poetic account of the Grail story.

Scofed me & beat me & bound me & cast me down
 chamber
 theft
 wickerwork
 The 7 cold stars of Arthur's wain
 & in a moment all across
 The seven cold stars in colour like a hand
 Before a burning taper past the Grail
 a young damsel
 & thro' the cleft
 I saw the torn sky & the flying rack

Pelleas and Ettarre

Though Hallam Tennyson referred to a prose draft of *Pelleas and Ettarre* among his father's manuscripts,¹⁰ there is no extant prose draft to verify his statement. In Harvard Notebook 39, however, there are five stubs which contained a prose draft of the idyll.¹¹ Only a few folios remain in this Notebook; at the beginning, there is a poetic draft of a few lines from *The Coming of Arthur*, a poetic draft of a new addition to *Merlin and Vivien*,¹² and a few lines from the new addition to the *Morte d'Arthur*. At the back of the Notebook are five stubs which show that Tennyson inverted the Notebook and began a prose draft here of the Pelleas idyll. The few words remaining on the stubs show that the draft extended four-and-one-half pages in length. On the fourth stub, the seventh last line begins with "Pelle" and the third line begins with "Pell." The opening line of the fifth stub begins, "So Gawai." Thus the stubs are evidence that Tennyson did write a prose draft of at least a major section of *Pelleas and Ettarre*.

The Passing of Arthur

When Tennyson decided to incorporate his earlier poem, *Morte d'Arthur*, as the final idyll in his series, he added an introduction to

¹⁰ "Some passages of the 'Idylls' were first written in prose: and I find among his manuscripts prose-sketches for part of 'The Holy Grail,' 'Pelleas and Ettarre,' 'Gareth and Lynette,' and for 'Balin and Balan'" (*Memoir*, II, 134). W. E. H. Lecky commented in a similar vein, "He had written out parts of the last 'Idylls' in old English prose before turning them into verse" (*Memoir*, II, 202).

¹¹ Notebook 39, marbled board notebook, red calf spine, 9½ × 7 inches; 5f. (numerous stubs), plain blue laid paper, watermarked: E. Towgood/[186]3.

¹² The passage, "He walked with dreams," which was added to the idyll in the 1873 Imperial Library edition.

the poem. Harvard Notebook 37¹⁸ contains the following draft of the addition.

— [14v] —

O Sir King shall one sin eat out the memory of all thy noble deeds. Remember thou how many a time we fought the Godless heathen & conquered. how often we drove them on the west & from the Roman wall. & when Rome had grown too weak to drive the heathen to & sent to us for her tribute as of old how we prevailed against her; & now thro' the sin of Launcelot Sir Modred hath brought in the heathen again, & some of their own knights & of the people whom thou hast made vie against thee yet doubt not thou — and go forth & conquer as of old.

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere
O me Sir King let elf & fairy pass
But thy great name shall ever cleave & cling
To all high places in this realm of thine. like a golden cloud

Far other is this fight from *than* those of old
Wherein we broke the heathen — like mine own death to me
To fight against my people & the knights

— [15v] —

O me but this fight is far other than those wherein we drove the heathen from the West or the Roman wall.

I fight against my people & the knights whom I have made and that is to me even as mine own death

That sweet smile w^h Guinevere & Lancelot smiled in the May woods was cruel as many deaths.

They say that I am no king: they (not) know not nor do I myself whence I came.

Theirs then is the blame who fostered me, & spake softly to me, & held me sacred, & drest me delicately, *nor ever let a foul word be spoken before me* & showd me the fields & hills & said this is thy realm for ever they told me that I was a King's son but that I s^d not see my father on earth

And I believed them & believe them still

But arise & go if we can find a way

For ever since I learnt the sin of Guinevere so dense a fog had hidden the world
Nevertheless arise & we will beat these traitors underfoot.

¹⁸ Notebook 37, marbled board notebook, orange paper spine, 9½ × 7 inches; 20f. (numerous stubs), plain blue laid paper, watermarked: E. Towgood/1863. In addition to the passage in this Notebook, there is a small fragment of a few words of a prose draft of *The Passing of Arthur* among the Loose Papers in the Harvard Tennyson collection (bMS Eng. 952.1.184).

*Gareth and Lynette*¹⁴

Two of the Harvard Notebooks contain extended drafts of *Gareth and Lynette* in prose and in poetry. In Notebook 40,¹⁵ the first twenty-three folios contain portions of the idyll; there are a few blank folios in the Notebook and one folio, partially torn out, which contains the poem, "Some pleasure and exceeding pain."

