

PAGE, ESQUIRE, AND KNIGHT

**PAGE, ESQUIRE, AND
KNIGHT**

A BOOK OF CHIVALRY

BY

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ILLUSTRATED BY

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YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS

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PREFACE

William Caxton, the first English printer, who published his books with a view to edification as well as to recreation, thought it well to include in his library three books of chivalry, "wherein his readers should find many joyous and pleasant histories," and should learn of "the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and the virtuous deeds that some knights did." He had no question that "for to pass the time" his books would be found "pleasant to read in," and he was equally confident that the noble lords and ladies who read these histories would make good use of the same and would "take the good and honest acts in remembrance and do after them." We of a later day find the stories of chivalry likewise pleasant, refreshing, and entertaining, and we echo his thought as to their moral value. How better can gentleness and courtesy, bravery and hardiness, humanity and friendliness, be instilled than by a perusal of stories of chivalry such as have been gathered in this volume of our library of literature?

Page, Esquire, and Knight presents the best stories of all periods of chivalry, from the days of the founding of the Round Table to the death of Chevalier Bayard. It sets forth in simple story form the development and progress of knighthood from the time of St. George, who won his spurs by killing the dragon, to the founding, a thousand years later, of

the order which bore his name and embodied in its ritual the highest ceremonial of chivalry. With its explanation of the meaning of the degrees of knight-hood, its description of quests and tourneys, and its outline of the great events of chivalry, this volume will serve as a good introduction to the later reading of the child in Arthurian and other romance, and in the history of Charlemagne's wars and the crusades.

Our best heritage from the Middle Ages is the ideal side of that system which

“By a line
Of institution from our ancestors,
Hath been deriv'd down to us, and receiv'd
In a succession, for the noblest way
Of breeding up our youth in letters, arms,
Fair mien, discourses, civil exercises,
And all the blazon of a gentleman.”

Chivalry ceased to be of practical value only when the conditions of civilization called for men of peace rather than of war, and the perfect knight was replaced by the perfect gentleman.

M. F. L.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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“Whither go those valiant knights,
The glory and the pride of France?”
“It is to defend our hearthstones
That their hand takes up the lance.”



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In the olden days when it was needful that all men should learn the arts of battle and defense, because law and order had not yet come to prevail throughout the world, knighthood began, and this is how it came to be.

There had been armed men before, and castles where they dwelt, and kings to whom they rendered some sort of allegiance. And there had been brave men who did valiant deeds, but there had been other warriors as well who used their skill at arms and their power over their households and estates to do violent and cruel acts, and this was an evil thing for all the land. So it came about, as you shall read in the tales in this book, that the good men of arms banded themselves together and made an order of chivalry which stretched in time over the length and breadth of all the civilized world. King Arthur was the first to gather the knights together, and many others followed in his way.

The fame and honor of this order of chivalry grew as the knights who made it did noble deeds and set themselves high ideals, until at last every boy of noble family was trained to be a knight; and what

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that means you will know better when you have read about some of the greatest knights that ever lived, and what brave deeds they did, and to what pledges they bound themselves. Gradually there came to be customs of knighthood which were the same in all lands, so that in the later days of chivalry every knight, whether he lived in a castle in the north of England or was a member of the household of the king of France, was trained in his youth in the same way. He was taken first when he was seven years old and made a page, so that while he was yet a child he should learn courtesy and obedience and the customs of knightly living. So it was that Roland lived in the court of Charlemagne and Bayard in the household of the Duke of Savoy. When he was fourteen the lad exchanged his page's dagger for the sword, and became an esquire, who should be taught skill at arms and good horsemanship and should gain strength of body and nobility of heart. In warlike days the esquire might often see much service, for he always attended his lord and master in arms, whether in travel or tourney or on the field of battle. That shall you see when you read of Roland and Ogier the Dane.

When the esquire was twenty-one, if he lived in days of peace and was deemed worthy, or at any time in his manhood if in days of strife he had performed some valiant feat in battle, he was made a knight; and this was the most solemn act of all, for by this deed he pledged himself to devote all his life to chivalry.

