

"Good father," said Sir Dinadan, "make your peace with him, and pray that the Saints forgive him, for even now his soul flits."

And this was so, for at that moment the fallen knight turned a little on one side, fluttered his eye-lids and caught at his breath, and then lay quiet in death.

Sir Dinadan turned away and addressed the damsel, who stood before the uneasy Bertram with calm and down-cast eyes.

"Lady," said he, "my comrade and I crave your pardon for this disturbance and bloodshed, and pray you to know us for honourable gentlemen, as far as may be in this world of rough camps and fallen gods. Into what strange place we have ridden this day, and what stranger company, I cannot say. Treason and lawlessness an errant-knight must ever expect to find, but such beauty, noble damsel, as yours, I had not sought away from Camelot or the safe castle of some prince."

The lady raised her eyes. A moment they lightened graciously upon the thin, brown face of the knight, then, swiftly and with a sweeter regard, they turned to the flushed and youthful visage of Bertram.

"I have been in this hateful house but six hours," she said. "It was a place of devils—this alone I know; and with what gladness, yea, tho' the old man weeps, do I now behold it a house of death. The beasts now bloody upon the rushes brought me here by force. Sirs, I am the daughter of King Pellinor of the Isles, ever thankful and ever holding you in my heart."

And tho' the damsel's gaze was so evidently for Bertram, Sir Dinadan bowed the lower of the two.

"In my father's distant house," said Bertram, "where there is no music and little enough laughter, even there have I heard of King Pellinor with great love and respect."

"And I," said Dinadan. "have ridden against him at many a tournament, and sat against him at many a feast. Fair damsel, your sire is a sturdy feaster, and the man he has so often out-sat puts hand and sword at your service."

Laughing, the lady turned again from the knight and looked at Bertram with enquiry in her glance.

"My heart and my sword," said the squire, and he dropped his left hand to his hilt and touched his right lightly to his breast.

"By my soul," cried Dinadan, "you learn speedily," and he pulled such a face that the lady laughed outright.

## CHAPTER V.

### A MERRY FELLOWSHIP.

The lady, the knight and young de Sallas went into the court-yard and got their own horses, for the fellows at the castle had disappeared as if by magic. The damsel, unable to find her own palfrey, took the dead knight's white charger. They rode westward until nightfall. The air was chill, for winter was close at hand. They passed for the most part over a good road running through a fair country of timber and rounded hills. Sir Dinadan, though weak from loss of blood, told wonderful stories that he had heard from pilgrims and mariners, of lands in the far east. He also sang songs, and made fun of many knights and kings, until the lady cried that she could see them feasting and jousting and rolling from their horses as plain as if they were worked on tapestry. Bertram rode in silence, though he was glad enough at heart to be of such a good fellowship. Every smile from the damsel, every glance of her eyes, threw him into a most unmanly confusion. Did she but lean from her saddle and pat the neck of his black horse he felt that he had been well rewarded for the risk of his life. Sir Dinadan, you may feel sure, saw all this without much trouble, and read the signs. So he laughed merrily, and said that a sad plague had settled upon knighthood, and that the name of the plague was love. But all the while the look of his eyes and lips was so tender that de Sallas could take no offence, though he was unable to make reply for the utter scattering of his wits. The lady turned her face ever away from Bertram, and made merry answer to Sir Dinadan, telling him that love was the heart and the grace of all true knighthood, and that by love many a poor gentleman had come to great glory.

"But does it not more often bring us to sorrow and dishonour," said the knight. "Has