

# CLIGÈS



CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES

*A Translation into English by*

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*With Illustrations by*

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**POETRY IN TRANSLATION**

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## ABOUT THIS WORK

Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian Romances, written in the late 12th-century, provide a vital link between the Classical Roman poets, Ovid in particular, and the later medieval world of Dante and Chaucer. The five major verse tales, namely *Érec and Énide* (c1170), *Cligès* (c1176), *Yvain or the Knight of the Lion* (before 1181), *Lancelot or the Knight of the Cart* (before 1181), and *Perceval* (before 1190), introduce motifs and plot elements that recur frequently in later literature. Well-structured, lively, and witty the tales were written for a sophisticated courtly audience, and the five stories considered together gave expression to the reality and the deeper ideals of French chivalry. Chrétien appears to have used themes culled from French and British sources, while characters such as Lancelot, and features such as the Holy Grail appear for the first time in European literature in his work. Here translated in rhyming couplets to mirror the original, rather than in unrepresentative prose, is a fresh treatment of one of France's and Europe's major poets.



LINES 1-44 CHRÉTIEN'S INTRODUCTION

**H**E who wrote Érec and Énide;  
And Ovid's commands, indeed,  
All in French, the Art of Love;  
Wrote the Shoulder-Bite; and of  
King Mark and Iseult the Fair;  
And the metamorphosis rare  
Of lapwing, swallow, nightingale;  
Here will begin another tale,  
Of a youth who in Greece did dwell,  
Of Arthur's lineage he, as well.  
But before I speak of him here,  
Of his father's life shall you hear.  
Whence he came, and his lineage,  
He was bold and of such courage,  
That, winning fame being his intent,  
He from Greece to England went,  
Which was known as Britain then.  
This tale, which I'll tell you again,  
We find inscribed, for all to see,  
In a book in the library  
Of Lord St Peter at Beauvais;  
From it comes a story, told today,  
Which history witnesses as true,  
The better to be believed by you.  
For from those books we possess  
We learn of ancient deeds no less,  
And of those centuries gone by.  
Our books inform us then, say I,  
That Greece gained supremacy  
In learning, and in chivalry:

Chivalry, it passed to Rome;  
As for high learning, its home  
Is now established in France.  
God grant that it may advance,  
And be so welcomed, on our part,  
That from France shall ne'er depart  
The honour now lodged with us.  
For God once granted it to others,  
Yet the Greeks and Romans none  
Remember, for their age is done,  
Quenched are the glowing embers...

### **LINES 45-134 ALEXANDER'S AUDIENCE WITH THE EMPEROR**

**CHRÉTIEN** now begins the story,  
As the book recounts the history,  
By telling of a mighty emperor,  
Possessed of wealth, and honour,  
And Greece and Constantinople.  
His empress, both wise and noble,  
Had borne the emperor two sons  
Such greatness showing in the one,  
Before the birth of his brother,  
That, if he had wished, the elder  
Could well have become a knight,  
And ruled the empire as of right.  
The elder's name was Alexander,  
And Alis that of the younger.  
Alexander named for the father,  
While Tantalus was their mother.  
Less time to empress Tantalus,  
And to the emperor, and Alis,  
I will devote than Alexander.

On Alexander I shall linger,  
Who, proud and strong in might,  
Scorned to become a knight  
In Greece, in his own region.  
Now, he had heard mention,  
Of King Arthur and his reign,  
And the lords he did maintain  
In his company, in those days,  
So his court was feared always,  
And famous in every country.  
Whatever the event might be,  
Whatever fortune might await,  
Nothing made him hesitate  
In his intent to go to Britain.  
But he must seek permission  
From his father if he would go  
To Britain, and Cornwall also.  
In order then his leave to win,  
With the emperor he must begin.  
Alexander, the brave and fair,  
Goes thus to the emperor  
To tell him of his fond desire:  
'I ask, dear father, for a favour,  
So that I might win great honour,  
And I request you grant it me,  
And that you do so promptly,  
If, that is, you are so willing.'  
The emperor considers nothing  
Ill can come of such a favour;  
Rather feels his son's honour  
Is something he should covet.  
Thinks it must surely profit  
Them. Thinks it? 'Twill do so,  
If his son's honour doth grow.  
'Fair son,' he said, 'I will grant

Your wish, now say, this instant,  
 What is it you'd have me do?  
 Winning what he asks, the youth,  
 Is delighted to have all granted,  
 Without declaring all he wanted,  
 Or saying where he desired to go.  
 'Sire,' he said, 'would you know  
 What, but now, you promised me?  
 I would have, of your treasury,  
 A pile of gold, silver, and then  
 Comrades from among your men,  
 Whom I may choose as I desire;  
 And issue forth from your empire,  
 To go and offer my service to,  
 The king who does Britain rule,  
 So he might dub me a knight.  
 I will never wear armour bright,  
 No helm on head, I swear to you,  
 A single day, my whole life through,  
 Unless King Arthur shall deign  
 To gird on my sword; in vain  
 Shall any other offer armour.'  
 Without a pause, the emperor  
 Replied: 'By God, say not so!  
 This country shall be yours also,  
 And Constantinople the wealthy;  
 Fault not my generosity,  
 When such a gift I give to you.  
 So tomorrow I shall crown you,  
 Dub you a knight of these lands.  
 All Greece will be in your hands,  
 And you'll receive from our lords  
 As indeed you should, the award  
 Of their allegiance, a fair prize.  
 Whoever scorns this is not wise.'

**LINES 135-168 ALEXANDER SCORNS A LIFE OF IDLENESS**

**T**HE youth, though led to know  
That after mass, on the morrow,  
His father would dub him knight,  
Insists he'll seek, wrong or right,  
Another country than his own:  
'If your promise you'd not disown,  
And grant me all I have declared,  
Give me robes, furs, grey and vair,  
Silken cloth, and handsome steeds,  
For before I might be dubbed indeed  
A knight, King Arthur I must serve;  
My powers are such I'd not deserve,  
To bear armour as yet, at his court.  
None will turn me from the thought,  
Neither by flattery nor by prayer,  
That I'm required to journey there,  
To that far country, to see the king  
And his lords, of whom men sing,  
Famed for their skill and courtesy.  
For many the man of high degree  
Fails to win what he might secure,  
Were he into the world to venture.  
Inaction and glory, it seems to me,  
Ill suit each other, being contrary,  
For the rich man idle all his days  
Can add but little to his praise:  
Sloth and fame are too diverse.  
He is a slave to wealth, or worse,  
Who spends his life in hoarding.  
Given strength, if fate is willing,

I would apply it all, dear father,  
To winning fame, by my labour.'

**LINES 169-234 THE EMPEROR SPEAKS  
IN PRAISE OF GENEROSITY**

**A**T these words, the emperor though,  
Feels no doubt both joy and sorrow;  
Joy on knowing his son's intent  
All on winning honour is bent,  
But sorrow, on the other hand,  
That he departs for another land.  
But given the promise he has made,  
And despite the woe he'll not evade,  
On him tis incumbent to agree.  
An emperor must show consistency.  
'Fair son,' he said, 'I must not fail,  
For I see the honour it doth entail,  
To grant you whatever you please.  
From my treasure you may seize  
Two barges full of gold and silver,  
But take care to be generous ever,  
Behaving well and with courtesy.'  
Now the youth is more than happy,  
That his father promises so much,  
Opens his treasury to him, as such,  
Honours him so with his command  
To dispense largesse, on every hand,  
While giving the reason for it freely:  
'Fair son,' as he said, 'believe me,  
Generosity ever proves the queen,  
Virtue illuminates with her sheen,  
Which is not hard for me to show;

Where is there any that you know,  
With great power or riches blessed,  
That is not blamed for meanness?  
Or, lacking in every other grace,  
Yet is for generosity praised?  
For largesse makes the gentleman,  
Which in truth naught else can,  
Not birth, knowledge, courtesy  
Possessions, or gentility,  
Nor strength, nor even chivalry,  
Nor skill, nor great authority,  
Beauty, or some other thing;  
But just as tis the rose we sing,  
As lovelier than other flowers,  
Freshest blown, in fairest hours,  
So where largesse is sought  
Above all virtues it holds court.  
And in a man the good it finds  
Is multiplied five hundred times,  
Should he acquit himself right well.  
Such its merit I could not tell  
You half of generosity's worth.  
The young man now goes forth,  
Possessed of all that he desired,  
Having, from his generous sire,  
All he requested now received.  
Yet the empress is much grieved,  
When she hears of the journey  
Her son intends, yet whoever he  
May cause grief and sorrow for,  
Or thinks it youthful folly, or  
Blames him, seeking to dissuade,  
Nonetheless his plans are made,  
His ships to be readied straight,  
Since he could no longer wait,

Or stay departure from the land,  
And that night, at his command,  
To be freighted, the whole fleet,  
With biscuit, wine and meat.

**LINES 235-338 THE JOURNEY TO THE COURT  
OF KING ARTHUR**

**T**HE ships were loaded in harbour,  
And, the next morning, Alexander,  
In high spirits visits the strand;  
With companions on either hand,  
Delighted at the coming voyage.  
They were escorted at each stage,  
By the empress and the emperor.  
Below the cliffs, in the harbour,  
The ships fully-manned are seen.  
The sea presents a tranquil scene,  
The breeze gentle, the sky serene.  
Farewells are exchanged between  
Himself, his father and mother,  
Her heart being heavy inside her.  
Alexander is the first to enter  
The skiff, then his vessel after;  
His companions quitting shore,  
In groups of two or three or more,  
Seek to embark without delay,  
The sails are set, anchors weighed,  
And now the fleet is poised to leave.  
Those left behind duly grieve  
At the departure of those who go,  
The ships with their eyes they follow,  
While they are able so to do.

And so as to extend their view,  
And gaze at them even longer,  
They all climb the path together  
That leads to a hill above the sea.  
From there they gaze mournfully.  
As long as the ships are in sight;  
Sadly their eyes on them alight,  
Concerned for them all, hoping  
That God will to safe haven bring  
The youths without risk or peril!  
They were at sea for all of April  
And the larger part of May,  
Without danger or much dismay,  
Reaching Southampton harbour.  
That day, between none and vespers,  
They cast anchor and went ashore.  
The young men had never before  
Known the discomfort of so long  
A voyage, and were pale and wan,  
The strongest and the healthiest  
Appearing weak and frail at best.  
Nevertheless they spoke joyfully  
Of having escaped from the sea,  
And arrived at that selfsame place.  
Because of their grievous state,  
At Southampton they remain  
That night, their joy maintain,  
Enquiring, on every hand,  
If the king is in England.  
He is at Winchester men say,  
And they too, early next day,  
If they rise at morning light  
And keep to the road aright.  
The young men rise at dawn,  
Ready themselves to be gone,

And once they are prepared  
From Southampton repair,  
Riding along till, by and by,  
Winchester they come nigh,  
Where the king has his court.  
The Greeks are there before  
The hour of prime that day.  
They dismount right away.  
The squires and horses stay  
In the yard below, while they  
Ascend the steps to behold  
The finest king the world holds,  
And ever was, or ere shall be.  
When Arthur doth them see,  
They all greatly delight him.  
But before they approach him  
Their cloaks they swiftly shed,  
Lest they are thought ill-bred.  
Thus, their cloaks discarding,  
They arrive before the king.  
All the knights admired them,  
For the young men pleased them,  
Being handsome and courtly,  
And thus they took them to be  
The sons of kings or counts,  
As they were, by all accounts;  
Very handsome for their years,  
And well-formed they appeared;  
And the robes they now wore  
Were all of one cloth and colour,  
Cut to the same shape and design.  
Twelve beside their lord align,  
Of whom I shall say no other  
Than of them none was finer,  
Yet modest, calm in everything;  
He stood uncloaked before the king,

All fine and handsome, in short.  
He knelt before the king and court,  
And, for love of him, his men  
Did all kneel beside him then.

**LINES 339-384 ARTHUR ACCEPTS ALEXANDER'S  
REQUEST TO JOIN HIS COURT**

**A**LLEXANDER salutes the king;  
His tongue is skilled in speaking  
Both nobly and wisely too:  
'King,' says he, 'if all be true  
In the reports beneath my hand,  
Then since God created man,  
There was never a king before  
With such grandeur as is yours.  
King, the renown you have won,  
Has led me to your court anon,  
To serve and to honour you;  
And I would remain here too  
And so be dubbed a knight  
If I should serve you aright,  
By your hand and by no other;  
And if you grant not that honour,  
I'll not be acclaimed a knight.  
If my service doth you delight  
Enough to grant me this thing,  
Retain me here, gracious king,  
And my companions also.'  
The king's reply came not slow:  
'Friend, I'll not say no to thee,  
Neither thee nor thy company;  
But welcome be to one and all,

For ye seem, both one and all,  
 To be of noble men the sons;  
 From whence?' 'From Greece we come.'  
 'From Greece.' 'Yes.' 'And thy father?'  
 'By my faith, sire, is the emperor.'  
 'And what is thy name, fair friend?'  
 'Alexander was I so christened,  
 And holy salt and oil received,  
 Baptism, and Christianity.'  
 'Alexander, most willingly,  
 Dear friend, shall I retain thee,  
 With utmost joy and pleasure,  
 For thou dost me great honour  
 In coming thus to my court.  
 I'd have thee honoured in aught,  
 As vassals, true, wise, and free;  
 Thou art too long upon thy knees:  
 Rise again, as I now demand,  
 And, from this hour, command  
 My court here and my person,  
 To a fair haven art thou come.'

### LINES 385-440 ARTHUR SETS OUT FOR BRITTANY

**T**HEN the Greeks rose, delighted  
 That the king had thus invited  
 Them in such a manner to stay;  
 Alexander had done well that day.  
 He now lacks nothing he desires,  
 Nor is a lord there, it transpires,  
 Who does not welcome him here.  
 He, who never too proud appears,  
 Nor vaunts himself in boastful strain,

Becomes acquainted with Lord Gawain,  
And with the other lords, one by one,  
And is well-received by everyone;  
But my lord Gawain likes him so,  
He is his friend and comrade also.  
The Greeks now lodge in the town,  
With a burgher of good renown,  
In the finest lodgings anywhere.  
Alexander had transported there  
Rich goods from Constantinople;  
For to obey the emperor's counsel,  
Above all, was his great intent;  
That all his efforts should be bent  
On giving, with an open hand,  
Such was the emperor's command.  
Therefore he took the greatest care,  
To maintain fine lodgings there,  
Giving and spending liberally,  
As is proper among the wealthy,  
And as his heart counselled too.  
The whole court wonders, true,  
Where he got such riches, for he  
Grants fine mounts to all he sees,  
Horses he brought from out his land.  
Such are those tasks, on every hand,  
That, in their service, he has done,  
The king treats him with affection,  
As does the queen, and all others.  
Now, at this time, King Arthur  
Desired to voyage to Brittany,  
And his knights, in full assembly,  
He gathered, their counsel to seek  
As to who for him might speak,  
In his absence, and rule England,  
To guard and maintain the land.

By the counsel gathered together,  
 The task was given to none other  
 It seems than Angres of Windsor,  
 For they considered none truer,  
 And no more loyal a count living  
 In the wide realms of the king.  
 Once the rule lay in those hands,  
 They sail, at the king's command,  
 With the queen, and all her ladies.  
 They heard the news in Brittany,  
 Of the king's and his lords' coming,  
 And met it with great rejoicing.

#### LINES 441-540 SOREDAMORS AND THE PAINS OF LOVE

**N**o youth or maid doth embark  
 To sail in King Arthur's barque,  
 Apart from Alexander alone,  
 And one of the queen's own  
 Maids, named Soredamors,  
 Who was disdainful of Amor;  
 For she had never heard tell of  
 Any man she might deign to love,  
 Whatever his beauty or prowess,  
 Or power, or birth; nevertheless  
 This maid was so lovely and fair,  
 She might have learned anywhere  
 All the manner and ways of Love,  
 If it had pleased her such to prove;  
 Yet she never granted Love leave.  
 Now Love will make her grieve,  
 And take revenge on her, I own,  
 For her pride, and the scorn shown

By her to Amor, every day.  
Love has turned his bow her way,  
And pierced her with his arrow,  
Oft she's pale, oft in sorrow,  
And is in love despite herself.  
She can scarce prevent herself  
From gazing now on Alexander;  
Yet must hide it from her brother,  
Beware of him, my lord Gawain.  
Dearly she pays, atones in pain,  
For all her pride and her disdain.  
Love has heated a bath, her bane,  
That warms her, yet causes harm,  
Now a wound, and now the balm,  
Now to be wished, and now refused.  
Her eyes themselves she accused:  
'You, my eyes, have betrayed me,  
You've turned my heart against me,  
Which used to be so true indeed,  
But now I'm grieved by what I see.  
Grieved? Nay, it pleases utterly.  
And if I see what is grief to me,  
Can I then not master my sight?  
My powers must then be slight,  
Such that I am to be despised,  
If I cannot so command my eyes,  
As to turn my gaze elsewhere.  
I can so guard myself, I aver,  
From Amor, who'd control me:  
Heart's unhurt, if eyes don't see.  
No harm will come if I gaze not,  
Nor pleas or requests have I got:  
If he aims not, shall I take aim?  
If his beauty my eyes doth claim,  
And my eyes accept the same,

Shall I for that kindle a flame?  
 Nay, for that would be to lie.  
 He should not blame me, say I,  
 No more have I a right to moan:  
 None can love by the eyes alone.  
 And where is their criminality,  
 If they gaze at what pleases me?  
 Where the sin, whose the fall?  
 Should I blame them? Not at all.  
 Who then? Myself, their guard.  
 There is naught my eyes regard  
 Unless it doth my heart delight.  
 Nor should my heart think right  
 Aught that brings unhappiness.  
 Yet its desire yields me distress.  
 Distress? Then I am stark mad,  
 If what it wants makes me sad.  
 Desire, that harms me, to ban  
 I should attempt if I only can.  
 If I can? Mad fool, confess:  
 Little the power that I possess  
 If over myself I have no power!  
 Does Love set me, at this hour,  
 On a path where I'm sent astray?  
 Let him tempt others that way,  
 But I for him gave never a sigh,  
 I'll not be his, nor ever was I,  
 Nor will I seek his friendship.  
 So with herself she's in conflict,  
 Now love speaks, and now hate.  
 Such is her doubt in this debate,  
 She knows not what path to take:  
 A defence against love to make,  
 Or pursue her love for another?  
 God, she knows not Alexander  
 Is thinking of her, for his part!

Amor equally grants each heart  
Such a share as to it falls due.  
He treats each of them fairly too,  
Each loves and desires the other,  
And if each knew, of that other,  
What was the other's true desire,  
Here is a right true love entire!  
But her wish he could not guess,  
Nor she the cause of his distress.

**LINES 541-574 THE QUEEN FAILS TO DETECT  
THE SIGNS OF LOVE**

**T**HE queen takes note of them,  
Who, oft, in considering them,  
Finds them blanched and pale.  
She knows not why they ail,  
What the true cause might be,  
Except this voyaging by sea.  
I think she would have guessed  
If not for what I now suggest,  
That the presence of the sea  
Blinded her to love, utterly;  
They are at sea, all too real  
Is the bitter pain they feel.  
Of the three; the sea, love, pain;  
On the sea she puts the blame.  
For love and pain both accuse  
The sea, which is their excuse,  
And held to be the guilty party;  
As the innocent, we often see,  
Are blamed for another's sin.  
On the sea the queen doth pin

All the guilt, and all the shame.  
 But she was wrong to blame  
 The sea which proves guiltless;  
 Soredamors was in distress  
 Still, when they'd reached port.  
 As for the king, as all report,  
 The Bretons right joyfully  
 Welcomed him, and willingly  
 Served him as their liege lord.  
 Of Arthur I will say no more,  
 Nor of his deeds, in this place.  
 Rather shall you hear me trace  
 How they're troubled by Amor,  
 Those on whom he wages war.

### LINES 575-872 ALEXANDER IN LOVE

**F**OR her Alexander loves and sighs,  
 She who for love of his form dies;  
 Yet he knows and will know it not  
 Until great grief has proved his lot,  
 And many a pain he has suffered.  
 For love of her the queen he served  
 Faithfully, and the maids in waiting,  
 But her of whom he's ever thinking  
 He dare not speak to or address.  
 And if she but dared to express  
 The right she thinks to possess,  
 Willingly she would so confess,  
 But she dare not, must not rather;  
 Of what each detects in the other,  
 They cannot speak, nor can they act.  
 Yet such works perversely, in fact,

Increases and inflames their love.  
All such lovers this matter prove:  
With gazing they feast their eyes,  
If nothing more can be realised,  
And think, because that pleases so  
From which their loth doth grow,  
That it must help, though it harm,  
Just as those who seek to warm  
Themselves at a fire, burn more  
Than those who the flames ignore.  
This love waxes and grows greater,  
Yet each seems shy of the other,  
So much is secret and concealed,  
Neither flame nor smoke's revealed  
From the coals beneath the embers.  
Yet the fire no less heat renders,  
For those coals no cooler prove  
Beneath the embers than above.  
Both of them are in great anguish,  
Yet so none knows of their wish  
Nor their trouble doth perceive,  
Both are forced to deceive,  
By feigning and self-restraint,  
Yet at night issues the plaint,  
That alone each doth create.  
Of Alexander first I'll state  
How he complains and vents  
His grief. For Love presents  
She who prompts his distress,  
Who stole his heart no less,  
To mind, grants no rest at all;  
For with delight he doth recall  
Her beauty, and her sweet aspect,  
She whom he doth not expect  
Ever to bring him any good.

‘Mad, I hold myself, and should,  
 He says: ‘For truly, so I must be,  
 Who my thoughts dare not speak,  
 Though that proves worse for me.  
 I have set my thoughts on folly.  
 Better that I conceal my thought  
 Than be called a fool for naught.  
 What I wish then will be hidden?  
 Concealing what grieves me then,  
 Shall I not dare to seek succour  
 For whatever brings me sorrow?  
 A fool is he who for his grief  
 Seeks no healing and no relief,  
 If he can find them somewhere.  
 Yet many seek for their welfare  
 By chasing after what they wish  
 Who find but sorrow at the finish.  
 And he who of health despairs,  
 Why seek for counsel anywhere?  
 All such effort would be in vain.  
 I feel the cause of all my pain.  
 Is such that I cannot be healed  
 By any herb the earth doth yield,  
 By root, or draught, or medicine.  
 We find not a cure for everything.  
 My wound lies so deep within  
 For this there is no medicine.  
 What none? I think I tell a lie.  
 When first I felt this illness, I  
 Might, if I had dared to speak,  
 Have found it possible to seek  
 One who might have treated me;  
 And yet would only reproach me,  
 And I doubt would attend on me,  
 Nor would ever accept the fee.  
 No wonder then if I’m dismayed,

I am sick indeed, yet cannot say  
What malady now grips me,  
Nor whence comes this misery.  
Cannot? I can. I think I know:  
Amor hath dealt me this blow.  
What? Can Amor bring care,  
Who is so gentle and debonair?  
For I used to think there naught  
In him, but goodness brought.  
Yet find him filled with enmity,  
Only those that know him see  
All the tricks that he doth play.  
A fool is he who'll with him stay;  
He always seeks to wound his own;  
By God, his tricks are all ill-sown.  
It is poor sport to play with him,  
I think he'd harm me, on a whim.  
What shall I do? Should I retreat?  
I think indeed that might be meet,  
But know not how it might be done.  
If he chides and chastens me anon  
In order to deliver his teaching,  
Should I disdain his preaching?  
He's a fool disdains his master.  
I should keep and cherish rather  
All Love doth teach and preach:  
Great delight I might thus reach.  
Yet he strikes me, I'm in dismay –  
Without wound or blow this day,  
Doth thou complain? In error surely? –  
Nay, he hurt me so profoundly  
That his arrow pierced my heart,  
Nor has he yet retrieved his dart. –  
How did he pierce thy body when  
No wound hath appeared to open?

Tell me now, for I wish to pry!  
 How did he enter? – Through the eye. –  
 Through the eye? Both are whole! –  
 Because the eyes were not his goal,  
 For the pain I have is in my heart. –  
 Then tell me why if Love's dart  
 Passed through the eye it is not  
 Blinded, or some wound has got?  
 If it entered through the eye, again,  
 Why doth the heart then complain?  
 When the eye itself does not do so,  
 Yet it received the very first blow? –  
 Herewith, I can the reason share,  
 The eye is in no manner aware,  
 Nor influences anything other,  
 But acts as the heart's mirror;  
 In and out that mirror do pass  
 Without wounding or trespass,  
 The flames that fire the heart.  
 Is not the heart set there apart,  
 Just as a lighted candle is set  
 Within a lantern, shining yet?  
 If the candle's removed quite,  
 Then the lantern gives no light.  
 But while the candle is alight  
 So the lantern repels the night,  
 And the flame that shines within  
 Does no harm, commits no sin.  
 Furthermore, a piece of glass,  
 Strong and solid, will let pass  
 A ray of sunlight, that on it falls  
 Without causing it harm at all;  
 Yet will never a scene transmit  
 Unless that light illumines it,  
 Enabling one to see the view.  
 Know this same thing to be true,

Of eye, and lantern, and glass.  
Light through the eye doth pass,  
Where the heart is accustomed to  
See itself mirrored, and the view:  
Many a diverse shape, and hue,  
Here a green, there dark blue,  
Here a crimson, there violet,  
Some it likes, some scorns as yet,  
Some holds vile, and others dear:  
Yet many things do fair appear  
When perceived in that glass,  
Which deceive the heart alas.  
I and mine were so deceived,  
For my heart there perceived  
A ray by which I was smitten,  
Which, within it, did brighten,  
And thereby, my heart fails me;  
A dear friend, it treats me badly,  
And for my enemies deserts me.  
Accuse it I might, of felony,  
For great wrong has it done me.  
Three friends I thought to see,  
My heart, and my two eyes both,  
Yet it seems that me they loathe.  
By God, who will my friend be,  
If these three prove my enemy,  
Who are mine, and yet my death?  
My servants scorn me, at a breath,  
And do exactly as they please,  
Without considering my ease.  
I know this saying to be true,  
From these who wrong me, too,  
That a good man's love may perish  
Through bad servants he doth nourish.  
Whoever bad servants tolerates,

Will weep for it, soon or late;  
 They'll not fail to break his heart.  
 Now I will tell you how the dart,  
 That came into my possession,  
 The arrow, is made and fashioned.  
 But I fear that I may fail to do so,  
 For the fashioning of it is all so  
 Subtle, no marvel if I fail.  
 Yet I'll endure whate'er travail  
 It takes to tell how it appears:  
 Nock and fleches fit so near  
 Naught can separate the pair  
 But the mere breadth of a hair,  
 As if they were made to mate;  
 The nock smooth and straight  
 It might be employed with no  
 Alteration, for aught I know.  
 The fletches are of that hue,  
 As if they were gilded anew,  
 But gilded will scarcely do,  
 For the flights, and this is true,  
 Than any gold are yet more fair;  
 The flights are of golden hair,  
 I saw on board the other day;  
 This the dart that doth me slay.  
 God what a treasure to possess!  
 He whom this prize might bless  
 How could he countenance envy  
 For aught else that he might see?  
 For my part, this oath I offer,  
 That I could desire no other.  
 I'd not lose nock and feathers  
 For Antioch and all its treasures.  
 And given I prize both those two,  
 Who could estimate the value  
 Of what lies beyond them there;

All that is so sweet and fair,  
All that is so good and precious,  
That I am eager and desirous,  
Of gazing once again, outright,  
On a brow God made so bright  
Naught is peer to it, not glass,  
Nor emerald, even, nor topaz?  
Yet that brow cannot out-vie  
The clear brightness of her eye.  
He who of her eyes hath sight,  
Thinks twin candles are alight.  
And whose lips have the grace  
And talent, to describe her face,  
So well-formed, the clear visage,  
Where, as rose and lily engage,  
The rose doth the lily control,  
To better illuminate the whole?  
Or into speech her lips distil  
God created, with such skill  
None can gaze on them awhile  
Without thinking that they smile?  
And behind those lips the teeth  
So closely set, above, beneath,  
They seem to be formed as one,  
Where, to enhance her person,  
Nature has added a touch of art,  
To be seen when those lips part,  
And all suppose the teeth to be  
Formed of pale silver or ivory.  
There would be so much to say  
If every feature I would portray  
In regard to her chin, or ears,  
No great wonder if it appear  
Some little thing I fail to note.  
I'll simply say of her throat,

Than crystal it is far brighter;  
 The flesh is four times whiter,  
 Forming her neck, than ivory.  
 Just so much there I could see,  
 Visibly, of her naked breast,  
 And what was bare, I attest,  
 Was whiter than the driven snow.  
 I had assuaged all my sorrow  
 Had I viewed the shaft entire,  
 If I had, I might then aspire  
 Most willingly, to enlighten you  
 As to its nature, and speak true,  
 But I did not, nor am I guilty  
 Of relating what I did not see.  
 At that time Love showed me  
 The nock and the flights only.  
 For in its quiver was the arrow,  
 In, that is, the shift and robe,  
 Which clothed the maid, I say.  
 By God, this the ill that slays,  
 The dart, by which I'm made  
 All too wretchedly enraged;  
 A wretch am I to be so disturbed.  
 Never a straw shall be stirred,  
 By mistrust, or quarrel thereby,  
 Never, between Amor and I.  
 Now let him do with me as he  
 Does with his own; willingly,  
 For I wish it, and it pleases me.  
 Never, I hope, may this malady  
 Leave me, but remain forever;  
 And let health return, if ever,  
 Only if it rise from the same  
 Source whence the illness came.