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The tales which you will read in this book are but a small part of the stories of noble knights and the deeds they did, since for more than ten hundred years every noble king and every valiant hero was a knight.

Of King Arthur and his Round Table there are many, many stories, for this was

“The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record.”

These you will read in the books wherein they are written. In the pages of history and romance you will learn of Guy of Warwick and of Richard the Lion-Hearted, of Louis of France and other famous knights. But here in this little book as well you shall read of knightly quests and strange adventures, and of many men who won fame and honor in those olden days

“When every morning brought a noble chance
And every chance brought out a noble knight.”

And I beseech you all, so many as shall see and read in this book, to keep these gracious and courteous and honorable acts of these knights in remembrance, and to follow after the same, for by oft reading of them you shall accustom yourselves to do knightly deeds, and so shall you win a good name and fame.

THE DRAWING OF THE SWORD

I

How Britain was without a king

In the olden days in Britain it came to pass that Uther the king died, and none but Merlin, the wise man and magician of the realm, knew that he left a son Arthur, who had been delivered to Merlin at his birth to be trained in all things by him. So for a long time the realm stood in great peril, for every lord that was mighty made himself stronger, and many strove to be king.

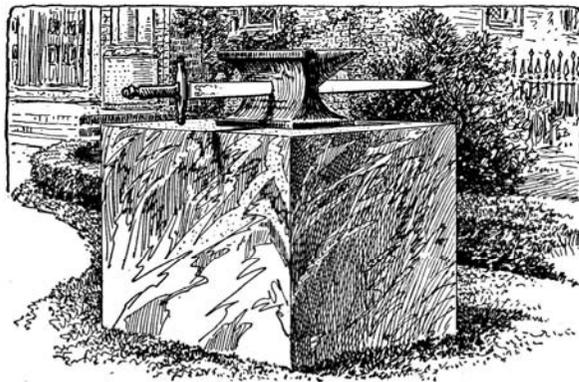
Then Merlin went to the Archbishop of Canterbury and counseled him to send for all the lords of the realm, and all the gentlemen of arms, be they earls or barons or knights, to come to London at Christmas time, and there God would show by a sign who was to be rightly king over all England. So the archbishop summoned them all. And many of them made clean their lives, that they might be more acceptable to God.

THE DRAWING OF THE SWORD

II

Of the marvel of the appearing of a sword

At Christmas time all the lords and earls and barons and knights came together from every side unto London to await the sign which should show who should be king. And behold, when they came out from their morning devotions, there in the churchyard they saw standing a great stone. It was of the same breadth and height on every side, and its appearance was like marble. And in the midst of it was an anvil of steel a foot high, and therein stood a fair sword, naked without sheath or guard, and about it were written letters of gold which said thus: “Whoso pulleth this sword out from this stone is rightwise king born of all England.”



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Then the people marveled, and all the lords went to gaze upon the stone and the sword. When they read the reading, some tried to pull the sword. One by one the lords and gentlemen of arms, such as would have been king, essayed to pull it. But none might stir the sword, nor even move it.

“He is not here,” said the archbishop, “that shall achieve the sword. But doubt not God will make him known. Now this is my counsel, that we choose ten knights, men of good fame, who shall guard this sword. And upon New Year’s Day let the barons make a joust and tournament in which every knight of the realm who will shall play. Perchance at that tourney it shall be made known who shall win the sword.” And so it was done as the archbishop said.

III

How Arthur pulled out the sword seven times and was made king

Upon New Year’s Day the barons rode to the field, and among them were Sir Hector, Sir Kay his son, and young Arthur, whom Merlin had caused to be brought up by Sir Hector as his own son. As they rode, Sir Kay found that he had no sword with him, for he had left it behind at his father’s lodging, and he prayed young Arthur to ride back for it.

THE DRAWING OF THE SWORD

“I will well,” said Arthur, and he rode swiftly back; but when he came to the house it was closed, so that he could not by any means make his way in, for the lady and all the servants were gone to see the jousting.

