Sir Kay sent you unto her. Then they swore it should be done, and so passed forth Sir Launcelot, and each one of the brethren holp other as well as they might.

CHAPTER XIII

How Sir Launcelot jousted against four knights of the Round Table and overthrew them.

So Sir Launcelot rode into a deep forest, and thereby in a slade, he saw four knights hoving under an oak, and they were of Arthur’s court, one was Sir Sagramour le Desirous, and Ector de Maris, and Sir Gawaine, and Sir Uwaine. Anon as these four knights had espied Sir Launcelot, they weened by his arms it had been Sir Kay. Now by my faith, said Sir Sagramour, I will prove Sir Kay’s might, and gat his spear in his hand, and came toward Sir Launcelot. Therewith Sir Launcelot was ware and knew him well, and feutred his spear against him, and smote Sir Sagramour so sore that horse and man fell both to the earth. Lo, my fellows, said he, yonder ye may see what a buffet he hath; that knight is much bigger than ever was Sir Kay. Now shall ye see what I may do to him. So Sir Ector gat his spear in his hand and walloped toward Sir Launcelot, and Sir Launcelot smote him through the shield and shoulder, that man and horse went to the earth, and ever his spear held.
By my faith, said Sir Uwaine, yonder is a strong knight, and I am sure he hath slain Sir Kay; and I see by his great strength it will be hard to match him. And therewithal, Sir Uwaine gat his spear in his hand and rode toward Sir Launcelot, and Sir Launcelot knew him well, and so he met him on the plain, and gave him such a buffet that he was astonied, that long he wist not where he was. Now see I well, said Sir Gawaine, I must encounter with that knight. Then he dressed his shield and gat a good spear in his hand, and Sir Launcelot knew him well; and then they let run their horses with all their mights, and either knight smote other in midst of the shield. But Sir Gawaine’s spear to-brast, and Sir Launcelot charged so sore upon him that his horse reversed up-so-down. And much sorrow had Sir Gawaine to avoid his horse, and so Sir Launcelot passed on a pace and smiled, and said, God give him joy that this spear made, for there came never a better in my hand.

Then the four knights went each one to other and comforted each other. What say ye by this guest? said Sir Gawaine, that one spear hath felled us all four. We commend him unto the devil, they said all, for he is a man of great might. Ye may well say it, said Sir Gawaine, that he is a man of might, for I dare lay my head it is Sir Launcelot, I know it by his riding. Let him go, said Sir Gawaine, for when we come to the court then shall we wit; and then had they much sorrow to get their horses again.

CHAPTER XIV

How Sir Launcelot followed a brachet into a castle, where he found a dead knight, and how he after was required of a damosel to heal her brother.

Now leave we there and speak of Sir Launcelot that rode a great while in a deep forest, where he saw a black brachet, seeking in manner as it had been in the feute of an hurt deer. And therewith he rode after the brachet, and he saw lie on the ground a large feute of blood. And then Sir Launcelot rode after. And ever the brachet looked behind her, and so she went through a great marsh, and ever Sir Launcelot followed. And then was he ware of an old manor, and thither ran the brachet, and so over the bridge. So Sir Launcelot rode over that bridge that was old and feeble; and when he came in midst of a great hall, there he saw lie a dead knight that was a seemly man, and that brachet licked his wounds. And therewithal came out a lady weeping and wringing her hands; and then she said, O knight, too much sorrow hast thou brought me. Why say ye so? said Sir Launcelot, I did never this knight no harm, for hither by feute of blood this
brachet brought me; and therefore, fair lady, be not displeased with me, for I am full sore aggrieved of your grievance. Truly, sir, she said, I trow it be not ye that hath slain my husband, for he that did that deed is sore wounded, and he is never likely to recover, that shall I ensure him. What was your husband’s name? said Sir Launcelot. Sir, said she, his name was called Sir Gilbert the Bastard, one of the best knights of the world, and he that hath slain him I know not his name. Now God send you better comfort, said Sir Launcelot; and so he departed and went into the forest again, and there he met with a damosel, the which knew him well, and she said aloud, Well be ye found, my lord; and now I require thee, on thy knighthood, help my brother that is sore wounded, and never stinteth bleeding; for this day he fought with Sir Gilbert the Bastard and slew him in plain battle, and there was my brother sore wounded, and there is a lady a sorceress that dwelleth in a castle here beside, and this day she told me my brother’s wounds should never be whole till I could find a knight that would go into the Chapel Perilous, and there he should find a sword and a bloody cloth that the wounded knight was lapped in, and a piece of that cloth and sword should heal my brother’s wounds, so that his wounds were searched with the sword and the cloth. This is a marvellous thing, said Sir Launcelot, but what is your brother’s name? Sir, she said, his name was Sir Meliot de Logres. That me repenteth, said Sir Launcelot, for he is a fellow of the Table Round, and to his help I will do my power. Then, sir, said she, follow even this highway, and it will bring you unto the Chapel Perilous; and here I shall abide till God send you here again, and, but you speed, I know no knight living that may achieve that adventure.
CHAPTER XV

How Sir Launcelot came into the Chapel Perilous and gat there of a dead corpse a piece of the cloth and a sword.