LINES 873-1046 SOREDAMORS IN LOVE

**G**REAT was Alexander's murmur,  
But no less does the maiden utter  
Her like complaint, without rest,  
Finding herself in great distress,  
And wins no sleep all that night.  
Amor within her heart doth fight,  
Wages a battle that doth molest,  
And greatly disturb her breast.  
It causes such anguish and pain,  
She weeps and doth complain,  
Tosses and turns, to no avail,  
So that her heart almost fails.  
And when she has thus moaned,  
And has sobbed so, and groaned,  
And tossed about so, and sighed,  
Then she considers, deep inside,  
What manner of man he might be  
For whom Love sends her misery.  
And when she has eased her pain  
By seeking all of this to explain,  
She stretches herself, turns about,  
And thinks it folly, nary a doubt,  
All the pain and thought she had.  
Then she takes a course less sad,  
Saying: 'Fool, what do I care  
If he is well-born and debonair,  
Wise, and courteous, and brave?  
All that is to his honour, the knave.  
And as for his beauty what care I?  
Let his beauty, with him, go by.

Yet if it do, tis despite my wish,  
 For I'd not see him lose by this.  
 Lose? Nay, I'd not wish aught gone.  
 If he had the wisdom of Solomon,  
 And Nature had granted the man  
 All the beauty and more she can  
 On the human form ever bestow,  
 And God granted me power so  
 Great that I might eclipse it all,  
 I would not wish such to befall.  
 But I'd make him, if I knew how,  
 Wiser and fairer still, I vow.  
 By my faith, him I cannot hate.  
 Am I then his friend? No, wait;  
 No more am I than any other's.  
 Why on him more than another,  
 Dwell, if he's no more pleasing?  
 I know not: all seems confusing.  
 I've never thought so much, I'm sure,  
 On any man in this world before.  
 For I wish to see him every day,  
 And never turn my eyes away;  
 Seeing him gives such delight.  
 Can this be love? Well it might.  
 My sighs to him I'd not address,  
 Did I not love him above the rest.  
 So, I love him. Now, tis agreed.  
 Then I may do whate'er I please.  
 True, if by him it is not denied!  
 Oh, my intention is ill-advised;  
 Yet Love seized me so utterly,  
 I am beside myself with folly.  
 No defence will help me aught,  
 If I must suffer Love's assault.  
 And I have acted so prudently,  
 Defended myself so carefully,

Was never to his will aligned,  
Yet now appear only too kind.  
What mercy would Love show  
To me if my service, though,  
And my goodwill were denied?  
By force he humbles my pride,  
And I must act at his pleasure.  
Now I'd love, now he is master;  
Now Love will teach me...What?  
I must serve aright but, as to that,  
Of all his teachings I'm apprised,  
In his service, I'm already wise;  
None could find fault with me.  
Of more learning I've no need.  
Love would wish, so would I,  
That I am wise, without pride,  
And approachable and kind,  
For one alone I have in mind.  
Love all then for the sake of one?  
I should be pleasant to everyone,  
But Love does not require of me  
That I am a true lover to all I see.  
Love teaches only what is fine.  
Not for nothing this name is mine,  
Of Soredamors, for I must be  
In love, that loved I should be,  
For I'll prove by my own name  
That Love is found in that same.  
Something, then, is signified  
By the first part, here inside,  
Displaying the colour of gold;  
The finest is golden I'm told.  
I like my name all the better,  
In that within it is the colour  
The purest of ores possesses;

And the latter part expresses  
 Love; whoever addresses me,  
 By my name, stirs Amor in me:  
 And the one part gilds the other  
 With its bright golden colour,  
 And therefore doth Soredamors  
 Mean 'turned to gold by Amor'.  
 A layer of gold is not so fine  
 As that which on me do shine.  
 Greatly has Love honoured me,  
 With his own self gilding me.  
 And so I shall take great care  
 To show his gold everywhere  
 And complain of Love never.  
 Now I love, and will forever.  
 Whom? True, a fine question!  
 Amor will give me direction,  
 For none other will I love so.  
 What care he, if he doth not know?  
 If I myself do not so advise?  
 What future, if I do not apprise  
 Him of it; who aught require  
 Must request what they desire.  
 What, must I of him request  
 Love? No. Why? Has ever yet  
 Woman pursued such a plan,  
 Requesting love of any man,  
 Except she showed great folly?  
 Folly were mine then, certainly,  
 If I were a matter so to broach  
 That would earn me reproach;  
 If he learnt it from me, I mean,  
 He'd hold me in low esteem,  
 And would reproach me for  
 Soliciting his love, I'm sure.  
 May love act never so basely

As to see me act prematurely  
And lower myself in his eyes.  
God, how will he be apprised  
Of love, since I cannot speak?  
As yet I have no reason to seek  
Him out, I've barely suffered,  
I'll wait till he has gathered,  
The truth, for I'll not tell it.  
He is surely bound to see it,  
If he's ever met with Amor,  
Or heard aught of him before.  
Heard? A foolish thing to say.  
Love offers not so easy a way  
That by hearing we grow wise  
Without experience to advise.  
For I learnt, I know it well,  
Naught, as far as I can tell,  
From eloquence or flattery,  
Though in that school you see  
I've been flattered many a day.  
And yet I stood aloof always.  
My punishment: I know love now  
More than the ox doth the plough.  
But one thing I'd hate to prove:  
That he has never been in love.  
If he loves not, nor has ever  
Been in love, I'll seek forever  
To sow seed where none will grow,  
In the sea, or in the embers' glow.  
Now I must suffer until I see  
Whether I can draw him to me  
By hints and verbal subtlety,  
Until he knows with certainty  
That I love him, and may dare  
To ask me. So, no more despair.  
For I love him; his will I be.  
I'll love him if he loves not me.'



*'For I love him; his will I be.  
I'll love him if he loves not me'*  
Idylls of the King (p108, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
*Internet Archive Book Images*

**LINES 1047-1066 ARTHUR IS ADVISED OF  
UNREST IN ENGLAND**

**T**HUS they complained, he and she,  
Unknown to each other, privately;  
By day unhappy, by night worse;  
And this distress they rehearsed  
Some length of time in Brittany,  
Till summer had vanished wholly.  
At the very beginning of October  
Messengers arrived from Dover,  
Sent from London and Canterbury,  
Bearing news to the king that he  
Thought most troubling indeed.  
The messengers advised that he  
Might stay too long in Brittany;  
He whom he thought trustworthy,  
Who of his realm had command,  
Had summoned up a warlike band  
Of his vassals, and his friends,  
And would London so defend  
The city would rebel, they learn,  
At the hour of the king's return.

**LINES 1067-1092 THE KING GATHERS HIS KNIGHTS TOGETHER**

**W**HEN the king heard their news,  
He summoned his knights anew,  
And, full of discontent, the better

To rouse them to seize the traitor,  
Cried that they were, upon his life,  
The cause of this trouble and strife,  
And that it was their fault entirely,  
For it was on their advice that he  
Had entrusted all his realm to one  
Who now proved worse than Ganelon.  
And there was not a single knight  
Who did not think him in the right,  
For he had followed their counsel.  
The man must be outlawed; well  
You may know this, for a surety,  
There was never a town or city  
Would prevent the traitor's body  
Being dragged forth and forcibly.  
And so they all assured the king  
Swore on oath, they would bring  
Him that traitor to his kingdom,  
Or would sacrifice their fiefdoms.  
The king, throughout all Brittany  
Has it proclaimed, full widely,  
None who bears arms can stay,  
But must follow him that day.

**LINES 1093-1146 ARTHUR AGREES TO  
KNIGHT ALEXANDER AND HIS MEN**

**A**ll of Brittany now was stirred.  
Never had there been seen or heard  
Such an army as Arthur gathered.  
And when the fleet sailed together  
It seemed a whole world set to sea;  
The waves they swelled invisibly

All the vessels covered them so.  
There will be war; that we know.  
And by the commotion it seemed  
With all Brittany the waves teemed.  
Now the fleet has crossed the sea,  
And all the swiftly gathered army  
Are there encamped upon the shore.  
Alexander thought to go before  
The king, and ask him outright  
If he would dub him a knight.  
For in that land he doth aspire  
That signal honour to acquire.  
He takes his companions along,  
Driven by what spurs him on,  
To achieve what is in his mind.  
Before the king's tent they find  
The king seated there, and he,  
Seeing the Greeks, instantly  
Summons them to him, and says:  
'Gentlemen, come, without delay  
Tell me what brings you here?  
Alexander for all speaks clear,  
And tells the king of his wish.  
'I come,' he says, 'to request this,  
As I should, of my liege lord,  
My men and I being in accord,  
That you do make us knights.'  
The king replies: 'With delight,  
I grant it, and with no delay,  
Since you request it this day.'  
At his command, to the king  
Arms for thirteen they bring.  
Then, again at his command,  
Each by his share doth stand;  
The king grants each his need,

Fine armour, and a fine steed.  
 Each man receives his own.  
 His twelve men are as one,  
 In arms, clothing and steed,  
 But Alexander's share indeed  
 Proves of greater value still  
 And if it were sold might well  
 Be worth the twelve together.  
 They undress beside the water,  
 And bathe and wash in the sea,  
 Not asking that any vessel be  
 Heated for them, this they dub  
 Their bath, all the sea their tub.

### LINES 1147-1196 THE QUEEN'S GIFT OF A SHIRT

**O**F this, the queen is well aware;  
 Wishing naught ill to the fair.  
 She love, esteems, values him,  
 A kind service would do him;  
 Yet tis greater than she knows:  
 Through all her coffers she goes;  
 There is found, freshly laid,  
 A white silk shirt, finely made,  
 All soft, and delicately woven.  
 Not a thread but was proven  
 Gold or silver, you understand.  
 Soredamors had set her hand  
 To the stitching, her and there,  
 And a strand of her own hair,  
 With the gold had interleaved,  
 At the neck and on the sleeves,  
 So as to see if she could find

Any man who, in that design,  
Could with his eye discover  
That one differed from the other;  
For as bright as the gold, there,  
Shone her thread of golden hair.  
Soredamors had taken it to her;  
The queen sent it to Alexander.  
By God, what joy he'd have seen  
If he had known what the queen,  
Now sent by messenger to him!  
And how joyful she'd have been  
Who had interwoven her hair,  
If she had been present there,  
To see it handed to her lover.  
That would have comforted her,  
She would have cared far less  
For what was left than the tress  
That Alexander now possessed.  
Yet he and she nothing guessed:  
Tis pity that both knew it not.  
The messenger goes to the port  
Where the youth is now bathing,  
He the queen's gift doth bring,  
And the shirt to him presents.  
He delights in what she has sent,  
Holding it in more esteem  
In that it is from the queen.  
But if he had known the rest,  
The shirt he now possessed  
He'd have loved even more.  
Nor in exchange would take  
The whole world for its sake.

**LINES 1197-1260 THE TRAITOR RETREATS FROM  
LONDON TO WINDSOR**

**A**LLEXANDER delays no more  
Dresses himself there on the shore,  
And when he's dressed and ready  
Goes to the king's tent, swiftly,  
Together with his companions.  
The queen it appears made one;  
For she herself also attended,  
To see these knights presented,  
Newly-made, all fine figures  
Of men, and so considered,  
Though the handsomest of all  
Was Alexander, fair and tall.  
Knights they are, I speak no more  
Of them but of the king ashore,  
Who with his host to London came.  
There people mostly call his name,  
Though against him some do rise.  
Count Angres, whose force comprised  
Whoever was drawn to his side,  
And by gifts and promises allied,  
When he had gathered his array,  
By night, silently slipped away,  
Lest he be betrayed by all who,  
Hating him, might prove untrue;  
But, before he made his retreat,  
Stripped London, street by street,  
Of its provisions, gold and silver,  
All shared among his followers.  
To the king the news was told

That the traitor had fled the fold,  
And with him all of his army,  
After having stripped the city  
Of so much of its provisions  
All destitute were its citizens.  
And the king at once replied  
All ransom would be denied  
The traitor, and if he should  
Be taken, as he surely would,  
Then he would be hanged indeed.  
Now the whole host proceed,  
To Windsor, with fine display.  
However it may be these days,  
If any did then its walls defend  
No siege could find a ready end.  
The traitor its defence secured,  
Once his treachery was abroad,  
With double walls and a fosse,  
And those walls he reinforced,  
Shored with timbering, behind  
To stop their being undermined.  
So he worked with great intent,  
June, July, and August spent  
In building many a barricade,  
Drawbridges too they made,  
Dug moats, built buttresses,  
And forged iron portcullises,  
And a huge square stone tower  
Raised, and never for an hour  
Gated it through threat or fright.  
The castle stands on a height,  
Where the Thames runs below.  
Arthur halted beside its flow  
Only finding the time that day  
To pitch his tents where they lay.

## LINES 1261-1348 THE FIGHT AT THE FORD

**T**HE tents stood in the meadow,  
 And the Thames was all aglow  
 With pavilions red and green,  
 For the sun so fired that scene  
 The colours in the water shone,  
 Fully a league or more along.  
 Men from the castle they spied  
 Disporting by the river-side,  
 Their lances in their hands,  
 A targe at the breast and  
 Carrying no other weapon.  
 And this it seems was done  
 To show they had little fear,  
 Undefended, yet quite near.  
 Now, Alexander stood apart,  
 Watching them, for his part,  
 As they sported to and fro.  
 Longing to attack the foe,  
 He called his companions  
 Naming them, one by one:  
 First was Cornix, he loved dearly,  
 Then Licorides the Doughty,  
 With Nabunal of Mucene,  
 Acorionde then, I ween,  
 From Athens, then Ferolin  
 Of Salonica, following him,  
 Calcedor the African, as well,  
 Parmenides, and Francagel,  
 Torin the Strong, and Pinagel,  
 And Neruis, and Neriolis,

'My lords,' he said, 'hear this:  
I desire, with shield and lance,  
To seek a close acquaintance,  
With these who are before us.  
For, see, they clearly scorn us,  
And hold us in small esteem,  
Sporting there beside the stream,  
And all unprepared to fight.  
We are new-dubbed knights,  
And have not so maintained  
Against knight or yet quintain.  
We have, for too long, in fact,  
Retained each new lance intact.  
What use are our shields today  
That nor dent nor split display?  
All useless possessions quite,  
Except for a battle, for a fight.  
So let us pass the ford, swiftly,  
And attack.' 'We'll not fail thee!'  
The twelve reply, 'May God avail,  
No friends to thee those that fail.'  
Each their sword they now gird on,  
Saddles and girths, every one,  
They tighten; mount, and then,  
Shields about their neck again,  
Gather each their lance in hand,  
Hung with bright pennants, and  
All gallop to the ford together;  
While those against them lower  
Their lances, ride to the attack.  
And now the Greeks fight back,  
Not avoiding or sparing them  
Nor yielding a foot to them.  
They each struck home so fiercely,  
None so strong, of that enemy,



'Of the skirmish and of the blows;  
Great were the battle I suppose'  
Idylls of the King (p72, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
*Internet Archive Book Images*

As could avoid being dismounted;  
Yet their skill was not discounted,  
Their experience nor their bravery.  
The Greeks struck their blows cleanly,  
And thirteen of the foe unhorsed.  
The news spread among the force  
Of the skirmish and of the blows;  
Great were the battle I suppose,  
If the foe had stood their ground.  
Throughout the camp men found  
Their weapons and, at the sight,  
Raised a cry, but the foe took flight,  
Seeing no virtue in remaining.  
All the Greeks closely pursuing,  
With sword and lance, in a trice,  
Through many a neck did slice;  
Alexander the main prize won,  
Taking prisoner, on his own  
Account, four knights thereby.  
And the dead about them lie,  
Whom they have beheaded,  
And others now sorely wounded.

**LINES 1349-1418 SOREDAMORS DEBATES  
HOW TO ADDRESS ALEXANDER**

**A**ALEXANDER, out of courtesy  
Grants the results of his chivalry,  
His first prisoners, to the queen.  
Not desiring them to be seen  
By the king, who'll hang them all.  
Now the queen holds them in thrall  
Well-guarded, closed in prison,

Being men charged with treason.  
 Yet the king proves dissatisfied,  
 And sends to the queen, beside,  
 Ordering her to speak with him,  
 Not withhold traitors from him,  
 For those men she must render  
 Him, or now prove an offender.  
 The queen came to see the king,  
 And as she was there speaking  
 Of those traitors, as she ought,  
 The Greeks her tent had sought  
 And sat there with her maidens.  
 Twelve engaged in conversation,  
 But Alexander said not a word.  
 Soredamors saw what occurred,  
 For close to him she was sitting.  
 Her head upon her hand resting,  
 It seemed she was lost in thought.  
 They sat a while thus, saying naught,  
 Until she noticed her bright hair  
 At the neck and sleeve there,  
 Of the shirt she had woven.  
 She drew a little nearer then,  
 For now she owned a reason  
 To speak to him, on occasion,  
 Yet knew not in what manner  
 To be the first, nor what to utter,  
 So with herself took counsel:  
 ‘What speech first would be well?  
 His name should I address him by,  
 Or call him friend. Friend? Not I.  
 Well then? Call him by his name!  
 God, it would be sweet that same  
 Word to use, and call him friend!  
 If I but dared that word defend...  
 Dared? Why a word should I deny?

Because I think it speaks a lie.  
A lie? I know not what may be,  
But lying will bring grief to me.  
Therefore tis best to say that I  
Will ne'er consent to tell a lie.  
By God though, he'd not tell a lie  
In claiming his sweet friend am I.  
So therefore should I lie to him?  
Both should speak truth, I mean.  
Yet if I lie, the fault proves his.  
Why so hard this name of his,  
That I hereby seek a better?  
I think because so many letters  
Make me halt there in the midst.  
Yet call him friend, and I insist  
I'd say the word quite easily.  
Because I would thus fail, ah me,  
My blood I'd shed if, in the end,  
I might call him 'my sweet friend.'

## LINES 1419-1448 ARTHUR'S JUDGEMENT ON THE TRAITORS

**I**n her mind, this thought she turned  
About again, till the queen returned,  
From the king who'd summoned her.  
Her coming was spied by Alexander,  
Who went to meet her and demand  
What was now the king's command  
Regarding his prisoners and their fate.  
'Friend,' she said, 'He doth dictate  
I surrender them to his discretion,  
And let justice on them be done;  
Concerning them did anger show

That I'd not yet already done so.  
 So must I needs do so today,  
 Since I see no help but to obey.'  
 Thus indeed that day they spent,  
 And the next, before the royal tent,  
 Gathered the good and loyal knights,  
 To pass judgement, and do aright,  
 By deciding by what punishment  
 The four traitors' lives would end.  
 Some said they should be flayed,  
 Others by hanging well repaid,  
 Or by burning them on a pyre;  
 The king had expressed his desire  
 That they be torn apart when caught.  
 So he ordered that they be brought;  
 Being brought, that they be bound;  
 And only when led before the town  
 Be then torn asunder, as was right,  
 So those within would view the sight.

### LINES 1449-1472 ARTHUR PROMISES ALEXANDER A KINGDOM

**W**ITH sentence pronounced on them,  
 The king, who desired to hurt them,  
 Having retired to his grand pavilion,  
 To Alexander turned his attention,  
 Addressing him as his dear friend:  
 'Friend,' said he, 'I saw you defend,  
 And attack, with bravery yesterday:  
 I must render you the guerdon today;  
 I will add to your force in this fight  
 Five hundred brave Welsh knights,  
 And a thousand foot from that region,

And when this war is over and done  
Beside all this that I give you now  
I'll set a crown upon your brow,  
As king of the finest realm in Wales.  
Towns and castles, hills and vales,  
I'll give to you whilst you await  
The time when all of your estate  
Is rendered you that your father  
Holds, with you as its emperor.  
Alexander, for his generosity,  
Thanked the king most effusively,  
As did his companions, indeed.  
And all those of the court agreed,  
Saying that he was richly owed  
The honours the king bestowed.

### LINES 1473-1490 THE ARMY MOBILISES

**ONCE** Alexander had reviewed,  
The company to whom I allude,  
That the king for him had found,  
Then horns and trumpets sound,  
All throughout the whole force.  
Good or bad all have recourse  
To their weapons immediately,  
Those of Wales and Brittany,  
And Cornwall, and the Scots,  
For every region known allots  
Its forces to him without fail.  
The Thames now was low, the tale  
Tells; that summer lacking rain.  
So that a drought now obtained,  
And all the river fish were dead,

And the vessels quite grounded;  
And thus the river they could ford  
That had once run deep and broad.

### LINES 1491-1514 THE ARMY CROSSES THE THAMES

**O**VER the Thames the army went,  
Some on the high ground intent,  
Others on occupying the vale.  
The town, preparing to be assailed,  
Sees the wondrous host draw near,  
That great and powerful doth appear,  
All ready to besiege the castle,  
As they stand ready to repel.  
But before the assault was made,  
The king the traitors displayed,  
Behind four stallions trailed,  
Over the hills and down dale,  
Over the meadows, and the rest;  
Count Angres much distressed  
To see before his eyes appear  
The fate of those he held dear.  
Yet though his men feel dismay,  
Despite the grief they display,  
They are not minded yet to yield.  
They must still defend the field,  
For Arthur has revealed to all  
His anger and his bitter gall,  
And if defeat should be their fate,  
A shameful death doth them await.

**LINES 1515-1552 THE ASSAULT ON THE TOWN BEGINS**

**ONCE** the traitors were no more,  
And their limbs scattered abroad,  
The host's assault was put in train.  
Yet all their efforts proved in vain:  
Many the missiles shot or thrown,  
But nothing was achieved, I own,  
Nevertheless they strove again  
And hurled their javelins amain,  
And fired quarry-bolts and darts,  
The hiss was heard in every part  
Of the crossbows and the slings,  
Arrows, stones and other things,  
Flying thick and fast, they sail  
Through the air, like rain or hail.  
Thus all day long they travail,  
Those to defend, these to assail,  
Until night falls and they cease.  
Then was King Arthur pleased  
To order, and have it proclaimed  
That a rich gift might be claimed,  
By any man who forced its capture:  
'A cup, of great price, a treasure,  
In weight, fifteen marks of gold,  
The richest that my coffers hold.'  
That cup was valuable, and fine,  
And he who owned it, I opine,  
Less for the gold would value it,  
Than for the noble workmanship.  
Nevertheless, if the truth be told,  
More than the craft, or its gold,

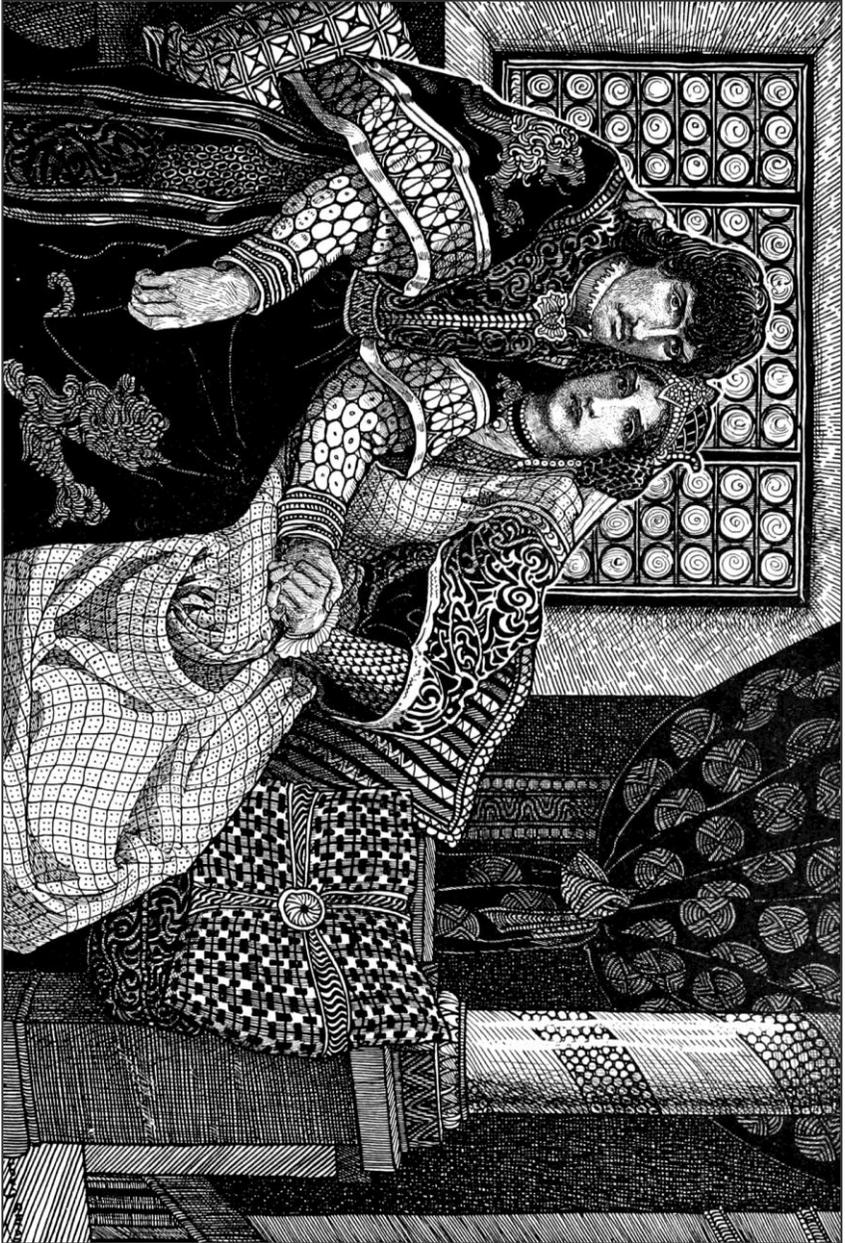


*'Nevertheless they strove again  
and hurled their javelins amain'  
Idylls of the King (p75, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
Internet Archive Book Images*

The gems adorning it, all agree,  
Were above all its chief beauty.  
A man at arms the cup will win,  
If the town's taken thanks to him;  
And if it's taken thanks to a knight,  
Then he, in seeking for his delight,  
Will not need to go far to find it;  
All he lacks, if the world holds it.

**LINES 1553-1712 MORE OF THE LOVERS;  
AND A NIGHT ATTACK ON THE CAMP**

**W**HEN the matter was done,  
Alexander had not forgotten  
A custom of his, as I believe,  
Of visiting the queen each eve.  
That eve too he was to be seen,  
Seated there, beside the queen.  
Before them, not far off, I own,  
Soredamors was sitting alone,  
Her gaze fixed on Alexander,  
So willingly, that sitting there  
She thought herself in paradise.  
The queen now cast her eyes  
On Alexander's sleeve, and she  
Examined the threads carefully;  
The gold had tarnished with wear,  
While brighter still shone the hair.  
Then, by chance, she remembered  
The work had been embroidered  
By Soredamors, and she smiled.  
Alexander, seeing her beguiled,  
Begged her, if such were fitting,



*'That eve too he was to be seen,  
seated there, beside the queen'  
Idylls of the King (p97, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
Internet Archive Book Images*

To say what she found amusing.  
The queen full slow to reply,  
On Soredamors cast her eye:  
Then to her she called the maid,  
Who most willingly obeyed,  
And then knelt there before her.  
Overjoyed was Alexander,  
Seeing her so much nearer,  
So near he might touch her.  
But he lacked the temerity  
Even to regard her closely,  
And, confused in his senses,  
Was nigh rendered speechless;  
While she, overcome likewise,  
Losing the use of her eyes,  
Cast her gaze on the ground,  
Whilst seeing naught around.  
Seeing her, the queen marvelled;  
Finding her now pale, now red,  
And noted well the emotion,  
And expression of each one,  
And of both of them together;  
And these changes in colour  
She perceived might well prove  
To be the outward signs of love;  
But not wishing to cause pain,  
She made an effort then to feign  
She made naught of all she saw.  
And well she did so, I am sure,  
Betraying not a sign to them,  
Except to say to the maiden:  
'Demoiselle, look carefully,  
And, hiding naught, tell me,  
Where the fine shirt was sewn  
That this fair knight has on.'



*'Then to her she called the maid'*  
Idylls of the King (p62, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
*Internet Archive Book Images*

The maiden felt some shame,  
But spoke of it, all the same,  
For she wished him to know  
The truth, and he felt joy also  
When she the tale now relayed  
Of where and how the shirt was made,  
And he could barely refrain  
From thus worshipping, again  
And yet again, the golden hair.  
His companions being there,  
And the queen's presence too,  
Annoy and trouble him anew,  
Since he cannot, because of this,  
Touch it to his eyes and lips,  
As he would gladly have done;  
For it will be remarked upon.  
Even to own so much of her,  
Delights him, who can ne'er  
Hope for aught more joyous;  
Longing makes him dubious.  
Yet when finally he is free,  
He kisses it most passionately,  
And much joy all night hath he,  
Careful that no one doth see.  
Once he is couched in his bed,  
By vain delight is he fed,  
And in that doth find solace,  
Doth the shirt all night embrace,  
And gazing on that golden hair  
Thinks himself the world's heir.  
Love makes fools thus of the wise,  
If a single hair delights the eyes;  
Yet it will pass, this delight.  
Thus he enjoys, and delights.  
Well before the sun shone bright,

Those vile traitors, in the night,  
 Took counsel as to what to do.  
 They could defend the castle, true,  
 If they cared to hold it still,  
 Yet they knew the king's will,  
 Was so firm that, while alive,  
 He would not cease to strive,  
 To take the town; and none deny  
 If that occurs then they will die.  
 Yet if the castle surrendered,  
 No mercy would be tendered.  
 Thus one or the other course  
 Would be fatal to their cause.  
 At last a decision was made:  
 On the morrow, before day,  
 They'd issue forth secretly,  
 And hope to find the enemy  
 All unarmed, the knights asleep,  
 The host abed in slumber deep.  
 Before these were full awake,  
 Ere they could their amour take,  
 They themselves would achieve  
 Such slaughter that posterity  
 Would remember it forever.  
 This counsel all the traitors,  
 Agreed to, as a last resort,  
 Placing confidence in naught:  
 Despair invited them to fight  
 To the end, come what might.  
 The outcome of their decision,  
 Could be naught but death or prison;  
 A decision that shed no light,  
 Nor was there any point in flight;  
 For it was unclear how they could  
 Take to flight, even if they would,  
 Since the river, and their enemy

Denied them escape, utterly.  
Spending no more time in counsel  
With arms they equip themselves;  
On the northwest, issue straight,  
From an ancient postern gate,  
All in serried ranks, their army,  
Comprised of five companies,  
Each owned two thousand men,  
Well-equipped to inflict pain;  
With each, a thousand knights.  
No moon, no stars, that night,  
Shed bright rays from the sky,  
But before the men came nigh  
The foe's tents, the moon arose;  
I think it was to work them woe.  
It seemed it rose before its hour,  
For God, to thwart their power,  
Illumined all the dome of night,  
They being naught in His sight,  
And hated for the evil wherein  
They were steeped, all their sin  
Of treachery; since the traitor  
God hates more than any other;  
So, he ordered the moon to rise  
And thwart all their enterprise.

