

Interlude.

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

The Sutton Hall Codex.*

The 151 leaves of British Library MS MMIX.ad, or the Sutton Hall Codex (named after the country house where, until 1880, the manuscript was kept), contain 5 prose narratives that are all secular in content. They are interspersed with 4 short poetic texts, including a fragment of Chretien de Troyes' *Yvain: Le Chevalier au Lion* (folio 43 recto) and a section of the Middle-English verse romance *Athelston* (folios 103 recto to 106 verso). Parts of some of the prose narratives are illegible or missing due to scorch marks and loss of manuscript leaves; the codex as a whole is thought to be the work of two different scribes.

The Sutton Hall Codex seems to have been put together as a compilation of late medieval romances copied from a range of exemplars. Close scrutiny of the texts that are also known from other sources demonstrate that the manner in which the scribes did their copying was rather mechanical, which means that the different linguistic backgrounds of the tales and poems have been preserved, and punctuation varies across transcripts. Somewhat confusingly, however, there is also evidence to suggest that, as regards contents, a process of editing has taken place. A number of tales, such as, for instance, *Athelston*, differ significantly from other available versions: material has been added or adapted, whilst other passages have been extracted, leading to substantial revision of the texts that were copied out. It could also be the case that no alterations were actually made by the scribes, but that other, as yet unidentified (possibly even earlier) exemplars were used, although there is still little proof of such alternative editions having existed.

With respect to historicity, the Sutton Hall Codex is generally assigned to the late 15th or early 16th century, mainly because it was originally supplemented by the (complete) romance tale *The Knight of the Yellow Lands*, which is believed to form part of the famous story sequence *Le Morte Darthur* by Sir Thomas Malory. Regrettably, the manuscript of *The Knight of the Yellow Lands* was lost seven years

* Appendix B from J. R. F. Holland (ed. R. A. Thornton): *"The Life and Times of Sir Sidney Althane. Containing a Full Biography, a Discussion of his Literary and Scientific Works, and an Exploration of his Views on the History of Great Britain."* Short & Sweet Publishing, London, 1884.

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ago; at present, the only version that remains is the translation into modern English made by Sir Sidney Althane, the late owner of the codex. An expert on medieval writings,^{*} as well as a respected philologist and palaeographer, his rendition of the tale is taken by scholars to be reliable and true to the original. Comparison of the specific editorial features and diction of *The Knight of the Yellow Lands* (in particular the scribe's notes at the beginning and the end, which were copied out by the translator in their Middle-English format) with the Caxton print of *Le Morte Darthur* has lent strong support to the supposition of Malory being its author. Whether it concerns a lost section of the Arthurian cycle, or a drafted fragment which was later abandoned or eliminated, remains a matter of debate.

As stated above, no other source or version of *The Knight of the Yellow Lands* is currently known to be extant; however, the Althane text does seem to indicate that, at some stage, Malory envisaged a different sequel to his second book of Sir Tristram than the one with which we are familiar. Contrary to some redactions of the French prose *Tristan* (the Vulgate Cycle), there is no third book of Sir Tristram in *Le Morte Darthur* as we know it, and the story of King Arthur and his knights continues straight with the Grail Quest as based upon the *Queste del Saint Graal*. The use of the word "fyrste" in the introduction to the tale certainly points towards the intention of composing, and even the possible existence of, more chapters of "the thyrde boke".

The Althane translation of *The Knight of the Yellow Lands* is given below. In this romance, we meet with a new knight, called Sir Olyver, a character who is not mentioned in the rest of *Le Morte Darthur*. The tale relates how Sir Palomedes' quest for the Beast was concluded – a story-line that in most versions of the *Romance of Palamedes* (which may well have served as a source of inspiration to Malory) remains uncompleted.[†] Interestingly enough, in texts where the finale of the quest for the Beast is given, the story differs significantly from the course of events as described in *The Knight of the Yellow Lands*.[‡] In the Post-Vulgate *Palamedes*, the Beast

^{*} E.g., see S.O.R. Althane, *The Book of Medieval Romance*. Short & Sweet Publishing, London, 1873.

