

104 Early British Heroes

came for them to sit down at the table, each one tried to get the best place, so that he might sit above his fellows.

This led to a scene of the utmost confusion and quarrelling. The princes seized the loaves and the other things that were on the table, and threw them about. Then they took up the silver bowls filled with wine and hurled them at each other. When all these had been thrown, they approached each other's necks with firm closed fists. And last of all, swords were drawn and a fight began, in which many were wounded.

When Arthur arrived and heard what had happened, he was deeply grieved. He at once called out, in a loud and commanding voice, "Sit ye down! Sit ye down! And who does not obey me instantly, shall be put to death."

In this way peace was at last brought back. But the heart of good King Arthur was very heavy. He wished that he had never planned to hold the festival, if this were the result. It grieved him very deeply to think that his princes and nobles had disgraced themselves with foolish quarrelling.

While he was still sorrowing, Merlin came up and desired to speak with him. The prophet was now very old, but he was still Arthur's constant adviser.