

Sir Tryamour

anon

a fourteenth century Middle English verse romance

Translated and retold in Modern English prose

by

Richard Scott-Robinson

This tale has been translated and retold, in the style of Hannah Scot, from: Harriet Hudson, 2006. *Four Middle English Romances: Sir Isumbras, Octavian, Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Tryamour*. Second edition. Medieval Institute Publications. TEAMS Middle English texts. From Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.2.38, dated to the mid-fifteenth century

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Sir Tryamour

anon

late fourteenth century

Heven blys that all schall wyne · Schylde us fro dedly synne · And graunte us the blys of hevyn · Yf ye wyll
a stounde blynne · Of a story Y wyll begynne · That gracyus ys to nevyn – May heaven's bliss, that
we shall all win, shield us from sin and grant us joy at the last! If you will be silent for
a moment, I will begin a story that is a pleasure to tell. It concerns a king and a queen,
their joy and their sorrow. A lesson to us all – if you will listen!

Sir Arthus was the King of Aragon and he had a queen named Margaret whom he loved very much. She was loyal and very beautiful. But no child had been born to them and this was a source of great sadness to them both. So the king made a vow that he would go to the Holy Land to fight fearlessly in order to earn the help of God Almighty in obtaining an heir.

When the king had made this vow and taken the cross from the Pope, he spent the night with his wife; and, as God willed, they conceived a child! But of course, they were unaware of this and in the morning the king made ready to set out for Palestine. He summoned all his armourers, knights and squires, had his horses saddled and made ready to leave. Then he said goodbye to the queen, and there was great sadness between them when the time came for him to go.

The story of Sir Tryamour is found in a manuscript in Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.2.38, dated to the mid-fifteenth century, a seventeenth century manuscript in the British Library and two early printed editions, one dating to 1531. The tale itself was written by an unknown hand in the late-fourteenth century, when Geoffrey Chaucer was working on his Canterbury Tales. Although inspired by themes and motifs found in many Romances penned in Old French, the tale is probably English.

So the king crossed the sea to face his enemies in bitter conflict, and Sir Marrok, his steward, lost no time in setting into motion a dastardly plan.

He wooed the queen day and night, and showed no fear of making plain his intention to make love to her. He tried to persuade her that there would be no risk at all if they slept together, in the hopes that this might have the desired effect.

But the queen was steadfast and stood motionless until he had finished speaking. Then she exclaimed: 'Traitor! What are you thinking of? You are wasting your breath! My husband put me into your hands for protection, and now you would be the first to injure me. How dare you!'

The queen was beside herself with anger and swore that she would not lower herself to be his harlot. 'If you dare to be so bold as to lay a finger upon me,' she screamed, 'I swear I shall not eat until I see you dead!'

‘Madam! Have mercy,’ replied the steward. ‘I said this with no lascivious intent but as a test. I needed to know how you intend to conduct yourself in the king’s absence, and now that I can see that you are absolutely true to my lord the king, this is a source of great joy to me. Please forgive my impertinence.’

In this way the evil Marrok wriggled out with a lie and the lady believed him. So he went away and all returned to normality, or so it seemed; for although he said nothing, Marrok had not forgotten.

But let us leave the queen for a moment; she is becoming visibly pregnant but let us turn to the king. King Arduus battled in the land of heathens, fighting for God, and the wonderful things he soon achieved through his martial prowess caused his name to spread



as far as Spain, Gascony and Germany. But when he had liberated Bethlehem and the river Jordan, and Jerusalem where God was resurrected from the dead, his thoughts turned to his wife. And without warning, suddenly, he arranged for ships to carry his army and himself back to Aragon.

After many days upon the sea, the king arrived back and he and the queen were reunited with more joy than I can describe. And she told him the happy news, and he could see the truth of it for himself and kissed her twenty times!

Soon afterwards, the evil Marrok approached the king. ‘Sir,’ he asked, ‘why do you seem so pleased with yourself? Perhaps you think the child is yours, but it is not. Another man has slept with your wife and given her this child.’

‘Alas!’ cried the king. ‘Did I not trust you with her safekeeping? Why did you let her do it?’

‘It was not my fault,’ pleaded Marrok. ‘She gave no hint that there was anybody in her thoughts but you. I had no inkling that anything untoward was going on until I found them in bed together. It was barely a fortnight since your departure when I found them entwined in love’s rapture! I ran at this knight and slew him. Fearing for her own life, the queen offered me lands and titles, even her own body to use as I wished. But I refused, of course. I could think only of you.’

‘Why has she done this?’ wailed the King.

‘Sir,’ replied Marrok, ‘I advise you not to burn her, nor to kill her in any way, since that would be sinful. It would be better to banish her. I advise you to send her into exile. Give her an old horse, and an old knight to accompany her, and give them just enough money to see them safely out of your kingdom. For it would be a tragedy if a bastard were to be your heir, and no son of yours.’

