

Robert d'Orbigny

Floire et Blancheflor

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Part I

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Translator's Introduction

Floire et Blancheflor is a Medieval verse tale, from the Loire region of France, attributed to Robert d'Orbigny (or d'Orléans), possibly inspired by *Neema and Noam* one of the tales of the *Thousand and One Nights*, and propagated in a multitude of versions and languages. The tale first circulated in Europe around 1160AD, in an 'aristocratic' French version, and was extremely popular from c1200 to c1350AD.



Floire et Blancheflor



Floire in Blancheflor's lap

The author's introduction

Hear me, every noble lover,
All you that from love do suffer,
Listen, every youth and maiden,
All you, knights and ladies, listen!
If you but hearken to my tale,
You'll learn of true love, without fail.
The tale of Floire, the infant king,
And of noble Blancheflor, I sing,
She of whom Bertha Bigfoot came,
That was Pepin's wife, the same
That was mother of Charlemagne,
And once held France, and all of Maine.
Floire who was this maiden's lover,
A pagan king did engender;
On Blancheflor, that loved him so,
A Christian count did life bestow.
This Floire then was of pagan stock,
Blancheflor of the Christian flock.
Floire was baptised, however,
For Blancheflor's sake, his lover.
On the same day they saw the light;
Engendered, both, on the same night.
Once Floire became a Christian,
He was a wealthy nobleman,
For he was King of Hungary,
And Bulgaria's fair country.
An uncle of his was king there
And he'd died lacking a male heir;
Floire was born of the sister,
So inherited through his mother.
If I can but render its glory,
Now shall you hear all the story.

ii
Also der künig Fenix von Hispanien samet
vil heiden über mer mit schiffen uff der kriste schaden



King Fenix departs for battle

The author begins his tale

I once entered in a chamber,
Twas on a Friday, after dinner,
To disport with the ladies there,
Of whom there were many and fair.
In this chamber there was a bed
With a silk cover overspread,
None finer in all Thessaly,
Rich it was, and great in beauty,
For it was worked with flowers too,
And was striped in yellow and blue.
There I sat on the bed, and heard
Two ladies exchanging a word.
A pair of sisters they did prove,
Speaking together of true love.
They were of noble lineage,
Both were lovely, fair and sage.
Of two lovers spoke the elder,
To the younger, her dear sister,
Of love between two children, though
A good two hundred years ago.
A clerk had told her it, she said,
For in a book the tale he'd read.
This tale she told most fittingly,
And you shall have it now from me.

Of King Felis and of Blanche-flor's mother

There was a king came out of Spain,
With a great company in his train.
In his ship he had crossed the sea,
And reached Galicia, for he
Felis, by name, was a pagan.
He'd journeyed to the Christian
Land, to make it his martial prey
And fire its towns, with fierce affray.

A month and fifteen days, fully,
The king occupied that country,
Nor was there a day but this king,
And his company, war did bring.
Towns he despoiled, while sparing none,
Loading his ships with all he'd won.
Till, for nigh fifteen leagues around,
Not a cow or ox could be found,
Not a town nor castle remained;
None sought the cattle he had claimed.
The whole country he'd set alight,
In which the pagans took delight.
Then the king sought his return,
To his quartermasters did turn,
To load the vessels; to his sight,
Summoning many a bold knight,
Forty at least, and cried: 'Arm swiftly!
We'll load without you, as quickly.
About the roads seek, high and low,
Rob all the pilgrims, you meet so.'
Off they went to the mountain high
Guarding the pass, beneath the sky,
That held the road, and pilgrims saw
Climbing the slope, both rich and poor.
They pursued and assailed them all,
And the pilgrims did so appal
Scant defence they offered, that day,
Surrendering, from fear, alway.
A Frenchman, in their company,
Was a knight, a man of chivalry,
To Saint James' shrine he did go,
A daughter of his he had in tow;
To the Apostle she'd made a vow
To travel there, as she did now,
For her husband's sake, who had died,
And then she was with child, beside.
The brave knight fought to defend her,

Yet they sought not his surrender,
Rather they struck him, left him dead,
And bore her to their lord instead.
To King Felis, they showed her then
He gazed at her, once and again,
And from her face could clearly see
She was of true nobility,
And declared she might be conveyed
To his queen, as a lady's maid,
For she had requested the same
When o'er the sea, to rob, he came.
Thereupon, they boarded the fleet,
And soon had tautened every sheet.
The wind was fair and thereupon
Bore them joyfully on and on.
Not two days had passed, wholly,
Ere they reached their native country.
Soon the king attained the shore,
And all his company went before,
To Naples, that splendid city,
To which his brave vanguard, swiftly,
Brought the news that he had landed,
And, there, delight it commanded.
The citizens came to meet him, then
Expressed their deep pleasure again.
All felt joy that the company
Had arrived in their own country.
The king entered the town, gladly,
Summoning his company, shortly;
Then he shared the spoils, widely,
For he was generous and courtly.
For her part, to the queen, he gave
The lady, a gift that she did crave.
The queen was most pleased to see her,
And carried her off to her chamber.
She let her follow her own law
And honour her faith as before;

They oft spoke at ease together,
For she learnt French from the other.
The lady was good, courteous, fair,
And made herself loved by all there.
The queen her lady's maid did prize,
And treated her as one full wise.

iii

Also zwo frowen einen tag genesen waren
vnd eine einen knaben machte vnd die ander ein tochter



Floire and Blancheflor's births

Of the births of Floire and Blanche-flor

One day it chanced that the latter,
Was folding, in the queen's chamber,
A tapestry the king had sent,
That their likenesses did present.
The queen suddenly saw her pale,
And shudder, as if she did ail,
Clasping both of her flanks tightly,
Shaking, and sweating profusely.
The queen recognised all her case,
(That she was with child) from her face.
The queen then asked how long ago
She'd received the amorous blow.
The date she knew; this she told her.
The queen, pondering the matter,
Said that she too was due to bear
A child, and the same date they would share.
For she knew well when it must be
Without recourse to prophecy.
The births took place on Palm Sunday,
So says those ladies' history;
That was the day on which each bore
A child, whereby grief lay in store.
Travail, they knew, a deal of pain,
Ere the infants a breath did gain.
While a son the pagan queen bore
The Christian a daughter saw.
The children were named for the day,
The flowers, I mean, of Palm Sunday.
Blanche-flor was the girl-child's name,
Floire was that which the boy did claim,
The girl so named in the feast's honour,
The boy by the king, his father.
The father loved his infant son;
The mother's heart equally won,

He was cared for by the lady,
She who was both wise and lovely,
Raised thus, and nourished, by her,
(But for the breast-milk however:
A pagan held him to her breast,
Their faith no other wet-nurse blessed).
She raised him in noble manner,
Cherishing him dearly ever,
Much as she did her own daughter,
Nor knew which of them was dearer.
Together, the two of them did grow,
Till they were twelve years old or so,
Once they were weaned, not a thing
Parted them, sharing everything;
They slept together in one bed,
As one they drank, as one they fed.
At five years old, the thriving pair
Were fine, and noble, and most fair.
In all this world beneath the sun,
Lovelier children were there none.
When the king saw that his son
Was of an age where might be won
Knowledge of letters, he then sought
That such his son might now be taught.
Gaides was a master of arts,
None wiser living in those parts,
His parents for learning won fame;
Gaides then was his tutor's name.
The king commanded his son to learn,
And he replied, for his heart did burn:
'Sire, what then shall our Blanche-flor do?
Shall she not learn her letters too?
Without her, I'll not learn a thing,
No worth could any lessons bring.'
The king replied: 'For love of you,
Blanche-flor then shall learning accrue.'
The pair would be schooled together!

Great was their mutual pleasure.
Both learnt so much through the other
It was a marvel, none learnt better.
And they loved each other, that pair,
While both were more than passing fair.
No thought had either of those two,
Of which the other lacked a view.
As much as Nature would allow
They set their hearts on love, I trow.
In their books they had the wit
To search out many a trace of it.
Full many a pagan text, they found,
Spoke of love; there love did sound,
Therein they took such rare delight,
The art of love they savoured quite.
Those texts hastened on the thought
Of love in another sense than taught,
Another sense than the nourishment
Of knowledge, erst their sole intent;
Together they read, and understood;
The joys of love were fair and good.
When they were free of school each day
The kissed and they embraced, alway,
Together, they went here and there,
And their delight in love did share.

Of their upbringing

Now, Floir's father had a garden,
And mandragora grew therein,
All the herbs, and every flower
Of diverse hues, to light the hour;
Many a tree and shrub rose there.
The birds, sweet songs of love did share.
There the children went each morn,
And breakfasted upon the lawn.
While they were eating and drinking,

The birds perched above were singing.
Birds sang about them, as they fed,
Such was the life those children led.
When they'd eaten, and so returned,
Great the joy their path had earned.
And then when to the school they came,
Their ivory tablets they would claim.
You might have seen them writing, there,
Love verses in the wax, with care!
Their styluses were silver and gold,
Their lettering skilful and bold.
Verses they penned to pass the hours,
Of love, the birdsong, and the flowers.
They wished for naught else, free of strife;
Full glorious it seemed, that life.
Thus, in a mere five years, or so,
Both of these young children did know
How to speak Latin, and to write
That language fair, on parchment white,
And understood many a counsel
Therein; few others learnt as well.

Of the agreement to part the pair

Now, the king knew the love his son
Held for Blancheflor; his heart she'd won.
He'd formed the intent, by this stage,
That when his son had come of age
And was ready to take a wife,
The maid must part from him, for life.
He went to the queen's chamber,
That the two might speak together.
If she agreed with his desire,
He'd resolve the matter entire,
And then seek a wife for his son
Appropriate to such a one.
The queen saw that he was irate,

His colour changed from that of late,
For his face was suffused with blood,
His summons boded little good:
'Lady,' said he, 'your son does ill,
His deeds accord not with my will.
Know that he will be lost, shortly,
Unless we take counsel, swiftly.'
'How?' cried the queen, 'Why, and wherefore?'
'Because of his love for Blanche-flor,
The daughter of your lady's maid.
He adores the girl, I'm afraid,
So much so that, while she's alive
Their love will alter not but thrive,
Nor will he wed another, I claim,
But upon all his kin bring shame.
Indeed,' said he, 'without more ado,
Her head from her body I'd hew;
Then I'd see my noble son wed,
To some royal daughter instead.'
The queen reflected, thoughtfully,
And felt that he'd spoken wisely.
If he'd agree, she thought to aid
And save from death the little maid;
To both prevent her death, and yet,
Ensure that his wish might be met.
'Sire,' said she, 'we must seek indeed
The best for our son, that is agreed,
That he should lose not honour and more,
Through his deep friendship with Blanche-flor.
Yet that we separate the pair
Without causing our son despair
Would be the best it seems to me.'
The king replied, immediately,
'Lady,' he said, 'I quite agree,
There's concord here twixt you and me.'

Of the queen's plan to send Floire to Montoire

'Sire,' said she, 'let us send our Floire
To acquire knowledge at Montoire.
Sybil, my sister is much there,
For that same town lies in her care.
And there she might seek occasion,
If she can, give him good reason
To forget this Christian, Blancheflor;
Some other shall solace him more.
Gaides must seem to be too ill,
To teach the boy his lessons still,
For we must make him understand
He is sent there at our command
To learn; and if Gaides seems well
Floire indeed may easily tell,
For they are good diviners who
Love with its insight doth imbue.
He will only grieve, I'm afraid,
If he gains sight there of the maid,
So, her mother illness must feign,
Must by her side, the girl, retain,
And say she'll send on Blancheflor,
In a fortnight's time, if not before.'
This they agreed should be done.
The king so commanded his son,
But, ere he did so, was content
To ask if he'd hear of his intent,
Then proceeded to state his wish.
Floire, replied, most troubled by this:
'Sire,' said he, 'why must it be
That Blancheflor is parted from me,
With my tutor? Let her go too,
And learn all that you'd have me do.'
The king gave him no alternative,
If he would have his mother live
Not die of grief, but to agree,

Without objection; this did he.
He accepted all, not without pain.
The king ordered his chamberlain
To escort the lad with such might
And pomp, as for a prince seemed right.
Thus, they went to Montoire; there,
A castle stood both strong and fair.

vi
Also Flore zu der Herzogin kam und empfangen
Wart gar herlich und in sin vatter entweg schickte
und wolt do noch blanchefleur getötet han //



Floire is received by Duke Joras

Of Floire's sorrow

Duke Joras was lord in that place;
And he received the lad with grace,
While his aunt too was filled with joy;
Yet naught that he heard pleased the boy,
Since, for lack of his Blancheflor, he
Scorned mere life, lost in misery.
Dame Sybil led him by the hand
To meet the maidens of that land,
Hoping he might forget love's rule,
Or love, at least, in another school,
But naught he heard, and naught he saw,
Joyless without his sweet Blancheflor.
Much he heard, but little he learned;
Scant understanding sorrow earned;
Love within his mind, from the start
Had planted a tree within his heart,
One that grew and flourished there,
And whose sweet perfume filled the air,
Stronger than incense, any spice,
Clove, or ginger; beyond all price,
No other scent surpassed its worth,
Forgot all other joys on earth.
The fruit of that tree he now sought,
But twould be long, as he now thought,
Ere he might cull the sweet fruit there,
Ere he lay by Blancheflor the fair,
All alone, that he might kiss her,
And so, the tree's fruit might gather.

Of the plan to sell Blancheflor into slavery

Floire waited, though pained thereby,
Till the fortnight had passed, say I.
When she'd arrived not, by its end,

He knew he'd not now see his friend,
That he was mocked, and with a sigh
Cried that, if she came not, he'd die.
He thus forwent all food and drink,
Of joy and play refused to think.
He embraced naught, not even sleep;
All thought his vow to die he'd keep.
The chamberlain informed the king;
Angered and aggrieved, by the thing,
He gave him leave to return to court,
While his wife's good counsel he sought:
'Indeed,' said he, 'this news so ill,
Deeply involves the maiden still.
Perchance it is by sorcery
She's gained his love, and loyalty.
Let her be summoned, as I said,
And let her be parted from her head.
Once my son knows that she is gone,
Twill not be long he'll brood thereon.'
The queen now replied to that same:
'Sire, let her be sold, in God's name,
For in this port dwells more than one
Wealthy merchant of Babylon.
Let her be taken there, and sold,
Thus, for the maid you'll gain much gold.
Let her be led there, for she is fair;
Tis the last you'll hear of her, I'd swear,
Thus, we'll be rid of this ill maid,
Nor murder at our door be laid.'

