

Parzival

Wolfram Von Eschenbach

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Translator's Introduction

'Parzival' is dated, from internal and circumstantial evidence, to the first decade of the 13th century. The work is written in the East Franconian dialect of Middle High German. Its author Wolfram von Eschenbach was a contemporary of Gottfried von Strassburg, creator of the epic 'Tristan'. Wolfram was Bavarian, and Hermann I of Thuringia appears to have been a major patron. 'Parzival' is an extensive development of Chrétien de Troyes' unfinished 'Perceval', the first extant version of the Grail theme, though Wolfram, perhaps mischievously, claims an unknown poet, named Kyot, from Provence, as his source. 'Parzival' is a fine and representative work from the richest period of Medieval German poetry which, as well as 'Tristan', includes the courtly love-lyrics of the Minnesingers.

Book I: Gahmuret and Belacane

Wolfram's Prologue

THE heart that strays harms the spirit.
Shame and honour war within it
When the soul of a steadfast man
Piebald like a magpie doth stand.
Yet such a man may still know joy,
Heaven and Hell do both employ
Their part in him; disloyalty
Is black in hue, dark its company,
Yet still the true and loyal knight,
Holds, endlessly, to the white.

Now, such a winged metaphor,
Flies all too fast for the unsure,
Slower minds will grasp it not.
It will speed past, and be forgot,
Gone flying like a startled hare.
Thus with a dark mirror we fare,
Or a blind's man's dream, all dim
Do features seem, to us and him;

They shine not with a steady light,
Grant but a momentary delight.

Why tweak my palm to find a hair,
If never a hair was growing there!
You grip must needs be close indeed,
For such a mission to succeed.
Were I to cry 'Oh!' in fear of it,
A fool I'd be, you must admit.
Should I then seek for loyalty
Where it must vanish utterly,
A burning brand the well has won,
A dewdrop vanished in the sun?
Yet I've ne'er met a man so wise,
That he'd not wish me to advise
As to the path this tale maintains,
And what goodness it contains.
This story then ne'er goes astray,
But flees yet follows, every way,
Turns, then attacks, in the same
Moment, scattering praise and blame.
Who follows it as it leaps about,
Will be well served, amidst the rout,
By their wits, if they do not stray,
Nor sit too long straddling the way.
False friendship leads us to hellfire,
Beats down, like hail, noble desire,
Destroys nobility without fail,
Its loyalty so short in the tail,
If it meets with gadflies in the wood,
Two bites in three they'll make good.

Again, the many thoughts I'll pen
By no means just relate to men,
I set a challenge for women too.
Let any, who'd do as she should do,
Learn from me, to take great care,

And so, in learning thus, beware
Whom she trusts with her honour,
And her good name and, further,
To whom she grants her person
And her love, lest both affection,
And then chastity too is lost.
By God, lest it be to their cost,
I bid good women do aright;
Shame keeps virtue ever bright,
No better fate to them is shown;
The false for falseness ever known.
How long will thin ice endure
In August's heat? Well no more
Will their good name last a day;
Beauty as swiftly melts away;
Many a fair one's praised for it,
Yet, if her heart be counterfeit,
Rate her but a bead set in gold,
As, I say, about the fair is sold.
And yet I think it no small thing,
If a noble ruby adorns a ring
Of simple brass, with its virtue;
For that I'd liken to the true
Spirit of womanhood. If she,
Any woman, acts virtuously,
And ever shows her best nature,
I'll not search her every feature,
Nor probe her heart, for if she
Holds in her breast true loyalty,
Then she will never come to shame,
Nor shall aught hurt her good name.

If I'm to speak in judgement now
Of men and women, as I know how,
Then a lengthy story I must tell;
Hear then the tale of what befell;
It speaks of happiness and woe,

Where pain and joy in company go.
And yet were there full three of me,
Each with skills matched equally,
Inspiration would yet be needed
Ere the three of us succeeded
In telling you, what a single one
Must do; for such is my intention.

For I shall now retell a story,
That doth speak of great loyalty,
Womanly womanhood, anew,
And a manly manhood, so true,
In every trial, his steel prevailed,
His heart within him never failed,
While his hand, in battle, likewise
Seized on many a glorious prize;
Honour-seeking, in nature slow,
(For thus do I hail my hero)
A sweet sight to woman's eye,
Yet a bane to the heart, thereby;
Yet one, indeed, that shunned all wrong.
The one I've chosen for my song
Is yet unborn to this fine tale,
Yet shall be born here, without fail,
The lad of whom this story's told,
With all its wonders that I unfold.

Gahmuret, Parzival's father, wishes to seek his fortune

THERE is a custom holds secure,
Where runs our western neighbours' law,
And it still holds in one corner
Of our German lands moreover;
You need not me to tell you so.
Whoe'er held the lands of old,
Made the ruling (strange though true)
That the eldest brother was due

His father's whole inheritance.
That death erased, in an instant,
All the rights to the younger
Granted by the living father,
Was that younger son's misfortune.
Before they'd sung the one tune,
But now the eldest ruled alone.
Was he not the wisest known,
Who ruled all went to the elder,
Naught at all to those younger!
'Youth has its endless tomorrow,
While age is full of pain and sorrow.
There never was so sad a fate,
As aged poverty,' he would state.
That dukes, and counts and kings
(For I'll not lie about such things)
Should lose their land, every one,
While all goes to the eldest son,
That is a monstrous law indeed.
But thus, when his brother did accede,
Did Gahmuret, the brave and daring,
Not destined to be born a king,
A bold, and yet a temperate man,
Lose his strongholds and his land
There where his father, in renown,
Had wielded the sceptre and crown,
With regal skill, and royal might,
Till death in combat as a knight.

The mourning for him was bitter,
For he had kept faith and honour
Bright, and whole, until the end.
His elder son for those did send
Who were the noblest in the land.
And all did come to kiss his hand,
Showed themselves in fine array,
So as to claim their rights that day,

And have confirmed from his hand
Their fiefdoms throughout the land.

Now once they had gathered at court,
All their rightful claims had brought;
With these confirmed, hear how they
Proceeded; loyalty, I say,
Prompted that great gathering,
Humbly, to ask of their new king
That he show love for his brother,
Gahmuret, maintain his honour,
By granting him a title, that all
Might see whence he came withal,
And whence his freedoms derived,
And not of all such be deprived.
The king accepted their petition:
'Tis not beyond the bounds of reason,
What you request, you may be sure
This will I grant him, this and more.
My brother, do you not name him
Gahmuret the Angevin?
Well, Anjou is within my claim:
Let both be blessed with that name.'

Thus this elder brother, the king,
To the court did pleasure bring:
'My brother I shall yet support
In many a form, for, in short,
He shall be of my company,
And of the Household he shall be;
I shall show you, and my brother,
We were born of the same mother.
He owns naught, yet I have plenty,
And shall share, so generously,
That my salvation will ne'er be
In doubt with Him who, as we see,
Doth give us life, and life doth take;

And rightly He doth judgment make.’

Finding their king in this was true,
The lords were pleased and, in review,
Each bowed his thanks, and did rejoice.
Nor was Gahmuret slow to voice
A wish, within his heart concealed,
But now, good-naturedly, revealed:
‘My lord and brother, if I sought
To live at yours or other’s court,
What reputation would be mine?
But you are true and wise, I find,
And you may thus advise me now,
And of your kindness may allow
This gift. My arms and my armour
Are all that stands to my honour.
Should I win more through chivalry,
Were some renown granted me,
I might, indeed, be remembered.
I have sixteen squires in number,
Six have battle-armour worn;
Give me four pages, nobly born,’
Gahmuret said: ‘who will share
In all I win, where’er I fare,
And I shall seek another land,
As once before, sword in hand.
And I may seek a virtuous lady,
If fortune yet proves good to me,
And if worthily I serve her,
I think I shall not do better
Than pledge myself completely;
May God grant such a fate to me.
When our father Gandin was king,
We used to ride forth suffering
Many a sorrowful pang of love;
You a thief and a knight did prove;
You knew how to take and conceal.

Oh, how I wish you would reveal
The secret of such thefts, that I
With your skill, might win love thereby!

His royal brother sighed anew:
'Oh, that I e'er set eyes on you!
You, with your jesting, tear apart
What was whole, my loving heart.
The king left wealth beyond compare,
Since we must part, then we must share;
For you dear to my heart I hold.
Bright jewels then and fine red gold,
Arms, clothes, brave steeds, and men,
Receive from me; take more again,
As much as your journey may need,
As supports your largesse, indeed,
For your generosity's e'er in view.
You are the crown of manly virtue.
In the far west had you been born,
Or if the east had seen your dawn,
Gustrate or Rumkale, tis no matter,
I would have granted you forever
The place that in my heart you hold;
For tis my brother I behold.'
'My lord, tis your own courtesy
That showers such praises on me;
Then help me now in such measure
As I request. For if my mother,
Or you, would give your wealth away,
Then good fortune will pave my way.
For my heart is set on soaring high;
It swells within, I know not why.
I feel as though twill burst from me!
What does ambition urge on me?
I shall seek the heights, if I but can;
Tis time my journeying here began.'

Gahmuret takes leave of his widowed mother, Schoette

HIS brother then granted him more
Than he had sought from him before;
Five war-horses to him he hands,
The finest mounts in all his lands,
Strong and spirited, swift and bold;
And many vessels wrought of gold,
Many bright ingots, did him allow.
The king was pleased to thus endow
Four panniers; in doing so,
Adding the rarest gems also.
And the squires in charge of these,
Were dressed well, so as to please,
And granted fine horses indeed.

Now Gahmuret, he went, with speed,
To his mother, who clasped him tight,
And let her sorrows flow, outright:
'*Fil li roy Gandin,*' thus she cried
Will you no more with me abide?'
So that womanly woman did cry:
'Son of my lord, was it not I
That bore you? And you are no less
Gandin's child; witness my distress;
God seems blind where He should aid,
And deaf to the prayers I have made.
Fresh sorrows now then must I bear?
I've buried my heart's delight, my fair
Spouse and my eyes' sweet pleasure.
If God now robs me of my treasure,
Just though he be, the talk I hear
Of him helping mortals is, I fear,
Untrue, for see he abandons me,
Harasses, and grants no mercy.'
Up spoke then the young Angevin:
'God solace you yet for losing him,

My mother, and there is true cause
For us to grieve for him, yet pause,
There is none to think this ill news
That I go forth, though you do lose
My presence, I go, you understand,
To seek my fortune in some far land,
That is the reason for my going.'

'Dear son, if you think of winning,
The love of some great lady there,
Scorn not the things I've prepared
To help you as you make your way.
Tell your chamberlains this day
To receive four panniers from me,
Of silks entire, from blemish free,
And many lengths of broad brocade.
Now if true kindness you displayed
You would seek my thanks to earn,
By naming the day of your return.'

'Madam, I know not, understand,
Where I shall go, to what far land,
Yet whate'er path I now shall take,
When your fair presence I forsake,
You will have dealt with me quite
As befits the honour of a knight.
The king too has granted me leave
In a style that should thanks receive,
And you will cherish him the more
Whate'er becomes of me, I'm sure.'

Now the tale tells us that the love
And friendship of a lady did prove
Of aid, fine gifts she gave, that day,
Worth a thousand marks, were they;
Whoe'er is offered them at that price
Should take them, such is my advice!

He had gained then, from his service
To this most charming friend of his,
A woman's love and her kindness,
With gifts to add to his happiness,
Yet they cured him not of ambition.

The warrior set forth on his mission,
Never to set eyes on his mother,
Or the realm, nor yet his brother,
Ever again; yet mourned by many.
He thanked all, of his courtesy,
Who had favoured him ere he left,
And since they did seem bereft,
He thought it right not to appear
To display that it was their mere
Duty; he was e'er straight and true.
Those who quite otherwise do,
And themselves proclaim their worth,
Are the last to be believed on earth;
No, let a man's close neighbours say,
Or those who meet him on the way,
How well his actions are conceived,
And then his tale might be believed.

Gahmuret was a temperate man,
Level-headed in all that he began,
Not one to boast; all his honours
He carried lightly; was ambitious,
But free of all worthless passion.
Yet, on considering his mission,
He knew no king or head of state,
Emperor, empress, or potentate,
In whose house he cared to serve
Except the greatest one on earth,
And such was then his deepest wish.

He takes service with the Caliph of Baghdad

NOW he had heard, concerning this,
That there was a ruler, in Baghdad,
And so great was the power he had,
That two thirds of the earth or more
Was subject to him, and his law.
He was revered those folk among,
And titled, in the heathen tongue,
'The Baruc', Caliph, of that place.
So great was his power o'er the race
That many a king of great renown,
As subjects, owed to him their crown.
The Caliphate stands to this day.
As in Rome they dispense, I say,
The Christian rite the law decrees,
So in that realm it doth please
The folk to follow infidel ways.
From Baghdad comes law and praise
(They think it true and free of ill,
And so to it they bend their will);
The Caliph grants them indulgence.
Now Gahmuret sought his presence.

The Caliph had seized Nineveh,
From two brothers; it had alway
Belonged to their great ancestors;
And the names of these brothers
Were Pompeius and Ipomidon.
Now they had battled hard and long,
Till the young Angevin appeared;
Gahmuret made himself so feared
With the Caliph he found favour;
And he deemed it then an honour
To serve him as a mercenary,
And find fortune in that country.

Be not disturbed that he did bear
A far different coat-of-arms there,
Than that bequeathed by his father.
As one who aspired to far greater
Things, now this lord displayed,
On his caparison, anchors, made
In bright 'ermine'; and his shield
And his surcoat the same did yield.
His harness greener than emerald,
Was the colour of silk they called
Achmardi, finer than silk brocade,
Of these he had a tabard made,
And the surcoat; and both did hold
'Ermine' anchors with ropes of gold.
He bore his anchors, you understand,
This proud exile, from land to land,
Though the anchors had ne'er seen
Sea-road or headland, nor had been
Deep enough to bite sand beneath,
For he found scant rest or relief.
How many lands did he sail around,
Or ride across? Well, if I'm bound
To swear to them, upon my honour
As a knight, none can I discover
But those of which the tale doth tell,
No other speaks as to what befell.
My source says that he did become,
Through his efforts, in heathendom,
The most renowned for manly vigour;
In many a place gaining honour,
From Persia, as far as Morocco,
And in Damascus, and Aleppo;
And whate'er field knew chivalry,
Beneath the walls of Araby;
So that no other sought to fight,
In single combat, this brave knight,
Such was the fame that he won there.

His heart sought glory in each affair,

All others' deeds were soon eclipsed,
If Gahmuret entered in the lists;
This was the lesson all did learn,
Who e'er jousted with him; in turn
He e'er showed the courage he had;
Thus they spoke of him, in Baghdad.

He sails to the realm of Zazamanc

FROM Persia to Zazamanc he came,
Where folk lamented for one slain
In love's service; brave Isenhart,
She Belacane, sweet, true of heart,
Who had brought him to that end,
Though Isenhart had stood her friend,
Her love she'd denied him ever;
He lay dead who'd sought to love her.
His kinsmen thought to gain revenge,
In ambush and open battle, avenge
His death, and so besieged the lady.
When Gahmuret reached her country,
She'd beaten off the belligerent,
Isenhart's cousin, Vridebrant,
King of the Scots, he whose men
Had scoured the land from end to end,
And all its fertile ground had fired,
Before he, with his fleet, retired.

