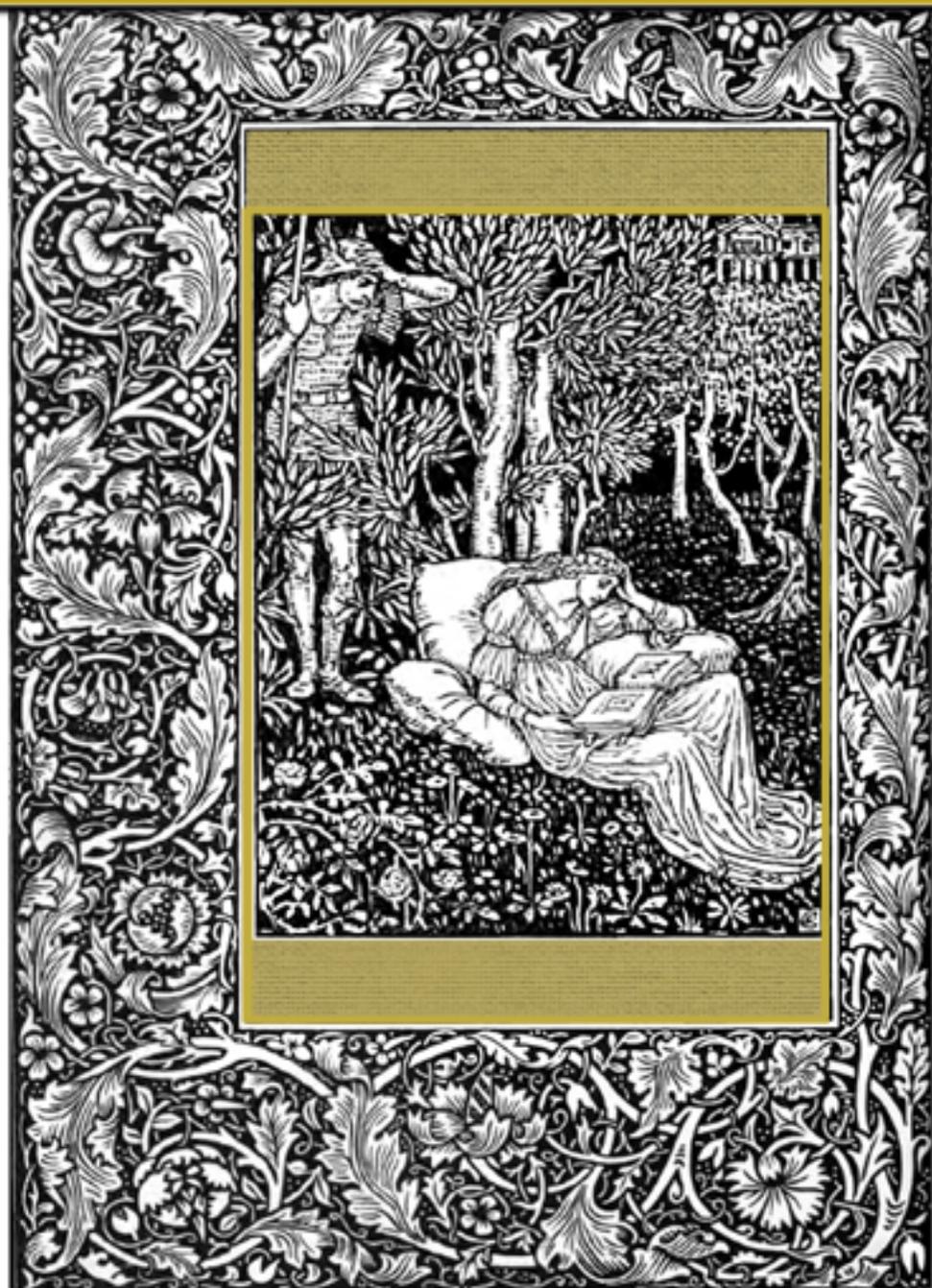


- TOLKIEN'S BOOKSHELF -



THE STORY OF THE
GLITTERING PLAIN

- illustrated -

**The Story of
the Glittering Plain**
- illustrated -

ACCORDING TO THE 1894 KELMSCOTT EDITION

by William Morris
With 23 Woodcuts by Walter Crane
Introduced by Cecilia Dart-Thornton