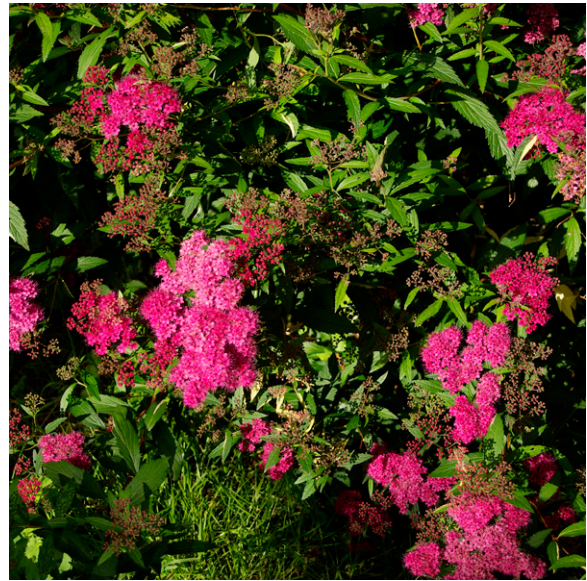
‘As you have said,’ replied the king, ‘so shall it be. And immediately!’

So the queen was exiled. She had no idea what crime she was supposed to have committed, for the king would not speak with her at all. He gave her some simple clothes to wear, set her upon an old, blind steed and gave her an old knight, Sir Roger, a kind and courteous gentleman, to act as her companion. And he allowed them twenty days to vanish from the kingdom, and if they were found after this, he let it be understood that she would be taken and burned alive. They should ride like the wind! He gave them a small amount of money and commanded them to be gone.

The queen was distraught, for she had no idea why she was being treated in this way. She nearly fell from her horse in a faint. Sir Roger tried to comfort her: ‘This must be God’s will,’ he consoled, ‘so what use is it to kill yourself? Have courage.’

Knights, squires and ladies all mourned for the queen, for they, too, could see no cause for this to be happening. So in sorrow and perplexity, she rode off with Sir Roger, in the direction of a great wilderness full of wild animals.

But the evil Marrok had not finished with her. He organised a company of knights who would be happy to conspire in villainy. They rode hard to a forest that stood beside the route that the queen would have to take, and waited there.



The queen entered the forest without any fear of ambush. But then Sir Roger caught sight of the steward, riding towards them with a large number of knights. The steward rode up to Sir Roger and cried: ‘Yield to me or die, for you have no hope against us!’

‘Traitor!’ replied Sir Roger, defiantly. ‘You will not take me without a fight!’ Then all the knights who were accompanying the steward attacked the lone old man; but he had once been a formidable warrior and although they hewed and hacked at him, and rained blows all around, Sir Roger stood up to them valiantly. He sliced through helmets down to the waist, and many had their dying view of him! But the remaining knights fought against Sir Roger like madmen, and soon the blood was flowing freely on both sides, so hard were the blows. Faithful-love, Sir Roger’s dog, remained with his master, helping with his teeth wherever he could.

While this was going on, the queen dismounted and ran into the forest where she came almost at once upon an impenetrable clump of thorn bushes; and so she hid herself as best she could in the thick of these. From her dreadful vantage point, she could see Sir Roger fighting for his life, with his dog helping wherever he could.

And as the story tells, Sir Roger killed forty of his attackers, and if he had been wearing armour he would have carried the day – Oh why was he not wearing his armour! Sir Marrok manoeuvred behind him as he fought and stabbed him with a spear. Sir Roger was mortally wounded and fell from his horse. Marrok left him there and rode off to look for the queen. But all he could find was her horse. There was no sign of the queen at all. In anger, the steward cursed the day and searched the entire wood, but through God's grace he found no sign of the lady. Furiously, Sir Marrok returned to the body of Sir Roger and thrust his spear into it three times to make sure that he was dead. Then he rode off with the only knight of his to survive. Of all his companions, only one was left alive.

The queen still feared for her life, until she was sure that Marrok had gone. Then she emerged from her soggy refuge and went to where Sir Roger lay dead. 'Alas!' she cried, 'why did that villain kill you? I can see no reason. You have given your life for me, and now I, too, am lost!' And with this, she fell down and wept.

When she had recovered her senses, she mounted her horse for fear of staying in that place a moment longer. But the dog remained with his master, licking his wounds. He thought that by doing so he might heal him, for there is great kindness and loyalty in dogs.

The dog licked his master until the body began to stink. And then it occurred to the animal to make a pit and to line it with stones; and he buried the body in this hole, and kicked moss and forest leaf-litter over it. And he remained there, by his master's grave, living on whatever he could find or catch, for many years.