**LINES 1713-1858 ALEXANDER AT THE  
BATTLE BEFORE WINDSOR**

**G**REAT harm the moonlight yields,  
Reflecting now from their shields,  
And their helms prove damaging,  
Beneath the moon, all gleaming,

For the pickets have them in sight,  
As they guard the host by night.  
They cry to the whole army:  
‘Up knights all, up, rise swiftly,  
Seize your arms, and defend us,  
For these traitors are upon us!’  
All are at their posts already  
Striving hard to make ready,  
In this hour of greatest need.  
Not one left his post, indeed,  
Until the knights were fully  
Armed, and mounted securely.  
While they prepared, the enemy  
Launched their attack, eagerly,  
Hoping to take them by surprise  
And without defence, likewise.  
Their force, in its five sections,  
Attacked from five directions.  
The first enjoys the woods cover,  
The second comes by the river,  
The third doth the plain assail,  
The fourth descends the vale;  
While the fifth joins the fight  
From below a rocky height,  
Seeking to roam at random,  
And strike, with abandon.  
But they could find nowhere  
A clear path they might dare,  
For the king’s men resisted,  
Defying them if they persisted,  
Reproaching them for their treason.  
Iron lance-tips were broken;  
Men rushed at one another  
And fiercely met together  
As lions attacks their prey,  
Devouring what they seize and slay.

At the onset of this strife  
There was great loss of life,  
On both sides, moreover.  
But help now reached the traitors,  
Who had all fought most bravely  
And sold their lives full dearly.  
When they can hold no more  
From the four quarters pour  
The four companies to their aid.  
Then the king's men arrayed  
Spur their mounts and so attack;  
At their shields away they hack  
With such a show of force,  
Five hundred they unhorse.  
The Greeks, led by Alexander,  
Will spare them naught either,  
For now he strives to prevail.  
Into the melee he doth sail,  
Some poor victim to assail,  
Whose shield and iron mail  
Prove of little worth at all  
As to the earth he doth fall.  
Having unhorsed one traitor  
He offers to so serve another,  
And freely, and unstintingly,  
Serves the man so savagely,  
He parts the spirit from the flesh,  
And leaves the house without a guest.  
After these two, he turns to fight  
A noble and a courteous knight  
Piercing him, through one side,  
Till from the other flows a tide  
Of blood; and soul and body part,  
As he expires, and doth depart.  
Many are killed, many stunned,

For like a thunderbolt he comes,  
Striking those he doth assail;  
And neither shield nor iron mail  
Serve to defend against the blow.  
While his companions, they also,  
Spill blood and brains generously,  
Showing their might for all to see.  
And now indeed the king's men  
Slaughter such a crowd of them,  
That they scatter them all abroad,  
Like a low-born mindless horde.  
So great was the sheer carnage,  
So widely did that battle rage,  
That, long before they saw day,  
A line of dead stretched away,  
Five leagues in length or more,  
All along the river's shore.  
Count Angres left his banner  
On the battlefield, and together  
With seven men slipped away.  
To the castle he made his way,  
By a secret path he thought  
None knew of, thus unsought.  
But Alexander saw them go,  
Escaping thus from the blow,  
And thought that, if he also  
Could leave, without any show,  
He would catch them without fail.  
But while he was yet in the vale,  
He saw a band of thirty knights  
Behind him, keeping him in sight,  
Of Welshmen there were twenty-four,  
And his Greeks now made six more,  
Who thought to pursue his lead,  
In case he found himself in need.  
Alexander, perceiving them,

Halted now to wait for them,  
But the progress he still viewed  
Of the men whom he pursued;  
And saw them entering the town.  
Then he began to propound  
His plan for a most perilous  
Deed, a plan full marvellous;  
Turning, for his mind was set,  
Towards the company now met,  
And addressing them, there:  
'My lords, now, without demur,  
If you'd garner my affection  
Follow this, my plan of action,  
Whether tis wise or a folly.'  
And they agreed willingly,  
To support without dissent  
Aught that was of his intent.  
'Let us alter our appearance,'  
Said he, 'seize shield and lance,  
From the corpses lying there,  
And to the castle let us fare.  
So the traitors will believe  
That to their cause we cleave,  
And unaware of their fate,  
To us will open then the gate.'  
And what shall we render them?  
Dead or alive we'll take them,  
If the Lord God doth consent;  
While if any man doth repent  
Of his promise, then be sure  
I shall love him nevermore.'

## LINES 1859-1954 THE TRAITORS TAKE REFUGE IN THE KEEP

**ALEXANDER'S** company obey  
 His wish; arming, straight away,  
 With shields taken from the dead.  
 And the sentries posted overhead,  
 High on the town's battlements,  
 On seeing their accoutrements,  
 Think them to be of their party,  
 Not dreaming of the trickery,  
 Concealed beneath the shields.  
 The gatekeeper entrance yields,  
 And the company pass within.  
 He is deceived as they ride in,  
 Thus he demands no password,  
 And none of them says a word,  
 But mute and silent they pass by.  
 All of them, with sorrowful eye,  
 Trail behind the lance they wield,  
 And for support grip their shield,  
 And seem to be in great distress.  
 Thus through the gate they press,  
 Until the triple walls are passed.  
 There the men at arms are massed,  
 And knights attending on the count.  
 I cannot give the exact account,  
 But all were unarmed, I will state,  
 Except, it seems, a band of eight,  
 Who had returned from the fray;  
 And it would seem that even they  
 Were about to doff their armour,  
 Though that proved ill-considered,

For now, abandoning all pretence,  
Yielding them no time for defence,  
The company spurred their steeds  
Bracing themselves in their seats,  
Attacking them, and striking true,  
Such that twenty-one they slew,  
Before they could show defiance.  
Dismayed by their swift advance,  
'Betrayed, betrayed!' the traitors cry,  
Unmoved, their enemies pass by,  
For unarmed men are there arrayed,  
On whom they might prove a blade.  
Indeed, of those who were armed,  
Three had been so greatly harmed,  
That only five of them were alive.  
Yet Count Angres now doth drive  
At Calcedor, and his blow upon  
His golden shield, as all look on,  
Stretches the Greek on the ground.  
Alexander's grief's profound;  
Almost maddened, and in pain,  
At seeing his companion slain,  
He knows the traitor's ill-intent  
And yet his courage and strength  
Are doubled; his lance he breaks  
As the Count's shield he rakes,  
For willingly he would avenge  
That death, seeking his revenge.  
Yet the Count was a man of might,  
A skilful, and a hardy knight,  
And, in his day, none were nobler,  
Had he not shown himself a traitor.  
He now returned the lance blow  
His lance shattering as he did so,  
Bending backwards, and splitting.

But, Alexander's shield holding,  
Neither man yields to the other,  
No more than rocks struck together,  
For both the combatants are strong.  
Yet that the Count is in the wrong  
Troubles him, robs him of his ease.  
Their mutual anger found increase.  
Both, as their lances came to grief,  
Drew their swords from the sheath.  
And if the combatants had wished  
To prolong the fight, and so persist,  
Death must have put an end to all.  
Just when it seemed both must fall  
At the close whatever else occurred,  
The Count it seems lost his nerve,  
On seeing his men dead or harmed,  
Who'd been surprised, all unarmed.  
The company now struck hard again,  
Slashing at them, beheading them;  
Carving limbs, and spilling brains,  
While calling out the traitor's name.  
Hearing himself accused of treason  
He fled towards the keep, and won  
His way there, followed by his men,  
While the enemy still harried them,  
Charging in fiercely from the rear,  
Letting none flee who came near,  
On whom they might lay a hand.  
They slew so many of that band,  
No more than seven in that melee  
Forged a path to the keep, that day.

**LINES 1955-2056 THE KEEP IS TAKEN AND  
THE COUNT CAPTURED**

**ONCE** the tower was there at hand,  
At its doorway they made a stand;  
For those who pursued them swiftly  
Now followed on behind so closely  
That they would soon have entered,  
Had the doorway been surrendered.  
The traitors made a strong defence,  
Awaiting help; below, their friends,  
In the town now armed themselves.  
Yet Nebunal gave good counsel  
To the Greeks, being wise in war:  
That the approach to it be barred,  
Thus the relief might be thwarted,  
As they, as yet, had barely started,  
Either through sloth or cowardice.  
Now, but a single gate there is,  
That doth guard the tower above,  
If the Greeks stop that entrance up,  
There is no way the newly armed  
Can find a way to do them harm.  
Nebunal now bids twenty wait,  
Ready to turn, and hold the gate,  
And combat any attack in force  
That might arise in due course,  
Should those from the town appear,  
To launch the assault he fears;  
While these twenty hold the gate  
The other ten must fare straight  
To the door, and stop the traitor  
Shutting himself in the tower.

Nebunal's advice is acted on,  
Ten to attack the door are gone,  
While twenty run to hold the gate.  
Almost too long do they wait;  
Near at hand, comes a company  
Up for the fight, keen and fiery,  
That, beside a crowd of arbalists,  
Of diverse men at arms consists,  
Carrying their various weapons,  
Some with their halberds threaten,  
While others heft their Danish  
Axes, lances, or grip Turkish  
Blades, javelins, bolts or darts.  
Since it is meet all play their part,  
Many a Greek would have died,  
If their enemies they'd defied.  
But the latter arrived too late,  
Forced to halt before the gate.  
By means of this stratagem,  
Nebunal had thwarted them.  
Once they saw the way barred,  
They paused there in the yard,  
Perceiving that by attacking  
They would garner not a thing.  
Then the town by cries was riven  
From every child and woman,  
The old men, the adolescents,  
So loud that if from the heavens  
It had thundered none had heard.  
Now the Greeks give the word,  
Joyous now, since they are sure  
The Count must fail to procure  
His escape, and will be taken,  
If they're not much mistaken.  
Four mount the defensive wall,  
To keep a good watch over all  
Beyond the gate, and so ensure

That by no artifice of war,  
Can those without gain entry.  
The other sixteen run swiftly  
To join the ten at the tower.  
Now cometh the dawn hour;  
The ten have found a way to win  
Beyond the door, and are within:  
His back against a post, the Count  
With his axe gives good account,  
Defending bravely against each,  
He swings at those he can reach.  
His men ranged alongside him,  
Avenge themselves beside him,  
So skilfully that they remain  
Whole, the Greeks it is complain;  
For of the ten, and the sixteen,  
There now fight on but thirteen.  
Alexander is much enraged,  
When he sees his men, engaged  
In the fight, stricken and weary.  
A club he finds, long and heavy,  
Raising it above his head,  
Being also to vengeance wed,  
And so fiercely doth it wield  
That neither iron coat nor shield  
Are worth a fig to the wretch  
Doomed to fall that he selects.  
Then he doth the Count pursue  
Raises the club to strike him too,  
And with the heavy weapon, lo,  
He deals the traitor such a blow  
The war-axe falls from his hand.  
The Count, now, can barely stand,  
So stunned he must surely fall  
Unless he leans against the wall.

**LINES 2057-2146 THE HOST BELIEVE ALEXANDER  
TO HAVE BEEN KILLED**

**W**ITH this blow the fight was over,  
Towards the Count, Alexander  
Stepped, then he gripped him fast;  
Naught need be said of the last  
Traitors; all were swiftly mastered  
Once they saw their lord captured.  
With the Count, all were led away,  
In deep disgrace, as he and they  
Richly deserved for their crime.  
Naught was known, at that time,  
Of aught of this by those outside.  
But the shields that were set aside  
By their companions were found,  
Among the corpses, on the ground,  
That day, when the fight was done.  
There the Greeks weep and moan  
For their lord, yet all mistakenly.  
Finding his shield, in an agony  
Of grief, its device they fell upon,  
Saying they had lived too long.  
Cornix and Nereis, tears they shed,  
Reviving, wish that they were dead;  
Torin, and Acorionde appear  
Both bathed in floods of tears  
That have drenched them both;  
Life and joy to them seem loth.  
Parmenides outdoes the rest,  
Tearing his hair in his distress.  
No greater pain can grief afford

Than these showed for their lord.  
Yet their mourning was in error;  
Thinking it his, it was another's  
Corpse that they did bear away.  
And the shields that round it lay  
Lead them to suppose those were  
Their friends' bodies lying there:  
So over them they did lament.  
Yet the shields were innocent  
In this, for of all their friends  
Only Neriolis had met his end.  
His corpse they'd have borne alone,  
For burial, if they had but known,  
But, as concerned for the others  
As for him, carried off all together.  
Those they bore away were traitors,  
With all but one they were in error.  
But as with the man who dreams,  
Where all is not quite as it seems,  
The shields have induced the error.  
The bodies, hidden by their armour,  
They carry onwards, to the tents,  
Where all the company laments.  
To the grief the Greeks expressed  
Soon there gathered all the rest,  
And to that grief added their cry.  
Soredamors feels death is nigh  
When she hears the mourning  
For her lover, dire lamenting.  
Their plaints and their dolour  
Overcast her looks with pallor,  
And her grief is not made less  
By her not daring such distress  
To show to others far and wide.  
In her heart her grief she hides.

Yet if any had paid regard  
 To her face, it was not hard  
 To see her heartfelt distress  
 In what was there expressed.  
 But since none had any care  
 For aught but their own grief there,  
 They were blind to others' pain.  
 Each their own grief sustains,  
 Heavy and bitter; here a father  
 Is mourned by his son, or there  
 A father doth lament his son;  
 Here for his cousin grieves one,  
 Another for his nephew weeps.  
 On every side the grief runs deep,  
 In kin, in sons and their parents;  
 Above all is the grief apparent  
 That the Greeks reveal, although  
 The prescient may joy yet know,  
 For soon to great joy will turn  
 All of this sorrow we discern.

**LINES 2147-2200 ALEXANDER SENDS  
 HIS PRISONERS TO THE KING**

**T**HUS they continue their lament,  
 The Greeks elsewhere being intent  
 On relaying news of their success,  
 So joy might all the company bless.  
 Disarmed and bound, the prisoners,  
 Request and pray, being traitors,  
 That they be beheaded promptly.  
 But their captors, all disdainfully,  
 Refuse, stating that they will be

Held till the king shall them see,  
Who will render, as he sees fit,  
The just desserts that they merit.  
When they had disarmed them all,  
They were made to mount the wall,  
So as to be seen by those outside.  
Mortal the blow to the others' pride.  
Seeing their lord, captive and bound,  
The pain was even more profound.  
Alexander, ascending the wall,  
On God and His saints doth call,  
And swears no traitor shall live,  
Unless they all their word do give  
To render themselves to the king,  
Before they themselves do swing.  
'Go,' he cried, 'and at my command,  
Humbly before the king now stand,  
Throw yourselves on his mercy.  
None but the Count, whom you see,  
Hath deserved to be put to death.  
None shall breathe their last breath,  
Nor be harmed at all, if they do;  
Small is the chance if they refuse;  
None shall save them from death  
Who cry not mercy at every breath;  
Their life is forfeit, death their lot.  
Go, unarmed, to the king's court  
Stand there before my lord the king  
And tell him these words you bring:  
From Alexander, from him you come.  
Your speech will prove no idle one,  
For he is so noble, and gentle too,  
My lord the king will pardon you,  
And set aside his righteous anger;  
But if you wish to remain traitors,

You all will be condemned to die,  
 No tear of pity will wet his eye.<sup>7</sup>  
 This counsel is accepted by all,  
 At the king's feet they must fall,  
 None hesitating in their intent,  
 But hastening to the king's tent.  
 Soon all the host know the tale,  
 The king mounts, without fail.  
 All then to the town spur away,  
 With not an instant's more delay.

### LINES 2201-2248 KING ARTHUR REWARDS ALEXANDER

**A**ALEXANDER now rides forth to meet  
 The joyful king, whom he doth greet,  
 Rendering the Count to his justice,  
 Whom the king doth straight punish.  
 But Alexander he praises greatly,  
 While the other lords, willingly,  
 Join with the king in fulsome praise,  
 And swear to esteem him always.  
 Never a courtier but shows his joy,  
 For the grief that did them annoy,  
 Not long before, is all dispelled.  
 No joy compares, now all is well,  
 With that of the Greeks gathered there.  
 The king gifts a cup to Alexander,  
 Worth fifteen marks, from his treasure,  
 And says that, if it be his pleasure,  
 There is nothing he holds so dear,  
 He'd not grant to him, of all here,  
 Except the queen and his kingdom;  
 And so place it in his possession.

Alexander, though, does not dare  
To speak of his longings there,  
Yet full well does he understand  
He might secure his beloved's hand;  
For he fears to bring her annoy,  
Who therein would find great joy,  
Preferring to suffer grievously,  
Rather than win her unwillingly.  
He asks for a little time therefore,  
Before requesting anything more,  
Seeking to know her wish in all;  
Though he seeks no delay at all,  
In accepting that cup of gold.  
Now, when Soredamors is told  
Of all that involves Alexander,  
She delights in all they tell her.  
For when she knows that he lives,  
Such joy to her that news gives,  
She feels she'll ne'er be sad again;  
Though, for all that, doth complain  
That he pays no visits as before.  
Yet she'll have her wish and more,  
For together they both contend  
To arrive at the selfsame end.

**LINES 2249-2278 QUEEN GUINEVERE PREPARES  
TO ADDRESS THE LOVERS**

**I**T seemed an age to Alexander  
Before he might seek from her  
Even one solitary sweet glance.  
He would have seized the chance,  
Long before, to attend the queen

If not detained elsewhere, I mean;  
 And, much troubled by this delay,  
 As soon as he could, found a way  
 To visit the queen in her pavilion.  
 The queen greeted him in person,  
 Knowing what was in his thought,  
 Without his having told her aught,  
 Thus understanding all his intent.  
 There at the threshold of the tent,  
 She greets him with particular care,  
 Knowing what it is he seeks there.  
 Wishing to show him her favour,  
 She summons Soredamors to her;  
 The three of them speak together,  
 At some distance from the others.  
 For this the queen is first inclined,  
 Having not a doubt in her mind  
 That they are in love, the pair,  
 She with him, and he with her.  
 Of this she is completely sure,  
 While persuaded Soredamors  
 Could not possess a finer lover.  
 She sat down between them there,  
 And began with them to reason,  
 In words both fit and in season.

**LINES 2279-2310 THE QUEEN SPEAKS OF LOVE  
 AND MARRIAGE**

‘**ALEXANDER**,’ thus the queen began,  
 ‘Should it grieve and trouble a man,  
 Love may prove worse than hate.  
 They know not what they perpetrate,

Who hide their love from each other,  
For there is much that's grievous there.  
Care is needed, with love's foundations;  
Who fail to begin in brave fashion,  
Will never achieve its completion.  
They say no crossing's harder won  
Than the passage of that threshold.  
I'll teach, of love, what I was told,  
For I see that love torments you,  
Such that I wish to instruct you:  
Take care to hide naught from me,  
Any might see who look carefully  
At both your faces, as I have done,  
That two hearts have here made one.  
Take care to conceal not one thing!  
You'd both act foolishly in hiding  
Your thoughts from one another.  
By silence, you'll slay each other,  
And prove Love's murderers too.  
Now, have not tyranny in view,  
Nor fickleness in love, but seek  
To join in marriage honourably,  
And be wed one with the other.  
For then I do believe, together,  
Your true love will long endure.  
And both of you I now assure  
That, if neither of you change,  
Then your marriage I'll arrange.'

## LINES 2311-2360 ALEXANDER AND SOREDAMORS ARE WED

**ONCE** the queen had reached a close,  
Alexander began, as follows:

‘My lady, I’ll offer no excuse  
 For aught of which I stand accused;  
 But will confess to all you say,  
 And will never true Love betray,  
 But ever direct to it my thought.  
 I am delighted by all you sought  
 To tell me of, in your kindness.  
 Since you know, of your goodness,  
 What I wish, I seek not to hide it.  
 Long ago, if I’d dared to say it,  
 I would have spoken openly,  
 For silence has tormented me;  
 But it may be, perhaps, in this,  
 The maiden herself may not wish  
 That I be hers and she be mine,  
 And yet if she doth decline,  
 Still I offer my vows to her.’  
 At this the maiden was stirred,  
 Possessing no desire to resist,  
 Unable to hide her heart’s wish  
 Either by her looks or speech,  
 And trembling, him doth she seek,  
 Saying that she’ll deny him not,  
 Neither in will, body, nor heart,  
 That all the three, she doth mean,  
 Are at the disposal of the queen,  
 Now to do with her as she please.  
 The queen clasps them tenderly,  
 Presenting the one to the other,  
 Smilingly says: ‘Alexander  
 I give thee thy sweetheart’s body,  
 And I know you take it willingly.  
 Whoever agrees or begs to differ,  
 I give each of you to the other.  
 You take yours, and you yours so.’  
 He has his, and she has her own,

He all of her, and she all of him.  
At Windsor, thus, she marries him,  
With permission and to the liking  
Of My Lord Gawain and the king,  
On that very day, and I am sure,  
None could tell of the splendour  
The food, the joys, the delights,  
Or could ever do justice quite,  
To how all that wedding pleased.  
But since many it might displease,  
No more words on it will I waste,  
For I wish another dish to taste.

### LINES 2361-2382 THE BIRTH OF CLIGÈS

**O**N a day then, at Windsor,  
Alexander has all the honour  
And the joy life could bring;  
Joy and honour of three things:  
The first the castle he has won;  
The king's gift, the second one,  
Which he promised Alexander,  
When that war should be over,  
The finest kingdom in all Wales;  
Of which he is king without fail.  
But the finest, the third I mean,  
Is that his sweetheart is queen  
Of the board where he is king.  
A three month from the wedding,  
And Soredamors found that she  
Was now with child and, joyfully,  
Carried that child to full term,  
And such was the seed in germ,

That the fruit of it proved a son,  
The fairest child under the sun,  
None near or far, so blessed;  
And they called the child Cligès.

**LINES 2383-2456 ALIS, ALEXANDER'S BROTHER,  
USURPS THE THRONE**

**H**E the Cligès, of whom is sung  
All this, in the Romance tongue.  
Of him, his deeds and his courage,  
When he shall have come of age,  
And good service given, as well,  
You will doubtless hear me tell.  
Meanwhile, it appears, in Greece,  
The emperor, but now deceased,  
Who had ruled Constantinople;  
For thus end the great and noble,  
Since no man can live forever;  
Before he died, had gathered  
The lords of the land together,  
To send and seek for Alexander,  
In Brittany, where he remained,  
Or most willingly was detained.  
From Greece now they set sail  
On the voyage, but a fierce gale  
Caught them, the tempest then  
Overwhelming ships and men.  
So all were drowned in the sea,  
All but one faithless wretch, and he  
Was friend to Alis, the younger,  
Not the elder son, Alexander.  
Having escaped from the sea,

He returned to his own country,  
And told a tale that all were lost  
On the sea, while tempest-tossed  
In returning from Brittany, when  
Bringing Alexander home again,  
And that he had escaped alone,  
Into the stormy waters thrown.  
Now, this lie of his was believed  
Without dissent; so Alis received  
The crown, since none demurred,  
And of Greece was thus emperor.  
Not many days had passed before  
Alexander learned of this for sure,  
That his brother now ruled Greece.  
From Arthur he sought his release,  
Unwilling that his brother outright  
Usurp his throne, without a fight.  
The king did not oppose the plan,  
But said that he should command  
So large a company of Welshmen,  
Of brave Scots, and Cornishmen,  
That his brother would not stand  
On seeing so vast a host on hand.  
Alexander might thus have led  
A mighty force to Greece, instead,  
Wishing no harm to his countrymen  
If his brother restored to him again  
The land which was his birth-right,  
He took with him but forty knights,  
And his son, and Soredamors,  
Not wishing to leave them ashore,  
For they were dear to him, clearly.  
At Shoreham then they set to sea,  
Taking leave there of all the court,  
And full soon they arrived in port,

For, with fair winds, the fine vessel  
 Ran swift as a fleeing stag, so well  
 That to Athens, one dawn, they came,  
 A city full rich and high in fame.  
 The emperor was residing there,  
 In that city both strong and fair,  
 And had called a great assembly  
 Of all the lords in that country.  
 Without delay, now, Alexander  
 Despatched a secret messenger  
 Into the city, for thus he sought  
 To find if he might win support  
 Or whether his countrymen there  
 Would reject him, the rightful heir.

**LINES 2457-2494 ALEXANDER, IN ATHENS,  
 SENDS AN ENVOY TO ALIS**

**H**E chose then as his messenger  
 A wise knight and a courtier,  
 Acorionde was his name,  
 A noble who from Athens came;  
 Wealthy he was, and eloquent,  
 Of that country was his descent,  
 And in that city his ancestors,  
 As men of power and honour,  
 Had lordship. This messenger  
 Once he knew that the emperor  
 Had taken residence in the city,  
 In pursuance of his duty,  
 On behalf of Alexander,  
 Went now to challenge the brother,  
 And assert he ruled unlawfully.

Arrived at the palace, he quickly  
Found welcome among many,  
But gave little away to any  
Of those who welcomed him  
Until he learned from them  
What feelings were abroad,  
Regarding their rightful lord.  
Granted audience with Alis now  
Failing to honour him with a bow,  
Nor address him as emperor:  
'Alis,' he said, 'I come ashore  
Bringing news of Alexander,  
Who lies here, at the harbour.  
Hear what your brother demands,  
Of what is his he seeks command,  
Asks only what is his by right,  
Constantinople, his birth-right:  
It should be his and will be his.  
No good can ever come of this  
That twixt you there be discord;  
My counsel to you I now afford,  
Render the crown without a fight,  
For to do thus is only right.'

**LINES 2495-2524 ALIS GIVES HIS RESPONSE**

**A**lis replied: 'My noble friend  
To mad folly do you pretend,  
Who such a message have brought.  
You can bring indeed no comfort,  
For I know my brother is dead.  
Yet I would rejoice, if instead  
He were alive, and I knew it so.'

I'd not believe till I saw him though.  
 He died long ago, I grieve today;  
 But believe naught of what you say.  
 And if he live why comes he not?  
 He need not fear that I would not  
 Bestow on him sufficient land.  
 He's a fool to prove so offhand,  
 If he serves me he'll have his own.  
 But the empire and the crown  
 None shall possess them but me.'  
 Acorionde liked not this speech,  
 Replying to the emperor,  
 He addressed him without fear  
 Or favour, and answered thus:  
 'Alis,' said he, 'May God strike us,  
 If ever this matter remain so.  
 I defy you, and summon, also,  
 In your brother's name, as I ought,  
 All those I witness at this court,  
 To desert you and join his cause.  
 It is right that they should, because  
 They must own he is their true lord.  
 Let he who is loyal now stand forth!'

**LINES 2525-2554 ALIS IS ADVISED BY HIS  
 NOBLES TO SEEK PEACE**

**W**ITH these words he doth depart,  
 While the emperor, for his part,  
 Summons those of his alliance:  
 Regarding his brother's defiance,  
 Seeks counsel, and would know  
 Whether he can trust them, or no,

To deny his brother their support,  
Or whether they will aid his cause;  
Testing the loyalty of each one.  
Yet he fails to discover anyone  
Who holds to him in this quarrel;  
He is asked to remember by all  
And sundry the war Polynices  
Waged long ago with Eteocles,  
Who was, likewise, his brother,  
And how they slew one another:  
'Such a fate may fall upon you,  
If you undertake to quarrel, too,  
And bring confusion to the land.'  
Thus they advise that he demand  
A peace, both just and reasonable  
Both seeking for what is tenable.  
Now Alis understood, that if he  
Could not with his brother agree,  
All of them would desert his cause.  
So he said he'd employ no force  
If they themselves did not agree,  
But that in any covenant he  
Must still remain as emperor,  
Whatever else might occur.

**LINES 2555-2618 THE BROTHER'S PACT AND  
THE DEATH OF ALEXANDER**

**N**ow, to establish a firm peace,  
Alis sent a noble lord of Greece  
To Alexander, bidding him  
Come and govern the land for him,  
While still allowing him the honour

Of being addressed as emperor,  
 And that the crown should be his;  
 And thus, if Alexander so pleased,  
 Between them all would be well.  
 And when the envoy all this tells  
 To Alexander, he mounts and then  
 Gathering to him all his men,  
 To Athens he makes his way;  
 There was much joy that day,  
 But Alexander was displeased  
 At the demand he had received,  
 That Alis must wear the crown,  
 Stating he a pledge must own,  
 That he would never take a wife,  
 And when he relinquished life  
 Cligès should be the emperor.  
 So they agreed, the two brothers,  
 Alexander dictating the oath,  
 And his brother swore to both:  
 That he would never take a wife,  
 And Cligès would be heir for life.  
 They agree, and are friends again,  
 To the joy of the noblemen.  
 Alis remains as emperor,  
 And yet, before Alexander  
 Come all matters great and small,  
 And whatever he decrees is all  
 Effected, while naught is done  
 But through him; and Alis has won  
 Only a name, and naught doth move,  
 While Alexander's served with love;  
 And who ne'er from love will serve  
 From fear his commands observe.  
 And for one reason or the other  
 All the land his powers cover.  
 But he whom we know as Death,

Spare none, robs us of breath,  
And weak or strong slays us all.  
So Alexander was doomed to fall  
To a disease that gripped him tight,  
Against which he could not fight.  
But before death surprised him,  
He called his son and said to him:  
'Cligès, my son, you cannot know  
Whether they are yours or no,  
Virtue and knightly prowess,  
Until of them both you make test,  
With the Breton and English knights,  
In whom King Arthur's court delights.  
If adventure should draw you there,  
Conduct yourself at court with care,  
Such that your name is not known  
Until you have your prowess shown  
To that kingdom's finest knights;  
Remember this, my counsel, aright,  
And, if the time comes, do not fear  
To try your skill, and there appear  
Against your uncle, My Lord Gawain,  
Forget not, I pray you once again.'

