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**TALES FROM
SPENSER, CHOSEN
FROM THE FAERIE
QUEENE**

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PREFACE

In writing these Tales from "The Faerie Queene," no attempt has been made to interpret their allegorical or explain their historic bearing. Intended for children, the stories are related simply as stories, and therefore only those episodes in the poem most interesting and most complete in themselves have been chosen. In no case do the Tales pretend to relate the whole that Spenser tells of their heroes and heroines.

Una and the Lion

Faerie Queene. Book I. Cantos I., III., VI

Once upon a time, while fairies and goblins still lingered in the forests of Merry England, a great queen named Gloriana reigned over Faeryland. The subjects over whom she ruled were not tiny creatures like Oberon and Titania, but brave knights who went out from her court endowed with magic powers to redress wrongs and help those in trouble.

Now there lived at this time a king and queen of very ancient lineage, whose dominions stretched from east to west, and who had once held all the world in subjection. But a cruel enemy had arisen against them, and destroyed their rich lands, and killed the inhabitants, and forced the king and queen to take refuge in a strong castle, guarded by a mighty wall of brass. This enemy was no other than a huge and fearful dragon. From every quarter of the globe knights came to fight the accursed beast, but only those whose faith was strong and conscience clear could prevail; and thus knight after knight fell before the dragon, who grew stronger and more cruel in his success.

The king and queen had one child, a daughter, whose name was Una. She loved her parents dearly, and hearing of the knights

of queen Gloriana, she resolved to go to the Faerie Court and pray for assistance for her parents who had now been four years prisoners, and were in great distress. She set out upon her journey, dressed in a long black robe covered by a deep veil; she rode an ass as white as snow, and led by a line a milk-white lamb, a symbol of innocence. Behind her followed a dwarf, bearing a spear in his hand, and leading a war-like steed, on whose back was laid a suit of armour. Thus accoutred, Una appeared at the court of Gloriana.

Shortly before, a young man, tall and powerful, but clownish in appearance, had arrived at the Faerie Court and had prayed to be sent on the first adventure that should arise. When, therefore, Una came and preferred her request, the young man claimed the enterprise as his right. Gloriana wondered at his boldness, for he had not a knightly air, and Una herself objected, but he only urged his suit the more, and at length Una said he might try on the armour she had brought, but that, unless it fitted him perfectly, it was impossible he could succeed in so dangerous an enterprise.

Now, the armour which Una had was that of a Christian knight; and when it was tried on, lo! the clownish youth changed into the noblest of all the company. And Queen Gloriana conferred knighthood upon him; and he, mounting the steed led by the dwarf, went forth with Una to vanquish her foe. Henceforth the youth is called the Red-cross knight, for on his silver shield, and on the breast-plate of his armour, was a blood-red cross, the symbol of the Christian faith. And the knight

proved right worthy of his cross: he was true and faithful both in word and deed, and his countenance was grave and sober, befitting one who dreaded no danger, but was himself held in dread; so Una loved him well.

Now, it happened that, shortly after Una and her knight had left the court of Gloriana, they met a grave old man dressed in long black weeds; he had bare feet, and a hoary head, and a book hung from his side; and as he walked, he prayed and smote upon his breast in the manner of a hermit. But he was, instead, a wicked enchanter named Archimago, who, by means of the most cunning tricks, deceived the Red-cross knight, made him think Una an impostor, and beguiled him and also the dwarf away from her. This made the lady very sad, for not only was she lonely and helpless in the strange land through which she was passing, but, unless she could find the knight, she must give up the hope of seeing the cruel dragon subdued and her dear parents set free. So Una, brave as she was good, put away her fears, and travelled on through vast forests and desolate moors, seeking for her knight.

One day, when almost wearied out, Una alighted from her slow-footed steed, and, taking off her robe and unbinding the band which confined her hair, lay down to rest; and so fair and lovely was she that her sweet countenance made sunshine in the shady place in which she lay. Now, while she rested, there suddenly burst out from the forest a lion, hungry and greedy, who, seeing the maiden, ran towards her with jaws wide-open, ready to devour his prey. But, as the lion drew nearer to the

maiden, his rage changed into pity, and, amazed at the fair sight before him, he forgot his savage fury and licked her lily hands and kissed her weary feet. And Una, unable at first to cease from the fear of death, watched him, hardly believing her eyes, and then her heart began to melt in gratitude and her tears to flow, as she thought how this fierce lord of beasts pitied her, while her own lord, whom she loved as her very life, had forsaken her.