But hear now how the queen flees for fear of pursuit; she is very frightened and has no idea where to go. She rode into the land of Hungary, and arrived there in a dreadful state. And in a wood she could go no further but collapsed in the pains of labour and gave birth to a child. She tied her horse to a tree and lay down to give birth on the forest floor.

Soon she was holding a son in her arms, and the baby's cries were a great comfort to her. She held her infant tightly and through weariness and despair she fell asleep, with her horse standing beside her.

There came a knight, Sir Barnard, a king's envoy, hunting a hind in the woods, and he found that lovely lady clutching the baby to her as she lay asleep beneath a linden tree. His approaching footsteps woke her up and she started in terror.

'What are you doing here?' he asked. 'Madam, where have you come from? What is your name, and why are you lying here?'

'My name is Margaret,' she replied, tearfully. 'You can see that I am in some distress, so please could you help me. Or could you lead me to some town perhaps, where I could find some help?'

Sir Barnard looked at the woman, helped her to her feet, courteously, and led her to his home. And here he assigned ladies to look after her and gave her a bed to lie in. Whatever she asked for, she received. Nothing was denied her.

They christened the child Tryamour, and found a nurse for the little boy. Margaret was given ladies to wait upon her and soon she had found friends everywhere. She was so courteous and gentle that she quickly became very well-liked. And she stayed there for a long time. But although there was merriment, there was no frivolity nor idleness and they never grew weary of her, for she taught her son to work. He grew into a handsome lad, fair and strong, and everybody loved him.

But let us leave the queen for a moment and speak of the greyhound. For seven years he lived beside his master's grave, and the dog became quite old. He lay always upon the earthen mound and nobody could drive him away from the place. He would only leave to catch food for himself, and then he would quickly return.

The hound lived like this for seven years; and then, one day, Christmas Day as the story tells us, he ran to the king's palace and bounded into the hall as all the knights sat at the tables eating. Looking around, the dog could not find what he sought, and so he ran away again. He ran without stopping until he came once more to his master's grave.

In the hall, the king sat wondering who owned the dog that had just rushed in. He had a vague feeling that he had seen it before, but could not recall where, nor when, and so he said nothing. But he wondered about the dog and sat deep in thought.

The next day, the same thing happened. The dog appeared, looked as though it was searching for something, or someone, and then left again quickly. The king declared: 'I think that was once Sir Roger's dog!

'Sir,' his knights replied, 'we think you are right.'

The next day, they all sat together in the hall, eating, and this time the evil Marrok was with them. The hound appeared once more and got very excited, running about the hall until he came upon Sir Marrok, and seeing this dastardly knight the greyhound flew at him and grabbed him by the throat, tearing wickedly at his flesh with all the ferocity that he could muster! In this way the greyhound avenged his master's death!

Then the dog raced out of the hall, followed by all the knights and squires. Some mounted their horses, others pursued on foot, but the greyhound took no rest until he came to Sir Roger's grave; then he turned and tried to hold them all at bay, as though he thought they meant to kill him; but in no way would he move from the spot.

Unable to think of anything more to do, the knights all returned to King Arthus and explained what they had seen.

'Alas!' cried the king when he was told. 'What can this mean? I fear that Sir Marrok may have murdered Sir Roger, for I swear that that dog would not have killed him otherwise. But what reason could he have had for doing this? Unless – Oh God! – was the whole

story he told to me about Margaret's adultery a fabrication? A lie! Was the whole thing a lie!'

They all returned to the shallow grave and found Sir Roger's body lying there. They took it up and brought it to the king. King Arduus was saddened beyond belief. The greyhound accompanied the corpse as it was taken into the hall. 'Alas!' cried the king. 'Now my cares are increased! This traitor Marrok has killed an honoured knight and accused my wife of an abominable crime that she almost certainly didn't commit. He has deceived me and been the cause of a terrible injustice!'

The king had Sir Marrok's body dragged through the town in the dirt behind a team of horses and then hung by the neck on a gallows, in full view of everybody. Sir Roger's body was buried with all honour, and with all the barons of the realm in attendance. And the dog remained at his grave ever afterwards, until death took him.