[†] The *Palamedes*, a later work than the prose *Tristan*, expands on episodes from the *Tristan*. It is preserved in, amongst others, the *Compilation* of Rusticiano da Pisa.

[‡] As with the other texts in the Sutton Hall Codex, such apparent inconsistencies and deviations may be due to the difference between the manuscripts actually used and those which have survived.

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is presented as an abomination that only the chosen can kill; after Palomides' conversion to Christianity during the Grail Quest, which releases him from worldly entanglements, he manages, with the aid of Galahad and Percival, to trap the Beast in a lake, where he finally slays it. In *The Knight of the Yellow Lands*, however, the Beast stands for the harm and loss inflicted upon King Arthur by evil forces in the past, with Palomides acting as a redeemer. He also liberates the soul of the Knight of the Yellow Lands so that it can go to Heaven.



The Knight of the Yellow Lands.

*Here beginneth the thyrde boke off Sir Tristrams de Lyoness,
whyche geffeth a tale fyrste aboute hys goode frende Sir Palomydes,
and who had slayne the Questynge Beste, and how the Knyght of
the Yealow Londis was graunted hys conffecion.*

When Sir Tristram had come home to Joyous Garde, there was good cheer between him and La Belle Isolde, because they loved each other for ever. And, as was rehearsed before, during his adventures all over the country Sir Tristram had won much worship and fame, so that he was spoken of far and wide as the knight that was matched by no-one living in this world except for Sir Lancelot. And people called Sir Lancelot a lion and Sir Tristram a leopard, that is to say Sir Lancelot was the best in combat, but

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Sir Tristram was almost as good. Often it was mentioned, too, that Sir Tristram was a man of great spiritual achievement, for the Saracen Sir Palomides had been granted his seventh battle for Christ by Sir Tristram, after which Sir Tristram had been his godfather when Sir Palomides was baptised.

Then shortly after Sir Tristram had been reunited with Isolde, there came to Joyous Garde an old and well-trying knight, with his son at his side. So the knight told Sir Tristram how his son had only lately arrived in the region, for he had been born in England and bred in France, but now he had come of age. And Olyver, as the son was called, was brother unto Sir Onderstan and Sir Oswald. Because of his great renown and because he admired him so, Olyver would not serve anyone but Sir Tristram, and therefore it was his great desire to be knighted by him.

So Sir Tristram looked at Olyver to see what manner of young man he was, and when he beheld his noble countenance and his well-made body, he assented, and he made Olyver a knight. Also, in the weeks that followed, he taught Sir Olyver all manners of hunting and hawking, for not only was Sir Tristram an honourable knight, he was an excellent archer as well. And as the book says, most skills and terms in hunting were first invented by him.

Soon it befell that Sir Olyver went hunting in the forest one day. And it was his plan to please his new lord well and make a passing good catch. So at first he followed a deer, but the deer was too fast for him, and he lost its track. Next he came by a well, and Sir Olyver took off his helmet to refresh himself, when suddenly he heard the sound of hounds, to the sum of forty. Right so Sir Olyver saw how there came a big animal running towards him, and it was the strangest animal he had ever seen. For its head was shaped like a serpent's, and it had a body like a leopard, but with buttocks like a lion and feet like a hart. Also the animal's belly made such a noise as if

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there were twenty couple hounds questing inside. But when the beast stopped and stooped to drink at the well, the noise ceased, at which Sir Olyver marvelled not a little.

And as he stood gazing thus at the creature, a thought came to Sir Olyver's mind, that surely Sir Tristram would be pleased if he came home with such a wondrous catch. So Sir Olyver took his bow and arrow and launched a shot at the beast, and he killed it in one clean go, the arrow travelling straight through the eye and deep into the brain, whereupon the animal fell over and gave up the ghost.

Just as it had blown out its very last sigh, a knight on horseback arrived. When he saw the dead animal lying beside the well, he dismounted and cried, "Oh, sir knight, what have you done? For many years I have chased after this here Questing Beast, on pain of my life, for I knew that if I achieved the adventure I should gain more worship than ever before. But now my quest has come to an untimely end, and the signification of the Beast shall never be revealed to me!"