The long prose draft of *Gareth and Lynette*, which occurs at the beginning of Notebook 40, reveals the poet's original plan of composition; he intended to return to the familiar practice of establishing a comparison between a female figure and Guinevere; the adulterous Bellicent would see herself as similar to Guinevere in her behavior; consequently, the idyll would begin when the shame of the Queen's adultery was already evident in the realm. Such an opening would retain the blemished character of Gareth's mother from Malory; it

"In addition to the prose drafts of *Gareth and Lynette* in the Harvard collection, there are two fragmentary prose drafts of the idyll in the Tennyson collection of the University of Texas. Both fragments are written on plain blue laid paper similar to the paper of Harvard Notebook 40; both present scenes which should occur between folio 6r and folio 7r of Notebook 40; there is no evidence, however, of a torn folio here in the Notebook. The fragments are reprinted here through the courtesy of the Humanities Research Center Library of the University of Texas at Austin.

And Gareth came before Arthur & said

O King deem ye not that I must fain be faint & weary when ye behold me trailing my feet along thy hall & leaning on the shoulders of these twain? wherefore I pray thee, grant me a boon for to grant it will be neither against thyself nor thy realm nor thy Table Round, & the boon I beg thee to grant is this that I may live & eat among thy thralls & those that hand the dish across the bar, for as long as I will

And Arthur said Thou seemest the goodliest boy I ever look'd on, yet grant I thy request: hast thou ought else *to ask* for this request of thine is below thee, & my heart warms toward thee.

And Gawain: yea, King, there be two other boons which I would fain have thee grant me & they are neither against thyself nor thy realm nor thy Table Round: but I ask them *not* now, but when the time comes.

And the king said If these be not against me nor my state nor my Round Table & provided they be nobler in their nature than eating & drinking they are granted to thee.

¹⁴ Notebook 40, marbled board notebook, red calf spine, 9½ × 7 inches; 32f. (some stubs), plain blue laid paper, watermarked: E. Towgood/1863, and a post-horn.

would make the idyll too similar to *Geraint and Enid* in its dependence upon the growing rumor of Guinevere's dishonorable behavior. This plan would deprive the completed series of any idyll which features the full glory of the Order.

— [21] —

Lots wife Bellicent, the Queen of Orkney sat in her castle on the sea & she was lost in thought: for there had come to her (a twelvemonth before) a noise that Queen Guinevere was false with Lancelot: & thereupon the Queen who had been long haunted by a passion for Sir Lamorack had yielded herself to him & thus dishonoured her house.

But now she said to herself Lo if Guinevere have not sinned & this rumour is untrue I shall be the first woman who have broken the fair order of the Table Round & made a knight forego his vows & so my name shall go down thro' the world for ever: but if Guinevere have sinned the sin will be hers & my shame covered by her shame.

And there came in to her Gareth her son & he said O mother for here my life is spilt & lost among rocks & stones that never heard the sound of a trumpet blowing the knights together in the lists *but* let me have thy leave to go to the halls of Arthur & be made knight by Arthur as my brethren Modred & Gawain are.

And she answered Yea my son Gareth so that thou wilt swear a vow to me to do my will when thou comest to Arthur.

And Gawain swore a vow that he would do her will.

Then the Queen spake & said I have heard for this long time that Queen Guinevere is false to the King & my heart is troubled thereby & my life darkened for I love him.

— [31] —

but thou shalt go & be made knight & seek into this scandal & dwell among them & bring me word whether there be truth therein

Then said Gareth O mother shall I ask the Knights of the Table Round whether the King is dishonoured by his wife

Grieved am I that I have taken such a vow.

And the Queen said thou hast taken it & shalt abide by it but think not to ask this of the knights for they hold together by their vows & are sworn to speak no slander & from them wilt thou learn nothing but thou shalt mingle with

the thralls of the house & with those that hand the dish across the bar for these are they that know the things of a house & delight in the evils thereof & from them shalt thou learn & bring back the truth of this matter to me thy mother: for it were shame that Arthur should be shamed by his own Queen not knowing, moreover this sin will pass thro all the Table Round & ruin the King's purpose, if (thi) it be not known & put an end to.

And Gareth said An evil vow have I sworn. Are not Modred & Gawain wiser than I?

And the Queen answer'd Modred & Gawain were liars from their youth upward but thou hast ever spoken the truth

So Gareth took two of the house & sware them to silence & disguised himself & came before the King.

