

**Brian T. Murphy**  
**ENG 220-CAH: Mythology and Folklore (Honors)**  
**Fall 2019**

**La Queste del Saint Graal**  
*or*  
**The Quest of the Holy Grail**

**[www.Brian-T-Murphy.com/Eng220.htm](http://www.Brian-T-Murphy.com/Eng220.htm)**

## Introduction

(from Publications Old French Series, Cambridge, Ontario. 2000)

The text here translated is based on *La Queste del Saint Graal* (Paris: Champion, 1923), edited by M. Albert Pauphilet, the author of illuminating *Études sur la Queste del Saint Graal* attribuée à Gautier Map (Paris: Champion, 1921). This volume of *Études* constitutes a valuable interpretation of this document as a chapter in the history of mediæval religious thought.

The *Queste* is dated about 1220, a fact which renders its attribution to Gautier Map, who died before 1210, fantastic. As we shall see, it was plainly conceived by someone writing under the influence of the Cistercian Order, and it was intended to be a picture of the victorious Christian life as shown forth to mediæval humanity by the White Friars. The individual author is unknown.

The *Queste* forms part of a long series of French prose compositions collectively known as the Lancelot-Graal series, arranged in the following order: *Estoire du Graal*, *Merlin*, with its continuation, *Lancelot*, *The Queste*, and *Mort Arthur*. The material contained in this series of romances has been preserved in whole or in part in many manuscripts.

The *Queste*, however, is to be distinguished from all the other romances with which it is associated in the manuscript compilations. By its subject it is of course connected superficially with the earlier biographical treatments of Lancelot, who was the central figure of the entire cycle. Further, Robert de Boron had already identified Perceval with the search for the Grail as a holy object of desire. In what, then, consists the apparent originality of the author of the *Queste* before us?

There is no necessity of repeating here information which is easily accessible in the vast amount of critical writings relating to the Arthurian romances, their origin and development, or to the origin and nature of the mysterious vessel called the Holy Grail, which came to be the object of knightly search at King Arthur's court. I am concerned here merely with the significance of the Holy Grail as revealed in the present text, and with the Christian qualities required in him who would succeed in the search for the

precious vessel. The earliest authors who had presented the Grail as an object of search have failed to describe it with sufficient clearness to enable us to seize its outward appearance. Robert de Boron had described it as an actual cup used by Christ at the Last Supper, in which Joseph of Arimathæa later caught His blood after the Crucifixion and which, after being carefully preserved, was finally transported to Britain. But even so, there is something more mysterious back of it as a symbol, as well as of the bleeding lance with which Longinus pierced Christ's side upon the Cross and which came to be so mystically associated with the Grail itself. Our author is not concerned in clearing away the cloud of mystery surrounding these precious relics. He pays little attention to the lance and gives nowhere any description of the Grail as a tangible object. He is interested in the Grail as a symbol, in its virtues as an object of search, and in its effect upon him who is privileged to behold it. To him the Grail symbolises God, and the search for it is the search for God, who reveals Himself only to the pure those who are pure in heart as well as in deed. Evidently the common man of the world, sullied with sin and unrepentant, is not fit to see God or to enjoy His benefits. A break in the established literary tradition will be required before the ascetic life can be portrayed in the old Arthurian atmosphere. This break is precisely what constitutes the originality of the present treatment.

Literary tradition had had its way with Gawain, Lancelot, Arthur, Guinevere, Bors, Hector des Mares, Perceval, and the rest of the great personages at court. This tradition had portrayed in these personages diverse qualities dear to twelfth-century French chivalry, but it had not undertaken to represent any of this society as impeccably chaste, as pure, as virgin. Perceval was the purest of them all, but even his literary title was not clear enough in the eyes of our author to entitle him to serve as protagonist in this new spiritual Quest. As for the rest of the courtiers, they were all far from perfect: they were guilty of pride, cruelty and incontinence. Their past record, known of all, debarred them from any hope of success in this exacting competition. Yet they were favourites with

the social class whom the Cistercian apologist wished to reach with his revival call. He wished to call this proud and luxurious public to a militant career of virtue and self-abnegation. How should he catch their attention and turn it to his own purpose? By taking the old favourites, by showing their delinquencies and their unworthy traits, and by creating beside them a new character to embody those virtues which alone could win in the Quest. So he created Galahad, son of Lancelot, who thus belongs in the old corrupt society, but who distinguished himself from all his relatives and associates by his possession of those qualities which the ascetic author had determined to extol.

The whole setting of the Arthurian court, the Round Table and the knights, even their search for the Holy Grail all this was taken over; the endless adventures which came to the knights-errant as they went up and down through the earth in their hopeless search are repeated with persistence but without enthusiasm. What our author is interested in is the revelation of a higher standard to these wayward worldlings. With all their pride and bravery in the field and joust, with all their chivalric trappings, he brings them to their knees before the White Friars, who mercilessly flay them for their sins of omission and commission and who instruct them in the true purpose of life as conceived in the cloister—the search for God.

These familiar adventures with lorn ladies, with eyrie castles, with awful tombs and sylvan shrines, with cruel or craven knights are all invested with a new significance. They are interpreted by the lonely hermits and learned abbots as mere trials of that faith which must survive all trials along the way of life. These adventures which astound and baffle the knights are inexplicable to them until they are explained by godly men in their true perspective as tests of moral and spiritual strength. These Cistercian counsellors into whose hands the knights unflinching fall in their moments of greatest confusion and chagrin are God's ministers set to interpret the meaning of life. They will tolerate no excuses or palliation of guilt. They stand for the monastic doctrine undefiled, but a monastic doctrine applied to the man of the world. Faith, humility, mercy and chastity are the pillars of their teaching. Life is a continuous warfare against man's lower nature. There can be no compromise with the Devil, who is ever ready with his wiles to drag men down to Hell.