And so the knight fell groaning and moaning to the earth, for his name was Sir Palomides, and the Beast had always been his own personal quest. But because he was new to the country, Sir Olyver had never seen the Beast before, and therefore he had not known its appearance. Alas for Sir Olyver, he had no chance to explain, because Sir Palomides was in such a rage of woe that he mounted his horse again and stormed off, all the time wailing and weeping and raving and ranting as if he were mad.

So then Sir Olyver stayed behind alone, full of sorrow that he had deprived such a worthy and famous knight as Sir Palomides of his rightful adventure. Neither durst he return to Joyous Garde, for Sir Tristram was good friends with Sir Palomides, and surely Sir Tristram would be angry out of measure if he heard what had happened in the forest that day. Poor Sir Olyver almost tore out the hairs of his head with remorse, when

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suddenly he heard the noise in the Beast's belly begin again. He said, "I must know the meaning of this", and so he took his belt-knife and cut the Beast open.

At that, twenty couple hounds came out, and they all sat down in a wide circle at Sir Olyver's feet. And some of the hounds were brown, and some were black, and some were ginger, and also there were hounds with a hoary coat. So Sir Olyver sat down as well, and he leant his back against a tree, but always he kept his eye on the forty hounds, hoping to learn what they were and why they had been in the Questing Beast's belly. Night came, but still Sir Olyver held his watch, until sleep began to fill his eyes and the hounds ceased yelping, so at the long last he fell into a deep slumber.

Here we leave Sir Olyver sitting under the tree, and we will speak first of Sir Palomides, who had gone to partake of a festive meal at King Arthur's court. But Sir Palomides was not at all in a joyous mood, still making great dole about how his quest for the Beast had come to such a shameful end. So Sir Lancelot tried to lighten his spirits, and he said that a new adventure might well arrive before they all sat down to their meat and drink.

Right so entered into the hall a fair damsel on horseback, with a dwarf on foot, and they had travelled full fast, for the horse was sweat through and the dwarf nigh out of breath. And the dwarf held a scabbard in his hands, which was the strangest scabbard that anyone had ever seen. It had a pattern on it of snakes and lions, and also there was a leopard and a hart, all twisted together into one wondrous picture.

When King Arthur saw the damsel, he asked whence she came and what was her errand. And she answered, "Bless you, sire, and for God's sake, tell me where is the knight that used to follow the Questing Beast."

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“He is yonder,” said the King, and he pointed to where Sir Palomides stood. So the damsel betook herself to Sir Palomides and said,

“Sir knight, I salute you on my lady’s behalf, and also I require of you to take this scabbard and travel with me into the forest.”

Then Sir Palomides asked where she lived, and she replied, “My dwelling is with the Knight of the Yellow Lands, and I pray you to take on this quest, for with you lies my lady’s only hope. As for the purpose of our journey, I cannot reveal it, but you shall know it on the way.”

“Madam,” said Sir Palomides, “I shall not fail you,” and so he bade his squire to saddle his horse and bring him his arms in haste.

Thereupon Sir Lancelot came to Sir Palomides and spoke,

“You said well, my dear friend, for I know that this hard adventure is yours and you shall follow it whatever may come.”

Right then Sir Palomides took the scabbard and fixed it onto his waist, and anon he departed with the damsel and the dwarf. But soon the damsel sent the dwarf away, so she and Sir Palomides went on their adventure together.

Here we turn our tale again to Sir Olyver slumbering under the tree. So Sir Olyver slept for a whole night and a whole day, and it was only far into the next night that he awoke. Meanwhile the moon had risen and was quite full, and as Sir Olyver rubbed the sleep from his eyes, he saw that the forty hounds were still sitting at his feet, but they had waxed bigger than before. Then shortly after that they grew as tall and broad as men, and when the moon reached its highest point, they changed into forty knights. And many of the knights were young and some were older, and one knight was hoary in all aspects, with a beard that hung down to his knees.