and including
THE ART AND CRAFT OF PRINTING
by William Morris



the story
of the
Guttering
Plaim
of the
Land of
Living
Men

THE STORY OF THE GLITTERING
PLAIN OR THE LAND OF LIVING MEN



CHAPTER I: OF THOSE THREE WHO CAME UNTO HALLBLITHE TO
THE ROUSE OF THE RAVEN

IT has been told that there was once a young man of free kindred and whose name was Hallblithe: he was fair, strong, and not untried in battle; he was of the

House of the Raven of old time. This man loved an exceeding fair damsel called the Hostage, who was of the House of the Rose, wherein it was right and due that the men of the Raven should wed. She loved him no less, and no man of the kindred gainsaid their love, and they were to be wedded on Midsummer Night.



BUT one day of early spring, when the days were yet short & the nights long, Hallblithe sat before the porch of the house smoothing an ash stave for his spear, & he heard the sound of horse-hoofs drawing nigh, and he looked up and saw folk riding toward the house, and so presently they rode through the garth gate; and there was no man but he about the house, so he rose up and went to meet them, and he saw that they were but three in company: they had weapons with them, and their horses were of the best; but they were no fellowship for a man to be afraid of; for two of them were old and feeble, and the third was dark and sad, and drooping of aspect: it seemed as if they had ridden far and fast, for their spurs were bloody and their horses all a-sweat. Hallblithe hailed them kindly and said: "Ye are wayworn, and maybe ye have to ride further; so light down and come into the house, and take bite and sup, and hay and corn also for your horses; and then if ye needs must ride on your way, depart when ye are rested; or else if ye may, then abide here night-long, and go your ways to-morrow, and meantime that which is ours shall be yours, and all shall be free to you." Then spake the oldest of the elders in a high piping voice and said:

YOUNG man, we thank thee; but though the days of the springtide are waxing, the hours of our lives are waning; nor may we abide unless thou canst truly tell us that this is the Land of the Glittering Plain: and if that be so, then delay not, lead us to thy lord, and perhaps he will make us content." Spake he who was somewhat less stricken in years than the first: "Thanks have thou! but we need something more than meat and drink, to wit the Land of Living

Men. And Oh! but the time presses" 🍀 Spake the sad & sorry carle: "We seek the Land where the days are many: so many that he who hath forgotten how to laugh, may learn the craft again, and forget the days of Sorrow."

THEN they all three cried aloud and said: "Is this the Land? Is this the Land?" 🍀 But Hallblithe wondered, and he laughed and said: "Wayfarers, look under the sun down the plain which lieth betwixt the mountains and the sea, and ye shall behold the meadows all gleaming with the spring lilies; yet do we not call this the Glittering Plain, but Cleveland by the Sea. Here men die when their hour comes, nor know I if the days of their life be long enough for the forgetting of sorrow; for I am young and not yet a yokefellow of sorrow; but this I know, that they are long enough for the doing of deeds that shall not die. And as for Lord, I know not this word, for here dwell we, the sons of the Raven, in good fellowship, with our wives that we have wedded, and our mothers who have borne us, and our sisters who serve us. Again I bid you light down off your horses, and eat and drink, and be merry; & depart when ye will, to seek what land ye will" 🍀 They scarce looked on him, but cried out together mournfully: "This is not the Land! This is not the Land!" 🍀 No more than that they said, but turned about their horses and rode out through the garth gate, & went clattering up the road that led to the pass of the mountains. But Hallblithe hearkened wondering, till the sound of their horse-hoofs died away, & then turned back to his work: and it was then two hours after high-noon.