Also der künig florens vatter seie der künigin
 Wie er wolte blancheflor Das houbet abe slachen
 vnd meime sy hece sinen sin verzeufert



Floire and Blancheflor on the Minneburg

Of the price paid for the girl

The king, reluctantly, agreed.
He sent for a rich noble, at need;
Every aspect of trade he knew,
And spoke many a language too.
Yet twas not from covetousness
The king sold her; no more nor less
Than dead, he wished her, and not sold
For some hundred pieces of gold;
Yet twould be sin, so he let her go.
The merchant at the port did show
The maid, and offered her for sale,
To all who'd buy one sound and hale.
The girl commanded, in that place,
For she was passing fair of face,
Thirty gold coins, twenty silver also,
Twenty silk bales brought from Benevento,
Twenty fur mantles lined with silk,
Twenty blue tunics of like ilk,
And a costly cup, all of gold,
Taken from the treasure, of old,
Of some rich Roman emperor;
And none more costly wine ere bore.
This cup was marvellously made,
Thereon were rare designs portrayed,
Engraved there, and delicately;
Vulcan wrought it, most skilfully.
Upon the chalice there were shown
The walls of Troy, of solid stone,
The Greeks, assailing the city,
Striking at them in great fury,
As those within made stout defence,
Many a sharp missile firing thence.
On the rim, fair Helen was seen,
Whom Paris stole, Menelaus' queen,

In white enamel fashioned there,
And set in gold, with wondrous care.
That king was pursuing her by sea,
In great distress, most furiously,
The Greek host following him, as one,
Led to Troy by King Agamemnon.
On the lid of the cup was shown
The goddess Venus, not alone,
But with Pallas and Juno too,
Whom Paris, in judgement, did view,
For they sought an apple as prize,
Competing there, before his eyes,
An apple of gold and, on it, writ
That the fairest should be granted it.
The three had brought the apple there,
And conjured him, if he should dare,
To grant it to the fairest of all,
She whose beauty did most enthrall.
Each of them promised a reward
If he would yield them that award:
Juno of great riches made offer;
Pallas skill and wisdom; a lover
Venus declared he should acquire
The fairest a man might desire.
To her Paris granted the prize,
For rather than be rendered wise,
Or skilled, or gain great wealth, he chose
To win one fairer than the rose.
The artist had portrayed with skill
The love of Paris who had his will,
How he readied a ship and how
A breadth of water he did plough.
The cup was rich indeed, and fine,
And thereon a ruby did shine,
No fairer a gem neath the sky;
If he were there, a butler, say I,
No brighter a clarity could show,

No hyssop-wine had such a glow.
Above, a bird engraved in gold
With its claw this jewel did hold.
None ever saw a fairer wrought,
For none fairer was sold or bought;
It seemed alive; whoe'er did view
That bird, it seemed as if it flew.
Aeneas brought the chalice there,
When he fled Troy, and to the fair
Lavinia, in Lombardy,
He gave the thing; his love was she.
It passed to every ancestor,
The lords of Rome, each emperor,
And then was stolen by a thief,
Who bore it to the place, in brief,
Where the cup a merchant saw,
That gave it now to gain Blancheflor.
He bartered it, in fair exchange,
And was delighted, tis not strange,
For he believed double he'd gain
If he returned home; such was plain.
A favourable wind blew gently,
Back he sailed to his own country,
And made his way to Babylon,
Where to its lord he came anon.
Thus, to that lord the maid was sold
For seven times her weight in gold,
For she was lovely, right fair of face,
And nobility her form did grace.
The merchant was filled with delight,
For he'd gained great profit outright.
While to the king his noble brought
All that she'd fetched, and gave report.

Of Blancheflor's empty tomb

The queen gave thought to the matter,

And spoke to the king thereafter:
'Sire, said she, what will you say
When Floire, our son, seeks, on a day,
Once to this place he is conveyed,
To know what happened to the maid?
When he asks about his lover,
What bold answer will you offer?
For, by my faith, I greatly fear,
He'll die when he finds she's not here.'
'Lady,' said he, 'come, give some thought
As to how his comfort might be sought.'
'Sire,' she said, 'now, listen to me:
A noble tomb we'll raise, full swiftly,
Of marble, crystal, all over
Adorned with pure gold and silver.
"Fair Blancheflor is dead", we will say;
And bring him comfort, on that day.'
So, they summoned many a mason,
And many another worthy person,
Skilled artisans, to raise a tomb,
Finer than any, you may assume.
All of the workmanship was fair;
Gold and silver adorned it there.
No beast or bird beneath the sky
But to that tomb they did apply,
Every serpent that one could name,
Every fish, that sea or lake did claim.
Before a church, beneath a tree,
That marble tomb, the eye might see.
And above it was set a stone,
A Frisian artisan worked, alone.
The stone he set above it, there,
Was made of marble, fine and rare;
Of red and yellow, green and blue,
It shone in the sun, right rich in hue.
And a frieze about it, pierced inlay,
As employed in Solomon's day.

Within that the enamelling was
All in silver, and gold, and glass.
On the tomb, in gold, cast with care,
Were two children, tender and fair;
No eye saw ever, wrought in gold,
Such fine likenesses, e'en of old.
One of the two seemed Floire, and naught
A closer likeness could have caught.
The other cast was fashioned too
Like fair Blancheflor, the likeness true.
And the image of fair Blancheflor
Held out a single flower, before
Floire, her true love; there it did hold,
That lovely form, a rose of gold.
Floire too held, before his face,
A lily of pure gold, in place.
Opposite each other, the pair,
Noble of countenance, sat there.
The child Floire wore, upon his brow,
A glowing ruby I avow,
And one might see, in darkest night
A league around, by its fair light.
Within the tomb four pipes were set,
Fine and sound, from which air might jet
Through four nozzles, and, when the air
Flowed in the pipes, the statues there
Of those children touched together,
Kissed, and as if by magic arts,
Spoke all that lay in their two hearts.
To Blancheflor, Floire, this speech did make:
'Kiss me, my fair one, for love's sake.'
Blancheflor replied, kissing him too:
'More than life itself, I love you.'
So that pair spoke, when the air blew,
When those statues embraced anew,
And then, when the air ceased to flow,
They ceased speaking, that pair, also.

So sweetly they gazed at each other
It seemed those two smiled together,
At the head of that tomb, a tree
Was planted, beautiful to see;
Lovely it was, and in full leaf,
With flowers fair beyond belief,
Springing from every branch also,
And all were fresh, and white as snow.
The name of this tree was ebony,
And all was alight upon that tree.
At the tomb's foot, like to the sun,
A crimson terebinth stood, and none
Fairer neath the sky, I'd suppose,
For it was lovelier than the rose.
To the right, a tree gave holy oil;
To the left, balsam was the spoil.
And ne'er was there a scent so sweet,
No flower today could compete,
For, on the one side, balsam flowed,
The other holy oil bestowed.
They who planted those four trees,
In seeking, thus, the gods to please,
Made such supplication there,
They flowered every year as fair.
Amidst the trees' rich flowering
Ever a thousand birds did sing,
And yielded such sweet melodies
As ne'er were heard, but midst those trees.
Such sweet melodies filled the air,
From the little birds that sang there,
That if heard by youth or maiden,
Who by ardour had been smitten,
With the sweet songs that they heard,
They, seized by love so, in a word,
Ran to clasp each other, swiftly,
And kiss one another, sweetly.
If any heard the singing who

The pains of love, as yet, ne'er knew,
Yet from the air did sweetness reap,
In that moment, they fell asleep.
And there, amidst those four trees, stood
The tomb so wrought, and no man could
Conceive a tomb for any maid
As fair as the one in that glade.
With rich borders it was bounded,
By rare enamels was surrounded.
Gems of power, in past days formed,
Many a miracle there performed.
Sapphire, jacinth, chalcedony,
Emerald, sardonyx, and many
A pearl, coral, and chrysolite,
Diamond, and amethyst bright,
Rare beryl, rose-quartz, they were there,
Jasper, topaz, and agates fair.
Letters engraved, in niello,
Of Arabian gold's rich yellow,
Were wrought upon it; thus, pure gold
To the reader did her name unfold:
'Within this tomb lies fair Blancheflor,
She whom Floire did greatly adore.'

viii.

Als man tet sine marmelstein geap machen und
so flore keme so Wolte man sprechen blancheflor
lege so begraben und Wer gestorben //



The king and queen prepare Blancheflor's tomb

Of Floire's return from Montoire

Now Floire returned, as soon as he
Was allowed, to his own country.
From his palfrey swift descending,
In the courtyard, before the king.
Welcomed by his father and mother,
Twas Blancheflor he first asked after.
They were slow to yield a reply.
Entering a chamber, by and by,
To the maid's mother he did appeal,
To whom his heart he did reveal:
'Lady, where is my love?' he cried,
'She is not here,' the dame replied,
'Where, then?', 'I know not', 'Summon her, then.'
'I know not whence.' 'You jest, again!'
'Is she hiding?' 'Sire, no indeed.'
'By God,' said he, 'here's an ill deed!'
When she could hide it no longer,
Piteously, in tears she did utter
These words, while weeping: 'She is dead.'
'Can this be true?' 'Tis true,' she said.
'Where is her corpse?' 'To the churchyard, go.'
'When did she die?' 'Eight days ago,
Blancheflor died, Sire, all is true,
And her death was for love of you.'
She lied about the matter though,
For the king made her say twas so.

Of Floire's distress at the news of Blancheflor's supposed death

When Floire was told that she was dead,
He was filled with sorrow and dread,
His face grew pale, all strength failed him,
He fell fainting, his sight was dim.
The Christian dame, troubled thereby,

From sheer fright, now uttered a cry.
The cry was loud, and the king heard,
Who hurried there, with nary a word,
While the queen ran to seek her son
Both were concerned, feeling as one.
He fainted thrice for an hour or so,
And when he revived, wept, in woe.
'Death, why neglect me thus,' he said,
'Now that my own true love is dead?
Lady,' said he, 'since you know where
My fair love lies, come lead me there.'
The king it was led him to the tomb,
Floire went there, as if to his doom,
And saw twas writ that this Blancheflor
Loved but one, whom she did adore.
He read the words three times, but fell
Fainting, ere a word he could tell.
Thereafter, he sat upon the stone
About the tomb, and there made moan.

Als floire kam von fremden landen und inne gestanc
Do man ime seite die blancheflor tot was.



Floire faints on hearing of Blancheflor's alleged death

Floire's Lament

The lad wept bitterly once more,
And, thus, lamented his Blancheflor.
'Blancheflor! Blancheflor! They ever say,
We were born on the very same day;
On the same night were engendered,
By the count our mothers rendered.
We were raised together, closely,
So, twould be best, it seems to me,
Since we two issued forth as one,
If to join you I'm swiftly gone.
Oh, Blancheflor, so fair of face!
No maid in this age had such grace,
Such wisdom, or such loveliness,
As you who did all three possess.
Dead is she, that most precious gem!
Nor shall we seek her like again.
Fair one, none could fathom surely,
No tongue could describe, your beauty,
For whatever might come to mind
To silence would ever be consigned.
Who'd describe, her face, head, hair,
Would own to a wisdom most rare.
That face of such delicate hue!
Oh, none were born to equal you,
That lived in such sweet chastity;
O, you, the very form of beauty.
You were humble and honourable,
And to the needy most merciful,
Loving all, both small and great,
Of your goodness, whate'er their fate.
Fair one, in our confidences we
Exchanged good counsel privately,
Telling our news both ill or good,
In that Latin both understood.

Ah Death! E'er seeking harm are you,
So evil, and contrary too,
That when summoned you come not;
Those who love you, you have forgot,
Those who hate you, you love the more,
Leading them to that fatal shore.
Wisdom against your power doth fail,
Prowess nor possessions avail.
To folk of worth who ought to live,
Mortal suffering and pain you give;
To those that should live in delight
You grant not joy but endless night.
Yet when some old beggar you see,
Trembling with age, and misery,
Who summons you, then, merciless,
You give no heed to their distress.
When you took my sweet love from me,
Who wished to live, wrong you did me,
And wrong again is this you do,
Who come not, when I summon you.
Death, I follow you, while you flee;
I seek you, while you hide from me.
By God, one that of love would die,
You shall not long evade, say I.
When a poor wretch summons you,
Then your chariot flies from view,
And yet when you'd regain your ground,
The die is cast, swift end is found.
By my faith, I'll ask you no more,
But, this eve, make my own death sure,
For life to me must hated be,
Now my sweet love is reft from me.
My soul my love's will now pursue,
In Elysian Fields; seek me anew,
Where I now go to seek my flower,
For Love holds us yet in his power.
Swiftly, I go where she has gone,

For, swift as I can, I follow on.
And soon her love my love shall see;
In Elysium, where she waits for me.'

Of the enchanter Barbarin

Such was the plaint uttered by Floire,
On returning home, from Montoire.
He had no joy by night or day,
His life wretched in every way.
If he'd but had a naked dart,
He'd have plunged it into his heart,
It weighed on him that he had none.
The king begged him to have done
With sorrow, and the queen likewise,
Naught kept the tears though from his eyes.
He could not forget his Blancheflor;
Night and day, he but wept the more.
The king summoned an enchanter;
Among his peers, no wizard finer
Was to be found in those days;
Folk would tremble at his displays.
Wise in all magic was this fellow,
He could make stones rise and follow;
He could make a cow fly, or a mare;
Or an ass, on the harp, play an air.
For twelve gold coins, he'd willingly
Cut off his head, for all to see;
Severing his head, at a blow,
He'd hand it to a witness so,
Then the open mouth would demand:
'Have you a head there in your hand?'
'Yes, by God!' the fellow would cry,
But when upon it he turned his eye,
He held but a lizard, or a snake;
Such was the magic he could make.
On entering the hall, smoke arose,

Issuing forth from the wizard's nose,
Such that none could see his form,
For about him its clouds did swarm.
When he sought a breath to claim,
He lit the palace with bright flame.
(So, they might see what he could do)
His actions troubling to view.
On seeing the flames, many ran,
Fleeing the palace, to a man.
And once they'd exited the place,
Called the wizard a vile disgrace.
Though when they chose to look behind,
Nary a flame there could they find.
The wisest held the thing mere folly!
Returning to the hall full swiftly,
Monks and nuns, their eyes now saw,
And each nun gripped a monk, and bore
A knife, and held it to his throat;
Before their eyes this sight did float.
Now they saw them and now did not.
For mere enchantment was their lot,
And thus, they saw twas but folly.
The king called out, approvingly:
'Barbarin, work magic for me,
And I'll reward you, handsomely.'
'Gladly,' he said, 'I'll work a thing.
Be seated all, and you, great king,
Be seated, on the instant now;
A bird I'll summon, if you'll allow.'
The king sat; a bird came in sight.
Listen to what its beak held tight!
The bird it was a turtle-dove,
And it held a roundel, from above,
The roundel was wrought of topaz,
And yet it seemed as clear as glass,
And it was twelve-foot all around,
And therein a gold form was found,

Shaped like a man who, on command,
Played on a harp, held in his hand;
The Lay of Orpheus he played,
And those that heard the sounds he made,
Ever followed their rise and fall;
Twas found harmonious by all.
Then before them was the sight
Of a marvellous mounted knight,
His body was not two foot high,
But his legs were full long, whereby
He was a good six feet or so.
A melody began to flow,
That pleased them all exceedingly,
Though Floire heard naught, nor did see,
The others all joyed at what they saw,
Floire could not; twas his Blancheflor
Kept his eyes from these delights,
From the hall he fled, and such sights.

