

A REALM OF CHIVALRY, A KING UNBOUND.

THE STORY OF KING  
**ARTHUR**  
AND HIS  
**KNIGHTS**

THE CHRONICLES OF KING ARTHUR: BOOK 1



HOWARD PYLE

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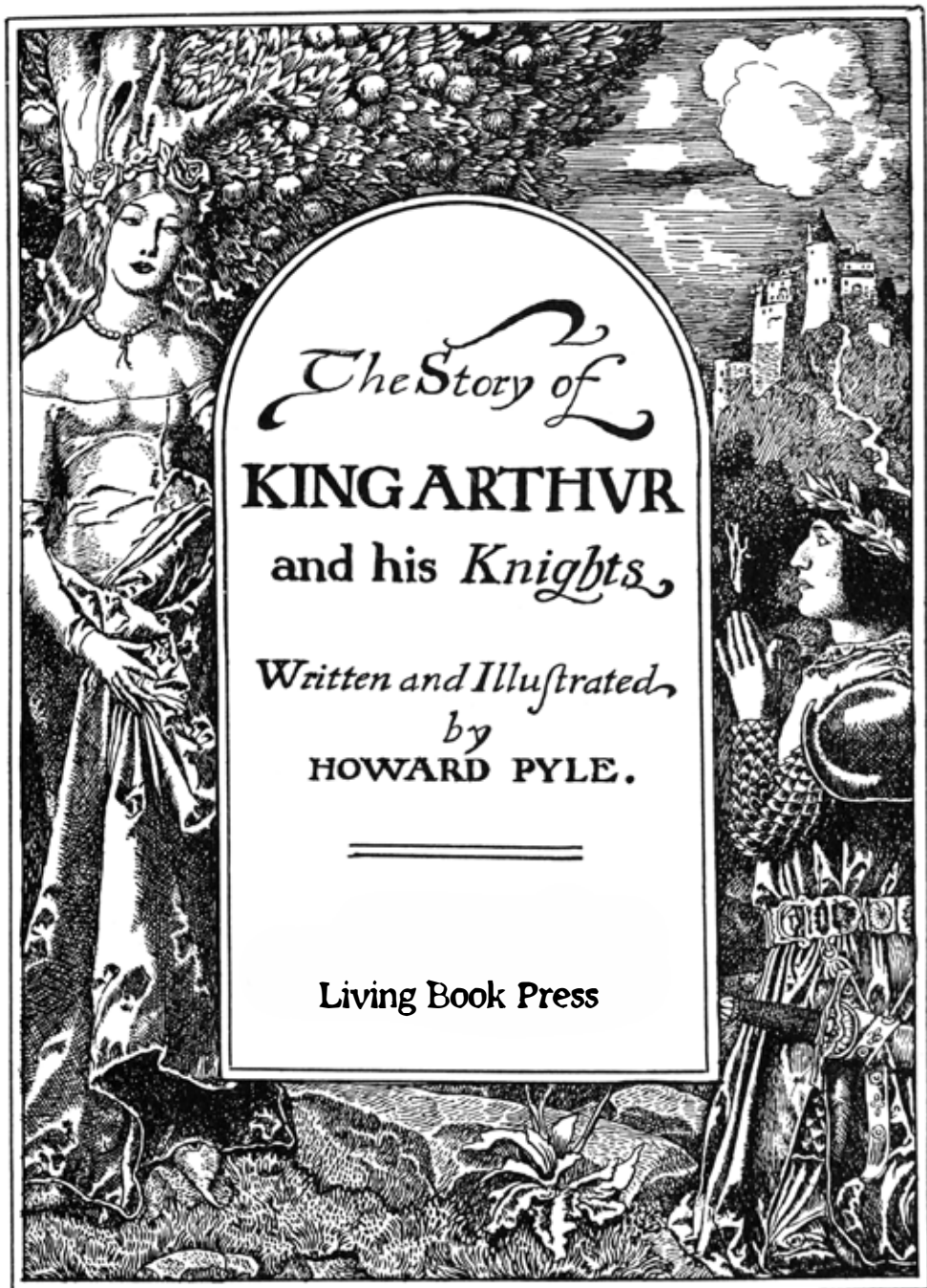
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*The Story of*  
**KING ARTHUR**  
*and his Knights*

*Written and Illustrated*  
*by*  
**HOWARD PYLE.**

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**Living Book Press**





# The Giant at the Crossroads

By

W. J. AYLWARD



In the realm of American arts and letters, the position occupied by Howard Pyle is so high and firmly established that no word of mine can add inch or cubit to its stature. So I'll leave all that to abler pens.