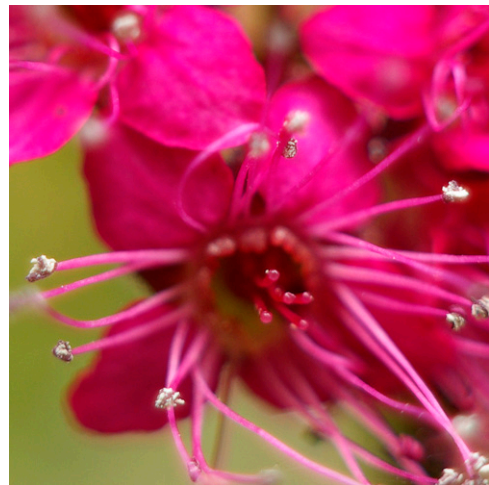
The king sent messengers everywhere, to every town, asking for news of his queen, of Margaret. But despite an extensive search, there was no sign of her. Nobody knew where she had gone, nor what had happened to her all those years ago. The king was grief-stricken.

And thus does the king live in sorrow. Nothing but the grave will banish his guilt. For many years he lived like this, in sorrow and pain, for he could find no rest from his anguish.

But now let us turn to the queen, and to her son Tryamour. He has grown into a very strong and handsome young man and, moreover, a very fair and honourable one. He wrongs nobody. And at this time, the King of Hungary died. He had no heir to inherit his lands except for a young daughter. Her name was Helen.

Helen was as white as blossom, good-natured, happy and lovely to kiss. But when her father was dead and buried, war erupted in her land and this child was advised that she must find a husband who had the resources to assume control of her kingdom. They impressed upon her that this was a matter of great urgency. Helen replied that she would take no husband unless he was a prince, or an invincible warrior. They agreed to announce a tournament, and that the winner of this jousting competition would gain her hand in marriage.

The day of jousting was arranged; it was to be six months hence, in order to allow enough time for knights to prepare and to journey to it. And when the time approached, young men and old, from kingdoms far and wide, rode without rest, magnificently dressed and equipped in order to attend this tournament. Some came to test themselves against the finest warriors to be found anywhere in the world, others to try to win the



pretty young maiden and to rule her lands. A magnificent display of chivalry converged upon Hungary.

When Tryamour heard of this coming tournament, he begged to be given some weapons, a suit of armour and a horse. 'I need to test myself in battle,' he explained to Sir Barnard. 'I want very much to be numbered amongst the finest warriors, and to shed a little of my blood.'

'What on Earth are you thinking of?' replied Sir Barnard. 'You don't know how to joust – you are not old enough.'

'Sir,' said Tryamour, 'how can you possibly know how good I am unless you see me tested in the field amongst the best?'

Sir Barnard didn't know how to answer. 'Well,' he said, bowing to this logic, 'since your heart is set on going, you shall not want for anything. I shall lend you all my battle-gear, horse and saddle, shield and lance. I'll give you all the help I can.'

Tryamour was delighted at this and thanked Sir Barnard profusely.

So in the morning, Tryamour sat armed upon his horse. Be in no doubt, he looked magnificent! He set off for the tournament accompanied by Sir Barnard himself, and there was no prince that day who looked more regal, nor more impressive.

The young lady who was the focus of this tournament was set high up in a tower, to view the fighting that was to take place on her behalf. There were many knights and princes galloping about beneath her, their armour and shields gleaming so brightly that it seemed as though the whole field was ablaze! Knights of great renown were set to joust with one another, each trying to look more awe inspiring than the rest.

As chance had it, Tryamour found himself placed on the same side as his father, the King of Aragon, although neither had the slightest idea who the other was. The first to advance from the opposing side was the King of Lombardy, and Tryamour, despite his inexperience, brought him down. Then the son of the King of Armenia galloped towards Tryamour with his lance lowered. Tryamour turned his horse to face his attacker and cast the man effortlessly from his steed.

'Ah! Tryamour! Tryamour!' cried Sir Barnard, bursting with pride, aware that in this way men might learn the young man's name. Helen, from her vantage point in the tower, set her gaze upon this young man Tryamour more than upon any other.

Early the following morning, the knights returned to the field in their most splendid attire, eager to continue the competition. Without any more ado they applied themselves to forming up into opposing sides, and then each took on whichever knight he chose.

Tryamour galloped eagerly into the thick of it and soon found himself facing the King of Aragon. Their shields and lances met. Tryamour withstood his father's blow and though

the man did not know it, his own son gave him such a clout that he fell from his horse. Tryamour's prowess was beginning to be noticed by all.

The son of the King of Naverne galloped towards Tryamour with his lance lowered. Tryamour hit him so hard upon the helmet that the blood burst out from his ears and his horse fell to the ground. Everybody saw this, and Sir Barnard was delighted.

And the next morning as well. Every knight took to his horse and soon many ran free and riderless. Tryamour took a lance to the King of Sicily and they met with great ferocity; his spear hit the king's shield and it bent alarmingly with the force of the impact! The



Duke of Lithuania galloped forwards to test Tryamour's skill. Tryamour turned to meet him and struck his opponent so hard that the duke fell head over heels onto the ground. Then the Duke of Ameré rode against him, and Tryamour served him in the same manner – there was nothing the duke could do to save himself.