**LINES 2619-2680 THE DEATH OF SOREDAMORS:  
ALIS SEEKS A WIFE**

**A****F****T****E****R** this last plea, Alexander  
Lived but a little while longer.  
And Soredamors' grief was such  
She did not survive him by much,  
Uniting them, with her last breath.  
Alis and Cligès mourned the death,



*'She did not survive him by much,  
uniting them, with her last breath'  
Idylls of the King (p90, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
Internet Archive Book Images*

Expressing grief while it endured;  
Until they could mourn no more:  
For it is wrong to mourn forever,  
No good comes of such grief ever.  
So their sorrowing reached its end,  
While the emperor did not offend  
Against his pledge and seek to wed,  
Wishing to keep his word instead;  
But no court in the world is free  
Of evil counsel, and sophistry.  
Great lords often lose their way,  
And from the path of virtue stray,  
And evil counsel is oft to blame.  
For men to the emperor came,  
Offering him the same advice,  
That he should get to him a wife.  
They so exhorted, and pressed  
Harder each day, and expressed  
Their desire that he should marry,  
That, hemmed about and harried,  
He at last acceded to their wish:  
But that she be gentle doth insist,  
Wise and fair, and rich and noble,  
This mistress of Constantinople.  
Then his counsellors declared  
That they indeed were prepared  
To seek in the Germanic lands,  
Their emperor's daughter's hand;  
This the choice they preferred  
For, in Germany, the emperor  
Was very rich and powerful,  
And his daughter so beautiful  
There was not, in any kingdom,  
A fairer maid of Christendom.  
Alis, hearing this, did so agree,

And granted them full authority,  
 And so their journey they began,  
 With all that befits a nobleman;  
 Until with the German emperor  
 At Regensburg they can confer,  
 And ask for his eldest daughter,  
 To wed with Alis, their emperor.  
 The German emperor, delighted,  
 Willingly would see her plighted,  
 For in no way would it shame  
 His daughter, or mar his fame,  
 Or dishonour either in any way.  
 Yet she's promised he doth say  
 To the grand Duke of Saxony,  
 Thus they would only be free  
 To take her if their emperor there  
 With a mighty army did repair,  
 So the duke could work no injury,  
 As they journeyed to their country.

### **LINES 2681-2724 THE EMPERORS MEET AT COLOGNE.**

**ONCE** the ambassadors had heard  
 And understood the emperor's word,  
 They took their leave, and departed.  
 Then to their emperor they imparted,  
 All the German emperor had replied.  
 Alis then summoned to his side,  
 The most expert of his knights,  
 Those most steadfast in a fight,  
 And took his nephew with him,  
 For whom his word he'd given,  
 That never in his life he'd wed:

Yet that vow he'll break instead,  
Once he has come to Cologne.  
On a day, he departs his own  
Country, bound for Germany.  
And despite reproach doth he  
Intend to take a wife, although  
Much dishonoured in doing so.  
Cologne he now came before,  
Where the German emperor  
Was holding a court festival.  
So many had come at his call,  
That with such a host of Greeks  
And his Germans in company,  
Sixty thousand now were found  
Lodged there, without the town.  
Great was the whole assembly,  
Great too the joyous melee,  
Great the delight, greater yet,  
When the two emperors met.  
Once the lords had gathered there  
In his palace, grand and fair,  
The emperor, immediately,  
Sent for his daughter, and she  
Without any undue delay,  
To the palace made her way.  
Of sweet form was she and fair,  
As God Himself created her,  
Who had there worked a wonder,  
On which mankind might ponder.  
For God who had fashioned her,  
Gave mankind no words to utter  
That could ever have expressed  
All the beauty she possessed.

LINES 2725-2760 THE BEAUTY OF FENICE,  
THE EMPEROR'S DAUGHTER

**FENICE**, was the maiden's name,  
With reason; as that bird of fame  
The Phoenix is more beautiful  
Than all the others, so no equal  
Had Fenice, it seems to me,  
Among others; she, so lovely,  
Had no peer in beauty at all.  
Such a marvel, nay a miracle,  
Was this Fenice, that Nature  
Could ne'er repeat such a creature.  
So, to be brief you understand,  
Her arms, body, head and hands,  
I'll not attempt to set out here,  
For if I lived a thousand years  
And every year doubled my skill  
My efforts would be wasted still  
In seeking to describe her truly.  
And were it my task completely,  
If I exerted all my brains,  
Naught would I show for all my pains,  
And all my efforts were laid waste.  
So, in short, the maid made haste;  
Into the palace hall she came,  
Head and face unveiled the same,  
While the radiance of her beauty  
Lit the palace more completely,  
Than bright gemstones ever could.  
Before the emperor, there stood  
Cligès, uncloaked, and though

The day had little light to show,  
Yet so handsome were the pair,  
He and the maiden both so fair,  
That rays from their beauty shone  
And lit the palace, as in the dawn  
The rising sun doth shed its light,  
Never more clear, or more bright.

**LINES 2761-2792 CLIGÈS' BEAUTY**

**T**O tell you of Cligès' beauty,  
I will speak of it most truly,  
And yet as briefly as I may.  
He was in the flower of his age,  
Being in years almost fifteen;  
Yet outdoing in looks, I mean,  
Narcissus, who himself did see,  
In the still pool, beneath the tree,  
So loving his own form, they say,  
He died of what he saw portrayed,  
A form that he could not possess.  
Beauty had he, his wit proved less,  
But Cligès' was of finer mould,  
As copper is surpassed by gold,  
More than I can explain to you.  
His hair, it seemed golden too,  
His complexion like the rose,  
A well-formed mouth and nose;  
And he showed of good stature,  
Of the finest seen in Nature;  
For to him she had supplied,  
Gifts she often scatters wide.  
To him she was so generous

That she, in him, united thus  
All it seems she has to give.  
Such was Cligès, in him lived  
Sense, beauty, strength, generosity,  
Heartwood, sapwood, bark: the tree.  
More than the nephew of King Mark,  
Tristan, Cligès knew all the art,  
Of sword and bow, bird and hound.  
Every good thing in him was found.

**LINES 2793-2870 LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT**

**CLIGÈS** in all his beauty stood,  
Before his uncle, and those who would  
Know what he was, who he might be,  
Gazed upon him most eagerly.  
While others gazed most eagerly,  
Wondering who the maid might be,  
Thinking she a marvel must prove.  
But Cligès turned eyes full of love  
Towards the maiden, covertly,  
Withdrawing them so discreetly,  
That none could think them so,  
In all their passage to and fro.  
With great favour he regards her,  
And does not see that she ever  
Regards him too, in fair exchange.  
From true love her eyes do range,  
Not flattery, in glance for glance.  
It seemed to her, in this instance,  
A true exchange, yet augured better  
If she'd known aught of the other;  
She only knows that he is fair,

And that if she love anywhere  
For beauty's sake, she has no need  
To seek elsewhere but here indeed  
Her eyes and heart both now are his,  
And his to her he doth promise.  
Promise? Nay, doth give outright!  
Give? Nay, I speak not quite aright,  
For there is none can give his heart;  
I must speak of it with more art.  
Nor will I say, as some have done,  
That two hearts are joined in one,  
For in the same body never  
Can two hearts beat together;  
And if they could be there united,  
They could never so be plighted.  
But if it please you to attend  
The truth to you I shall extend,  
How two hearts' unity is won,  
Without their being merged in one.  
Their unity alone is achieved  
In that one's wish is received,  
By the other, and likewise;  
Thus their wishes harmonise.  
And because they wish one thing,  
There are those who oft will sing,  
Of how each one hath two hearts,  
Though in two places, wide apart,  
One heart can never be, and yet  
Their wishes can as one be met,  
Though each hath their own heart,  
Just as singers through their art  
May sing, as one, in harmony.  
I'll prove by this analogy,  
One body cannot have two hearts;  
Know then the truth I here impart;

They are not made one who relate  
 To what the other doth love and hate,  
 No more than many mouths that sing  
 Because they seem to utter one thing,  
 And if this cannot by such be done,  
 No body owns more hearts than one.  
 On this I need not reason more,  
 For other matters press me sore.  
 And of the maid and of Cligès  
 Further thoughts must I express.  
 Now of the Duke of Saxony hear,  
 Who to Cologne has sent his dear  
 Nephew, a youth of tender years,  
 Who before the emperor appears,  
 To say his uncle now proclaims  
 No peace treaty can appertain  
 If his daughter is not on her way.  
 Any who think to steal her away  
 Had better not start their journey  
 Hoping to find the roads empty,  
 For those will be well defended,  
 If she is not at once surrendered.

### LINES 2871-3010 LOVE AT FIRST THWARTED

**T**HE young man spoke his words well,  
 Without insults or pride did spell  
 Out his message, but no answer  
 Did receive from knight or emperor;  
 When he found that all were silent,  
 To show disdain their sole intent,  
 He left the court defiantly.  
 But youth and love of chivalry,

Rouse Cligès to challenge him  
Before he doth part from them.  
In the contest there shall ride  
Three hundred on either side,  
So that the numbers are equal.  
None remain in the palace hall,  
Of he and she now emptied quite,  
For every lady and every knight  
Mount to the battlements to see,  
Fill every window and balcony,  
To gaze abroad, and so follow,  
The contest taking place below.  
Even the maiden, now vanquished  
By Amor, and shaped to his wish,  
All subject to his will, doth go  
And seat herself at the window,  
Looking on with great delight,  
Since she can view that knight  
Who holds her heart in thrall,  
Not wishing aught else at all,  
For she will love no other man.  
His name she knows not, the man,  
Nor his rank, nor yet his country,  
Since to enquire lacks courtesy;  
Yet would have any there impart  
Aught that brings joy to her heart.  
Through the window she doth behold  
The shields below that gleam with gold,  
And those who those shields do bear,  
As for the contest they prepare.  
But her thoughts and her gaze  
Are soon fixed upon one place,  
For her thoughts are of no other,  
On Cligès her looks must hover  
Her eyes follow where he goes,

And he for her strives below  
 To prove eminent in the fight,  
 So she might hear that her knight  
 Battles with courage and with skill,  
 And in every way doth compel  
 Her to prize him for his prowess.  
 The Duke's nephew he doth address,  
 Who, breaking many a Greek lance,  
 Against them doth himself advance:  
 But Cligès, whom all this annoys,  
 Braces himself, his spurs employs,  
 And strikes him at such a speed  
 That he, despite himself indeed,  
 Is thrown from the saddle-bows.  
 The noise was great as he arose.  
 The youth mounted once again,  
 Seeking now to erase the shame;  
 Yet many a man who seeks a chance  
 To erase his shame, doth it advance.  
 On Cligès doth the youth advance,  
 Who at him doth lower his lance.  
 And thrusts at him with such force  
 He's again unseated from his horse.  
 Now is all his shame redoubled,  
 While his followers, much troubled,  
 Perceive they cannot leave the field  
 With the honour the fight should yield;  
 For none of them is so valiant  
 If he is struck by Cligès' lance  
 That in the saddle he shall remain.  
 While those of Germany joy again  
 And those of Greece, when they see  
 Their party chase those of Saxony  
 From the field, all discomfited,  
 And scornfully all driven ahead,  
 Until they reach a flowing river,

Into which they plunge together.  
Cligès, amidst the water's course,  
Tips the Duke's nephew from his horse,  
And, after him, full many give way,  
Till, to their shame and their dismay,  
They escape, saddened and grieving.  
Cligès, joyful, is now, returning,  
Twice the victor, the prize bearing,  
And now the castle gate is nearing  
Below the window room, on high,  
Where the maid sits, as he goes by,  
And exacts as toll a tender glance,  
As their eyes meet as if by chance,  
Which he thus pays to the maiden.  
So is she conquered by the man.  
But nary a German, of any tongue,  
Who can speak, is not now stung  
To admiration: 'God, who is this,  
In whom such great beauty exists?  
Lord, how was all this realised,  
That he should win such a prize?  
Thus they all ask, both he and she:  
'What is this youth then, who is he?'  
Soon it is that through the city,  
Runs the news, in all its verity,  
His name, and that of his father,  
And the pledge that the emperor,  
Made to his father under oath.  
So much was said there of both,  
All that news the maid now had  
Which made her heart so glad;  
For she could no longer say  
That Love toyed with her always,  
Nor of him could she complain,  
For he had made her love plain;

The most courteous, brave, and fair  
 Knight to be met with anywhere.  
 Yet strength will be needed still,  
 For he's not free to obey her will;  
 Thus is she anguished and distraught,  
 For, regarding what's in her thought,  
 She has none to offer counsel,  
 But must waste herself in vigil.  
 And thought and vigil so afflict her,  
 She grows pale, and loses colour,  
 So that to all about tis clear,  
 Watching her colour disappear,  
 That she lacks what she longs for,  
 For she's less carefree than before,  
 Smiles less, and is less joyful;  
 Yet she hides her trouble well,  
 When any ask about the matter.  
 Her nurse's name was Thessala,  
 Who in childhood cared for her,  
 And was a skilled necromancer;  
 For this Thessala was acclaimed,  
 Being born in Thessaly, the same  
 Where diableries are wrought,  
 And there are likewise taught;  
 For the women of that country,  
 Work many a spell and mystery.

### LINES 3011-3062 THESSALA PROBES HER MISTRESS' ILLNESS

**T**HESSALA saw she was pale and wan,  
 She whom Love held in his bonds,  
 And offered up her counsel freely:  
 'My God,' she cried 'my sweet lady,

Could it be you are bewitched?  
So pale is your complexion, which  
Makes me wonder if aught ails you.  
Now tell me, if you can so do,  
Where this ill most affects you;  
For if any here can cure you,  
Tis I to whom you should entrust  
Your health, for recover it I must.  
I can cure you of the dropsy,  
And the asthma, and the quinsy,  
And I can cure you of the gout;  
The pulse too I know much about,  
And urine: you need see no other.  
For I know, I dare say, altogether  
More than ever Medea knew,  
Of charms and enchantments too,  
Of proven potency averred.  
Of this I've never said a word,  
Though I've cared for you till now,  
But pardon me that I so avow,  
For I'd never have mentioned it  
Did I not see the need for it;  
Finding that illness grips you so  
My help you need; that I know.  
My lady, I would now advise  
You to tell me, if you'd be wise,  
Of your sickness, ere it worsen.  
The emperor himself, in person,  
Placed you in my care, for safety,  
And I have guarded you so closely,  
I kept you always safe and sound.  
And yet all will prove unsound,  
Should I not cure your malady.  
Now, do not conceal from me  
If this is illness, or some other.'

The maiden dare not uncover  
All the truth of her longing  
Fearing lest that very thing,  
Bring disapproval and blame.  
Yet hearing now that this same  
Thessala boasts of being wise,  
And of enchantments is apprised,  
And of charms and of potions,  
She decides to yield the reason  
For the pallor showing there;  
But first she makes her swear  
To keep this secret forever,  
Nor disapprove of her ever.

**LINES 3063-3216 FENICE AND THESSALA  
CONSPIRE TOGETHER**

**N**URSE,' she said,' I truly thought  
I was not ill, no pain it brought;  
Yet I think I must be, surely,  
For when I touch upon it merely,  
I feel great pain and great dismay.  
Yet how without experience, pray,  
Can illness and health be told apart?  
My ill is not as others impart,  
Since if I wish to speak of it,  
I have both pain and joy of it,  
For it delights me in my distress;  
And if illness brings happiness,  
My affliction is my pleasure,  
And pain, of health, is the measure;  
Thus I know not why I complain,  
For I know not whence comes my pain

If it comes not from this pleasure.  
Perchance my longing is a measure  
Of ill, but longing brings such joy,  
Contentment lies in its employ,  
And such delight its pain brings me  
I suffer ill contentedly.  
My Thessala, is this not it,  
That illness plays the hypocrite,  
Seems so sweet yet works me ill?  
I see no way that I can tell  
If I am truly unwell or no.  
Nurse come tell me its name though,  
Its symptoms now and its nature.  
Yet understand I seek no cure  
For my illness, let that be clear,  
Since such sorrow to me is dear.  
Thessala, skilled in the malaise  
Of Love, and wise in all its ways,  
Understands by Fenice's words  
That it is love that troubles her.  
The tender terms she uses prove  
That, for certain, she is in love.  
For all ills are bitter, except  
That of love, which is adept  
At turning all its bitterness  
To sweetness and joyfulness,  
Then again to their contrary.  
But she who knew the malady,  
Replied: 'Have no fear, for I  
Will, of your ill, tell by and by  
Its name and nature together.  
You told me, but now, I gather,  
That the pain which you fear  
Doth like joy and health appear:  
Love's sickness is of such a brew,

It comes of joy and sweetness too.  
 You are in love, as I will prove,  
 For I have found only in love  
 Is illness found with sweetness.  
 Experience of all other sickness  
 Shows it to be wretched and sour,  
 But love is sweetness by the hour.  
 You are in love, of that I'm sure.  
 In that there is no wrong at all;  
 But I will think it villainy  
 If you should in idlest folly  
 Choose to hide your heart from me.'  
 'Nurse, that will never be,  
 If I am assured and certain  
 You'll not, whatever happens,  
 Speak of it to a living soul.'  
 'My lady, the winds that blow  
 Will sooner speak of it than I  
 Without your leave, I tell no lie;  
 And I will swear, in this instance,  
 All this, your cause, to advance,  
 For you may be sure, in this,  
 I will, indeed, serve your wish.'  
 'Nurse, you ease my mind today,  
 Yet my father gives me away,  
 Which grieves and troubles me,  
 For he who has captivated me,  
 Is nephew to him I must marry.  
 And if the latter should enjoy me,  
 Then all my joy is lost and gone,  
 And no respite may then be won.  
 I would rather be dismembered  
 Than that by us be remembered  
 The love of Tristan and Isolde,  
 Of whom many a folly is told  
 And whom it is shame to recall.

I could never accept at all  
Leading the life Isolde led.  
For by Love she was misled,  
Her heart was given to one alone,  
Yet to two was her body loaned.  
Thus indeed, her life was spent  
Denying neither, to all intent.  
Such Love as that's unreasonable,  
But mine will always be rational,  
For there will never, on my part,  
Be any sharing of body or heart.  
My body will not be so enjoyed,  
Nor in such service be employed.  
Who has my heart, has body too,  
All others he may banish from view.  
But yet I can see never a way  
For him to have my body always,  
He who has captured my heart,  
When I am compelled to depart,  
By a father I cannot oppose,  
And if that other, God knows,  
Does aught that I do not wish,  
It is not right that I call on this.  
Yet the other cannot be truly wed  
Without breaking his sworn pledge,  
For unless a great wrong is done,  
Cligès shall rule when he is gone.  
But, Nurse, if such is your art  
That he of me shall have no part,  
He to whom I'm wed – never,  
Then I shall be grateful forever.  
Nurse, do you such measures take,  
That he might not his pledge break,  
That he swore to Cligès' father,  
Where he undertook, moreover,

That he'd never possess a wife.  
He has sworn an oath on his life,  
And breaks it, in possessing me.  
Yet Cligès is not so hateful to me,  
That I'd not be buried rather  
Than that he should lose an iota  
Of the honour that he should see.  
May never a child be born to me,  
By whom he'd be disinherited,  
Nurse, now do for me as you said,  
And I shall then be yours forever.'  
So the nurse tells her and assures her,  
That she will undertake such spells,  
Enchantments, potions as well,  
She need trouble herself no more  
On marrying with the emperor,  
For even when they lie together,  
When she lies beside the other,  
She may feel as secure in all  
As if between them stood a wall;  
Yet must not be alarmed if he  
Finds all he desires in sleep,  
For whilst he slumbers deeply  
He shall slake his joy completely,  
And shall think that he, awake,  
All the joy he found did take.  
And never think it an illusion,  
Or a dream, and thus a fiction.  
'And so for ever and a day:  
Sleeping, he'll think to play.'

**LINES 3217-3250 FENICE'S MARRIAGE TO ALIS IS SOLEMNISED**

**T**HE maid was delighted by all this,  
Prizing her kindness and service.  
Her nurse had inspired hope in her,  
By the promise she had made her,  
And had bound herself to keep.  
Fenice thought from hope to reap  
Joy's reward, despite love's delays;  
Surely he must prove true, Cligès,  
When he knows how she loves him,  
And that she takes great joy in him,  
– So guarding her virginity  
As not to mar his destiny –  
And cannot fail to pity her,  
If he is as noble by nature  
As he indeed ought to be.  
So in her nurse she believes  
And puts all her faith in her:  
And one to the other doth swear  
They will keep their lips sealed,  
The secret never to be revealed.  
So their conversation ends,  
And when the sun ascends,  
The emperor doth his daughter demand.  
She goes to him, at his command.  
For all of the details, what need?  
The two emperors there agreed  
The whole matter, and as advised  
The marriage now is solemnised,  
And in the palace joy now reigns.  
Yet will I not waste my pains

In portraying every little detail:  
 For to Thessala returns my tale,  
 As diligently she sets in motion  
 The preparation of her potion.

### LINES 3251-3328 ALIS DRINKS THE POTION

**T**HIS potion Thessala blends,  
 She to the mixture spices lends,  
 To sweeten and to temper it;  
 After mixing and stirring it,  
 She strains it till all is clear,  
 Nothing sharp or bitter here,  
 For all the spices blent thus  
 Are both sweet and odorous.  
 The potion at last stands ready  
 As the sun completes his journey,  
 And now for supper all are met,  
 The cloths spread, the tables set;  
 Though the supper was delayed.  
 Thessala, with the potion made,  
 Must find some device, a method  
 By which it might be delivered.  
 All were seated now for supper,  
 A dozen dishes there moreover,  
 As Cligès now his uncle served.  
 Thessala, who all this observed,  
 Thought his service ill-advised,  
 Disinheritance its only prize;  
 She was troubled wretchedly,  
 And thus thought it a courtesy  
 That the potion be employed  
 By he who would its fruits enjoy.

So Thessala summons Cligès  
And on his approach she says,  
When he asks why Thessala  
Has now summoned him to her:  
‘Friend, I would, at this supper,  
Present a drink to the emperor,  
Which gives good cheer alway,  
So I ask you, by Saint Richier,  
Ensure that he drinks no other.  
I think he’ll not taste a better,  
It cannot fail to please greatly,  
Nor is there any known so costly.  
But I must warn you, beware  
That none other drink; take care,  
For there is little of it, as I know,  
And thus I beg of you, also,  
Say none knows whence it came,  
But by chance, you saw the same  
Among the pile of presents there,  
And smelt sweet spices on the air  
When you tasted it, and found  
That the drink was pure and sound,  
And since it appeared full clear  
Filled his cup with its good cheer.  
If he should wish then to enquire,  
Those words will answer his desire.  
And may you suspect no ill too,  
From all that I have said to you,  
For the drink is clear and sound,  
And within fine spices found,  
And in time to come, this drink  
Is sure to bring you joy, I think.’  
Hearing good from it would come,  
He took the potion, pouring some  
Into the emperor’s crystal glass

Thinking naught would come to pass,  
 And set it before the emperor,  
 Who took the glass for, as ever,  
 He placed great trust in his nephew;  
 Then he quaffed deep of the brew,  
 And at once he felt its strength,  
 From head to heart in its descent,  
 Then its ascent, from heart to head,  
 Such that all his body it wed,  
 Without working any trouble.  
 And when they rose from table,  
 The emperor had drunk so deep  
 That, intoxicated, in his sleep,  
 By this potion that gave pleasure,  
 He was from it delivered never,  
 While all thirsts he'd seem to slake,  
 And, sleeping, think himself awake.

### LINES 3329-3394 THE POTION TAKES EFFECT

**T**HUS the emperor was deceived.  
 Many a churchman he received,  
 Now, to bless the marriage-bed.  
 When night veiled the newly wed,  
 The emperor performed his duty,  
 And in the dark enjoyed her beauty;  
 Performed his duty? Nay, I lie,  
 For he embraced her not, say I,  
 Though they lay in bed together.  
 At first the maiden was bothered,  
 By fear, and great anxiety,  
 As regards the drink's efficacy.  
 But it caused such enchantment

That he would not now frequent  
Her or another, except in sleep,  
Where he did such pleasure reap  
As one is like to do in dream,  
Thinking true what doth but seem.  
Nevertheless she takes good care  
To distance herself from him there,  
So that he cannot close with her  
Before to sleep he doth surrender.  
He sleeps, dreams, thinks he's awake,  
And great efforts doth he make  
To win, in sleep, this maiden's favour,  
Though she perceives the danger,  
And defends her virginity;  
He calls to her, begs her sweetly  
Speaks to her as his dear friend,  
Thinks to clasp her, as he intends,  
In vain, and yet delights in nothing  
Holds and kisses some empty thing,  
Speaks to nothing, embraces naught  
Nor sees nor clasps what is sought,  
Struggles and strives to no effect.  
The potion was choice and elect  
In its work upon him, though,  
For this nothing afflicts him so  
That for truth he takes this error,  
Thinks he doth the fortress conquer,  
And when all weary he desists,  
Still so thinks, and credits this.  
Yet I will say, for once and all,  
No more than this to him shall fall.  
Like this he'll be condemned to play  
Forever, once he takes her away.  
But before they can leave in safety,  
I sense great obstacles they'll meet;

For while he seeks his land anew,  
 The duke whom she was promised to,  
 Will not sit by, as they pass through.  
 And a vast force he's gathered too,  
 And has garrisoned the frontiers,  
 While at the court his spies, all ears,  
 Seek to inform him, every day,  
 Of what is done and what men say.  
 And how long they intend to stay,  
 And when return, and by which way:  
 Thus he knows the route they're on.  
 Now, Alis, did not linger long  
 After his marriage, and promptly  
 From Cologne he parted happily,  
 While the emperor of Germany,  
 Escorted him with rich company,  
 For he ever went in fear and dread  
 Of those the Duke of Saxony led.

**LINES 3395-3424 CLIGÈS IS ATTACKED ON  
THE JOURNEY HOME**

**T**HE two emperors ride along  
 Till Regensburg is past and gone,  
 Pitching camp, when the sun is low,  
 By the Danube, in a green meadow.  
 The Greeks raise their tents, and rest  
 Bordering on the Black Forest,  
 While, opposite, those of Saxony  
 Can spy upon them, at their ease.  
 The Duke's nephew on high ground,  
 Where all was visible around,  
 Looked for a chance to inflict,

Some harm, forcing true conflict.  
There from his lookout point he saw  
Cligès, who made one of four;  
Brave youths who wished to disport  
Themselves, and had shields brought  
And lances, there to joust and play.  
Attack them and harm them, I say  
The nephew would, if he so could.  
His five companions, by a wood  
Deep in a valley, he concealed;  
Thus they failed to be revealed  
To the Greeks, till they emerged,  
From the valley and converged,  
With the nephew, in close attack,  
He wounding Cligès in the back,  
Though he was only hurt lightly,  
For, bowing, he inclined slightly,  
So that the lance, aimed too high,  
Brushed him, merely, as it passed by.