But more and more as "a Pyle man" I am asked by the present generation of his admirers what his personality was like. What sort of man was this who equally at home in literature and art could in both fields and with the same apparent ease bring the past to life again? How did he make the creatures of his fancy so real that they appear to be rational human beings and the wonders they perform the most natural things in the world?

Somehow we are apt to imagine the unknown personality of a distinguished artist, unconsciously investing it with the characters he best

portrays: naturally enough when one considers what an important part of his personality a man's work is. In my own case as a boy, I always thought Winslow Homer must look pretty much like the bearded old salt striking the midnight hour in the moonlit solitude of midocean and singin' out his comforting message that "All's well," and of Howard Pyle as a grave, dignified figure vaguely resembling George Washington. I found later that Homer was not at all like that and as for Mr. Pyle, I can do no better than to set down my first impression of the man himself.

It was back in the early decade of nineteen hundred when two rather discouraged young men wrote him from a city on the Great Lakes seeking to enter his class. One was Mr. Arthur E. Becher and the other the writer, I still have his reply pointing out in a courteous note that as his school was extremely limited, it would be better to send a few samples of our work than to make so long a journey on the slight chance of gaining admission. Encouragement enough for us, slim as it was. We packed up and came East.

In course of time we found ourselves one glorious afternoon in late September in the land of "thee and thou," a town of narrow, cobbled streets, of quaint red-bricked dwellings with dormered windows set in their sloping roofs above white, fanlighted doorways, of fine old sycamores, — in short, Wilmington, Delaware.

We learned the address in Broome Street, and without difficulty found the house with "closed for the summer" plainly written over its dusty exterior and leaf-scattered walks. We were frankly aghast, but were we down-hearted? No! Although the auto was already in the land, it was a rare bird. So we found a livery, "hired a hoss" and set out at once on a course for a spot twelve miles distant somewhere across the State line in Pennsylvania.

Over rolling hills we followed the winding Brandywine past many a snug, russet-bouldered little farmhouse tucked in among giant oaks or set boldly against the sky on hilltop in harvested fields till we came to a place where the hills spread and the valley widened into a broad meadow. A grist-mill hummed contentedly by the shining waters hard by a sleepy little hamlet in the shadows of its own great elms — Chadds Ford.

"Yes," we were told at Baldwin's General Store and Post Office, "Mr.

Pyle was at his home, up the road a piece 'bout a mile — big white house, left-hand side of the road — can't miss it." Miss it we did not and without difficulty found Lafayette Hall — a lofty, square, early American country mansion of unpretentious dignity with a generous porch surrounding it.

Not a little fussed, we drove into the shaded lane leading up to its great portal, whence at the sound of wheels in the drive, the man himself emerged smiling a welcoming greeting, "Well, you are in earnest, aren't you?" He was a large, ruddy, well-built man with a fine head firmly set on broad shoulders, six feet and over, clad in gray tweeds with a bicycle cap perched on graying thin hair. Through silver-rimmed glasses, he fairly beamed good-humored kindness.

He did not look at all like an artist — few of the big ones do. With his large build, small, well-formed hands and feet, he rather suggested an English squire who you felt would wear formal dress during the London Season with the same unconscious grace with which he wore his tweeds. Perhaps it was a flat inch or so of "Burnside" on his cheek that made this comparison possible. I know that was what made him recall to my mind a portrait I had seen of Sir John Millais.