Then was Arthur angry and said to himself, “Nevertheless, my brother Kay shall not be without a sword this day. I will ride to the churchyard and take the sword that I saw there sticking in a stone.”

He rode with all speed to the churchyard, and alighted there and tied his horse to the stile. When he came to the stone he found no knights there, for they were at the jousting. So he grasped the sword by the handles, and lightly and fiercely pulled it out of the stone, and took his horse and rode till he came to Sir Kay, and delivered to him the sword.

When Sir Kay saw the blade that Arthur had brought him, he knew well that it was the sword of the stone. Straightway he rode to his father, Sir Hector, and said, “Sir, lo, here is the sword of the stone; wherefore I must be king of this land.”

But Sir Hector said to him, “Swear to me by thy knightly honor how thou camest by this sword.”

“Sir,” said Kay, “by my brother Arthur, for he brought it to me.”

“How gat ye this sword?” said Sir Hector to Arthur.

“Sir, I will tell you. When I came home for my brother’s sword, I found no one at home to deliver it to me. Yet, thought I, my brother Sir Kay should not

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be swordless. So I went in all haste and pulled out of the stone in the churchyard this blade which I had seen sticking there as I passed in the way."

"Found ye any knights about this sword?" said Sir Hector.

"None," said Arthur.

"Now," said Sir Hector, "I understand ye must be king of this land."

"Wherefore I?" asked Arthur, "and for what cause?"

"Because God will have it so; for there should never man have drawn out this sword but he that should rightwise be king of this land."

He led Arthur and Sir Kay to the churchyard, and Arthur read the words that were written there, which in his haste to get the sword he had not seen.

"Now," quoth Sir Hector, "let me see whether you can put the sword there as it was and pull it out again."

"That is no mastery," replied Arthur, and he put it into the stone and drew it out again.

"Once more put it in," commanded Sir Hector, and this time he himself essayed to pull it out, but he could neither move nor stir it.

"Do thou try," he said to Sir Kay. And anon Kay pulled at the sword with all his might, but it would not be moved.

THE DRAWING OF THE SWORD

“Now shalt thou essay,” said Sir Hector to Arthur.

“I will well,” said Arthur, and drew it out easily. That was the third time Arthur had drawn it forth.



Therewithal Sir Hector kneeled down before Arthur, and so likewise did Sir Kay.

“Alas!” quoth Arthur, “mine own dear father and brother, why kneel ye to me?”

“Nay, nay, my lord Arthur,” returned Sir Hector, “it is not so. I was never your father, nor of your blood, but I wot well ye are of an higher blood than ever I thought ye were.”

Then Sir Hector told him all, how Merlin had brought Arthur to him at his birth, and how he had

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nourished and trained him by Merlin's commandment.

Arthur was sore grieved when he understood that Sir Hector was not his father.

"Sir," said Hector, "will ye be to me a good and gracious lord when ye are king?"

"Else were I to blame," said Arthur, "for ye are the man in all the world I am most beholden to, and to my good lady and mother your wife, that hath fostered me and kept me as well and as tenderly as her own. And if ever it be God's will that I be king, as ye say, ye shall desire of me what I may do, and I shall not fail you. God forbid I should fail you while you and I live."

Therewithal they went all three unto the archbishop and told him how the sword was achieved and by whom. On Twelfth Day all the barons came to the churchyard, and he who wished essayed to take the sword. But there before them all there was none that could draw it save Arthur. Wherefore many lords were angry and said that it was a great shame unto them all and unto the realm to be governed by a boy, and he of no high blood. So it fell out that the crowning of a king was put off till Candlemas, when all the barons should meet there again. (But ten knights were ordained to watch the sword by day and by night. They set a pavilion over the stone, and five always watched.)

At Candlemas many more great lords came thither to win the sword, but none might prevail. And as Arthur did at Christmas, so he did at Can-

THE DRAWING OF THE SWORD

dlemas, and pulled out the sword easily. Again the barons were sore aggrieved, and yet again they delayed. As Arthur did at Candlemas, so did he once more at Easter. And still they would not crown him king. Then the archbishop of Canterbury and many of the best knights were full of indignation, and they made a guard of the most worthy knights, those whom King Uther had loved best and trusted most in his day, and all these, with many others, were always about Arthur day and night until the feast of Pentecost.