**LINES 3425-3570 CLIGÈS DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF  
IN THE FIELD**

**F**EELING the wound so dealt him,  
Cligès turned, and then pursued him;  
And struck the nephew such a blow  
He sent the lance, true as an arrow,  
Through his heart, and left him dead;  
At which his friends of Saxony fled,  
In fear of Cligès, and well they might;  
Through the forest they took flight.  
Unaware of their being spied upon,  
Brave Cligès foolishly follows on,

Leaving his companions behind,  
 Pursuing the foe to where, I find,  
 The Duke and his forces stand  
 Fully cognisant, there on hand,  
 Ready now to attack the Greeks.  
 Unaided, he the fugitives seeks,  
 Who saddened by what had ensued,  
 By the loss of the Duke's nephew,  
 Hastened thus to the Duke, to tell  
 Him of their tragic loss as well,  
 Weeping, and mourning deeply.  
 The Duke took the news gravely;  
 By God and His saints, he swore  
 He'd take joy and pride no more  
 In aught that occupied his days,  
 If one still lived and went his way,  
 Who had thus his nephew slain;  
 Adding that any who might gain  
 The man's head, and bring it there,  
 Would prove both friend and comforter.  
 At that a knight of his made claim  
 That he would work that very same,  
 If this Cligès could now be found.  
 Meanwhile Cligès makes his ground,  
 Approaching the men of Saxony,  
 And him now the knight doth see,  
 Who claims he will have his head,  
 Nor can he wait to strike him dead,  
 While Cligès has now turned about  
 To escape, at his enemies' shout,  
 And back, at the gallop, hastens  
 To where he left his companions,  
 But there finds not a single one  
 For they are all vanished and gone  
 To tell the host of their adventure.  
 And now, on the emperor's order

Both Greeks and Germans mount;  
In all the host, baron and count  
Are armed, and ready for the fight.  
Meanwhile the enemy knight  
Fully armed, his helmet laced,  
In hot pursuit of Cligès raced.  
Cligès, not wishing to appear  
A coward, nor touched by fear,  
Seeing the knight, who was alone,  
Called to him, in challenging tone.  
But first the knight did him annoy  
By addressing Cligès as 'boy',  
Being unable to hide his anger.  
'Boy,' he cried, 'leave me, here,  
A pledge for my lord you slew.  
If I fail to take the head from you,  
Then I'm not worth a false *bezant*.  
I wish to make the Duke a present  
Of that pledge, I'll accept no other.  
For his nephew's life, yours I'll render:  
He shall profit from the exchange.'  
Cligès, hearing him in this strain  
Of boastful and brazen offence,  
Cried: 'Vassal, look to your defence,  
For my head, that you claim of right,  
You shall not own without a fight.'  
Then each man doth attack his foe;  
He misses his aim, but Cligès' blow  
Strikes him so hard, he and his charger  
Sink, in a single heap, together,  
The horse falling across the knight  
And so heavily that, outright,  
His leg was shattered wholly.  
Cligès now descends swiftly  
To the green turf; and disarms

The knight, exchanging arms,  
 Prior to severing the man's head,  
 With the sword seized from the dead.  
 When the head he had removed,  
 He fixed it on his lance as proof,  
 Thinking to do the Duke a service  
 Whom his nephew had promised  
 To present with Cligès' own  
 If he could but fight him alone.  
 Now Cligès on his own head sets  
 The other's helm, his shield affects;  
 Not the arms which were his own,  
 But his whom he had overthrown,  
 And mounts himself on the charger  
 That had belonged to the other,  
 Allowing his steed to run astray,  
 And cause, indeed, his Greeks dismay.  
 Soon the advancing banners he saw,  
 Of a hundred squadrons and more  
 A mighty force, Greek and German;  
 Fierce, and cruel, and fully manned.  
 Cligès, perceiving his own ranks,  
 Now on those of Saxony advanced,  
 His friends on his side chasing after,  
 Not knowing him in his new armour,  
 And his uncle most discomforted  
 Since the rider bore a severed head  
 Atop his lance, and so he thought  
 It was Cligès' head, whom he sought;  
 No wonder he was filled with fear.  
 Now all the host ride at Cligès' rear,  
 And Cligès wishes to lead them on  
 To fight the battle he has begun,  
 Till those of Saxony see him close,  
 Yet they too now wrongly suppose  
 That he is theirs, from his armour.

Both sides mistake him, lost in error.  
Thus the Duke and all, at his advance  
In swift approach with levelled lance,  
Cry: 'Here comes our noble knight:  
Upon his lance, fresh from the fight,  
He bears the head of this Cligès;  
The Greeks pursue him and the rest;  
To horse now, and his flight sustain!'   
Thus they give their mounts full rein  
While Cligès spurs his charger on,  
Crouching behind his shield, anon,  
Lance levelled, the head his guerdon;  
For he was braver than Samson,  
Though no stronger, it may be said.  
Both parties think that he is dead,  
Greeks, Germans, those of Saxony:  
The latter rejoice, the former grieve.  
But the truth will out, by and by,  
For Cligès utters his battle-cry,  
And charges at those of Saxony,  
Striking his man on the head fiercely,  
Piercing his breast with ashen lance,  
Toppling him, in his swift advance,  
Shouting: 'Strike, my lords, at me,  
I am Cligès, whom you would see!  
On now, my bold and hardy knights!  
Let no man retreat from this fight;  
The first joust won, the rest now relish,  
The coward alone likes not this dish!'

## LINES 3571-3620 CLIGÈS MAKES OFF WITH THE DUKE'S HORSE

**T**HE emperor doth now rejoice,  
 On hearing his nephew's voice  
 Calling out in exhortation.  
 He is filled with quiet elation,  
 While the Duke is much dismayed,  
 On finding his cause betrayed,  
 Unless his force can win his thanks.  
 He ranges his men in serried ranks,  
 While the Greeks effect the same,  
 Ready to press close, and maim,  
 Stab at the flesh and pierce keenly.  
 The lances are lowered mutually,  
 Ready to deal blows and receive  
 In the true manner, heave for heave.  
 Thus at the first sharp encounter,  
 Shields are split and lances shatter,  
 Girths are cut, and stirrups break,  
 While many a horse must forsake  
 Its rider, fallen in that affair.  
 But whatever else happens there,  
 Cligès and the Duke must engage,  
 Extending their lances, they rage,  
 And strike, with such violence,  
 The other's shield, that their lance  
 Though finely-made and strong,  
 Flies in splinters broad and long.  
 Cligès is skilful in the saddle,  
 Fixed, unwaveringly, astraddle,  
 With no sign that he might fall,  
 While the Duke harm doth befall,

Despite himself he is unseated.  
Cligès, seeing him defeated,  
Tries to capture him by force,  
But his strength proves, perforce,  
Insufficient, the men of Saxony  
Rallying to the rescue swiftly.  
Nevertheless Cligès now flies,  
Escapes unharmed, with a prize,  
The Duke's steed with him doth go,  
Its colour whiter than the snow,  
And worth more to a nobleman,  
Than the wealth of Rome's Octavian.  
The horse was of Arabian breed,  
And seeing Cligès with the steed,  
Gave joy to his whole company,  
Who recognised the worth and beauty  
Of that white stallion from Araby,  
Though not the ruse of their enemy,  
Through which, before they are aware,  
Great damage will be done them there.

### **LINES 3621-3748 FENICE IS CAPTURED BY THE DUKE'S MEN**

**A**spy to the Duke now came  
With tidings to delight the same:  
'Sire,' he said, 'not one is left  
In the Greek camp but is bereft  
Of any means for his defence.  
The emperor's daughter I sense  
Could be seized from her tent  
While the Greeks are all intent  
On the wounded, or the fight.  
Lend me a hundred knights,

And you will have her today;  
For by an ancient hidden way  
I'll lead them there so secretly  
That not a man of Germany  
Will know of, or encounter, us,  
Till the maid from her tent thus  
They can seize and lead away,  
And not a man to say them nay.'  
This filled the Duke with delight,  
And more than a hundred knights  
He assigned the spy; this company,  
Being guided so fortunately,  
They seized the maiden in due course,  
Without employing brute force,  
But easily leading her away.  
Far from the tents, on their way,  
Twelve were detailed to escort her,  
The rest departing not long after,  
The twelve accompanying the maid,  
While the rest the news relayed  
To the Duke of their success.  
Since the Duke doth now possess  
What he desires, he doth agree  
A truce with the Greek enemy,  
The truce to last till the next day.  
The Duke's men then rode away,  
The Greeks without more ado  
Returning to their tents anew.  
But Cligès remained behind,  
On a hill where none would mind  
Him, till there came in sight  
The maiden and the twelve knights,  
Carrying her away swiftly.  
Cligès, in his lust for glory,  
Charged them, at a thought;  
Their flight is not for naught,

His heart and mind both agree.  
So, when he sees them flee,  
He spurs after them. But they  
Wrongly think that this may  
Be the Duke, for, by and by:  
'Reign in a moment,' they cry,  
'He has parted from the host,  
And after us alone doth post.'  
Not a man but thinks this so,  
All wish to greet him though,  
And turn around, one by one.  
Meanwhile Cligès had gone  
Into a dip between the hills,  
And might have lost them still,  
If they had not paused a while  
Nor ridden back, in single file.  
Six now ride to the attack,  
Each alone, as they turn back.  
The others lead the maiden on  
At a slow amble, they are gone,  
Or trotting onwards gently;  
While the first six spur briskly,  
Galloping along the vale,  
Till the swiftest came in hail,  
And seeing Cligès cried loudly:  
'God save the Duke of Saxony!  
My Duke, we now have the lady,  
No more the Greeks will she see,  
And now her to you we render.'  
When this shout, all in error,  
Cligès hears, this fellow's cry,  
His heart is much pained thereby.  
No wonder then if he is enraged,  
Never was wild beast, uncaged,  
Whether lion, tiger, leopard,

On seeing its cubs captured  
So stirred, angered so fiercely,  
Or roused to fight so ardently,  
As Cligès, who death doth vow,  
Should he abandon his love now.  
Better that he die than fail her,  
His distress spurs on his anger,  
His courage thus mounting higher.  
He spurred on the Arab charger  
And struck his enemy's shield  
With such force that it did yield;  
In truth, so great a blow did deal,  
That his foe's heart felt the steel.  
He spurs the Arab charger on  
A dozen rods and more is gone,  
Strengthened by his encounter,  
Until he meets a second comer,  
For they approach him singly,  
Each man attacking fearlessly.  
Thus Cligès fights them, one by one.  
And since each meets him alone,  
They cannot turn about for aid.  
A charge at the second he made,  
Who like the first thought to cry  
The news that Cligès must die,  
And take joy in it, as the other,  
But Cligès cares not for his chatter,  
Nor does he stop to hear him speak.  
Rather he thrusts his lance flesh deep,  
So the blood spurts on withdrawal,  
Stealing his foe's speech, life and all.  
After these two he meets the third,  
Who thinking to find him perturbed,  
And give him joy of his own fate,  
Spurs his mount against him straight,  
But before he can say a single word

Cligès runs his lance, by a third,  
Through the centre of his body.  
The fourth he strikes such a blow that he,  
Is left senseless on the ground.  
After the fourth a fifth is downed,  
And the sixth after number five;  
None strong enough to survive.  
He leaves them all silent, mute.  
Less afeared of the rest, in pursuit  
He presses more fiercely after them,  
Leaving behind him six dead men.

**LINES 3749-3816 CLIGÈS COMPLETES HIS DEFEAT  
OF THE TWELVE CAPTORS**

**S**UCCCEEDING in this, the first test,  
Cligès rides on to present the rest  
With a debt paid in shame and woe,  
As with the captive maid they go.  
Approaching them he makes assault  
As a lean and hungry wolf will vault  
All obstacles to reach its prey,  
Now he feels fate turned his way,  
Where he can show his chivalry  
And his bravery openly,  
Before one who is his delight.  
Now will he die, our brave knight,  
Or save her, while she's equally  
Close to dying, of anxiety,  
Not knowing he's so near to her.  
An attack Cligès now delivers,  
Lance couched, which pleases him,  
Striking one foe, then after him

Another, dashing to earth, again,  
 With a single charge, both of them,  
 While his ash lance splinters too,  
 As they, run through and through,  
 Fall to the ground in such great pain  
 They lack the will to rise again  
 And work him any harm or ill.  
 The other four attack him still,  
 Enraged they face Cligès together,  
 But he neither quails nor wavers,  
 Nor can they bring him to grief.  
 Swiftly drawing from its sheath  
 His sword, with sharpened blade,  
 Against a foe his charge he made,  
 In order that delight might move,  
 The one who waited on his love,  
 Striking with his sword fiercely  
 Such that he severed from the body  
 Half the man's neck, and the head,  
 His sense of pity now limited.  
 Fenice who had watched all this,  
 Had not yet recognised Cligès;  
 She wished that it might be he,  
 Yet, such the peril, she could see  
 That might seem a foolish notion.  
 Thus she showed her deep devotion,  
 Feared his death, but sought his honour.  
 Thus Cligès faces his attackers,  
 Who fight bravely, nor will yield,  
 But splinter and hole his shield;  
 Yet, trying to down him, they fail,  
 Nor can they pierce his iron mail;  
 While when Cligès strikes his foe,  
 Naught remains beneath the blow;  
 Moving faster than top doth skip  
 Lashed and driven by the whip,

He leaves all torn and split apart.  
Skill, and the love within his heart,  
Render him steadfast in the fray:  
The men of Saxony, in that melee,  
He pressed so hard, all were dead  
Or their spirits were almost fled.  
To one alone he grants escape,  
Showing him mercy, face to face,  
Who to the Duke might tell the tale  
Of woe, how their attempt did fail.

### LINES 3817-3864 THE LOVERS' DIFFIDENCE

**L**EARNING thus of the disaster  
The Duke feels great grief and anger.  
Cligès with Fenice doth remain,  
Love of whom is trouble and pain.  
Yet if he does not now confess  
His love, he'll know endless distress,  
And she, should she fail to employ  
The words that will bring him joy;  
For they can grant mutual audience  
To the workings of the inner sense,  
Yet he fears she may refuse him,  
While she would speak all to him,  
But dreads lest he may her refuse;  
Although their eyes would accuse  
Each other of their secret thought,  
If of them they had heeded aught.  
Their eyes converse at a glance,  
But their tongues in this instance  
Prove cowards, fearing to speak  
Of the love that doth them pique.

And yet if she dare not begin,  
 (For an innocent, fearful thing  
 A maid must be, tis no wonder)  
 Why doth Cligès stand yonder,  
 Who fought so bravely but now,  
 Yet once alone with her is cowed?  
 My God, whence comes his fear,  
 Of an innocent maid, a mere  
 Lone girl, timid, weak and mild?  
 As if our eyes were now beguiled  
 By the hound that flees the hare;  
 The fawn that terrifies the bear,  
 The lamb the wolf, the dove the hawk;  
 The peasant scorning his pitchfork,  
 With which he has to earn a living;  
 The hawk from the pigeon fleeing,  
 The falcon flying from the heron,  
 A pike that doth the minnows shun,  
 The stag behind, and the lion first,  
 And all things turned to their reverse.  
 So I feel the desire in me,  
 To reason on this mystery,  
 As to why lovers lose all sense,  
 All their courage held in suspense,  
 And fail to say what's in their mind,  
 Though the perfect time and place they find.

### LINES 3865-3914 ON LOVE AND FEAR

**A**ll you, wise in the ways of Love,  
 Who the manners and forms approve  
 Of his wide court, most faithfully,  
 Upholding his laws, most loyally,

Whatever he may inflict on you,  
Tell me if aught is known to you  
That, born of love, delights us here,  
Yet brings not trembling and fear.  
If any deny me their assent,  
I'll yet refute their argument;  
For unless we tremble in fear,  
And sense and memory disappear,  
We are seeking to obtain by stealth  
What by right is another's wealth.  
A servant who fears not his master  
Should never in his employ linger,  
Nor seek to labour in his service.  
Fear's wedded to esteem in this:  
Lack of esteem means lack of love,  
Which deceit doth quickly prove,  
By stealing what is not its own.  
The servant with fear should groan,  
If his master's service so demands;  
And who is under Love's command  
Owns him as his lord and master:  
Tis right that he does him honour,  
Fears and serves with due reverence,  
If he would maintain a true presence  
At his court. For Love without fear,  
Doth like chill flameless coals appear,  
Day without sun, flowerless summer,  
A honey-less hive, a frostless winter,  
A moonless night, a book sans letters.  
And so my logic must all prefer:  
If fear doth not direct intention,  
Love is hardly worth a mention.  
Who would love, must know fear,  
Or Love himself will not appear;  
But he must fear his love alone,

And for her sake defend his own.  
 So no wrong did Cligès do,  
 In fearing his love, tis true.  
 Even so he'd not have failed  
 To speak, and thus his love regaled  
 With fair words of love, outright,  
 Despite all, and come what might,  
 If she'd not been his uncle's wife.  
 This the wound that plagues his life,  
 And grieves and pains the more, that he  
 Dare not utter what he'd speak.

### LINES 3915-3962 CLIGÈS AND FENICE RETURN TO THE CAMP

**S**O to their own camp they return.  
 And if to speak of aught they turn  
 It is to little of great import.  
 Each mounted on a spirited horse,  
 They ride to their people swiftly,  
 Who are lost in sorrow wholly.  
 The whole host is plunged in grief,  
 But they are wrong in their belief  
 Who think that Cligès is dead.  
 That is the cause of all their dread,  
 And Fenice's fate doth them pain,  
 Thinking never to win her again.  
 So for him, and for her no less,  
 The whole host is in great distress.  
 But the aspect of the whole affair  
 Must alter once they are there,  
 And as they reach the camp again,  
 Then new joy cometh after pain.  
 Joy returns and sorrow flies,

As all come to feast their eyes,  
The whole host quickly gather.  
Both the emperors together  
On hearing of the glad tidings,  
Of Cligès and the maid arriving,  
Go out to meet them joyfully.  
And each of them can barely  
Wait to hear of how Cligès  
Has rescued the new empress.  
Cligès tells them, and listening  
They both marvel at the thing,  
Praising his courage and devotion,  
But the Duke's contrary emotion,  
Is such that he determines, swears,  
To fight with Cligès, if he dares,  
The duel to be between the two,  
And there to be a condition too,  
That if this Cligès wins the fight  
The emperor shall proceed aright,  
And freely take with him the maid,  
While if Cligès he beats or slays,  
Who has worked him great injury,  
No truce or stay shall there be,  
But each shall after do his will.  
This the Duke would see fulfilled,  
And ensures that his interpreter,  
With Greeks and Germans doth confer,  
Such that the two emperors know,  
He'd wish the contest handled so.

## LINES 3963-4010 CLIGÈS ACCEPTS THE DUKE'S CHALLENGE

**T**HE interpreter gave his message,  
 In one and then the other language,  
 So all might clearly understand.  
 The whole army took their stand,  
 Proclaiming God forbid Cligès  
 Should in such a duel engage:  
 While the emperors having learned  
 Of the challenge are concerned.  
 But Cligès kneels at their feet,  
 Telling them not to fear defeat,  
 But that if he had e'er pleased them,  
 He prays he might fight for them,  
 As a guerdon, and as his reward.  
 For if his plea be now ignored,  
 He cannot aid his uncle further,  
 Nor serve his cause, nor his honour.  
 Alis who held his nephew dear,  
 As he ought, was most sincere  
 Raising him swiftly by the hand,  
 Saying: 'Dear nephew, understand,  
 It grieves me that you wish this so,  
 That after joy we attend on sorrow.  
 That you pleased me I'll not deny,  
 Yet it must force from me a sigh  
 To send one yet so young, thus  
 Into battle to fight for us.  
 Yet I know your heart's so high,  
 There's not a thing I can deny,  
 That you are pleased to demand.  
 Know, solely at your command

Shall this be done, so go forth,  
But if my prayer is of any worth,  
You will turn from battle today.'  
'Sire, plead with me no more, I pray,'  
Cried Cligès, 'may God confound me,  
If I should win the world before me,  
Yet shirk to undertake this feat.  
And why then should I further seek  
Respite from it, or long delay?'  
The emperor then, giving way,  
Wept with pity, while Cligès  
Wept with joy, at his success.  
Many a tear is shed that day,  
They ask no respite, or delay;  
The Duke's own messenger goes  
Before prime, and doth disclose  
That the challenge is accepted  
As the Duke himself expected.

**LINES 4011-4036 CLIGÈS ARMS HIMSELF AS  
THE WHITE KNIGHT**

**T**HE Duke is quietly confident  
That Cligès will ne'er prevent  
Death or disaster at his hands;  
Armed and ready now he stands.  
Cligès, who awaits the fight,  
For all that, trusts in his might,  
Sure of acquitting himself well.  
Arms that may the Duke repel  
He asks of the emperor, of right,  
And that he dub him now a knight.  
The emperor grants him armour;

He takes the gift, battle-eager,  
Much desiring to bring it on;  
Swiftly all that armour he dons.  
Once he is armed, head to toe,  
The emperor filled with sorrow,  
Girds the sword at Cligès' side;  
The white Arab steed he'll ride.  
Now Cligès mounts, in full armour,  
Round his neck, on straps of leather,  
He hangs his shield, white ivory,  
Not to be shattered easily,  
And free of emblem or design.  
All his armour white doth shine,  
And the harness, and the charger,  
All are white as snow, and whiter.

### LINES 4037-4094 BATTLE COMMENCES

**CLIGÈS** and the Duke are mounted.  
Each to the other had suggested,  
That they should meet half-way,  
And their companies should stay  
Beside, without sword or lance;  
And should this pledge advance  
That each of them standing there,  
During the space of this affair,  
Would no more move, whate'er his wish,  
Than he would an eye relinquish.  
This agreed, they met together,  
Each of them ready and eager  
To win the conflict gloriously,  
And know the joy of victory.  
But before a blow was dealt,



*'And the guards now all in place,  
Each of them his lance doth take'  
Idylls of the King (p32, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
Internet Archive Book Images*

Fenice came there, since she felt,  
Concerned to know Cligès' fate,  
For it had seemed to her of late  
If he were dead, then she must die;  
For no comfort would be nigh  
To stop her joining him in death;  
Naught without him worth a breath.  
With the audience there, all told,  
High and low, young and old,  
And the guards now all in place,  
Each of them his lance doth take,  
And charge, so their lances shatter,  
As with force they clash together.  
And, unable to keep their seat,  
Both fall to the ground beneath.  
Yet as neither man was wounded  
To their feet they swiftly bounded.  
They run at the foe without delay;  
While on their helmets they play  
Such a tune with their swords,  
To the onlookers it affords  
The sight of their helms on fire,  
The sparks struck flying higher.  
For when those swords rebound  
Glittering sparks fly, at the sound,  
Like those from the smoking steel  
When the blacksmith's anvil peals,  
As he beats metal from the furnace.  
Both these warriors are generous  
In dealing a myriad of blows,  
And each intends, as he shows,  
To give back what he receives;  
The one and the other heaves  
Repaying, without count, all  
Both interest and capital,  
Promptly, and without respite.

But the Duke is troubled quite  
Filled with anger and distress  
That, in the first assault, Cligès,  
Has neither been killed nor yielded.  
He deals Cligès a blow, wielded  
With such wondrous force, that he  
Falls, before him, on his knees.

**LINES 4095-4138 FENICE FAINTS WHILE  
WATCHING THE FIGHT**

**WHEN** this fierce blow downed Cligès,  
The emperor was much distressed,  
No less than if he, in the field,  
Were himself behind the shield  
Of him to whom it had occurred.  
Nor could Fenice prevent a word  
Escaping; so dismayed was she,  
That she cried out: 'Saint Marie!  
As loudly as it might be uttered,  
But only that one cry was heard,  
Before her voice failed her wholly,  
And, fainting, she fell awkwardly,  
While slightly bruising her face.  
Two noblemen helped her apace,  
And raised her to her feet, while she  
Regained her thoughts completely.  
And yet none who saw her guessed  
Despite her seeming so distressed,  
The reason why she had fainted.  
And not a man there blamed her,  
But rather they were full of praise,  
For each one there thought someday

She might for him feel the same  
 As Cligès whom her pity claimed;  
 But as to that they were in error.  
 When Fenice cried out in terror,  
 Cligès heard her, and was aware  
 Of her voice, and its note of care,  
 For leaping to his feet bravely,  
 He attacked the Duke strongly,  
 And so seemingly unafraid  
 That the Duke was now dismayed.  
 For now he found him fiercer still,  
 Strong, agile, keen to show his skill;  
 More so it seemed than when first  
 They had met to wage their worst.  
 Because he now feared his fury,  
 He cried: 'Young man, God save me,  
 I see you prove both bold and true,  
 And if it were not for my nephew,  
 Whom I am sworn never to forget,  
 I could make peace with you yet,  
 And quit all this dispute with you,  
 And scorn to trouble you anew.

### LINES 4139-4236 THE DUKE MAKES PEACE WITH CLIGÈS

**'DUKE**, which path will you choose',  
 Cligès cried, 'must a man not lose  
 A right of choice he can't recover?  
 And must he not choose the lesser  
 Of two evils with which he's faced?  
 When he thought after me to chase,  
 Your nephew indeed was not wise  
 And I shall treat yourself likewise,

As I will do now, if I so please,  
Unless you agree my terms of peace.’  
With Cligès, launched or in defence,  
Grown in strength and confidence,  
The Duke decides he’d best desist,  
Before he lacks strength to resist,  
And halt the fight in mid-career,  
Before aught worse doth appear,  
And he is sent on an evil road.  
Nevertheless, he does not show  
The bitter truth of this openly:  
‘Young man,’ he says, ‘you I see  
Are noble, true, full of courage,  
Yet still are of quite tender age,  
Such that it doth appear to me,  
That if I killed or injured thee,  
I should gain but small success,  
Nor would I wish to confess  
To any, expert in chivalry,  
That I had battled against thee,  
To your honour, and my shame.  
But, if honour you would claim,  
A mighty honour, all your days,  
’Twill be that you held me at bay  
For two whole rounds in this fight.  
Heart and mind now speak aright:  
That I end the quarrel is their plea,  
And thus no longer fight with thee.’  
‘Duke,’ said Cligès, ‘that will not meet  
My need; all this you must repeat  
Openly, for it must ne’er be said  
You granted grace to me instead,  
Or that you showed mercy to me.  
In the presence of both companies  
You must say all you said to me,

If reconciled you'd seek to be.'  
 The Duke, agreeing, did so record,  
 And they established their accord.  
 But, however it might be regarded,  
 To Cligès all honour was awarded,  
 And the Greeks were thus delighted.  
 Yet those of Saxony felt slighted,  
 Having viewed their lord but now  
 Wearied quite, with head bowed;  
 For there was but little doubt  
 That had he not been worn out,  
 Peace would ne'er have been won,  
 And Cligès' spirit swiftly gone  
 From out his body, if possible.  
 The Duke repaired to his citadel,  
 Sad, downcast, filled with shame,  
 For none now but must maintain  
 That he'd been utterly defeated,  
 Disgraced, and thoroughly worsted.  
 Those of Saxony, full of shame,  
 Retreat to Saxony again,  
 While the Greeks, quickly turn  
 And to Constantinople return,  
 In great joy and great delight,  
 For Cligès, their brave knight,  
 Has opened the way for them.  
 No longer now escorting them,  
 The emperor of Germany,  
 Takes leave of all the company,  
 Of Cligès and of his daughter,  
 Last of Alis, and then close after  
 His return to his palace follows.  
 While the Greek emperor goes  
 On his way, filled with delight.  
 Cligès, that brave and courteous knight,  
 Reflects now on his father's orders;

Of his uncle, the emperor,  
He must now request consent  
To go to Britain, so present  
Himself before him, seeking  
To visit his great-uncle, the king,  
Whom he would both see and know.  
Before the emperor then, he goes  
And makes request, submits a plea,  
That he be allowed to take leave,  
To see his great-uncle in Britain.  
He spoke most courteously again,  
But his uncle steadfastly denied  
Him his request, and thus replied,  
When he had listened to his plea:  
'Fair nephew,' he said, 'it pains me  
That you desire so to depart.  
This leave, this request to part,  
I never could grant without regret:  
It is my pleasure and my wish yet,  
That my comrade you should be  
And rule the empire, alongside me.'

**LINES 4237-4282 CLIGÈS PLEADS FOR  
LEAVE TO VISIT BRITAIN**

**N**OW Cligès is much dismayed  
When his uncle reply has made,  
To his plea, denying him leave.  
'Sire,' he says, 'most dear to me;  
Neither wise nor versed in chivalry  
Enough am I, that any with me  
The work of government should share,  
Or the burden of the empire's care.

I am young, and lack experience.  
 They put gold to the test, hence  
 They prove if that metal is fine.  
 And I now wish to assay mine,  
 And prove myself by such a test,  
 There where I may, among the best.  
 For in Britain, the brave may hone  
 Themselves on a true whetstone:  
 If I am brave, by that true test  
 I too may prove my own prowess.  
 For in Britain are the noblemen  
 Of honour and of prowess blent;  
 And he who honour would gain  
 In such company should remain.  
 Honour he'll have, and will gain  
 Who their company doth attain.  
 To travel there I seek your leave,  
 And if you grant it not, believe,  
 That if, in denying your consent,  
 You seek my journey to prevent,  
 I will depart without your leave.'  
 'Fair nephew, I grant you leave,  
 Seeing indeed from your manner,  
 That I cannot by force or prayer,  
 Retain you here, and at my side.  
 May God grant that you not abide  
 There, and that you wish to return.  
 Since my prohibition cannot earn  
 A change of heart, nor force nor prayer,  
 Of gold and silver a full measure  
 I would have you take with you,  
 And horses for your pleasure too,  
 I give to you to ride when there.'  
 On hearing his speech so fair,  
 Cligès thanked him graciously,  
 And all that the emperor indeed

Intended, and had granted him,  
Was then swiftly brought to him.

**LINES 4283-4574 FENICE REFLECTS ON CLIGÈS' DEPARTURE**

**CLIGÈS** had all that Alis promised;  
The companions too that he wished.  
And for his use selected too  
Four horses of differing hue;  
Sorrel, dun, black and white.  
But I have passed over quite  
Something I should not omit;  
For Cligès now thought fit  
To ask leave of Fenice, seeking  
To place her in God's safe-keeping.  
Once before her, on his knees,  
He sheds tears so bitterly,  
Robe and tunic are drowned,  
His eyes fixed on the ground,  
Not daring to raise them higher,  
As though he hath conspired  
To commit some crime towards her,  
And thus from shame doth suffer.  
While Fenice, gazing silently,  
Timidly and fearfully,  
Knows not why he is there.  
She speaks with difficulty: 'Fair,  
Friend, rise now, dear brother!  
Sit beside me, weep no further,  
And tell me all your pleasure.'  
'Lady, what then shall I utter?  
I come to ask leave of you so,  
Because to Britain I must go.'