At length Una checked her tears, and, trying to put away her grief, arose, and, remounting her humble steed, set out again to seek her knight. But she was no longer a defenceless maiden, for with her went the lion – a strong guardian and faithful comrade – who, while she slept, kept both watch and ward, and, while she waked, waited on her will, taking direction from his lady's eye.

One day, as the damsel and the lion travelled thus through untrodden deserts, they unexpectedly came upon a beaten path. Following this path, which led under the brow of a steep mountain, Una observed a young girl walking slowly before them, bearing on her shoulder a water-pot. To her Una called, and asked if there were any dwelling-place near at hand. But the girl was rude, and did not reply; indeed, she seemed neither to hear nor understand, and when she saw the lion fear seized upon her, and, throwing down her pitcher, she fled. She dared not once look back, but ran as if her life depended on her speed, until she reached her home, where sat her mother old and blind. This was Corceca, a wicked woman and a hypocrite, who was wont daily to fast and pray and do painful penance. With trembling

hands, the girl caught hold of the old woman, and exhibited such signs of terror that her mother rose in great alarm and hastened to close the door just as Una and her strange page arrived. Una prayed hard for admittance, but in vain; and at this the lion lifted his great paws, and, tearing down the wicket door, let his lady in. She found the two women almost dead with fright, crouching in the darkest corner of the hovel. Una tried to calm their fears by gentle words and looks, and after a time succeeded so far as to receive permission to rest there for the night. She was very weary and laid herself down on the floor – the lion at her feet – but she was too sad for the loss of the Red-cross knight to sleep, and so spent the long hours in sighs and groans and bitter tears.

At length morning approached, and with it came some one knocking at the door. He knocked loud and repeatedly, and was heard to curse and swear because the door was not more readily opened to him. Now, he who knocked was a wicked thief, who robbed churches and stole money from the poor men's box. At this very moment he had on his back a heavy load of stolen goods, for all that he got, whether by lawful means or unlawful, he brought to this old woman's house and bestowed upon her daughter Abessa, who was as wicked as herself. There he stood knocking at the door, but neither Abessa nor Corceca dared pass by the lion to open. At length, Kirk-rapine, for such was his name, became quite furious and would wait no longer, but burst open the door. Alas! for Kirk-rapine; the moment he entered, the lion rose from Una's feet, and, outstretching his lordly paws,

laid the robber low. The wretched man was powerless to resist, nor did Abessa or Corceca dare to go to his assistance, and very soon Kirk-rapine lay quite dead – his body torn in pieces, and his blood flowing into the earth.

Now, when the broad daylight returned, Una arose, and with her the lion, and once more set out together to seek the knight. As soon as she was gone, the women came out from their dark corner, to see whether or not their worst fears were realized. When they saw that Kirk-rapine was indeed slain, they tore their hair, and beat their breasts, and, half mad with malice and revenge, rushed forth in pursuit of Una. As soon as they got near her, they began to shout and cry after her, calling her all sorts of bad names and praying that every kind of evil might befall her. At length, tired out with their own curses, they turned back, and on the way met one clad in armour as became a knight.

This was, however, no knight, but Archimago, the wicked enchanter, who, not content with having separated Una from her champion, sought to lead her into further distress. He stopped the old woman, and, describing Una, asked if she had seen any such lady. Thereupon Corceca's passion became renewed, and, crying and cursing, she declared she knew her but too well, and told him which way to take.

Before long, Archimago came where "Una travelled slow," her fierce guardian treading by her side. The sight of the lion alarmed the enchanter, and he turned aside, not daring to approach too near. Now Archimago had taken care to disguise himself as Una's

own Red-cross knight. When, therefore, she recognized the well-known shield, she turned and rode towards him, and, as she approached more near, became assured in her own mind that this was indeed her lost lord. Hastening on, in much humility and with tears in her eyes, she exclaimed: "Ah! my long-lost lord, where have you been so long hidden from my sight?" The pretended knight replied "that his absence had been enforced in that a certain Archimago had sent him on an adventure, from which he had now returned successful, and ready henceforth to abide by her and defend her by land and sea." His words made Una very happy. In her new-found joy, she forgot the pains and toils she had encountered and journeyed on, discoursing happily of all that had befallen her.