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So Sir Olyver requested to know who the knights were and what they wanted. And the eldest that had the long beard said to him,

“Sir, we were all Knights of the Round Table once, but then we fell into evil hands, and we were imprisoned against our will inside the belly of the Beast. And for many years, we have tried to persuade one of the purest flowers of knighthood into the pursuit of us, for there is a man that stands in dire need of aid, and he prays daily to be rescued.”

Then Sir Olyver asked who was the villain that had imprisoned them thus. At this question, the old knight let out a sigh, and said,

“The Knight of the Yellow Lands did this treacherous deed, and he is the same one that now awaits deliverance. As God knows, before he wandered off into the wilderness of vice, this knight was goodly and kind, full of honour, and a righteous lord to all that answered unto him. And he had a fair and faithful lady by his side, who bore him six strong sons. But then misfortune befell him, as he became enamoured with King Arthur’s half-sister that is called Morgan le Fay. Morgan knew the Knight of the Yellow Lands to be a most mighty man, bold in battle and strong in his strokes, and therefore she bewitched him into a burning love for her own person, so as to drag him off the straight and narrow. And so hot grew the fire in his loins that he could not rest until he had satisfied the great desire he had for her.

“Then Morgan le Fay promised the knight access to her chamber if only he granted her a boon and, mad with longing as he was, he assented thereto. And upon the morning after they had first shared the bed, Morgan reminded him of his promise, and so she told him to organise his men against King Arthur, and capture as many Knights of the Round Table as he could. To ensure that he would do as she bade, Morgan then gave him a green wine to drink, which poisoned his soul and filled him with such envy of the King’s noble fellowship that he full gladly met her request. So the

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wine soon enslaved him, for every day he asked for more wine, until his entire being grew as hateful and green and vile as the poison itself.

“Now meanwhile this knight’s lady was smothered with great sorrow, and her grief was doubled thrice when her sons, too, turned against the King and stole away knights of the Round Table whenever they could. If one of us neared too closely the Yellow Lands that lie on the edge of King Arthur’s realm, we were taken and put into prison without mercy or proper judgement being given. And this was done by letting us be swallowed by a huge and corrupted animal, which was first created by Morgan le Fay’s dark crafts, and it is the same Beast that you see lying before you now.

“So for forty seasons this secret feud continued, and some of us were missed and sought for, but never were we found. Then in the end the Knight of the Yellow Lands grew old and infirm, and he could keep neither food nor drink, for his stomach was eaten away by a cancer. And as he lay on his death-bed, and had had no wine for thirty days, the cloud in his mind cleared, to make way for the longing to repent for all the damage that he had done to his rightful Lord and King. Also he resolved to order his sons to mend their ways and stop the feud against the Fellowship of the Round Table. But then, for pure spite and malice, Morgan le Fay invented yet newer trickery, and she stuck an enchanted knife into the knight’s chest, so that the voice of his soul was locked inside forever. And for this reason, he could not make his confession, no matter how eagerly he wished for it.

“But when his lady learned what had happened, she set loose the Beast and gave it its quest, because the chain of evil can only be broken if the knife is drawn out again, other else the sons, and the sons of sons and their sons, will prolong it forever. And we that were trapped inside the Beast soon found hope again, because first King Pellinore chose to follow the Beast, and after he passed away Sir Palomides took over, and the younger

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amongst us knew Sir Palomides to be a good and proven knight, and full of prowess. So now, sir, we beseech you, in the name of knighthood, to tell us where we can find him, for those of the Yellow Lands are in sore want of his help.”

Then Sir Olyver vowed that he would bring them to Sir Palomides, if ever he were able to do so. And forthwith he went to King Arthur’s court, with the intent of finding him there. But Sir Lancelot said that Sir Palomides had departed with the damsel, and no-one knew wither they had gone or where they were. So Sir Olyver searched for their tracks, and then he and the forty knights followed these as best as they could.