He offers his services for hire

HEAR now what did befall our knight.
Tossed to and fro, both day and night,
On stormy seas, at risk of death,
For he came sailing, in a breath,
Into the great harbour, below

The Queen's Palace, and did show
Himself there to many an eye.
Upon the plain he did espy
Many a tent pitched near the town,
Not by the sea, but on open ground,
And two great armies yet lay there.
He sent to know, in all this affair,
What was the town, for he knew not,
Nor did his crewmen, whose was what.
Patelamunt was the town's name,
And the envoys from that same
Sent tokens of friendship, and prayed
Gahmuret to come to their aid,
For they were in great need of such,
Or all must feel death's chill touch.

Now, once the brave young Angevin
Knew of the plight that they were in,
He offered his services for gold,
(As many a knight still does, I'm told)
Or they need give some other reason,
Why he should suffer enemy action.
With one voice, they gave him answer:
Of gold and gems he would be master,
Injured and sound begged him to stay.
Yet he needed not their gold, that day,
For he had there, in the ship's hold,
More than enough of the king's gold;
With Zazamanc's folk dark as night
He'd scant desire to stay and fight,
Yet good lodgings, in which to rest,
He asked for; they gave of their best.
At their windows the ladies leaned;
Gazing down, the facts they gleaned
Of his squires, and his equipage,
As he entered the town centre-stage.

There showed, on a rich sable field,
That 'ermine' emblem on his shield,
Which the Queen's Marshal did see
In the shape of an anchor must be,
And was right glad to see it there;
His eyes told him, in some affair,
He had known this knight before,
Or else his double; in that war
Perchance, when the Caliph laid siege
To Alexandria where, for his liege,
Gahmuret had shown peerless skill,
And laid about him with a will.

So he rode into town in style:
Ten loaded mules, in double file,
Preceding him, the people counted,
And twenty squires all well-mounted;
The baggage-train had gone ahead,
By pages, cooks and scullions led.
After the squires twelve pages rode,
And pleasant glances each bestowed,
Noble lads, full of grace and sense,
Some of whom were Saracens;
Behind them eight steeds came on,
Each with a rich caparison,
While a ninth his saddle wore;
Beside it a page his shield bore.
Then trumpeters on either hand
Rode by, such still are in demand;
A drummer tossed his tabor high,
Then beat it loud, as he went by;
While his lord would have thought
His whole passage went for naught
If there had been no flutes to see
And hear, nor yet his fiddlers three.
They passed by with measured stride;
Behind, the man himself did ride,

And with him the ship's master,
A skilled, and worthy, mariner.

The folk within the town were Moors.
Upon the house walls and the doors,
Gahmuret saw many a dented shield,
Pierced through by spears in the field.
About, he heard lament and woe.
The wounded lay at each window,
To breathe fresh air, but in such pain
That even then should those men gain
A doctor's aid they would never
From such hurt as theirs recover.
They'd met, faced with the enemy,
The fate of all who will not flee.
And many a fine steed was led past,
Its flesh by sword and spear gashed.
Many a dark-skinned maid he spied,
Raven-coloured, on either side.

His host, the Governor, received him,
And this was later most useful to him.
His host was a brave and noble man,
Who at the gate had made his stand,
Dealing many a forceful blow,
With him stood many knights also,
Their arms in slings, heads swathed,
But, though wounded, still a brave
Fight they had carried to their foe.

The Governor, begging him though,
In the friendliest manner, to request
Aught of his that might please a guest,
Whate'er his wish indeed might be,
Led him to his wife, courteously,
Who kissed him, much to his dismay;
Then to refreshments led the way.

These partaken, the Marshal went
To gain Queen Belacane's assent
To a reward; good news he brought,
Said he: 'Madam, the joy we sought
Shall now dispel all misery.
A knight of such true quality
We here and now do entertain,
That we should thank the gods again
For bringing such a man to us.'

'Tell me, how seems this virtuous
Knight?' 'A proud, noble warrior,
An Angevin, but one, however,
That serves the Caliph; you should see
How he fights, how wondrously,
Nor spares himself when in a fight,
How he attacks and then takes flight,
Attacks again, and thus shows the foe
What toying with them means; I know
How gloriously he can fight,
For when the Babylonians might
Have driven the Caliph from the wall
Where he sought Alexandria's fall,
Then what hosts of them he slew!
He dealt so furiously with that crew
They'd no recourse except to flee,
Or lie down and die, in misery.
And he has earned this reputation
In many a neighbouring nation,
Beyond all others is he known
For the bravery he has shown.'

'Then bring him here,' said the Queen,
And we may talk, this day I mean
For there's a truce and he may ride
To audience, and may sit beside
Myself; or must I go and seek him?

There is the colour of his skin,
Of course, that differs from ours;
Woe's me, if it is aught that sours
His view of us, or weighs with him!
For I would seek to honour him,
If my council do so allow.
Yet how shall I receive him now,
If tis his pleasure to consent?
Is he of such noble descent,
That my kiss will not be idle?'

He is, I pledge, of royal title,
Your Majesty; and so I will
Tell all the princes to fulfil
Your wish, and wait on you the while,
Till we may both advance in style.
Command your ladies; I shall go,
As is your will, and tell him so,
Then bring this man of quality,
This nobleman, for you to see.'

Gahmuret appears before Queen Belacane

IT was no sooner said than done.
The Marshal went there at a run.
He bore rich robes to Gahmuret,
Which he then donned, ere they met,
Right costly robes, so I have heard,
True royal gifts; then, at a word,
He who knew how to answer such,
Mounted a steed, its cost not much,
Since a lancer out of Babylon,
Had once charged at him, thereon,
And he had thrust him from the steed,
To the man's great chagrin, indeed.

Did his host bear them company?

He and his knights, most willingly;
Yes, they proved happy so to do,
And thus they rode up, two by two,
Dismounting at the palace door,
Which a crowd now stood before,
For many a knight there did gather,
In rich robes, all grouped together.
His pages went first, joining hands
In pairs, as seen in other lands.
Their master, following, did meet
A host of ladies, whom he did greet,
They in wondrous clothes were dressed;
There stood the Queen among the rest,
And when her eyes first lit on him,
She had great harm of this Angevin;
For so handsome did he appear,
That he unlocked her heart, I fear,
That had been most secure till then.

She took one pace, and then again,
And of the knight she made request,
Sought a kiss from her noble guest,
Whom to a soft divan she led,
With a samite cover o'er spread,
By a window, whence he could see
The encampment of the enemy.
If aught is brighter than the day,
Twas not the Queen, I might say,
Not seeming as the dew-wet rose,
But dark as ever midnight glows.
Upon her head was a coronet
With many a ruby there inset,
She told her guest what pleasure he
Had brought her with his company.
'My lord it seems I've heard aright
Of your great prowess as a knight.
Yet I beg you, of your courtesy,

Forgive me, if you hear from me
Naught but the grief within my heart.'

'And not in vain; since, for my part,
With whate'er vexed or vexes you
This right hand shall take issue,
And if it may bring you relief,
Let it be minister to your grief.
I am but the one man alone,
And yet if any wronged your throne,
Or wrongs it still, here is my shield,
Though it serve not to win the field.'

With courtesy, a prince then spoke,
'Yet if the strength we could invoke
Of some noble leader, our enemy
Would not indeed escape so lightly,
Now, Vridebrant has gone from here.
His own country, it doth appear,
He must free from the kith and kin
Of King Hernant, for they harry him,
Since he slew that king, for the sake
Of Herlinde, and did vengeance take.
They'll ne'er cease till he does so.
He leaves here fierce warriors though:
The Scots Duke Hiuteger, for one,
Who many an encounter has won;
He remains with his company,
Who have proved a worthy enemy;
They fight with vigour and with skill.
And Gaschier of Normandy is still
To deal with, that grand old man,
With many a mercenary to hand;
And Kaylet of Hoskurast, the King
Of Spain and Castile, who did bring
A greater force to swell the fight,
Many a fierce and warlike knight.

The King of the Scots, Vridebrant,
He brought them all to this land,
All these, his allies, as you see,
And many a foreign mercenary.
To the west, by the coast, do lie
Isenhart's men, with tearful eye,
Who lament their liege lord slain,
And, overwhelmed by their pain,
Have not retired from that place,
(Heart's tears thus run down apace)
Since he died in single combat.'
'Tell me, my lady, more of that,'
Gahmuret asked of his hostess,
Being an ever-courteous guest:
'Tell me why they thus besiege you,
What enmity do they bear you?
You have many a brave warrior,
And so it saddens me the more
Their near subjection so to see,
Neath the malice of this enemy.'

Queen Belacane tells the tale of Isenhart

'I will tell you, sire, since you wish,
A noble knight's the cause of this,
Who with faithfulness served me,
His life was like a budding tree,
For he was brave, and he was wise,
And loyalty blossomed likewise
From deep roots, for noble was he
Surpassing all in nobility;
Yet more modest than a woman,
Although a brave and daring man.
None more generous anywhere,
No hand more free did any bear,
(What shall be in some other day,
I know not; others then must say)

He was unknown to treachery;
Of race he was a Moor like me,
His father was King Tankanis,
Whose renown was as great as his;
He then was this same Isenhart,
And I, as a woman, for my part,
Betrayed myself by letting him
Serve me; an act of love, my sin
To deny him consummation;
Winning by it condemnation.
They think I sent him to his fate,
But treachery is not the weight
That bears on me, though his men
Claimed it of me, and will again.
I loved him more than e'er they can,
And many a witness is at hand,
Since the gods, both his and mine,
Know the truth, twas a love so fine
I suffered many a heart's pain
For him, yet modesty again
Made me delay his true reward,
And endless grief did me afford.
My virgin state spurred him to win
Renown, each joust that he fought in,
Until I sought to test his love,
And soon his loyalty did prove
For he doffed all his armour then,
For my sake, the truest of men
(That Pavilion standing there,
Was his, that marvellous affair,
The Scots, they have raised it here)
Yet bare of steel, he knew no fear,
Life indeed seemed not his care,
Fighting without armour there.
In my court a prince there was,
And his name was Prothizilas,
A brave man who rode out to try

His fortune, fated though to die,
(It was no mock death that he found,
In seeking to contest the ground
In the Forest of Azagouc)
Though not as valiant, in my book,
As my true suitor, Isenhart,
Who also with his life did part.
A spear each of them bereaved
Of life, through the shield received
And then the body; and I mourn
It still, none more wretched born;
Nor shall I e'er cease to regret
Their deaths (for the affection yet
I bear them ever blooms) nor can;
Nor have I e'er wed any man.'
It seemed to Gahmuret that she
An infidel indeed might be,
Yet no sweeter womanly spirit
Did ever woman's heart inhabit.
From her eyes the tears rained down,
A purifying stream that found
Its path from beneath her eyes
To her breast, with countless sighs.
Her devotion to her sorrow
Was her task night and morrow,
With the rituals of true grief,
For such indeed was his belief.

Then Queen Belacane spoke on:
'Isenhart's maternal cousin,
The King of the Scots appeared,
Brought his fleet and army here,
Though it was not in his power
To do me greater harm, that hour,
Than did my dear Isenhart's death,'
And then a sigh was her next breath.
Many a tearful glance she gave,

Shyly, as strangers will behave,
Such that her eyes told her heart
Gahmuret seemed a man apart,
Handsome, while his complexion,
Though fair like many a heathen
She had seen, did no way impair
Her judgment; true love did stir:
She gazed at him, and he at her.

Love at first sight

AT last she ordered that they pour
A farewell cup, although far more
Inclined to leave it, wishing rather
Her servants had ignored her order,
For that last cup had never failed
To dismiss all that love entailed;
For her life his life now did own,
While she felt his life was her own.

Gahmuret rose then spoke anew:
'Madam, I inconvenience you,
I forget myself, and sit too long,
And thus I seem to do you wrong.
Though I am sad at your distress,
For it troubles me, yet no less
Am I at your disposal, lady.
You have only to command me,
And I will seek to avenge you.'
'And I,' she said, 'have faith in you.'

Gahmuret visits the town's defences

NOW the Governor did not neglect
To make his new guest his object,
Asking him if he wished to go
And 'view the walls and gates below',

And Gahmuret, that worthy knight,
Replied it would be his delight
To view the battlefield, indeed.
A knightly host did then proceed
Along with them, young and old,
Around the sixteen gates and told
How not one had yet been barred,
Not since the death of Isenhart:
'Revenge men seek, day and night;
An equal struggle proves this fight,
Yet, all this time, not one was closed.
Isenhart's men a threat have posed,
Battling before eight of the gates,
As you can judge now from our state.
Losses we bore, since they fight hard
Those forces, for brave Isenhart,
Those lords of Azagouc striving
To win revenge for their dead king.'
Above those troops, before each gate
A pennant flew, it showed the fate
Of Isenhart; a knight pierced through
With a lance-thrust, this the new
Device that his men had chosen.
'To assuage their grief, the token
On our pennants, in this affair,
A hand upraised in oath, to swear,
Is the figure of Queen Belacane,
Who in that manner doth proclaim,
That since he died she doth suffer,
(Pained by the loss of her lover),
For once we saw their flag in play,
(Which could but add to her dismay),
Her image we displayed in black;
White samite the field at its back.
Ours fly here now above each gate,
But still before another eight,
Lie the armies of Vrïdebrant,

Borne here from a foreign land.
Each gate is guarded by a prince
Who sallies forth in its defence,
Bearing his banner, and thereby
One of Gaschier's counts doth lie
In our hands, and offers ransom.
Gaschier is Kaylet's sister's son,
So the harm done by her brother
Will now be paid for by this other.
Such good-fortune we seldom see.
Between the moat and the enemy
There lies a broad stretch of land,
Some thirty courses wide, all sand
Not turf; and two brave knights may face
Each other in combat, in that place.'

Gahmuret's host had more to tell:
'There is a certain knight, as well,
Who seeks to joust beneath the wall,
If she, who sent him here, gave all
For his service, twere scant reward
For the fine display he doth afford
Our eyes: he is proud Hiuteger.
And so, I must tell you further,
That each morn he doth appear
Since the foe besieged us, here,
Equipped and ready for the fight,
Before the palace gate, a sight
To see; and we have oft obtained
Love-tokens from this brave knight, gained
By being thrust into our shields,
Gemstones that his lance-tip yields,
Retrieved by the heralds and shown
To be as precious as any known.
He has unseated many a knight,
He likes to meet the ladies' sight,
And they commend his courage too;

To them a name and fame is due;
All the favour he might demand
Is here indeed, at his command.’
The dying sun now did gather
His bright glances in, as ever,
And they returned, at that sign,
All ready now, at eve, to dine.

He dines with Queen Belacane

NOW of the dinner I must tell,
Brought to the table right well,
As befitted her guest, a knight.
Then the Queen came in sight.
And she helped him to every dish;
Now the heron, and now the fish.
She had come with many a maid,
To see that due honour was paid
And with her own hand did serve
The food to him, without reserve,
And far from standing at his side,
(Despite his protests) knelt beside
His place, delighted with her guest,
Happy to serve him of the best.
She filled his cup, saw to his needs,
And he took note of her kind deeds,
Of all she said and did. His minstrel
Sat at the far end of the table,
His chaplain on his other side.

He glanced at the lady there beside
His seat, and then spoke, bashfully:
‘Such honour, lady, as you show me,
I am not used to; you should serve
Me only as I indeed deserve,
If you’ll grant me my opinion;
Nor should you do as you have done,

Ride down to dinner here, with me,
If I may ask a favour; let be,
And we may seek a happy mean;
You honour me too much, my queen.’
She went to where his pages sat,
Told them to dine, and grow fat,
Seeking thus to honour her guest
And the thanks that they expressed
Were endless, nor did she forget
Their host and hostess, in their debt
She raised her cup: ‘Let me commend
Our guest to you, for, my friends,
Yours is the honour, and I pray
You bear it well in mind, this day.’
She took her leave, but then she sought
This guest again; his heart was caught,
Filled with the love that she inspired;
And she by that same love was fired,
As her heart and eyes bore witness;
Their common cause she did confess.

