

Robert Stephen Hawker (1803-75)

2 *The Doom-Well of St. Madron*

“Plunge thy right hand in St. Madron’s spring,
If true to its troth be the palm you bring:
But if a false sigil thy fingers bear,
Lay them the rather on the burning share.”

Loud laughed King Arthur whenas he heard 5
That solemn friar his boding word:
And blithely he sware as a king he may
“We tryst for St. Madron’s at break of day.”

“Now horse and hattock, both but and ben,”
Was the cry at Lauds, with Dundagel men; 10
And forth they pricked upon Routorr side,
As goodly a raid as a king could ride.

Proud Gwennivar rode like a queen of the land,
With page and with squire at her bridle hand;
And the twice six knights of the stony ring, 15
They girded and guarded their Cornish king.

Then they halted their steeds at St. Madron’s cell:
And they stood by the monk of the cloistered well;
“Now off with your gauntlets,” King Arthur he cried
“And glory or shame for our Tamar side.” 20

’Twere sooth to sing how Sir Gauvain smiled,
When he grasped the waters so soft and mild;
How Sir Lancelot dashed the glistening spray
O’er the rugged beard of the rough Sir Kay.

Sir Bevis he touched and he found no fear: 25
’Twas a *bénitée* stoup to Sir Belvidere,

How the fountain flashed o'er King Arthur's Queen
Say, Cornish dames, for ye guess the scene.

"Now rede me my riddle, Sir Mordred, I pray,
My kinsman, mine ancient, my *bien-aimé*; 30
Now rede me my riddle, and rede it aright,
Art thou traitorous knave or my trusty knight?"

He plunged his right arm in the judgment well,
It bubbled and boiled like a cauldron of hell:
He drew and he lifted his quivering limb, 35
Ha! Sir Judas, how Madron had sodden him!

Now let Uter Pendragon do what he can,
Still the Tamar river will run as it ran:
Let King or let Kaiser be fond or be fell,
Ye may harowe their troth in St. Madron's well. 40

1851

(From *The Poetical Works of Robert Stephen Hawker*.
London: John Lane, the Bodley Head, 1899)