Here we have, then, exhibited in action the crusading spirit for which the Cistercians were famous. Militant Christianity was their ideal, in which the Christian hero should lay aside every weight and sin and fight straight on to the goal. Be not surprised if Galahad

hearkens to no appeal of the world! He has been created and reared for a more arduous task than mere victory in a tourney or in a lady's bower like his father Lancelot. His eye is kept single upon the great Quest; where others falter and lose heart, he knows no discouragement. His eye is clear, his sword is keen, his heart is pure. Galahad is always in training. He will reach his goal. He will see God, and then gladly die.

Now we see the novelty of this composition: taking contemporary society as it loved to imagine itself in the brilliant but false colours of the Arthurian court, the author has introduced a new idealism an idealism which has penetrated the entire mass of this romantic material and which has survived to our own day. Mere courtesy, formal deference to the rules of knighthood were not enough to purify society: these things savoured too much of the world and of corruption. What was needed to regenerate man was an insistent call to a higher Quest. It was more important to fight for the High Master than for Arthur, more imperative to save one's own soul than to save a fair damsel in distress.

This text, then, furnishes us with the biography of the perfect knight as seen by an important corporate body of Christians in the thirteenth century an Order which we are told had eighteen hundred houses about 1200. This Order presented the most energetic type known in the Middle Ages. Galahad may be plainly taken as an embodiment of their ideal: he is the Christ of 1200.

How powerfully this portrayal of manly perfection has fastened itself upon the imagination of posterity is evidenced by the manner in which to-day Galahad has come to dominate the entire Arthurian cycle. He arrived late, but he arrived with power. Artistic representations of Arthur himself, of his beloved Lancelot, of his nephew Gawain, of Kay the seneschal, of the goodly Perceval, may be sought in vain. But who is there unfamiliar with the figure of the saintly Galahad? From among all the glittering assembly of the Table Round, he represents for us, as he represented for his companions in the Quest, all that is best in knighthood and all of its spirituality that has survived.

## The Quest of the Holy Grail

On the eve of Pentecost, when the companions of the Round Table had come to Camelot and had heard mass, and when the tables were about to be set at the noon hour, there entered the hall a very fair damsel on horseback. It was evident that she had come in great haste, for her horse was still all in a sweat. Dismounting, she came before the king and saluted him with God's blessing. Sire, said she, for God's sake, tell me if Lancelot is here. Yes, truly, the king replied, see him yonder. And he pointed him out to her. Then going directly up to him, she said: Lancelot, in the name of King Pellés, I bid you to accompany me into the forest. And he asked her in whose service she was. I belong, she said, to him whose name I have just mentioned. And what is your need of me? he inquired. That you shall soon see, she replied. Then in God's name, he said, I will gladly go.

Then he bade a squire saddle his horse and bring him his arms; and the squire did so at once. And when the king and the others who were in the palace saw this, they were very sorry. Nevertheless, seeing that he would not tarry, they let him go. But the queen said: How is it, Lancelot, that you leave us on the day of this high festival? My lady, the damsel then replied, you may be sure that you will have him back here again to-morrow before the dinner-hour. Then let him go, the queen replied, for were he not to return to-morrow, he would not have my sanction to go away to-day. Then he mounted his horse and the damsel hers.

So they started away without other leave taking and without any company except a squire who had come with the damsel. And when they had gone forth from Camelot, they rode until they came into the forest.

There they struck into the beaten highroad and continued half a league until they came into a valley and saw before them by the road an abbey of nuns, whither the damsel turned in. And when they came to the gate, the squire called, and the gate was opened. Then they dismounted and entered. And when those within knew that Lancelot had come, they all went to meet him and welcomed him joyfully. And when they had taken him to a chamber, and he was disarmed, he saw his two cousins, Bors and Lyonel, lying on their beds. Greatly delighted at the sight, he woke them; and when they saw him, they embraced him and kissed him. Then began a happy scene between the cousins. Fair sire, said Bors to Lancelot, what adventure has brought you here? We

expected to find you at Camelot. Then he told them how a damsel had brought him here, but for what reason he did not know.

And while they were conversing thus, three nuns came in bringing Galahad, so fair and shapely a youth that one could hardly find his equal in the world. Then she who was most high-born, gently weeping, took him by the hand, and standing before Lancelot, she said to him: Sire, here I bring you our ward, our greatest joy, our comfort and our hope, that you may make him a knight. For to our thinking there is no more honourable man than you from whom he could receive the order of chivalry. He looked at the youth and saw him to be so marvellously endowed with every beauty that he thought he would never again see such a fine figure of a man. And from the modesty which he saw in him he hoped for so much that he was greatly pleased to make him a knight. So he replied to the ladies that he would not fail to perform this request, and that he would gladly make him a knight, since they wished it so. Sire, said she who had brought him in, we wish it to be done to-night or to-morrow. In God's name, said he, it shall be as you desire.

Lancelot spent the night there and made the youth keep watch in the church throughout the night. In the morning at the hour of prime he made him a knight, he himself fastening one of his spurs and Bors the other. Then Lancelot girded him with the sword and gave him the accolade, and told him that God would make him an honourable man, seeing that he had not yet been found lacking in any good trait. And when he had done everything connected with this ceremonial, he said to him: Fair sire, will you come with me to my lord King Arthur's court? Nay, sire, said he, I will not go with you. Then Lancelot said to the abbess: Lady, allow our new knight to come with us to the court of my lord the king. For he will make more progress there than if he stays here with you. Sire, she replied, he shall not go now; but as soon as we think that the time and the circumstances are favourable, we shall send him.