She spoke once more, with modesty:
‘My lord, you must now command me;
Whate’er you ask I shall provide,
For you deserve whate’er you eyed;
If you find all tends to your ease,
That indeed our hearts will please.’
Four men, with candlesticks of gold,
Bright candles for her path did hold,
Though she was riding to a place
Where flame enough lit up her face.

So their supper had reached its end,
And Gahmuret was sad, but then,
Joyed at the honour he had found.
And yet his cares did now abound,
For he was vexed by Love’s power,

That humbles Man's pride in an hour.

Now the Governor's wife withdrew,
To her chamber, the Governor too
After saying, to his noble guest:
'May you sleep sound, and find sweet rest;
Tomorrow we go forth to fight.'
His servants took leave of the knight.
The pages' beds lay all around him,
As usual, heads turned towards him.
Great candles stood there, burning bright.
He lost all patience with the night,
Which passed so slowly; he thought
Of the dark Moorish queen; he sought
To rest, but like some willow wand
Whipped from side to side, his fond
Desire set all his joints a-quiver;
He was on fire for love and honour;
War he sought, now pray his wish
Is granted, his heart throbb'd with his
Lust for the combat, his breast also
It arch'd, as sinew doth the bow,
So immense was his fierce desire;
To love and war did he aspire.

He fights Hiuteger of Scotland, and Gaschier of Normandy

SLEEPLESS that night, Gahmuret lay,
Until grey dawn brought on the day.
The sky had scarce begun to glow
Before he had his chaplain go
And make ready to sing the Mass;
And before the hour had passed
He, for God, and for his master,
Sang it through; the servants, later,
Brought Gahmuret his full armour;
And he went forth seeking honour,

Where single combat might be found

He mounted his charger, at a bound,
A war-horse trained to the joust,
Quick to answer, and wheel about
And gallop swiftly on command.
You could see his emblem stand
High above his helm, an anchor,
As he was led where folk did gather
By the gate, while they called out
As he appeared, and raised a shout,
As this armoured knight drew near,
That so their great gods must appear.

His lances too were borne along.
How then was he caparisoned?
His steed was clad in iron plate,
To guard it from an evil fate,
And over this a green samite
Which weighed but little, soft and light.
His tabard and surcoat were green,
Woven in Araby these had been,
I tell no lie; and his shield thong,
With all its trappings, bright and strong,
Was of corded silk, with jewels set,
Its boss of red gold gleaming yet
From the furnace; he served for Love;
No battle-fear might this man move.

The queen was at the window there,
With her ladies, to watch the affair.
See where Hiuteger now doth wait,
Where before he'd chanced his fate,
And won the prize. Seeing the knight
Galloping towards him in full flight,
He cried: 'A fool do they think me?
For a fool, at best, indeed I'd be

To take a Frenchman for a Moor.
When did this fellow join the war?’

They each spurred on their eager mount,
And each of them gave good account;
Their blows were well and truly meant
Both thrusting home, with real intent.
Splinters flew from Hiuteger’s lance,
But his foe, with his fierce advance,
Sent him flying toward the ground,
Ne’er before such hurt he’d found.
And Gahmuret now trod him down,
Gazing about, with an angry frown.
Yet, struggling hard to recover,
His foe denied him his surrender,
Though the man had found his master.
‘Who masters me?’ he asked the victor,
‘I am Gahmuret the Angevin.’
He yielded; Gahmuret sent him in.
And this won Gahmuret much praise
From those who upon this did gaze;
The lovely ladies, and the queen,
Such are the watching eyes I mean.

Now Gaschier of Normandy,
A fearless knight, proud and free,
Advanced towards him at full pace,
A powerful warrior of his race.
Gahmuret readied himself to bear
A second lance, in that affair,
Broad its tip, its shaft was strong.
The foreigners charged headlong;
Down went Gaschier, steed and all,
The shock alone had caused his fall,
And was forced himself to render.’
‘Give me your hand, in surrender,’
Cried Gahmuret, ‘for you fought well!

And now send to those Scots and tell
Their men to hold from the attack,
Then ride to the town, at my back.'
The order, or request, was made;
The Scots from all attack delayed.

Kaylet, King of Spain is Gahmuret's maternal cousin

NOW Kaylet was next to appear,
And Gahmuret, finding him here,
His cousin on his mother's side,
He could do naught but turn aside;
For why should he cause him harm?
The Spaniard yet cried the alarm,
And pursued him, as had the rest.
Kaylet's helm bore an ostrich-crest,
In flowered silks he was arrayed,
(All fine things should be portrayed)
The bells upon the silks did sound,
As he passed by o'er the ground.
Ah, the flower of manly beauty!
Without a peer in that fair duty,
Except for two, as yet to come,
Beacurs who was King Lot's fair son,
Gawain's brother; and Parzival.
In later days they outshone all
In beauty though, as yet, unborn.

Tw'as Gaschier, that splendid morn,
Who seized Kaylet's bridle, saying:
'If you oppose the Angevin, riding
There, flushed with my surrender,
Meek as a lamb he will render
You; and be advised, my lord,
I promised him we would afford
Him passage now, free of conflict,
And then he has my hand upon it.

For my sake now, press not the fight,
Or he may prove the better knight.’
‘If, ‘Kaylet, said, ‘it is my cousin
Gahmuret, scion of King Gandin,
I have no quarrel with the man.
Let go my bridle; free your hand!’
‘Not before your head is bared,
For worse than that I have fared.’
Kaylet unlacing, shed his helmet.
But Gahmuret fought on; as yet
The morning was scarce half-spent,
And now the townsfolk were intent
On viewing the jousts that he led,
As along the outer walls he sped,
For he seemed like a living snare,
Catching all those who met him there.
A fresh mount he had, I’m told,
Which flew along, spirited, bold,
It scarcely seemed to touch the ground;
And yet, for all its speed, he found,
His mount could be controlled with grace,
Wheeling to either side, at pace.
What could he not achieve indeed
When mounted high on such a steed?
Deeds of courage; I praise his cause;
He rode within sight of the Moors,
Where they lay, that powerful enemy,
Camped, to the west, against the sea.

Gahmuret defeats Razalic

THERE was a prince named Razalic,
He was a knight amongst the pick
Of those in Azagouc; each day
He never failed to make his way
To where, as his rank demanded,
He might fight, yet now he landed

In dire straits, for the Angevin
Met his charge, and toppled him;
His defeat arousing sad lament
From the maid he did represent.
Gahmuret's squire, ere this deed,
Steel-tipped a shaft of cane or reed,
Twas with this he had thrust the Moor
From his perch to the sandy floor,
But there would not let him linger,
Swiftly making him his prisoner.
As for the war, here ends its story;
And Gahmuret has won the glory.

Gahmuret and Queen Belacane consummate their love

HE saw eight pennants floating there,
Nearing the town, and so took care
To have Razalic turn them away,
While ordering him to ride that way;
And Razalic followed his lead,
Accepting what his fate decreed.
And Gaschier too came riding in,
Telling the Governor of that win;
That Gahmuret was in the field,
And had forced Gaschier to yield.
The Governor, angered, tore his hair,
And roared, most like a lion, there;
And if he failed to chew ironstone,
Or flint, twas their absence alone
Prevented him; out loud he cried;
Then: 'An old fool am I,' he sighed,
'The gods send me a noble guest,
But if he's slain amongst the rest,
I'll lose my honour beyond recall.
My sword and shield, useless all.
But let none say so, if any dare!'
With that he left his men to stare,

And galloped on towards the gate.
Razalic's squire arrived there straight;
Bearing a shield, he did advance,
One with a man pierced by a lance
Depicted there, on both its sides,
Made in Isenhart's land; besides
This he bore the helmet, and sword,
Razalic had carried abroad
To prove his prowess; yet, despite
His skill was unhorsed by our knight.
If that heathen at some later day
Died unbaptised may He, I say,
Who works the miracles we see,
Treat Razalic most mercifully.

The Governor had ne'er seen a sight
That e'er so pleased him, as a knight.
He recognised the emblem straight,
And galloped onward through the gate.
There he met the young Angevin,
Still seeking some enemy's ruin,
And took him quickly by the arm
And led him in, to ward off harm.
Gahmuret let him have his way,
And so unhorsed no more that day.

Lachfilirost, the Governor, asked:
'Tell me sir, is it you who has
Defeated Razalic? If such is so,
Our land is safe now from the foe.
For he is the lord of all the Moors,
All who fight in Isenhart's cause;
He great loss for us did portend.
Now all our woe is at an end.
At some angry god's command
His men have invaded our land,
But now their power to wage war

Ends with victory o'er this Moor.'

Lachfilirost led Gahmuret in,
Which vexed that scion of Gandin.
To greet him the Queen rode down,
Took his bridle, smoothed his frown;
The Angevin's host then let him go;
Gahmuret's squires followed though,
While the Queen led forth her guest,
Through the town, to show this best
Of champions; when the time was right,
Dismounting, alongside the knight.
'What faithful squires you are indeed!
Such close attention he'll not need.
Perhaps you think to lose him thus?
Yet now his comfort lies with us.
Here is his steed, lead it away.
I'll keep him company this day.'

He gazed at a host of ladies there.
The Queen made it her own affair
To disarm him with her own hand.
Therein a noble bed did stand,
With a sable coverlet, and where
A private honour was all his care.
They were alone, the maids had gone,
Closing the chamber doors thereon.
There the Queen yielded, to sweet love,
With one whom her heart did approve.
Though they were of different hue,
What matter, if their hearts be true?

The people brought rich offerings
To please their gods. Remembering
What Razalic was sworn to do,
You'll see that he performed it too,
Although his grief for Isenhart

He still bore there within his heart.
From the noise, the Governor knew
That Gahmuret was now on view,
For all the princes of Zazamanc
Came in an eager crowd to thank
Gahmuret for the victory.
And two dozen knights, certainly,
He had downed in that brave fight,
And taken all their mounts outright.
Those three princely captives too,
Came riding in before their view,
And the rest with them they brought
All to present themselves at court.

Gahmuret is now lord of Zazamanc

LORD now of that land, Gahmuret,
Relaxed and at ease, having slept
And refreshed himself, she dressed
In fine robes, and then, by the hand,
That Queen, who had been a maiden
But was now indeed a woman,
Before them all her true love led,
This Angevin, and to them said:
'I, and my land, are now of right
Subject to the rule of this knight,
If friend and foe do so concede.'

Then Gahmuret asked, it was agreed,
That Lord Razalic approach and kiss
His spouse. Lord Gaschier, did this
Also, and proud Hiuteger the Scot,
Though a painful wound was his lot.
He seated them, though he yet stood:
'I would greet my cousin, if I could
And yet the Queen not take offence,
Though I shall offer her my defence,'

He said courteously, 'I am bound
To free a kinsman of such renown.'
The Queen smiled, and the knight
Being sent for, soon came in sight,
Pushing his way through the crowd;

He speaks with his cousin, Killirjacac

HE came before the Queen, and bowed,
This fair young count, Killirjacac,
Wounded lately in an attack,
But also winning honour there.
He had been brought to this affair
By Gaschier of Normandy,
And was there to serve a lady.
A French subject was his father,
Kaylet's sister was his mother,
And he had been raised at court.
Peerless in beauty he was thought.

As soon as Gahmuret viewed him,
(And he indeed looked so like him,
That their kinship was clear to all)
Upon the Queen he then did call
There to embrace and kiss the youth:
'And come kiss me too, forsooth!'
He cried, and kissed his 'dear brother',
Both much pleased, one with another.
'Ah, my charming young man,' he said,
Is it to serve some maid, you're led
To risk your life in this dire matter?'
So he sought the youth to flatter.
'Such concern me little, my lord;
With Lord Gaschier I came abroad
Who is my uncle. He best knows why;
A thousand knights in arms, say I,
I maintain here at his service,

Brave warriors whom, at his wish,
I gathered at Rouen, in company,
And led them out of Normandy.
Champagne I left on his account,
Now mischance has found him out,
Unless, through a generous deed,
You gain honour now from his need,
Meet fate's treachery with kindness,
And add lustre to your success.
From my friendship, let him gain:
Show pity for your captive's pain.'

He speaks with Kaylet and the captive lords

'FOLLOW your own fair counsel then.
Go with Lord Gaschier; come again,
Both bring my cousin Kaylet here.'
Kaylet did soon with them appear,
Returning to his presence swiftly.
Gahmuret and the Queen warmly
Welcomed him, she kissed the knight,
Since he was a king in his own right,
Her consort's cousin. 'I do swear,'
Said Gahmuret, smiling, 'if this affair
Was in your Spain, and I'd besieged
Your Toledo, and all to please
That King of Gascony who's forever
Attacking you, then I would ever
Be thought disloyal, my cousin dear.
Yet you bring seasoned warriors here.
Who forced you then to such a thing?'

The proud young lord, answered him:
'Schiltunc, my uncle, led me to war,
Vridebrant is his son-in-law;
At my uncle's urging I came,
Because of the marriage, in his name,

I brought six thousand knights with me,
Seeking to aid his victory,
And others too, that serve his cause;
Though some indeed have left the wars.
For love of the Scots, many a man,
Two kings no less from Greenland,
Came here in strength, a sea of knights
To admire; and Morholt, who fights
With wit as well as strength, made one;
But now their presence here is done.
I shall act as the Queen commands,
And all my men, and serve her lands;
For, after all, we two are kin.
Her army is yours; though their skin
Is not as ours, were they baptised
No king of ours would these despise.
Yet I wonder what brings you here?
Tell me when you did thus appear.’
‘But yesterday, you understand;
Today I am lord of all this land.
The Queen made me her prisoner,
And I, inclined to surrender,
Who yet a warrior would prove,
Could only defend myself with love.’

‘Your twin victories, it seems to me,
Come of true deeds of chivalry.’
‘You mean because I shunned a fight
With my own cousin? Why, outright,
You challenged me, both loud and clear;
Think you I turned away from fear?
Only now is there time to parley.’
‘Your emblem, it meant naught to me;
That anchor Gandin never wore,
He my mother’s brother-in-law.’
‘Yet your brave ostrich in the field,
I knew, and then, upon your shield,

The serpent's head. That bird tis true,
And this I say in tribute to you,
Was perched on high, not on its nest;
And I could see your deep unrest
At my capture of those two lords.
A brave fight they did there afford.'
'I fancy I'd have fared no better.
And if the sourest devil ever
Had triumphed there, where you did meet,
The ladies would have thought him sweet.'
'You shower praise.' 'I flatter? Never.'
Come, ask of me some other favour.'

Then they summoned Razalic there:
'My cousin Gahmuret, I declare,'
Said Kaylet to him, courteously,
'Took you prisoner, most nobly,
With his own hands.' 'Yes, that is so;
My lord, he's one to whom I'll show
Allegiance ever, as will my land
Of Azagouc, for its command
Lies not with Isenhart again;
In a lady's service he was slain,
Who is your cousin's lady now.
To win her love was e'er his vow,
And seeking it his life was lost.
Yet I forgive her at the cost
Of a kiss. Now, my lord is gone,
Who was kin to me; if, anon,
Your cousin, versed in chivalry,
Doth make amends for him, to me,
I will clasp my hands in homage.
Should he grant us his patronage,
He will have both wealth and honour,
All that Tankanis, his father,
Did once bequeath to Isenhart,
Whose body lies there, set apart,

Embalmed, and guarded by his men.
And not a day has passed since then,
When I've gazed not upon his bier,
There where his body doth appear,
Since this lance-tip pierced his heart.'
The valiant knight did gently part
His gear, and from its folds he drew
A silken cord, where it hung true;
Then slid it back against his skin.
'There is yet time ere night begin.
If Lord Killirjacac will go
To the army, and bear also
My message, as I beg of him,
The princes will ride back with him.'
And he sent, with him, a ring of gold.