At his brisk, "Well, what have you to show me?" the Big Moment had arrived. He was most encouraging — more appreciative perhaps than the work warranted, and during his enlightening talk there on the long broad porch, while the deepening shadows crept up among the mellowing trees, we learned more about the requirements of an illustrator than we had ever dreamed of.

But — it seemed he was looking for younger students (I had reached the advanced age of twenty-six) of a more pliable age, into whose minds he could instil his own theories, which seemed so extremely practical. With all his practicality, he was a good deal of a mystic and much of what he said was tinged with the philosophy of Swedenborg.

During this eventful hour a sweet-faced woman appeared in the shadowy doorway with some papers in her hand and softly announced that "William was about to leave with the mail." She called him, "Howard," a familiarity we thought. He excused himself for a moment to sign a few letters. Quite suddenly a sturdy bright-faced lad popped up on the porch to show "Father" a cap full of chestnuts he had gathered. There were

five other youngsters we were told, evidently from the sounds coming from that direction having a good time somewhere back in the orchard.

The light was going and we prepared to depart. He was concerned about our having something to eat, but we felt the horse needed some consideration and we left buoyed up with encouragement and elated by his assurance that we would be welcome at his weekly Monday-night lecture and privileged to bring our work for criticism at any time.

We were scarce out of earshot when we turned toward each other with the same thought — Well, we didn't quite make the grade, but wasn't he great? We eventually entered the class itself — but that is another story. Even so we had achieved one big ambition — we had met Howard Pyle.





## Foreword.



*A*fter several years of contemplation and of thought upon the matter herein contained, it has at last come about, by the Grace of God, that I have been able to write this work with such pleasure of spirit that, if it gives to you but a part of the joy that it hath afforded me, I shall be very well content with what I have done.

For when, in pursuing this history, I have come to consider the high nobility of spirit that moved these excellent men to act as they did, I have felt that they have afforded such a perfect example of courage and humility that anyone might do exceedingly well to follow after their manner of behavior in such measure as he is able to do.

For I believe that King Arthur was the most honorable, gentle Knight who ever lived in all the world. And those who were his fellows of the Round Table—taking him as their looking-glass of chivalry—made, altogether, such a company of noble knights that it is hardly to be supposed that their like will ever be seen again in this world. Wherefore it is that I have had such extraordinary pleasure in beholding how those famous knights behaved whenever circumstances called upon them to perform their endeavor.

So in the year of grace one thousand nine hundred and two I began to write this history of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table

*and, if I am able so to do, I shall endeavor, with love of that task, to finish the same at some other time in another book and to the satisfaction of whosoever may care to read the story thereof.*