Then Lancelot and his companions left and rode together until they came to Camelot at the hour of tierce, when the king had gone to hear mass with a great company of his noble men. Upon arrival the three dismounted in the court-yard and went upstairs to the great hall. Then they began to talk about the young man whom Lancelot had knighted, and Bors remarked that

he had never seen any other man who so much resembled Lancelot. Upon my word, said he, I will never believe anything again, if he is not Galahad who was born of the fair daughter of the Fisher King; for he bears a marvellous resemblance to that family and to ours. In truth, I believe that is who he is, Lyonel replied, for he is much like my lord (Lancelot). They spoke of this subject for a long time in hope of drawing something from Lancelot, but to all they said he answered never a word.

When they had ceased speaking of this, they surveyed the seats placed about the Round Table and found on each one written This is the seat of such an one. And they examined each one until they came to the large seat called the Perilous Seat. There they found letters which had been newly written, as it seemed to them. And they saw that the letters said Four hundred and fifty-four years are accomplished since the Passion of Jesus Christ; and on the day of Pentecost this seat is to find its occupant. At the sight of these words, they said one to another: In faith, here is some marvellous adventure! In God's name, said Lancelot, were one to count up the time elapsed since the resurrection of Our Lord until now, he would find, I believe, that this seat is due to be occupied this very day; for this is Pentecost after four hundred and fifty-four years elapsed. And I wish that no one else should see these words before the arrival of him to whom this adventure is to fall. Then the others said that they would take good care that they should not be seen; so they ordered a silken cloth to be brought, and with it they covered the words on the chair.

**Summary:** King Arthur returns from church but refuses to sit until some adventure occurs. (cf. *SGGK*, etc.) A page brings word of a strange block of red marble which has floated downstream, with an embedded sword bearing the inscription "No one shall remove me from here but the one at whose side I am destined to hang. And he shall be the best knight in the world." After Gawain and Perceval both attempt unsuccessfully to remove the sword, Arthur orders everyone to go in to dine.

Then the knights left the stone by the river's brim and went away. And the king ordered the horn to be blown for the washing of hands, then sat down on his raised seat, while each of the companions of the Round Table took his allotted seat. That day four crowned kings rendered the service, and along with them so many men of high degree that it was a wondrous sight to see. That

day the king was seated on his high seat in the palace, and there was a great company of noble men to do his service. And it came about that when they were all seated, they found that all the companions of the Round Table were present and the seats occupied, except only the one called the Perilous Seat.

When they had finished the first course there happened such a marvellous adventure that all the doors and windows of the palace where they were dining were closed of their own accord without anyone having touched them, and yet the hall was not darkened. At this the wise and foolish were alike amazed. And King Arthur, who spoke first, said: By God, fair lords, we have seen strange things to-day both here and at the river. But I believe we shall see to-night still greater wonders.

While the king was speaking thus, there entered a worthy old man with a white robe, but there was not a knight in the hall who saw where he came in. He came on foot and led by the hand a knight with scarlet armour, but having no sword or shield. And as soon as he was inside the hall, he said: Peace be with you! Then when he saw the king, he said: King Arthur, I bring thee the Knight Desired, who is sprung from the high lineage of King David and from the family of Joseph of Arimathea; it is he through whom the marvels of this country and of foreign lands will terminate. Behold him here! Then the king, delighted with this news, said to the worthy man: Sire, be welcome indeed if this news be true, and this knight be welcome too! For if it is he whom we have been awaiting to achieve the adventures of the Holy Grail, never was such a joyous reception given to any man as we shall give to him. But, whoever he be, whether the one you say or some other, I should wish him welcome, since he is such a gentle man and of such high lineage as you say. Upon my word, the worthy man replied, you shall soon have early evidence of what I say. Then he made the knight disarm, who was left clad in a jacket of red silk cloth; then he gave him a red mantle which he threw over his shoulder, all of heavy silk and furred inside with white ermine.

When he had clothed and equipped him, he said to him. Follow me, sir knight, and so he did. Then he led him straight to the Perilous Seat beside the one occupied by Lancelot, and he raised the silken cloth with which it was covered. And there he found the words which said: This is the seat of Galahad. When the worthy man looked at the words he saw that they were apparently

recently inscribed, and he recognised the name. So he said in the hearing of all present: Sir knight, take your seat here, for it is your place. And he sat down confidently and said to the worthy man: Now you can go, for you have done all that you were commanded. And greet for me all those in the holy hostel and my uncle King Pellés and my grandsire the rich Fisher King, and tell them from me that I shall go to see them as soon as I can and when I have the leisure.”

**Summary:** The man in white departs, leaving the court amazed that such a young knight should occupy the *Siege Perilous* and remarking that he “shall bring the adventure[s] of Britain to their close and restore the Maimed King to health” and that he has been “sent by God to free our country from the enchantment and the strange events that have troubled it.” Galahad declares that this is “the starting point for all who would join fellowship in the Quest of the Holy Grail, which will be undertaken presently.” King Arthur then brings Galahad to the river, where he easily removes the sword from the stone.

Then they looked down the stream and saw a damsel riding rapidly toward them on a white palfrey. And when she had come up to them, she greeted the king and all the company and asked if Lancelot was there. As he was standing right before her, he himself replied: Damsel, here I am. Then she looked at him and recognised him, and said to him in tears: Ah, Lancelot, how changed is your situation since yesterday morning! And when he heard that, he said to her: How is that, damsel? Tell me. Upon my word, she replied, I will tell you in the presence of all who are here. Yesterday morning you were the best knight in the world. Anyone who should have called you then the best knight of all, would have said the truth, for then you were so. But whoever should say it now would be considered a liar; for there is one better than you, as is proved by the adventure of this sword on which you did not dare to lay your hand. Now such is the change and alteration in your position, which I have pointed out in order that you may not henceforth think that you are the best knight in the world. And he said that he would never more think so, after this adventure which made it impossible for him so to regard himself. Then the damsel turned to the king and said: King Arthur, I bring thee word from Nascien the hermit that there shall come to thee this day the greatest honour that ever befell a knight of Brittany. And this will not be for thy sake, but for another’s. Dost

thou know what this honour is to be? It is the Holy Grail which will appear to-day in thy palace and will nourish the companions of the Round Table. Then as soon as she had said these words, she turned away and left by the same road as she had come. Now there were there many barons and knights who would fain have detained her in order to learn who she was and whence she came; but she would not tarry for any request that was made of her.