Of Floire and the lions' den

The fact was perceived by the king.
'Barbarin, he said, 'are you listening?
Halt your magic, reveal no more.'
'Gladly, Sire, all's now as before.'
At once he ceased his conjuring;
His magic, he to an end did bring.
It seemed to all, before their sight,
The whole palace was filled with light,
The ground trembled, or so they thought,
All fell to earth, with terror fraught.
None was so brave they trembled not,
All but Floire who had quit the spot.
They shook with fear, then fell asleep,
While Floire, upon his way, did keep.
He could not forget his lover,
In his mind, he thought upon her;

She seemed to say: 'Sweet friend, dear Floire,
You must return now to Montoire.'
Floire reflecting on this, apart,
Was grieved and felt sad at heart,
Many a time he was seen to faint,
And on reviving made complaint:
'Sweet Blancheflor, my lovely friend,
For love of you, this life he'd end,
Your Floire!' he cried, in discontent.
About the silent halls he went,
While all within the palace slept,
Both great and small, and ever wept.
He thought to die and end his strife,
Lacking the talent, thus, for life.
While he was wandering, grieving so,
He came to a pit; there, below,
The king had two great lions penned,
Both strong and fierce; to make an end,
He thought he might anger the pair,
Then leap into the den, and there
Be slain, and eaten, and none say nay.
He thus approached, without delay.
But before he sought to enter there,
He uttered this plaint, in deep despair:
'Our sovereign Father, who commands
All things, for all lies in your hands,
That made Adam in your semblance,
(Thereafter granting him abundance,
Fruits of the earth, in great plenty,
All there within his grasp, wholly,
Every fruit, for none was hidden,
Only the apple then forbidden)
Who ate of the tree, for his sin,
And, hence, our errors did begin,
Plunging us in darkness, the more,
May I and my sweet friend, Blancheflor,
Dwell in Elysium, we two,

Our Lord above, I beg of You.’
Floire, ending his words in a sigh,
Entered the pit, with this loud cry:
‘Blancheflor, my sweet and lovely friend,
For you, of this life, I make an end.’
Floire went towards the creatures;
They lay down, belied their natures.
My lords, we who read his story
Find that Floire was granted glory;
The beasts lapped at his hands and feet,
Their pleasure seemingly complete.
But Floire, at this, feeling but woe,
Called angrily to the lions so:
‘Lions, come, slaughter me now;
And no sight of it, here, allow
To the king; come, slaughter this Floire;
Let him think me gone to Montoire!
When the king takes a thief or two,
Their deliverance rests with you.
So, deliver me, and my flesh devour;
Lions, my death lies in your power!’
Floire’s heart was filled with ire and woe.
The lions their sharp claws did show,
For other weapons they had none,
But they touched him with nary a one,
Struck not, despite all he could do,
Cried Floire: ‘Perverse creatures are you,
You do wrong in not slaying me,
I’m worth more than a thief, truly,
And far better than such to eat,
Though you resist such tender meat!’
Floire remained, thus, in great woe.
Now hear of the wizard; for, lo!
He ended the enchantment then,
The king and lords awoke, again.
They were awake, but scarce knew where,
Feeling but mocked by this affair.

The king asks after Floire

The king demanded of Barbarin:
‘Have you seen Floire, here within?’
‘Yes sire, though he’s now lost to you.
I hope you shall not find it true,
But he has leapt in the lions’ pit.’
The king now fell into a fit,
His barons fainted, dropped to the floor,
Fearing that Floire was now no more.
The king began to shout aloud:
‘My barons, tarry not; in a crowd
Rush those lions, and slay the pair.
Wretches,’ cried he, ‘what repair
If we have lost fair Floire, my son?
Twas ill he returned; yet tis done,
And now he’s lost beyond recall,
Hapless the prey on which you fall,
And great the prize you gain, truly!’
To the pit he ran, instantly,
And in delaying not, he found
That Floire was alive, safe and sound.
Imagine the king’s profound delight
As he dragged him forth to the light.
He led him swiftly to the hall.
His mother looked pale, amidst them all.
Father and mother were filled with joy
Yet Floire’s heart did but pain enjoy.
He determined, ere night, he must die,
And so, erase his failure thereby.
That thought so weighed upon his mind,
Nor joy nor delight could Floire find.

The End of Part I of ‘Floire et Blancheflor’

Part II

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Floire attempts to slay himself

Floire now drew his silver dagger
From its sheath; twas all the dearer
As he'd received it from Blancheflor
When he'd last seen the maid, before
He'd made his journey to Montoire.
Twas this that he addressed. Said Floire:
'My silver dagger, ready, there,
To set an end to this affair,
She gave you as a gift, that I
Would remember her, and thereby
Might do her good service, but now
I must go to her; such my vow.
Blancheflor, one might rightly say:
Too long have I prolonged my stay.'

His mother reproves his action

With it he'd have pierced his heart
But his mother, seeing, him did dart
To his side, and seized the dagger
Reproving him, in gentle manner.
As a mother, she could not see
Him die of sorrow, so tragically.
'You're but a child, my son,' she said,
'In pursuing death, for on that head,
Ther's none on earth if they must die
And yet from death itself might fly,
Would not rather live a beggar,
Or in some den, like a robber,
Than suffer all the pains of death;
Tis ill to seek one's own last breath.
Slay yourself, and you'll not enter
The Elysium you chase after,
Nor will you find your Blancheflor;

No sinner reaches that fair shore.
Straight to the fires of Hell below,
There, sweet boy, such mortals go.
Minos, Aeacus, Rhadamanthus,
Are the judges there; below us,
In the depths, they judge the sinner,
Amidst the condemned, you'd suffer.
There Dido, Byblis did remove,
Two that slew themselves for love,
And wander yet through Hell in woe,
Seeking their lovers, grieving so.
They seek, and will seek, them ever,
And yet can meet with them never.
My dear sweet son, be comforted;
Seek the living, and not the dead.
For I think to find some remedy,
Whereby she might recovered be.'

She seeks the King's agreement to a remedy

Weeping, she went to seek the king:
'Sire,' she said, 'are you listening;
For God's sake, His will be done,
I pray He shows mercy to our son,
Who seeks to slay himself; I saw
A dagger he drew, and thus, before
He could attempt the act he planned,
I struck the weapon from his hand.'
'Lady,' said he, 'be calm, dear heart!
His grief he will quench, for his part.'
'True', said she, 'by dying, agreed,
For he will die of his grief, indeed.
We've no children but this fair one,
Yet we consent to lose our son.'
'Lady, what would you have us do?'
He cried, 'Consider it done!' 'Those two,
We must once more view together,

Or, losing one, lose both, forever.'



The queen requests the king to tell the truth

The queen confesses to her son

The queen, rejoicing in her heart,
Sought her son, where he sat apart:
'Dear son,' said she, 'by our design,
Partly the king's, and partly mine,
We had the tomb wrought that you see.
And would not be there, had not we
Desired that you might forget her,
And, as we wished, wed another,
The daughter of a wealthy king,
And honour us all, by so doing.
We desired that fair Blanche-flor
Should be your childhood love no more,
For she was but a Christian lass,
A poor thing, of low rank, alas.
One that did her price command
Has taken her to another land.
'Mercy, by God, my son!' said she,
'All is true you have heard from me.
Suffer this grief, my son, no more,
Be at peace, as you were before.'

Floire swears to seek for Blanche-flor everywhere

Hearing this, he was lost in thought.
He sat for a while, seeing naught,
Then, looking one more at the queen,
He swiftly asked here if she did mean
All she'd said; had she spoken true?
'My son,' said she, 'I lie not to you.'
He quit the tomb, his feet he found;
His love lay not beneath that ground;
Thanks, he gave to the Lord above,
Knowing that she still lived, his love.
He swore no effort he would spare,

But would search for her, everywhere.
He claimed he'd find the maid one day,
No matter how wild and harsh the way.
And then he would return with her,
In great joy, no more to suffer.
The joy he felt made him forget
The labour of finding her, as yet.

He asks leave of the king

My lords, I'd have you marvel not
For true Love now governed his lot,
That makes men think that they will do
That which would startle no small few.
Aristotle and Plato say
That many a man will, every day,
Do what they never thought they could
Till Love seized them, for ill or good.
Great was his joy; he gave his word,
And proclaimed he cared not who heard,
That the king's pain might go for naught,
For he must act now as he ought.
To the king he went, who showed his joy
That his son lived, and clasped the boy,
But yet was troubled, even so,
When the lad asked for leave to go,
And said that he must seek the maid,
Of whom no news had been conveyed;
Where he might find her, he knew not,
Yet to seek her was now his lot.
The king blamed the queen's plan for
His having sold the fair Blancheflor.
He cursed the hour, great was the cost,
For he'd lost his son when she was lost.
A thousand silver marks he'd gained,
And as much he'd give, he maintained,
If he could find her; and yet could not,

Willing or no, such was his lot.



Floire asks his father to aid him

And requests his support

‘Dear son,’ said the king, ‘dwell here, still!’
‘By my faith,’ came answer, ‘you say ill,
For you but hasten my search the more,
And sooner shall you see Blancheflor.’
‘Son, since you choose not to remain,
Say where you’ll search, for I am fain
To do your will in this matter,
And meet your needs; gold and silver,
Rich silks and bales of cloth I’ll give,
And mules to bear them, as I live.’
‘Sire,’ said he, ‘now listen to me,
If you will, of your grace and mercy.
When to this merchant, I am known,
Seven beasts of burden I would own;
Two to bear the silver and gold,
And whate’er boxes I’d have hold
Aught else, and then a third, indeed,
To hold the coins that I might need,
And two more, Sire, to bear rich gear,
Like that in which fine lords appear,
Robes of sable, or martens’ fur,
And seven men with them, to defer
To my orders, and lead the mules,
And three good squires, none of them fools,
Who can forage for food, and guard
Our horses, in stable and yard.
Your chamberlain, Sire, if you please,
Send with me to ensure my ease,
For he knows how to buy and sell,
And give counsel so all goes well.
Everywhere we’ll make occasion
To seek the mart where she may be won,
And if we can find the place and she
May be purchased right easily,
We’ll give generously and buy,

And return right swiftly, say I.’

Royal gifts are bestowed on the boy

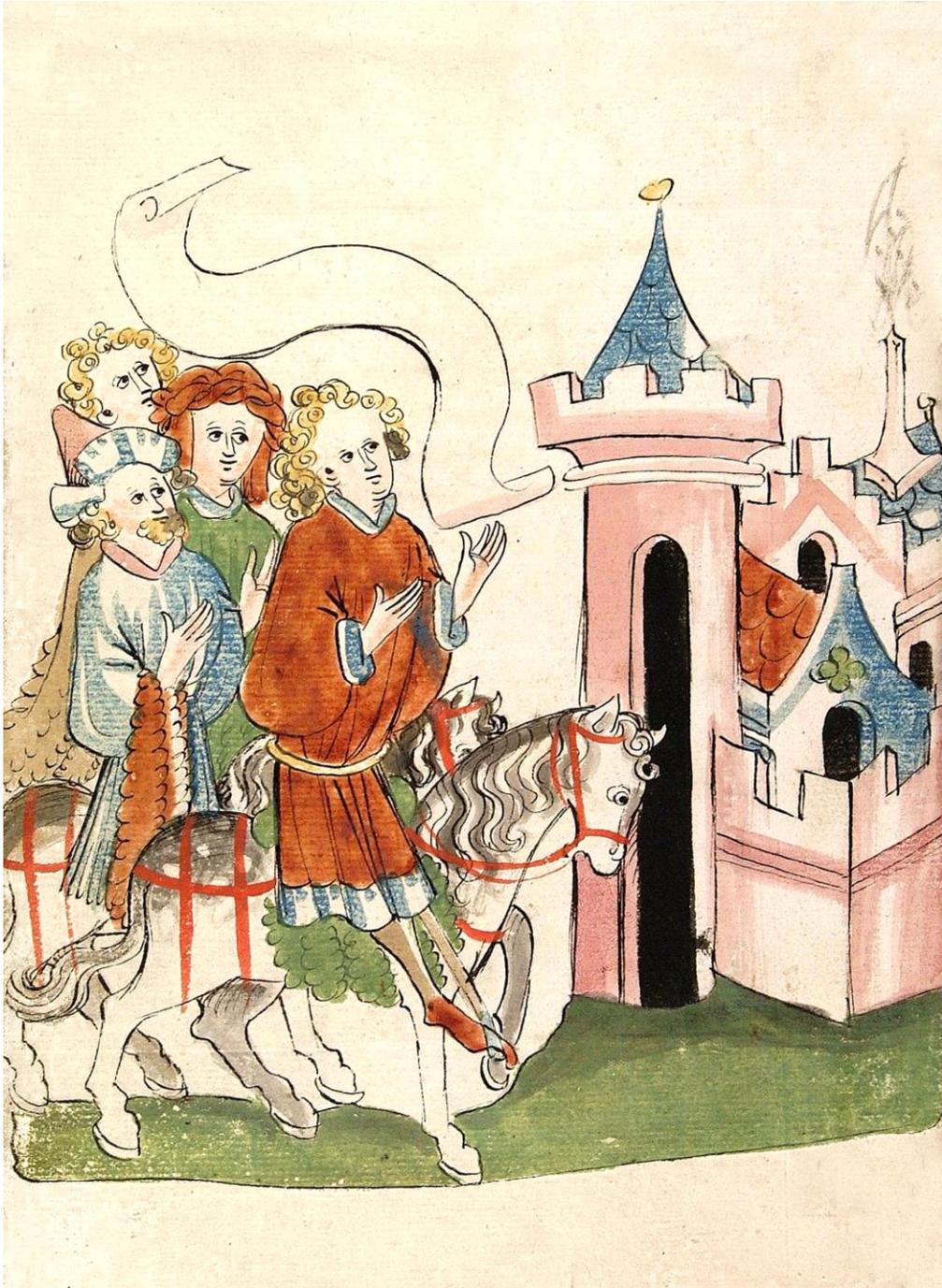
So, the lad ended his request.
The king, gathering of his best,
All that was needed did bestow.
When it came time for him to go,
The monarch told what price was paid
For the girl, when the deal was made.
‘My son’ he said, ‘such you must take;
You’ll have to give, if you would make
An equal bargain, the like amount
As Blancheflor cost, by all account.’
He gave the lad a palfrey to ride
For his own, and its gear beside.
The creature was partly milk-white,
Part red as blood; fit for a knight.
Of rich silk, the caparison,
In fine-wrought chequering was done.
All the saddle and saddle-bow,
Was made of pure whalebone below,
Coloured a blue-grey naturally;
A great marvel it was to see,
Wondrously carved, and fine gold
Was set about that work of old.
The saddle cover of silk was made
And this Castilian silk displayed
Flowers done in rare embroidery;
All this the king gave generously.
Silk were the stirrup-straps, and cinches,
And skilfully-wrought counter-cinches,
Fastened wondrously tight and sure;
The silver buckles, fashioned of yore.
The stirrups were worth a castle,
Worked in gold and black enamel.
The horse’s bit was of rich design,

No other steed bore one as fine.
Its shanks and chain were wrought of gold,
With gems, a treasure to behold,
In white enamel, here and there,
Set, to show their beauty, with care;
The whole was wrought of Spanish gold,
No finer workmanship was of old,
Nor richer; while the gems, thereon,
Were perfect, each and every one.
The bridle straps with gold were set
From where the gold curb-shanks they met.
Thus was the steed adorned, I say,
That the king granted Floire that day.
And the queen, too, a ring did offer
To set upon the maiden's finger.
'My son,' said she, 'now guard this well,
While you possess it, fear no ill,
Iron nor solid steel can harm you,
Nor fire burn, nor water drown you.
My son, great power has this ring
If you but believe in the thing,
So that my sole request is this:
In guarding it prove not remiss.'

Floire departs in search of Blancheflor

He gave her thanks and took the ring,
And took his leave, then, of the king,
Saying: 'I'll find my true love, so!'
The king granted him leave to go.
Weeping; he took leave of the queen
Amidst a hundred kisses, I mean.
Many a tear wept the royal pair,
Wrung their hands, and tore their hair,
And showed such grief at that parting
As if they'd die there, of weeping.
Then, commended to God alway,

Floire departed, and went his way.