And the King was holding the feast of Pentecost at King-Keredon in Wales.

— [4r] —

And the sides of the hills were green, & the earth quickened with flowers & the birds warbled in the bush for it was the feast of Pentecost.

Then came Gareth unto hill & he was clad like a tiller of the *field* soil but his raiment was without soil & he moved heavily as tho' he were faint & about to fall & he leaned his hands on the shoulders of those twain with whom he came & the twain were richly beseen like those in the court of a king & his hands were the largest & fairest that ever men saw.

[And the day was one of driving showers: & as they drew near to Camelot, sometimes the city gleam'd out at top while the rest of it was hidden, sometimes only the middle of it was seen, sometimes only the great gate of Arthur at the bottom & sometimes it disappeared altogether.

And the two that were with Gareth were amazed & said to him Lo now my lord let us go no further for we have heard that this is a city of enchanters & was built by Fairy Kings and Queens

And the other said There is no such city: it is a vision.

But Gareth brought them to the great Gate: & there was no gate like it under heaven: for the deeds of Arthur were sculptured there in strange types & old & new was mingled together so that it made a man dizzy to look at it.

— [4v] —

And there came a blast of music from the town & the three started back ¹⁶

& now they have been frightened with this music nor care to go in ¹⁷

— [5r] —

And the two that were with Gareth stared so long at the figures on the gateway that it seemed to them that the tails of the dragons & other strange shapes on the gate began to move & to twine & to curl.

And they caught hold of Gareth saying to him O my lord 'the gate is alive.

And Gareth lookd also so long that the figures seemed to him also to move.

And while they were thus amazed Old Merlin came out from under the gate, & he saw them staring & askd Who be ye? my sons?

And Gareth answer'd O master we be tillers of the soil & come to see the state of the King: but these men are feared to go into the city for they have heard it was built by enchantment & by fairy kings & queens ^Λ [*caret in manuscript*]

And Merlin I will speak the truth as thou hast spoken it to me: for truly O son this city was built by a fairy king & many fairy Queens & they came from out the cleft of a mountain toward the sunrise; & they built it to the sound of their harps & as thou sayst it is enchanted & nothing in it is what it seems, saving the King & many hold the city is real & the King is unreal: & take thou of him for if thou pass under this gateway thou wilt become subject to this enchantment & the King will swear thee to vows which it is a shame that a man should not swear, & which

— [6r] —

yet no man can keep: but if ye be afraid to swear pass not beneath the gateway but abide here among the cattle of the field: for the city is built to music, & therefore not built at all, & therefore built for ever.

And Gareth was angry & answer'd Old master, hast thou no reverence for thine own white beard which is wellnigh as long as thou art tall that thou mockest strangers. Why mockest thou me & my men who have *been* fairspoken to thee?

And Merlin answer'd Have ye never heard the riddling of the bards? I mock thee because thou mockest me & all that look at thee, thou art not what thou

¹⁶ This line is intended to follow the line, "And Gareth lookd also so long that the figures seemed to him also to move," on folio 5r.

¹⁷ This line is intended to follow the passage, "And Gareth answer'd . . . by fairy kings & queens," on folio 5r.

seemest but I know thee & who thou art, & thou goest up to mock the Great King.

And Gareth was abashed & said to his men Here sits a white lie like a little ghost on the threshold of our enterprise. But let my good mother — heaven bless her — bear the blame.

And he & his men past up into the city & they had never seen stranger or statelier palaces & they came to the doors of the great Hall & Arthur was speaking to his knights & rendering thanks for such service as they had done him in subduing the heathen: & Gareth saw in the eyes of each of them loyalty & clear honour sparkling like the morning star in heaven, & high promise, & the light of victory, And glory (to be) gain'd & glory yet to be gain'd.

— [7r] —

Then went Gareth & lived & ate among the grooms; & he heard them talk of the love that was between Lancelot & the King & at times they talked in such fashion that he broke out into whistling & into singing; so that the thralls marvelled at him & at last revered him; & he was the best among them at putting the bar & stone; & if there ever chanced to be a tourney he was ever at the barrier & his eyes kindled.

But after a while he tired of their company & on a morning when the great king paced before the Hall alone, he came upon him & said

I am Gareth thy nephew & I bound myself by a foolish vow to one whom I loved that I would live among thy thralls for a season; but now am I come to thee for those other two boons which thou hast promised. Make me thy knight in secret & give me the first adventure that comes to thy court that I may spring like flame out of ashes.