Then the king said to the barons of his household: Fair sirs, thus we have had true evidence that you are soon to enter upon the Quest of the Holy Grail. And because I well know that I shall never again see you all together as you are now, I desire that in the meadow of Camelot there should now be held so well-contested a tournament that after our death our descendants who come after us shall still hold it in remembrance.

**Summary:** Galahad easily wins the tournament, defeating all of the other knights, and everyone attends mass.

And when the king had come out from the church and had come into the upper hall, he ordered the tables to be laid. Then the knights went to take their seats as they had done in the morning. When they were all seated in silence, there was heard such a great and marvellous peal of thunder that it seemed to them the palace must collapse. But at once there shone in upon them a ray of sunlight which made the palace seven-fold brighter than it was before. And straightway they were as if illumined with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and they began to look at one another; for they knew not whence this experience had befallen them. Yet, there was no man present who could speak or utter a word: for great and small alike were dumb. Then when they had remained for some time so that none of them had power to speak, but rather they gazed at each other like dumb beasts, there entered the Holy Grail covered with a white cloth; but no one was able to see who was carrying it. It entered by the great door of the hall, and as soon as it had come in, the hall was filled with odours as sweet as if all the spices of the earth were diffused there. And it passed down the middle of the hall and all around the high seats; and as it passed before the tables, they were straightway filled at each place with such viands as the occupant desired. When all were served, the Holy Grail departed at once so that they knew not what had become of it nor did they see which way it went. At once the power of speech was restored to those who before could

not utter a word. And most of them gave thanks to Our Lord for the great honour he had done them in feeding them with the grace from the Holy Vessel. But more than all the others present, King Arthur was joyous and glad because Our Lord had shown him greater favour than to any king before him.

Thus the familiars and the strangers at the court alike rejoiced, for it seemed to them that Our Lord had not forgotten them in showing them such a favour. And they continued to speak of it as long as the meal lasted. The king himself spoke of it to those who were seated nearest to him, and said: Surely, my lords, we ought to be glad and rejoice greatly that Our Lord has given such evidence of His love that He has consented to feed us with His grace upon such a high festival as Pentecost. Sire, replied my lord Gawain, there is something else that you do not know: there is not a man here who has not been served with what he desired in his mind. And that is something that never happened in any court, unless it be in that of the Cripple King. But they are all so confounded that they could not see it openly, the true likeness being concealed from them. Wherefore, for my part I make this vow, to enter to-morrow without delay upon the Quest and to prosecute it for a year and a day, and longer yet if need be; and I will not return to court for any reason whatsoever until I have seen it more clearly than it has been manifested to me here, if peradventure it be destined that I can behold it. And if it be destined otherwise, I will return.

**Summary:** All of the knights vow the same, leaving the next morning despite King Arthur's misgivings and his foreboding that many will die on the quest. The story then follows the adventures of Gawain, Lancelot, and the three successful Grail Knights, Galahad, Bors, and Perceval.

*from British Legends: The Quest for the Holy Grail:*

### **The White Shield**

Galahad left Camelot alone and travelled until he came to the White Abbey where he was shown a magical white shield bearing a red cross that had belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. He was warned that the shield was special and protected by a White Knight, and reserved for a knight who was pure of heart. Galahad decided to take it and left, but he had not gone far when the White Knight appeared. Instead of attacking him, the knight congratulated

him on his decision and revealed the history of the white shield.

The next morning Galahad continued on the quest, and, riding through a forest, came across Sir Percival and Sir Lancelot travelling together. However, because he now carried the white shield they did not recognize him, and jousted with him as was the knightly custom, until an old anchoress appeared saying,

“Galahad, without doubt, you are the best knight in the world!”

This accolade alarmed Galahad who spurred his horse into the forest. Lancelot and Percival went after him but lost him. The two knights decided to split up: Lancelot rode on and Percival returned to the recluse.

### **Sir Percival's Quest**

The anchoress told Percival she was the sister of his father, King Pellinore, making her his aunt, and also told him the sad news that his mother was dead. Percival in turn told her about the knight with the white shield. The anchoress warned him that the knight was Galahad who was an important part of a miraculous event that was unfolding in the world. Furthermore, she foretold that of all of the Knights of the Round Table only three would achieve the Sangreal, and of these, two would be virgins and the third chaste. One, she continued, would evolve past his father in the same way the lion is stronger than the leopard, and she advised Percival make for the castle of the Maimed King, who was also known as the Fisher King, of Corbenic.

Following her advice, Percival arrived at a monastery where a very elderly and venerable gentleman lay in a bed, suffering from many wounds. He was told this was King Evelake who had been a companion of Joseph of Arimathea. God had granted him time to live until the most perfect knight arrived who would achieve the Sangreal.

### **The Lion and the Serpent**

Percival continued the quest and travelling through a valley came upon a strange scene. A massive serpent had hold of a lion cub by its neck and was dragging it along, when suddenly a huge lion appeared and fought the serpent. Percival joined the attack, killing the serpent with his sword. On the death of the serpent, the lion made a great show of

appreciation, allowing him to stroke its head and shoulders, and that night it slept peacefully at his side.