King Ardu of Aragon rode to where the thickest fighting was taking place and encountered Sir James, the son of the German Emperor, who expended a lance against him. King Ardu fell to the ground, badly bruised.

Tryamour was delighted to see this and spurred towards Sir James with the ferocity of a wild boar! So mightily did they meet that Sir James's spear and shield were shattered into fragments and he was forced to retire from the fray hurt. Tryamour was given the prize. He was judged to be the overall victor.

The jousting has now finished. But Sir James is intent upon seeking revenge.

'Yield to me or die!' he shouted.

'Since I am doomed to die anyway,' replied Tryamour, 'I shall offer a few strokes before I do!' At once, Tryamour was beset on all sides by Sir James's henchmen and received many wounds, although whoever felt a blow from him in return was never fully fit ever again! Sir Barnard came to Tryamour's defence and gave a good account of himself. King Ardu of Aragon happened to be riding by, saw the fighting and weighed in on the side of the young warrior, until the whole mêlée had developed into quite a skirmish, every man in combat with another.

Sir James fought enthusiastically and struck Tryamour with his sword, catching him a dreadful wound in his side. In return, Tryamour, in his rage, swung at Sir James's head and knocked him violently from his horse. But Tryamour was bleeding so profusely that he could fight no more and taking his leave of the King of Aragon, and thanking him for his help, he made his way home to Sir Barnard's castle and to his mother.

Margaret went pale when she saw his wound. Tryamour kissed her and said: 'Mother, don't cry. There is nothing wrong with me.' A doctor was summoned urgently to examine the wound and to stop it bleeding, and he voiced the opinion that the injury, if properly treated, should not threaten Tryamour's life. Tryamour's mother was relieved beyond words.

All the other knights at the tournament, **A**so the story says, galloped to the royal palace to hear the proclamation concerning the outcome of the jousting. They presented themselves before the young lady to hear who she wished to marry. She looked carefully at them all, but could not see Tryamour amongst them and became annoyed.

'Where is that knight who won the prize?' she asked. 'I want to marry *him*! Lords, so save me God, I shall take the warrior who won me, and no other!'

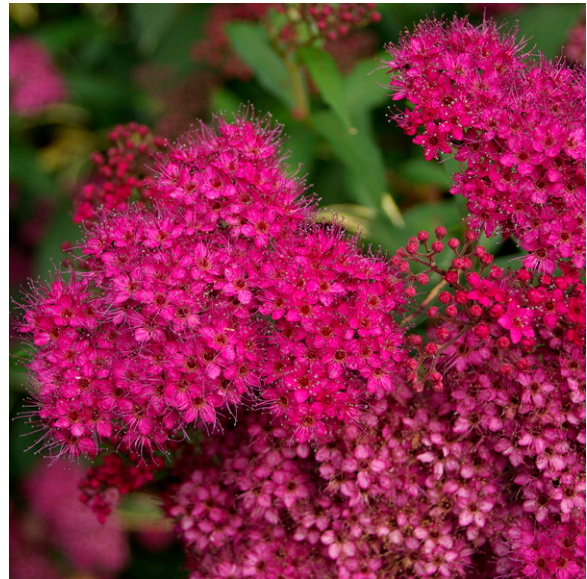
They all looked about and searched, but there was no sign of the youth. The girl became very dejected. Her lords and barons suggested a delay of two years in order to hunt for this young man, so all the knights returned to their lodgings to eat, and to reflect upon their failure.

Sir James's men were particularly unhappy, since their lord had been killed by the blow that Tryamour had given him. They carried the body back to Germany and brought it before the emperor.

The young man's father had to sit down, he was so shocked. 'Who killed him?' he asked.

'We don't know who he is,' they replied, 'but he calls himself Tryamour and he was the victor at the tournament. King Arduus of Aragon came to this young man's aid in the fight that led to your son's death.'

The emperor sent for allies and hardened warriors, travelled to Aragon, spread his banners about and laid siege to a castle inside which the King of Aragon had been cornered. He tried to storm it. King Arduus managed to withstand this assault. He ordered that stones be hurled down from the ramparts and broke many a back with some massive boulders. But after six days, the king was frantic to find a way of bringing the siege to an end. So he sent two messengers to the emperor to ask for a truce. 'Sir,' they said. 'You've made a mistake! Our king insists that he has not killed your son, that he took no part in the fighting at all and had no desire to see your son lying dead. He is willing to prove this in single combat, you against him, if you will agree. Or else, if you wish to choose another knight to be your champion, he will appoint another to represent him as well.'



The emperor quickly agreed to these terms, for he had a champion whom he trusted above all others; throughout every land this knight was known to be an invincible warrior.