And Gareth gave the king secret signs whereby he should know that he was Gareth — & the King granted him what he would, nor revealed his name

Then there came a maiden into hall: & she was of high lineage; & her eye was sharp as a falcon's when he sees his prey beneath him, & her colour clear as a rose, & her nose tilted up at the tip & she spake to the king

O King, for thou hast driven the heathen — but there be thieves & bandits enow left to ruin a realm & everyone that has a tower is king for a league round, nor canst thou be verily & indeed King till these be driven as thou hast driven the heathen.

— [8r] —

Why sit ye there? were I thou I would not rest till the whole land were as

free from accursed bloodshed as the altar cloth from the blessed wine which it is a sin to spill

Comfort thyself said Arthur I rest not nor my knights & so they keep their vows but for a year the *whole* realm will be safe as the centre of this hall.

Lo now she answer'd Is it not foul wrong -- my sister whom even the heathen spared when they spoilt the land -- she hath a great heritage -- & rich she is & comely -- yea & comlier than I myself -- & there ever wails a knight nor lets her stir abroad but vows that he will wed her perforce save that one of thine own knights overthrow him.

Then cried out Sir Gareth. O King thy promise. I can overthrow seventy such: for thou knowest I have been thy kitchen knave, & so am I full of thy meats & drinks & strong as a lion.

Well spoken kitchenboy said Sir Kay. Thou wilt lose nothing for the asking.

But the damsel Linette cried out upon the king Fic on thee: I asked thee for a knight & thou hast given me a kitchen knave. & right so past quickly out of the hall.

And there were men of Sir Gareth in the city & they brought him his armour & he mounted his horse & rode swiftly down the street & past thro' the gate & found the damsel (in) hardby the tourney-field: & she was inflamed

[9r] —

with wrath as she looked at the field, saying could not the king have lent me one of the knights that fight in this field rather than a kitchen-knave?

On folio 9v, there is a prose draft of a conversation between Gareth and Bellicent before his departure for Camelot.

— [9v] —

And Gareth knelt by his mother & she blest him laying hand on head & he ask'd her.

Sweet Mother know ye the parable of the Golden Goose
And she said thou art a Goose to mind me of so foolish a parable.

And he Foolish enow, sweet Mother for it is the Eagle that lays the golden egg. here is my parable. There was a youth & he was poor but lusty, & he knew that the Eagle had laid a golden egg high up on a — call it a palmtree. & it seemd to him that he would be rich & happy if he could climb the tree & get the egg from the nest. & as he was about to climb one that loved him

laid hold on him & prayd him by his love, not to climb less he should break his neck; & many times the youth w^d have climb'd save for the love between them but he still longed for the egg day & night, & so sweet mother, he brake not his neck but he brake his heart

On folios 16r and 16v, there is the following prose draft of the entrance of Mark's messenger into Arthur's court.

— [16r] —

Now as the King ceased speaking & Gareth stood yet among the crowd there came in a messenger from King Mark of Cornwall & he held in his hand a cloth of gold, & spake to him that Mark was on his way to Arthur, for he had heard that the King had made Tristram *his kinsman* knight of his Table, & that he was of the greater state, being a king, & therefore trusted that Arthur would all the more give him this honour, & to show his reverence to Arthur he sent him this cloth of gold.

And Arthur said 'take it & cast it on the hearth Shall the shield of Mark stand among these? For in the middle of the side of the (great) Hall there rose over the hearth (a mighty pile) a great arch & over that a mighty pile of stone work: & as many knights as made the Table, so many shields were there & *the name & every knight was written thereupon*, in the stone, & *on* some of these (n) the arms were only carven, & some were carven & blazoned, & some were blank. for this was the custom of Arthur. When a knight had achieved one deed of prowess his arms were carven, & when he had achieved twain, they were blazoned & those that had achieved one had their shields blank: & *Gareth saw that the shield of Gawain was blazoned*

— [16v] —

& that of Modred was *blank*, & there was a vast oak-log smouldering on the hearth, so that the King said Cast it on the log.

On folios 20r and 21r, there is one final piece of prose, a draft of Dagonet's confrontation with Tristram which becomes the germ of *The Last Tournament*. There is a folio torn out of the Notebook immediately before folio 20; the missing folio probably continued the prose passage of folios 16r and 16v where the reference to Tristram would seem to stand behind the meeting between Tristram and Dagonet.

— [20r] —

Sir Dagonet, the king's fool, stood before the hall of Arthur. & the wind was blowing & the leaves flying in the wood below.