While he slept he dreamed of a young woman who rode upon the back of a lion, and an old woman who rode upon the back of a serpent. The young woman warned him of the approach of a great battle. The old woman demanded he give himself to her in compensation for the serpent that he had wrongly killed. Percival refused, but the old woman vowed she would possess him if his faith ever failed.

### **The White Ship**

The next morning, accompanied by the lion, Percival travelled on and arrived at the seashore. At midday, a black ship arrived and onboard was a beautiful lady who asked him why he wandered in the wilderness. He replied that his devotion to Christ made it safe for him to roam where he would. She said she had met Galahad earlier and if he promised to help her she would take him to him and commanded her servants to set up a pavilion and set food inside. The lady asked Percival to join her and while they ate, seeing how beautiful the woman was, he offered himself to her. She told him only if he promised himself to her exclusively would she return his affections. He agreed, but as he prepared to sleep with her he caught a glimpse of the crucifix on the handle of his sword and recalled that he had vowed to remain a virgin. He made the sign of the cross and the tent suddenly dissolved into black smoke and was gone. Looking around he saw the black ship sail away with the lady onboard who shouted, "Betrayer!", and realized he had only just resisted temptation.

Over the horizon, a white ship appeared and onboard was an old man who invited him to join him. Percival went onboard the ship and it sailed off over the sea.

### **Sir Bors' Quest**

Before Sir Bors left Camelot he went to see a holy man for advice, who asked if he would like to confess his sins before beginning the quest of the Sangreal. Bors took up the offer and also vowed from then on to remain chaste. After this he began the quest and on his journey came across a dead tree where a great bird sat in its uppermost branches upon a nest with its starving young. It pierced its

own body with its beak and, as it bled to death, the baby birds drank up the blood, saving them from starvation.

As evening fell he met a young lady who was seeking a champion to fight a knight who was trying to steal her land. Without hesitation, Bors agreed and spent the night in her tower where he slept on the floor. While asleep, he dreamed he saw two birds. One was as white as snow and the other as black as coal.

The white bird said, "If you would give me meat and be my servant, I would give you all of the treasures of the world, and shall make you as white and as fair as I."

The black bird countered saying, "If you serve me and have me, my blackness will avail you more than the whiteness of the other."

In the morning Bors defeated his adversary, making him promise to esteem and honour the lady and stop threatening her. The defeated knight agreed, and Sir Bors, satisfied with the outcome, resumed his quest. At the summer's end, he arrived at the coast, where he found the white ship with Percival onboard. The two friends had a happy reunion then settled down to await the arrival of Sir Galahad.

### **The Sacrifice of Dindrane**

With the arrival of the first brown leaves of autumn, Sir Galahad arrived at a hermitage where a lady named Dindrane invited him to accompany her on a great adventure. He agreed, and the two travelled to the sea where they found the white ship with Bors and Percival waiting. They were all delighted to see each other and swapped tales to pass the time. To the joy of Percival, Dindrane revealed herself to be his sister by their father King Pellinore. The ship sailed on and towards the end of autumn arrived at another coast. Dindrane instructed them to disembark to seek out the Maimed King and cure him of his wound.

Travelling through a forest they came across a white hart leading four lions, which they followed. Arriving at a chapel, the hart transformed into a man. The lions also underwent a transformation, with one becoming a man, another remained a lion, while a third became an eagle and the fourth changed into an ox.

The following day the party came to a castle where they were challenged by the castle knights who demanded that Dindrane give a bowl of her own blood to the lady of the castle to satisfy their custom. Her companions could not agree and fought to defend her. Eventually, admitting defeat, the castle knights offered the party peace and lodging for the night at the castle. The party all agreed and accepted the offer. Later that evening they asked their hosts about the grisly practice of bloodletting. They were told that the lady of the castle suffered from a terrible disease whose only cure was the blood from a virgin who was the daughter of a king. Hearing this, Dindrane feeling compassionate, offered her blood to the lady despite the danger to herself.

Her offer was accepted and the practice carried out the next morning, after which she lost consciousness. On regaining consciousness, she knew she would die and asked her brother to place her body in the ship and set it free to the sea. She foretold they would find her in Sarras, the holy city, and asked them to bury her there, foretelling that Galahad and then Percival would die soon after her. Finally, she instructed the three knights to split up and go separate ways until at last they were reunited in the castle of the Maimed King.

Galahad and Bors left their grieving friend at his request to fulfill his sister's wishes. Lovingly he placed her in a ship and wrote a note describing her life and adventures and left it by her side knowing they would be reunited in Sarras. After watching the ship disappear over the horizon he set out for Corbenic.

### **Lancelot and Galahad**

After Sir Lancelot left Camelot on the quest he had many adventures. Although he had glimpsed the Sangreal before the quest he had never managed to hold it and this desire burned deep within him. At last, he came to the sea where he rested and fell asleep. In a dream, he heard a voice telling him to board the first ship that came his way. When he awoke he looked out over the sea and saw a ship approaching that was driven by neither sail nor oar. On boarding the strange ship he found it deserted but, experiencing a feeling of peace and serenity, he stayed. Exploring, he came across a room where the body of Dindrane lay, and reading the note at her

side he learned about her and her sacrifice. The ship sailed on and Lancelot remained onboard thinking himself alone, but that night as he took the air on deck he was surprised to see a knight approaching him. As he welcomed him he was delighted to see that it was his son, Sir Galahad.

Eventually, as winter approached, the ship passed close by the shore where an unknown knight called to Sir Galahad telling him it was time to resume the quest of the Sangreal. After an emotional farewell, Galahad told his father they would never meet again and disembarked.