And swiftly, to that fair stronghold,
The princes rode, through the town,
Dark-faced Moors of great renown;
And with the giving and receiving
Of pennants, and much oath-taking,
The lords of Azagouc were sworn
To their fiefdoms; those high-born
Princes were honoured one and all;
To Gahmuret, their lord, did fall
The better portion, nonetheless.

Gahmuret shows his generosity.

THESE the first, then came the rest,
The lords of Zazamanc, who won
(At the Queen's bidding this was done)
Their lands and tithes from Gahmuret,
As was right; he could now forget
A younger brother's poverty;
Land to the measure of a duchy
Prothizilas had left behind,

He who was of princely line,
And this Gahmuret gave in fee
To one who'd battled loyally,
Failed not but won honour there,
Lachfilirost, the Governor;
His pennant too he rightly claimed.
Hiuteger now was loudly named
And, with Gaschier the Norman
That most brave and noble man,
The lords of Azagouc led him
Straight before their sovereign,
Who now, at their request, set free
Those lords, quenching all enmity.
And then they called on Hiuteger,
To grant a boon, in this affair:
'Gift our lord the great Pavilion,
A prize for all that he has won,
For Isenhart gave Vridebrant
The greatest treasure of this land,
When his armour he gave away;
No, there is naught to this day
To match his Helm of adamant;
Strong and hard, it e'er did stand
As emblem of our strength, and more,
His faithful friend in every war;
Love's victim, Isenhart risked all,
And paid the price with his sad fall.'
Hiuteger the Scot raised his hand
And swore that, once in his own land,
He'd seek the Helm, and willingly,
Return it to them o'er the sea.

The princes, at that gathering,
Now took their leave of this new king,
And from the palace they departed.
He continued, as he had started,
Generous in the gifts he gave,

To the faithful and the brave;
Such a shower of wealth untold
You might have thought the trees bore gold;
And this despite the ravaging
Of that land; the lords relieving
Their hero of his good and chattels,
Whether allies, kin, or vassals,
(And there were more than one or two)
Such being the queen's pleasure too.

The conflict had been great before;
The peace was rendered strong and sure.
Naught do I invent, for, behold,
King Isenhart, as I was told,
Was buried with royal honour,
By all his friends, who did favour
His rites with a full year's income
From all their land, a goodly sum;
While Gahmuret himself decreed
That all those lords should indeed
Retain the land in their possession,
And manage it in due succession.

Next morn their armies quit the field,
All those allies the ground did yield
Before the gates, and went their way,
Yet bearing many a litter that day.
The plain was bare of all but one
Great tent, the grand Pavilion,
Which Gahmuret had shipped aboard,
Spreading the news, by every lord,
That to Azagouc it would be sent,
Though such was not his true intent.

Gahmuret leaves Queen Belacane

SO the proud warrior lingered there,

Until, beginning to despair
Of finding deeds of chivalry
Pining and fretting endlessly,
All his joy turned to sadness.
And yet his lover was no less
Dear to him than his own life;
Ne'er was there a lovelier wife,
Who in her own heart was conscious
Of a chaste woman's virtuous
Ways that ever waited on it;
Gahmuret depended on it.

He asked his pilot to prepare
For sea; the one who'd brought him there,
A faithful mariner from Seville,
One who had often served his will,
Though he was not indeed a Moor.
'None shall know of it on shore,'
Said the pilot: 'and then the ship
May swiftly give their fleet the slip;
We must, in leaving thus, be bold.'
Gahmuret filled it full of gold.
Of his departure, tells the tale;
That night, in secret, he set sail.
Queen Belacane was twelve weeks gone
With child, when he set out upon
His voyage; how swift the breeze
That drives such men o'er the seas!

His farewell letter to the Queen

SHE found a note, writ by his hand,
In French; this she could understand.
These the words from her lost lover:
'Here, one love salutes another!
Now like a thief I sail, my dear,
Only to spare more tears I fear;

I cannot hide it from you, lady,
If you were of one faith with me,
Then I must seek to be with you
Forever; know that this is true:
That I live, e'en now, in torment.
If the child be male, his descent
Will guarantee his fortitude.
He is of the House of Anjou.
Love will be his mistress ever.
In battle he shall fight forever,
A storm of hail to all fierce foes,
Harsh friend, indeed, to such as those.
To the deeds I'd have him aspire
Wrought by Gandin, his grandsire,
Who died in battle against the foe,
As Gandin's father did also,
And Addanz was that man's name;
He was a Briton, won great fame,
His shield was never whole for long.
He and King Uther Pendragon
Were the children of two brothers,
Lazaliez one, Brickus the other.
Their father's name was Mazadan,
And to the land of Feimurgan
He was lured, by a faery queen,
Terdelaschoye, his love, I ween.
My race descends, then, from this pair,
Nor shall it cease to shine as fair;
Each man has worn his crown in turn,
Each his badge of honour did earn.
My lady, you may win me still,
If baptism shall prove your will.'
Nor did she wish it differently:
'Oh, how swiftly that might be!
I'll be baptised, and with all speed,
If he'll return, in my great need.
Where else has this noble lover

Left the fruits of love, however?
Sweet amour ne'er shall you stay,
If you bring sorrow night and day,
And must plague my life forever.
I would honour his god, and ever
Live according to his own wish,
And be baptised.' Sorrow with this
Assailed her heart, and her joy now
All lost, she sought the withered bough,
Just as the turtle-dove will do;
Doves to each other prove so true
That whene'er their spouse is gone,
They seek a withered branch anon.

The birth of Parzival's elder half-brother, Feirefiz

SHE bore a son when her time came,
His skin particoloured; that same
Had God pleased, by some miracle,
To paint black and white, a marvel!
And the Queen would kiss the light
Places where his skin showed white.
Feirefiz was the name she gave him,
Her Feirefiz the Angevin;
And when he grew to be a man,
Whole forests fell to his right hand,
For many a long lance, in the field,
He shattered, and many a shield.
Two hues his hair and skin, not one;
Like a magpie was this 'pied son'.

Gahmuret reaches Seville

NOW, more than a year had passed by,
Since Gahmuret, seen by every eye,
Had been acclaimed in Zazamanc,
Thus elevating himself in rank,

Through his resounding victory,
Yet still was storm-tossed on the sea,
Driven by every wind and gale.
And there he spied a silken sail,
Dyed gleaming red, far from land.
It brought fair words from Vridebrant,
Messengers to Queen Belacane,
Asking her pardon for the pain
He had caused by that dire affair,
Though he had lost a kinsman there,
Due to her; that ship also brought
The Helm of adamant they sought,
Greaves, a hauberk, and a sword.

A marvel indeed, yet, be assured,
They met in passing! So indeed
My source has it, and I give heed.
They gave up all those gifts to him;
Gahmuret swore, when he did win
His return to the Queen, why then,
He'd repeat their message again.
He reached harbour I am told,
Paid his pilot in fine red gold,
For all his labours upon the sea,
And there they parted company,
Much to that mariner's sorrow;
And then he left, on the morrow,
And made his way, with a will,
From that haven, to fair Seville.

Book II: Gahmuret and Herzeloide

The Tournament at Kanvoleis in Wales

GAHMURET wished to greet, again,
His cousin Kaylet, King of Spain.
Towards Toledo he made his way,

But Kaylet, gone now many a day,
Had left to seek some fair tourney
Where shields met with little mercy.
Gahmuret, so says my author,
Told his men to go and gather
His lances, each of which displayed
Its pennant, of green sendal made,
With three anchors in 'ermine' white,
That proudly signified the knight,
All acclaimed for their splendour.
He owned a hundred in number
Of such pennants, long and wide,
Which, starting from where they were tied
A span below the lance-tip, ran,
Well-nigh down to the wielder's hand.
All these were carried in his train,
By his cousin's folk, who made plain
The deep respect they'd there afford
This brave knight, to please their lord.

Now, I know not how long he sought
For Kaylet, and where Kaylet fought,
Quite as far as the land of Wales.
But there, at last, so run the tales,
Before Kanvoleis he found,
Pitched en masse, on open ground,
A host of tents of foreign knights;
I spin no tales, fair truth delights.
He told his men to rein in there,
While his own squire ahead did fare,
To find some site within the town;
Such by his squire was swiftly found.
There followed on his baggage train.
Not one house did the town contain
That did not many a shield display,
Like penthouse roofs, in fine array,
And hangings draped from every wall.

Fenced with lances was every hall.

The Queen of Wales a tournament
At Kanvoleis did thus present,
Its terms such as would scare today
Any who heard them, I may say,
If he were not known for bravery.
She was a maid as yet, you see,
Not yet come to woman's estate,
And offered to who tried their fate
Two broad lands and her own person,
As the prize, on this occasion.
And it was this news which brought
Many, who that brave honour sought,
To bite the dust, or at least the grass,
As they with horse and lance did pass
Along the lists, and did there advance,
Yet were toppled, and lost their chance.
Many a brave knight played his part,
Proved his skill, yet did then depart.
Many a steed sped onwards there,
And many a sword rang in the air.

A bridge led over a pool of water
To a meadow, in a quiet quarter,
Barred by a gate that his young squire
Had oped, to see the Palace entire
Towering above; there at a window
The Queen and her ladies saw below
This squire and others work to raise
A Pavilion that, in other days,
A young prince lost, for a love
That no benefit to him did prove,
A vain love, for Queen Belacane.
A rare Pavilion it was, tis plain,
Burdening thirty mules indeed
To carry it; the ladies agreed,

That it cost much labour that affair,
Before twas raised high in the air;
Yet the meadow was long and wide,
With room for its ropes on every side.

Gahmuret raises his Pavilion

NOW Gahmuret that noble man
Breakfasted, such was his plan,
Outside the town while this was done,
And when they'd raised the Pavilion,
He thought of how he might, with flair,
Approach, in sight of those ladies fair.
He took no time at all to decide.
Each of his squires there did ride
With five lances tied together,
And a sixth lance in their other
Hand, with pennant flying above;
Such the style pride doth approve!

Now the Queen was told, you understand,
That a stranger, from a distant land,
Would soon be seen, so said the page,
Who brought the news, and set the stage:
'His men, Frenchmen and infidel,
Are richly clad, and they may well
By their speech be men of Anjou.
They bear themselves right proudly too,
Their clothes are fine, none can deny.
I went amongst his squires, and I
Found nothing there not of the best.
They say if any of them attest
To their need of aught at all,
And do upon their master call,
That he will soon dispel their care.
I asked: who is the master there?
They said the King of Zazamanc;

He it is that they have to thank
For their contentment,' said the page,
'See his Pavilion, why I would gage
Its worth at twice that of your crown
And all your lands with this fair town.'
'I would not rate its worth so high,
Cried the Queen, 'and yet, say I,
Its lord knows naught of poverty.
There is his lodging, where is he?'
And she sent the page to enquire
For to know of him was her desire.

Gahmuret rode through the town,
In great state, rousing all around.
The glitter of shields met his eye.
The trumpets played as he went by,
Their shrill sound startling the air,
And timbrels shaken, a tinkling pair,
Till from the walls they did resound:
The noise was heard all over town,
Mingled with the sound of flutes,
Playing a march, along their route,
While flanked by fiddlers on horseback,
Their master went who naught did lack.
Clad in high-boots made for summer,
One leg cocked on his mount's shoulder,
He rode along, lips red as a ruby,
Their colour shining bright and fiery.
Radiant, handsome in every way,
Lord Gahmuret rode out that day;
Bright, softly curling, was his hair,
Flowing from his rich cap there;
His cloak, as ever, of green samite,
Against a tunic of gleaming white,
Its trimmings glowed a sable black.
A crowd of folk went at his back,
Or pressed around to watch the sight,

All asking who might be this knight
Parading past, so splendidly?
His folk told them, right willingly.
Towards the bridge all made their way;
The Queen's bright radiance that day,
Made him straighten his slack posture,
And gaze alertly, when he saw her,
Like a hawk that beholds its prey;
In such lodgings he'd seek to stay,
And as for his hostess, the Queen,
She seemed content, her face serene.

Gahmuret is visited by Kaylet, Gaschier and Killirjacac

A knight told Kaylet, King of Spain,
That there, upon the Leoplane,
They had erected the Pavilion,
That Gahmuret had been given,
Through Razalic, at Patelamunt.
Kaylet rejoiced, as was his wont.
'I saw your cousin, in his pride,'
Said the knight, 'for there I spied,
A hundred banners raised on high,
Before his tent; his shield did I
Behold, all green; his emblem there
On every pennant, that same affair
Of three anchors on a green field,
All ermine, like that on his shield.'
'Is it so? Is my cousin here?
Then you shall see how he'll appear
Effortlessly to deflect the lance,
And trouble all with his advance.
King Hardiz, for some time now,
Has sought to topple me, I avow,
And, indeed, he has pressed me sore.
But Gahmuret he'll not dare ignore,
And Gahmuret will unhorse him too.

My fortunes then must rise anew.’

Kaylet sent the knight on his way,
To where the Norman, Gaschier,
And fair Killirjacac lay, at rest.
They had come at Kaylet’s request,
And camped with a large following.
Now they accompanied the king
To the Pavilion, there to greet
The King of Zazamanc, and meet
Again, their friendship as before.
Too long had it been since they saw
His face once more, they all said so.
Gahmuret then was keen to know
What knights in arms were there at hand?
‘Knights there are from many a land,
Whom Love of some fair lady brings,
A host of warriors, lords, and kings.
King Uther Pendragon for one,
And his Britons, yet he is none
Too happy, his flesh feels a thorn,
Since she to whom Arthur was born,
His wife, Igraine, Uther has lost;
For she departed, to his cost,
With a priest versed in magic lore,
And Arthur after them, what’s more,
And we are in the third year now,
Since he did lose them both, I vow.
Yet Lot of Norway, his son-in-law,
Is here, one chivalrous to the core,
A skilful, wise, and noble knight,
Who is as quick to act aright,
As slow to dream of treachery;
And Lot’s own son, Gawain, we see,
Not old enough to joust, tis clear,
And yet the lad was with me here,
And said if he could break a lance,

Were strong enough in his advance,
A knight's work he would seek to do.
Ambition works in him, tis true.
And then the King of Patrigalt,
Has brought a forest to the assault,
For thick with lances is his force,
And yet his deeds count not, of course,
For here are knights of Portugal
"Mad wretches" we named them all,
Intent on piercing many a shield.
The Provençals, too, take the field,
Their shields are striped all bright
With red and yellow, every knight.
And then the Welsh, of this fair land,
Who such numbers can command
That they can drive at will right through
The others' forces, and then pursue.
And there are those unknown to me,
Who come in service to some lady,
But as for those that I have named,
We are encamped within this same
Town of Kanvoleis, each fair nation
Is there at the Queen's invitation.

Now let me name those camped outside,
That our brave fighting skills deride.
The noble King of Ascalon,
And the proud King of Aragon;
Also Cidegast of Logroys,
And the King of Punturtois,
Who is named Brandelidelin;
And there too is bold Lahelin,
And Morholt of Ireland, as well,
Who's ransomed many men that fell.
The Alemans lodge in the plain;
And the Duke of Brabant I name,
Who has appeared in this country

For love of the King of Gascony,
He's that very same King Hardiz,
Who weds him to his sister, Alize;
Thus he's rewarded in advance.
All these oppose me with the lance;
Yet now I may rely on you.
Recall your kith and kin; be true
To the love that you bear me, now,
For your assistance you must vow.'