Right so Sir Launcelot departed, and when he came unto the Chapel Perilous he alighted down, and tied his horse unto a little gate. And as soon as he was within the churchyard he saw on the front of the chapel many fair rich shields turned up-so-down, and many of the shields Sir Launcelot had seen knights bear beforehand. With that he saw by him there stand a thirty great knights, more by a yard than any man that ever he had seen, and all those grinned and gnashed at Sir Launcelot. And when he saw their countenance he dreaded him sore, and so put his shield afore him, and took his sword ready in his hand ready unto battle, and they were all armed in black harness ready with their shields and their swords drawn. And when Sir Launcelot would have gone throughout them, they scattered on every side of him, and gave him the way, and therewith he waxed all bold, and entered into the chapel, and then he saw no light but a dim lamp burning, and then was he ware of a corpse hilled with a cloth of silk. Then Sir Launcelot stooped down, and cut a piece away of that cloth, and then it fared under him as the earth had quaked a little; therewithal he feared. And then he saw a fair sword lie by the dead knight, and that he gat in his hand and hied him out of the chapel.

Anon as ever he was in the chapel yard all the knights spake to him with a grimly voice, and said, Knight, Sir Launcelot, lay that sword from thee or else thou shalt die. Whether that I live or die, said Sir Launcelot, with no great word get ye it again, therefore fight for it an ye list. Then right so he passed throughout them, and beyond the chapel yard there met him a fair damosel, and said, Sir Launcelot, leave that sword behind thee, or thou wilt die for it. I leave it not, said Sir Launcelot, for no treaties. No, said she, an thou didst leave that sword, Queen Guenever should thou never see. Then were I a fool an I would leave this sword, said Launcelot. Now, gentle knight, said the damosel, I require thee to kiss me but once. Nay, said Sir Launcelot, that God me forbid. Well, sir, said she, an thou hadst kissed me thy life days had been done, but now, alas, she said, I have lost all my labour, for I ordained this chapel
for thy sake, and for Sir Gawaine. And once I had Sir Gawaine
within me, and at that time he fought with that knight that lieth
there dead in yonder chapel, Sir Gilbert the Bastard; and at
that time he smote the left hand off of Sir Gilbert the Bastard.
And, Sir Launcelot, now I tell thee, I have loved thee this
seven year, but there may no woman have thy love but Queen
Guenever. But sithen I may not rejoice thee to have thy body
alive, I had kept no more joy in this world but to have thy
body dead. Then would I have balmed it and served it, and so
have kept it my life days, and daily I should have clipped thee,
and kissed thee, in despite of Queen Guenever. Ye say well,
said Sir Launcelot, Jesu preserve me from your subtle crafts.
And therewithal he took his horse and so departed from her.
And as the book saith, when Sir Launcelot was departed she
took such sorrow that she died within a fourteen night, and her
name was Hellawes the sorceress, Lady of the Castle
Nigramous.

Anon Sir Launcelot met with the damosel, Sir Meliot’s sis-
ter. And when she saw him she clapped her hands, and wept
for joy. And then they rode unto a castle thereby where lay Sir
Meliot. And anon as Sir Launcelot saw him he knew him, but
he was passing pale, as the earth, for bleeding. When Sir Meliot
saw Sir Launcelot he kneeled upon his knees and cried on
high: O lord Sir Launcelot, help me! Anon Sir Launcelot leapt
unto him and touched his wounds with Sir Gilbert’s sword.
And then he wiped his wounds with a part of the bloody cloth
that Sir Gilbert was wrapped in, and anon an wholer man in
his life was he never. And then there was great joy between
them, and they made Sir Launcelot all the cheer that they might,
and so on the morn Sir Launcelot took his leave, and bade Sir
Meliot hie him to the court of my lord Arthur, for it draweth
nigh to the Feast of Pentecost, and there by the grace of God
ye shall find me. And therewith they departed.