CHAPTER II: EVIL TIDINGS COME TO HAND AT CLEVELAND ❁❁



NOT long had he worked ere he heard the sound of horse-hoofs once more, and he looked not up, but said to himself, "It is but the lads bringing back the teams from the acres, and riding fast and driving hard for joy of heart and in wantonness of youth" ❁ But the sound grew nearer and he looked up and saw over the turf wall of the garth the flutter of white raiment; and he said: "Nay, it is the maidens coming back from the

sea-shore and the gathering of wrack” 🍃 So he set himself the harder to his work, and laughed, all alone as he was, and said: “She is with them: now I will not look up again till they have ridden into the garth, and she has come from among them, and leapt off her horse and cast her arms about my neck as her wont is; & it will rejoice her then to mock me with hard words and kind voice and longing heart; and I shall long for her and kiss her, and sweet shall the coming days seem to us: and the daughters of our folk shall look on and be kind and blithe with us” 🍃 Therewith rode the maidens into the garth, but he heard no sound of laughter or merriment amongst them, which was contrary to their wont; and his heart fell, and it was as if instead of the maidens’ laughter the voices of those wayfarers came back upon the wind crying out, “Is this the Land? Is this the Land?” 🍃 Then he looked up hastily, and saw the maidens drawing near, ten of the House of the Raven, and three of the House of the Rose; and he beheld them that their faces were pale and woe-begone, and their raiment rent, and there was no joy in them. Hallblithe stood aghast while one who had gotten off her horse (and she was the daughter of his own mother) ran past him into the hall, looking not at him, as if she durst not: & another rode off swiftly to the horse-stalls. But the others, leaving their horses, drew round about him, and for a while none durst utter a word; and he stood gazing at them, with the spoke-shave in his hand, he also silent; for he saw that the Hostage was not with them, and he knew that now he was the yokefellow of sorrow 🍃 At last he spoke gently and in a kind voice, and said: “Tell me, sisters, what evil hath befallen us, even if it be the death of a dear friend, & the thing that may not be amended” 🍃 Then spoke a fair woman of the Rose, whose name was Brightling, and said: “Hallblithe, it is not of death that we have to tell, but of sun-dering, which may yet be amended. We were on the sand of the sea nigh the Ship-stead and the Rollers of the Raven, and we were gathering the wrack & playing together; & we saw a round-ship nigh to shore lying with her sheet slack, and her sail beating the mast; but we deemed it to be none

other than some bark of the Fish-biters, and thought no harm thereof, but went on running and playing amidst the little waves that fell on the sand, and the ripples that curled around our feet. At last there came a small boat from the side of the round-ship, and rowed in toward shore, and still we feared not, though we drew a little aback from the surf and let fall our gown-hems. But the crew of that boat beached her close to where we stood, and came hastily wading the surf toward us; & we saw that they were twelve weaponed men, great, and grim, & all clad in black raiment. Then indeed were we afraid, and we turned about and fled up the beach; but now it was too late, for the tide was at more than half ebb and long was the way over the sand to the place where we had left our horses tied among the tamarisk-bushes. Nevertheless we ran, & had gotten up to the pebble-beach before they ran in amongst us: and they caught us, and cast us down on to the hard stones 🍀 Then they made us sit in a row on a ridge of the pebbles; and we were sore afraid, yet more for defilement at their hands than for death; for they were evil-looking men exceeding foul of favour. Then said one of them: 'Which of all you maidens is the Hostage of the House of the Rose?' Then all we kept silence, for we would not betray her. But the evil man spake again: 'Choose ye then whether we shall take one, or all of you across the waters in our black ship.' Yet still we others spake not, till arose thy beloved, O Hallblithe, and said: 'Let it be one then, and not all; for I am the Hostage.' 'How shalt thou make us sure thereof?' said the evil carle. She looked on him proudly & said: 'Because I say it.' 'Wilt thou swear it?' said he. 'Yea,' said she, 'I swear it by the token of the House wherein I shall wed; by the wings of the Fowl that seeketh the Field of Slaying.' 'It is enough,' said the man, 'come thou with us. And ye maidens sit ye there, and move not till we have made way on our ship, unless ye would feel the point of the arrow. For ye are within bow-shot of the ship, and we have shot-weapons aboard.' So the Hostage departed with them, & she unweeping, but we wept sorely. And we saw the small boat come up to the side of the round-ship, and the