# King Arthur of Britain.





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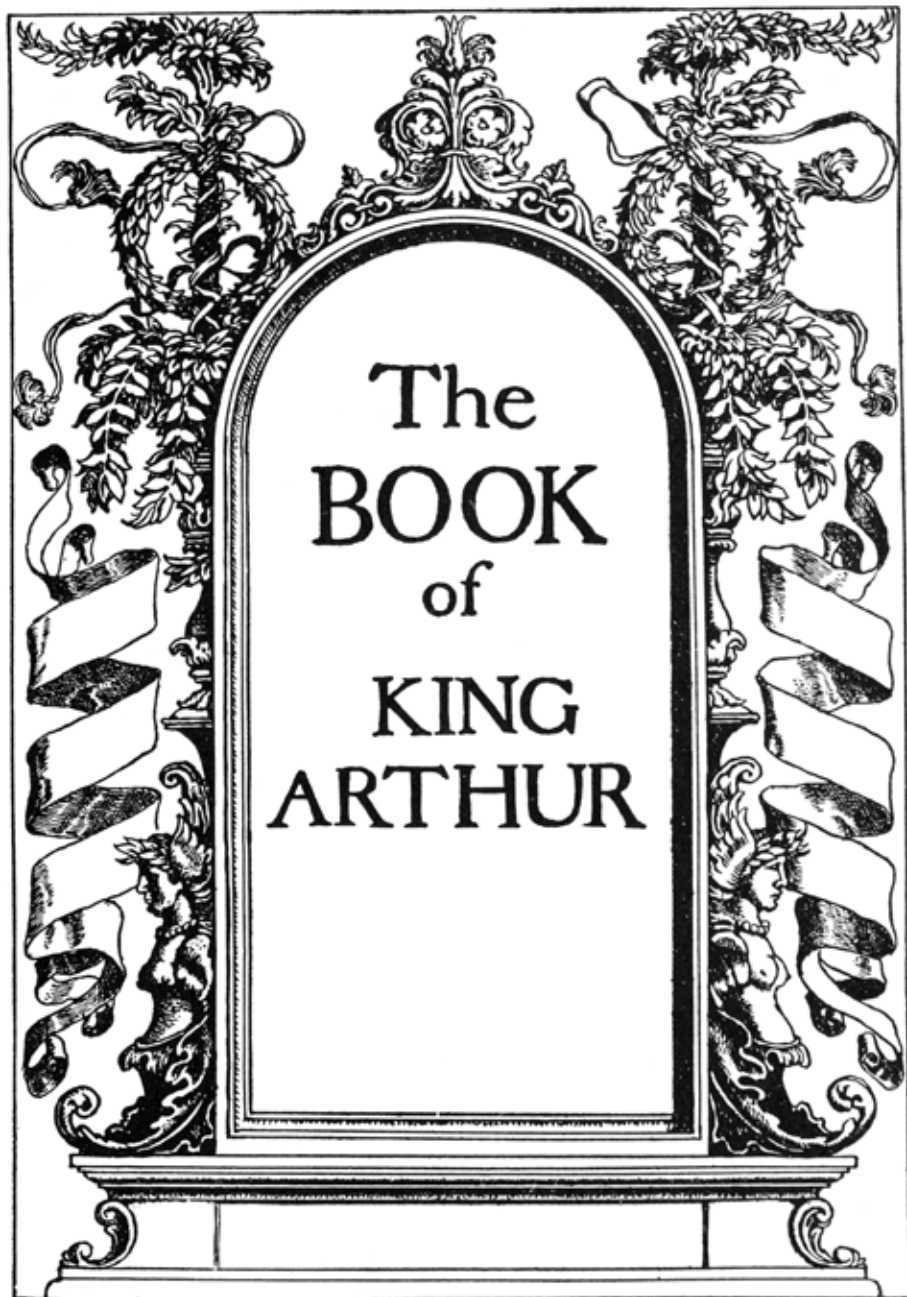
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The  
**BOOK**  
of  
KING  
ARTHUR



Uther-Pendragon. 





## Prologue.

**I**N ancient days there lived a very noble King, named Uther-Pendragon, and he became Overlord of all of Britain. This King was very greatly aided unto the achievement of the Pendragonship of the realm by the help of two men, who rendered him great assistance in all that he did. The one of these men was a certain very powerful enchanter and sometime prophet known to men as Merlin the Wise; and he gave very good counsel unto Uther-Pendragon. The other man was an excellent noble and renowned knight, hight Ulfius (who was thought by many to be the greatest leader in war of any man then alive); and he gave Uther-Pendragon aid and advice in battle. So, with the help of Merlin and Sir Ulfius, Uther-Pendragon was able to overcome all of his enemies and to become King of the entire realm.

After Uther-Pendragon had ruled his kingdom for a number of years he took to wife a certain beautiful and gentle lady, hight Igraine. This noble dame was the widow of Gerlois, the Duke of Tintegal; by which prince she had two daughters—one of whom was named Margaise and the other Morgana le Fay. And Morgana le Fay was a famous sorceress. These daughters the Queen brought with her to the Court of Uther-Pendragon after she had married that puissant King, and there Margaise

was wedded to King Urien of Gore, and Morgana le Fay was wedded to King Lot of Orkney.