They had not, however, travelled far when they saw an armed horseman riding towards them at full speed. Although his horse was covered with foam, the warrior kept spurring it from time to time, and looked as if he were breathing forth dread threats of vengeance on some unknown victim. On his shield his name Sansloy was written in red letters. Now, this Sansloy was a Saracen knight, and was brother of another knight named Sansfoy, but this brother had encountered the Red-cross knight shortly after he and Una left the Faerie Court, and had been slain by him. The moment, therefore, that Sansloy had seen the cross on Archimago's armour, he had determined to avenge his brother's death, and bore down thus fiercely on the enchanter and the lady. But Archimago had no mind to fight; he grew faint

and fearful when he saw the warrior, and it was only when Una cheered him on that he ventured to couch his spear or put spurs to his horse. Sansloy showed no mercy, but came on with such force and fierceness that his spear went right through Archimago's shield and hurled his antagonist from his charger, so that he fell heavily to the ground, while the blood gushed from his wound. Immediately Sansloy leapt from his steed and hastened toward his prostrate foe exclaiming, "Lo! there the worthy meed of him who slew Sansfoy with bloody knife," and thereupon began to unlace Archimago's helmet, thinking to sever his head at one stroke. But Una saw his purport, and cried out, beseeching him to hold "that heavy hand," urging that surely Sansloy's revenge was enough when he saw his foe lie vanquished at his feet. To her piteous words the cruel Saracen paid no attention, but tore off the other's helmet, and would have given the fatal blow had he not perceived before him, instead of the Red-cross knight, the hoary head of Archimago the enchanter. He stayed his hand, and gazed on the old man in amazement, for he knew him well, and knew that, skilful as Archimago was in charms and magic, he was but little used to war.

"Why, Archimago," he exclaimed, "what do I see? What hard mishap is this?"

The enchanter answered him never a word, but lay in a trance, apparently dying, and Sansloy, who had no compassion in his soul, made no attempt to render him assistance.

He turned instead to Una, who, poor damsel, was in sore

amazement to see that he whom she had believed her own true knight was the cruel enchanter who had caused all her distress. Her wonder soon changed into terror, for Sansloy proceeded to seize hold of her white veil and pluck her rudely from her steed and gaze boldly in her face. But now arose the lion, her fierce servant, and, full of kingly rage at seeing his lady thus maltreated, sprang upon the Saracen, and with sharp-rending claws strove to tear away his shield. But Sansloy was very strong and wary, and, redeeming the shield from the lion's paws, he drew his sword. Alas! the power of the wild beast was all too weak to withstand a foe armed at every point and so mighty in strength and in skill as Sansloy. Very soon the deadly steel pierced the lion's heart, and he roared aloud, and life forsook him. Una was left alone in the hands of a cruel warrior, bereft of hope, for her faithful guardian was slain. She knew not where to look for help, and indeed help seemed very far away.

The Saracen would listen to no entreaty, but lifted her on to his own steed and bore her off, while the lowly ass, who would not forsake his lady, followed as best he could. With piteous words, she wept and begged for freedom, but all in vain; her words only increased the hardness of her captor's heart.

After a time, Una found herself borne into a wild forest. Here the damsel's terror became extreme, and she cried aloud in her distress. She had no hope of succour, but succour came.

"Eternal providence, exceeding thought,

Where none appears, can make herself a way."

And a wondrous way in this case it proved.

Far off in the wood, a troop of Fauns and Satyrs, wild, untamed inhabitants of deepest forests, were dancing, whilst old Sylvanus, their god, lay sleeping. These, hearing Una's cry, left their sport, and, running towards the spot from which the cry had come, appeared suddenly on the scene.

They were a rude, misshapen, even frightful-looking crowd, and Sansloy, like the wicked knight that he was, seized with superstitious fears, took fright and fled. But, when the Satyrs beheld Una all alone, sad and desolate, her fair face stained with tears, they stood still before her, astonished at her beauty, and pitiful of her distress. And she, more amazed than they, began to fear and tremble afresh, for wild stories were told of the Satyrs and of their lawless deeds. And it seemed to her that a worse lot than ever before had now befallen her. So fearful was she that she dared neither speak nor move.

The wild people read Una's sorrow in her sad countenance, and, laying aside the rough, frowning looks they usually wore, began to grin and smile and bend their knees before her, trying thus to comfort her. Uncertain whether or not she dare trust herself to them, Una stood irresolute. They, as they watched her, were overcome by pity of her tender youth and wonder at her sovereign beauty, and prostrating themselves on the ground, kissed her feet and fawned upon her with their most kindly looks.

