



At first it grieved him that she should work at all, but afterwards he thought, “She touches everything with such grace and gentleness, that the work grows beautiful under her white hands.”

And when supper was ready, Enid stood behind, and waited, and Geraint almost forgot that he was very hungry, as he took the dishes from her careful hands.

When supper was over, Geraint turned to the Earl. “Who is this Sparrow-hawk of whom all the townspeople chatter? Yet if he should be the knight of the white fortress<sup>22</sup>, do not tell me his real name. That I must find out for myself.”

And he told the Earl that he was Prince Geraint, and that he had come to punish the knight, because he allowed his dwarf to be so rude to the Queen’s messengers.

The Earl was glad when he heard his guest’s name.

“I have often told Enid of your noble deeds and wonderful adventures,” he said, “and when I stopped, she would call to me to go on. She loves to hear of the noble deeds of Arthur’s knights. But now I will tell you about the Sparrow-hawk. He lives in the white fortress, and he is my nephew. He is a fierce and cruel man, and when I would not allow him to marry Enid, he hated me, and made the people believe I was unkind to him. He said I had stolen his father’s money from him. And the people believed him,” said the Earl, “and were full of rage against me. One evening, just before Enid’s birthday, three years ago, they broke into our home, and turned us out, and took away all our treasures. Then the Sparrow-hawk built himself the white fortress for safety, but us he keeps in this old half-ruined castle.”

<sup>22</sup> fortress [ˈfɔːrtrɪs] (n.) a large strong building used for defending an important place





The Earl's wife sat there, and she wore a dress that must have been very grand once, but now it was old.

Beside her stood her beautiful daughter, and she wore a faded silk gown<sup>19</sup>, but Geraint thought he had never seen so fair a face.

"This is the maiden who sang the beautiful song," he thought.

"If I can win her for my bride, she shall come back with me to Queen Guinevere. But the brightest silks the Queen can dress her in, will not make her look more fair than she does in this old gown," he murmured to himself.

"Enid," said the Earl, "take the stranger's horse to the stable<sup>20</sup>, and then go to the town and buy food for supper."

Geraint did not like the beautiful girl to wait on him, and he got up eagerly to help her.

"We are poor, and have no servants, but we cannot let our guest wait upon himself," said the Earl proudly.

And Geraint had to sit down, while Enid took his horse to the stall<sup>21</sup>, and went across the bridge to the little town to buy meat and cakes for supper.

And as the dining-room was the kitchen too, Geraint could watch Enid as she cooked the food and set the table.

19 gown [gaʊn] (n.) a long dress that a woman wears on formal occasions

20 stable ['steɪbəl] (n.) a farm building for housing horses or other livestock

21 stall [stɔ:l] (n.) a small enclosure within a farm building in which there is space for one animal to be kept



So Geraint rode wearily on across the bridge and reached the castle. The courtyard was quite empty and looked very dreary<sup>16</sup>, for it was all overgrown with weeds and thistles<sup>17</sup>.

At the door of the half-ruined castle stood the old Earl.

“It is growing late. Will you not come in and rest,” said Earl Yniol, “although the castle be bare, and the fare simple?”

And Geraint said he would like to stay there, for he was so hungry that the plainest food would seem a feast.

As he entered the castle, he heard some one singing. The song was so beautiful, and the voice was so pure and clear, that Geraint thought it was the sweetest song in all the world, and the old castle seemed less gloomy<sup>18</sup> as he listened.

Then Earl Yniol led Geraint into a long low room, and this room was both dining-room and kitchen.



<sup>16</sup> dreary [ˈdriəri] (a.) gloomy, unexciting, and certain to have a wearying and depressing influence

<sup>17</sup> thistle [ˈθɪsəl] (n.) a wild plant which has leaves with sharp points and purple or white furry flowers

<sup>18</sup> gloomy [ˈɡluːmi] (a.) causing or suggestive of sorrow or gloom



Soon Geraint reached a smithy<sup>15</sup>, and he looked in, and saw that the smith was busy sharpening swords and spears.

“I will go in and buy arms,” thought Geraint.

And because the smith saw that the stranger was dressed like a Prince, he stopped his work for a moment to speak with him.

“Arms?” he said, when Geraint told him what he wanted. “There are no arms to spare, for the

Sparrow-hawk holds his tournament here tomorrow.”

“The Sparrow-hawk again!” thought Geraint. “I wonder who he can be.”

Then he turned to the smith again and said, “Though you cannot give me arms, perhaps you can tell me where to find food and a bed.”

“The old Earl Yniol might give you shelter. He lives in that half-ruined castle across the bridge,” said the smith. And he turned again to his work, muttering, “Those who work for the Sparrow-hawk have no time to waste in talk.”

<sup>15</sup> smithy [ˈsmɪθi] (n.) a place where iron objects such as horseshoes were made and repaired in the past