Hostage going over the gunwale along with those evil men, and we heard the hale and how of the mariners as they drew up the anchor and sheeted home; and then the sweeps came out and the ship began to move over the sea. And one of those evil-minded men bent his bow and shot a shaft at us, but it fell far short of where we sat, and the laugh of those runagates came over the sands to us. So we crept up the beach trembling, and then rose to our feet & got to our horses, and rode hither speedily, and our hearts are broken for thy sorrow.”



AT that word came Hallblithe’s own sister out from the hall; and she bore weapons with her, to wit Hallblithe’s sword and shield and helm and hauberk. ♣ As for him he turned back silently to his work, and set the steel of the spear on the new ashen shaft, & took the hammer and smote the nail in, and laid the weapon on a round pebble that was thereby, and clenched the nail on the other side. Then he looked about, and saw that the other damsel had brought him his coal-black war-horse ready saddled and bridled; then he did on his armour, and girt his sword to his side and leapt into the saddle, and took his new-shafted spear in hand & shook the rein. But none of all those damsels durst say a word to him or ask him whither he went, for they feared his face, & the sorrow of his heart. So he got him out of the garth and turned toward the sea-shore, and they saw the glitter of his spear-point a minute over the turf-wall, and heard the clatter of his horse-hoofs as he galloped over the hard way; and thus he departed.



CHAPTER III: THE WARRIORS OF THE RAVEN SEARCH
THE SEAS ❁❁



WHEN the women bethought them, and they spake a word or two together, & then they sundered and went one this way and one that, to gather together the warriors of the Raven who were a-field, or on the way, nigh unto the house, that they might follow Hallblithe down to the sea-shore and help him; after a while they came back again by one and two

and three, bringing with them the wrathful young men; and when there was upward of a score gathered in the garth armed and horsed, they rode their ways to the sea, being minded to thrust a long-ship of the Ravens out over the Rollers into the sea, and follow the strong-thieves of the waters and bring a-back the Hostage, so that they might end the sorrow at once, & establish joy once more in the House of the Raven & the House of the Rose. But they had with them three lads of fifteen winters or thereabouts to lead their horses back home again, when they should have gone up on to the Horse of the Brine.

THUS then they departed, and the maidens stood in the garth-gate till they lost sight of them behind the sand-hills, & then turned back sorrowfully into the house, and sat there talking low of their sorrow. And many a time they had to tell their tale anew, as folk came into the hall one after another from field and fell. But the young men came down to the sea, and found Hallblithe's black horse straying about amongst the tamarisk-bushes above the beach; & they looked thence over the sand, and saw neither Hallblithe nor any man: and they gazed out seaward, and saw neither ship nor sail on the barren brine. Then they went down on to the sand, and sundered their fellowship, and went half one way, half the other, betwixt the sandhills and the surf, where now the tide was flowing, till the nesses of the east and the west, the horns of the bay, stayed them. Then they met together again by the Rollers, when the sun was within an hour of setting. There and then they laid hand to that ship which is called the Seamew, and they ran her down over the Rollers into the waves, & leapt aboard and hoisted sail, and ran out the oars and put to sea; & a little wind was blowing seaward from the gates of the mountains behind them. So they quartered the sea-plain, as the kestrel doth the water-meadows, till the night fell on them, and was cloudy, though whiles the waning moon shone out; and they had seen nothing, neither sail nor ship, nor aught else on the barren brine, save the washing of waves and the hovering of sea-fowl. So they lay-to outside

the horns of the bay and awaited the dawning. And when morning was come they made way again, and searched the sea, and sailed to the out-skerries, and searched them with care; then they sailed into the main and fared hither and thither and up & down: and this they did for eight days, and in all that time they saw no ship nor sail, save three barks of the Fish-biters nigh to the Skerry which is called Mew-stone. So they fared home to the Raven Bay, and laid their keel on the Rollers, and so went their ways sadly, home to the House of the Raven: and they deemed that for this time they could do no more in seeking their valiant kinsman and his fair damsel. And they were very sorry; for these two were well-beloved of all men. But since they might not amend it, they abode in peace, awaiting what the change of days might bring them.