Then Una, guessing their hearts aright, gave herself up to their care, and, rising, went fearlessly among them. Glad as birds in the joyous spring-time, they led her forth dancing, shouting, singing, and strewing green branches before her. All the way they played on their merry pipes, until the woods rang with their echo; and, worshipping the lady as a queen, they crowned her with an olive garland and led her to Sylvanus, their god.

He had wondered at the sounds of rejoicing which had roused him from his sleep, but when, leaning on his cypress staff, he came forth from his bower and saw Una, he stood amazed and wondered not when his wood-born subjects fell prostrate before her.

And then came tree-nymphs and light-footed Naiads, flocking to see the new-comer. But when they saw how fair and good she was, sharp envy seized upon them, and they fled away lest the Satyrs, in their new-born reverence for Una, should scorn their ancient playmates.

So Una, thankful for the favour she found and the respect shown to her, remained a long time among this forest people, and rested from her weariness. In return for their hospitality, she tried to teach them something of truth, and to prevent their worship of herself, but it was in vain, for when they found they might not worship the lady, they turned to the milk-white ass, her lowly steed, and worshipped it in her stead.

One day there came to the forest a certain Sir Satyrane, a noble knight who had been born in these woods, and who was

in the habit of revisiting them from time to time. Now, when he came unexpectedly on this fair lady sitting among the Satyrs and endeavouring to teach them true sacred lore, he wondered at her heavenly wisdom, the like of which he had never before seen in woman. And when he watched her courteous deeds and heard the story of her sad misfortunes, his wonder changed into admiration, and he became her scholar and learned of her "the discipline of truth and faith."

Thus Una and Sir Satyrane grew close friends, and at length she told him her most secret grief, how deeply she longed to find the Red-cross knight, and how all her secret thoughts were spent in contriving an escape from her kind but rude guardians. So Sir Satyrane began to devise how he might help her, and one day while the Satyrs had all gone to pay homage to Sylvanus, the strong knight led away the gentle virgin, and after further adventures, of which you shall hear in the next tale, Una did at last rejoin her long-lost knight to the great comfort of them both.

Prince Arthur helps Una to find the Red-cross Knight

Faerie Queene. Book I. Cantos VIII., X

Una and the good Sir Satyrane travelled together for some time, seeking her knight. In the course of their search Sir Satyrane became separated from Una, who must have gone on alone had not her long-lost dwarf unexpectedly appeared.

This was a most welcome sight, and yet Una's heart sank within her as she looked at the dwarf, for he travelled alone and carried with him the silver shield, the mighty spear and ancient armour of the Red-cross Knight. Seeing these, she fell helpless to the ground, for she knew some terrible misfortune must have happened to her lord.

The dwarf, as he drew near and beheld his lady in such distress, became as sorrowful as she; for he bore heavy tidings and feared greatly to impart them. His heart sank within him, but he made a show of hopefulness and set about to rub and chafe the poor damsel's temples until she began to give signs of life, and to moan and groan aloud. She was very weary, and she thought her effort to save her parents was all in vain. Loathing the very sunshine she cried out for death, and, believing her prayers about

to be answered, once more sank upon the ground.

Three times she sank and three times the dwarf raised and revived her with busy care and pains. When at length life fairly won the victory, with trembling limbs and failing tongue Una prayed him to tell her what woful tragedy had befallen her knight. "Thou canst not," she said, "tell a more heavy tale than that I already know to be true."

Then the dwarf began to relate all the adventures which had happened to him and the knight from the time that Archimago, the wicked enchanter, had parted them from Una until now. These were many, but at present I can only tell you of that in which the Red-cross Knight lost his armour.

First, you must know that the knight ought never to have left Una. In leaving her he followed a false imagination put into his mind by Archimago, instead of remaining strictly true to the charge given him by Gloriana, Queen of Faeryland, and this one false step led him into much misfortune.

It was thus he came to trust in Duessa, a wicked witch, who one day led him to rest by a stream whose waters had the fatal effect of rendering every one who drank of them weak and powerless against all attacks of evil. The knight, then, resting by the stream, drank of its waters, and immediately his strength gave way, his blood ran slow, and a chill struck at the very root of his courage.