Now we leave off speaking of Sir Olyver, and will proceed with the story of Sir Palomides, who had gone on his way with the damsel. But all the time the damsel kept doubting her lady’s choice of knight, as to her own eye Sir Palomides did not seem strong and stern enough as was needed for such a hard adventure. Also she chided him for having been a Saracen before, for Saracens were black at the core, and black could never turn white, except for night turning into day. So the damsel was full of rebuke, and she mis-said Sir Palomides in the foulest manner.

Then within a while a knight armed at all points came riding towards them, who proffered to joust with Sir Palomides. So Sir Palomides spurred on his horse and balanced his spear, but by mishap the steed stumbled, so that Sir Palomides was thrown on the ground. Then he drew his sword and he raised his shield high, prepared to do battle to the utterance. But thereupon the other knight turned and fled into the forest, for he was Breunis Sans Pity, and he had seen by the shield that it was Sir Palomides. And full well Breunis Sans Pity knew that he could never defeat a powerful knight like Sir Palomides, unless it was by luck or by treason.

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Right then the damsel mocked Sir Palomides, and she said,

“Fie, for shame! What manner of knight art thou? Tumbling off thy horse thus easily! Oh, that ever such a fool came into my company!”

“As for that,” said Sir Palomides, “I would rather not have ado myself with a vile-tongued damsel like yourself. But it was a mare's son that failed, not me, and therefore I have no disworship, no matter how you say otherwise.”

So in the meantime they had come to a castle. And such was its custom that no knight was allowed to pass unless he did battle with the lord of the castle, other else he would lose his horse and his harness. Right so a knight came riding out of the gate, all dressed in white except for a yellow plume on the helmet. He said, “Knight, make yourself ready!”, and Sir Palomides went forward to meet him. Then they rushed together like two wild boars, and Sir Palomides smote the other so sore that his spear shattered down to his hand and he tumbled horse and man to the earth.

Thereupon the knight requested they fight on foot, and so Sir Palomides dismounted and put his shield before his shoulder. And there they fought a long battle together, nigh an hour, but at the last Sir Palomides struck the other three mighty buffets on the helmet, and also he wounded him in the knee. Then he made for to slay him, but the white knight yielded himself just in time. So Sir Palomides asked him his name.

“Fair sir,” said the knight, “my name is Sir Randolph, and I will do as you command me, in saving of my life.”

“You speak well,” Sir Palomides replied. “And at the next feast of Pentecost, you must go to Camelot, where you shall yield yourself to King Arthur and put yourself in his grace. You can tell him that Sir Palomides sent you thither to be his prisoner.”

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"Gramercy," said Sir Randolph. "By the faith of my living body, I shall follow your word." And then he swore upon his sword, so Sir Palomides let him depart.

When he had left, the damsel was full of wrath that Sir Palomides had not slain Sir Randolph, but granted him pardon. For Sir Randolph was one of the wickedest knights there was, she said, and therefore he deserved to die. And she said, "Only a Saracen would let the devil live."

"Madam," spoke Sir Palomides, "I am a Christian, and it would have been dishonourable to slay that knight when he asked for my mercy."

But the damsel would not suffer Sir Palomides beside her any more, calling him a coward to his back, and shouting abuse wherever they went.

Then early in the morning they came to a well, where there sat a woman weeping heavily. So Sir Palomides asked what ailed her.

"Kind knight," said the woman, "yonder you see lying the body of my dear husband, God rest his soul. He received his death-wound from two brethren by the names of Sir Raymond and Sir Richard, that keep the Bridge Perilous one mile hence. They stabbed my lord treacherously in the back, for they hate all knights of the Round Table, and great is the suffering they have caused. So therefore, sir, I pray you to avenge me."

"In the name of all knighthood," replied Sir Palomides, "your prayer shall be answered, other else I am shamed." Then he changed his shield for that of the dead knight, and he and the damsel rode on.

Soon they came to the Bridge Perilous that was kept by the two brethren. And the armour of these brethren was all grey, except for a yellow plume on the helmet. So when Sir Raymond and Sir Richard saw the shield that Sir Palomides bore, they said to him, "Knight, you shall repent your return, for we defeated you once, and we will do so again. And wit you well that this time you shall not depart with your life!"