Now after awhile Uther-Pendragon and Queen Igraine had a son born unto them, and he was very beautiful and of great size and strength of bone. And whilst the child still lay wrapped in his swaddling clothes and lying in a cradle of gold and ultramarine, Merlin came to Uther-Pendragon with a spirit of prophecy strong upon him (for such was often the case with him), and, speaking in that spirit of prophecy, he said, "Lord, it is given unto me to foresee that thou shalt shortly fall sick of a fever and that thou shalt maybe die of a violent sweat that will follow thereon. Now, should such a dolorous thing befall us all, this young child (who is, certes, the hope of all this realm) will be in very great danger of his life; for many enemies will assuredly rise up with design to seize upon him for the sake of his inheritance, and either he will be slain or else he will be held in captivity from which he shall hardly hope to escape. Wherefore, I do beseech thee, Lord, that thou wilt permit Sir Ulfius and myself to presently convey the child away unto some place of safe refuge, where he may be hidden in secret until he groweth to manhood and is able to guard himself from such dangers as may threaten him."

When Merlin had made an end of speaking thus, Uther-Pendragon made reply with a very steadfast countenance in this wise: "Merlin, so far as my death is concerned—when my time cometh to die I believe God will give me grace to meet my end with entire cheerfulness; for, certes, my lot is in that wise no different from that of any other man who hath been born of woman. But touching the matter of this young child, if thy prophecy be true, then his danger is very great, and it would be well that he should be conveyed hence to some place of safe harborage as thou dost advise. Wherefore, I pray thee to perform thy will in this affair, bearing in thy heart the consideration that the child is the most precious inheritance which I shall leave unto this land."

All this, as was said, Uther-Pendragon spake with great calmness and equanimity of spirit. And Merlin did as he had advised, and he and Sir Ulfius conveyed the child away by night, and no one but they wist whither the babe had been taken. And shortly afterward Uther-Pendragon was seized with the sickness as Merlin had foretold, and he died exactly as

Merlin had feared that he would die; wherefore it was very well that the child had been taken to a place of safety.

And after Uther-Pendragon had departed from this life, it was likewise as Merlin had feared, for all the realm fell into great disorder. For each lesser king contended against his fellow for overlordship, and wicked knights and barons harried the highways as they listed and there levied toll with great cruelty upon helpless wayfarers. For some such travellers they took prisoners and held for ransom, whiles others they slew because they had no ransom to pay. So it was a very common sight to see a dead man lying by the roadside, if you should venture to make a journey upon some business or other. Thus it befell that, after awhile, all that dolorous land groaned with the trouble that lay upon it.

Thus there passed nearly eighteen years in such great affliction, and then one day the Archbishop of Canterbury summoned Merlin to him and bespake him in this wise: "Merlin, men say that thou art the wisest man in all the world. Canst thou not find some means to heal the distractions of this woeful realm? Bend thou thy wisdom to this matter and choose thou a king who shall be a fit overlord for us, so that we may enjoy happiness of life once more as we did in the days of Uther-Pendragon."

Then Merlin lifted up his countenance upon the Archbishop, and spake in this wise: "My lord, the spirit of prophecy that lieth upon me sometimes moveth me now to say that I do perceive that this country is soon to have a king who shall be wiser and greater and more worthy of praise than was even Uther-Pendragon. And he shall bring order and peace where is now disorder and war. Moreover, I may tell you that this King shall be of Uther-Pendragon's own full blood-royal."

To this the Archbishop said: "What thou tellest me, Merlin, is a wonderfully strange thing. But in this spirit of prophecy canst thou not foretell when this King is to come? And canst thou tell how we shall know him when he appeareth amongst us? For many lesser kings there are who would fain be overlord of this land, and many such there are who deem themselves fit to rule over all the others. How then shall we know the real King from those who may proclaim themselves to be the rightful king?"

"My lord Archbishop," quoth Merlin, "if I have thy leave for to exert

my magic I shall set an adventure which, if any man achieve it, all the world shall straightway know that he is the rightful King and overlord of this realm." And to this the Archbishop said, "Merlin, I bid thee do whatsoever may seem to thee to be right in this affair." And Merlin said, "I will do so."