The date of the combat was set. King Arthus was hopeful and optimistic, for he put all his trust in the young warrior whom he had helped at the tournament. He sent a messenger to seek out this young man and to bring him back to Aragon with him as quickly as he could.

When Tryamour had recovered from his wound, he made ready to set out on a long journey. He rode across plains and over mountains in search of adventure, and also to try to find out who his father was, since his mother would not tell him. And by chance, he came into the land of Aragon. He was dressed as a huntsman and as he came riding through a forest he saw that the woods were full of game and unleashed three of his hounds against a wild deer; a stag. Twelve gamekeepers heard the noise and rode up to challenge Tryamour.

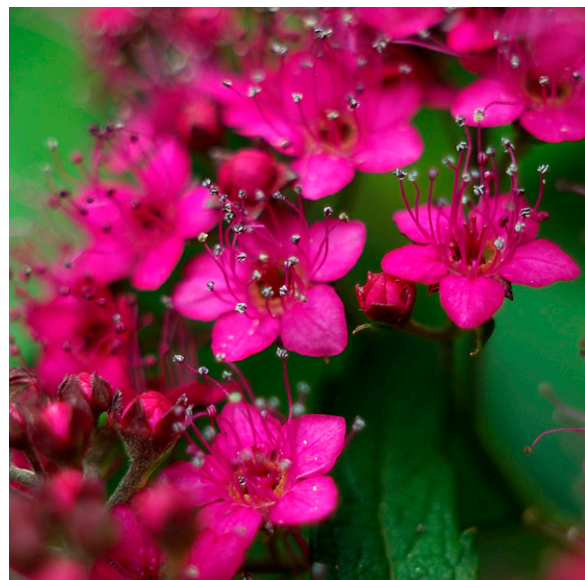
‘It is the custom in these parts,’ they explained, as they surrounded him, ‘that you must lose your right hand. This is the only punishment that the law allows for poaching.’

‘Then this hand shall prove very expensive to you,’ cried Tryamour, fearlessly. Soon, all but one of the foresters lay dead on the ground.

Tryamour was more concerned to find his dogs than to remain at the scene and soon he came to a river. Here he found the bodies of two of his greyhounds, and the third was trying to hold the great stag at bay. The deer thrashed out with its enormous antlers and Tryamour was very worried for the safety of his remaining dog. Urging his horse into the river, he rescued the hound and killed the deer. Then he blew his hunting horn.

The king, by chance, was visiting a manor nearby and heard the sound. His messengers had all returned with no news at all of the young man who had won the prize at the tournament, and the king’s initial optimism had evaporated into despair. All in the hall wondered what the sound meant, for none of them recognised the call. Almost at once, a forester came running breathlessly into the hall. ‘s s Sir!’ he stammered. ‘Your men. All slain. Eleven of them. Dead!’ and then, as his breath came back to him, he described the feats of the young poacher who’s hunting horn they had just heard.

‘It will need more than twenty men to take him,’ declared the forester, ‘and these will be hard pressed!’



‘I have need of such a man!’ exclaimed the king. ‘God has led him to me!’

When Tryamour came into the hall he hailed the king, whom he recognised at once. The king took him by the hand enthusiastically and asked him his name. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘my name is Tryamour.’ The king then recognised him and kissed him three times, as tears fell down his cheeks.

‘You are welcome!’ he exclaimed. ‘I have suffered horribly for that unfortunate incident at the tournament,’ and he told Tryamour the whole story.

‘I am very sorry to hear this,’ replied Tryamour, when the king had finished. ‘And I insist that no man shall fight this combat but I.’

The king was delighted to hear it. He and Tryamour went hawking beside the river and then hunted deer in the forest until the day of the battle. Then they sought out the emperor.

The emperor brought a retinue of kings and noblemen with him, and Moradas his champion. Before the battle, the king knighted Tryamour, kissed him and said: ‘Tryamour, you shall fight this contest on my behalf.’

What more needs to be said? Moradas was knocked from his horse. Tryamour dismounted and they began to fight on foot, and this young knight, unknown to the King of Aragon except as an elusive young warrior, spared no effort; all he could think of was: ‘Today I was made a knight! Either he will kill me here and now, or I shall win my spurs upon him, with God’s grace!’

Each hewed at the other’s head pitilessly. Moradas began to feel himself tiring, through fatigue and through loss of blood, and began to struggle with exhaustion. Tryamour redoubled his efforts and wounded Moradas in the side, then ran his sword through his heart. The emperor gave out a cry of anguish. Moradas was done for.

The emperor acknowledged King Arduus as victor, recalled his forces and withdrew from Aragon. King Arduus and Tryamour were led home in honour, and that is no lie! Everyone in the city clamoured for a view of this young knight. All their troubles seemed to be over, and happiness reigned.