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"Say what you will," spoke Sir Palomides, "but never was I conquered by your hands. And if you wield your weapons with as little skill as the white knight that I won in the forest, my task will be a light one only. So keep you from me!"

"Ah villain!" they cried. "You shall die for defeating our brother!"

With this, the brethren and Sir Palomides parted asunder, and then they rushed together eagerly. And Sir Palomides smote on the right hand and on the left hand, and all the knights gave many sad strokes. Then Sir Palomides hit Sir Raymond's horse in the neck, and also he grabbed Sir Richard's arm and pulled him off his steed. Thereupon the brethren lightly arose, and drew their swords to fight Sir Palomides on foot. This saw Sir Palomides and he dismounted as well, and then they hurled together like wolves for a long while, that sorely they all bled.

Thus for nigh two hours they fought, until Sir Palomides grew weary in his body, and he was smarting all over, yet never would he give up. So at the last he doubled his strokes and smote Sir Raymond in the hand, that he lost his grip and his sword fell to the earth. And the other brother he gave three mighty strokes upon the helmet, saying with every stroke that came down, "Have this for the sake of the Knights of the Round Table!" And Sir Richard's helmet jammed so hard onto the brain-pan that the blood came running down into his eyes, and he almost broke his neck. Next Sir Palomides struck Sir Raymond to the ground with one mighty blow, and he pulled off his helmet so as to smite the head off his body. But Sir Richard spoke just in time and cried aloud, "Noble knight, hold your hand!"

And therewith Sir Palomides withdrew his sword.

"Mercy, sir," the brethren said in one voice, "slay us not, for never did we see a knight do such deeds of arms. And we forgive you for all the despite that you have done to us, and for the winning of our brother."

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"You say well," replied Sir Palomides. "At the next feast of Pentecost, you will go to Camelot to yield yourselves to King Arthur and put yourselves in his mercy. And you can tell him that Sir Palomides sent you to be his prisoners."

Then Sir Richard and Sir Raymond assented thereto, and they swore that it would be done. So Sir Palomides let them go.

Right after the brethren had left, the damsel said to Sir Palomides,

"Oh, for shame, that thou should be thus foolhardy twice, not to have slain those fiends when thou easily could have done so! Fie on thee, false Saracen!" And thus she gave him the vilest rebuke.

"Madam," said Sir Palomides, "your fellowship is almost as hard to bear as the wounds that I have received during this battle. As for your reproachful words, I know I have behaved righteously and honourably. Better a knight repenting on earth than a villain burning in hell."

And so they rode on. And that night they went to rest themselves in an hermitage, where the hermit healed Sir Palomides of his wounds. But Sir Palomides had been so grievously hurt that it was two weeks before he was well and whole again. Then upon the morning after the two weeks had passed, he said mass and broke his fast, and departed on his way again with the damsel.

Here we will return to Sir Olyver and the forty knights, who were following the tracks that Sir Palomides and the damsel had left behind. So at first they were led in this manner through a big forest, until they came to a castle. But since the castle's former custom had been broken, they could pass freely and without delay. Then the forty knights told Sir Olyver that the lord of the castle was Sir Randolph, son unto the Knight of the Yellow Lands. So Sir Olyver asked of a poor man of the country who had broken

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the castle's custom. "It was Sir Palomides, the good knight," said the poor man. And at that, Sir Olyver and the knights were passing glad.

Next they rode through steep crags and narrow glens, until they came to the Bridge Perilous, which was now called the Bridge of Safety. And the forty knights told Sir Olyver that the former keepers of the bridge were called Sir Raymond and Sir Richard, sons unto the Knight of the Yellow Lands. So Sir Olyver inquired with a peasant whither these brethren had gone, whereupon the peasant said, "They were defeated by Sir Palomides, the good knight." And again, Sir Olyver and the forty knights were right relieved.