Ride of the knights to the orchard

He and his company reach the port

Once he was outside the city,
He readied his men for the journey.
He and the chamberlain concurred
On their route, and then gave the word.
For the port, at once, they started,
From which Blancheflor had departed.
They travelled on until they came
To a townsman's house, where that same
Lodged many a merchant, great and small,
And there dismounted, one and all.
Once the horses were stabled there,
And fed, with oats and hay to spare,
Servants went to the market place,
And roamed about it for a space.
Food they bought, of every kind
The finest viands one could find.
This, the master had commanded:
None must return empty-handed.
Indeed, much bread and wine they bought;
And for the dinner these they brought.
Merchants were they, claimed the company,
Set to sell their goods beyond the sea.
Floire said he was their sovereign lord,
The goods were his; once reassured
The host had their dinner prepared,
While no attention now was spared.
They washed their hands, and wiped them dry,
And sat down to supper, by and by.



The meeting of knights and ladies in the orchard

The company dines, though Floire seems distracted

Now, Richier was their host's name.
His place at their table he did claim.
He honoured them much, held them dear,
And urged them to eat, his kindness clear.
The table bowed under the weight
Of the rich food that company ate.
They were served most handsomely,
Wine was brought, then poured swiftly
Into their cups from bowls of silver;
The clear wine and mead flowed over.
They laboured hard that company
At eating and drinking copiously,
Oft saying the wine was good, indeed;
Saint Martin had blessed it they agreed.
While they were dining cheerfully,
Floire's mind was on Blancheflor, for he
Despite the good wine, ne'er forgot
That, without her, woeful was his lot.
Thoughts of her troubled him greatly,
Such that he oft sighed profoundly,
Ever careless of whether his hand
Raised his cup, or bread did command.
The hostess observed him, keenly,
As she filled her lord's cup, neatly:
'Sir, said she, 'do you note this lad,
So self-contained, and seldom glad?
He leaves his food, so full of thought,
See him sigh, for with woe he's fraught.
Upon my life, no merchant is he,
He's a lord, and upon some journey.'
He set to questioning the young man.

Floire hears news of Blancheflor

‘Sire, much thought you seem to command.
I have watched you; as to food and drink,
Little you take, while much you think.
What you have eaten of this meal
Would count for but little, I feel.
A like face I saw the other day,
A maiden, Blancheflor, passed this way
(Such was the name that she gave me)
And, by my faith, you’re as sad as she!
She looked to be the very same age,
And seemed as woeful in her visage.
She pondered likewise over her food;
On one she loved she chose to brood.
Floire, it seems, was this lover’s name,
She to be sold, and lose that same.
She dwelt here for two weeks or so,
And endlessly her tears did flow.
She pined for Floire her true lover,
And night and day bemoaned him ever;
Except for that, the girl did naught.
She was sold in this very port.
The one who bought her, so they said,
To Babylon has that maiden led.
The commander there now owns her,
Who for twice her price obtained her.’
When Floire heard his lover named,
And news of her was likewise claimed,
The prince was struck by sudden joy,
While the cup with which he did toy,
Filled with wine, the lad knocked over,
Struck mute at word of his lover.
The host cried: ‘Come, tis forfeit, now!
We must amend this thing, I vow.’
‘True; that we must!’ cried one and all;
Filled with delight, thus they did call.
Floire filled the cup, of rare design,
Right to the brim, with vintage wine,

And presented it to him graciously:
'This I present to you,' said he,
'For you have brought me certain sure
News of that maiden, fair Blancheflor.
For tis of that sweet maid I think,
And sigh, rather than eat or drink,
And though knowing not where to go,
Set forth to seek her high and low.
Now I'll follow her to Babylon,
Nor will quit her, ere I am done.'
Then he added: 'Once being spilled
Tis right the cup should be refilled.
Drink if you please to my return,
If you would our good fortune earn.'
Four servants came where they did dine,
And brought the guests four bowls of wine;
To make amends, the wine they poured;
To the host, his cup Floire did afford,
When from it he had drunk a sup;
The host drank, and returned the cup.
And all the rest, within the place,
Contended then, and drank apace.
The poorest matched the richest there,
And right boldly acquired their share.
They enjoyed themselves happily,
Till the wind blew, propitiously.

He boards ship for Babylon

Afternoon now had turned to eve,
The tide had risen; and they might leave.
The air was clear, bright and serene,
The heavens shone on all that scene.
The ship's captain did then declare,
That all was set, the wind was fair.
They had lingered there long enow,
And were desirous of sailing now.

The owner cried the news abroad
Through all the town, that those should board
Who would journey to Babylon,
Or to the land, there, would be gone.
Floire was delighted when he heard,
He was eager to leave, in a word.
One he'd gathered his company,
And then rewarded his host fully,
He took leave of him, went aboard,
To be borne by that ship abroad.

Floire hears of the feast to be held there

Of the owner he had requested,
And he on oath had so attested,
That they arrive at that fair port
Nearest the city that he sought,
That of Babylon, for he had heard,
Or rather the owner had brought word,
That in a month from that very day,
All of the monarchs who held sway
Over the Emir's lands, in short
All the kings that adorned his court,
Would gather there to a feast he'd hold.
'There,' said the merchant, 'may be sold
All of my cargo, and I gain greatly,
All of it shall be bought, and swiftly.'

xii

Mag dir sin als ein Winc der gabe gnade ir Ez linc
Als flore entzag Wolke vnd in sin mütter Wemende
Kuste vnd der waeter vnd so er in das schiff ging
Do wende das hofe gefinde vber al der lende.



Floire sets sail

He sets sail with his company and reaches Baudas

The sky was clear, the wind blew free;
At once the ships set out to sea.
From the port they issued that day,
On the ebb, to gain steerage way.
The sails were unfurled to the light,
And to the top-castles drawn tight.
The wind drove them astray, swiftly,
As soon as Floire was out to sea.
The company he'd brought aboard,
Was such as befitted a royal lord.
Eight days they wandered fitfully,
And never a sight of land did see.
Baudas, they reached, on the ninth day;
The city stood high over the bay,
On a rock grey-brown in colour,
Above the port, and the harbour.
From there, on a clear day, the eye
Viewed a hundred leagues of sea and sky.
The ships' owner well knew the road
To the height, which they now followed.
Twas the city that Floire had sought,
When he went aboard, the very port.
From there twas but four days journey,
If naught delayed the company,
Or little longer, till he might come
To the Grand Emir in Babylon.
The merchant asked for his reward
And Floire, like a generous lord,
Gave him twenty pieces of gold,
Then twenty of silver, all told,
For he thought himself in paradise,
Since there he might attain the prize,
And find his love, in that far country,
She whom he sought o'er land and sea.



Floire's voyage to Babylon

He finds lodging there

Swiftly he disembarked on the shore,
While the ship was loaded once more,
Then ascended to the city,
Which he now wished to enter quickly.
There was lodged a rich ship-owner,
Merchant and contractor, moreover.
He owned a vessel of ample size,
In which was loaded merchandise,
And so traversed the seas and served
To bear the goods therein reserved.
In this the merchants, furthermore,
Had sailed, who purchased fair Blancheflor,
The lovely maid that Floire now sought
For whom his heart was ever fraught.
In that house he now passed the night,
Once he had climbed the city height.
From the merchant Floire hoped to hear,
News of her, whether far or near.
The company unloaded their effects,
And stabled the mules and horses next,
Ensuring the creatures were well fed,
Granted hay and straw for a bed.
In that hostelry, they found to hand
Everything that one might demand,
Feed for the horses, bread and wine,
Meat, salt, and fish on which to dine.
They asked for supper hastily,
For they were weary from the sea.

Floire hears further news of Blancheflor

The Emir commanded the port;
Many a merchant there he caught,
For rightly or wrongly all who came
Were obliged to pay to that same

A sixth part of the goods they brought,
And swear too that they held back naught.
To the mistress of the city,
The Lady Marsile, went this fee.
Once the company had paid,
And the supper table was laid,
They washed their hands, and sat to eat;
Floire was granted the noblest seat.
They were offered the choicest fare,
That might please all palates there.
But Floire little sustenance sought,
For his lost love was all his thought.
The host gazing upon his guest
Thought his spirits not of the best:
'Sir, said he, 'it would seem to me,
You are brooding upon the fee
Charged against the goods you've brought.'
Floire answered: 'Tis indeed my thought.'
'I saw a like frown the other day,
In this hostelry,' the host did say.
'That day there came a company
Of merchants out of Spain, you see,
And to this port they had conveyed,
Tis truth I tell, a pretty maid,
And she looked much the same as you,
For she was quite as pensive too.
The name that I heard was Blanche-flor,
And she could not have sorrowed more.
She too, at her supper, sat and sighed,
Thoughts of her love she could not hide.'
At this news, Floire felt great delight:
'Where did they go, after that night?'
'When they left, the very next day,
To Babylon they made their way.'
Floire gave to him a cloak, full fine,
And a silver goblet for his wine.
'Sir,' said he, 'I would have you take

These gifts for lovely Blancheflor's sake;
For she you speak of, understand,
Was reft from me in my own land.'
The host, in thanking him, replied:
'Lord Jesus return her to your side!'
When they had eaten what they would
The servants made the table good.
Their beds prepared, the company
Went to their rooms and slept soundly.
Though Floire would sleep, his heart would not,
He thought of Blancheflor, and her lot,
And if he found sleep, twas but light.
When dawn broke, dispelling the night,
The company woke, and were ready
To start once more on their journey.

They take the road to Babylon and reach Monfelis

Soon on their road they were gone,
To seek the city of Babylon.
That night they came to a fine inn,
And found decent lodgings therein.
And the next day, upon the morn,
Took to the road again, at dawn.
That night they lodged in a town
Whose market was of some renown,
There they heard talk of Blancheflor,
For she'd passed that way before.
The third day, at eve, the company
Arrived at an arm of the sea,
'Hell's Deep' its name, in that country.
On the far side, lay Monfelis,
A great castle where those were found
That conducted folk o'er that sound.
The castle knew neither bridge nor ford,
The flood was too deep such to afford,
And too wide, but a horn hung high,

Set on a post, beneath the sky.
Floire proceeded to blow the horn,
To call the ferryman who, borne
On the wave, now rowed to their shore
As briskly as he could pull an oar.
He commanded a boat in which
The gentlemen might toss and pitch,
And so might every man, and squire,
And the mules, to their heart's desire.
Then they began to cross the water,
The travellers and the boat's owner,
Who gazed at Floire; to this ferryman,
The other seemed a rich nobleman,
He asked of him: 'Where are you bound?'
'Merchants are we, and o'er the sound
We go to seek Babylon, where we
Would buy and sell in that country.
If that castle might lodge a knight,
I would lodge in that place tonight.
'I'd lodge you willingly, by my creed,
For there lies good lodging indeed.
But fair friend, come tell me why,
You're sad and pensive to my eye,
Ne'er so sad a face did any show
To my sight since, six months ago,
A sorrowful maiden entered here,
Who quite as pensive did appear.
I know not if you are kin to her,
For, by my faith, you resemble her.'

xv
Also flore mit sinen dienern uff saß und wolt ritten
Begen babolome zo blanchestherin was



Floire rides to Babylon

Floire hears that Blancheflor is in Babylon

On hearing this, Floire raised his head,
‘Sir,’ said he, ‘where to was she led?’
‘To Babylon, to the Emir’s court,
For tis he that the maid has bought.’
As the man spoke, they reached the shore,
And were on solid ground once more,
And having lodged there for the night,
Floire took his leave, in the dawn light.
He gave his host a hundred in gold,
And prayed that, if in Babylon’s fold
He had a friend who’d aid the cause
Of a stranger from foreign shores,
He would send word, if he agreed,
That he might counsel them, at need.
‘Sir,’ said he, ‘ere you can enter
Babylon, you’ll reach a river
That you’ll find both deep and wide.
Once o’er the bridge, then confide
In the toll-keeper, who is my friend,
And to a like task his life doth lend.
In Babylon, a rich man is he,
With a house there that’s fine to see.
We are companions in our trade,
And share the profits we have made.
Here is a ring that you must bear,
And give my friend, once you are there,
And say I’d have him counsel you,
And he will grant you lodging too.’

They reach the river-bridge, and Babylon

The company went on their way,
And came to the bridge at midday.
There they found, beneath a tree,
He who let none there pass for free.

Beneath the tree he sat alone,
On a block of marble like a throne.
His body was richly clad, and he
A man of substance seemed to be.
None could pass the river, I say,
Lest four silver coins he did pay,
And for his horse four of the same,
Floire saluted him, in the name
Of all the gods, and then the ring
He gave to him, that he did bring
From his friend, and requested he
Should lodge them there, and kindly
Grant them his good counsel, at need
For love of that friend, if he agreed.
He, in turn, recognised the ring,
And was delighted by the thing.
And his own ring he then did send
To his wife, that she might extend
Hospitality to them, that hour,
Pointing out his house and tower.
He told them to go there swiftly,
For his ring would grant them entry.
They were welcomed hospitably,
And lodged with stabling, splendidly.
Now was Floire within the city,
Where he had long desired to be,
Lodged with his host as agreed.
Of good counsel he had great need,
For though within this foreign place
Which he had long wished to grace,
He lacked knowledge of what to do
For of its customs naught he knew.



Floire arrives in Babylon

Wisdom and Love debate within him

Wisdom set this thought in his mind
To recall his rank, and be not blind,
And not to err now, foolishly,
Through ignorance of this country.
Saying: 'What know you of these men,
To whom you speak, Floire, as and when?
What will they make of what they hear?
Reveal all, and you're a fool, tis clear.
Twould be your ruin, for the Emir
Will know your folly if he should hear.
If he does, he'll have you taken,
And hung, if I'm not mistaken.
Be wise, and return whence you came,
Once there, a fair wife you may claim,
Your parents will find you a fine bride,
A girl of good parentage beside.'
But Love replied: 'What's this I find?
Depart? And so, leave the maid behind?
Was it not for her you chose to roam?
Yet, without her, would scuttle home!
Recall you not how the other day
You'd draw your dagger, and would slay
Your own self for the love of her,
Yet would return to wed another!
And if you were there without her,
Willing or no, you'd yet remember.
Can you live, and yet lack her now?
You'd be mad to think so, I avow.
All the goods in the world, its gold,
Without her must but leave you cold.
Remain here, and be wise instead,
And rescue her, if she be not dead.
None can hold a creature readily
That is determined to be free!
If she knows you're here, she'll find a way

To speak to you, if indeed she may.
Many a way true Love will find,
That many a guard has rendered blind.
Folk do say that God e'er labours,
If He pleases, for those He favours.'
This the contest within his mind,
Which argument Love won; I find.

Floire dines with the host and his wife

In a while, to his host he came.
Finding Floire so silent, that same
Questioned him quite openly:
'Young sir, I must demand of thee,
Can it be that aught troubles you?
The lodging with us, do you rue?
If you see aught that may displease,
I shall amend it; so be at ease.'
'Sir, I thank you,' was Floire's reply,
'You speak kindly, none could deny;
Naught's amiss here, assuredly,
I but pray that God allows me
To recompense you for my stay,
And all the kind words that you say.
Sir,' said he, 'my thought dwells upon,
A thing I seek; yet thinking thereon,
What I seek, I'll not find, I fear,
Or fail to win, though I find it here.'
The host was a gentleman complete,
'Sir, said he, 'let us go and eat.
Afterwards, if I can so do,
I willingly will counsel you.'
He ceased then, his wife he sought
So that the supper might be brought:
'Lady, said he, 'honour our guest,
For none is as fair, you will attest.'
The pair, Daires and Licoris,

Seated Floire twixt them, at this,
And they drank fine wine together,
From cups wrought of gold and silver;
Vintage wines both red and white,
The mulled, and the sparkling bright.
Of fine dishes there were many
At that supper, with fowls a plenty,
And plates of venison; on wild boar
They dined, and then asked for more;
Nor for goose, crane, heron, did want,
Partridge, bustard, or cormorant;
All you can think of they addressed,
And, after they had paused to rest,
Daires, the host, had ripe fruit brought,
All to delight his little court,
Pomegranates, and figs, and pears,
– With many a cup to drown their cares! –
Peaches, and chestnuts a-plenty,
For such were grown in that country.
Sweet wine they drank, sweet fruit they ate;
All that was fine filled cup and plate.