'If my aid', replied Gahmuret,
'Brings you gain, you need feel no debt.
Let our two causes be as one.
Does not your ostrich take the sun
And scorn its nest? Your serpent's head
Bear against Hardiz; you were bred
To strike against his demi-griffin.
So shall your emblems fight and win.
And I will cast my anchor there
Into the wave that he doth prepare,
And so hold firm while he doth land
Head over heels upon the sand;
If we move against each other
And he and I attack together,
I must down him, or he down me,
That I will swear, and guarantee.'

The preliminary or 'Vesper' tournament begins

KAYLET returned to his fine tent,
More than usually content.
In an instant, the heralds cried
A fine warrior from either side;
He of Poitou was Schiolarz,
His foe Gurnemanz of Graharz.
They made to joust there in the plain.
But six knights from this side came,

And three from that and, as swiftly,
Knights began the Vesper tourney,
Commencing their chivalric deeds.
What indeed could make them cease?

The time was round about midday,
And Gahmuret in his tent still lay,
When he heard the growing fight
Was drawing to it every knight,
As is the way of such chivalry,
And so he made his own entry
To the field, where long and wide
Grew the squadrons on either side.
He flew his pennant but refrained
From the attack, his post maintained
Before his tent, wishing to see
How both sides fought, and did he
Have his carpet set upon the ground,
Near where the battle-cries did sound,
Where charge upon charge was made
While the wounded horses neighed
Mournfully, and sharp swords clashed
Bent on glory, where armour crashed,
And lances shattered – why ask where?
Amidst the squires, watched the affair,
As the knights their patterns wrought
Like woven tapestry, as they fought.

They were, those deeds of chivalry,
So close by the ladies could see
And review the warriors' labours,
As brave knights attacked their neighbours,
And thus the Queen was sad at heart
To find that Gahmuret sat apart,
Out of the thick of that rare fight.
'Ah, where is that wondrous knight
Whom I have heard so much about?'

Great things were done midst the rout,
By many a knight of slender means
Who yet aspired not to the Queen's
Royal person nor her broad lands,
Nor sought, by the work of hands,
The prize declared there, in her name;
Some lesser chess-piece was their aim.

Gahmuret had donned that armour
Vridebrant the Scot had proffered
As amends to Queen Belacane
For all the warfare and the pain
With which he'd burdened her land.
He'd gazed on the Helm of adamant,
A peerless work which he now wore.
They had set his emblem, as before,
The anchor, high upon its crest,
With precious gems the helm was blessed,
A rare and heavy weight indeed;
The Angevin called for his steed.
Yet what, you ask, adorned his shield?
A boss of gold Araby did yield,
Was riveted there, a golden burden
For the man who sought the guerdon,
All shining with a reddish glow;
There you could see your face; below
The gold was set a sable anchor.
I'd have longed for what he wore,
Many a pound in weight and worth.
His tabard was of ample girth,
I doubt if any has worn its peer,
Its hem the floor did barely clear,
It shone, like living coals at night,
Nothing worn, but all new and bright;
One's gaze could not evade its glare,
The weak-sighted were blinded there.
And it was all patterned with gold

Such as the griffins' claws do hold,
Won from a rock in the Caucasus,
They who as yet still guard it thus.
Folk travel there from Araby,
Gain its possession, guilefully,
(There is none so fine elsewhere)
And then return to Araby, where
They weave the green silk Achmardi,
For rich brocades and such finery.
His tabard then was rich and rare,
As he went to join in this affair.

He slung his shield about his neck.
There stood his fine charger decked
With iron plates, to its hooves nigh;
His pages gave forth his battle-cry.
And Gahmuret leapt to the saddle,
His eager mount he did bestraddle;
Many a lance, full tilt, he broke,
Cleaving through the other folk
Charging out on the farther side.
Kaylet's ostrich was there beside
The anchor, as Lord Gahmuret,
Poytwin de Prienlascors now met,
Thrust him down and he did render
Like many another his surrender.
All those knights who bore the cross
Of poverty, gained from their loss,
Since he gave each a captured mount,
A fine addition to their account.

Four banners now against him came,
On each the emblem was the same,
(Brave men they were that carried these,
Their lord well-versed in chivalry)
The emblem was a griffin's tail,
Its latter end, but sharp as hail.

It was the King of Gascony
Who bore the front half there, you see,
Upon his shield, and his attire
Was such all ladies did admire.
Seeing the ostrich on a helm,
He spurred at it to overwhelm
The knight beneath, yet the anchor
Reached him first, quelled his rancour,
Gahmuret toppling him unaware,
Making the king his captive there.
There was a fine melee after that,
The furrows were all trampled flat
As smooth as is a threshing floor,
The knights' steel swords, they combed the straw.
A forest of lances broke, and down
Went many a knight to the ground;
(I'm told twas to the rear they went
Where cowards lurk behind a tent).

The finest knights topple their foes

THE battle now had come so near
The ladies now could see, full clear,
Which knights in arms might gain the crown.
Now came sharp splinters showering down
Like blown snow, for it did win
The hour, that lance of Rivalin,
Who fought for a lady's favour,
And so as ever sought for honour.
He was the King of Lyonesse,
And wherever he did press,
There was a sound of splitting wood,
And a cracking, as he made good.
Morholt cleverly stole a knight,
Hoisting him from his seat outright
And onto his own saddle there
(A fine journey through the air!)

That knight was Killirjacac,
Who had but now paid King Lac
With such as e'er a man has found
In treasure from such solid ground;
Killirjacac was fighting well,
But Morholt, the tale doth tell,
Wished to win without a sword,
And so that flight did him afford.

Out of his saddle, and onto land
Kaylet thrust the Duke of Brabant;
That lord's name was Lambekin.
What was done by his kith and kin?
They all thirsted for battle, so
They shielded him as he sank below.
Then the brave King of Aragon
Topped old Uther Pendragon
Over his horse's tail, and there
Ended his part in that affair;
The King of Britain, reft of power,
Lay there, deep among the flowers.
How courteous, when all's said and done,
Of me, to lodge the King of Britain,
Under the walls of Kanvoleis,
In a place not trampled by feet,
Nor likely to be in time to come.
For he found more ease there, in sum
Than on his horse, but not forgot
For long, for those quite near the spot,
Gave him fair cover from the sword,
While charging about the greensward.

Up came the King of Punturteis,
He fell there, before Kanvoleis,
And lay where his mount had gone,
While the horse itself sped on.
This was proud Gahmuret's doing.

‘Charge my lord!’ men were crying,
And, charging, he found his cousin
Kaylet, by his foes hemmed in,
Those folk of Punturteis who sought
To take him captive, where he fought;
And all seemed now a hideous din,
As ransom for Brandelidelin,
They had taken this other fellow.
Now various noblemen did follow
Running or walking in their armour,
Their flesh bruised black from the honour
Done them by many a harsh blow;
Their sole prize for a manly show.
I say it not to adorn my tale,
But no thought of rest did there prevail,
For they were spurred on by Love,
As many a helm and shield did prove,
Once bright, now coated with the dust;
While many fell there, as many must,
On the short turf, midst the flowers,
That fate with such honour dowers.
Let my heart too to such wars aspire,
If I keep my seat, and finish higher.

His mount being somewhat weary,
Gahmuret left the melee briefly.
They unlaced the Helm of adamant,
But only to let him puff and pant,
Not from bravado; his face was red,
Yet proud the bearing of his head.

Gahmuret and ‘his lady’ Queen Ampflise

NOW, hear! The king of France had died,
For whose fair wife, Ampflise, he sighed;
And she impelled by her great longing,
Had sent to Kanvoleis, seeking

To know if Gahmuret had returned
From distant lands, and such she learned.
The lady's chaplain had, by this stage,
Arrived, with many a little page,
Escorted by steadfast young squires
Leading pack-mules; for her desires
Had led Ampflise to send him there.
And soon to Gahmuret he did fare.
'Bien sei venûz, bêâs sir.' He
Spoke in French, most fluently,
'Fair greeting, on my lady's part,
And on mine; tis from the heart,
Of the Queen of France I mean;
For, pricked by passion's lance, the Queen
Is occupied with thoughts of you.'
He handed him her letter too,
Which sent Gahmuret her greeting,
And in its folds a tiny ring,
A safe-conduct, and a token,
Which once to her he had given.
With emotion Gahmuret bowed
On seeing her writing which avowed,
(If you would hear what it did state),
'I, who have been distressed of late
By the passion that you inspired,
Send you love and greetings, fired
By a love that has shut and barred,
With bands of steel, strong and hard,
My heart from its true happiness.
I am dying now, of Love's excess.
If your love should elude me yet,
Then surely I'll die of deep regret.
Return, and receive from my hand,
The crown and sceptre, and the land
That the king has bequeathed to me.
The love you stir earns this, you see,
And accept the rich gifts I send,

Four panniers full; be my friend,
And my own knight at Kanvoleis,
Their capital, and you shall please.
If their Welsh Queen, of this affair
Catches sight, why should you care?
It cannot harm me; far lovelier
Am I than her, and mightier;
And then my love it holds more charm.
If for such noble love you'd arm
In return, come, here's my crown.'
All this her fair hand had set down.

And this he read, there was no more;
So he donned his Helm as before,
Without a care to mar his thought.
His squires, who had the helmet brought,
Laced him in, for he was eager
To fight again, but gave the order
For the chaplain, her messenger,
To be led to the tent, there enter,
And take his rest, and be refreshed.

Wherever knights were hard-pressed,
Gahmuret cleared a way, as he could,
Some found bad luck and others good,
But if any missed his chance, yet he
Had a wealth of opportunity,
To retrieve whatever time he'd lost;
He only needed to make riposte,
Or join a mass charge over there.
They laid on with scarce a care,
Scorned 'friendly blows' as they are known,
Such as are ever in friendship shown,
Such that close friendships were rent
Apart, so great the force they spent;
In such a matter ill deeds, unseen,
Are but rarely excused, I mean:

No judge was there to keep the law,
Or rule on what they should ignore.
Whate'er a man won he retained,
No matter the resentment gained.
For they had come from many a land,
To Kanvoleis to try their hand,
And they'd little fear of the cost,
Whether indeed they won or lost.

He fights at his lady's request

HE obeyed the Queen's request,
That in the letter she'd expressed,
To be her knight, so for Ampflise
He fought on, and sought to please.
Behold him, now restraint is gone!
Is it passion that drives him on,
With such courage? Affection dowers
A man with strength; renews his powers.
Now Gahmuret espied King Lot
Turning his shield to where a knot
Of men were struggling; the king
Was well-nigh turned around, seeking
An advantage, but Gahmuret
Charged, and broke the enemy wedge;
And with his hollow lance unhorsed
The king of Aragon, such its force;
And that king's name was Schaffilor.
The lance that Gahmuret now bore,
Lacked a pennant, for he had brought
The lance there from the heathen court.
Schaffilor's friends now rallied round,
But he was a prisoner still, he found.

Those lodged in town forced those outside
To make for the open country, and ride;
Their Vespers brought a goodly yield,

The broken lances about the field
Suggested a full-blown tournament,
Though that was scarcely their intent.
King Lahelin now grew furious:
'Are we to be put to shame thus?
Tis the deed of him who bears the anchor
And one of us must lay the other
Where he shall have a harsher rest,
Ere the day's over, and this contest.
They have come nigh conquering us!'
The power of their charge was wondrous,
And guaranteed them ample space.
No mere sport these two did face.
Gahmuret and King Lahelin
Both with a will did now begin
Threatening to clear a forest entire:
'A lance, a lance, a lance, dear squire!'
But then at last King Lahelin
Was shamed; Gahmuret thrust at him
And toppled the king from his mount,
A lance-length gave him, on account;
And received the king's surrender.
I'd find gathering ripe pears harder,
So swiftly his foes went to ground.
Many, on seeing him bear down,
Cried: 'Flee, beware, the anchor's here!'

Gahmuret learns of his brother Galoes' death at Muntori

BUT an Angevin prince did appear,
Gallop ing past with upturned shield,
One who to deepest grief did yield,
And he did its fair emblem display.
Why now did Gahmuret turn away
From the fight? I will tell you. Know,
That his dear brother, proud Galoes,
Fil li roy Gandin, as was he,

Gandin's son, had previously
Granted it to that knight, ere Love
In single combat did him remove.
Gahmuret now unlaced his helm.
He sought no longer to overwhelm
The enemy; the dust and grass
He churned no more as he did pass,
As befitted his grief and sorrow.
Berating himself that he was slow
To question Kaylet as to why
His brother was absent (yet I
Deem Kaylet knew not the story
Of brave Galoes' death at Muntori)
He had been too troubled in mind
Then; in truth, as we shall find,
Galoes was tormented by love
For Queen Annore, and did prove
Her bane, she suffering great sorrow
On his account, whence did follow
Her death, born of her loyal grief.

Now Gahmuret, to my belief,
Although in mourning, nonetheless
Had shattered lances to excess,
So many, in but half a day,
That he might well have cleared away
A whole forest, if the tourney
Proper had ensued, for nearly
A hundred ones, brightly coloured,
He had wielded there, and squandered.
His pennants were now owned outright
By the heralds, as was their right.
Back to his Pavilion, he did ride,
With the Welsh Queen's page at his side,
Who relieved him of his tabard,
All pierced, and hacked, and scarred
In the conflict, and then the boy

Bore it for the ladies to enjoy;
And still that fine coat shone with gold,
As a bright furnace shines, and told
Of his wealth and magnificence;
The Queen said smiling: 'You were sent,
With this brave knight, to our fair land,
"Sir Tabard" and now lie in my hand.
And though,' she said, 'tis only right
That all who fought should feel no slight,
(And let them note my true good-will,
Through Adam's rib my kindred still)
Yet when all things are said and done,
Gahmuret's deeds the prize have won.'

The chivalry continued still,
So fiercely, that twas not until
The twilight that the battle ceased.
Those from within the town were pleased
To drive those outside to their tents,
And would indeed have been content
To gallop on, through ropes and all,
Were it not for a loud recall
From the King of Ascalon and
The Lord Morholt of Ireland.
Some had won and others had lost,
Many were laid low to their cost,
Others earned honour and glory,
But at this moment in the story,
Tis time to part them; none can see!
He, who holds the stakes at tourney,
Grants no light here; who can play
After the candle's borne away?
Who'd wish to gamble in the dark?
Not weary men who've made their mark.

The Queen of Wales, Herzelayde, visits Gahmuret's tent

AND yet the dark was quite forgot,
Where Gahmuret sat, for in that spot
It seemed broad day, though it was night,
For he was lit by candle-light;
Huge rings of tiny candles shone
Down on fair olive leaves; thereon
Was many a fine quilt and before
All these broad carpets made a floor.
The Welsh Queen to his tent came she,
With many a fair and noble lady,
To view this King of Zazamanc,
And a host of weary men of rank.
The space was cleared ere she entered,
Her host leapt to his feet, presented
All the four captive kings with their
Attendant princes, and met the fair
Queen with honour and ceremony.
She looked; she liked what she did see.