### **Lancelot Fails**

Lancelot stayed on the ship spending much of the time praying for another sight of the elusive Sangreal. Eventually, the ship arrived at a castle by the sea. Lancelot heard a voice telling him to enter the castle, and following its instructions found a locked chamber. Not knowing what else to do he prayed outside and eventually the door opened, revealing a room that was filled with the most glorious light. The voice told him to flee, saying that he was not worthy to enter, but as he turned to go he caught a glimpse of angels and priests standing all around the Sangreal. Stepping inside he was hit by a blast of fire that scorched him and left him blind and deaf. He was laid in bed where he remained for twenty-four days, dreaming many wonderful dreams. When he finally awoke he was told he was at the castle of Corbenic. When he had fully recovered he chose to return to Camelot, realizing he was too unworthy to achieve the quest of the Sangreal, and his son had eclipsed him as the best knight in the world.

### **The Death of King Evelake**

After Galahad had left his father he came to the abbey where King Evelake lay. The King called him close and requested an embrace. As he embraced him the king died, and Galahad carried him outside for burial. Soon after, Galahad discovered something marvellous had happened to him, and resuming his journey performed all manner of miracles along the way.

The next morning, when Galahad had heard mass, he left there, commending the friars to God, and rode five full years before coming to the residence of the Cripple King. And during all these five years Perceval bore him

company wherever he went. Within that time they had so completely achieved the adventures of the kingdom of Logres that few were ever seen there afterward except some miraculous revelation of Our Lord. And wherever they passed, and whatever the number of their foes, they could never be discomfited or dismayed or frightened.

One day it happened that they came forth from a great and marvellous forest. And there they met at a cross-road Bors who was riding alone. When they recognised him, do not ask whether they were glad and happy, for they had long been without his company and greatly desired to see him. So they made much of each other, celebrating the honour and good fortune of the meeting. Then they asked him how he was, and he told them the truth and how he had fared: and he said that full five years had passed without his lying four times in any bed or in any house where people lived; but he had slept in lonely woods and distant mountains, where he would have died more than a hundred times, had it not been for the grace of the Holy Spirit which had comforted and cheered him in his distress. And did you find what we are looking for? asked Perceval. Certainly not, said he, yet I believe that we shall not separate before we have finished that for which we started upon this Quest. God grant us that! said Galahad, for so help me God, I know of nothing which could make me so happy as your arrival which delights me and satisfies my desire.

Thus chance brought the three companions together as chance had previously separated them. They journeyed together for a long time until one day they came to the castle of Corbenyc. When they were inside and the king recognised them, the joy was great and marvellous, for it was generally known that with their arrival the adventures of the castle would end, which had so long existed. And the news travelled far and wide, until all the inhabitants came to see them. King Pellés wept over Galahad, his nephew, and so did the others who had seen him as a little child.

When they had removed their arms, Elyezer, the son of King Pellés, brought to them the Broken Sword, of which the story has already been told, and with which Joseph had been smitten through the thigh. And when he had drawn it from the scabbard and had told them how it came to be broken, Bors took it to see if he could join it again, but without success. When he saw that he was not equal to the task, he handed it to Perceval, saying: Sire, see whether you can achieve this adventure.

Willingly, he replied. So he took the sword just as it was and fitted the two pieces together, but could by no means join them. Seeing this, he said to Galahad: Sire, we have failed in this adventure. Now you must try, and if you fail, I think it will never be achieved by mortal man. Then Galahad took the two pieces of the sword and fitted them together. And at once the pieces became joined so marvellously that no one in the world could detect the break or know that it had ever been broken.

When the companions beheld this, they said that God had granted them a good beginning, and that they believed that they would easily accomplish the other adventures, since this one had now been achieved.

When the others present saw that the adventure of the sword had been concluded, they were very happy. They presented it to Bors, saying that it could not be in better hands, for he was such a wonderfully fine knight and worthy man.

When the vesper hour arrived, the weather changed, the sky grew dark, and a great and marvellous wind arose which fairly struck the palace; and the heat of the wind was so fierce that many of them expected to be burned, and some fainted with fear. Then they heard a voice saying: Let those who are not entitled to sit at the table of Jesus Christ withdraw; for the true knights are about to be fed with food from heaven.

Upon hearing this, all went out without delay, except King Pellés, who was a worthy man of holy life, his son Elyezer and a damsel who was the king's niece, the most holy and religious creature known in those days in any land. With these three the three companions remained to see what revelation Our Lord would be pleased to grant them. After waiting a little while, they saw coming through the door nine armed knights, who took off their helmets and armour; then approaching Galahad, they bowed to him and said: Sire, we have come in haste to be present with you at the table when the precious food is to be broken. Then he replied that they had arrived in time, for they too had just got there. Then they all sat down in the midst of the palace, and Galahad asked them whence they came. Three of them said they came from Gaul, and three from Ireland, and the other three from Denmark.

While they were conversing thus, they saw come out from one of the adjoining chambers a wooden bed borne by four damsels. Upon the bed there lay a worthy man apparently in great distress, and he had a golden crown upon his head. When the damsels had carried him into

the middle of the hall, they set him down and withdrew. Then he lifted his head and said to Galahad: Welcome, sire! I have long desired to see you and have long waited for you to come, being in such pain and anguish the while that any other could not have endured the trial. But now, if it please God, has come the hour when my grief is to be relieved, and I shall depart from this life as it was long ago promised me.