[And below him there past into the wood Sir Lamorack & his head was down,
& his heart darkend for he had heard that Queen Bellicent was dead.] [*brackets
in manuscript*]

And (the dwarf skipt.)

And below him riding three abreast there past into the wood Sir Gawain Sir
Modred & Sir Gaheris: & the face of Gawain was red as tho' with wine; &
the face of Modred was white but he had bitten his thin lips till they were
bloody: & so they past away.

And about an hour after there rode into the wood Sir Lamorack & his head was
down & his heart darkend for his old love Queen Bellicent was dead.

And the dwarf skipt upon the steps before the hall & out of the hall came
Tristram & cried to him.

O fool why skippest thou:

And the dwarf pointed to the wood & said

'They are gone to keep the vows of the King'

And Tristram said who are gone.

And he answer'd the sons of the Queen: for Lancelot has kept the vows of the
king, & Lamorack has kept the vows of the king & thou also: for ye have all
lain by Queens,

— [211] —

so that no king knoweth his own son¹⁸

In Harvard Notebook 32,¹⁹ there is a series of prose drafts of sections
of *Gareth and Lynette*. Joan Hartman has correctly described the
poet's use of this Notebook, "Sometimes Tennyson held the notebook
right side up, sometimes upside down; sometimes he progressed for-
ward from page to page in a normal fashion, sometimes backward Chi-
nese-style. Here too is verse and prose, though less prose than in Note-
book 40. In this disorder and confusion, for the manuscript cannot
be read consecutively, are segments that constitute the remainder of
'Gareth and Lynette'."²⁰ This statement, however, demands some

¹⁸ Sir Charles Tennyson reprints this prose passage to draw attention to its im-
portance as "a projected beginning" for *The Last Tournament* (*The Cornhill
Magazine*, CLIII, 547).

¹⁹ Notebook 32, vellum notebook, 16½ × 6½ inches; 86f. (some stubs), plain
bluish laid paper, watermarked: Gilling/&/Alford/1822, and figure of Britannia in
an oval. On front flyleaf: "Alfred Tennyson Esq. Farringford Freshwater I. of
Wight. Oct. 13.-56."

²⁰ Hartman, 240.

clarification because Notebook 32 had a special function for the poet. The large number of short prose drafts of sections of *Gareth and Lynette* and their seemingly scattered position in the Notebook reveal that Tennyson used this Notebook as an exercise pad;²¹ he wrote a short prose draft of one episode, then he made a series of poetic renderings of the prose account. Each prose draft represents the earliest version of the episode and often shows a very close verbal fidelity to Malory's account of the same scene; the poetic renderings show Tennyson's continuing expansion and clarification of the prose passages. The major prose draft in Notebook 32 follows Gareth's adventures from his departure from Camelot until his departure from the Baron's castle.

— [15v*] —

Now these two entries into the great hall, one, wherinto a man c^d walk only, & there was also, a side-entry, huge & lofty wherinto a man c^d. And Gareth past to the side entry: & there stood a great & goodly charger given by the King, & there likewise were those twain who had come with Gareth one whereof held a helmet & a shield & one the horse; & Gareth when he came without throw off a rough dress that veil'd him from head to foot, & shone forth all in complete armour; & there was a tumult in the street. And he took shield & put on helm & mounted horse, & all the thralls ran into the street & when they saw their fellow whom they loved, everyone threw up his cap & rejoiced in him & the King & cried out God (sa) bless the King & all his fair fellowship & the people mingled with the cry of the thralls & Gareth rode down between the shouters & so past down by the gate

But Sir Kay stood by the door & was wroth with the thralls & the people & Gareth; & said *My kitchen k sent on a quest* Of a surety that old wound on the head w^h the king got in Badon battle hath broken out again — this is madness Thralls to your work! why — now let the good sun roll backward let there be dawn in west & Eve in East. The boy was tame enow when I had him in keeping. Now will I after my kitchen knave & see whether he know me for the better man. but of the smoke hath he come & into the mere he shall go, & thence into the smoke again

But Lancelot said Told I thee not there was a mystery. Abide: the lad is

²¹ This function of the Notebook is further suggested by the surviving folios which contain sections from other idylls; there are passages from *Guinevere*, *Balin and Balan*, a much-altered first draft of *To the Queen*, a few lines from *The Passing of Arthur*, and the sections from *Gareth and Lynette*. The Notebook also contains versions of *The Spiteful Letter*, *The Lord Has Grown as Commonplace*, and *Guess Well, and That is Well*, and several folios devoted to *Queen Mary*.

great lusty & knowing of sword & lance & thou art past thy force; & more-
over thou goest against the King's will & that did never he whom ye rail at.