At the feast of Pentecost all manner of men essayed once more to pull out the sword, but still none might prevail but Arthur. He pulled it out before all the lords and common people who were there, wherefore all the people cried out, "We will have Arthur for our king; we will have no more delay, for we all see that it is God's will that he shall be our king, and he that holdeth out against him, him will we slay."

Thereupon they all kneeled down, both rich and poor, and cried Arthur mercy because they had delayed so long. And Arthur forgave them, and took the sword between his hands and offered it up on the altar where the archbishop was. So was he made knight by the best man that was there.

Anon, when Arthur had been made a knight, was the coronation made, and there did he swear to his lords and his people to be a true king, and to stand for justice from henceforth all the days of his life.

THE FOUNDING OF THE ROUND TABLE

“For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle and, ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land.”

All the kingdom was in distress when Arthur came to the throne, and many wrongs were done by petty lords who governed small portions of the land and cared not what happened to their people if they might wage war on each other and gain more power. Even King Uther and his father before him had never subdued all these lords and barons, for some lived in distant and lonely parts and were so powerful that none dared try his might against them. For many a day these barons and lords refused to acknowledge Arthur as their king, but ere a score of years had passed he had won them all and brought the whole land under his rule, both northward into Scotland, and westward into all of Wales, and to the south and to the east. As the chronicler tells it, “Many kings and lords made great war against him; but well Arthur overcame them all.”

That Arthur could bring all this about was due to the noble prowess of his knights of the Round

THE FOUNDING OF THE ROUND TABLE

Table. As soon as he became king he gathered about him all the best knights of the realm, both those whom he had cause to know were mighty and those whom Merlin deemed the best of all. They had been called the knighthood-errant of the realm, for they wandered through all the land and across the seas seeking adventure and taking part in tournaments and jousts or in any service that came in their path. There were many of these knights in England, but none had ever gathered them together. Each went his own way and did what seemed best in his own eyes.

King Arthur sent through the length and breadth of the land, summoning those whom he had chosen as the best of these knights to come together and form with him a brotherhood of knighthood, which should be called the Round Table. There were to be one hundred and fifty in all, but the king found only one hundred and twenty-eight who could fulfill all his wishes. When they came together they were the flower of all the knights of Christendom.

There in Camelot Arthur had built a mighty hall wherein the brotherhood should meet, and there had been set seats for all the knights. These seats the archbishop blessed in the presence of them all, and when it was done, and they sat silent before him, Merlin spoke to them, saying, "Fair sirs, ye must all arise and come to King Arthur for to do him homage."

And they arose and did their homage gladly, crying, "Be thou the king, and we will work thy will."

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THE FOUNDING OF THE ROUND TABLE

Then Arthur spoke to them as they stood before him, and bound them to himself with solemn vows. He charged them never to do outrage nor murder, and to flee treason as it were a plague; never to be cruel, but to give mercy, and always to aid women even unto death; to take up no battles for money, nor to have any part in wrongful quarrels. King Arthur made each knight lay his hands in his and swear

“To reverence the King, as if he were
His conscience, and his conscience as his King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honor his own word as if his God’s,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds.”

So strait were the vows by which he bound them, that when they rose after kneeling and repeating the words after him, some of the knights were pale as death, others flushed, and others stood half-dazed as though a vision had been granted them, so deeply were they moved. And when they turned to find their seats again, behold on every seat was written in letters of gold the name of him who should sit therein.

Ere they separated the king spoke to them of their land and all they might do for it.

With wise and cheerful words he set before them his thoughts and plans, and they responded

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gladly. And the archbishop blessed them as they parted, saying in solemn tones,

“May all this Order of the Table Round
Fulfill the boundless purpose of their King!”

Thus was formed this fellowship, this fair order of the Round Table, which was made up of the flower of the knighthood of the time, and was the beginning of a new, bright age when chivalry and honor should triumph over misery and wrong.