‘Here where I find you, you are host,’
Said the Queen, smiling, ‘here you boast
A great Pavilion, yet I command,
For I am mistress of this land;
It tis your pleasure that I should greet
You with a kiss, then twould prove meet.’
‘I would have your kiss,’ he replied,
‘If these lords are kissed, at my side,
For if kings and princes are forgot,
No kiss indeed should be my lot.’
‘So be it, they are unknown to me.’
She kissed them all, appropriately,
As their rank deserved, and Gahmuret
Had requested, and then he set
A seat for her, and she sat within,
And the Lord Brandelidelin
Sat beside her; the carpet wore
A coat of fresh green rushes, and bore

This host who delighted the Queen,
She longed for him indeed, I mean;
As he passed, to sit some way away,
The lady caused him some delay,
And had him sit at her other side.
She was a maid, and no one's bride,
Who drew him down to sit so near.
Her name now you would seek to hear?
Well then, she was Queen Herzeloyde.
Her paternal aunt was Rischoyde,
Whom Gahmuret's maternal cousin,
Kaylet, had wed; and there within
That Pavilion such light she shed
That lacking the candles overhead
She would still have lit that place
With her sweet and radiant face.
Gahmuret would have delighted
In granting the love she invited,
Had not his grief for his brother
Quenched his longing for a lover.

They both exchanged fair courtesies.
Then cup-bearers with graceful ease
Brought crystal cups, devoid of gold
Yet quite magnificent to behold,
Once gifted to Queen Belacane,
By Isenhart, to plead his pain,
Carved in Azagouc, of great worth;
These pages, all of noble birth,
Poured out for them the sweet wine,
From goblets made of crystalline
Cornelian, in pure colours seen
Of ruby red and emerald green.

Herzeloyde asserts her claim

TWO knights on parole now came

To the Pavilion, for these same
 Had been captured, and only now
 Had returned, having made a vow.
 One was Kaylet, who on seeing
 Gahmuret visibly grieving,
 Said: 'What's this? Why, you are named
 As the winner, and thus acclaimed
 By those from every place, the men
 Of Britain, and then the Irishmen,
 The French, the warriors of Brabant,
 Also the Welsh, of this fair land;
 All these accept your victory,
 And concede your supremacy
 In every tourney of this kind;
 And then the proof, to my mind,
 Is that your courage did not fail
 When these brave four you did assail,
 Men who have never before now
 Been made to ask parole, I vow:
 My Lord Brandelidelin,
 And then the noble Lahelin,
 And Lord Hardiz and Schaffilor.
 (Much like poor Razalic the Moor,
 Whom you also taught to render,
 At Patelamunt, his surrender!)
 And this, your skill in battle, wins
 The heights and greater fame begins.'
 'My lady will but think you foolish
 To flatter me as you do in this,'
 'Do not,' said Gahmuret, 'over-praise me,
 Lest others see the failings in me.
 Too lavish are fair words unearned.
 But tell me how you have returned?'
 'Brandelidelin's men of Punturteis
 Set me and this Champagnard free,
 And if you'll release him in turn,
 My lord Morholt will then return

Killirjacac, my nephew, whom
He snatched from us, or our sad doom
Is to be ransomed. Favour us now,
For these Vespers were such, I vow,
There'll be no tourney at Kanvoleis,
Or not unless you choose to release
The best of the foe, all seated here,
For how could they in force appear?
Like it or not you've won renown.'
Then the Queen, with nary a frown,
Made a request, dear to her heart:
'Grant me satisfaction, on your part,
In the claim I now have on you,
I ask, who am your servant true.'

The Queen of France's chaplain asserts the counter-claim

AT this the chaplain of that discreet
French queen, Ampflise, leapt to his feet.
'I object!' he cried, 'for by every right
He is my lady's own true knight,
She who sent me to woo him here.
She longs for him, it doth appear,
And so claims the title to his love.
The one that loves him most doth prove
The one that should his heart possess,
For she loves more than all the rest.
Here are her three princely envoys,
Pages above reproach, these boys:
The first lad is named Lanzidant,
Of noble birth, and from Greenland,
And he has come to France to learn
The tongue and a fair phrase can turn.
The second is called Liadarz,
Son of the brave Count Schiolarz
Of Poitou.' Now, who was the third?
Strange is the tale, list to my word:

His mother was the fair Beaflurs,
And his father was Pansamurs,
Of the faery race, for their part,
And his name Liahurteltart.
All three stood before Gahmuret.
'Sire,' they said, 'you may forget
All risk, for hazard you may play
And yet be bound to win the day.
(For the Queen of France doth move
To make the stake her noble love)
Of fair defence you have no need,
Happiness must be yours indeed.'

Now ere this embassy took place,
Kaylet seated himself with grace,
And was favoured with an angle
Of the Welsh Queen's velvet mantle.
'Tell me,' she asked him, quietly,
'Have you received some injury?
Are these the marks of blows I view?'
And then she touched the bruises too;
Her soft white hands did not shirk
To do so, they God's handiwork.
She found his cheeks, and nose, and chin
Scarred, and battered, and beaten in.
Herzeloyde had done him the honour
Of granting him a place beside her,
By gently taking him by the hand,
Because his wife was the queen's aunt,
Rischoyde. Now turning to Gahmuret,
While the lads were retreating yet,
She addressed him with courtesy:
'The Queen of France, as I can see,
Urges her love; as she has sought,
Let me bring my own case to court,
Thereby honour all women in me.
Remain, my lord, in this country

Till judgement is given in this place,
Or you will bring on me disgrace.’
Gahmuret gave his word, and she
Took her leave, and parted swiftly;
No mounting-block did she need there,
For Kaylet lifted her in the air,
Onto her palfrey, then joined his brothers.

Gahmuret mourns his brother King Galoes

‘YOUR sister Alize, amongst others’
He said to King Hardiz of Gascony,
‘Once offered her own true love to me
Which I accepted, but now we see,
That such love was not meant to be,
And she is provided for elsewhere,
More nobly than were she in my care.
So I would beg that you, no longer,
Turn on me your righteous anger.
For she’s Prince Lambekin’s, and though
She wears no crown her rank is so
Illustrious Hainault and Brabant
Honour her, every noble man.
Befriend me, my fair lord, once more,
And your good graces now restore,
Be sure of my wish to serve you.’
Hardiz replied, a man full shrewd:
‘Ah, you were honey-tongued, always!
If a man you’d wronged all his days
Was set to summon you to answer
For it all, he would yet consider
It wise to forgive you still, if he
Was your cousin’s prisoner, like me.’
‘He would never wrong any man,
To set you free would be his plan,
And that is the first thing I’d request
For Lord Gahmuret is of the best,

And when you are set at liberty
You may be kinder then to me.
Surely enough time has gone by
To soothe your injured pride, say I.
And yet howe'er ill you treat me
Your sister will never scorn me.'

His words brought forth laughter,
And yet sadness soon thereafter;
Gahmuret's love for Belacane
Was drawing him to her again,
While grief is a sharp goad pricking,
And they knew he was in mourning
And thus had little time for jests.
His cousin chided him: 'Confess,
You treat our company as naught.'
'Ah, I have many a rueful thought!
Though full of longing for the Queen,
Queen Herzeloyde the fair, I mean,
In Patelamunt, I left behind
One pure and sweet, of whom I find
The memory wounds me to the heart,
And now we are so far apart,
Her chaste and noble manners move
Me with sad longing for her love.
Queen Belacane gave me a land
And people, yet, you understand,
She robs me now of happiness;
We are shamed by our fickleness,
Yet tis manly to scorn constraint;
She bound me so, all my complaint
Was I was barred thus from fighting,
And so I fancied that this jousting
Here, might free me from my woe.
Now many a fool might well, I know,
Think that I fled from her blackness,
Yet she was as the sun in brightness.

Thought of her womanly excellence
Afflicts me, for if honour and sense
Were a shield, she'd be its centre.
That is one woe, but there's another,
My brother's shield, held in reverse,
I've seen borne here, his death rehearse
In mind.' Alas, for that sad speech!
A sorry tale must this cousin teach;
Kaylet's eyes now filled with tears,
For he had held that cousin dear;
'O Queen of Averre, for your love
He gave his life; a fool you prove.
For King Galoes women should grieve
With true respect if they'd receive
Fair praise when they are spoken of,
And with due caution ever move.
Though it may little trouble you,
I mourn a kinsman brave and true
On your account, he wore your favours
And fought and died with knightly honours.
His kin and his companions here,
Bear heartfelt witness for their peer,
Sorrow bids them reverse their shields,
In the manner that true grief yields,
As if in attendance on his bier;
Such the chivalry they show here.
They bow now in grief, my cousin,
Galoes, will no more strive to win
His lady's love.' A second blow
Was this to Gahmuret, to know
The details of his brother's death.
'With such sorrow,' he sighed a breath,
'Have my anchor's flukes found sand.'
And he held that blazon in his hand,
His sad gaze filled with his distress:
'Galoes of Anjou, let all confess
There is no need to seek a knight

Who is as fine, or shines as bright,
And never yet was born, the man
That did ride forth with such élan.
Kindness blossomed in your heart,
And there bore fruit, where love doth start,
How the thought of your true goodness
Moves me, and grieves me to excess.’

And then he asked, of King Kaylet:
‘What of my poor mother, Schoette,
How does that unhappy woman now?’
‘As must move God’s pity, I avow;
For having lost Gandin, your father,
And now Galoes, your elder brother,
And being placed so far from you,
Death has broken her poor heart too.’
‘Yet be brave now,’ King Hardiz cried.
‘Though your brother it is has died,
Though his memory you treasure,
Yet grieve not beyond all measure.’
Gahmuret’s pain was still too great,
His flood of tears would scarce abate;
He saw to the ease of every knight,
Then to his tent of rich samite
He retired, and vented his grief,
All night, yet found there scant relief.

Queen Herzeloyde’s claim on Gahmuret is upheld

WHEN day dawned, the parties agreed,
All who bore arms whether indeed
Young or old, brave or cowardly,
That no fresh tourney could there be.
They were so raw still from the fight,
Even in the mid-morning light,
And with jaded mounts no less;
They could not move for weariness.

The Welsh Queen now rode the ground,
And led the knights back to the town,
Where she invited the lords to ride
To the Leoplane and, once inside,
They all complied with her request
And came to where Lord Gahmuret,
King of Zazamanc, mourned alas,
Listening to a requiem Mass.
After the blessing, the Welsh Queen,
The Lady Herzeloyde, I mean,
Stepped forward, and laid solemn claim
To Gahmuret, for voicing his name
She made her plea, to common assent.
'Though from her side I am absent,
Yet, my lady, I have a wife,
Whom I love more dearly than life,
An even so, though I had none,
I could yet evade your person,
If I were now to assert my right.'

'You must relinquish her outright,'
Said she, 'there lies greater virtue
In one baptised, and so must you
Divorce yourself from heathenry,
And love me, as our rites decree,
For I love you, as all have seen;
Or shall she claim you, that French Queen,
For such sweet words were said indeed,
Perchance their message you did heed.'
'She is my Lady, in chivalry,
Respect for her I brought with me,
With great gifts, when I returned
To Anjou, and such has she earned,
For I was raised with her, and she,
A woman of woman's failings free,
Shared many a day of happiness
With me when childhood did bless

Us with its innocence. Ampflise,
Of your fair sex, doth ever please.
My sweet friend did, with her fair hand
Grant me gifts of her finest land
(I was much poorer then than now);
Yet you should pity me, I avow,
Though my poverty is of another
Kind, for I have lost my brother!
Urge this not, of your courtesy;
Let Love dwell where all are happy:
All my company is but sorrow.'

'Let me not wait until the morrow.
What shall constitute your defence?'
'I'll answer you, in all innocence:
That you proclaimed a tournament,
A true one, for such was your intent,
Yet none took place; many a man
Will witness this that was on hand,
For the Vespers tourney so tamed
The fiercest here it must be blamed
For denying us your tournament.
I laboured in your town's defence,
But many another fought as well,
Or better, as far as I can tell,
And so I think that from this claim
You must in truth remove my name.
For all your rights, your claim on me
Is naught, no more than a courtesy
You should indeed extend to all,
If such courtesy to me should fall.'

Now the story tells that the knight
And lady named, as was but right,
A judge to rule on the lady's plea.
Noon approached, so right swiftly,
Lawful judgement was pronounced:

‘Lo, any knight who was announced
As present here, in this country
To work fair deeds of chivalry,
And donned his helm, and won the prize,
The Queen’s claim now must realise.’
And to all this the court assented,
Proving her claim, as presented.

‘Sire’, she said, ‘now you are mine,
And I shall seek, as you will find,
To bring you such joy this morrow
That you shall transcend all sorrow.’
His grief was lasting nonetheless,
He mourned his brother to excess.
And yet the April days were past,
And the fields of bright green grass
Were one unbroken stretch of green,
Which inspires faint hearts, I ween,
And lifts them to the heights again.
For the sweet May breeze was fain
To stir the blossom on the bough,
And all the world was waking now,
And Gahmuret had faery blood,
His destiny, for ill or good,
To love, and then to sue for love,
And here a friend his friend would prove.

On Herzeloyde he gazed, then he,
With a fair smile, said, courteously:
‘My lady, if we’d prove content,
You must not thwart my true intent;
For, if this sadness leaves my heart,
To seek the joust I shall depart.
If you deny me the tourney,
Then I shall be forced to journey.
Do not forget that once before
I left a wife I won in war,

For that she sought so to bind me,
I chose to leave her behind me,
And all that her land did afford.’
‘You shall strike your own terms, my lord,’
She replied, ‘and act as you wish.’
‘Breaking of lances, that I relish;
You must allow me to journey,
Once a month, to some tourney.’
She promised this, so I am told,
And her and her land he did hold.

Now Queen Ampflise’s four envoys,
That is, her chaplain and the boys,
Stood and waited while judgement
Was granted, and the court’s assent.
This the chaplain had seen and heard,
And to Gahmuret he spoke a word,
Softly, in his ear: ‘My lady,
And I say this in all courtesy,
Knows all the tale of how you won
The day there, at Patelamunt,
And are master of not one but two
Fair lands; she has a kingdom too,
And she is minded to endow
You with her goods and person now.’

‘She it was made a knight of me,
And as the laws of chivalry
Call me to act, so I must do,
And be a knight both firm and true.
Had I not had the shield from her,
This need not be, I do aver;
Yet, wish it or no, I must now
Be bound here by my knightly vow,
And accept the verdict given.
Return to her, as you were bidden,
Tell her, respectfully, I will be

Her knight forever and that she
It is for whom I'll long the most,
Though of kingdoms I rule a host.'
He offered the envoys treasure,
But such proved not their pleasure,
And they returned to their mistress
Free of all blame yet, nonetheless,
They did not ask for leave to go,
As may occur in anger, we know,
And those princely pages, I fear,
Were all blinded by many a tear.

Those who had carried their shield
Point uppermost on that fair field,
Were told that Herzeloyde must win
Her claim to the brave Angevin.
'Yet who is here from our Anjou?
Our lord is absent, gone to fight
In Saracen lands, such our plight,
That there he seeks to win great fame,
While we in sorrow here remain.'
'He who bested all in the fight,
He who unhorsed many a knight,
Thrusting, hacking in that affair,
And wore the anchor emblem there
On his Helm all studded with stones,
Rare and precious, for such he owns;
He is your lord; for King Kaylet
Greets this Angevin as Gahmuret,
He who has won much honour here.'
They mounted swiftly, and did appear
Before their lord, their robes all wet
With their sad tears and, as they met,
They swift embraced him, and he them;
Both joy and grief were present then.