So Merlin caused by magic that a huge marble stone, four square, should suddenly appear in an open place before the cathedral door. And upon this block of marble he caused it to be that there should stand an anvil and into the anvil he caused it that there should be thrust a great naked sword midway deep of the blade. And this sword was the most wonderful that any man had ever seen, for the blade was of blue steel and extraordinarily bright and glistening. And the hilt was of gold, chased and carved with marvellous cunning, and inlaid with a great number of precious stones, so that it shone with wonderful brightness in the sunlight. And about the sword were written these words in letters of gold:—

**Whoso Pulleth Out this Sword from the Anvil  
That same is Rightwise King-Born of England.**

So a great many people came and gazed upon that sword and marvelled at it exceedingly, for its like had never before been beheld upon the earth.

Then, when Merlin had accomplished this miracle, he bade the Archbishop to call together all the chief people of that land upon Christmastide; and he bade the Archbishop to command that every man should make assay to draw out the sword, for that he who should succeed in drawing it forth out of the anvil should be rightwise King of Britain.

So the Archbishop did according as Merlin said; and this was the marvel of the marble stone and the anvil, of which same anyone may easily read for himself in that book written a very long while ago by Robert de Boron, which is called *Le Roman de Merlin*.

Now when the mandate of the Lord Archbishop went forth, summoning all the chief people of the land to the assay of that miracle (for, indeed, it was a miracle to draw forth a sword-blade out of an anvil of solid iron), all the realm became immediately cast into a great ferment,

so that each man asked his fellow, “Who shall draw forth that sword, and who shall be our King?” Some thought it would be King Lot and others thought it would be King Urien of Gore (these being the sons-in-law unto Uther-Pendragon); some thought that it would be King Leodegrance of Camiliard, and others that it would be King Ryence of North Wales; some thought it would be this king and others that it would be that king; for all the world was divided into different parties who thought according to their liking.

Then, as Christmastide drew nigh, it presently appeared as though the entire world was wending its way to London Town, for the highways and the by-ways became filled with wayfarers—kings and lords and knights and ladies and esquires and pages and men-at-arms—all betaking their way whither the assay was to be made of that adventure of the sword and the anvil. Every inn and castle was filled so full of travellers that it was a marvel how so many folk could be contained within their compass, and everywhere were tents and pavilions pitched along the wayside for the accommodation of those who could not find shelter within doors.

But when the Archbishop beheld the multitudes that were assembling, he said to Merlin, “Indeed, Merlin, it would be a very singular thing if among all these great kings and noble, honorable lords we should not find some one worthy of being the King of this realm.”

Unto which the Merlin smiled and said, “Marvel not, my lord, if among all those who appear to be so extraordinarily worthy there shall



not be found one who is worthy; and marvel not if, among all those

who are unknown, there shall arise one who shall approve himself to be entirely worthy.”

And the Archbishop pondered Merlin’s words, and so beginneth this story.

PART I

# The Winning of Kinghood

*H*ERE beginneth the story of the sword, the anvil, and the marble stone, and of how that sword was first achieved by an unknown youth, until then of no renown, whether in arms or of estate.

*So hearken unto that which I have hereinafter written.*

**S**ir Kay breaketh his sword,  
at y<sup>e</sup> Tournament. *~ ~*





## Chapter First.

*How Sir Kay did Combat in a Great Tournament at London Town and of How He Brake His Sword. Likewise, How Arthur Found a New Sword For Him.*

**I**T happened that among those worthies who were summoned unto London Town by the mandate of the Archbishop as above recounted, there was a certain knight, very honorable and of high estate, by name Sir Ector of Bonmaison—surnamed the Trustworthy Knight, because of the fidelity with which he kept the counsel of those who confided in him, and because he always performed unto all men, whether of high or low degree, that which he promised to undertake, without defalcation as to the same. So this noble and excellent knight was held in great regard by all those who knew him; for not only was he thus honorable in conduct but he was, besides, of very high estate, being possessed of seven castles in Wales and in the adjoining country north thereof, and likewise of certain fruitful tracts of land with villages appertaining thereunto, and also of sundry forests of great extent, both in the north country and the west. This very noble knight had two sons; the elder of these was Sir Kay, a young knight of great valor and promise, and already well renowned in the Courts of Chivalry because of several very honorable deeds of