While lying in this feeble condition, a dreadful sound was heard, that seemed to shake the earth and cause the trees to

tremble. Starting up, the knight began to collect his weapons and to don his armour in great haste. But before he could do so, before he had even got his shield in his hand, a hideous giant, more than three times the height of any mortal man, and so huge that the earth groaned under his weight, came stalking into sight. In his hand the giant Orgoglio bore a gnarled oak torn up from the forest, which he used both as staff and weapon, and when he saw the knight he raised this formidable cudgel and bore down upon him in a fury.

Alas! the Red-cross Knight was little able to sustain the combat. Unarmed, disgraced and inwardly dismayed by the power of the fatal waters, he could hardly wield his single blade.

The giant struck with a force that might overthrow a tower of stone, much more a defenceless man: but the knight watched carefully where the blows fell, and skilfully leapt out of their way, and thus for a time evaded them. But not for long: so furious were the blows that the wind they raised presently overthrew him and flung him stunned upon the ground.

The giant was not slow to see his advantage. He uplifted his powerful arm, and with one stroke would have made an end of his opponent had not Duessa interfered. She besought Orgoglio to spare the life of the Red-cross Knight and take only his liberty: and to this the giant consented on condition that Duessa would become his lady-love. He then raised the knight in his cruel arms and carried him in haste to his strong castle, where he threw him into its darkest dungeon.

Such was the tale the dwarf had to tell.

Una heard him patiently to the end, and strove to master her sorrow, but it only grew stronger the more she contended against it. At length, when the first passion of grief had worn itself out, she rose, and, attended by the dwarf, resolved to find her knight, alive or dead. But ever as she wandered through low dales, and over high hills and among thick woods, her grief broke forth from time to time as if from a wound that had not healed.

After a time Una and her dwarf chanced to meet a very noble-looking knight attended by a single follower.

These were none other than the great and good Prince Arthur and Timias his much loved squire. The armour of the Prince glittered from afar, and on his breast he wore a bauldric beset with precious stones, in the midst of which shone one shaped like a lady's head, which was of wondrous worth and was possessed of magic powers. By the bauldric hung the Prince's sword: its sheath was of ivory curiously wrought. The hilt and the buckle were of burnished gold and the handle was of mother-of-pearl. His helmet was also of gold and had a dragon for its crest: the wings of the dragon spread wide apart, while its head couched close upon the Prince's beaver, and its tail stretched low upon his back, and on the top of all was a tuft of divers coloured hair sprinkled with gold and pearls, and quivering in the sunlight. His shield was closely covered and might not be seen of mortal eyes, for it was made of pure and perfect diamond: – one massive piece cut solid from the rock, and no spear could pierce it nor any sword

divide its substance.

And never did Prince Arthur reveal its brightness to any single foe, but if he wished to dismay huge monsters or daunt whole armies, then would he discover its exceeding brightness, and so discomfit them. No magic art or enchanter's word had power over it, and all things that were not what they seemed, faded away before its brightness. By it the Prince could blind the proud, turn men into stones, stones to dust, and dust to nought.

This wondrous shield, with the rich sword and armour, had been made for Prince Arthur by Merlin, the great and good magician.

Timias, the Prince's squire, was a gentle youth. He bore a spear of ebony, with a square pike head, which had been three times heated in the furnace; and he rode a proud and stubborn steed that chafed under its rider, but was kept well in hand.

As Prince Arthur approached the lady, he spoke courteously to her, and when he perceived that his words drew forth slow and unwilling answers, he guessed that a secret sorrow rent her heart. He then tried to draw from her the cause of her distress, until, moved by his kind words, Una spoke.

"What happiness," she asked, "could reach a heart plunged in a sea of sorrow, and heaped with huge misfortunes?" As soon as she thought of her distress a cold chill crept over her, and she felt as if stung by an iron arrow. Grievs which could not be cured were best not spoken of, – she could only weep and wail.

Then said the Prince – "Ah! dear lady, well do I believe that

your grief is a heavy one, for only to hear you speak fills my soul with sadness; but let me entreat of you to unfold it, for counsel eases the worst sorrow."

"But great grief," said Una, "will not bear to be spoken of; it is easy to think about, but hard to utter."

"True," replied the Prince, "but he that wills not, can do nothing."

"Ah!" pleaded Una, "but grief that is spoken, and finds no relief, grows still heavier, and leads to despair."

"Not so," said the Prince, "when there is trust and faith."

And thus was Una at length persuaded to disclose her secret sorrow.

She told the Prince the story you already know: how her dear parents were imprisoned by a huge dragon, and how the Red-cross Knight, who was to have rescued them, had been betrayed into the hands of a cruel giant, in whose dungeons he lay, disarmed and helpless.