Gahmuret kissed each loyal knight:

‘To mourn my brother is but right,
Yet grieve not to excess for I
Will be your lord; and, by and by,
Hold the shield as it should be shown
And thus the path of happiness own.
I’ll now wear my father’s emblem,
Not the anchor, since tis given
Me now to plant it in his land.
While it marks fair fortune’s band,
We mercenary soldiers at large,
Let one of them take it in charge.
I have won both wealth and power,
And must live as befits my dower.
My sorrow indeed would but pain
My people too, with but little gain.
Lady Herzeloyde, help me win
Favour with these princes and kings,
That they delay their departure,
And remain here for a measure,
Till you have granted me what love
Doth require of us to seal our love.’
They urged their plea thus together,
And those lords, one and another,
Readily agreed, and so they went
Each noble to his separate tent.

Gahmuret and Herzeloyde consummate their love

THE Queen beside her lover stands:
‘Now place yourself in my fair hands,’
She says, and leads him gracefully
Through private ways, all secretly.
(Where’er they have gone hereafter,
Their guests are well looked-after).
Their retinues combined together,

He went with her, and no other

But his two pages and her maidens,
He following where he was bidden,
To where his pain he might allay,
And joy drive sorrows far away.
Grief was banished, life revived,
As must be at one's lover's side.
Queen Herzeloyde was no more
A maiden, and a goodly store
Of kisses did their lips consume,
Joy granting grief but little room.

Later, he courteously freed
The prisoners, as they'd agreed,
And those kings Hardiz and Kaylet
Were reconciled by Gahmuret.
Then they feasted, and if any
Has matched that rare feast since, then he
Was indeed a right wealthy man.
Gahmuret, with a generous hand,
Spared not his treasury, but doled
Out to the knights his Arab gold,
Most to the poorest of them all.
And then to the kings there did fall
Gifts of precious jewels, and he
Rewarded the princes equally;
While the wandering minstrels too
Were pleased to receive their due.
Now let the fair guests take their way,
The Angevin grants leave this day.

Gahmuret leaves to fight for the Caliph of Baghdad

NOW the emblem, borne in the field
By his father, onto his shield
They'd hammered, the sable Panther;
And a white silk shift would cover
His hauberk, it was the Queen's

(She that was now his wife I mean)
As it came from her naked body;
And ere he parted from his lady,
Of silk shifts, no less than eighteen
Pierced by lances they had seen,
Or hacked about by his steel blade.
In each one she would go arrayed
Slipping it on o'er her bare flesh,
When her lover, flushed with success,
Returned from jousting in the field,
And shattering many a brave shield.
A deep love was thereby expressed,
Their true feelings were of the best.

Gahmuret found further honour
When he went abroad, moreover,
Seeking war in a far kingdom.
Yet grieve I for what was to come.
He'd had word that his old master
The Caliph, countenanced disaster,
Against his foes out of Babylon,
One force led by Ipomidon;
And a second by Pompeius,
Not he who fled from Julius,
Rome's Caesar, long ago, in fear,
For this Pompeius, it is clear,
Was a proud and noble warrior,
For King Nebuchadnezzar
Was, indeed, his mother's brother,
Who'd read, in some book or other,
That he, the king, was a deity!
A claim to invite folk's mockery
If said today of any man.
But so twas thought in his far land.
These brothers, of noble heritage,
(From Ninus came their lineage,
Indeed, who reigned long before

Baghdad was founded, and oversaw
Mighty Nineveh's foundation)
They spared neither land nor nation.
The Caliph had declared these cities
As bound to him, his tributaries,
Yet their folk balked at the shame.
As a consequence of his claim,
Much was at stake on either side;
Many a knight fought there and died.
So Gahmuret sailed the seas again,
And found the Caliph with his men,
And with joy was welcomed there,
Whate'er the sorrow I must bear.
Of all that came to pass, of how
His fortunes stood, whether now
They had won or lost, the Queen,
Herzeloyde, knew naught, I ween.

Herzeloyde's dream

SHE shone as does the pure sunlight,
Her beauty such as brings delight.
Blessed with youth, and then possessed
Of wealth, she'd tasted happiness;
She had all that one seeks and more,
Of kindness too had no small store;
Her people loved her virtuous ways,
And thus she won enduring praise,
For the pure way she lived her life,
For her modesty as a loving wife.
Of three lands was she the queen,
Of Anjou and of Wales, I ween,
And wore the crown of Norgals,
In its great city of Kingrivals.
Her husband was her own dear love;
If some other woman might prove
To have won the love of one so fair,

What harm then? Without despair,
Or hatred, all this she could endure.
When half a year had passed, no more,
She thought that he must soon be there;
This hope, indeed, had eased her care.
And yet contentment's brittle blade
Snapped at the hilt, for joy must fade.
Alas, that virtue must bear in woe;
That pure devotion grief must know!
Yet so we find with earthly sorrow,
Tis joy today, and grief tomorrow.

A strange dream troubled her one day,
At noon, as in brief sleep she lay;
It seemed as though a shooting star
Swept her through the heights afar,
Where fierce lightning bolts did fly
Around her in the storm-filled sky,
Fiery sparks lit her flowing hair
All hissing, crackling everywhere.
Thunder pealed as she flew higher,
While showers fell, in tears of fire.
As she recovered, a griffin caught
At her right hand, and marvels wrought;
For she dreamed she bore a serpent,
That grew within her, and then rent
Her womb, and next a dragon lay
And suckled at her breast, its way
It took then, soaring high in flight,
And swiftly vanished from her sight.
Her heart it tore from out her flesh!
Never such terrors, such distress
Has any woman found in sleep.
She had been all a knight might seek,
Alas, all that would change, apace.
Thereafter she would wear grief's face
For losses she would know, and sorrow,

On that day, and many a morrow.

Herzeloyde learns of Gahmuret's death in battle

IN her sleep she twisted and writhed,
Wailed and moaned, kicked and scythed,
In a manner most strange to her.
Her ladies ran now, and woke her.
At that moment in rode Tampanis,
Her husband's loyal squire, with his
Young pageboys, and all happiness
Was at an end; of their lord's death
He told her, and she swooned outright.
'How did he die, so great a knight?'
He was asked, and he answered true,
Though his dire grief broke forth anew.

'Sadly, my lord's life was cut short;
The heat was great, relief he sought;
Doffing the chain-mail from his head,
Beneath his helm went bare instead.
And then that perverse heathen land,
Must steal from us our finest man;
A knight had a flask of goat's blood
And stumbling fell, and then what should
He do, but spill it o'er the Helmet
Of adamant grasped by Gahmuret,
And then the Helm grew soft within.
May He whom the artists still limn
As the Lamb of God, with the cross
Between the hooves, show, in our loss,
Pity for all that chanced that day!
When they rode out in fine display
You'd have seen how men can fight.
The Caliph's cavalry, shining bright,
Defended themselves courageously,
Many a shield they pierced; fiercely

They rode to battle before Baghdad.
Many a wild encounter they had,
As they clashed against each other,
Tangled pennants mixed together,
And many a proud knight fell there,
With many a stout defence laid bare.

The deeds of others were as naught
Compared to those that my lord wrought.
But then appeared King Ipomidon,
Who repaid him for all he'd won
At Alexandria, where they all
Had seen this Ipomidon fall
To my lord, who had toppled him.
My lord he turned now to face him;
But the other's lance brought death
(His own was shattered in a breath)
The tip tore clean through his Helm,
Such that its force did overwhelm
My lord, and pierced his head below,
From which the blood began to flow,
While yet the splinter there remained.
Still my brave lord his seat maintained,
And out of battle he swiftly rode,
Into the broad plain, where he slowed.
His chaplain was soon at his side,
And absolved of all his sins he died;
His brief confession he did advance,
And sent this shift, and this, the lance
That took him from us, to the Queen,
And we his squires, and pages I ween,
Commended to her, with his last breath.

They bore his body after his death
To Baghdad; since the Caliph cared
Naught for the cost the tomb prepared
For our lord was adorned with gold,

And rare gems, a fortune all told.
They embalmed that flawless hero,
Whose death brought many a sorrow;
And the lid of his tomb was made
Of bright crystal, of a ruby shade,
Through which my lord's body doth shine.
And then at a request of mine
Which they respected, there a cross
Was set in memory of our loss,
(An emblem of the Crucifixion,
When Christ redeemed us at the Passion)
To comfort and to guard his soul.
And the Caliph defrayed the whole,
At the cost of a precious emerald.
All this, done without the infidel,
We ourselves there did undertake,
For my lord Gahmuret's own sake,
Since the cross (whose true blessing
Christ conferred on us through dying)
Is not in keeping with their rite.
Those heathens, far from the light,
Do worship Gahmuret, freely,
As they do their own deity
(Yet not the glory of the cross,
Or Christian teaching that His loss
Will loose our bonds at the Last Day)
Because of his faith, true alway,
In confession and repentance,
Granting him a bright radiance
In Heaven, and for his loyalty
Devoid of lies, or treachery.
Then his adamant helmet
Upon the cross above we set,
His epitaph engraved upon it;
For these words there were writ:
'Through this sadly broken helmet,
'A lance did strike Lord Gahmuret,

A brave knight and a noble man,
A mighty king who ruled three lands;
Each brought him a splendid crown,
And many a prince of high renown.
He was of Anjou, and met his death
At Baghdad; he served the Caliph,
His fame such that none hereafter
Shall exceed his mark wherever
Men know the value of a knight.
He ne'er surrendered in a fight
To any sworn to Chivalry;
He gave good counsel to many,
Nor did he ever fail to aid them;
He suffered for many a woman
Bitter pangs of love; baptised,
The Christian path he realised,
And yet tis said, by truthful men,
His death distressed the Saracen.
This hero strove for honour ever,
And died a knight, to live forever,
For he overcame all that is ill;
May God have mercy on him still.'
Such the tale the squire did bear;
Many a man of Wales wept there,
And had good reason for his woe.

Herzeloyde's lament For Gahmuret

THE Queen was with child, but though
The babe quickened within her womb,
She lay unattended, in her room.
Near full term the child did thrive,
And yet the mother was scarce alive;
Queen Herzeloyde, with every breath,
Was wrestling with impending death.
Foolish not to help this woman,
For in her womb she carried one

Destined to be chivalry's flower,
If death passed him by that hour.
But a wise old man who'd come
To mourn beside her, in her room,
Bent over her as death she fought,
Forced her teeth apart, and sought
To make her drink, and the water
To her senses swiftly brought her.
'Ah me,' she cried, 'my lord is dead!'
As upon her sorrow she fed,
'His fame indeed gave me great joy,
But a reckless spirit he did employ,
And that has taken him from me.
I was indeed far younger than he,
Yet I am now bride and mother,
Bearing as I do another
Lord Gahmuret, of his seed here,
Received in love, and thus so dear.
If God is steadfast in intent,
May he to its live birth consent,
And let the seed now come to fruit,
For love seems withered at its root
Now that my lord indeed is lost.
How cruel is death, severe the cost!
He might not feel a woman's love,
But joyful at her joy did prove,
And ever saddened by her woe.
It was devotion moved him so,
A man devoid of cruelty.'

Now know this action of the lady:
She clasped her belly and the child,
And cried: 'God send me, in a while,
The noble fruit of Gahmuret;
This is the prayer I cherish yet.
God keep me now from false despair,
For were I to fail in this affair

My lord must die a second death,
He who proved true with every breath.’
Careless of who saw her, she tore
The shift from her body, she wore,
And then in a womanly manner
She clasped the breasts before her,
Soft and white with their red tips,
And sought to kiss them with her lips.
‘You hold nourishment for the child,
And I have known this for a while,’
Cried the Queen, in womanly guise,
Now in the ways of childbirth wise,
‘Since have I felt his quickening.’
She wished to see that very thing,
That nourishment above her heart,
Her breast milk that there did start.
Queen though she was she did so,
Pressing her breasts till it did show.
‘How faithfully you come to me;
And were I not baptised already,
You might mark my own christening,
With the nourishment that you bring,
For I shall sprinkle myself with you,
As with my tears that fall like dew,
Oft, alone, or with others yet,
While I do mourn for Gahmuret.’

She had them bring the bloody shift,
In which he’d died to aid the Caliph,
Meeting a warrior’s death indeed,
With the spirit that marked his breed.
She also asked for the broken lance
That had slain him in its advance.
Ipomidon of Nineveh,
That proud Babylonian heir,
Had repaid him in such a manner
The shift was but a torn banner.

Though she made to wear it as before
When her spouse returned from war,
Now they took it from her hand.
The noblest men of that fair land
Placed the bloody lance on show,
The weapon that had dealt the blow,
In the church, as folk lodge the dead,
Grieving for their lord fate had led
Afar, to die at an infidel's hand.
All mourned here, in Gahmuret's land.

The birth of Parzival

NOW, twas scarce a fortnight later,
That the Queen became a mother,
Bearing a large-boned son, alive,
Though she herself did scarce survive.

And here the tale doth truly start
Marked by this son, dear to her heart,
For only now is he born, the one
For whom this story was begun.
You've heard something of his father,
His life and death, and hereafter
You shall learn of how our hero
Was kept from harm, sequestered so
That he knew naught of chivalry
Till he had reached maturity.

Once the Queen was herself again,
And took the babe, she saw plain
The thing between his legs, and she
Admired him, as did every lady,
On seeing him formed as a man.
In time he'd wield with his hand,
Like a blacksmith, many a blade,
(For his heart too was bravely made),

From many a helm the sparks flew.

The Queen would kiss him tenderly,
Saying, '*bon fîz, cher fîz, bêâ fîz*:
'Dear, fine, lovely boy,' and then
Would take one red nipple again
And into his little mouth place it;
She had borne him and twas most fit
That she herself should nurse him now,
Her sex's failings she'd disavow,
And rear her child at the breast,
And this she did; as for the rest
It was as though her prayer was met
And in her arms lay her Gahmuret.
Though now she scorned vanity,
Bolstered by true humility.
'The Queen of Heaven,' this her thought,
'Nursed Jesus, who in time was brought
To the cross and a bitter death
In human form, and his last breath
He breathed for us, thereby to prove
His true devotion, and His love.
Whoe'er treats His anger lightly,
Shall be judged for it, and rightly,
Though pure of heart they might be
Or may have been, I know truly.'
She sprinkled herself with the dew
Of a grieving heart, sorrowed anew,
As from her eyes the tears did fall,
And rained down upon her; withal
A woman's affections she did enjoy,
Lending her lips to sighs, yet joy
Filled her with the birth of her son,
And then, ere pleasure was begun,
And breath her spirit did it afford,
Lo, it was drowned at sorrow's ford.

Wolfram's apology

IF any spoke with better intent
Of woman, I would ne'er resent
Their doing so, at their leisure;
I'd take pleasure in their pleasure.
From one alone do I withhold
Faithful service, for I, of old,
Have found her faithless; my anger
Towards her shall never alter.

I am Wolfram of Eschenbach,
A minnesinger of sorts and, hark,
I clench tight hold, like pincers,
Of my resentment, my anger's
Towards her who mistreats me
Such that I'm now her enemy.
And women's hatred too I know;
Why must they mistreat me so?
Yet though I feel their enmity,
Womanly anger against me
It is that drives them, for I said
A thing that I should ne'er have said.
And there I wronged myself, indeed,
For never such words must I breed.
But nor should they all charge ahead,
Attacking my wall and fence instead,
For they'll meet stiff resistance there.
I can judge yet, in every affair,
Their manners and their behaviour.
Yet if she's of modest character,
I will uphold a woman's name
And take to heart the pain and blame
She may have suffered; for limp praise
A man doth give his lady always
Who scorns the rest, to whom its due,
Just to advance his one anew.

