

vised him to summon all the lords and gentlemen to come to London at Christmas time. For, he said, Jesus Christ had come to this earth at Christmas to be King of mankind, and of His mercy He would show by some miracle who should be King of England. All the lords and gentlemen who bore arms came to London, and as they were praying, long before daylight, in the greatest church in London, there was seen in the churchyard a great square stone; in the middle of it there was an anvil of steel a foot high, and sticking in the anvil was a fair sword. Round about the sword were written in gold these words: "Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil is rightwise king born of all England."

The Archbishop told the people not to leave the church until the service was done; but when the service was over, they all went out together to see the stone and the sword. And when they read the words, every man who wanted to be king tried to pull out the sword; but no one could move it. Then the Archbishop said, "He is not here that shall achieve the sword, but doubt not that God will make him known."

Ten knights were appointed to guard the sword night and day, and the lords and gentlemen all stayed in London, trusting that God would show who was to be king. On New Year's Day, after service in the church, they all rode off to justs and tournaments, and among them was Sir Ector, with his son, Sir Kay, who had lately been knighted, and Arthur, who still thought that he also was Sir Ector's son. Sir Kay had forgotten his sword, and he asked Arthur to ride back to their lodging for it. "I will well," said Arthur, and rode fast after the sword. But when he came to the house, he could not get in, for everyone had gone to see the justing. Arthur was vexed, but he said to himself, "I will ride to the churchyard and take the sword that sticketh in the stone, for my brother shall not be without a sword this day." So when he came to the churchyard Sir Arthur alighted and tied his horse to the stile, and so he went to the tent and found no knights there, for they were all at the justing; and so he handled the sword by the handles, and lightly and fiercely pulled it out of the stone, and took his horse and rode his way till he came to his brother, Sir Kay, and delivered him the sword.

Sir Kay knew at once what sword it was, and showed it to his father, and said, "Sir, lo here is

the sword of the stone: wherefore I must be king of this land." Sir Ector took his two sons back to the church, and there he made them tell him solemnly the truth about the sword. Kay said that Arthur had given it to him, and Arthur told how he had got it. "Now," said Sir Ector, to Arthur, "I understand ye must be king of this land; for God will have it so; for there should never man have drawn out this sword but he that shall be rightwise king." Sir Ector then told Arthur to see if he could put the sword back where it was, and pull it out again. "That is no mastery," said Arthur. So he put the sword into the stone, and Sir Ector tried to pull it out and failed; and Sir Kay tried, and he failed; then Arthur tried, and pulled it out easily. Then Sir Ector and Sir Kay kneeled down before Arthur. But Arthur said, "Alas, mine own dear father and brother, why kneel ye to me?" And Sir Ector told him then that he was not his father, nor Sir Kay his brother, but that he was Uther's son. Arthur was very sorry, and it grieved him to have Sir Ector say, "Sir, will ye be my good and gracious lord when ye are king?" "Else were I to blame," said Arthur, "for ye are the man in the world that I am most beholding to, and my good lady and mother, your wife, that as well as her own hath fostered me and kept. And if ever it be God's will that I be king, ye shall desire of me what I may do, and I shall not fail you: God forbid I should fail you."

Then they went and told the Archbishop all about it. And on Twelfth Day the barons came together and tried again to pull out the sword. But no one could pull it out but Arthur. The lords were very angry that a boy should be made king, so the decision was put off until Candlemas, and the ten knights were set to watch the sword again.

At Candlemas many more lords came to try to win the sword, but none could do it. Only Arthur pulled it out easily. The barons were still more angry, and said they would try again at Easter. But at Easter it was just the same, so they made another delay until Pentecost.

"And at the feast of Pentecost all manner of men assayed to pull at the sword, but none might prevail but Arthur; and he pulled it out before all the lords and commons that were there, wherefore all the commons cried at once. 'We will have Arthur unto our king; we will put him no more in delay, for we all see that it is God's will that he