While they were speaking thus, they heard a voice saying: Anyone who has not been a companion of the Quest of the Holy Grail should now withdraw: for he may not longer remain here. As soon as these words were uttered, King Pellés and his son Elyezer and the damsel withdrew. When the palace was emptied of all except those who knew themselves to be companions of the Quest, it seemed at once to those who had remained that there came from heaven a man dressed in the garb of a bishop, with a crozier in his hand and a mitre upon his head; and four angels carried him upon a rich seat and seated him at the table on which was the Holy Grail. He who had been carried in like a bishop had words on his brow which said: Behold Josephe, the first Christian bishop, whom Our Lord anointed in the city of Sarraz, in the temple there. And the knights seeing this understood the words, but marvelled how it could be true; for this Josephe to whom the words referred had been dead more than three hundred years. But he spoke to them at once, and said: Ah! knights of God, servants of Jesus Christ, marvel not to see me before you as I am in the presence of this Holy Vessel; for just as I served it in the flesh, so I serve it being a spirit.

Saying this, he drew near the silver table and prostrated himself on his elbows and knees before the altar. And when he had continued thus for some space, he listened and heard the chamber door open and slam loudly. So he looked in that direction, as did all the others. And they saw the angels come in who had carried Josephe, two of them bearing two tapers, and the third a red silk cloth, and the fourth a lance which dripped blood so freely that the drops fell down into a box in his other hand. Then the two set the tapers upon the table, and the third laid the cloth beside the Holy Vessel, and the fourth held the lance straight up over the Holy Vessel so that the blood which was flowing down the lance dropped into it. As soon as they had done all this, Josephe arose and removed the lance a little from the Holy Vessel and covered the latter with the cloth.

Then Josephe prepared to celebrate the sacrament of the mass. And after waiting a little, he took in the sacred Vessel a wafer apparently of bread. And at the elevation there came down from heaven a figure as of a child with a face as red as if it were aflame with fire; and He entered into the bread so that those present saw clearly that the bread had assumed the form of carnal man. When Josephe had held it thus a while, he put it back in the Holy Vessel.

When Josephe had performed the priest's part in the service of the mass, he came up to Galahad and kissed him, and told him in like manner to kiss all his brothers. And so he did. When this ceremony was over, he said to them: Servants of Jesus Christ, who have striven and toiled to behold a part of the wonders of the Holy Grail, sit down now at this table, and you shall be filled with the best and most precious food that ever knights tasted, and this from the very hand of your Saviour. And you can say that you have toiled to good purpose, for you shall receive to-day the highest reward that ever knights received. Having said this, Josephe vanished from their midst, so that they never knew what had become of him. Then they sat down at once at the table in great fear, and wept so tenderly that their faces were all wet with tears.

Then the companions looked and saw come forth from the Holy Vessel a man as it were quite naked, and His hands and feet and body were bleeding; and He said to them: My knights and servants and My loyal sons, who while yet in this mortal life have become spiritual, who have sought for Me so long that I can no longer conceal Myself from you, it is fitting that you should behold a part of My mysteries and secrets, for you have proved yourselves worthy to sit at My table, where no knight ever ate since the time of Joseph of Arimathæa. Some of the others have partaken as faithful servants: that is, some of the knights here and many others have been satisfied with the grace of the Holy Vessel; but they have never been in the same position which you now occupy. Now take and receive the precious food which you have so long desired, and for which you have endured such toil.

Then He Himself took the Holy Vessel and came to Galahad, to whom when he had kneeled, He gave to partake of his Saviour. And he received Him joyfully with folded hands. So did each of the others, and there was none to whom it did not seem that something like bread was placed in his mouth. When they had all received of this precious food, which seemed to them so

marvellously sweet that they thought that all the savours they could imagine were entering their bodies, He who had regaled them thus said to Galahad; Son, so pure and clean as mortal man can be, dost thou know what I am holding in My hands? Nay, he replied, unless you tell me. He replied: It is the bowl from which Jesus Christ ate of the lamb on Easter Day with His disciples. This is the bowl which has served acceptably all those whom I have found serving Me; this is the bowl which no faithless man ever beheld without suffering for it. And because it has thus served all manner of people acceptably, it is properly called the Holy Grail. Now thou hast seen what thou hast so desired to see and what thou hast coveted. But thou hast not yet beheld it so clearly as thou shalt yet see it. And knowest thou where it is to be? In the temple in the city of Sarraz, and therefore it behoves thee to proceed thither and bear this holy Vessel company, which to-night will leave the kingdom of Logres so that it shall never be seen there again, nor shall it cause any more adventures there. And knowest thou why it is going away? Because its claims are no more served or honoured by the people of this land. For they have turned to a lower worldly life, in spite of having been nourished with grace from this Holy Vessel. And because they have so ill repaid the favour, I divest them of the honour which I had done them. Therefore I wish thee to go to-morrow to the sea, and there thou shalt find the ship in which thou didst find the Sword with the strange belt. In order that thou mayst not go alone, I wish thee to take with thee Perceval and Bors. However, since I do not wish thee to leave this country without curing the Cripple King, I wish thee to take some blood from this lance and anoint his legs with it; for by this shall he be cured, and by nothing else. Ah! Sire, said Galahad, why will you not permit all the others to come with me? Because I will not have it so, He said, but I wish to do it after the manner of My disciples. For just as they ate with me at the Last Supper, so you have eaten now with me at the table of the Holy Grail. And you are twelve just as the disciples were, I being over you as the thirteenth, who am to be your Master and Shepherd. Just as I separated them and sent them over the world to preach the true gospel, so I send you, one here and another there. And you shall all die in this service, except one of you. Then He gave them His blessing and vanished, so that they knew not what became of Him, except that they saw Him ascend toward heaven.

And Galahad came to the lance which was lying on the table and touched the blood; then he went to the Cripple King and anointed his legs with it where he had been wounded. Then the king clothed himself and left the bed healthy and whole. And he thanked Our Lord for having so promptly regarded him with His favour. He lived a long time yet, but not in the world, for he withdrew at once into a community of White Friars. And Our Lord performed many a fine miracle for love of him, of which the story does not tell in this place, as there is no need of it.