But Sir Kay armed & rode down the street & The people gazed him at silence.

— [18r*] —

So, till it darken'd after evensong,
The two rode on, reviler & reviled.
'Then after climbing a great slope they saw
(a glo) Bowl-shaped, a gloomy gladed hollow sink
To westward, & beneath, a rounded mere
Red as the round eye of an Eagle-owl
Under the half-dead sunset glared in gloom.

And from the mere came shrieks & cries

Then from the black wood came a serving man
Flying & crying 'They have bound my lord
Six robbers & will cast him in the mere'
That some may know

I may not leave thee alone in the black wood
I am bound to right the wrong
The damsel a spake contemptuously
Lead & I follow & Gareth cried again
Follow I lead & plunged into the wood,
And three with blows he quieted & three
Fled thro' the pines & Gareth loosed his bonds

& so set him upright on his feet whereon he said I owe thee my life & ask for
what reward I may give thee wh^h is in my power

And Gareth I will no reward have. I have my deed for the deeds sake & in
uttermost obedience to the King but an thou wilt give this gentle damsel &
myself harbourage for this night, then were I well-rewarded.

And the damsel said

Weenest thou that I have joy of thee a *shepherd thrasher* with a²² for this deed
thou hast done it hath but mishappened thee for these were all craven thieves.
fie how ye smell after your exercise of the tallowgrease! but if my lord the
Baron will yield me harbourage then I grateful

²² In the Notebook, "thrasher" is written above "shepherd."

So when they came to his castle wh^b was hard at hand, the Baron made them (the) great cheer & goodly; & there was set a peacock in his pride before the damsel, & the lord set Gareth before the damsel but she arose & cried fie fie Sir Baron ye are uncourteous to set a kitchen-page beside me. I went this morning to King Arthur

— [17v*] —

I have ever warred on these thieves & my manner was when I had overcome them to tie a stone round their necks & down them in this mere — & there be many rotting under this wan water ²³

to ask him for a knight who w^d do battle with Night & Day — yea & none but Lancelot c^d do it, then this kitchen knave cries out 'thy promise, king give me the quest; & the king having gone mad, gives it to him, to him — a fellow fitter to stick a swine than sit beside a noble gentlewoman.²⁴

— [20r*] —

& the Baron was half amazed & half ashamed & (set Ga) left the damsel with the peacock in his pride before her & set Gareth at a sideboard & set himself beside him. & said

Friend whether thou beest kitchen knave or no Thou art a strong man & a goodly & I owe thee my life & therefore bethink thee as to this quest; for here be four of the mightiest knights living, tho' they be but the scum of Uther's time. & these in their fantastic fashion call themselves the Day, the morning star, the noonday sun & the evening star, & the fourth calls himself the night, & sometimes Death for he hath a skeleton painted on his harness & his helmet is fashion'd like a scull, whereby he have men know that even if any s^d overthrow the three he will be at last slain by himself & pass into eternal night. Wherefore I beseech thee bethink thyself whether thou wilt not return with the lady Linette that she may choose another champion for by my faith if thou pass on I count thee but as lost, & all this I say for thy *avail* (benefit) & because thou hast saved my life.

And Gareth said whether I be kitchen knave or not (The I) will be shown hereafter: but the King has granted me this quest & I follow it to the death ²⁵

In addition to this extended prose passage, there are brief prose drafts of later episodes of the idyll; each of these drafts is surrounded by poetic renderings of the episode.

²³ This passage is intended to follow the line, "ask for what reward I may give thee wh^b is in my power," on folio 18r*.

²⁴ This passage is intended to follow after the passage, "And the damsel said," on folio 18r*.

²⁵ On the folios opposite these prose drafts are their corresponding poetic versions: 16r* corresponds to 15v*, 17r* to 18c*, and 19v* to 20r*.

— [26v*] —

And lifting up the torch she show'd him on the cavern-walls painted figures of Day & Night & Death & evil custom pursuing the soul drest like a bride — the work of the hermit who had lived there — & to whom the four w^d confess themselves, & while he lived they restrained themselves & fear'd the king, & now they care not for the king but fear the cave — & from these walls these unfurnished fools — said I not they were fools have suckd their allegory.