CHAPTER IV: NOW HALLBLITHE TAKETH THE SEA 🌸🌸



NOW must it be told of Hallblithe that he rode fiercely down to the sea shore, & from the top of the beach he gazed about him, & there below him was the Shipstead and Rollers of his kindred, whereon lay the three long-ships, the Seamew, & the Osprey and the Erne. Heavy and huge they seemed to him as they lay there, black-sided, icy-cold with the washing of the March waves,



their golden dragon-heads looking seaward wistfully. But first had he peered out into the offing, and it was only when he had let his eyes come back from where the sea and sky met, and they had beheld nothing but the waste of waters, that he beheld the Ship-stead closely; and therewith he saw where a little to the west of it lay a skiff, which the low wave of the tide lifted and let fall from time to time. It had a mast, and a black sail hoisted thereon and flapping with slackened sheet. A man sat in the boat clad in black raiment, & the sun smote a gleam from the helm on his head 🍃 Then Hallblithe leapt off his horse, and strode down the sands shouldering his spear; and when he came near to the man in the boat he poised his spear and shook it and cried out: "Man, art thou friend or foe?" 🍃 Said the man: "Thou art a fair young man: but there is grief in thy voice along with wrath 🍃 Cast not till thou hast heard me, and mayst deem whether I may do aught to heal thy grief" 🍃 "What mayst thou do?" said Hallblithe; "art thou not a robber of the sea, a harrier of the folks that dwell in peace?"

THE man laughed: "Yea," said he, "my craft is thieving and carrying off the daughters of folk, so that we may have a ransom for them. Wilt thou come over the waters with me?" 🍃 Hallblithe said wrathfully: "Nay, rather, come thou ashore here! Thou seemest a big man, & belike shalt be good of thine hands. Come and fight with me; & then he of us who is vanquished, if he be unslain, shall serve the other for a year, and then shalt thou do my business in the ransoming" 🍃 The man in the boat laughed again, and that so scornfully that he angered Hallblithe beyond measure: then he arose in the boat and stood on his feet swaying from side to side as he laughed. He was passing big, long-armed & big-headed, and long hair came from under his helm like the tail of a red horse; his eyes were grey and gleaming, and his mouth wide.

IN a while he stayed his laughter and said: "O Warrior of the Raven, this were a simple game for thee to play; though it is not far from my mind, for fighting when I needs must win is no dull work. Look you, if I slay or vanquish thee, then all is said; and if by some chance stroke thou slayest me, then is thine only helper in this matter gone from thee. Now to be short, I bid thee come aboard to me if thou wouldst ever hear another word of thy damsel betrothed. And moreover this need not hinder thee to fight with me if thou have a mind to it thereafter; for we shall soon come to a land big enough for two to stand on. Or if thou listest to fight in a boat rocking on the waves, I see not but there may be manhood in that also."

NOW was the hot wrath somewhat run off Hallblithe, nor durst he lose any chance to hear a word of his beloved; so he said: "Big man, I will come aboard. But look thou to it, if thou hast a mind to bewray me; for the sons of the Raven die hard" 🍃 "Well," said the big man, "I have heard that their minstrels are of many words, and think that they have tales to tell. Come aboard and loiter not." Then Hallblithe waded the surf & lightly strode over the gunwale of the skiff and sat him down. The big man thrust out into the deep and haled home the sheet; but there was but little wind 🍃 Then said Hallblithe: "Wilt thou have me row, for I wot not whitherward to steer?" 🍃 Said the red carle: "Maybe thou art not in a hurry; I am not: do as thou wilt." So Hallblithe took the oars and rowed mightily, while the alien steered, & they went swiftly and lightly over the sea, and the waves were little.