Tryamour’s name was held in high esteem in Aragon after that. The king declared: ‘Tryamour, I shall make you my heir!’

‘No,’ replied Tryamour. ‘I ask only for a horse, so that I may continue my journey from land to land, for I must resume my search for my father.’

So Tryamour leaves Aragon, and his spirits are high since everybody seems to like him. Everywhere he goes he wins the prize; there is nobody as good as he amongst knights and warriors, and as a result, he wins a great name for himself. In every land, everywhere he goes, everybody has heard of him.

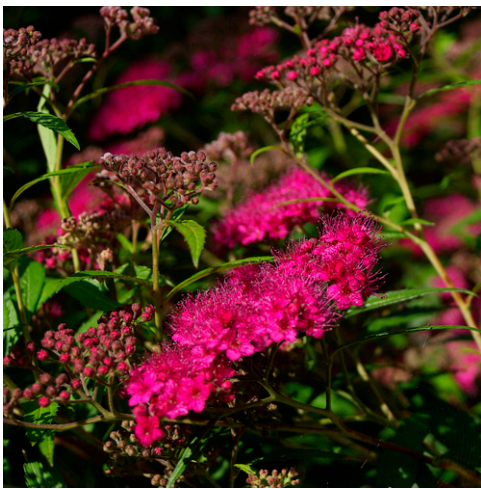
But at last he tired of jousts and tournaments and began to make his way back to Hungary. Following a route between two mountains he chanced upon a palmer, a pilgrim. The palmer asked him for alms. Sir Tryamour gave generously, and in return the palmer said: 'Take my advice, Sir. Turn around, for there is danger ahead.'

'Why is this?' asked Tryamour.

'There are two brothers who live on this mountain,' explained the palmer, 'and it is suicide to deal with them.'

Sir Tryamour rode as fast as he could, and less than a mile ahead he came upon two knights. One rode towards him with his lance lowered. After a vicious engagement, the other knight rode between the two of them and stopped the conflict.

'I have never seen such a strong knight as you!' he exclaimed. 'Tell me your name.'



'Explain to me first why you want to know,' said Sir Tryamour.

'For this reason,' said the knight: 'We had a brother whose name was Moradas and who belonged to the retinue of the Emperor of Germany. Whilst in Aragon he was killed by a knight called Tryamour.'

Tryamour laughed.

'And also,' explained this knight, 'we have another brother called Burland who is intent upon marrying the daughter of the King of Hungary. He has almost succeeded, for a day has been announced when the lady Helen must find a champion to defend her or he will gain her hand by default. She has made an oath to abide by these terms. And it is this same Tryamour whom the damsel loves and wishes to marry. She loves him and she has sent for him, and for this reason we guard the only way into Hungary, and we will kill him if we can. And therefore we ask the name of every man of strength and valour who tries to pass here and whose face is not known to us. Therefore, if it does not put you to any trouble, and if you are not too frightened to do so, we would ask you, once again, to tell us your name.'

No one in Hungary had been able to find Sir Tryamour, and the damsel was almost beside herself with grief. The two years were very nearly up and she would have to marry the ugly Burland if Sir Tryamour didn't arrive today. Many lords and barons had come to see what would happen, and Burland was there early. He asked her to produce a different knight for him to fight against.

'No!' she shouted. 'If Tryamour is alive, by God's grace he will come very shortly to rescue me from my enemies.' And at that very moment, Tryamour arrived. Seeing Burland waiting about on his horse, he rode over to him and waved a glove in his face, signifying

his acceptance of the challenge.

The lady Helen stood in a tower and thought at first that this young knight must be mad, for she did not recognise him. She asked Sir Barnard: 'Can you see that knight with a blue crest who seems so intent upon battle?'

Sir Barnard recognised the young man and answered: 'Madam, God has sent you relief indeed, for it is Tryamour, and he seems keen to fight with Burland.' The young lady was delighted and both of them offered prayers to Jesus that the young knight might perform well.

Both knights galloped towards each other at full tilt and shattered their spears against the other's shield, each sending his opponent toppling to the ground. Then they drew their swords and set upon each other on foot. Many mighty blows were exchanged. Their horses lay motionless on the ground, and so they fought on foot. There was nothing to choose between them, they seemed so evenly matched. The battle lasted a long time. and everybody said: 'At last, Burland has found his equal!'

Each stroke of their sharp swords caused a burst of fire as massive blows were delivered against plate steel. Tryamour's sword was knocked from his grip and Burland let out a cry of joy. The young lady gasped in anguish and all the knights were crestfallen. Tryamour asked Burland if he could recover his sword. Burland replied: 'Tell me truly who you are, and why you have challenged me for this young lady, then you can have your sword.'