— [25v*] —

W^d God had made us tongueless. all the day I riled & reviled thee; & now have I got Sir L. to give thee his shield & horse & let thee fight in his stead; & now I repent me yet again, for thou hast gaind thee glory enough in overthrowing those three knights but before this last thou wilt surely go down: for he is the mightiest living: & he will slay thee, for (his squire) he hath spared not man nor woman nor babe; & some say he hath eaten child's flesh — a monster. And I know not his face, but it is *too* horrible be looked upon & never have I seen it, nor heard him speak but ever his squire spoke for him, & the squire was sore sick when I left, & like to die

— [22r*] —

So when they had eaten the baken venison & drank in much as they w^d of the red wine of Southland, Gareth disarmed himself & lay down & slept. Then the damsel Lynette said to Lancelot. 'Wilt thou do me a grace? I sware to the black knight that I w^d *bring* thee to fight him. Wilt thou fight him in lieu of Sir Gareth? Nay fair damsel, for therein w^d be too much discourtesy but an he overthrows Sir Gareth then shall he not scape *me*. 'Yet she said, an thou refuse me this thou wilt yield me another grace? *so that my sister's heart may be comforted & I may not seem forsworn at first sight* Willingly fair damsel, so that I may' Thou shalt let Gareth have thine armour, & he shall take thine. Willingly said Lancelot so that Gareth agree thereto

And when Gareth had awaked he was mighty again as any lion, & he sware that an he had Lancelot's harness on him he w^d have tenfold might from the touch thereof, & tenfold might from the thought that he w^d never disgrace the shadow of Lancelot in the arms of Lancelot.

And so it was done: & Gareth said (Shall we not fall) let us go on the instant. Fain Sir said the damsel it yet wanteth 6 hours to the sunrise. Care not for that we will be there to fall on him when it dawneth.

Then they rode thence & when they gained the space before the castle, they ware of a huge black pavilion under the stars, & the harp of Arthur bickered over it, & a great black horn hung by the side of the pavilion. And Gareth was so fresh & eager that ere Lancelot or the damsel c^d stay him he blew it. & in the black night horribly brayed the horn. & a light flashd in a tower &

past away; & Gareth once more winded the great horn & there were many lights but when he had blown it thrice, the castle doors were flung open & there came out two & two men bearing torches till all was as light as day.

Then the great black pavilion opened & yielded up Night on a huge black horse, & he was ghastly to gaze upon, & he rode like a bare-ribb'd Death & the scull grinn'd over him

— [21v*] —

And when he saw Gareth he cried out Art thou Sir Lancelot & he said I am all that thou wilt find for him

Balin and Balan

Harvard Notebook 37²⁶ contains a prose draft of the story of Pellam, an episode which occurs before the story of Balin since Garlon is now withholding the tribute. In this account, Vivien's introduction would occur in Mark's court, a scene ultimately placed in the new introduction to *Merlin and Vivien*.

— [5r] —

Pellam the King who held & lost with Lot had his realm render'd tributary, & he had no child, but Sir Garlon, his heir, was his nephew. and Sir Garlon hated K. A. because the King had refused to make him of his Round Table, knowing him & many times in his anger he had sworn that come what might come he w^d pay the tribute no more.

And it chanced on a time that he sat drinking red wine in Lyonesse with King Mark for these were close friends; & they spoke of the great King, who promised to bring the world right by swearing his knights to vows of perfect obedience & perfect purity: & either laugh'd & scorned at the phantasy of so many knights being pure.

And there was with him a damsel of that court *battlefield*²⁷ who bewitched men with her beauty. & she said What wilt thou wager, Sir king with me that I do not go to the court of this & bring back love-tokens from these pure ones, yea, even were it curl from the golden beard of Arthur. Have we not heard that this Lancelot worships no unwedded damsel but the Queen herself, to

²⁶ For a description of Notebook 37, see footnote thirteen.

²⁷ The insertion of "battlefield" must have been intended as an aide-mémoire for Vivien's account of her own history in the addition to *Merlin and Vivien*, "My father died in battle for thy King, / My mother on his corpse—in open field, / The sad sea-sounding wastes of Lyonesse."

show forsooth, his utter selflessness, swears by her, & fights in her name. here be snakes in the grass, w^h methinks I can stir till they sting.

Go an thou wilt said Mark the King & an thou canst make a mischief among them there is nothing I will not give thee.

— [5v] —

Then spake Sir Garlon. I ride on the tomorrow back to the castle of King Pellam on the way to Arthur. Ride now with me. (but when they came) & she took with her a squire whom now she treated as a lover & now she mocked as a child. & the boy was besotted with her. But King Pellam thrust her from the gates. & there she dwelt among the woods awhile waiting Sir Garlon to go with her. And Garlon ever kept the tribute from being paid.

