

And fling him far into the middle mere¹:
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word."

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :

" It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus, 40

Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.

A little thing may harm a wounded man.

Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,

Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept 45

And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,

Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,

Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang

Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He stepping down

By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock, 50

Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,

And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,

Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth

And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt : 55

For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,

Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work

Of subtlest jewelry. He gazed so long

That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,

This way and that dividing the swift mind,² 60

In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd

Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd

There in the many-knotted waterflags,

That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.

So strode he back slow to the wounded King. 65

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :

" Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave ?

What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ? "

1. A Latin construction for the middle of the lake.

2. Perplexed, undecided.