Before she had quite ended her tale, the poor damsel grew faint from grief and dread, but the Prince comforted her with cheering words.

"Truly," he said, "you have great cause of sorrow; but take comfort and courage, for until I have rescued your captive knight be assured that I will not leave you."

So the whole party went on together, until they reached a great castle. Here, said the dwarf, lay his luckless lord, and here the Prince must try his prowess. Whereupon the Prince alighted from

his steed, and bidding Una remain where she was and watch the issue of the fight, took Timias, his squire, and strode up to the castle wall. He found the gates fast closed, and no one to keep guard or answer to his call. At this, the squire blew a small bugle, which hung by his side, adorned with twisted gold and gay tassels, and writ all over with the wonders of its virtue.

None ever heard its shrill call who did not tremble before it. There was no gate however strong, or lock however firm, that did not burst open at its summons. And now, as the squire blew the magic horn, the grim castle quaked, every door flew open, and the giant himself rushed forth with an angry stare on his cruel countenance, eager to learn who or what this might be that had dared his dreaded power. After him appeared Duessa, riding a many-headed monster, with a fiery, flaming tongue in every one of its many heads.

At once the Prince began a furious attack on the monster. Thereupon the giant buckled to the fight, and lifting up his dreadful club, all armed with ragged knobs and gnarled knots, thought to have slain the Prince at a single blow. But he, wise and wary, leapt swiftly aside, and the great weapon fell so heavily, that it sank three yards deep into the ground, making the earth tremble. Now, Orgoglio could not easily uplift his club, and as he strove to drag it from the deep cleft, the Prince smote off his left arm, which fell to the ground, a senseless block, while streams of blood gushed from the wound. Dismayed by the pain, Orgoglio roared aloud, and Duessa hastened to draw up her many-headed

charger to his aid. But the squire soon forced the horrid beast to retreat, and at this Duessa in her pride rebelled and urged the monster afresh; but in vain, for Timias dealt mighty strokes, and stood firmly to his post.

Then Duessa resorted to her witch ways, and taking out a golden cup, murmured enchantments over it, and sprinkled some of its contents upon Timias. His courage immediately faded away, and his senses became dull and numb, and he fell helpless before the monster.

The dreadful beast laid its claws upon Timias' neck, and kept him pinned to the ground, until his life was nearly crushed out: then it left him with neither power nor will to rise.

But when Prince Arthur beheld the sad plight into which his well-loved squire had fallen, he left off fighting with Orgoglio, and turned upon the beast, and struck off one of its monster heads.

Thereupon Orgoglio went to Duessa's aid, and putting all his force into his remaining arm, he let drive his oaken club with such terrible fury, that falling on the Prince's shield, it bore him to the ground.

But as Prince Arthur fell, his shield became uncovered, and suddenly there blazed forth a light of such dazzling brightness, that no eye could bear it. The giant let his arm drop to his side, and the many-headed beast turned blind and staggered so that Duessa cried out wildly, "O! help, Orgoglio, help, or we perish all!"

The giant was moved by her piteous cry, and strove to wield his weapon in her aid, but all in vain, for the bright shield had sapped his powers.

And now Prince Arthur struck at him, smiting off his right leg, and while he lay prostrate and helpless, leapt lightly upon him, and smote off his head. Lo! Orgoglio's body shrank away, and nothing was left but an empty dried-up skin – such is the end of pride.

When Duessa saw the grievous fate of Orgoglio, she cast away her golden cup, and fled fleetly from the bloody scene; but the squire, light of foot as she, speedily brought her back captive.

And now Una, who had watched the fight from afar, came forward with sober and modest gladness, hardly able to find words with which to greet and thank the victor, declaring that heaven, not she, must requite him the service he had done. She then went on to pray that since heaven and his prowess had made him master of the field, he would end that he had so fair begun, and would rescue her Red-cross Knight from the deep dungeon in which he lay.

Thereupon the Prince gave Duessa into the charge of Timias, while he himself proceeded to make forcible entrance into the castle. No living creature did he see, and when he called aloud, no man answered to his cry; but a solemn silence reigned in hall and bower.

At length there came forth an old, old man, with a beard as white as snow, who walked along with a creeping, crooked pace,

and leant his feeble steps on a staff, groping his way, for his eyesight had failed him long ago. On his arm hung a bunch of keys, overgrown with rust: these were the keys of the inner doors, but he could not use them, and only kept them by him from ancient custom. It was a strange sight to watch his feeble pace, for as he moved slowly forward his face was seen to be turned backward. He was the ancient keeper of the place, foster-father to the slain Orgoglio, and his name, Ignaro, betrayed his true nature.