**Summary:** Galahad, Perceval, and Bors sail to “the city of Sarraz” with the table and the Grail; disembarking, they bring it into the palace. The ship carrying the body of Perceval’s sister also arrives, and they retrieve her body, burying it in the palace.

When the king of the city, named Escorant, saw the three companions, he asked them whence they came and what they had carried in on the silver table. And they answered his inquiries truthfully, and told him of the marvel of the Holy Grail and the power which God had conferred on it. But he was treacherous and cruel, being a member of the cursed pagan line. So he believed nothing of what they told him, but said they were faithless deceivers. Waiting until he saw them remove their arms, he had them seized by his men and thrown into prison; and he held them closely in confinement for a year without allowing them any freedom. But this turned out well for them; for as soon as they were cast into prison, Our Lord, who was not forgetful of them, sent the Holy Grail to bear them company, by whose favour they were daily nourished so long as they were confined.

At the end of the year Galahad complained to Our Lord one day, saying: Sire, it seems to me that I have survived in this world long enough: if it please you, release me from it soon. Now that day it happened that King Escorant lay sick unto death. So he sent for them and begged their forgiveness for having wrongfully treated them so ill. They willingly pardoned him, and he died at once.

When he was interred, those of the city were greatly dismayed, for they knew not whom they could make their king. So they took lengthy counsel together; and while they were thus engaged, they heard a voice which said to them: Take the youngest of the three companions, and he will take care of you and be your counsellor so long as he remains with you. So they

obeyed the command of the voice, and took Galahad, making him their unwilling master, and put the crown upon his head. All this he regretted much; but seeing that it must needs be so, he permitted it, for otherwise they would have killed him.

When Galahad had become lord of the land, he constructed on the silver table an ark of gold and precious stones to cover the sacred Vessel. And every morning, as soon as he arose, he and his companions came to the sacred Vessel to make their prayers and orisons.

When the end of the year came around, on the anniversary of the day when he had first won the crown, he and his companions arose early in the morning. And when they came into the temple, they looked at the sacred Vessel; and there they saw a handsome man garbed like a bishop, and he was on his knees before the table making his confession; and about him there was such a great company of angels as if he were Jesus Christ Himself. After remaining upon his knees for a long time, he got up and began the mass of the glorious Mother of God. And when he came to the mystery of the mass and had removed the platter from the sacred Vessel, he called Galahad, and said to him: Come forward, servant of Jesus Christ, and thou shalt behold what thou hast so desired to see. Then he stepped forward and looked within the sacred Vessel. And when he had looked in, he began to tremble violently, as soon as mortal flesh began to gaze upon things of the spirit. Then Galahad stretched forth his hands toward heaven, and said: Lord, I adore Thee and thank Thee that Thou hast brought my desire to pass, for now I see clearly what tongue could not tell nor heart conceive. Here I behold the motive of courage and the inspiration of prowess; here I see the marvel of marvels! And since it is so, fair gentle Lord, that you have accomplished my desire and allowed me to see what I have always longed to see, now I pray you, just as I am and in this great bliss, to permit me to pass from this earthly life to that in heaven.

As soon as Galahad had addressed this request to Our Lord, the good man who stood before the altar, dressed like a priest, took the Body of Our Lord from the table and offered it to Galahad. Humbly and devoutly he received it. And when he had partaken of it, the good man said to him: Knowest thou who I am? Nay, lord, unless you tell me.

Know, then, said he, that I am Joesphe, son of Joseph of Arimathæa, whom Our Lord has sent to bear thee company. And knowest thou why He has sent me rather than another? Because thou hast resembled me in two respects: in that thou hast beheld the marvels of the Holy Grail as I have done, and in that thou hast been virgin as I am too; and it is right that one pure man should bear another company.

When he heard this, Galahad came up to Perceval and kissed him; then he did the same to Bors, saying to him: Bors, salute my father, my lord Lancelot, as soon as you see him. Then Galahad prostrated himself on his elbows and knees before the table; but he had not been there long before he fell forward upon his face on the temple floor, for the soul was already gone from his body. And the angels bore him away with jubilation, blessing Our Lord.

As soon as Galahad had passed away, a great miracle happened there. For the two companions saw plainly that a hand came down from heaven; but they saw no body to which the hand belonged. Coming straight to the Holy Vessel, it seized it and the lance as well, and carried it up toward heaven, so that since then no man has been bold enough to assert that he had seen the Holy Grail.

When Perceval and Bors saw that Galahad was dead, never were men so sorrowful; and had they not been such good men of virtuous life, they might readily have fallen into despair for the great love they bore him. The people of the country mourned him sorely too, and were in deep distress. His grave was dug there where he died; and as soon as he was interred, Perceval withdrew to a hermitage without the city and assumed the religious garb. Bors accompanied him, but without laying aside his worldly dress, because he was desirous of returning to King Arthur's court. Perceval lived a year and three days in the hermitage, and then died; and Bors had him buried with his sister and with Galahad in the temple.

When Bors saw that he was all alone in such a distant land as in these regions of Babylon, he left Sarraz all armed, and coming to the sea entered a ship. And he had such good fortune that in a very short time he arrived in the kingdom of Logres. When once in the country, he rode until he came to Camelot, where King Arthur was. Never was such joy made over anyone as over him; for they thought they had lost him forever, seeing that he had been so long absent from the country.

When they had finished their meal, the king sent for the clerks who used to set down in writing the adventures of the knights of the court. So when Bors had related the adventures of the Holy Grail just as he had beheld them, they were committed to writing and kept among the rolls at Salisbury. Master Walter Map got them from there to make his book of the Holy Grail for for love of his lord King Henry, who ordered the story to be translated from Latin into French. Here the story concludes, without further mention of the Adventures of the Holy Grail.