‘Tell me then why you believe,  
 You must come to seek my leave.’  
 ‘Lady, before my father died,  
 He begged me, with his last sigh,  
 To obey him, and for my sake,  
 The journey to Britain undertake,  
 As soon as I was made a knight.  
 And since indeed it must be right  
 Ne’er to ignore such a request,  
 I must not falter in that quest,  
 Until I have so journeyed there.  
 And as Greece is far from where  
 We are, and if I travel to Greece,  
 The distance would only increase,  
 That I must travel to reach Britain,  
 I should ask your leave for certain,  
 As one who is yours completely.’  
 Many a sob and sigh, covertly,  
 Marked these two lovers’ parting,  
 But neither was there any hearing,  
 Nor any sight sharp enough  
 To know with any certain proof,  
 That there was truth in the thought  
 That between the two was aught.  
 Cligès, despite his pain and grief,  
 Now seizes the first chance to leave;  
 He is thoughtful as he sails away,  
 Alis too, but, of those who stay,  
 Fenice is the most pensive of all,  
 To her there seems no end to all  
 The thoughts with which she’s occupied  
 Such are her cares multiplied;  
 And pensive still on reaching Greece.  
 The honour shown her doth increase,  
 As their noblest lady and empress;  
 But her heart rests still with Cligès,

And all her hopes, where'er he be,  
And ne'er her heart's return doth she  
Desire, unless he that brings it her  
Is dying of the ill that's killing her;  
If he recovers then so will she,  
Yet he can never a victim be,  
Without her proving one also.  
Her illness in her face doth show,  
For it is changed, pallid in colour;  
From her face, with all its pallor,  
Is lost all the fresh, clear, pure  
Colour granted her by Nature.  
She often weeps, often sighs,  
Little the empire doth she prize,  
Nor all the honour shown to her.  
Cligès, she doth ever remember,  
How she saw his face alter,  
And the tears, and his pallor.  
How he had wept before her,  
As if compelled to adore her,  
Humbly, simply, on his knees.  
All this is pleasant and sweet  
To recall and to contemplate.  
And then, as a sweet aftertaste,  
Instead of spice, on her tongue  
She shapes the word that hung  
On his lips, that not for all Greece  
Would she now have him cease  
To use in the way he had, truly,  
For she lives on no other dainty,  
And nothing else pleases her so.  
That word sustains her though,  
For it can assuage all her ills.  
No other food or beverage will  
She, so often, seek and taste;

For when Cligès left in haste,  
 He said he was hers 'completely'.  
 The word is so good that, sweetly,  
 From the tongue to heart it flows,  
 Thus she savours it, in repose,  
 In order to render it more sure.  
 Nor would she dare to secure  
 That treasure with another key;  
 Nor could it be held so closely  
 In any place but in her heart;  
 Nor will she let it stand part  
 From herself, for fear of thieves;  
 Yet need not fear their deceits,  
 Nor cry out on birds of prey,  
 For she possesses it alway;  
 And it is like some edifice  
 That no harm can prejudice,  
 Nor flood nor fire can deface  
 Never moved from its true place.  
 Yet she still lacks confidence,  
 For she strives to make good sense  
 Of her state, and understand  
 How all of the matter stands,  
 Reading it in various ways.  
 These arguments she displays  
 For and against his position:  
 'What then could be the reason  
 For Cligès to say 'completely',  
 If Love did not prompt him to?  
 What power have I then to rule  
 Him, that he should prize me so  
 And make me mistress of his heart?  
 Does he not play a nobler part;  
 Is he not fairer far than I?  
 Naught but Love can I descry,  
 That could grant me such honour.

As one subject to Love's power,  
I'll show he'd not, unless he loved me,  
Claim to be mine 'completely';  
No more indeed than I should be  
All his, if Love, it seems to me,  
Had not placed me in his hands;  
Nor would Cligès, as I understand,  
Confess he was all mine, unless  
Amor now held him, under duress.  
If he loved not, he'd show no fear.  
I hope Amor, who gives me here  
To him, likewise grants him to me.  
Yet I am still troubled, frequently;  
The thought is often used in quite  
A trivial way, and so seems trite.  
For there is many a flatterer  
Who'll say, to a total stranger:  
'I, and all I have, am yours',  
In idle chatter, like a jackdaw's,  
So I'm filled with uncertainty,  
For it might be perhaps that he  
Said the words merely to flatter;  
And yet I saw his colour alter,  
And saw him weep piteously.  
In my judgement, thus to be  
So changed in face and pale,  
Indicates no treacherous tale,  
No treachery there or trickery.  
Those eyes told no lie to me,  
From which I saw the tears fall.  
For if I know aught at all,  
I saw the very signs of love:  
Yes, that sickness I approved;  
Woe I had of it, and have still,  
My mischance it proved, and will.

Mischance? In truth, God wot,  
 For I die when I see him not,  
 Who has stolen my heart from me,  
 By fawning, and by flattery.  
 Through his flattery and fawning,  
 My heart is lost from its dwelling,  
 And doth its habitation shun,  
 Avoiding me, and my mansion.  
 By my faith, he's mistreated me,  
 Who holds my heart in captivity.  
 Who steals what is mine, ah no,  
 He cannot love me, well I know.  
 Know? Why then all his tears?  
 Why? Unsurprising it appears,  
 He had good reason, certainly.  
 I must not think they were for me.  
 For parting from all we know,  
 Will frequently distress us so.  
 Thus in leaving those he knew  
 If he was sad and troubled too,  
 And wept, well that is no marvel.  
 But he who offered him this counsel,  
 That he should go dwell in Britain,  
 Could not have been, this is certain,  
 Crueller to me; my heart is flown;  
 Ill must be theirs who lose their own,  
 But I have deserved none of this.  
 Alas, and woe, why should Cligès  
 Have slain me who am innocent?  
 Yet why charge him of ill intent?  
 For I have no reason so to do.  
 Cligès would not, in my view,  
 Deign to act thus, at any time,  
 If his own heart were matched with mine.  
 But matched with mine it cannot be.  
 For if with mine it kept company

Mine would never part from his,  
Nor his depart now without mine,  
For mine would follow his covertly,  
They form such goodly company.  
And yet, I would say, in all verity,  
That they are diverse and contrary.  
How are they contrary and diverse?  
His is the master and mine serves,  
The servant has no will of their own,  
But obeys the master's will alone,  
And so forsakes all other affairs.  
For my concerns he hath no care,  
Nor for my heart, nor my service.  
It troubles me sorely then, all this;  
One serves, the other rules both.  
Why to serve me is my heart loth,  
While his heart serves him alone;  
Why are not equal powers shown?  
My heart is captive, not to move,  
Unless his own its motion prove.  
And whether his heart goes or stays  
Mine, it seems, is prepared always,  
To pursue, so follow after his heart.  
My God, why are our bodies apart,  
So, I cannot my own heart retrieve,  
In some manner I might conceive?  
Retrieve it? Ah, what foolish folly,  
To remove it from sweet ease wholly,  
Would indeed its death soon prove.  
Let be! I'd not wish for its remove,  
But with its lord it should remain,  
Till he feels some pity for its pain,  
For rather than here, tis there, that he  
To his servant should show mercy,  
Since both dwell in a foreign land.

If my heart doth flattery understand,  
 As one must do to serve at court,  
 Twill do well ere it again reach port.  
 Who'd wish to stand well with their lord,  
 And sit on his right hand at board,  
 Must, as custom doth now assume,  
 From his own cap remove the plume.  
 Though it may have no plume at all.  
 But here is the sore point, I recall,  
 For while he smooths him outwardly,  
 Though his lord may own inwardly  
 Naught but ill-will and villainy,  
 He'll never pay him the courtesy  
 Of saying so, but will ever swear  
 That none with him could compare,  
 In depth of wisdom or prowess.  
 He'll let him think he doth confess  
 The truth. For though he is a bear  
 In manners, or cowardly as a hare,  
 Mean, or foolish, or knock-kneed,  
 Or a villain both in word and deed,  
 He will praise his lord to his face,  
 Who behind his back calls him base;  
 And will praise him in his hearing,  
 When to another he is speaking,  
 Though his lord feigns not to hear  
 What either of them says, I fear;  
 Yet, if his lord cannot so hear,  
 Then at his master he will jeer;  
 And if his master seeks to lie,  
 He with that wish will comply.  
 Who lords and courts doth frequent  
 To the ready lie must give consent.  
 So must my heart meet the case,  
 If it would garner its lord's grace;  
 It must be obsequious and flatter.

Yet Cligès asks no such matter;  
A knight so open, fair and true,  
Needing naught false or untrue  
From my heart, to sing his praise,  
For naught is ill in him, it says.  
Thus my heart shall him serve,  
For as we say in our proverb:  
'Tis a wretched servant fails to be  
Improved in his lord's company.'

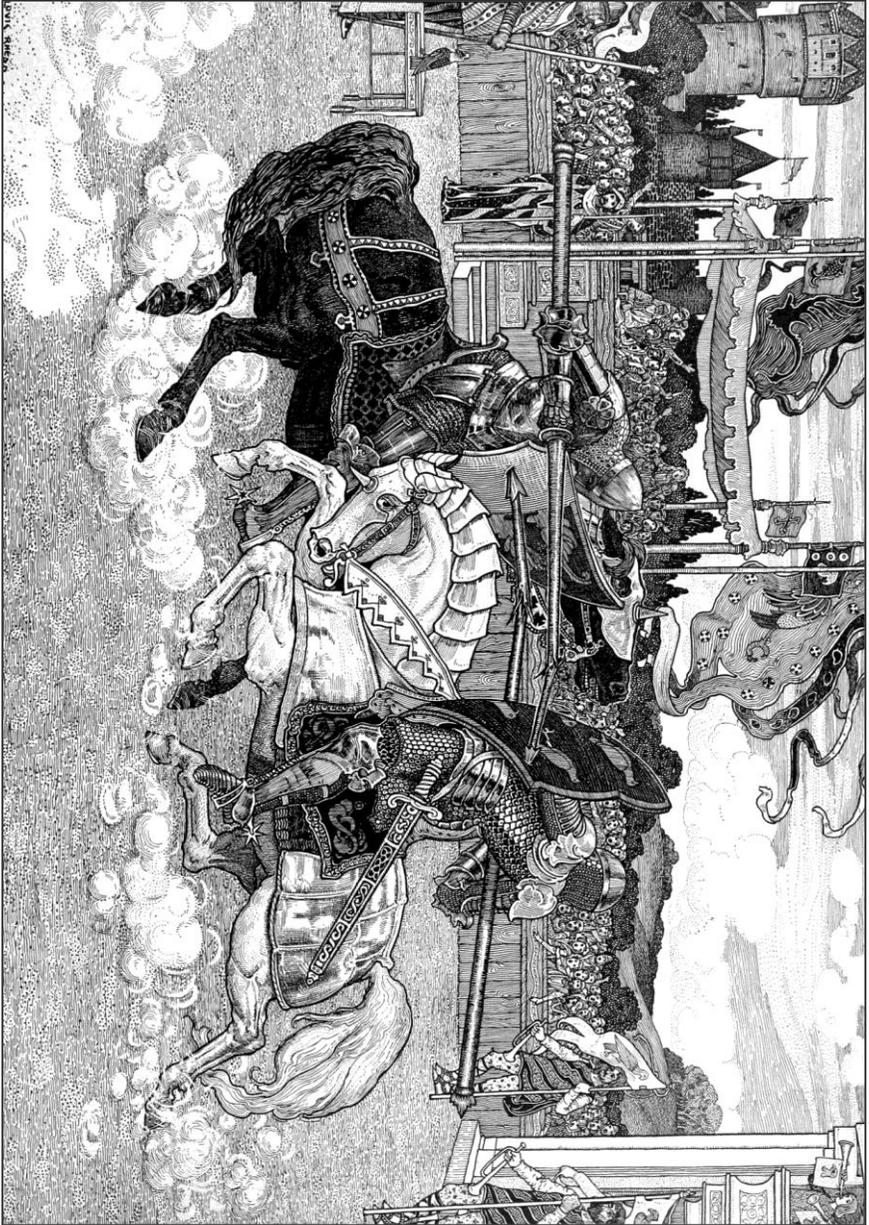
**LINES 4575-4628 CLIGÈS PREPARES FOR A  
TOURNAMENT AT OXFORD**

**T**HUS Amor torments Fenice,  
Yet it delights her completely,  
This torment that never wearies.  
While Cligès in his travels is  
Come at last to Wallingford;  
Occupies lodgings and board,  
At great expense, in fine style.  
But thinks of Fenice the while,  
Nor forgets her for a single day.  
While there he cultivates delay,  
His men are given to understand,  
On enquiring at his command,  
For it indeed is told them often,  
That King Arthur's noblemen,  
It being also the king's intent,  
Have appointed a tournament.  
On the plain in front of Oxford,  
Which lies north of Wallingford,  
The parties are to make assay,  
And the whole to last four days.

Now Cligès while staying there  
Has ample time still to prepare,  
And buy aught that he must get,  
For a fortnight must pass as yet,  
Before the start of this tourney.  
At once three squires journey  
To London at his command,  
There to buy, they understand,  
Three sets of arms of different colour,  
One black, one red, the other  
Green, and each set of arms he  
Ordered, on their way, to be  
With some plain cloth covered,  
So if any on the road hovered  
About them, he should not know  
What hue the arms were below.  
The squires take their way, and  
Reach London, and find to hand  
The equipment that they require.  
All being done, they then retire;  
Returning swiftly as they can.  
The arms, purchased thus to plan,  
Shown to Cligès, win them praise.  
He has these arms hidden away,  
With all those that the emperor  
Had given him, by Danube's shore,  
When Cligès was knighted there.  
All were now concealed with care,  
But if you ask me to say why,  
I will not tell you yet, say I,  
For I will tell you, and explain,  
When at the tourney on the plain,  
The highest nobles of the land,  
In search of fame, are all on hand.

**LINES 4629-4726 CLIGÈS FIGHTS, ANONYMOUSLY,  
IN HIS BLACK ARMOUR**

**KING** Arthur with his finest knights  
Whom he had chosen for the fight,  
Before Oxford, now took his stand,  
While near Wallingford, as planned,  
Ranged most of the other chivalry.  
Think you now, I should delay me,  
By telling you how, in this affair:  
‘This king was here, this count was there,  
And so, and so, and so, were present.’?  
As was the custom, now was sent  
From out the massed gathering, then,  
Between the assembled lines of men,  
A knight of outstanding bravery  
One of King Arthur’s company,  
To commence the tournament,  
But none advanced their intent  
To joust, from the other party,  
All held back from the tourney.  
And there were those who asked:  
‘Why are none of our party tasked  
With riding from the ranks to fight,  
Surely we will confront this knight?’  
While others answered promptly:  
‘Do you not see what an adversary  
The other side have sent forth?  
Who does not know he is worth  
Three of the best knights here,  
Will quickly learn of it, I fear.  
‘Who is he then?’ ‘Do you not see,



*'He looks most skilful, this knight,  
and see, he bears his arms aright'  
Idylls of the King (p26, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
Internet Archive Book Images*

Sagramor the Destroyer, is he.'  
'That is he?' 'Yes, most certainly.'  
Cligès hears this, mounted quietly  
On Morel, his charger; blacker  
Than a mulberry is his armour;  
For all his armour is jet black.  
He rides forth to the attack,  
Spurs Morel on to the fight  
But there's not one, at this sight,  
Who does not say to his neighbour:  
'He rides well, lance couched before,  
He looks most skilful, this knight,  
And see, he bears his arms aright,  
His shield about his neck hangs true,  
Yet he must still be thought a fool,  
To undertake to win success  
By jousting freely with the best  
Of all those known in this country.  
Where was he born then? Who is he?  
Who knows him? 'Not I.' 'Nor I,  
Yet naught white about him, say I.'  
Now, while they converse amain,  
The knights give their mounts full rein,  
Being no less on this battle intent  
Than they are both keen and ardent  
To joust and contend together.  
Cligès swiftly attacks the other  
Pinning shield to arm, to chest.  
Sagramor falls at this first test;  
He declares himself a prisoner.  
The tourney is fair begun here,  
And adversaries meet one on one.  
Cligès about the field is gone  
Seeking adversaries to fight,  
And there is not a single knight

He meets whom he does not conquer.  
For he takes all the glory; wherever  
He goes to joust and so contend,  
The fight comes swiftly to an end.  
Only a knight of great prowess  
In this tourney dare him address,  
For there's more glory in this fight  
In facing him than some other knight,  
And if he be conquered by Cligès  
From that fact alone glory is his,  
In having dared to stay and joust.  
Cligès then achieved the most  
Of any in that tournament.  
At evening swiftly though he went  
To his lodgings, and secretly,  
So that none there might see,  
And meet with him and speak.  
And lest any there might seek  
A sight of the black armour,  
He hid it close in his chamber,  
So as not to be found or seen;  
Then he hung the suit of green  
Above the doorway of the inn,  
So if they were seeking him,  
The passers-by would see it there,  
And not know where his lodgings were.

**LINES 4727-4758 KING ARTHUR HAS SEARCH  
MADE FOR THE BLACK KNIGHT**

**T**HUS Cligès, though lodged in town,  
By this ruse could not be found,  
And those who were his prisoners,

Though they wandered everywhere,  
Asking for the black-clad knight,  
None could answer them aright.  
Even King Arthur had the town  
Search for him, both up and down:  
But all cried: 'We've not seen any  
Trace of him, since the tourney,  
And know not what became of him.'  
More than twenty squires seek him,  
Whom King Arthur has bidden  
Search, yet he's so well hidden,  
There's no sign of our Cligès.  
The king is most amazed at this,  
When they tell him that no one  
Great or small can find the man,  
Or any sign that he lodges here,  
More than if he were in Caesarea,  
Toledo, or Heraklion,  
'By my faith,' says he, 'what anyone  
Says of it, I know not, yet tis to me  
A wonder; some phantom it may be,  
That has appeared here in our midst.  
Many a knight unhorsed in the lists  
Many of the best, indeed, have sworn  
A pledge, to one whose very door  
They know not, no more his country;  
A pledge they must now fail to keep.'  
Thus the king aired his discontent,  
But might as well have stayed silent.

## LINES 4759-4950 CLIGÈS, THE KNIGHT OF MANY COLOURS

**MUCH** spoke the noblemen that night,  
 On the subject of the black-clad knight.  
 Indeed they spoke of little else.  
 On the morrow they armed themselves,  
 Again without summons or request.  
 And to undertake the first conquest,  
 Lancelot of the Lake rides out,  
 Who lacks not courage in the joust.  
 Lancelot waits for the first-comer:  
 Cligès is there, clad in green armour,  
 Far greener than the meadow grass,  
 And wherever Cligès doth pass,  
 On his long-maned fallow steed,  
 None, whether with hair indeed,  
 Or bald as a coot, that doth not gaze  
 And to his next door neighbour says:  
 ‘This knight is much more graceful  
 And is in all respects more skilful  
 Than yesterday’s black knight did seem,  
 As the pine eclipses the hornbeam,  
 And the laurel doth the elder tree.  
 We still know not who he may be,  
 He of yesterday, but will tonight  
 Know the name of this fair knight.  
 If you know him now, then say.’  
 But each man tells the other nay,  
 Nor of seeing him ever is aware,  
 But than the other he is more fair,  
 More than Lancelot of the Lake.  
 If clad in a sack, for goodness sake,

And Lancelot clad in silver or gold,  
He'd yet be the fairer, say the bold.  
And all of them support Cligès,  
And the two men together press,  
Spurring their mounts full hard.  
Cligès strikes Lancelot and mars  
The golden lion on his shield,  
So that unhorsed he must yield,  
Cligès stands waiting his surrender.  
Lancelot yields himself a prisoner,  
Unable to mount a fresh defence.  
Now doth the tourney commence,  
With the sound of splintering lances.  
All have faith, as Cligès advances,  
Who are supporters of his party,  
For, of those he presses closely,  
None is of such strength that he  
Is not unseated from his steed.  
Thus Cligès performed so well,  
Took many captive, as many fell,  
He gave his side twice the delight,  
Won twice the glory in the fight,  
That he had on the previous day.  
At eventide, he hastened away,  
Returning to his lodgings where  
He had swiftly displayed there  
His red armour, and the trappings,  
While that he had been wearing,  
He now ordered to be concealed;  
So that his name was not revealed.  
For his captives sought that night  
The lodgings of this green knight,  
And yet could see no sign of him.  
Most of those who spoke of him  
In their lodgings, sang his praise.

All then returned, the next day,  
 Joyful, fresh, to fight once more.  
 Now, from the ranks before Oxford,  
 A knight of great renown there came,  
 Perceval of Wales was his name.  
 As soon as Cligès saw him appear,  
 And heard his name spoken clear,  
 And knew that this was Perceval,  
 He yearned to bring about his fall.  
 From the ranks Cligès issues forth,  
 Riding a Spanish sorrel horse,  
 Clad in his vermilion armour,  
 And all gaze at him in wonder,  
 Marvelling more than before,  
 Declaring that they never saw  
 A knight so truly outstanding;  
 While the two men go spurring  
 Toward each other without delay.  
 Each, bringing his lance into play,  
 Strikes hard at the other's shield,  
 So hard the lances bend and yield,  
 Though they are short and stout.  
 Now those watching raise a shout,  
 For Cligès has struck at Perceval  
 So hard he falls from the saddle,  
 And Cligès takes him prisoner,  
 Without it seeming a great affair.  
 Once Perceval has pledged his word,  
 The ranks of knights again are stirred,  
 As all the contestants meet together.  
 And Cligès never attacks another,  
 Without unhorsing his foe swiftly.  
 There is never an hour that he  
 Is absent that day from the field,  
 As all the other knights wield  
 Their weapons, singly, of course,

Against this rock, never in force,  
For that was not the custom then,  
Upon his shield these other men  
Pound, as hammer on anvil hits;  
Hewing, and shattering it to bits.  
But every blow he doth repay  
Toppling them to earth away.  
And none there, without a lie,  
Could say at evening, or deny  
That all were forced to yield  
To the knight of the red shield.  
And all the noblest and the best  
Now wished to befriend Cligès.  
But that would not soon occur,  
For Cligès took his departure,  
On seeing the sun about to set.  
He doffed his red armour, yet  
Had the white armour brought  
In which when dubbed he first fought,  
And stood the other suits of armour,  
And their trappings, before the door,  
While tethering his mounts there too.  
Now is it seen, by those who view  
The armour, that one man singly  
Has discomfited, and defeated, many;  
And has disguised himself each day,  
Changed horse and arms, so he may  
Seem not the one who last appeared.  
Now for the first time is this clear,  
And my lord Gawain says, for one,  
He has ne'er seen such a champion.  
And since he would meet this same  
In the tourney, and learn his name,  
Tomorrow he would be first to stir  
When all the knights were there.

Yet naught he boasts of, but fully  
 Expects, if considered carefully,  
 The other to show, in his advance,  
 Superiority with the lance,  
 And yet of the sword however  
 Might not show himself the master  
 (For Gawain had no master there).  
 Now it was his intent in this affair  
 To prove himself to the stranger  
 On the morrow, he whose armour,  
 Mount, and harness change each day.  
 For he will have moulted four ways,  
 If every day he changes costume,  
 To doff the old and a new assume.  
 Cligès doth so, and is renewed;  
 The following morn, he is viewed,  
 Whiter than shines the fleur-de-lis,  
 The shield gripped by him tightly;  
 And he, as planned the night before,  
 On his white Arab steed goes forth.  
 Gawain the illustrious, the brave,  
 Once on the field, seeks no delay,  
 But spurs his steed and advances,  
 Eager to joust and break lances,  
 If he can meet with his opponent.  
 And they will meet in a moment,  
 For Cligès has no wish to delay,  
 Once he has heard what others say,  
 They murmur: 'There rides Gawain,  
 On horse or foot, a champion plain,  
 He is one whom none will attack.'  
 Cligès, hearing this at his back,  
 Races up-field with couched lance,  
 The one, and now, the other advance,  
 With the same leap they meet here,  
 Swifter than the stag that doth hear



*'Eager to joust and break lances'*  
Idylls of the King (p78, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
*Internet Archive Book Images*

The baying of hounds in the chase.  
 Shields now against lances brace,  
 And the blows that they then take  
 Produce such havoc that they break,  
 Shiver and splinter and shatter,  
 Saddle-bows give way, the leather  
 Girths and their breast-straps snap;  
 Both are unhorsed at this mishap,  
 Rise, and draw their naked blades.  
 All the other knights undismayed  
 Gathering round to watch the fight.  
 At last, Arthur parts the knights,  
 And calls for peace not the sword.  
 Though before they'd reached accord,  
 The white hauberks that they wore  
 They rent, their shields split and tore,  
 While great blows did they both deal,  
 That of their helms crushed the steel.

**LINES 4951-5040 CLIGÈS IS RECEIVED AT  
 KING ARTHUR'S COURT**

**F**OR a while the king regards them,  
 Well pleased by the sight of them,  
 And many another doth confess,  
 That he now doth esteem no less  
 The white knight's deeds on the plain,  
 Than those of my lord Gawain;  
 Nor is he ready as yet to rehearse  
 Which is better and which is worse,  
 Nor who was likeliest to have won  
 If they'd been allowed to fight on,  
 Until the contest was completed:

The King wished neither defeated,  
Nor permitted more than was done.  
He parted them, before everyone,  
And cried: 'Hold you now, cease all!  
Ill shall arise if more blows fall,  
Make peace now, and be friends!  
Far nephew Gawain, I here extend  
My plea to you, without a quarrel  
Nor hatred, tis not desirable,  
For gentlemen to prolong a fight;  
But if to my court, this fair knight,  
Wishes to come, and join our play,  
It would bring him no harm, I say.  
Ask him nephew.' 'Willingly sire.'  
It accords with Cligès' own desire.  
And he consents to go there gladly,  
Once they have ended the tourney.  
For he has now quite fulfilled,  
All that which his father willed.  
But the king declares he has no wish  
For them to prolong the finish,  
They might cease without delay.  
Thus the knights take their way,  
At the king's wish and command.  
Cligès his armour doth demand  
To follow the king's company:  
Then makes for the court swiftly,  
Though altering his guise, to plan,  
Presenting himself as a Frenchman.  
When he was once arrived at court,  
All hastened to meet him; in short  
They made such joy and festival  
As ne'er was seen, and they did call  
Him 'my lord' whom he had taken,  
And made prisoners in the tourney,

But he would have them all go free,  
 Not wishing now to hurt their pride,  
 If they were fully satisfied  
 That it was he to whom they'd fallen.  
 Not one claimed he was mistaken,  
 All cried: 'We know well it was you;  
 We value your acquaintance too,  
 And ought to esteem you highly,  
 And name you as our lord rightly,  
 For none of us can equal you.  
 And just as the sun, risen anew,  
 Doth outshine all the lesser stars,  
 And their light fades, much as ours,  
 When the bright sun rises clear,  
 So our prowess now, we fear,  
 Is likewise dimmed and shamed.  
 Though we too once were famed  
 In this world, for some like display?  
 Now Cligès knows not what to say,  
 For it seems to him, they praise  
 Him more than he deserves always;  
 Though it pleases, still he blushes,  
 The blood to his cheeks so rushes  
 It reveals his modesty to all.  
 Leading him to the great hall,  
 They bring him before the king;  
 Their compliments now ceasing,  
 Their words of praise complete.  
 Now the hour had come to eat,  
 Those who do such things enable  
 Hastened to arrange the tables,  
 And swiftly these were all set,  
 Throughout the hall; some wet  
 Towels, others hold the basins,  
 To lave all those now entering.  
 Once laved, all were then seated.

Taking his hand, the king greeted  
Cligès, and bade him sit near,  
For he was eager now to hear  
Who he was, if he might so do.  
Of the meal I'll say naught to you,  
But that the dishes were as many  
As if cattle were two a penny.

**LINES 5041-5114 CLIGÈS REVEALS HIS NAME,  
IS FETED, BUT RETURNS HOME**

**WHEN** all the dishes had been served  
The king no more his speech reserved:  
'My friend,' he said, 'I wish to know  
If it was pride that delayed you so,  
Not deigning to visit my court  
As soon as these shores you sought;  
And why you kept aloof from others,  
And why you changed your armour.  
Then confess your name to the king,  
And say from what people you spring.'  
Cligès replied: 'I will hide naught.'  
All that of him the king now sought,  
He told to him, and did him regale.  
And when the king had heard the tale,  
He embraced Cligès, with delight,  
As did the gathering of knights,  
And my lord Gawain above all  
Clasped and embraced him in that hall;  
All joined in greeting him together.  
And speaking of him to each other  
Praised his looks and courage anew.  
More than the rest of his nephews,



*'He embraced Cligès, with delight,  
as did the gathering of knights'  
Idylls of the King (p56, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
Internet Archive Book Images*

The king loves him, does him honour.  
And Cligès, till the next summer,  
Follows the court, with the king,  
Through all of Brittany travelling,  
The realm of France, and Normandy,  
And, by his displays of chivalry,  
Proves his worth where he doth go;  
The love that wounds him, though,  
Is never eased nor assuaged.  
The desire with which he's plagued,  
Maintains him always in desire;  
To Fenice his thoughts aspire,  
Who from afar afflicts his heart.  
He longs to return, too long apart,  
Deprived for far too long is he,  
No longer would he deprived be,  
Of sight of the one more desired  
Than any other could be desired:  
For Greece he prepares to start,  
Takes his leave, and doth depart.  
My lord Gawain did much grieve,  
And so did the king, as I believe,  
On failing to keep him there.  
Long it seems, that return to her  
Whom he loves and desires so,  
As over land and sea he doth go;  
So long that voyage doth appear,  
Great the delay till she is near  
Who has stolen his heart away.  
But in full she doth him repay,  
Restores to him all he has lost,  
For her heart doth bear the cost,  
Which, as his, is worth no less.  
Yet he's uncertain nonetheless,  
Possessing no deed, or covenant,

Thus great is now his troublement.  
 Nor is she by such pains less rent,  
 Whom Love plagues and torments.  
 Taking no pleasure in any sight  
 That meets the eye, or that might,  
 Since the hour she saw him last.  
 What if he lives not? She's aghast,  
 Sad, at heart, at that very thought.  
 Yet Cligès is slowly nearing port,  
 And fortune has kept him in sight,  
 The winds have veiled their might.  
 With joy, journey's end he marks;  
 At Constantinople he disembarks.  
 The news ran swiftly through the city,  
 And none need ask if the court were happy:  
 For if it brought joy to the emperor,  
 The empress felt it a hundred times more.