Then within a while they came to an hermitage, and there the hermit told them that Sir Palomides had been wounded, but now he was well and whole again, and had gone on his way with the damsel. So Sir Olyver turned his horse for to follow, but the forty knights said to him,

"Sir, we are now near the edge of King Arthur's realm, which is the place where we were first captured. And there is every semblance, sir, that our quest has come to an end, for it was always our purpose to bring Sir Palomides to the Yellow Lands, and we can see his steps leading straight thither." Then the knights said they would stay behind and abide Sir Olyver's return, other else wait for Sir Palomides.

Thus Sir Olyver proceeded alone. And he rode through moors and fells and swamps, and many times he and his horse almost plunged into deep mires, so that they nearly perished. But at the last they came out of the wilderness, and then Sir Olyver became aware of a fair meadow and a high tower, with behind them the sea. As he drew nearer, Sir Olyver saw how on the meadow three knights were doing battle against one. And these three knights were all dressed in black except for a yellow plume on the helmet, whereas the one knight wore an armour of a red colour. Also he espied beside the tower a damsel who stood shaking her head from side to

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side, whereat Sir Olyver took great marvel, for the red knight was doing so wondrously well that it seemed as if never a man had done such deeds of arms before.

But then the red knight was struck off his horse, and as he lay on the ground the others rode over him twice or thrice, and also they smote him hard upon the shoulder. And such great pity took Sir Olyver upon the red knight for all the pain and disgrace he endured, that he rode forward and cried for the black knights to cease their manhandling, for they did themselves great shame, three fighting against one. Thereupon the biggest of the black knights said to him—and his name was Sir Roger, who had his brethren Sir Ronald and Sir Rupert at his side—

“Sir knight, what ado have you to meddle with us? If you have any wisdom, depart the way you came, for this knight shall not escape us.”

“It would be an outrage,” said Sir Olyver, “that so brave a knight should be slain thus cowardly. And therefore I will assist him with all my might.”

Right so he gripped Sir Roger’s horse by the bridle, whereupon the horse reared and Sir Roger was smitten down to the earth. But Sir Roger quickly drew his sword, and he wounded Sir Olyver so sorely in the thigh that he fell into a swoon. And as the world turned black around him, Sir Olyver still did not realise that the red knight was Sir Palomides, for he had not known the strange shield which Sir Palomides bore.

“I must needs complete this battle on my own,” Sir Palomides spoke to himself. Yet Sir Olyver’s kindness had given him new wind, and through fierce strength he first killed Sir Ronald’s horse, and then he grabbed hold of Sir Rupert’s leg and pulled him to the earth, that his armour clang like a smithy. But thereupon the three brethren lightly arose and pointed their swords, and so they hurled forward to meet Sir Palomides on foot.

And fast and furious did they fight, as if it were a battle between four wild lions, and all the knights gave many sad strokes, with the blood

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running down from them on the ground. And Sir Palomides smote on the left hand, and on the right hand, and before him, and behind, for the black knights now came sideways, now forwards and then at the back again. In this manner the black knights smote Sir Palomides all over the body, and he received over a hundred strokes, so that it was a miracle he still stood on his feet. And without repose for more than three hours this battle continued, until at the last Sir Palomides grew so faint and weary that he staggered and stumbled, and he almost fell over.

But just as the black knights closed in for the final kill, it befell that the Lady of the Lake rose to the surface of the sea. And always this Lady did great kindness to King Arthur and all his knights through her powers of sorcery and enchantment. So when she saw the shameful behaviour of the three brethren, she caused a huge sea-wave to rise, that curled high into the air and then swept forward, until it crashed like the thunder onto Sir Ronald and Sir Rupert, who stood closest to the shore.

And as the two brethren lay on the ground grovelling and gasping, Sir Palomides looked Sir Roger straight in the visor and gave him a mighty stroke upon the neck, so that he nearly lost his head. Next Sir Palomides smote the second brother in the left hand and cut off all of his fingers, with the blood spouting out in five red fountains, and the third brother he grabbed so firmly by the throat that Sir Rupert could neither speak nor breathe. And Sir Palomides would have smothered him to the death, but Sir Roger cried just in time, "Stay your hand, fair knight, and slay not my brother! I speak for us all when I say that we gladly yield ourselves to such a powerful knight as you are, for never before were we beaten in battle, not even if there were many. So therefore we shall do as you command us, in saving of our lives."