^{xiii}
Als Flore vber tisch gar trurig saß und in sin Wirtin
absetze Was in Were Das hat si in Das er in Das sitze



The mourning Floire at the richly set table

His pensiveness and sadness is perceived

Floire gazed in the cup they did pour
While thinking still of his Blancheflor;
Twas filled to the brim, moreover,
With wine clearer than spring-water.
Helen was carved there; she did stand
By her Paris, who held her hand.
He gazed thereon, at that image,
And Love, within, roused his courage.
He said to himself: 'Now envy, there,
Paris that his love's hand doth share.
Ah, God above, will the day e'er be,
When I'll have Blancheflor thus, by me?
Come, Floire! Once from the table,
You shall have your host's wise counsel.'
The lengthy meal had weighed on him;
The host's wife had gazed long on him,
And had perceived his heart was sore;
He was sad and thoughtful and, more,
Down his face, that was open, tender,
She saw that heartfelt tears flowed ever.
She pitied him, and made it known,
To her husband, in a quiet tone.
Napkins fell from their hands, and they,
All but those three, now moved away.

xviii
Also flore vber tisch saß vnd ime der selbß vnging
Weme er sach einen napp vor ime ston Do an was
Begeben Wie der amiral sin frundin an syne arm hette



The goblet

Floire hears yet again of Blanche-flor

Then the host said: 'Fair sir, tell me,
If twould not annoy too deeply,
Of your thoughts; grant me a view,
And, by my faith, I'll counsel you.
Hide not your inner self from me,
Tis simple, as far as I can see,
To sell your goods; you seem, rather,
Troubled by some other matter.'
'Sir, by my faith,' added Licoris,
'When I first saw your face, I wis,
I thought it was Blanche-flor the fair,
And that her twin was standing there.
Such a face, and form, and manner
Is yours, she might be your sister.
I thought you both related, for you
Are so wondrously alike to view.
A fortnight she was here, with grief,
Regrets, and tears, her sole relief.
She pined for Floire, her love, I say,
And wept for him both night and day.
Twas in this very house she stayed,
Until the Emir bought the maid.
You are her brother, or her lover.'
Floire could scarce a word now utter.



The wailing Blancheflor aboard ship

He confesses the nature of his quest

Then, blurted out a hasty reply:
'A lover, and no brother am I.'
Yet, repenting of what he'd said:
'I misspoke, lady', he cried; 'instead,
Forget my words, she is no other
Than my sister, and I her brother.'
'My friend,' Daires replied, 'fear naught,
To find this maid you seek the court,
And since the maiden you would win
With truth not falsehood should begin!'
'Sir, for the Lord's sake, have mercy,
A prince am I, I swear, and truly,
My true love is that same Blancheflor,
Snatched from me, by vile envy's claw.
I have followed her to this land,
Yet here am lost, you understand.
Rich am I, in silver and gold,
And can grant to you, wealth untold,
If you can advise me, in this plight.
Judge for yourself, tell me aright,
How this will end, shall I win her,
Or die of grief, a faithful lover?

Daires describes the might of Babylon and its Emir

Daires said: 'Harm that would be
To die for love, so foolishly,
An act of which I scarce could say
That in the deed wise counsel lay.
Better to hear what I tell you:
If act is what you choose to do,
Though I think that you'll do naught
But throw your life away for sport.
The Emir hearing of such a one,
Would leave you to your martyrdom.

No king that rules in this country
Could ever, as far as I can see,
Seeking to win the like, achieve
His aim, in any way, I believe,
By use of force, or by enchantment,
No, such would ne'er serve his intent.
If all the folk that there ever were,
With all that live, in seeking her,
Thought to take her from this Emir,
Then all would fail, such is my fear.
The Emir's law spreads its wings
O'er a hundred and fifty kings.
If he summons them to Babylon,
None may excuse himself, not one.
And Babylon, on every side,
Extends for twenty leagues full wide.
The walls that guard it are full high,
And they encompass it all, say I,
And they are made of such a mortar
No pick can pierce in any quarter;
They are full thirty feet in height,
Unassailable by day or night.
Through seven score gates all enter in,
With towers above, that none can win.
To the mart, open to all men there,
All week long the good folk repair.
Within the walls of this place, say I,
Seven hundred towers rise on high.
With each held by a noble lord,
That to the city defence afford.
And the weakest of those towers
Fears no king or prince's powers;
Even Rome's mighty emperor
Is worth not a fig in this matter.
By the use of force, therefore,
None may win the fair Blancheflor.
She is so guarded night and day

That none can steal the maid away.



Daries shows Floire the prison tower

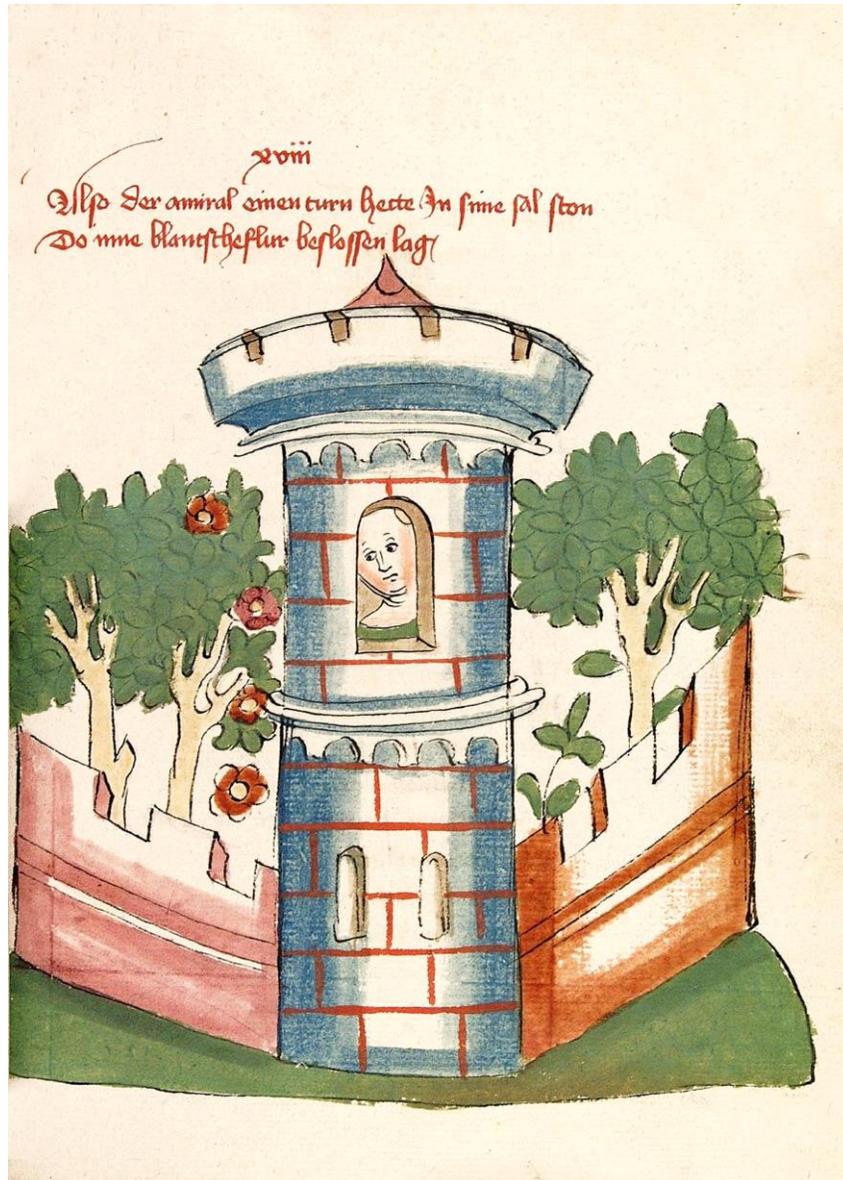
And the tower in which Blancheflor is held

In the midst of this vast city
Is a tower of great antiquity,
Two hundred feet high, a hundred wide,
Round like a chimney its outside.
The whole is of green marble wrought;
With no beam or strut its wall is fraught,
But like a belltower, tis roofed with wood,
Gilded with purest gold its hood,
While ninety feet tall is its spire,
Of the finest gold one might acquire
In minted coins, and the roof below
A hundred marks of gold doth show.
A ruby, by enchantment, on high,
Set on the spire's tip, lights the sky,
By magic and art, it glows so bright
It shines as twere the sun, at night.
All about the city, everywhere,
It sheds such splendour in the air,
That ne'er a lad on the darkest night
Bears a lantern, or a brand alight.
No knight or merchant has to guess
Where he might be, midst the darkness,
Nor others find themselves astray,
In the city at night; tis bright as day.
On land or at sea, none can doubt
Where they are, nor must cast about.
From twenty leagues away, tis clear
And bright as one not far but near.
Three floors do this high tower grace.
Skilful were they who built the place.
The floors of all three are of marble,
And unsupported (tis a marvel),
Except those above by a pillar
That rises upwards at the centre,
Reaching from the ground below

To the spire that on high doth show;
And, within it, there's a channel
Made of marble clear as crystal,
From which a flow rises higher,
Of clear and health-giving water,
Lifting as high as the third floor,
Whence the flow returns once more,
(The designer having wrought with skill)
Through another channel it doth fill
Within the pillar, and descends
From floor to floor, ere its journey ends.
The ladies that inhabit the tower
Take all they need to that bower.
Seven score chambers lie inside
Within which those ladies abide.
No place was e'er more delightful,
The pillar wrought all of marble,
And of costly wood is the portal,
Of a kind that's wellnigh immortal.
The windows are wrought of ebony
And myrtle-wood, splendid to see.
All who the Emir's tower wrought
With great labour his comfort sought,
No gliding serpent can come there,
Nor can other vermin climb the stair.
The ceilings and the walls there hold
Paintings done in azure and gold,
And the inscriptions there reveal
The subjects the paintings conceal;
All the Emir's forebears are there,
Their battles and prowess they declare.
In each high chamber he has placed
A maiden suited to his taste,
That might serve him at his pleasure
And be summoned at his leisure.
From one tier to another go
Flights of stairs, above and below.

The middle tier has a single door
In a chamber leading to that floor,
Through which the maidens descend
To the Emir's chamber and ascend.
And all there must serve the Emir,
As it pleases him, it would appear.
Seven score maids are in that place,
Of noble form and fair of face.
And since those maids are in its power
They name that place the Maiden's Tower.
Two pairs of maids serve the Emir,
On rising and sleeping they draw near,
One of the pair brings him water,
His towel's held by the other.
The guards set to man the tower,
Bear no lances within that bower.
Three of them, the steadiest men
Control each floor, and under them,
Are nine who are appointed there
To serve him humbly and prepare
The food he eats, and make his bed.
Those overseers fill all with dread,
And, so guard the floors of the tower
They know its state at any hour.
In their fists they grasp a blade,
A dagger or poleaxe there displayed,
In the passageway each doth stand,
To guard the way, you understand,
And not a bird could fly within,
Though it might seek to enter in,
For aught that it could seek to do;
They'd obstruct it, and slay it too!
Of this porter, I'd have you know,
For great knowledge he did show;
The Emir loved him with all his heart,
Though if he'd thought that by his art
He might deceive him in any way

He'd not have left him there a day!
Firm and steadfast was this porter,
For if he'd been a useless idler
Whom one might bribe in any way
As I have heard some are today,
And one that Floire might have deceived,
I'd tell you so (and be believed!)



Blancheflor at the window of her prison tower

The host tells of the tower's porter

I'll leave him be, but let me tell
Of the host again, and what befell.
For he now laboured to devise
A means for Floire to realise
His aim, and soon spoke again, so:
'Floire, be not so filled with woe,
Though of the porter I would speak,
Who guards the path to her you seek.
He lets none pass at any hour,
To spy, on high, within the tower.
For except the Emir should allow
That passage, they'll be harmed, I trow.
If they do not depart that place,
In silence, and with no ill grace,
He'll beat and plunder them until
They obey him, and do his will;
For he has leave from the Emir
To beat those who show little fear.
He guards the tower thus with care,
Without him none can enter there,
None can put e'en a foot inside;
With him the power doth reside.
Four watchmen, upon that tower,
Watch night and day, every hour.
Of these watchmen I tell you true,
They are paid well for what they do,
For they must watch all day and night,
Both in the darkness and the light.
If any would approach, they blow
A horn, and signal to those below.

221
Alps der portener der des turnes hütze und flore
gar güelich mit ein ander reiten



Floire talking to the guard before the tower

And the Emir's behaviour

The Emir's custom is to hold
Each maiden a full year, all told,
And then command that she be led
To execution, and lose her head.
He lets no clerk nor knight appear
To champion her, from far or near.
Head from body is struck asunder,
Such honour to the maid they render.
Then when he would take another
He has the rest descend together
To a fair garden there below,
With fluttering hearts and full of woe,
Little doubting the loss of honour
That might come, thus shamed for ever.

And of the garden of the Emir

Now, of this garden you shall hear
For, there, they'll be, after a year.
The garden is large and very fine,
And none is as lovely, I'd opine.
One part a wall doth there enfold,
Adorned with azure and with gold.
And on the wall, so I have heard,
Upon the right, there sits a bird.
Copper covers it, body and wing,
None may in silence view the thing,
For when one comes, it gives a cry,
That all must hear who thus pass by;
Fiercer it sounds than any creature,
None there is can match its manner.
Wolf, lion, tiger, drop to the ground,
And lie still, when they hear that sound.
When the bird has vented its anger,
It sings most sweetly thereafter,

And, the garden now grown serene,
Such sweet birdsong fills all the scene,
Whether you deem it false or true,
Of larks, and jays, and blackbirds too,
Of starlings, nightingales, they say,
Orioles, finches, in bright array,
And all the other birds found there,
That fill with joy the garden's air,
Who hears their chorus and their song
Cannot but for their loved-one long.
Round another, flows, by strange device,
One of the streams of Paradise,
The Euphrates that river's name,
And no man can traverse that same,
No none can seek to pass it by
Except they own the wings to fly.
In its clear depths, every manner
Of precious stone lights the water;
There sapphires gleam, chalcedony,
Sardonyx, jacinth, one may see,
Rubies, topazes, and jasper,
Emeralds, quartz, and many another
Jewel, whose name I will not list,
Or know not, bright as amethyst.
This garden too is ever in flower,
And birdsong fills the pleasant hour.
There is no tree of proper worth
That rises here, upon this Earth,
Ebony, rowan, or plane-tree,
No new graft, no fine fig-tree,
Peach, or walnut-tree, or pear,
No sound fruit tree, but prospers there.
Incense, cinnamon, and pepper,
Clove, and zedoary, and ginger,
And other spices that smell sweet
Make the inventory complete;
None finer grant both taste and scent,

Twixt Orient and Occident.
Who dwells there midst the odours,
Of the spices, and the flowers,
And hears the birdsong up on high,
The grasshoppers beneath the sky,
That do the listener, thus, entice,
Think themselves in Paradise.
On a central lawn doth appear
A spring, that is both fresh and clear;
It runs in a squared-off channel,
Wrought of silver and of crystal.
A tree is planted o'er the spring;
None born e'er saw a fairer thing.
Since it ever flowers there above,
They call that tree the Tree of Love.
A fresh flower blooms, if one should fade;
The gardener's skill is there displayed,
For the tree's leaves are ever green.
Its careful planting may be seen,
For they that did the place conceive
Wrought subtle art there, I believe.
At dawn, when the sun seeks the sky,
The green leaves are all lit thereby,
And so auspicious is its setting,
That tree is forever flowering.