### LINES 5115-5156 CLIGÈS REACHES CONSTANTINOPLE

**CLIGÈS** and all his company  
 Returning to Greek territory,  
 Have landed at Constantinople.  
 All the wealthiest and most noble  
 Are come to the port to meet him,  
 And here the emperor greets him,  
 Who is there before all the rest  
 Side by side with the empress;  
 Before all, he doth him embrace,  
 And welcomes him with grace.  
 Fenice welcomes him with care;  
 Both blush to see the other there,  
 And marvellous it is how they,

Brought so close in every way,  
Neither move to embrace, nor kiss  
Those kisses that are Love's bliss;  
Yet mad folly that would prove.  
The crowd on all sides are moved  
To see him, and lead him through  
The city. Thus the way they pursue,  
Many on foot, on steeds the rest,  
Until they reach the imperial palace.  
The joy that was there in excess  
No words of mine could e'er express,  
For his uncle gave him as his own,  
All that he had, except the crown.  
And asks that he take at leisure  
All that might serve his pleasure,  
Of gold or silver that he doth hold,  
Yet what cares he for silver or gold,  
Who does not dare, as yet, reveal  
His thoughts to her, who his rest doth steal,  
Yet has the chance to explain,  
But for his fear of her disdain;  
For now he sees her every day,  
Sits beside her, and none say nay;  
They raise no opposition, I meant,  
Thinking naught here of ill intent.

### **LINES 5157-5280 THE LOVERS CONVERSE TOGETHER**

**SOME** time after his return home  
He came one day to the room, alone,  
Of her who was not his enemy;  
And you may know, of a surety,  
The door for him was open wide.

Cligès takes his seat by her side,  
 The others have all moved away  
 So none can hear what they say,  
 Through seated close nearby.  
 Fenice was the first to try  
 A few words concerning Britain,  
 Enquiring about my lord Gawain,  
 His nature and his appearance,  
 Until her tongue made acquaintance  
 With the subject she most feared.  
 She asked if he was enamoured  
 Of any lady in that country.  
 Cligès showed himself not tardy:  
 He was ready with his reply,  
 The moment she had spoken:  
 ‘Lady,’ he said, ‘I did love then,  
 Yet I loved none from that country.  
 A piece of bark torn from the tree  
 Was my flesh, forsaking its heart,  
 For when from Germany I did depart,  
 I know not what became of my heart,  
 Except that it never left these parts.  
 Here was my heart, there my flesh,  
 I was not there truly, I confess.  
 For my heart has remained here,  
 And that is why I thus reappear.  
 Yet it will not come back to me,  
 I cannot entice it back you see.  
 Nor would I seek to if I could.  
 Has this country now proved good  
 To you since you came here?  
 Have you found true joy and cheer?  
 Like you this people, and this land?  
 Yet I should, of you, no more demand  
 Than whether you like this land at all.’  
 ‘It has not pleased, but now it shall

Be both a joy to me and a pleasure.  
And know that not for any treasure  
Would I desire to forsake it now:  
I'd not wrest my heart away, I vow,  
Nor would I seek to use such force.  
My body bark of the tree, as yours,  
So I live, and exist without a heart.  
I know not Britain, and yet my heart  
Has passed a lengthy sojourn there;  
I know not whether in joy or care.'  
'Lady, how could your heart be there?  
Tell me then, how it journeyed there,  
At what hour, and in what season,  
If this be matter that, in reason,  
You can tell to me, or another;  
And whether I was there moreover.'  
'Yes, indeed, though you knew it not,  
Twas there while you were there, I wot,  
And with you took its departure.'  
'My God, I saw and knew it never.  
Why did I not? If I had known,  
For sure, lady, I would have shown  
It every pleasant company.'  
'Yet only paid what you'd have owed me,  
My friend, much as you ought I ween,  
For very gracious would I have been  
To your heart if it had pleased  
To be where it would have been received.'  
'Lady, it surely came to you?'  
'To me? Then no exile it knew.  
For mine came to you also.'  
'Lady, if what you say is so,  
Then both our hearts are with us now,  
For mine is yours wholly I vow.'  
'And you, friend, you too have mine.

Thus perfectly do we combine.  
 And know, as God is my sanctuary,  
 Your uncle has had no part in me:  
 It pleased me not, and nor could he,  
 He has, therefore, never known me  
 As Adam knew Eve who was his wife.  
 'Tis wrong to so name me, upon my life,  
 For who names me a wife has made  
 An error, and knows not I am a maid.  
 Even your uncle he knows it not,  
 For a sleeping potion he hath got,  
 And thinks he wakes when he's asleep,  
 So that he fancies he doth keep  
 Company with me in his dream,  
 Clasped in my embrace, it seem;  
 But he has never so lain with me.  
 Yours is my heart, yours my body.  
 And none shall my example employ  
 To teach how looseness doth destroy:  
 When my heart took itself to you,  
 It gave the body, and promised, too,  
 None other should have part of me.  
 Love has wounded me so deeply,  
 On your account, there is no cure;  
 Such the pain he'd have me endure.  
 If I love you, and you love me,  
 No Tristan ever shall you be,  
 Nor shall I be Isolde to you,  
 For then our love would not be true,  
 But full of blame, and void of right.  
 No more in me shall you delight,  
 Bodily, than you do today,  
 If you cannot find out a way  
 By which I can be rendered free  
 Of your uncle and his company,  
 Without his recovering me again,

Or on us laying all the blame,  
Or ever knowing where I am gone.  
Tonight, all this go think upon,  
And tomorrow then let me know  
The best plan that comes to you so,  
And I too thus will make surmise.  
So tomorrow then, when I arise,  
Come at morn and speak with me;  
We'll share our thoughts openly,  
And then proceed to execute  
Whatever tis best to prosecute.'

**LINES 5281-5400 FENICE PROPOSES TO FEIGN DEATH**

**ONCE** Cligès knew of her desire,  
He agreed with her wish entire,  
And said it were best so to do,  
Left her happy, and was happy too;  
And that night each lay in bed,  
And each of them thus delighted,  
To plan what might be for the best.  
The next morning, from their rest  
They met together again, swiftly,  
And there took counsel privately,  
As indeed they had to, tête-à-tête.  
Cligès spoke first when they met,  
Of what came to him in the night:  
'Lady,' he said, 'I think it right,  
And see we could do no better,  
Than go to Britain, moreover  
I think to see you safely there.  
Do not refuse my loving care;  
For never with such great joy

Was Helen received in Troy,  
 When Paris carried her away,  
 As you would find displayed  
 And more; for joy we'd bring,  
 To all the realm of that king,  
 My uncle; and if you disagree,  
 Of your own thoughts tell me,  
 For no matter what occurs, I  
 With your decision will comply.'

She responded: 'What I will say,  
 Is you and I must not run away,  
 For me the world would insult  
 As just another blond Iseult,  
 And speak of you as a Tristan;  
 If we were to pursue your plan,  
 All and sundry, everywhere,  
 Would speak ill of this affair.  
 None would believe or ought  
 That all was as was thought,  
 Who would believe I had made  
 My escape, while still a maid,  
 If from your uncle I run away?  
 A dissolute, and a wanton they  
 Would call me, and you, a fool.  
 Saint Paul's words are as new,  
 Good to remember and retain;  
 If any wish to loosen the rein,  
 Saint Paul counsels them to act  
 So wisely that they fail to attract  
 All blame, reproach, or outcry.  
 It is well to arrest the evil lie;  
 In this, if it causes you no grief,  
 I would be the plotter in chief,  
 For my thoughts suggest to me  
 That I might feign death easily.  
 I shall fall sick in a little while,

And you may seek meanwhile,  
To ready for me my sepulchre.  
And to this devote all your care.  
Make you the sepulchre and bier  
Such that I shall not stifle here,  
And die when I should survive.  
Be it unguarded while I'm alive,  
And then to retrieve me be ready,  
At night, when you will rescue me,  
Such that of us no sight be caught;  
And let none other bring me aught  
I need but you, to whom I render  
Myself, and to whom I surrender.  
Never in all my life would I rather  
Be served in this way by any other.  
My friend and servant you shall be,  
Whatever you do is fine by me,  
I'll ne'er be mistress of an empire  
If you are not its lord and master.  
Any mean, wretched hovel at all  
Will seem far fairer than palace hall.  
And if this thing is done with care,  
None shall be the worse for wear.  
For none will know of it to speak ill,  
Throughout the empire all men will  
Think I am shut beneath the earth.  
Tessala, who was my nurse at first,  
A woman in whom I place great trust,  
Will give me her aid, now; she must,  
For she is wise, I have faith in her.'  
Cligès, once he had heard his lover,  
Replied: 'Lady, if you can do so,  
And you believe you nurse also  
Will give true counsel to both of us,  
We have naught further to discuss,

But must prepare and do it swiftly.  
 Yet if we fail to enact it wisely,  
 We are lost without hope of aid.  
 I have a mason who, if I may  
 I will consult, for wondrous things,  
 Are his, he's famed for his carvings;  
 Not a land where he's not known,  
 For masonry he has made his own.  
 John is his name, a serf of mine,  
 There is no artist, however fine,  
 Who would not take himself to John  
 To learn from all that he has done;  
 To him they're novices or worse,  
 Say an infant, that's put to nurse.  
 And by imitating his work, also,  
 They have learnt all that they know,  
 Those masons of Antioch and Rome;  
 Nor is any man more true to home.  
 Now I would prove his great skill,  
 And if I find him as loyal still,  
 Then he and his heirs will I set free.  
 And I will reveal all willingly,  
 And tell him of our secret plan,  
 If he will swear, as a loyal man,  
 That he will help me faithfully,  
 And never betray or you or me.'

**LINES 5401-5456 FENICE INVOLVES HER NURSE  
 THESSALA IN THE PLAN**

**FENICE** replied: 'So, let it be!  
 Cligès then, by her grace set free,  
 Now went forth and took his way.

She called her nurse straight away.  
Tessala, whom she had brought  
From her native land, she sought,  
And Tessala came there swiftly,  
Without delay, or seeming tardy,  
Yet not knowing the reason why.  
In private speech she sought reply  
As to Fenice's wish and pleasure.  
She concealed naught from her  
But told Thessala all her plan.  
'Nurse,' she said, 'I understand  
That anything I share with you  
Will never be brought to view,  
For in proving you thoroughly,  
I found you wise and trustworthy,  
Love you for all you've done for me,  
And in all my ills tis you I seek,  
Never accepting other counsel.  
Why I lie awake, you know well,  
And what I wish for and desire,  
My eyes see nothing, they aspire  
To one thing only, that delights;  
But I cannot enjoy such a sight,  
Except I must pay a heavy cost.  
I've found the one I love the most,  
For if I seek him, he seeks me too,  
And if I grieve he grieves anew,  
For all my sorrow and my pain.  
So to you I must needs explain  
The thoughts and proposition,  
We two, alone in discussion,  
Saw fit to confirm and agree.'  
Then she told her, privately,  
That she wished to feign illness,  
And so imitate a true sickness,

She would then appear to die.  
He'd steal her away, by and by,  
'So we will be together always.'  
There is no other way, she says,  
By which they might be sure  
Of this, but if she were assured  
That Thessala would help her  
They might arrange the matter  
According to both their wishes.  
'For I am full weary of all this  
Longing for joy and happiness.'  
Thessala assured her mistress  
That she would help her in all,  
She need have no fear at all,  
Saying she would set in motion  
The means to produce a potion  
Such that any examining her  
Would then immediately infer  
That the soul had left the body.  
For once swallowed, secretly,  
It would turn her veins frigid;  
Her body, pale, blotched, rigid,  
Seeming without speech or will,  
Yet she would be living still,  
Feeling nothing, good or bad.  
Nor was any harm to be had  
From a day and night there,  
Entombed in that sepulchre.

LINES 5457-5554 THE SCULPTOR, ARTIST,  
AND MASON, NAMED JOHN

ONCE she had fully digested  
Her nurse's words, Fenice said:  
'Nurse, I commit myself to you,  
And have all confidence in you;  
I am yours, so act now for me,  
And tell everyone that you see  
There is naught for them here,  
I am ill, they trouble me I fear.'  
To everyone, the wise nurse said  
'Friends, my lady is ill in bed,  
And requests you not to stay  
You speak too loudly she says  
And the noise is troubling her,  
She can get no rest moreover  
While you are near her chamber,  
And she, as far as I remember,  
Has never felt such pain before,  
Nor suffered with such dolour.  
Please leave, yet take no alarm,  
Your voices may work her harm.'  
And they depart at her command.  
Meanwhile Cligès doth demand  
That John comes to him secretly  
And speaks to him, privately:  
'John, here is what I wish to say;  
You are my slave, and I today  
Am your master, so I may sell  
Or give you away, as any chattel,  
Your body or possessions, either.

But if I can trust you in a matter,  
 That in my mind I have planned,  
 You'll be free as any in this land,  
 You and all your heirs, forever.'  
 And John replies, who is ever  
 Desirous of winning his liberty:  
 'Sire, there is nothing in verity  
 I would not do, if it might be  
 That I could achieve my liberty,  
 And my wife's and children's too.  
 Give your orders; thus will I do;  
 For there is no work so toilsome,  
 It can ever prove too irksome  
 Or too laborious for me.  
 Besides, however it might be,  
 I must ever attend to your cares,  
 And neglect my own affairs.'  
 'True, John, but this is a matter  
 That my mouth is loath to utter,  
 Unless you swear an oath to me,  
 And do assure me, faithfully,  
 You will give me of your aid,  
 And never will I be betrayed.'  
 'Willingly, sire,' John replied,  
 'Do not fear, by such I'll abide,  
 For I pledge to you and swear  
 That I will never do anywhere,  
 All the days of my life, or say,  
 Aught to harm you in any way.'  
 'John, not even for martyrdom  
 Dare I speak of this to anyone,  
 This, in which I seek your advice;  
 I had rather pluck out my eyes.  
 You will obey, I trust, my pleasure;  
 Help, and be silent, in equal measure?'  
 'Truly, Sire, and may God aid me!'

Then Cligès tells him all openly,  
And reveals all the plan to him,  
And when he has explained to him  
Everything of which you know,  
For you have heard me tell you so,  
Then John assures his master  
That he will build a sepulchre  
To the very best of his skill;  
And furthermore that he will  
Take him to see a fine building  
Of which none knows a thing,  
Not even his wife or children.  
He will show what he has done,  
If Cligès desires to go, and see,  
Where he carves and paints; free  
Of anyone but himself alone;  
The loveliest place, the finest known  
To him, anywhere, both far and wide.  
'Let us go, then!' Cligès replied.

### LINES 5555-5662 THE SECRET TOWER

**J**OH<sup>N</sup> had constructed a tower,  
The work of many a toilsome hour,  
In a hidden site, below the town.  
And now he led Cligès around,  
Revealing all the many storeys,  
Decorated with the glories,  
Fair and fine, of his artistry.  
The rooms and all the chimneys,  
John shows him, up and down.  
Cligès views the vale around,  
Where not a soul lives or stirs.

Room on room he doth traverse,  
 Until he thinks he has seen it all,  
 And is greatly pleased withal,  
 And says that it is fine and fair,  
 His sweetheart would be happy there,  
 All life long, could she inhabit  
 Its delights, and none know of it.  
 ‘Truly, sire, she’d not be seen.  
 But think you that you have been  
 Through all my turreted retreat?  
 There is still more of it complete,  
 And chambers no man could find.  
 And yet if you were so inclined,  
 And searched as hard as you might,  
 You never would reveal to sight,  
 However subtle and wise you are,  
 A single room or level more,  
 Unless I were to show it you.  
 Know, it lacks for nothing too,  
 Nothing a lady might need,  
 Or that comes to mind indeed.  
 For all is fine, and luxurious.  
 Below ground it extends thus,  
 As indeed you will perceive,  
 Nor will you find, I believe,  
 The entrance, or ever could.  
 With such art is it made good,  
 Fashioned out of solid stone,  
 So juncture seems there none.’  
 ‘Now I hear wonders,’ cries Cligès,  
 ‘Lead on, and after you I press,  
 For I desire to see these things.’  
 Now, on their way proceeding,  
 John takes Cligès by the hand;  
 By a smooth wall he doth stand,  
 All shining and of even colour.

This wall John now halts before,  
Asks Cligès to inspect its face.  
'Sire,' he says, 'no man can trace  
A door or window here assigned,  
And think you any man could find,  
The means to penetrate this wall,  
Without brute force ruining all?'  
Cligès replied that he thought no,  
Nor would, unless he found it so.  
Then John said that he would see,  
For now a way would opened be.  
And John who had constructed it,  
Revealed the door, and opened it.  
He used no force nor did it shatter.  
They entered, one behind the other,  
And by a stairway they descended  
To a vaulted cellar where it ended,  
A place where John wrought his art,  
When on some work he embarked.  
'This' he said, 'no one has viewed,  
No one God made, except us two;  
None has been here, and presently  
How well-appointed tis, you'll see,  
Tis so luxurious, and all complete,  
To such a place you might retreat,  
Your true friend might here find rest;  
Tis fine enough for such a guest.  
Here are chambers, and baths too,  
And heated water that doth issue  
From pipes set below; moreover,  
Who would true comfort discover  
Where a friend might hide her face,  
Would needs go far to find a place  
For her, that is equally delightful.  
You will find it all most suitable,

Once you've seen it completely.'  
 Cligès traversed the tower entirely,  
 Then said: 'Friend John, hark to me,  
 You, and your heirs, I now set free,  
 Place myself in your hands wholly,  
 And wish my friend to dwell solely  
 Here, alone, and none know of her,  
 But you, and I, and she; no other.  
 John replied: 'My thanks to you!  
 But time enough, all this to view,  
 Have we spent, there's nothing more,  
 Let us return, and seal the door.'  
 'Well said, friend,' Cligès answered,  
 'Let us depart.' Thus they retreated,  
 And issued forth from the tower.  
 Once in the town, within the hour,  
 They heard a murmur of distress:  
 'Know you not of this strange illness,  
 That doth my lady the empress seize?  
 May the Holy Spirit grant her ease,  
 So wise she is, and a gentle lady:  
 Yet is sick of a grievous malady.'

### LINES 5663-5698 FENICE FEIGNS ILLNESS

**A**s soon as Cligès hears this talk  
 He hastens swiftly to the court,  
 But finds no joy or gladness there,  
 As all are sad, and full of care  
 For the empress, who illness feigns;  
 For that of which she complains  
 Gives her neither grief nor pain.  
 She has commanded, once again,

That none her room should enter,  
While such strong pain grips her  
About her heart, and in her head,  
Unless it be Alis or, in his stead,  
His nephew, not daring to exclude,  
Either, but if the emperor choose  
Not to come, she will not mind.  
For Cligès, she herself resigns  
To great deception and danger.  
That he appears not, pains her,  
Since to see him she doth pine.  
Yet Cligès will be there, in time,  
When he will tell her all that he  
Has found and viewed, happily.  
He with this doth her beguile,  
But is only there a little while,  
Since Fenice, the ruse deploys,  
That what delights her annoys,  
By crying loudly: 'Go, depart!  
You trouble and grieve my heart.  
For I'm afflicted with such pain,  
That I shall ne'er be well again!  
Cligès, entranced by such arts,  
With a sad face though, departs;  
So sad a face you'll never see.  
Without, he seems all tragedy,  
And yet within his heart is light,  
For he now waits on his delight.

**LINES 5699-5718 FENICE DECLINES TO RECEIVE THE  
EMPEROR'S PHYSICIAN**

**T**HE empress, without being ill,  
Complains of her illness still,  
The emperor, who thinks it true,  
Ceases not to grieve anew,  
And calls for his physician,  
But she refuses him admission,  
And allows no one to touch her.  
He may well weep, the emperor,  
When she says she will accept  
But the one physician, so adept  
He can swiftly grant her health,  
Should he wish her to be well.  
Alive or dead he can her render,  
And to him she doth surrender,  
Both her life and her well-being.  
To God they think she is referring.  
But that was never her intention,  
Tis Cligès, she dare not mention;  
He is the god can make her well,  
Or toll for her the passing bell.

**LINES 5719-5814 FENICE DRINKS THE POTION  
AND FEIGNS DEATH**

**T**HUS Fenice takes every care  
That no physician examines her;

And takes no food or drink either  
So better to deceive the emperor,  
Until she's pallid, her lips blue.  
The nurse is busy about her too,  
As she with wondrous guile,  
Searches the town meanwhile,  
Secretly, such that none knows,  
For one who might be supposed  
Hopelessly, thus mortally, ill.  
More perfectly to work her will,  
She visited this woman in pain,  
And promised her, oft and again,  
That she'd cure her of her malady;  
Yet each day a glass she'd carry  
And inspected her water therein,  
Until she thought no medicine,  
Could help her now, in any way,  
And she would die that very day.  
This sample she now concealed,  
And kept it by her, tightly sealed,  
Until the emperor was awake.  
She to him the glass doth take,  
And said: 'If you would command  
All your physicians to be on hand,  
Sire, this water my lady passed  
Whom an illness afflicts, alas,  
Which she'd have the doctors inspect;  
But will not have them near her bed.'  
The physicians came to the hall,  
And condemned it one and all,  
Its evil character and colour,  
And agreed with one another  
The empress would ne'er recover,  
Nor yet live till nones was over,  
Perhaps till then, when at the latest,

God would grant her soul His rest.  
They muttered this first together,  
Then were asked by the emperor  
To tell him what they had to say.  
They then replied to him that they  
Gave no hope of her recovery,  
That she could never live past three,  
But would render up her soul before.  
When he heard this, the emperor  
Almost fell fainting to the ground,  
Stricken deep, without a sound,  
As many another who was there.  
Never were cries of such despair  
As echoed from the palace walls.  
I'll spare you all their grief withal:  
Know that Thessala now is brewing  
Her potion, tempering and stewing,  
She mixes it, and stirs it there,  
For she has long before prepared  
Everything she knew the potion  
Required, to be set in motion.  
A little before nones, that's three,  
She gives the drink to Fenice.  
Once she has sipped the drink,  
Her sight dims, her eyelids sink,  
All her face turns white and pale,  
As if the blood in her body fails.  
She cannot move a limb, either,  
Not even if alive they'd flay her;  
She cannot stir or speak a word,  
Despite the grief she has heard,  
The emperor's sorrow, and all  
The cries of pain that fill the hall.  
And through the town runs the cry  
Of people, as they weep and sigh:  
'Lord, what pain and what sorrow

Doth cruel Death on us bestow!  
Death you are evil, covetous,  
Voracious, blind, and envious,  
Your appetite is never sated.  
Never till now were you fated  
To tear at this world so fiercely;  
Death what have you done? Such beauty,  
God confound you, you've eclipsed;  
The loveliest, and the saintliest,  
Had she but lived, nor you destroyed,  
On whom God's art was e'er employed.  
Too long-suffering is God's patience,  
When he allows to you the strength  
To steal away what seems His own.  
Now God's anger should be known,  
He should cast you from your place,  
Your insolence has grown too great,  
Too great your impudence and pride.'  
Thus, all enraged, the people cried,  
Wrung their arms, and beat their palms,  
While the priests intoned their psalms,  
Prayed, as the passing bell did toll,  
For God to have mercy on her soul.

### LINES 5815-5904 THE PHYSICIANS FROM SALERNO

**A**MIDST all these tears and cries,  
As those who witnessed it advise,  
There arrived three physicians,  
From Salerno, aged clinicians,  
And all long established there.  
Astonished by this sad affair,  
They enquired, sought to know

For whom these tears did flow,  
 Why all the sorrow and distress.  
 Thus the answer was expressed:  
 ‘Good Lord, sires, do you not know?  
 Sure all the world would sorrow so,  
 And wish to mourn along with us,  
 If they knew of all the disastrous  
 Pain, and grief, and woe, and loss  
 That came upon us here, this day.  
 Dear Lord, where are you from, say,  
 To know not what afflicts the city?  
 We will tell you, in all verity,  
 For we wish you to join with us  
 In grieving for what troubles us.  
 Know you not how Death doth call,  
 Who so desires and covets all,  
 And everywhere awaits the best?  
 This crime is his, we now attest,  
 As ever with him is customary:  
 With her clear light, her rare beauty,  
 Did God illuminate this world,  
 But Death his banner has unfurled  
 Who cannot yet abide the hour.  
 As far as it lies within his power,  
 Each day he gathers in the best.  
 Thus he wished his power to test,  
 And in one body has taken more  
 Than is yet left in Nature’s store;  
 If all the world he had so cursed,  
 He could not have chosen worse.  
 Beauty, wisdom, and courtesy,  
 All that in one woman may be,  
 That appertains to true goodness,  
 Death has taken, to our distress,  
 For here he eclipses all goodness,  
 In the sole person of our empress.

Thus Death has now slain us all.  
‘Lord, your anger you have let fall  
On this city, we see, for we arrived  
Too late,’ the three physicians cried.  
‘If we had been here but yesterday,  
And Death still stolen her away,  
Then of his power he might boast.’  
‘She’d not have seen you, sirs, most  
Certainly, nor have sought your skill,  
For such indeed was my lady’s will.  
Good physicians do we have here,  
But my lady wished for none, I fear,  
And would not allow any to see  
Her then, nor treat her malady.  
No, by my faith, she’d see none.’  
The doctors think of Solomon,  
Whom his wife did so disdain,  
That her own death she did feign;  
This Fenice has worked the same,  
And if they can revive this dame,  
And find such is what she’s done,  
They’ll not lie for her, or anyone,  
But tell the truth and not deceive,  
And say to all what they believe.  
To the court they made their way,  
Where the cries of grief that day  
Might the thunder have suppressed.  
The trio’s chief, and the wisest,  
Straightway approached the bier:  
No one cried: ‘Stand not so near,’  
Nor forced him to move aside,  
And to her breast and to her side  
He set his hand, and felt the soul  
Still lived within the body whole;  
Convinced indeed by hand and eye.

He saw the emperor standing by,  
 Tormented, and crushed by grief.  
 And called aloud, to give relief,  
 ‘Emperor, be you now consoled,  
 For certainly I see and know,  
 That she, your lady, is not dead.  
 Cease your tears, be comforted.  
 If I render her not, alive, to you,  
 Then may my life be ended too.’

### LINES 5905-5988 FENICE UPHOLDS THE DECEIT

**A**T once throughout the palace all  
 The noise abates and silence falls,  
 While the emperor commands  
 The doctor to state his demands  
 As to what is needed to revive  
 Her; and if he renders her alive,  
 He will command the emperor,  
 But will be hanged as a robber  
 Should he, in anything, have lied.  
 ‘This I accept,’ the doctor replied,  
 ‘And may no mercy be shown to me,  
 If I do not make her speak to thee.  
 Now, without turmoil or delay,  
 Empty the palace straight away,  
 So no other person here remains.  
 The affliction this lady sustains  
 I must now determine privately.  
 These doctors, of my company,  
 Alone, must stay with me here;  
 These two; no other must appear,  
 All of the rest must wait outside.’

This request they'd have denied  
Cligès, John, the nurse Thessala,  
Could they, in some way, but all the  
Nobles would have imposed it,  
If they had sought to oppose it.  
So they are silent and endure  
What all the rest are longing for,  
And from the palace make their way.  
Meanwhile the doctors tear away  
The winding sheet from the lady  
By hand, without the use of any  
Blade, then say: 'Be not afraid,  
Lady, now be not dismayed,  
But speak to us, of a surety,  
For we perceive, with certainty,  
That you are both whole and well.  
Be wise now, and sensible,  
And here despair of nothing,  
For if of us you seek anything  
We assure you now, all three,  
We have the power to aid thee.  
You ought not now to refuse.'  
Thus they attempt to confuse  
And deceive her, but in vain,  
For she cannot but disdain  
Any service they might render,  
All this to her is idle chatter.  
And when the physicians see  
She will not respond indeed,  
To bland requests or flattery,  
Then they drag her forcibly  
From the bier, and say if she  
Speaks not, she'll regret her folly;  
For they will do such things to her  
As never before inflicted were,

On any wretched woman's body.  
 'We know you are alive, we see  
 That you disdain to speak to us,  
 Yet know you are deceiving us,  
 And so would cheat the emperor.  
 Yet you need fear us no more,  
 And if we have angered you,  
 Before we trouble you anew,  
 Disclose your true will to us  
 For your deceit is villainous,  
 We will help, no matter what,  
 Whether it prove wise or not.'  
 It cannot be; she needs naught.  
 Then they renew their assault,  
 Lashing her about with whips,  
 Bloody welts scar back and hips,  
 And they so beat her tender flesh  
 That her blood pours out afresh.

**LINES 5989-6050 FENICE IS TORTURED;  
 THE LADIES OF THE COURT RETALIATE**

**THOUGH** they lash her with their whips  
 Until her flesh is torn and split,  
 And the blood is trickling down  
 From her wounds to the ground,  
 Even then it proves of no avail.  
 To force a single sigh they fail,  
 Or provoke her to move or stir.  
 They argue lead must be preferred,  
 And melted, then, without a qualm,  
 Once hot, poured on her bare palms,  
 Rather than fail to make her speak.