Later in the same Notebook is a brief prose draft of the description of Pellam's court.

— [11 v*] —

So Balan, added to their table, stood
Before the King, to whom one day there came
An ancient Baron sent from him to claim
Tribute of Pelles, one who took the side
Of Lot, when Arthur winning, took his realm
Gave it again but made it tributary.

We got the tribute with much ado, for the king is old & hath fallen into dreams, & his brother, Sir Garlon rules him & his & he would fain be holier than thou art & so hath put his wife away, & lets not dame or damsel enter his castle, holding them a pollution, & hath let all things go to wrack & we past into his chapel, & saw

Thorns of the crown & shivers of the cross
Rich arcs with precious bones of martyrdom
& Sir Garlon hates thee & thine, & cried out against the tribute.

& there we saw the spear wherewith the soldier Longus pierced our Lord & which he said was inherited from his ancestor Joseph of Aromat. so deep is he in his foulness.

But I will tell thee another thing. In the woods nigh Pelles castle we found a knight of thine speared thro' the back & again another whom we buried & whether this be the work of a bandit or Sir Garlon it behoves thee to look to it.²⁸

²⁸ I have not included Tennyson's prose account of *Balin and Balan* entitled "The Dolorous Stroke," which is reprinted in *Memoir*, II, 134-141, since it is a prose ac-

The prose drafts of the *Idylls of the King* present an interesting and important perspective on Tennyson's method of composition as he attempted to continue the creation of his Arthurian masterpiece. After the publication of the 1859 volume of *Idylls*, he began the practice of composing at least sections of each new idyll first in prose, then in poetry. *The Coming of Arthur* is the only idyll written after 1859 that does not survive in any form of a prose draft.

The draft of *The Holy Grail* is extremely close in its structure and in its text to the completed idyll, though it is significant that the episode of Sir Bors was not part of the original conception. The brief draft of the new introduction for the earlier *Morte d'Arthur* suggests that Tennyson preferred to compose even such a small passage first in prose. The long draft of *Gareth and Lynette* presents the original manner of incorporating the episode into his series; it also suggests that his treatment of the Tristram story began as an outgrowth of the appearance of Mark's messenger in the plan of the Gareth idyll. Like the draft of the beginning of *The Passing of Arthur*, the brief prose passages for *Gareth and Lynette* in Harvard Notebook 32 corroborate the conclusion that Tennyson preferred to plan and compose each new episode first in prose. And the draft of *Balin and Balan* also shows the poet beginning the composition of a new idyll through a prose account of the story.

The prose drafts exhibit a marked degree of textual similarity and structure to their corresponding poetic versions. Obviously meant as the bridge between the poet's reworking of Malory and his final poetic rendering, the drafts present the student of Tennyson with the clearest portrait of the poet as he sought to recreate the Arthurian legends in his *Idylls of the King*.

count rather than a prose draft of the idyll. Dictated by the poet to James Knowles, "The Dolorous Stroke" is Tennyson's recollection of the synopsis of the plot of the idyll rather than an early draft.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

WILLIAM BENTINCK-SMITH has edited the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* (1946-1954) and *The Harvard Book*, which was published by the Harvard University Press in 1953; he was Assistant to the President of Harvard University (1954-1971), and is now Publication Associate in the Development Office of the University and Honorary Curator of Type Specimens and Letter Design in the Harvard College Library.

DAVID E. BYNUM is Lecturer on Oral Literature at Harvard and Curator of the Milman Parry Collection in the Harvard College Library; his Harvard dissertation was on "A Taxonomy of Oral Narrative Songs; The Isolation and Description of Invariables in Serbocroatian Tradition," and his edition of Branislav Krstić's *A Catalogue of Songs and Variants* was published in 1962.

LEO M. KAISER is Professor of Classical Studies at Loyola University of Chicago; his published writings include a contribution to the January 1973 issue of the *HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN* on Urian Oakes's Commencement Address of 1672.

MRS. BARBARA ROTUNDO, Associate Professor of English at the State University of New York at Albany, first visited Mount Auburn Cemetery as part of her continuing research on Annie Fields, poet, biographer, and wife of James T. Fields, the nineteenth-century Boston publisher.

DAVID M. STAINES is Assistant Professor of English at Harvard and Assistant Senior Tutor in Leverett House; his Harvard dissertation (1973) was "Tennyson's Camelot: A Study of Tennyson's Arthurian Poetry and Its Medieval Sources."