'In that case I shall tell you. Men call me Sir Tryamour and I won this young damsel at a tournament.'

'So it was you who killed my brother Moradas? You must have been lucky that day.'

'I have killed your other two brothers as well,' replied Sir Tryamour, 'so I would watch out if I was you.'

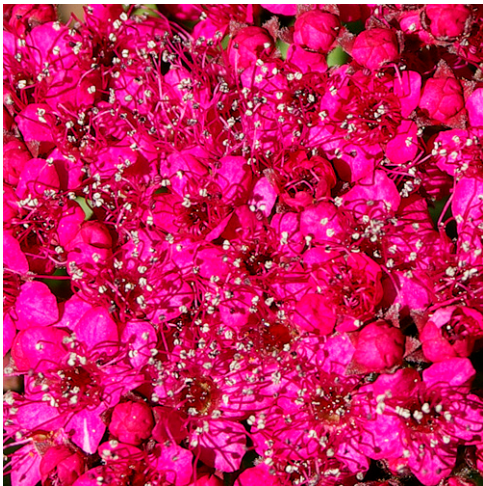
Burland became very animated.

'Well, there shall be no rest for you then!' he cried. 'You can kiss goodbye to your sword until I have avenged my brothers' deaths,' and he made to attack Tryamour, but slipped in some blood. Tryamour ran to seize his lost sword and went to engage Burland afresh. As Burland was rising, he cut off both his legs at the knees and chopped the legs into pieces.

'A little shorter, Sir!' cried Tryamour, 'and then we will be more evenly matched!' The lady Helen laughed and Sir Barnard thanked God a thousand times.

Burland stood on his stumps and, like a madman, swung his sword from side to side. He hit Tryamour on the head with what would have been a grievous blow, but mercifully his sword broke with the impact. 'Your days are over!' cried Tryamour, recovering himself. 'Your power is spent!' He swung his sword and cut off Burland's head.

Now Burland is slain! Tryamour made his way back to the castle. The young lady who wielded power over all the land greeted him at the castle gates and hugged him.



‘Welcome, Sir Tryamour,’ she said. ‘You have paid a great deal for my love, but it is yours.’ And all the barons were happy to acclaim this young knight as their overlord.

There is no more to be said. A date for the wedding was fixed. Sir Barnard went to bring Tryamour’s mother and led her to the court. Then Tryamour said: ‘Now I want to know who my father is, for I have earned this right. Tell me mother and fear for nothing – who is my father?’

His mother knitted her fingers together and said: ‘King Arduus of Aragon is your father. You are his son, and I was his queen before I was unjustly exiled from Aragon. I never knew why, I still don’t, and it has caused me great sorrow.’

When Tryamour heard this he wrote letters to the King of Aragon asking him to come to Hungary. He implored him to come. And when King Arduus received this news he was delighted at the invitation and gave the messenger many fine gifts.

The day of the wedding arrived, and the King of Aragon was there to witness it with many fine knights. The barons of Hungary were eager to get on with it; the girl was fetched and, with an earl on each side of her, she was led to the church. A bishop conducted the ceremony, and soon after the wedding they crowned Sir Tryamour king. They had no wish for any further delay.

You can well imagine the banquet afterwards! Margaret sat at the highest table with King Arduus beside her; the king stared at her and had a feeling that he should recognise this woman. So with a jovial air he asked: ‘Madam, if it is your desire, would you mind telling me your name?’

‘Sir,’ she replied, ‘there was a time once when you would not have had to ask me this question.’

The king fell silent then, until they had finished eating and the table tops and trestles were removed. But he had been musing all the while upon her enigmatic reply, and after the feast he invited her to retire to a private chamber with him, and he called Sir Tryamour. As soon as they were all together the queen said: ‘Here is your son!’ And she told the king the whole story; how Marrok had tried to seduce her and had then tried to kill her in the forest, and how she gave birth to Tryamour out in the open, beneath the trees, and how Sir Barnard had found her and taken her home with him, and how she had been with him ever since.’

Then there was joy! King Arduſ and Margaret kiſſed and hugged. King Arduſ had never been ſo happy in all his life! He kiſſed Tryamour twenty times while acknowledging him as his ſon. And the young Queen of Hungary declared herſelf to be very pleaſed that ſhe had won ſuch a lord.

And ſo they lived in comfort and joy. King Arduſ ſaid farewell and took Margaret back to Aragon with him. All his land rejoiced when they learned that the queen had returned.

And here ends the ſtory of Sir Tryamour. He was invincible in battle, ſo the book ſays. God bring uſ to the bliſſ of heaven that ſhall laſt forever. Amen.

Amen, for charity!