But the Prince honoured his grave and reverend appearance, and asked him gently where were all the dwellers in the castle, to which he replied in a quiet voice that he could not tell. Again the Prince asked where the knight whom Orgoglio had vanquished lay captive, and Ignaro replied he could not tell. Then the Prince inquired by which way he might pass into the castle, and still the old man said he could not tell; whereupon the Prince, courteous as he ever was, grew displeased, and thinking that Ignaro mocked at his questions, upbraided him, and demanded an answer befitting the gravity of the old man's years, but the reply was ever the same, he could not tell.

At this the Prince looked attentively at the aged sire, and, guessing that he was indeed ignorant, stayed his wrath in pity for his imbecility, and, stepping up to him, took the bunch of keys from his unresisting hand, and made free entrance for himself. He opened all the doors, and neither bar nor foeman presented any hindrance. He found all within furnished with great richness

and splendour, but everywhere he beheld traces of the giant's cruelty. He sought through every room and every bower, but nowhere could he find the Red-cross Knight.

At length, Prince Arthur came upon an iron door, which was fast locked. He searched among the keys, but in all the bunch there was not one to open it. Presently he espied a small grating in the door, and through this he called with all his strength that he might discover whether any living wight were imprisoned there.

By-and-bye he heard a hollow, dreary, murmuring voice. It asked who this might be that brought tidings so welcome as the news of death to one who had lain dying for three weary months, but yet lived on.

When the Prince heard this sad plaint, his heart thrilled with pity and indignation, and he rent open the iron door in fierce fury; but when the iron door was open, there was nothing before him but a deep descent, dank, dark, and foul. However, neither the darkness nor the foulness could stay the strong purpose of the Prince, and after long labour and great perseverance, he succeeded in finding means whereby to rescue the prisoner from the dismal hole.

But alas! when the knight was lifted out, he presented a sad spectacle of ghastly suffering. His feeble limbs could scarce support his body, his eyes were dull and sunken, and could ill bear the light, his cheeks were thin and hollow, his once powerful arms wasted away, and his whole appearance was withered and shrivelled.

When Una saw him she ran towards him, tears in her eyes, and joy and sadness mingled in her feelings, and as soon as she could speak for her tears, she exclaimed, "Ah, dearest Lord, what evil power hath thus robbed you of yourself, and marred your manly countenance? But welcome now, whether in weal or in woe."

The knight was too feeble to answer, and the Prince replied for him, saying that nothing was gained in recounting woes, since the only good to be had from past peril is to be wise and ware of like again.

He then asked Una what he should do with Duessa, the false witch. Una declared that to have her die would be too spiteful an act, and, therefore, having despoiled her of the scarlet and purple robes, and rich ornaments, with which she imposed upon men, they let her go, and Una and the knights remained in the castle to rest a while.

But this rest was not sufficient to fit the Red-cross Knight for his approaching conflict with the dragon, and so Una, seeing that his limbs were weak, and his spirit damped by the long and miserable imprisonment, conducted him to an ancient house, called the House of Holiness, in which she knew they would have a kind welcome and good food.

In this house they remained for some time, and here the knight met an aged sire, who told him many curious things concerning his origin. The knight rejoiced greatly as he heard that he was descended from ancient Saxon kings, and was destined to do great deeds for his native land.

Inspired with fresh courage he returned to Una, who had been resting with the good lady Charity, and her women, in their side of the great House of Holiness. After many thanks rendered and many blessings bestowed, they once more set out to find the Dragon.

How the Red-cross Knight slew the Dragon

Faerie Queene. Book I. Cantos XI., XII

As Una and the Red-cross Knight rode on their way they came near her father's wasted lands and the brazen tower in which her parents were imprisoned.

"Dear Knight," said Una, "we are now come where our peril must begin," and warning him that they might encounter the dragon at any moment she prayed him to be constantly on his guard.

As she spoke, the maiden pointed out the tower, and at the same time a hideous roar filled the air with horror. They looked up and beheld the dragon stretched out on the sunny side of a hill. The moment that the monster saw the knight's shining armour, he raised his great frame and hastened towards them as if delighting at the prospect of fresh prey.