And of how the Emir chooses his consort

When the Emir chooses a maid,
He has the maidens there arrayed,
Beside the ever-flowing river,
Gold its gravel neath the water,
And o'er its channel they must pass,
That's wrought of gold and crystal glass.
They cross in orderly manner,
While the Emir views the water,
And wills his people to draw near,

For a marvel doth now appear.
When a virgin passes o'er,
The water is both clear and pure.
But when one passes that is not,
The water's turbid, at that spot.
Tis a wonder all that affair,
To which no other can compare.
Any woman the trial shames
Is given at once to the flames.
And then he has the rest pass by
Neath the tree, that he might spy
Which shall serve that year, of all;
Tis she on whom the flowers fall.
The tree behaves in such manner
That she on whom falls a flower,
Is then crowned, immediately,
And named as queen of the country.
He weds the maid with great honour,
And as her husband he loves her,
For the year to come, as I've said,
Then violates her, and she is dead.
Yet if there is a maiden there,
That he loves best, and is most fair,
Then by enchantment, at his will,
The flower falls on that maid still.
On a month from this day will fall
The feast to which that lord will call
All the noblemen of his court,
For on that day his queen is sought.
Blancheflor he will choose that day,
For none is dearer to him, I say,
Of seven score there's none so fair,
Whom he might choose to marry there.
He desires her as his consort,
His mind is set on her, in short.
The time that yet remains doth fly,
And the hour of the feast is nigh.'

‘You have my thanks.’ was Floire’s reply.
‘Though if tis thus, then I must die!
For should she marry the Emir,
Then my mission has failed, I fear.
Daires, dear host, what shall I do?
Upon my life, here’s a pretty stew.
Yet what care I, if I lose my life,
If I cannot take the maid to wife?’



Floire clasps the tower in his arms

Daires, the host, counsels Floire

Daires replied: 'Since it doth appear
That your heart's possessed by that fear,
Such that you care not for your life
If you take not the maid to wife,
Now listen closely to what I say;
I'll grant the best advice I may.
Tomorrow, go straight to the tower,
Having made your plan this hour,
And though you go with rapid stride
Take great care your aim to hide.
The porter, who's a vicious one,
Will e'er your intention question,
But you, with cunning, must reply
Such a tower you'd raise on high,
Once you return to your own land,
That might be viewed close to hand.
Of your fine speech he'll take heed,
And think you a rich man indeed,
Then to acquaint himself with you
He'll play a game of chess or two,
For he most willingly plays the game
And takes great pleasure in that same.
Now you shall have, of a surety,
A hundred ounces of gold, from me,
Go not, if you'd live till you're old,
To that meeting without the gold,
For with that gold, you'll succeed;
My plan it is to arouse his greed.
Let him win, and to him render
All the gold, when you surrender.
And he will marvel that you seek
To play him, your game being weak.
On the morrow go there once more,
And concede the game, as before,

But take twice the gold with you,
Of your own store, and likewise do,
Grant him all, but then maintain
You'll not return to play again.
His thanks he'll give for that same,
And then beg you for one more game.
You will say: 'Thank you, in turn,
My love, for this, you rightly earn,
Of gold and silver, I've a store,
So won't object to play once more,
For you have welcomed me with grace,
And good address, sir, to this place.'
Four hundred ounces of fine gold,
In your hand take there, all told,
And your goblet in the other hand,
The next day, and let him command
The play, and in losing render up
All of your gold, but not the cup.
He'll offer to play for that same,
If you would risk another game.
Say that you'll play no more that day,
But take him to dine right away.
He'll be delighted with his treasure,
Having plundered you at leisure,
And he'll honour you as you dine,
Hold you dear, as he sups the wine.
He will covet that cup of yours,
And long to own it, in due course.
He'll offer a thousand marks, in lieu,
To obtain the goblet from you,
But tell him you'll not sell it him,
But from pure friendship grant it him.
At which, deceived completely, he
Will love you all the more, you see;
He'll fall at your feet, full of joy,
And words of homage will employ.
And you'll accept them, not despise

His trust in you, if you are wise.
For love and honour he will afford
To you, as if you were his lord.
And then you may reveal your plight,
Say why you languish day and night,
And if he will, he'll grant you aid;
And if not, all's lost, I am afraid.'



Floire bribes the guard

Floire carries out his plan

Floire thanked Daires from his heart,
For the counsel he did impart.
He went to bed, having drunk deep,
Although his thoughts robbed him of sleep.
Floire arose at the break of day,
And Daires saw him on his way.
He went to the foot of the tower
And gazed about, in the dawn hour.
The porter came, and shouted aloud,
So that the youth was almost cowed:
'A spy, I see, or perchance a traitor,
Gazing at us!' so cried the porter.
'Sir,' Floire replied, 'by my faith, no,
I come but to view the tower, so
I might build the like in my own land,
And would but see it close to hand.'
Now, Floire spoke so courteously,
A nobleman as the guard could see,
And appeared so handsome indeed
The man abandoned his harsh creed,
Saying: 'He looks not like a spy.'
And he asked of Floire, by and by,
If he liked chess, and would play a game,
For he was partial to that same.
Floire said he would. 'What stake, my friend,'
Said the porter, 'will you defend?'
'A hundred ounces of purest gold.'
'And I the same, since you're so bold.'
They sat down to play, as they'd agreed,
Floire was the better player indeed,
Yet did the game to the guard concede,
And paid him, as Daires had decreed.
The porter marvelled at one so bold,
And thanked Floire for the heap of gold.

Then begged him to play one more game
By which he might retrieve that same.
Floire agreed without more delay,
And so returned the very next day,
With two hundred in gold in his hand,
And staked it all, as Daires had planned.
Floire was no slower to concede,
And yielded the winnings as agreed.
The porter was overjoyed and gave
Him thanks, and dubbed his tactics brave.
Floire took his leave of him, but then
Agreed to return and play again,
And the next day was at his command,
With the prized goblet in his hand,
And four hundred gold pieces more,
Which he staked, as he had before.
And then the porter did the same,
And they sat down to play the game.
Before the board sat the porter
And set all the pieces in order.
With his knight Floire now wrought havoc
And cried 'Check!'; the porter took stock,
And having counted up the cost,
Perceived the game was truly lost.
He offered Floire the gold he'd won;
He refused, and would accept none,
Delighting the other by doing so,
Who to retain it proved not slow.
Being deceived as to his aim,
He sought to play another game,
With the cup at risk on Floire's side,
'No, in truth, I cannot!' he replied.

Xvii
Als der portener und flore mit ein ander sthochzabel ziehen



Floire and the guard playing chess

He wins the porter's loyalty

Floire led the porter off instead
To his lodgings, to be wined and fed.
He was honoured by the latter
For his wealth, and then the matter
Of the cup moved the man deeply,
For he coveted it greatly,
Cried he'd offer for it, all told,
A thousand ounces of pure gold.
Floire, finding him so covetous
Feigned to be truly generous
And said: 'No gold I'll have of you,
But gift you it, for love of you,
And you may grant to me indeed
Some favour if I seem in need.'
The porter took the cup and swore
He'd serve him gladly, evermore.
Seduced by the gift he'd received,
The porter was thus well-deceived.
And led Floire, without more ado,
Into the garden, its grounds to view,
Fell at his feet, and scarce would rise,
(Which Floire accepted, being wise)
And swore again he would afford
Him service, as if he were his lord,
And would prove both faithful and true;
No other course would he pursue.



Floire confesses his love for Blancheflor to the guard

Then takes him into his confidence

‘Sir,’ said Floire, ‘since that be so,
Then, as my man, I’ll let you know
A secret, for I trust in you:
In this tower, that we now view,
My friend’s prisoned, her name Blanche-flor,
I so love the maid, furthermore,
That I have followed her to this land;
She was reft from me, you understand.
Come, aid me now, sir, of your grace,
For in your hands my life I place.
The end will be that either I gain
The maid, or die of grief, in vain.’
The porter hearing this was dismayed,
And saw that he had been betrayed.
‘Bemocked am I, I see it now;
Deceived by your gift, I avow!
Thus,’ he cried, ‘wronged by my greed,
For your gift, I’ll win death indeed.
And yet for this there is no recourse,
You have bound me, though not by force.
Whether ill or good come to me,
I must break one bond of loyalty,
And if I know aught, then say I,
All three of us are bound to die.
To your lodgings now be on your way,
And return again, on the third day.
Tis then I’ll address the matter.’
Floire gave answer to the porter:
‘Your terms are too severe, say I.’
The porter rendered him this reply:
‘I’ll set the course, for if we’re caught,
Tis death to me, and all unsought.’
Floire departed, the guard remained;
Each of the other thus complained,
The guard at length, the other in brief,

For Floire cared not, tis my belief,
What he must do to win his love;
Death he'd risk, mountains he'd move.

The End of Part II of 'Floire et Blancheflor'

Part III

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Floire returns to the tower

Floire now returned to the tower.
The porter had it in his power
To present him to the fair array
Of ladies there, on the third day.
Flowers he'd ordered to be brought
Basketfuls would his plan support.
Thus, Floire arrived, as appointed,
Praying he'd not be disappointed.
A tunic he wore of crimson hue,
The porter advised him so to do,
So that the flowers and his dress
The very same colour did possess.
The porter despatched that same hour
Those flowery gifts to the tower.
A giant basketful for each lady,
Guaranteed to gain Floire entry.
Floire closed his eyes, oped them not,
And the porter carried out his plot;
Floire in a basket, hidden, did go,
Covered in flowers from head to toe.
For the porter instructed his men,
'Carry all those within, and then,
On ascending the tower, be sure
To bear this one to fair Blancheflor;
Go to her room, tis by the stair
Above the Emir's chamber there,
And say he sends to her a gift;
I think you will be thanked for it,
For she will hold that present dear;
Then lose no time returning here.'

The porter's plan is badly executed

So, the baskets they bore off straight,
Two staggering under the weight
Of that which held our Floire; they swore
At the heaviness of what they bore,
Puffing and panting climbed the stair,
And at the top no more could bear.
They left the basket for Blancheflor,
But set it down at the wrong door.
And leaving thus the flowers behind,
Abandoned them for whoe'er to find,
Shouted out their message, and then
Down the stairs they vanished again.



The flower baskets are carried into the tower

Floire is discovered by the wrong maiden

The maid within, with thanks, replied,
And sought to know what was inside,
Pleased by the gift left by the pair.
Floire thought it was his lover there.
Hearing the maid, filled with delight,
He leapt from the basket outright,
And nigh on frightened her to death,
While she, having taken a breath,
Cried aloud, and most forcefully,
'Ah! What is this wonder I see!'
Floire leapt back in the basket straight,
Wondrously fearful of his fate!
As twas not Blancheflor, this maid,
He thought he'd surely been betrayed,
And hid himself amidst the flowers,
As one beneath the verdure cowers!

Who conceals his presence

Her companions, hearing the maid,
Soon arrived and, once present, bade
Her say what caused her cries of fear,
For no other was there, twas clear.
They sought to reassure her, while she
Thought of Blancheflor, suddenly,
For she was her friend, and well knew
How Blancheflor her plight did rue,
And pined for her lover; so was wise
And hid the cause of her surprise:
'From the flowers flew a butterfly,
And that was the reason for my cry,'
She said, 'it caused my show of fear,
For I was scared when it drew near.'
They all mocked her, once she'd explained

Then left, while she alone remained.
This maid kept Blanche-flor company,
Her father was king of Germany.
The two maids loved one another,
And served the Emir together.
She was the loveliest, to be sure,
In that tower, but for Blanche-flor.
Never a quarrel had they there,
Into her chamber she would repair,
Blanche-flor's, I mean, she often sought.
Oft she spoke, the other said naught,
For night and day Blanche-flor wept,
While the maid her company kept.
Their rooms were next to each other,
With a door twixt one another,
By which they might change location,
If they wished for conversation.
Gloris she was called, that same.
Blanche-flor, she now summoned, by name.
'Fair companion, my Blanche-flor
Come now, and view the gift they bore.
For my discretion you'll love me,
For quite the rarest flower you'll see.
Such as grows not in this harsh land;
Tis from afar you understand.
Come, if you would view the flower,
Come, view it here, in my own bower.'

Floire is reunited with Blanche-flor

'Enough! Gloris' cried Blanche-flor,
'Why annoy me? Do so no more.
For you are wrong to tease me so,
By my faith, when I beg you no.
Flowers are for those who have their love;
Joy and delight such hearts do move.
Fair sweet Gloris, fair friend, I near

The end of my brief life, tis clear.
The Emir says that he will prevail,
Yet, if God please, his plan will fail.
The Emir will have my love no more
Than Floire will have his own Blancheflor.
The Emir foiled of his victory,
Will seek to slay me secretly,
I wish for husband nor lover,
If Floire's lost to me forever.'
For her, at this, Gloris, felt pity
And spoke to her again, gently:
'Sweet lady, tis for love of you
These flowers I would have you view.'
When to her love her friend referred,
Blancheflor entered without a word.
Floire heard all that they did share,
And when he knew his love was there
He leapt from the basket, with glad face;
No finer lad the world did grace.
She knew her lover instantly,
And he his own true love did see;
He saw his love; hers she did view;
Who was more joyful than those two?
Without a word, they clasped each other,
Filled with delight to be together.
In love and pity, tears did pour,
From Floire and his dear Blancheflor.
In one another's fond embrace,
They lost themselves, kissing apace;
Of kissing they were scarcely done,
Who were united now as one.
Their kisses were of love full sweet,
Savouring of a love complete.
When they ceased, no word was said,
The simply smiled, and gazed instead.
Fair Gloris viewed their contentment
Their joy, and mutual commitment,

Laughing she said to her Blancheflor:
‘Companion, what would you more?
Know you this flower? You were in woe,
And now delight it is you show!
Great virtue lies then in this flower,
That o’er sadness has such power.
Before, the gift you would not view
And now naught is so dear to you.
Great must needs be an enemy
To part you two, it seems to me.’
‘Praise be, Gloris!’ cried Blancheflor,
‘Here is my friend, I ask no more!’
And, turning to her, cried anew:
‘He’s beside me, thanks be to you.’
Gloris gave thanks to God (and she
Uttered those thanks most tearfully)
That she had not betrayed his plan,
Or Floire must needs be a dead man.
‘Of this be sure,’ was her reply,
‘That none could love you more than I,
And I will protect you both, I swear,
As I would myself, howe’er I fare,
Since thus he is revealed to me.’
Floire heard her words most joyfully.
Then Blancheflor led him by the hand
To her chamber, hers to command.