"Ah, well," said Sir Palomides, while he squeezed Sir Rupert's throat even tighter, "it depends upon the good will of her yonder by the tower

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whether your request shall be met." And thereupon he turned to the damsel, to see what was her judgement.

Right then the damsel felt deeply ashamed and she said to Sir Palomides, "Let be, sir, and do spare their lives, for best it is that a sorry knight should be saved for the good. And always when I rebuked you before, it was for no other reason than my fear that our adventure would come to a hazardous end. But now, fair knight, I beseech you to board the boat that comes sailing hither, because my lady's lord is in sore need of your help." And so she told Sir Palomides all about the Knight of the Yellow Lands and the enchanted knife.

Forthwith Sir Palomides released his grip and let Sir Rupert free, after which he told the brethren to betake themselves to Camelot at Pentecost, there to yield themselves to King Arthur. As for the damsel, he ordered her to stay with Sir Olyver, and tend to his wound as well as she could.

Then Sir Palomides stepped into the boat that lay waiting at the shore, and this boat had sails of bright yellow, with a golden plume on the helm. So within a while the boat arrived at an island, where there stood a pavilion richly made of gold, and on the inside thereof an old and ailing knight lay on a bed of silk, with his lady sitting at his side. Without delay, Sir Palomides knelt down before the dying knight, and begged him to let him search his chest. And then, with gentle hands and great care, he removed the knife that had once come from the strange scabbard given to him by the damsel. And right so as Sir Palomides fitted the knife back into the scabbard, the Knight of the Yellow Lands found the air in his lungs to speak his confession, and make himself able to receive his Creature.

When his soul was whole and clean again, the old man said to Sir Palomides, "Most courteous knight, one last wish remains in my heart. My sons have always followed in my footsteps on the path of evil, and therefore I pray you to seek them out and say that the feud against King

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Arthur must cease. For always this was done under the spell of dark crafts and ill intent, whose charm has now been broken.”

“Good and gracious lord,” Sir Palomides said in a soft voice, “your prayer has been answered already.”

And, upon hearing these words, the Knight of the Yellow Lands heaved a grateful sigh, and he left his life.

The following morning Sir Palomides sailed back to the mainland, and when Sir Olyver saw him alight from the boat, there was great cheer between them. As it drew fast to Pentecost, they collected the forty knights at the hermitage, and then travelled to Camelot with as much haste as Sir Olyver’s wound would allow. Gladly, Sir Olyver soon was on the mend, and they arrived at the court to meet with a hearty welcome, for all the ladies had greatly feared for their lives. And King Arthur shed happy tears to see the many knights that he had lost over the years safe and found again.

Right so Sir Randolph came into the hall, and there he did homage to King Arthur and swore his fealty for ever. Then followed Sir Richard and Sir Raymond, who gave all of their lands to Sir Palomides and made him their lord from that day until death. And Sir Roger, Sir Rupert and Sir Ronald entered as well, to promise everlasting loyalty to the Fellowship of the Round Table, in great reverence for King Arthur and his knights.

So then the King, Queen, ladies and many a bold knight went to their meat and drink, and well you can imagine that there was plenty of food and all manner of music and games. Also King Arthur declared a tournament that lasted for three days, but Sir Palomides would not allow Sir Olyver to partake of the jousting, because of his recent wound. And as the French book says, Sir Palomides was given the prize on the first day,

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whereas Sir Lancelot was the best on the second day. And on the third day the field was won by Sir Roger, the new Knight of the Yellow Lands.

*Here endeth the noble tale of the Knyght of the Yolowe Laundis,
whych drawyn was oute of Freynshe in the most trowe manere.
And I beg off all jentylmen and jentylwymmen that redeth thys tale to
praye for he as wrote hyt, so God sende hym spede and delyveraunce
from hys harde travayle at the deske. Amen.*