Then the knight bade Una leave him and withdraw to a hill at a little distance, where she could watch the fight and yet be secure from danger.

The dreadful beast came on steadily, half walking, half flying in his haste. He covered the ground quickly, and as he went, cast

a huge shadow over the wasted land.

As the dragon approached the knight, he reared his monstrous body on high, which looked the more horrible that it was swollen with wrath and venom. It was covered with brazen scales, so closely placed, that nothing could pierce them, and the dragon shook the scales until they sounded like the clashing of armour. He had wings which he spread out like great sails, and when these smote the air, the clouds fled in terror before them, and the heavens stood still in astonishment. His tail was twisted in a hundred folds, and lay over his scaly back, and when he unfolded its coils and displayed its full length, it swept the land behind him for three furlongs. At its extremity were inserted two deadly stings, sharper than the sharpest steel. And still sharper and more cruel were his claws; so cruel and ravenous, that all they touched, and all they drew within their reach, suffered certain destruction.

But most fearful of all was the dragon's head. It had deep-set eyes, that burned with rage, and shone forth like shining shields; and gaping jaws, in which were set three rows of iron teeth. From these trickled the blood of the creatures he had lately devoured, while from between his jaws issued clouds of smoke that filled the air with sulphurous stench.

Such was the foe the Red-cross Knight must face and conquer.

On came the dragon, raising his haughty crest, shaking his scales, and hastening so joyously to the combat, that the knight inwardly quaked for fear.

And now began the first of three days' mortal strife.

The Red-cross Knight couched his spear, and ran fiercely at his foe. The spear did not wound, but it annoyed the dragon: he turned aside, and as he turned, swept both the horse and its rider to the ground. In a moment the knight had risen, and renewed the attack. Never before, although many a knight had fought with him, had the dragon felt such force in the arm of a foe, and yet the deadly thrusts glanced back from his well-armed breast, leaving him unhurt.

But the knight's persistent attacks roused the monster's rage. He spread his great wings, and lifting himself into the air, swooped down upon his foe, and seized both horse and man in his cruel claws. He carried them an arrow's shot, when their fierce struggles obliged him to let them fall; and the knight, putting the force of three men into a single blow, once more aimed his spear at the impenetrable scales. Again the blow glanced aside, but this time it glided close under the dragon's upraised wing, and there inflicted so sore a wound, that the monster, unaccustomed to pain, roared aloud with a noise like that of the ocean in a wintry storm.

The weapon stuck in the dragon's flesh, until he contrived to tear it out with his claws, whereupon black blood streamed forth from his wound, and flames of fire from his nostrils. In his rage, he flung his great tail about: it twisted round the horse's legs, and the steed in its effort to get free, only became the more entangled, and at length was forced to throw the knight. Quickly he arose, and laying hold of his powerful sword, struck the dragon a stroke

that seemed as if it must prove fatal. But the hardened iron took little effect upon the still more hardened crest, although it fell with a force that made the dragon careful to avoid its blows.

The knight grew angry when he saw his strokes of no avail, and struck again with greater might, but the steel recoiled, leaving no mark where it had fallen.

Now the dragon was suffering from the wound under his wing, and impatient of the pain, tried again to rise into the air. But the injured wing impeded his effort, and full of rage and disappointment, he uttered a roar such as had never before been heard, and once more sent out flames of fire. These came right into the face of the knight, and making their way through his armour, burned him so sorely that he could hardly endure its weight. Faint and weary, burned, and sore with his wounds, worn out with heat and toil, and the very arms he bore, death seemed to him much easier than life. "But death will never come when needs require," and his despair well nigh cost him dear.

The dragon, seeing his discomfiture, turned upon him, and smiting him with his tail, felled him to the ground. Very near, then, was the knight to the death he coveted.

However, it so happened that, unknown to him, a well of rare virtue lay close by. Its waters could cure sicknesses, make the aged young, wash sinful crimes away, and even restore the dead to life. In the happy days before the accursed dragon had brought ruin to the land, it had been called the Well of Life; and though he had denied its sacred waters with innocent blood, it still retained

many of its ancient virtues. Into this spring the knight fell.

And now the sun began to set, and Una, watching from her hill, saw her champion fall, and saw, too, that the monster swelled out his proud breast, and clapped his great wings as if in victory. Little knowing the boon that had befallen her knight, the maiden grew very sad at heart, thinking all was lost. No sleep was possible to her. With folded hands, on lowly knees, she spent the long anxious hours in earnest prayer.

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