The lovers converse

In a recess, with a curtain
Of woven silk, where the maiden
Rested, they sat privately,
Exchanging their thoughts urgently.
Floire was the first to speak his mind,
‘My love, that you I thus could find,
Fills me,’ he said, ‘with deep delight,
My suffering ended at the sight

Of your face; I was near to death,
Labouring hard with every breath.
Never have I, since I lost you,
Found rest or happiness anew.
If I but have you by me still,
It seems to me I feel no ill.’
She replied: ‘Are you not that Floire
Who was sent away to Montoire,
And so was reft away from me,
By the king, your sire, or treachery?
Fair sweet friend, I’d have you know
That I love you, and e’er did so.
And so have felt joy and delight,
Neither in daylight, nor at night.
How is it I see you, my dear?
Tis by enchantment, you are here.
Fair sweet friend, Floire, I see tis you,
Yet scarce believe the thing is true.
If it be you, and I see aright,
Enjoy your love; in her, delight!’
And that he did, most lovingly,
Embracing her there, privately.
After that, he told Blancheflor how
He’d searched for her, until now,
From the day he’d departed, that is,
Until this day, when she was his.

They remain together for a fortnight

Fifteen whole days they were there,
Ate and drank together, that pair,
And, as they wished, took their delight.
Sorrow forgot; their hearts were light.
Gloris made sure to guard them still,
And serve their interests with a will.
And fair Gloris they served also,
Thus, all was well, time brought no woe.

Their hidden life continued so,
No alteration, nor some ill blow,
Threatening the love betwixt those two,
Floire and Blanche-flor, now joined anew.

Fortune's fickleness

It could not last; fickle as ever
Fortune changed with the weather,
And showed the envy that claims her
In respect of every lover.
Unable her envy to conceal
Of their life and love, she spun her wheel.
From on high all must fall below,
And, once above, now down must go.
Such is her nature and her game,
Her intent is ever the same.
The whole world knows thus they may fare,
For all folk feel her everywhere.
Since that her being is unstable,
Fortune ever turns the table,
Takes from one, gives to another,
Eight times a day changing, ever.
She gives not of her rich excess
To those with talent or prowess;
But rather she grants royalty
To fools, wealth and lands a plenty;
She makes fine clerics seek their bread,
Bishoprics go to rogues instead.
Who thinks to put his trust in her,
Is but a fool, the wise concur.
Who thinks she'll guarantee success,
Knows nothing of her fickleness.
She brings now laughter, and now tears,
Now joy, now woe, now hopes, now fears.
She'll grant us pleasure and delight,
Then anguish, and the darkest night.

The Emir misses Blancheflor

One morning, Gloris rose and dressed,
As the daylight the heavens blessed,
And called to wake her fair Blancheflor,
Who answered: 'Go you on, before.'
Twas sleepily the maid replied,
Then back into her sleep did slide.
Gloris went to serve the Emir,
Who asked why she alone drew near,
Why fair Blancheflor was not in place,
'Sire, forgive the maid, of your grace!
All night her book she did employ,
Praying that you might live in joy,
And since she scarcely slept all night,
She sleeps more deeply, now tis light.'
'Is this the truth, Gloris?' 'Sire, yes!'
'A noble task then she did address.
Kindness itself my love must be,
That wishes thus long life to me.'
The Emir took pity on the maid
Who such care of him had betrayed.
On the next day Gloris arose,
Before the other, from her repose,
And called out softly to her friend:
'We are late, and must swift descend.'
Blancheflor replied: 'I'm ready now;
I'll be there before you, I vow.'
Yet once more Blancheflor's lover
Clasped her and she him, foolish ever;
Then she kissed him, he kissed Blancheflor,
And kissing they fell asleep once more,
Lips to lips, in that sweet embrace,
They slept together, face to face.
Gloris went off to the pillar
With a basin to draw water.

When she returned, she called, softly:
‘Fair maid!’ four times, then more loudly.
But receiving no reply, instead,
Thought Blancheflor had gone on ahead.
She entered the Emir’s chamber,
‘Where is Blancheflor?’ he asked of her.
‘By my faith, she must fear me,’ he said,
To linger, and come not near my bed.’
Gloris most thoughtful did appear:
‘By my faith, sire, I thought her here,
For she arose before me this day.
As she is not here, I shall stay.
If she’d been able, she’d be here,
She was delayed, it would appear!’



Gloris explains Blancheflor's absence to the Emir

He sends his chamberlain to seek for her

The Emir, too, was deep in thought.
At last, his chamberlain he sought:
'Go, seek Blancheflor, see that she
Descends the stair, and rapidly.'
The chamberlain noticed not Gloris,
And retired above, speedily.
When he had climbed to the chamber
Neath the canopy, in the corner,
In bed, he thought he saw Gloris
And Blancheflor, sleeping peacefully.
Why should he not think it so?
Upon Floire's face no beard did show,
Not a moustache appeared to sight,
All that was there seemed aright;
Naught but two maids he thought he saw
The fairest that the tower bore.
Seeing those maidens resting there,
So sweetly, he pitied the pair,
Was abashed by the sight, and fled
To report to the Emir instead:
'Sire, a fair sight I have seen!
Ne'er a greater love has there been
Than that of Blancheflor for Gloris,
And she for her, it seems to me.
Lip to lip there, and face to face,
They are resting in fond embrace.
Sweetly there they lie together,
Fast asleep, one and the other.
I wakened them not, out of pity,
Fearing lest I trouble them greatly,
For well suited they thus appear.'
Gloris heard, and trembled with fear.



The Emir sends his chamberlain to the tower

The Emir discovers the lovers

The Emir was gripped by jealousy;
Another lay with his love, said he:
'Bring me my scimitar,' he cried,
'I shall go see what you have spied.
Gloris, you've failed me, for your part!'
Then he arose with troubled heart.
Afflicted, indeed, with pain was he
Angered deeply, as all could see.
At once he left his own chamber
Burning with jealousy's dark fever.
Though he believed none would dare
Seek to possess his own love there,
Nonetheless, Amor, by his art,
Roused jealousy within his heart.
He and his chamberlain, instantly,
Mounted the stair, while, angrily,
He grasped his scimitar in his hand,
And soon before the bed did stand.
The window had been opened wide
To welcome the sun's rays inside.
The lovers were sleeping, sweetly,
Clasped in a tight embrace, and he
Saw they were resting lip to lip,
Scarce dreaming, as they lay hip to hip,
That joy would end in woe outright
If God now failed to aid their plight.
The chamber was all filled with light,
The risen sun was shining bright,
Up to the heavens soared the lark.
Yet when he saw them, all grew dark;
He saw that the one was Blanche-flor,
The other he'd ne'er seen before.
Floire beside his love lay there,
But from his face none could declare
Whether this was a man or no,

For on that face no beard did grow,
And, except for the fair Blancheflor,
No fairer a visage that tower bore.
The king gazed hard but knew him not;
Jealousy pierced him on the spot.
Such is the nature of Love that he
E'er makes the lover fear treachery.
The Emir cried: 'Come, bare their chests,
Good chamberlain, their naked breasts
We shall view, ere we wake this pair,
Both we'll have revealed to the air.'



Floire and Blancheflor are caught in bed together

He threatens to slay them

Their breasts uncovered, the Emir saw
That a youth lay beside Blancheflor.
He felt such grief he said not a word,
And sought to slay the wretch unheard,
But then he thought that he should know
The rogue's name, ere he slew him so.
The two young people woke together,
Astounded, fearful to discover
The Emir standing close nearby,
Deeming they were about to die.
They saw the naked blade hover,
And in their hearts felt its tremor.
Now the Emir had caught them so
They awaited the mortal blow.
Now were they troubled, full of woe,
Waking to see their mortal foe.
Floire wept, as did Blancheflor,
Viewing that blade the Emir bore.
While the Emir was full of anger
Finding the two there together.



The Emir seeks to kill the lovers kneeling before him

His hand is stayed

He questioned Floire: 'Who then are you,
The boldest rogue I e'er did view,
Who dare to enter, thus, my tower,
And lie with Blancheflor, in her bower?
By all the gods that mortals honour,
You shall die now, in dishonour!
Both now must die, and here I stand,
Ready to slay you with my own hand.'
The youth and maid wept together,
And gazed with pity at one another.
Floire cried: 'For God's sake, say not so!
Aught but that, for you should know,
She is my love, and I, her lover;
Long I searched, her to discover.'
Then the Emir's seneschal cried:
'My fair lord, let the two be tried;
Till your people have heard the pair,
Pass no judgement on this affair.'

The Emir summons his lords to judge the case

This was granted, he had them rise
And they were bound before his eyes,
That they might not escape their fate.
He summoned the lords of that state,
Who were gathered not far away,
Within the city, against the day,
Which was close by, when the Emir
Chose his companion for that year.
Came many a king and emperor,
Dukes and counts, many a leader,
To fill the palace of the Emir;
All those he ruled did thus appear.
He made them all stand silent there
To hear his thoughts on that affair.

On hearing his wish and command,
None spoke, indeed, on either hand.
Then he mounted the platform, his heart
Still filled with anger, for his part.
'Lords,' said he, 'now hear my word,
And pass judgement on what is heard,
And he who wavers from the right
Shall meet his death ere it be night.'
Those who were bound to the Emir
Shuddered indeed his words to hear.

He addresses the assembly

'My lords,' said he, 'you all do know
Of this Blancheflor, who to my woe
I purchased, for a weight of gold;
Many an ounce it was, all told,
And this was but two months ago;
Eight times her weight I gave, or so.
Fairer than all she did appear,
And thus, I held the maiden dear.
In my tower she dwelt, for, there,
Dwell twenty-eight maids, each one fair,
To serve all my needs, with honour.
I held her dear o'er every other.
I had such love for her, by my life,
I wished to make the maid my wife.
Because she was noble and fair,
My passion was invested there.
Each day she would come to me,
On rising, to serve me, graciously.
Yesterday morning, twas my lot
That, on awakening, she came not.
I sent my chamberlain to find her;
A youth he found sleeping by her,
Whom he mistook for a maiden.
He returned to tell me of them.

As swift as I could, I went to see,
And gazed on the pair, most angrily,
So grieved I could not speak a word.
I seek their deaths, as you have heard.
My lords, tis all as I have said.
My chamberlain begged me instead,
That before you, in our court here,
I should seek your judgment clear.
I reflected that twould be ill,
Without your counsel, thus to kill.
My lords, you all have heard my case,
Avenge my shame now, in this place.'

Also blancheflor vnd flore wurden beide gebunden
für fürsten vnd heren gefirt in den garten vnd stumt
Serammul vnd clage ab in.



Floire and Blancheflor are charged

A subject king argues for due consideration

A subject king rose to his feet,
And answered: 'My lords, I entreat
You all to hear me; you know now
The shame neath which our sire doth bow,
Nonetheless, we should hear more
Ere we pass judgement on Blancheflor,
And on this youth, lest they can say
A word that might our judgement sway.
To deny their right to reply,
Ere we judge, lacks justice, say I.'

Another argues the contrary

Lord Yliers, on the other side,
A proud and mighty lord replied:
'Royal sir, think what you will,
You must concede the matter still.
If our Emir purchased the maid,
He may slay her, if thus betrayed,
And he who has stolen the prize
Can make no valid plea, likewise,
Their crime was revealed openly,
Thus, they should die, of a surety.'

Floire seeks to take the blame

Then all the lords rose to their feet,
The whole assembly there complete,
When he had spoken, and declared
The judgement that they be not spared.
He said: 'Sire let me bring them here,
That they may burn; the judgement's clear.'
His request was granted; he, before
Them all, led Floire and Blancheflor.

They came to that forum, weeping,
Each the other's visage seeking.
Floire, to his fair Blanche-flor, did cry:
'My love, we are thus bound to die,
Both doomed to utter our last breath,
In a short while, and meet one death.
Yet, my love, who yielded to me,
Your woeful ending is due to me.
For if I'd not entered the tower,
Death would not have you in his power.
Twas not through you this came to be;
Now you must lose your life through me.
Twice such a death I should suffer,
If that were allowed by Nature,
Once for yourself, once for my part,
For this is all my fault, dear heart.
Yet, hold tight to the ring I gave you,
While you have it, none can slay you.'

Blanche-flor seeks the same

Blanche-flor, as she wept, replied:
'My love, the fault is on my side!
My sweet friend, Floire, in a breath,
Tis I that bring about your death.
You had come to this far country
Wishing only to seek for me.
I alone am the occasion
For my woe; I, the sole reason.
On me the judgement then should fall,
Take back your ring; let me bear all.
I'd not wish to escape death so;
To die for you shall ease my woe.'
Yet a just God would not allow
That either one to Death should bow.
The fair Blanche-flor yielded a sigh,
Affirming that he must not die,

Saying, again, he should take the ring,
While he to his first plea did cling.
She wished not to retain, indeed,
A thing of which he now had need.
Once, twice, sweet words he did employ,
And when she wavered, showed his joy.
Yet Blanche-flor said, it was not right,
The ring would gain her scant respite;
'You're in the wrong, my love,' she said,
'If you would seek to die instead,
For I well know when Death sees you,
He'll seek me for my beauty too.'
'Fair one,' said he, 'tis I should die;
Twas I did all befell thereby.'
Speaking so, the lovers came there
Weeping, hands clasped, one fate to share.

x. xxi

Also flore ein vngelîn hette Das Im sin müetter Die
Künigin gap vnd Wer Das hette Den möhte man nie
geröten Das gap er blancheflor vnd Wolt er für si sterben



Floire gives Blancheflor his mother's ring

The like beauty of the pair of lovers

They were both told to keep the peace;
Once in the palace, talk must cease.
Then the pair were brought before
The Emir; Floire and his Blancheflor.
They saw the great lords gathered there;
Sad tears and sighs the two did share.
They had no hope that death would spare
Either, and yet they seemed so fair,
That their beauty, and their sadness,
Equalled the Moon in her brightness.
Not Trojan Paris, nor Absalom,
Parthenopaeus, nor Hippomedon,
Nor Helen who was Leda's daughter,
Nor Antigone, nor her sister,
Ismene, equalled in beauty
Those two, that to death went sadly.

The description of Floire

Floire, the youth, appeared so fair
That none, at his age, could compare.
But fifteen years of age was he,
Yet tall enough, as all could see.
His head was shapely, with blonde hair
That floated free, as he wept there,
His brow noble, most pale indeed;
None living were of nobler breed.
His eyebrows dark in hue, yet slight,
No fairer youth ere met the sight.
His fine eyes were large with weeping,
None could be sated with gazing
Upon those orbs, in sheer delight,
That now with tears were shining bright.
His face was like the rising sun,

When radiant day is first begun.
At mouth and chin, his face was bare,
Lacking moustaches or beard there.
Solid flanks, broad in the chest,
Pale as a fleur-de-lys his breast,
Strong his arms, hands white as snow,
I think that no man there did know
A youth more handsome at his age,
Stronger, more valiant, more sage.
A purple robe the lad now wore,
His arms were bound, the ropes secure.

