

A shield was sent for, too, on which an accomplished hand had lavished all its industry. It had a silver sheen all over, to match it with the helmet and the chain-mail. It had been burnished again and again and embellished with a lustre like that of a new mirror! A Boar had been cut out over it most skilfully from coal-black sable. This weapon, too, his uncle hung round him, and it suited the splendid man and fitted his side as if it had been glued there, then and on all occasions.

And now that Tristan (excellent, agreeable young man!) had assumed the shield, these four pieces – helmet, hauberk, shield, and jамbs – illumined each other so beautifully that if the armourer had designed all four to enhance each other with their beauty and be beautified in return, their splendour could never have been matched more evenly.

But what of the new marvel that was hidden within and beneath it, to the peril of his enemies? – was that of no account beside the rare masterpiece fashioned on the surface? I know it as true as daylight that however it was with the exterior, the subject within was designed and executed with greater artistry to make the pattern of a knight than all the outward embellishment. The work of art inside was most excellently contrived in form and conception. How the craftsman's art appeared in it! Tristan's breast, his arms and legs were lordly, splendid, well-formed, and noble. His casing of iron became him marvellously well.

Tristan's horse was held there by a squire – no finer mount was bred in Spain or anywhere. It was not sunken in any part, but deep and broad in the chest and quarters, strong in the flank, perfect in all its points. Its feet and legs met every formal canon: the hooves were rounded, the legs were straight, all four tall as a wild deer's. And it was of excellent line in that its build forward of the saddle and round the chest was just as it should be in the best type of war-horse. Over it lay a dazzling barding, bright and gleaming as sunlight,

Gottfried Von Strassburg, Tristan, c.1210, translated A.T. Hatto, 1960.