So fire and lead they swiftly seek,  
And light the fire and melt the lead,  
And now those felons, to evil wed,  
Torment, and thus afflict the lady,  
By pouring molten lead slowly,  
Lead taken boiling from the fire,  
Over her palms; such their desire.  
Nor are they even satisfied  
When it pierces from one side  
Of her bare palms to the other.  
The cowards declare that either  
She must confess immediately  
Or they will grill her cruelly,  
Until her flesh is burnt to ash.  
Still she is silent, for the lash  
And the pain she dare endure.  
They are preparing to do more,  
To grill her flesh, and char her,  
When a crowd of ladies sever  
Themselves from all the rest,  
And at the closed doorway attest,  
Viewing her torment through a crack,  
To the vicious and painful attack,  
These men are inflicting on Fenice,  
As with hot coals and irons they  
Seek to achieve her martyrdom.  
Preparing to break the door down,  
They bring implements, then batter  
At the closed door till it shatters,  
Thus do they achieve their mission.  
If they lay hands on the physicians,  
Swiftly their power they will assert,  
And grant the men their just desserts.  
The palace now these ladies enter,  
In a single torrent, all together,

And Tessala there in the press;  
 To the succour of her mistress  
 She runs; such is her only aim.  
 She finds her naked and maimed,  
 Sorely wounded, in bitter pain.  
 On the bier she sets her again,  
 And covers her now with a sheet,  
 While all the ladies go to wreak  
 Vengeance on the three physicians;  
 Not waiting on the decisions  
 Of emperor or seneschal.  
 From the windows, the doctors fall,  
 The three shattering, in the depths,  
 Necks, and ribs, and arms and legs,  
 Landing, all broken, in the court.  
 Never have ladies better wrought.

### LINES 6051-6162 FENICE IS INTERRED IN THE TOMB

**T**HOUGH those ladies have ensured  
 The doctors reaped their just reward,  
 And have repaid them grievously.  
 Yet Cligès is tortured cruelly,  
 Filled with dismay now on hearing  
 Of all the anguish and the suffering  
 His sweetheart has endured for him;  
 For a moment his eyes grow dim,  
 His thoughts fearful, and rightly;  
 For dead or injured she might be,  
 Through those grievous tortures  
 Inflicted by that trio of doctors.  
 So he is full of sorrow and pain,  
 When Thessala returns again,

Bringing a precious ointment,  
For the soothing anointment,  
Of poor Fenice's wounded body.  
Then the attendant ladies swiftly  
In white Syrian robes wrapped her,  
And laid her once more on the bier,  
Though leaving her face uncovered.  
All night they wept and suffered,  
Unceasing, weeping endlessly.  
All grieved, throughout the city,  
High and low, and rich and poor,  
Each sought it seemed to grieve more  
Than all the others, and lament,  
Nor cease till he or she were spent.  
All night their tears they sought.  
Next morning John arrived at court.  
Whom the emperor did now demand,  
And to him issued this command:  
'John, if you did rare work ever,  
Employ your skill, and deliver  
A most finely-wrought sepulchre,  
Than which none can discover  
One more beautifully carved.'  
And since it was already carved,  
John replied that he had wrought  
Such a tomb as was now sought.  
Though he'd had no expectation  
Of employing it yet for anyone;  
For when he had begun the tomb  
A saintly occupant he'd assumed.  
'Let it then the empress enclose,  
For she is saintly, God knows.'  
'Well spoken,' cried the emperor,  
'In the church of my lord Saint Peter,  
Let her be placed in her sepulchre,

There where the others are interred,  
 For she asked that, when she died,  
 She might forever there abide,  
 And requested I bury here there.  
 Now set to, and site the sepulchre  
 In its rightful position, where a tomb  
 Should reasonably a place assume  
 In some fair part of the cemetery.  
 John replies: 'Sire, most willingly.'  
 And John at once doth now depart.  
 The tomb he makes with great art,  
 And carves the work lovingly;  
 And, within, a feather bed he  
 Sets, for the stone is very hard;  
 And colder still the graveyard.  
 And that it might smell sweeter  
 Flowers and herbs he scatters;  
 And he does all this moreover  
 So as to hide beneath their cover,  
 And her body, the feather bed.  
 Already a Mass has been said  
 In the parish churches around,  
 And now the passing bells sound  
 As is customary for the dead.  
 Orders are given, the bier is led  
 To the graveyard, the body laid,  
 In the sepulchre John has made,  
 Which appears both rich and noble,  
 And throughout Constantinople  
 None remain, whether great or small,  
 Who do not weep, viewing the pall,  
 And curse and reproach cruel Death;  
 Knight and squires beneath their breath,  
 While the ladies and the maidens,  
 Beat their breasts, sorrow-laden;  
 All of them finding fault with Death:

‘Death, why wouldst thou not accept  
Ransom for our lady, as you might;  
For surely the gain to you is slight,  
While her loss to us is full great?  
And Cligès also laments her fate,  
For he now grieves and suffers too,  
Yet more than all those others do;  
And wonder it is he is still alive,  
Yet he will do naught but strive  
To endure, till he can disinter her,  
And hold her, and thus discover,  
Whether indeed she lives or nay.  
Around the grave those barons lay,  
Who’d lowered the bier to its place.  
And since John was there apace,  
Left him to close the sepulchre,  
While they lay prostrate there,  
And thus had no power to see;  
So that John could most readily  
Achieve all that he needed.  
When the sepulchre was fitted,  
And all was finished rightly,  
He sealed all the joints tightly.  
Great skill he must possess,  
Who, without force or excess,  
Could loosen, or penetrate  
Aught that John did so create.

### **LINES 6163-6316 FENICE IS RECOVERED FROM THE TOMB**

**F**ENICE lay there in the tomb  
Till the hour of darkness loomed,  
Yet thirty knights mounted guard,

Ten tapers the darkness starred,  
Shining bright, and burning clearly.  
The knights though, tired and weary  
From the grief they had suffered,  
Ate and drank so, to recover,  
That all as one fell sound asleep.  
At night Cligès the tryst did keep,  
And stole away from the court.  
Not a knight or squire knew aught  
Of this, nor of where he'd gone.  
He did not rest till he'd found John,  
Who advised him as best he could,  
And armed him, though they would,  
Indeed, meet no hostility.  
They spurred to the cemetery,  
Fully armed, fast as they might.  
Yet, so that the band of knights  
Who slept within felt secure,  
They had all the gates made sure,  
Such that no man might enter in,  
While the cemetery was ringed  
By a high surrounding wall.  
Cligès feels daunted by it all,  
For there is no way past the gate,  
Yet somehow he must penetrate;  
For Love summons him betimes.  
So he grips the wall and climbs,  
For he is both agile and strong.  
Within do gardens lie, among  
Which there rise scattered trees,  
And by the wall one of these  
Stands so near that it touches.  
Now with all he needs, Cligès  
Descends by means of this tree.  
And now the first necessity  
Is to open the gate for John.

The knights are slumbering on,  
So they extinguish all the lights  
And thus employ the dark of night.  
John seeks the grave site there  
And opens up the sepulchre,  
While doing no harm to it.  
Cligès climbs into the pit,  
And lifts his love from the grave,  
Who by her weakness is enslaved;  
Kisses her, clasped in his embrace,  
Pain and joy mingled in his face:  
She does not move or say a word.  
Now John himself is quickly stirred  
To seal the sepulchre once more,  
So all seems as it was before,  
As if no soul has e'er been there.  
As swiftly as they can they bear  
Her away to that secret tower.  
Now, once they were in the bower,  
Hidden there beneath the ground,  
Her grave clothes they unbound.  
And Cligès, who knows no detail  
Of what the potion may entail  
Within her body, rendering her  
Unable to speak, or even stir,  
Surmises that she must be dead,  
And many a tear now must shed,  
Discomforted so, and in despair.  
But came the time, as she lay there  
The potion began to lose its power,  
And Fenice who hears, at that hour,  
How he weeps, strains and strives  
To show him she is still alive,  
And comfort him by glance or word.  
Her heart, when his sorrow she heard,

Almost broke, at his grief and pain:  
 ‘Ah Death,’ he cried, ‘what a villain  
 You are, to thus save and reprieve,  
 Things vile, so as us to grieve,  
 Letting them live on and endure.  
 Death you are drunk or mad, for sure,  
 Who kill my love, and yet spare me.  
 Wondrous indeed is this I see,  
 My love is dead, yet life is in me.  
 Ah, sweet lover, why then does he,  
 Your love, live on, yet you lie dead?  
 For now, rightly, it might be said,  
 That you have died in serving me,  
 And I have murdered you, cruelly.  
 Yet, my love, of whom I am the death  
 That stole your life, is not the breath  
 Of error here? For I have lost mine,  
 And yet, in myself, I preserve thine.  
 For were not your life and health  
 Granted me, friend, as my wealth,  
 And were not mine granted you?  
 But for you I loved naught true,  
 And we two were but one thing.  
 Thus have I done a rightful thing!  
 For your life in my body I own,  
 While mine from yours has flown,  
 And one the other, where’er it be,  
 Should bear that other company,  
 And naught should part them ever.’  
 At this Fenice sighs, and whispers,  
 Answering, faintly, from her bed:  
 ‘My love, my love, I am not dead,  
 And yet am not so far from dying.  
 Little I think my chance of living,  
 I thought my death a game I’d play,  
 But indeed I may be pitied today,

For death hath made a game of me.  
Should I live, a wonder it will be,  
For the physicians have wounded,  
And torn my flesh, and tormented  
My poor self, and yet if my nurse  
Could come to me now and rehearse  
Her skills, I might yet be restored,  
If by such efforts one can be cured.’  
‘Have no worry as to that, my dear,  
For sure I will bring Thessala here,  
This very night,’ declares Cligès;  
‘Let John go seek her now,’ she says.  
So John departed to seek her there,  
And when he found her said to her  
That he wished to bring her away,  
And she should scorn all delay,  
For Fenice and Cligès needed her  
In the tower, and awaited her;  
And Fenice was much wounded,  
So that she must come provided  
With ointments and remedies,  
For Fenice would die if she  
Did not bring aid and promptly.  
So Thessala departs swiftly  
And fetches all her ointments  
Her plasters, and medicaments,  
And meets with John; the city  
They now leave, most secretly,  
And hurry straight to the tower.  
Once the nurse enters her bower  
Fenice at once feels calmer,  
So great her love and trust in her.  
Cligès greets her as she appears  
Saying: ‘Well it is you are here,  
Thessala, whom I love and prize!

Tell me straight what you surmise  
 Regarding this poor lady's state.  
 How seems she? Are we too late?  
 'Sire,' she answers, 'have no fear,  
 I will restore her, shed not a tear.  
 There shall not a fortnight pass  
 Before I have her well at last,  
 And you will find her healthier  
 Than ever she was and stronger.'

### LINES 6317-6343 THESSALA CURES FENICE OF HER WOUNDS

**T**HHESSALA waits on Fenice's health,  
 While John seeks to provide the wealth  
 Of supplies that the tower needs.  
 And Cligès visits, and succeeds  
 In doing so openly, for he dares  
 To lodge a moulting falcon there,  
 And feign he goes to attend on it,  
 So none surmises from this habit  
 That he goes there for any reason  
 Other than to visit the falcon.  
 He lingers there night and day,  
 And orders John to keep away  
 Any who seek, unasked, to enter.  
 Fenice has naught to distress her,  
 Being fully cared for by Thessala.  
 Were Cligès Duke of Tudela,  
 Morocco, or Almeria,  
 He'd think it little, it's clear,  
 Compared to his joy in her.  
 Love did himself no dishonour,  
 By bringing these two together.

When they clasp and kiss each other  
All their joy and happiness,  
It seems to them, must surely bless  
The world, and all who are in it;  
Ask me then nor more about it.

**LINES 6344-6392 FENICE LONGS FOR THE SUNLIGHT**

**E**ACH had sufficiency of the other,  
And Fenice dwelt in the tower,  
I think fifteen months, and more,  
Till the return of May now saw  
The flowers, the trees in full leaf,  
And the little birds, free of grief,  
Each singing their joyful litany.  
It came about one morn, Fenice,  
Heard the song of the nightingale,  
Cligès clasping her, or such the tale,  
About her waist, and round her neck;  
And she him likewise, in all respects.  
She said to him: 'Fair love, my dear,  
Would not a garden help me here,  
Where I could walk and take the air?  
For more than fifteen months there,  
I've had no sight of sun or moon.  
Were it possible, I'd wish that soon  
I might wander in the light of day,  
Nor in this tower be shut away.  
And if there were but a garden near  
Where I could walk often, it appears  
To me that such would do me good.'  
Then Cligès told her that he would  
Seek John's advice, and speedily,



*'Each had sufficiency of the other,  
and Fenice dwelt in the tower'  
Idylls of the King (p31, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
Internet Archive Book Images*

As soon as he could ever him see.  
It so chanced John met his view,  
As he was often wont to do,  
For he visited frequently.  
Cligès told him what Fenice  
Had expressed as her dearest wish.  
'I have already prepared for this,'  
Said John, 'all as she commands.  
For all she wishes and demands  
This tower and court can provide.'  
Fenice was pleased with his reply,  
And asked John to conduct her there,  
To which he answered: 'Anywhere!'  
And he then went and opened a door,  
Though the fashion of it was more  
Than I can describe to you or relate,  
Such as none but John could create,  
And so built that none could know  
There was a door or yet a window,  
For when both of them were closed,  
No trace of them was left exposed.

**LINES 6393-6424 THE SECRET GARDEN**

**W**HEN Fenice viewed the open door,  
And saw the sunlight inwards pour,  
As she'd not seen it for many a day,  
Her heart leapt at that sight, I say.  
Filled with joy she blessed the hour,  
Since now she could leave her tower,  
And no other lodging wished she then.  
Straight she passes into the garden,  
With all its pleasures and delights.



*'Fenice loves the shade around,  
under that tree, the turf is sweet'  
Idylls of the King (p77, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
Internet Archive Book Images*

A tree, in its midst, is a fine sight,  
With blossom and foliage blessed,  
Spreading wide and the branches  
So trained that they all hang down  
Until they almost touch the ground;  
The bole out of which they spring  
Aloft, through the clear air rising.  
High into the air doth lift its crown;  
And Fenice loves the shade around.  
Under that tree, the turf is sweet,  
Most pleasant now beneath her feet,  
And the sun's bright rays are not,  
Even in summer, when it is hot,  
Strong enough to pierce its leaves,  
For John its branches so weaves,  
And trains them all at his leisure.  
Here Fenice takes her pleasure.  
A bed is made under the tree;  
And there are joy and beauty.  
From the tower a high wall  
Doth surround the garden all,  
So that none might reach her bower  
Except they do so through the tower.

**LINES 6425-6586 THE TOWER IS DISCOVERED,  
AND JOHN IS ARRESTED**

**F**ENICE is now quite at ease,  
With nothing there to displease.  
For with the flowers, and leaves,  
She lacks nothing that she needs:  
Her lover may there embrace her.  
Now at the time when the hunter

Sets she-hound and sparrow-hawk,  
 To take the mistle-thrush and lark,  
 And stalk the partridge and quail,  
 A knight of Thrace, along the vale  
 Near the tower, sought such prey.  
 Young and lively was he alway,  
 Much taken with knightly pursuits,  
 And had chanced to take this route.  
 Bertrand was the young knight's name,  
 And his sparrow-hawk, though tame,  
 Had flown up, having missed a lark.  
 Bertrand, seeing it fail of its mark,  
 Was concerned the hawk was lost,  
 And must be foregone, to his cost.  
 Yet now its descent was sudden,  
 Hard by a tower, into a garden,  
 And, pleased to see its sudden fall,  
 He clambered swiftly over the wall,  
 Thinking his prayer had been heard  
 And he might now secure the bird.  
 But in descending he doth see,  
 Asleep and naked, under a tree,  
 Cligès there, with his Fenice.  
 'Lord,' he cried, 'what do I see?  
 What wondrous thing is this?  
 'By my faith, is that not Cligès,  
 And the empress in his embrace?  
 Surely not, yet it seems her face,  
 And none doth so resemble her.  
 The nose, mouth, brow, appear  
 Those my lady the empress owns.  
 Never indeed has Nature shown  
 Two forms fashioned so akin.  
 And here I see not a single thing  
 That I observe not in my lady.  
 If she lived, it would seem to me,

That this must certainly be her.’  
Just then, close to Fenice’s ear,  
A pear fell, and struck the ground;  
Fenice awoke, at the sound,  
And, seeing Bertrand, she cried:  
‘My love, my love, we are surprized,  
See tis Bertrand! If he escape  
Are not we in a dreadful strait,  
For he will tell all he has seen.’  
Now Bertrand, viewing the scene,  
Knew ‘twas the empress, without fail,  
And over the wall now he must sail,  
For Cligès has brought his sword  
And set it there on the greensward,  
Where beside their bed it was laid.  
He leapt up, and grasped the blade,  
And Bertrand fled immediately;  
As fast as ever he could, he  
Scaled the wall, and was nigh over,  
When Cligès now hurrying closer  
Struck at him so fiercely that he  
Near took his leg off at the knee,  
As though it were a fennel stalk.  
Nonetheless Bertrand could walk,  
And, once over the wall, escaped  
Although badly cut, and scraped.  
When his folk, on the other side,  
Bertrand, in this sad state, espied,  
They picked him up and wondered  
Greatly, upon seeing him wounded,  
By whom he had been mistreated:  
‘Ask me no questions now,’ he said,  
‘But set me on my horse aright.  
I cannot speak of this, nor might,  
Until I have seen the emperor.

The man must be struck with terror,  
Who has thus wrought me ill,  
For he is now in mortal peril.’  
Then they set him on his palfrey,  
And led him swiftly to the city  
Troubled, and fearful in mind.  
A great crowd followed on behind,  
Accompanying them to the court.  
Vying with each other, they sought  
To be the first to reach the hall.  
Bertrand, in the hearing of all,  
Made his report to the emperor.  
But they all took him for a liar,  
When he readily bore witness  
To having viewed their empress,  
And the emperor’s nephew Cligès,  
Under a tree, in all nakedness.  
One half of the city was in ferment  
Hearing the news with wonderment,  
Yet treating it as mere foolishness;  
While the other half, thought it best  
For the emperor to visit the tower.  
Great was the outcry, in that hour,  
Of those who followed on behind.  
But in the tower naught they find,  
For Cligès and Fenice have fled  
With Thessala, who boldly said,  
To comfort them and reassure,  
That if by any chance they saw  
Any who tried to follow them  
So as to take and detain them,  
They indeed need have no fear;  
Such could never come so near,  
Due to a most powerful charm,  
If seeking to cause them harm,  
As a crossbow’s flight that day.

Meanwhile the emperor doth say,  
That John must now be sought,  
Ordering him bound, once brought,  
– For John tells him all, in verity,  
And so is dispelled the mystery –  
And cries that he will see him hung,  
Burnt, and his ashes abroad flung,  
For the shame lately incurred,  
And such will be justly deserved,  
For John concealed from his power,  
His nephew Cligès, in that tower,  
And his wife as well, the empress,  
‘Such is the truth,’ John doth confess,  
‘I have not sought to concoct a lie,  
Nor to hide it from you will I try,  
And if I have done aught amiss  
It is right I am punished for this.  
But if am wrongly put to death  
He will avenge my last breath,  
If he lives. Now do your worst,  
For should I die you are accursed.’

**LINES 6587-6630 JOHN TELLS THE EMPEROR OF  
THE MAGIC POTION**

**T**HE emperor was deeply angered  
By everything that he had heard,  
Once he'd grasped all John had said.  
‘John,’ said he, ‘you are not dead,  
Until I have discovered your lord,  
He who hath worked such discord,  
While I have ever held him dear,  
And sought in all to be sincere.

For you shall be held in prison,  
 And if you know what has become  
 Of him, I order you, tell me now.’  
 John replied: ‘Tell you? And how  
 Should I commit such a felony?  
 Were the life drawn from my body  
 I would not reveal my lord to you,  
 Even if his hiding place I knew;  
 As for that, as God is my witness,  
 I know not the place, I confess,  
 Any more than you. Your jealousy  
 Seeks to guard naught, in reality:  
 For I am not so filled with fear,  
 As not to state, that all might hear –  
 And even if I am not believed –  
 How thoroughly you were deceived.  
 By means of the potion you imbibed,  
 That your nephew for you prescribed,  
 Your nights were not as they seemed.  
 For except you slept, and in a dream,  
 Had joy of her, you never achieved  
 Aught of that in which you believed.  
 But dreams came to you in the night,  
 And gave you then as much delight  
 As if you were still wide awake,  
 And her within your arms did take.  
 No other joy, it was, came to you.  
 To Cligès, her heart was so true  
 That for his sake death she feigned.  
 He trusted in me, and explained  
 All their plan; he placed her, rather,  
 In the tower, of which he’s master.  
 My loyalty you should not accuse;  
 Yet if my master I’d dared refuse,  
 Or had disobeyed his command,  
 Then indeed I should be hanged.’

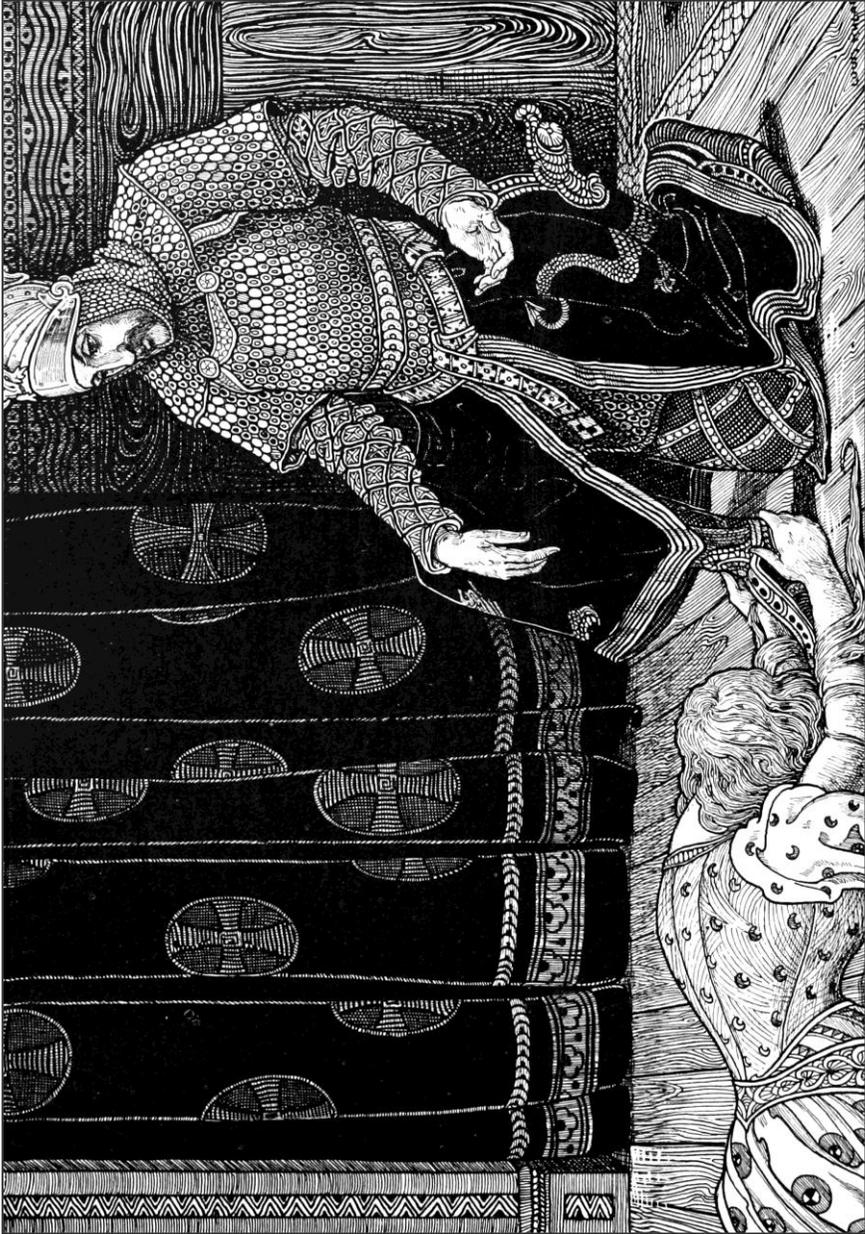
**LINES 6631-6784 CLIGÈS BECOMES EMPEROR**

**T**HE emperor, now brought to think  
Of that potion he was led to drink,  
By which he had been deceived,  
For the very first time perceived  
That if he had never had pleasure  
Of his own wife, by any measure,  
Except in dream, all was delusion,  
And his marriage a mere illusion.  
He cried that if he did not take  
Revenge for the shame and disgrace,  
Brought upon him by the traitor  
Who'd played the part of her seducer,  
He'd never more have joy in life.  
'Search,' he commanded, 'for my wife,  
From Pavia, all through Germany,  
And let no castle, town or city,  
Be excluded from your quest.  
Whoever doth those two arrest,  
Will be, of all, dearest to me.  
Now go search, diligently,  
Near and far, and high and low.'  
They started eagerly, although,  
Despite searching, every day,  
Some, being friends of Cligès,  
Would rather hide them closely,  
Conducting them both to safety  
If they found them, than otherwise.  
A fortnight at least, I'd surmise,  
They spent on that task in vain;  
For Thessala, guided the twain,

And with her arts and enchantments,  
Such were her accomplishments,  
That not even for a single hour  
Did they fear the emperor's power.  
They stayed in town nor city as yet,  
But still all their needs were met,  
Or more even than they desired,  
For whatever might be required,  
Tessala both sought and purchased;  
When they were no longer chased  
And the pursuit ended in failure,  
Cligès was able, at his leisure,  
To seek out King Arthur's court.  
When he'd found him he sought,  
To his great-uncle he made clamour  
Concerning his uncle the emperor,  
Who'd robbed him of his inheritance,  
By taking a wife in open defiance  
Of his sworn oath which was not right,  
For by it he had promised outright,  
To Cligès' father, he'd not marry.  
The king declared that with his navy  
He would attack Constantinople,  
And his knights and all his nobles,  
Would fill a thousand ships of war,  
And men-at-arms a thousand more;  
No city, town, burg, nor castle wall,  
However strong, would fail to fall.  
Nor did Cligès forget to deliver  
His thanks to the king, as ever,  
For the aid that he now offered.  
The king issued then his order  
Through all the land to his barons,  
And they all made ready, at once,  
Every warship, barque, and galley.  
With lances and shields, were they,

And suits of armour for the knights,  
Filled, to the gunwales, for the fight.  
The king made greater preparation  
For the coming confrontation,  
Than ever did Caesar or Alexander.  
He did summon there and gather  
All of England and Normandy,  
Flanders, France and Brittany,  
And as far as the gates of Spain.  
They were about to sail amain,  
When from Greece came a message  
That instantly delayed their passage,  
Held the king and all from sailing.  
Among the messengers appearing  
Was John, a man to be believed  
Since he never sought to deceive,  
By saying aught that was untrue,  
But only what he for certain knew.  
These messengers were noblemen  
Of Greece, seeking Cligès again.  
They found him where they sought  
With much joy, at Arthur's court.  
They cried: 'God save you, sire!  
By all those now in your empire,  
Is Greece surrendered to you,  
As is Constantinople too,  
For all belongs to you of right.  
The news we pronounce outright  
Is that your uncle died of anger,  
Because he failed to uncover  
Where you were; filled with hate,  
Such that he neither drank nor ate,  
He died as one who lost his mind.  
Fair sire, return, for you will find  
That such is your barons' desire;

For your true presence they require,  
Wishing to make you emperor.’  
Some were delighted, while more  
Wished that their guests had never  
Arrived, for they would moreover  
Have indeed been greatly pleased  
To have still embarked for Greece.  
But thus the venture was abandoned,  
And the king his force disbanded,  
All the host turned from the affair.  
While Cligès hastened to prepare,  
Wishing now to return to Greece,  
And let his stay in Britain cease.  
Once he is ready, he seeks leave  
Of the king, while the lords grieve,  
And so, with Fenice, now embarks.  
Until the Greek shores they mark,  
They voyage, and are welcomed there  
With great joy, as befits their share.  
And all the people see them marry,  
And crown their Cligès and Fenice.  
Now his love he has made his wife,  
And calls her: ‘My love, my wife.’  
And she has no reason, all confess,  
To say he loves her any the less;  
And she too loves him moreover  
As one should love one’s lover.  
Each day their love grew stronger,  
For he indeed doubted her never,  
And she complained of naught.  
She was never confined at court,  
As so many have been confined  
And hidden away since that time.



*'He imprisons her in her chamber,  
for in her he lacks all confidence'  
Idylls of the King (p105, 1898) -  
Baron Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)  
Internet Archive Book Images*

For every later emperor  
Of his empress went in fear,  
Lest the woman might deceive him  
As in the story, told to him,  
Fenice had deceived Alis;  
First with the potion at the feast,  
Then with her other trickery.  
Thus every empress, who e'er she be,  
However rich, however noble,  
Is held captive in Constantinople,  
Since her day, and locked away,  
For every emperor is still afraid,  
When this story he remembers.  
He imprisons her in her chamber,  
For in her he lacks all confidence,  
And no man can enter her presence  
Unless he's gelded from infancy,  
For then there is no fear, you see,  
Love will bind him, as other men.  
Here ends this work of Chrétien.

**The End of the Tale of Cligès**



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chrétien, likely a native of Troyes in north-eastern France, served at the court of his patroness, Marie of France, Countess of Champagne and daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, between 1160 and 1172. Hers was a literate court, and she herself knowledgeable in Latin as well as French texts, and Chrétien used the legendary court of King Arthur as an analogue for the French and Angevin courts of his own day. Marie's mother Eleanor became Queen of England, in 1154, as the spouse of Henry II, following annulment of her marriage to Louis VII of France, thus Chrétien was able to blend French and British traditions in his works. Between 1170 and 1190, Chrétien, writing in fluent octosyllabic couplets, developed and transformed the narrative verse tradition, and laid the foundations for the plot-driven prose narratives of later times.

## ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

**A**nthony Kline lives in England. He graduated in Mathematics from the University of Manchester, and was Chief Information Officer (Systems Director) of a large UK Company, before dedicating himself to his literary work and interests. He was born in 1947. His work consists of translations of poetry; critical works, biographical history with poetry as a central theme; and his own original poetry. He has translated into English from Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Chinese and the European languages. He also maintains a deep interest in developments in Mathematics and the Sciences.

He continues to write predominantly for the Internet, making all works available in download format, with an added focus on the rapidly developing area of electronic books. His most extensive works are complete translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.