The description of Blanche-flor

Half-dressed, likewise, was the maid,
As upon judgement she now stayed,
Her mass of hair was blonde also,
Whiter than ermine the brow below.
Her tresses were parted o'er her crown,
To her shoulders they straggled down.
Brown eyebrows, grey glittering eyes,
Brighter than jewels shone likewise.
None could match them for beauty;
Those who gazed upon her closely
Saw that those eyes were full of tears,
As one o'ercome with grief appears.
Her skin was that shade of colour
Clear glass reveals, none is subtler.
Her nostrils too were finely made,
As if by an artist portrayed;
Her mouth was traced in like manner,
Nature never wrought a better.
No fairer form had any maid,
No queen a lovelier displayed.
Her lips, in truth, were made to kiss,
A touch of crimson spoke of bliss.
Her teeth were small, and as bright

As polished silver in the light.
From her lips came a breath so fair,
One might live a week upon the air
That issued forth, so sweet it, still,
Full seven days later, eased all ill.
Her chin and neck were such as might
In any age arouse delight.
Her skin was pale as pale could be,
Whiter than blossom on the tree.
Her form was such, so finely made,
As if by an artist twas portrayed.
Slim were the flanks, the hips well-set,
Skill and art were there well-met.
Her hands white, the fingers slender
Long and straight, fine and tender,
Not a man, that she stood before,
Thought any nobler than Blanche-flor.
At her beauty, all were astounded,
Their admiration unbounded.
None were so wretched it appears
As not to pity Blanche-flor's tears,
And the judgement all there would
Have overturned, if they but could.
Yet the Emir with wrath did glare,
Showing scant pity for that pair.
Judgement against them had been found,
And, upon that, the two were bound.

The pair are led to the city square

In the midst of the city square,
Three servants a pyre did prepare.
There the pair were led, together,
That the one death they might suffer.
When the nobles saw them bound,
Sorrowful murmurs rose around,
And most who viewed that sight shed tears

For lovers of such tender years,
And said an ill thing it would be
To see them die so cruelly.
And if they'd been able, and had dared,
Once ransomed, both lives they'd have spared.
The nobleman who'd found her ring,
(From her hand she had cast the thing)
Now returned it to her finger,
Seeking not to bear it longer,
So overcome was he with pity.

The Emir questions them

They approached the Emir slowly.
He, who'd heard the lamentation,
Swiftly put them to the question.
The Emir asked the reason why
The pair before him should not die.
He put the question to those two,
Asking of Floire: 'Who are you?'
The youth replied: 'My name is Floire,
I was far distant, in Montoire,
When this maiden was reft from me,
Whom I have found in your country.
I swear by the saints, she knew naught
Of my entry to the tower, nor ought
To face such torment as you employ.
If you yourself would come to joy,
Slay me and, in one, punish two,
For such should be the sentence due.
The wrong, the punishment, is mine,
She bears the judgement for my crime.'
Blancheflor was troubled however:
'Sire,' she cried 'I am his lover,
And, by my faith, on account of me
He climbed the tower, so daringly.
If he'd known naught of Blancheflor

He'd not have done so, such is sure.
Ill the deed, if he died for me,
For tis a prince of Spain, you see;
Thus, he should live, and I should die,
If you would come to bliss, say I.'
Floire cried aloud: 'Credit this not,
Slay me; let her part be forgot.'
The Emir said: 'Nay, both of you,
Without delay, must die; the two,
The very same death, die this day,
And Paradise be mine; I pray.'

Each seeks to be the first to be slain

His naked blade he raised on high,
Blancheflor sought to be first to die,
But Floire drew her backwards swiftly,
'You should not be the first,' said he,
'I am the man, it is not right
That you, ere me, should quit the light.'
He bowed his neck where he did stand,
Fair Blancheflor clasped him by the hand:
'No, you are wrong!' cried out Blancheflor,
And, weeping, set her herself before;
Each wished to be the first to die,
Yet the ring sought it not, say I.
Each felt pity there, in that place,
With so sad a sight before their face.
All the noblemen standing there
Wept to witness that sad affair.
Those who are pitied by so many,
We should not judge with enmity.

A plea for mercy

Then pity conquered the Emir,
Though anger sought still to appear,

Seeing each seek in turn to die
Before the other, while those nearby
Wept and their deep sorrow did show,
He could not give the word of woe.
Gazing on Blancheflor, that fierce lord,
Out of pure pity, sheathed his sword.
Those who looked on, in their delight,
Wept with joy, and pity, outright,
While the lord who'd found the ring
Gazed on her; above everything,
He saw that it was his place to speak,
And her pardon attempt to seek.
Thus, he turned to the company:
'We must advise our lord,' said he,
'To hear a plea that's to his honour.
My friends, we must do so, together.
For our Emir takes pity now
On these that to our judgment bow,
And Floire has not concealed the fact
That all this plan he did enact,
Saying how he entered the tower,
And lay with Blancheflor in her bower.
What would men say were he to die?
Such would yield scant justice, say I!
Much ill would others think if he
Were to slay the youth, ruthlessly.
Better twould be, so I believe,
To know all Floire did conceive,
And how he entered in the tower,
And who aided him at that hour.
The Emir might learn much from this,
A wealth of knowledge would be his;
Better to know the whole design,
So, its defences he might refine.
Such he will do, if he is wise.'
And thus, the lords did so advise,
That twould be ill to slay the two:

'Release the pair, such is our view!'



At the already burning pyre

Floire refuses to betray his helpers

The Emir, on hearing their plea,
That twould be far better if he
Were to pardon both, did declare
That Floire to speak the truth must swear,
On his life, and Blancheflor's too,
As to his plan, the how and who.
Floire replied: 'I'll not do so,
Though you've means to work me woe,
If you do not, in like manner,
Since o'er them you have the power,
Pardon the men, who aided me
With help and counsel, instantly.'
The Emir, greatly angered, cried:
'The plea that you make is denied.
Rather the two of you I'll slay,
For both of you must die this day.
I'll entertain no such request,
But of your lives shall you divest.'

The priest advises they be pardoned

Then a bold priest leapt to his feet,
Who for their pardon did entreat,
On hearing the pleas and replies;
He was one considered full wise:
'Fair sire,' said he, 'where is the gain,
If you slay him? Little, tis plain!
Do as your counsellors commend,
Let reason make of this an end.
This fair youth, Floire, it seems to me,
Owes naught to your authority,
And can receive no judgement here;
His realm is elsewhere, twould appear,
While to pardon those you can

Pardon is e'er the noblest plan.
Better to hear the whole design,
Than slay them, and justice resign;
For great harm the deed would do,
If you chose now to slay these two,
Whose beauty's beyond all measure,
Finer than any wrought by Nature.'
All there cried: 'Fair be the deed!
Grant their plea, Sire; be it agreed!'
Thus, all shouted, seeking mercy,
And, when the Emir heard, then he
Wished not to contradict his court,
And pardoned the pair, as he ought.
All his lords thanked him, most deeply,
And praised this act of royal pity.

Floire, once pardoned, tells his tale

The two prisoners were full of joy.
Floire his eloquence did employ
And spoke aloud for all to hear,
As, in silence, those lords drew near.
All that had happened he did say,
From his birth to that very day;
How he had loved her, out of hand,
How she'd been reft from out his land,
And of his sorrow then he told,
And how he'd issued from that hold,
To search for his true love, Blancheflor,
O'er land, then sea, from shore to shore,
And how to Babylon he did steer,
And how his host had held him dear,
And how he gave him counsel wise,
And how he'd fooled the guard, likewise,
How, in the basket, trembling, pale,
(They all held it a wondrous tale;
E'en the Emir was seen to smile!)

Into the tower, his skill and guile
Had seen him borne, then, stupefied,
By Gloris revealed, hid inside.
And how, on ascending the stair,
The Emir came to find him there.
His tale told, his answer complete,
Humbly he knelt at the Emir's feet,
And begged him, for God's sake, to free
His love, and let this matter be,
For if he lost her, in a breath,
Rather than live, he'd beg for death.

The Emir then pardons Blancheflor

Then the Emir gave his command
Before them all, clasping Floire's hand,
That they should free the fair Blancheflor.
He took her hand, and Floire's once more,
Then he spoke, and most graciously:
'I render the maid to you,' said he,
And Floire rendered his thanks, in turn,
Who need not for his love now yearn.
Both of them fell at the Emir's feet,
And kissed them, their delight complete.
The Emir offered Floire redress;
He sought him as his knight, no less.
Of the thousand arms he possessed,
He now made Floire choose of the best.

Floire weds Blancheflor, and the Emir weds Gloris

Knighting him, the Emir then led
Floire and Blancheflor to be wed;
Thus, they were joined at last, that pair.
Then he summoned Gloris there.
Through Blancheflor's counsel, the Emir
Married the maid, and held her dear,

While Blancheflor begged him, for God's sake,
Since Gloris as his spouse he'd take,
When the year was done, not to slay
His bride but care for her alway.
And Floire too begged him so to do;
Fair Blancheflor then rejoiced anew,
For the Emir swore that he would
Honour her lifelong, as he should.
Gloris was overjoyed at this,
And she her Blancheflor did kiss,
A hundred times, from sheer delight.
The Emir led her forth, outright;
And a golden crown went with her,
While he her presence did honour,
And, once they had reached the great hall,
He crowned her there before them all.

The double wedding festivities

All the fine lords of Babylon
Gathered to feast there, every one,
And that same feast was full of joy,
For entertainers they did employ.
Lions were baited, and many a bear,
Minstrels, jugglers, they summoned there,
And instruments of every kind
Sounded before them, and behind.
And, from the greatest to the least,
Every guest had joy of that feast,
And even the worst minstrel there,
Earned four gold marks from that affair,
And a mule, and a decent cloak.
All the guests of their pleasure spoke.
Floire invited his host, and not
E'en the tower's doorman was forgot.
Water to bathe their hands they sought,
Thus, the chamberlain had it brought,

That they might wash; and then all there
Laved their hands, and everywhere
Sat to the board, while his new bride,
Gloris, was placed at the Emir's side.
And next to her sat fair Blanche-flor,
With Floire at his love's side once more.
Floire was seated beside his wife,
And gazed upon her more than twice.
Great joy he felt that she'd been saved,
And, therefore, many a kiss he braved.
Many smiled, throughout the great hall,
And, smiling, cried out, midst them all:
'Floire keep a hold of that fine dish,
Which you'll do well to truly relish.'

The description of the wedding feast

Great was the feast, and joyous, there;
The bearers served them all with care.
Spiced wine the butler poured around
From a golden bowl, no finer found.
Many a rich cup, worked in gold,
The mulled wine, and the clear, did hold,
And e'en the household had their share,
Till the kitchen lads with drink did stare.
You'd have stared too, to see the mass
Of fare that through that hall did pass;
Hérons, wild geese, and cranes, were there,
Bustards, peacocks, and swans to spare,
Poultry, rabbits, pastries, and pies
All full of live birds, met their eyes,
And when the pies were oped anew,
Everywhere those little birds flew.
Falcons there you would have seen;
Ospreys, and merlin too I ween,
And sparrowhawks, took to the air,
Hunting the birds from out that fare.

Sweet instruments fair music wrought,
Harps and viols enchantment brought,
They took pleasure, in every way,
Who attended the feast, that day.

Floire hears of his father's' death

Yet, they saw ten knights appear,
Who bringing messages drew near.
Before the Emir they halted, then
Saluted him, and turned again
To Floire, to whom sad news they brought:
His father dead, his mother distraught.
'Sire,' said they, 'we carry a plea
From the high lords in your country,
Begging that you return anon,
To be welcomed there by everyone.'
Floire mourned the death of his father,
And, weeping, grieved for his mother:
'Wise king, and steadfast warrior,
Open-handed, generous giver,
Alas!' he cried, 'my dear father,
And you, my fair, my sweet mother,
Who yet brought me such trouble
When you gave my father counsel!
Yet twas through love you advised
That Blancheflor should be despised
And sold abroad, whom my father
Wished to slay in his great anger,
Deeming that I myself would die
Through love of her, fearing that I
Could not live without the maid;
And so, by her the price was paid!
You gave me your precious ring
When you sent me journeying
To find my love, knowing that I
Would find her, if I kept it by!

Ne'er has mother given her son
Such a gift; nor loved so, none.
Lord, have mercy on my father,
And upon the queen my mother!

Ir hant gattwele zu lange hie
Ir sullen och mit langer sumen.
Wan ir müssen z lanc rumen *xxxi*
Also zwene ritter zu flore koment vß sine lande vnd
Ire seitten z sin vatter der künig tot wber vnd er vnde
blanestheflur sece weintent/



Two messengers bring news of King Fenix's death

The lovers seek leave to depart

He and his love grieved together.
Then, turning to the Emir, after,
Sought his gracious leave to go,
Though he proved reluctant, and so
Declared: 'If you choose to remain,
Of your lot you'll ne'er complain.
I will crown you king and queen
Of a richer realm, here, I mean;
A fine realm I will grant to you,
Crowns of gold will grace you too.
Ah!' said he, 'Floire, my fair friend,
Your presence, to this country, lend!
My dear counsellor you shall be,
And command my armies for me.'
Floire replied that he could not stay,
And yet his kindness would repay,
For he would gift him the cup, that he
Had brought there, from his far country,
Which he would buy from the porter,
To whom he'd gifted it earlier;
For a hundred golden coins he'd buy
The cup, and show his thanks thereby.

Floire showers gifts on his host

Floire now summoned his host to him,
And with gifts he showered him,
Twenty gold cups, twenty silver,
(Not taking 'no' for an answer);
Of bales of samite a good score,
With twenty bales of silk stuffs more,
Seven of sable pelts, free of moth,
Two hundred bales of purple cloth,
Such were his gifts to him, all told.
Then, a rich goblet wrought in gold,

He gave to the hostess Licoris,
And ten cloaks, vair and grey, with this.
And to all of their household, he
Gave cloth of superior quality.
He took his leave in fine manner,
And they accompanied him together,
The Emir joining their company,
Embracing him before his journey.
Great was the throng at his departure,
They kissed him, like to a brother,
Commending him to the Lord on high,
While fine, and noble, was his reply.
Floire went both sorrowful and glad,
One hour joyful, another sad.
He felt the loss of his dear father,
And grieved for his widowed mother,
Yet, at the same time, felt delight,
For Blancheflor now gladdened his sight.
Whom he had lost, as I've made plain,
Yet, by God's grace, had found again.



Floire is crowned king

The lovers return home and Floire is crowned king

Floire and Blancheflor, hand in hand,
Now, sailed away from that far land,
Wandering long ere they did see
The shores of their own fair country.
There they were welcomed with delight
By the whole court, joyful at the sight.
And Blancheflor's mother led the way
In celebrating that fair day,
Now that her daughter was set free,
Who'd languished in that far country.
Once Floire was home, life wrought amends,
For he rejoiced amidst his friends.
Now the royal crown was brought
To him, by the flower of the court.
So Floire was christened on that day,
Then crowned as king with great display,
And, for Blancheflor, heaven's daughter,
Led a Christian life thereafter.
Four archbishops led the prayers,
Sound Christian knowledge was theirs,
They baptised him, in holy rite,
And crowned him king, as was but right.
One he was baptised, he brought
All the noblemen of his court
There together, and bade them love,
And believe in, the Lord above.
And in Mary, likewise, believe,
The faith, thereafter, ne'er to leave;
And, that God's love be realised,
The court entire should be baptised.
Thus, the nobles, in full array,
Were baptised on that very day;
And know that folk lingered not
In accepting their ordained lot
(For any that would not receive

Baptism, nor in God believe,
Would be beheaded or flayed,
Or burnt, or otherwise ill-paid!)
The baptism of the people
Took more than a week, in total.
Once all the folk had been baptised,
And the realm was Christianised,
Floire gave away Blancheflor's mother
In marriage to a man of honour,
His wealthiest and bravest duke,
The mightiest and most astute.
You would be as happy, or I,
As she whom Fortune raised on high;
Fortune who had brought her low,
Now raised her high, o'er those below,
For she saw her daughter a queen,
And as a duchess now was seen.
All gave thanks to the Lord above,
For His great mercy, and His love.
Here, of Floire, ends the story,
God bring us all to His glory!

The End of 'Floire et Blancheflor'