And then the following is true,
Whichever lady would wish to view
My right to do so, both see and hear,
I'd not deceive her my right is clear:
I am of the Order of the Shield,
Both pen and lance, the pair I wield,
For I should think her foolish who
Loved me for mere songs, for I too
Can back my art with a manly deed.
If I for a woman's love do plead,
And fail to win love's prize from her
With shield and lance, I shall defer
To her and her scorn accordingly.
Who aims at love through chivalry,
Plays for high stakes, tis ever true.

Now I'll continue to offer you
Things unheard of yet in story,
Lest the ladies deem me merely
A flatterer; I'll tell my tale.
But let who wishes me to regale
Their ears, not call it literature,
For that you must find some other;
I've never a letter to my name;
This tale rides forth, all the same,
Without the guidance of a page.
Rather than have some wise sage
Take this for literature, I would
Choose to sit naked in my tub,
If only I failed not in my quest –
For a bath-brush to scrub my chest.

Book III: The Young Parzival

Parzival's upbringing

IT saddens me that all women bear

That same name of Woman; all fair,
And all owning the same clear voice.
Yet some do in pure deceit rejoice,
While others of such are wholly free.
Two faces you have it seems to me.
To my heart's depth the pain doth strike,
That all you women are named alike.
For if to yourself you are ever true,
Then, Woman, faithfulness and you
Will ever remain the best of friends,
Bound together whate'er fate sends.

Many will say that poverty
Brings us naught but misery,
Yet for loyalty's sake to endure
Such a thing doth ever ensure
That the soul doth escape hellfire.
Here was one who amidst the choir
In heaven found her true reward,
The infinite gift it doth afford
Faithfulness, despite poverty.
I doubt today there are many
Who in their youth would thus forgo
Earthly riches that they might know
Heavenly glory hereafter.
I know none, and I'd go farther,
For men and women in my view
Would, one and all, shirk it; and do.

Lady Herzeloyde, though possessed
Of riches, renounced, none the less,
Her three kingdoms, sought poverty,
Burdened by care, while all falsity
Was so absent from heart and face,
Nor eye nor ear could find a trace.
The sun was clouded to her sight,
She shunned all worldly delight.

To her the day and night were one,
Her heart was e'er to sorrow won.

Possessed by grief, she now withdrew
From all she had, and all she knew,
Among the wild wastes of Soltane
She lived, and not the flowery plain;
Bright garlands brought her no delight,
Nor those less pleasing to the sight,
So deep the sorrow in her heart.
And she bore to that place apart,
The son of her lord Gahmuret,
So he might find a refuge yet;
And there her folk cleared, all around,
A space to cultivate the ground.

How she sought to protect her son
Ere to maturity he had come!
She forbade her people, every man,
On pain of death, and every woman,
Ever to breathe the name of knight:
'For if ever my heart's delight,
Should come to learn of chivalry,
A burden it would prove to me.
So take care that he never learns
Of knighthood, and the pain it earns.'

There things took their narrow course.
Buried away from the world, perforce,
The lad was reared in Soltane's waste,
Of the royal life had ne'er a taste,
Made bow and arrows with his own hand,
And hunted the birds about that land;
Though when he had shot one dead,
That had been singing loud, instead
Of rejoicing, the lad would weep,
And grasp his hair and then wreek

Vengeance on his own foolish head.
Proud and handsome, there he led
A simple life; he washed each morn
In a stream in the meadow, at dawn,
And naught in all the world did prove
A care to him but the birds above,
Whose sweet singing pierced his heart,
Troubling his breathing with their art.
Then all in tears he'd run to the Queen.
'What vexes you, what have you seen
In the meadow there?' she would ask,
Lifting her eyes from some small task,
But he could find ne'er a word to say,
As oft happens with some child today.

She thought about this many a time.
One day she saw his clear gaze climb
To where the birds sang on high,
And found in them the reason why
His heart was moved. In this the boy
Was victim of that amorous joy
To which his race was heir, and she
Now turned on them her enmity,
Ordering ploughmen and drovers
To hasten and remove the singers.
But still the birds escaped in flight
In numbers sufficient to delight
The world still with their sweet song.

'Why do they do the birds such wrong?'
The little lad asked of his mother,
And begged a truce for wing and feather.
The Queen kissed him; their lips met:
'Oh, why, she said, 'must I forget
And thwart the will of God on high?
Must the birds mourn with such as I?'
'Who is this God now?' asked the boy.

‘My son, I’ll tell you, without alloy;
He shines more brightly than the sun,
He who our human shape once won.
My son, do this wise saying heed,
Pray to Him in your hour of need,
His steadfast love shall never fail.
Let not the lord of Hell prevail.
He’s black and full of treachery.
Scorn him, for he brings misery.’
Then she told him of dark and light,
And how each differs to our sight.

And so the lad dashed off to play,
And through the forest made his way.
He’d learned to throw the javelin,
And slay the deer, lurking within;
Of these his mother had benefit.
In snow and thaw he practised it,
And wrought havoc on the quarry.
List to the wonders of my story!
When he had felled a stag so heavy
It would have burdened a pack-pony,
He bore it home, at a steady pace,
Unquartered, to his mother’s place.

He meets a band of knights

ONE day while hunting the hill-slopes,
He’d broken off a twig, in hopes
Of sounding a decoy-call, when he,
Heard echoing hoofbeats swiftly
Passing along the trail nearby.
He raised his javelin to his eye.
‘What’s this I hear now? If only
It is the Devil come upon me,
In all his fierce and dreadful power,
Then I might do for him, this hour.

My mother tells awful tales of him,
Though she trembles in every limb.'
He stood there, ready for a fight.

Behold, there came a splendid knight,
With two companions; three as fine
As you could wish, in single line,
All fully armed from crown to heel,
And each a god; the boy did kneel,
It must be so: 'God aid me!' his cry,
Rang out, 'Your help you'll not deny!'
The leading knight lost his temper:
'This stupid Welshman,' he cried in anger,
'Blocks our way!' Now the men of Wales,
I tell you, born of its hills and vales,
Are much like us Bavarians,
That others deem barbarians;
Though twice as dense again in fact.
Yet he becomes a marvel of tact
And courtesy, and a warrior born,
That in either land first sees the morn.

Now a fourth fair knight did appear
Handsomely clad in finest gear,
And he was riding in hot pursuit
Of others far ahead on his route,
A pair of knights who had lately
Borne away a fair young lady;
For he thought this a great disgrace,
One that brought shame on all his race,
And he was angered by the wrong
Done to her, so he galloped along,
To seek them; and the other three
Were his men, of his own country.
He rode a fine Castalian steed,
Ever a proud and handsome breed,
His shield dented by many a lance;

His name it was Karnahkarnanz,
Count of Ulterlec. 'Who,' he cried,
Blocks the way?' then the boy he spied.

To the lad, a god this knight did seem,
Never saw he such brightness gleam
From anything. The knight's tabard
But brushed the dew it left unmarred;
His neat stirrups rang with the sound
Of tiny bells there, on each leg found
At its front, they were made of gold.
And his right arm too, which did hold
The same, made music when he swung
A sword, and jingled where they hung,
For he was ever in search of fame.
Splendour then this knight did claim,
On a steed richly caparisoned.
'And have you seen two knights, my son?'
Asked Karnahkarnanz, courteously,
He the flower of manly beauty,
'Scant chivalry have they displayed,
Ravishers, who have here essayed
To carry away a girl by force.
Devoid of honour is such a course.'
But, barely listening to what he said,
The lad saw him as God, instead
Of just a knight, whom Herzelayde
Had spoken about, when employed
On telling him of dark and light.
'Help me, kind God!' at the sight
Of him, the lad cried, earnestly,
And then he went down on one knee,
And began to pray.' 'God I am not,'
The Count replied, 'yet fair my lot
On earth, and I do God's will gladly.
And if your eyes saw not so badly
You'd but see four knights before you.'

‘Knights, you say, what do they do?
If you are not God then tell me now
Who grants this knighthood and how?’
‘King Arthur dubs a man a knight.
Were you, my boy, to seek aright,
And come into his court, none need
Blush for the knight you’d make, indeed,
I deem you of noble lineage.’

The knights in their bright equipage
Looked him up and down, and thought
That God in truth the lad had wrought.
And that I learn too from my source
Who tells me no one in the course
Of the centuries, since Adam’s day,
Was e’er more handsome in his way,
And women praised him far and wide.
There came more laughter on their side,
For the lad said: ‘What can you be?
Sir God, for look, here are many
Little rings tied fast to your gear,
All down there, see, and all up here.’
And the lad tugged at the ironware,
Saying: ‘My mother’s maids do bear
Rings on ribbons, on my honour,’
As he gazed at the Count’s armour,
‘But theirs are not so closely set,
And what is this coat gleaming yet,
That makes you look so neat and trim,’
For so he asked the Count, on whim,
‘While scarce a seam doth it afford?’
The Count he showed the lad his sword,
Saying: ‘If a man attacks me
I must fight with him most fiercely,
Thus, to defend myself, I wear
This armour, fitting it with care.
Tis good against lance-thrusts you see

And stops the arrows fired at me.’
‘Well, if the deer had hides made so,
The boy replied, ‘my every throw
Would never wound a single one,
Which my javelin has often done.’

The knights grew angry that their lord
Stood talking so, with this fool abroad.
But the Count cried: ‘God protect you!
And I would I had your good looks too.
If you’d but a modicum of wit,
God would have left you not a whit
More to wish for. May His power
Guard you now, and at every hour!’

The Count and his men parting made,
And rode to a field by a forest glade.
There that courteous knight did slow,
Finding fair folk much to their woe,
Labouring there, the Queen’s farmhands,
Ploughmen and such, for her commands
Had set them to furrowing; they sowed,
And harrowed, and worked the goad
Over the hides of the ox-teams there.
The Count asked them how they did fare,
And whether they’d seen two knight pass by,
With a woeful damsel, their reply
Was: ‘Two knights and a young lady
Rode by this morn, and we could see
The lady was sad and filled with fear.
They spurred hard and galloped clear.’
Now one of these was Meljahkanz,
Whom this Count Karnahkarnanz
Sought to catch and then by force
Win back the lady in due course,
For she till then would be in woe
And anguish, this the knight did know,

And then this lovely lady's name
It was Imane de Beaufontane.

Now as the knights away did fare,
They left the ploughmen in despair:
'How did we come to do this thing?
They cried, 'for these men are wearing
Battle-scarred helmets, and further
They were seen by our young master,
And so our trust we have betrayed.
With harsh words we'll be repaid
By the Queen, and it serves us right,
For he came with us, at first light,
While the Queen was still asleep.'

Parzival tells his mother of the knights

AND sure enough the lad was deep
In thought, and had forgot the chase,
But went to seek his mother's place,
And told a tale that sent her reeling,
With such a shock to her feelings,
She fell at his feet, in a swoon.
She regained her senses full soon,
Though her spirit had failed at first,
And asked: 'My son who rehearsed
This tale of the code of chivalry?
Who told you such a thing might be?'
'Mother, I met four, each a knight,
Shining like God, and yet more bright,
And one he told me of chivalry,
And how so fine a thing might be.
It lies in Arthur's royal power
To guide me to honour, that hour,
And the fair office of the shield,
When by his hand my fate is sealed.'

It added to that woe of the Queen's.
She cast about to find some means
Of persuading him from his intent.
On gaining a mount he seemed bent.
'I'll not deny him.' Though her heart
Regretted it; since they must part:
'Yet it shall be the worst I know,
And he shall wear fool's clothes also,
O'er his white skin, and then if he
Is scorned he will return to me.'
And, oh, for the pity of the thing!
She took a piece of coarse sacking,
Cut him trousers and a doublet
All of a piece, the strangest yet,
Neck to knee, twas a fool's garment,
With a cowl as its complement.
And then did she, from raw calf-hide,
Cut a pair of boots, shaped to hide
His white legs, and all this was done
In tears, lamenting o'er her son.

She asked him to stay one more night:
She said: 'You shall not leave my sight
Till I have taught you a little sense.
Now then, when you go riding hence,
Avoid the fords with murky water,
But go briskly where they're clearer.
Greet those that you meet, one and all,
And if it should chance to befall
That you meet a wise grey-haired man,
Who offers to teach you, as he can,
Fine manners, then do as he says,
Willingly; keep from anger always;
And I give you this advice, my son,
If a lady's ring's there to be won,
And her welcome, take it from her,
Dawdle not, embrace and kiss her,

It will add much to your content,
And bring good fortune if her intent
Is good, and she be chaste; learn this,
Lahelin the proud has taken as his
Two of our lands, Wales and Norgals,
From our vassals, while Turgentals,
One of those brave lords, he has slain.
Your rights then you must maintain.
Lahelin killed your kith and kin,
Or took them captive, think on him.’
‘I will avenge it, mother, I vow;
I shall wound him, if God allow.’

The death of Herzeloide

WHEN the sun shone bright at dawn,
The lad rose swiftly with the morn,
Eager to search for Arthur’s court.
The Queen kissed him, all distraught
Ran after him and (the saddest thing)
When she could no longer see him,
(Who feels not the pain she found?)
That loyal lady fell to the ground,
Where sorrow dealt her such a blow
That death came to her, in her woe.
Her loyalty from hellfire saved her,
O happy woman, faithful mother!
Thus from true virtue’s root we see
Rose that stem of humility
To seek the path that brings souls gain,
Ah, that her scions no more remain
To the eleventh generation;
For lack of them, woe to our nation!
Yet all true-hearted women should
Bless the lad, and pray for his good,
As he goes forth, and leaves her there.

Parzival sets out, and comes upon a pavilion

NOW hear more of this whole affair.
In a while, our handsome young man
Approached the Forest of Brizljan,
And came to a stream where if it please
A cockerel can cross with ease.
Though twas only grass and flowers
That darkened the ford's pure waters,
Our hero shunned them, rode away,
And went following the stream all day.
He spent the night as best he could,
Till the bright sun cleared the wood,
Then, all alone, discovered a ford
That him clear passage would afford.

Upon the far bank, in a meadow,
Stood a pavilion, and it did glow
With bright samite, in three colours,
Worth a fortune, midst the flowers.
It was tall, and spacious within,
And then gold braid its seams did trim.
A leather cover too hung there,
Employed whene'er rain filled the air.
Duke Orilus de Lalander –
Twas his wife reclined thereunder,
The fair Duchess, a noble sight,
The sweetest mistress for a knight;
And fair Jeschute that was her name.

The lady was asleep; that same
Wore Love's emblem, a sweet mouth
Of gleaming red, to quench the drouth
Of amorous knight and aching heart.
Her lips, at rest, did slightly part,
That wore the flames of Love's hot fire,
Thus there she lay, the sweet desire

Of any man who ventured by.
Her perfect gleaming teeth did lie
In rows of snow-white ivory.
(Naught could ere accustom me
To kissing of a mouth so praised,
For no such thing ere came my way!)
The sable coverlet reached barely
To her hips; her lord had scarcely
Left her, ere she had felt the heat,
And pushed it down, her hips to meet.
Her figure it was trim and neat,
No art was lacking there, twas meet,
Her sweet form God himself had wrought.
And if this beauty's arms you sought
They were slender, and white of hand.

Now on one finger of her right hand
He spied a ring, which drew him on,
Toward the couch, and thereupon
He began to struggle with the lady;
He'd thought of his mother, how she
Would have him take a woman's ring,
And so he'd sought that very thing,
And leapt to the couch from the floor.
The modest woman, shocked, I'm sure,
Found a handsome lad in her arms;
How to sleep through such alarms?

He kisses the Lady Jeschute and takes her ring

'WHO is this does me such dishonour?'
The lady cried, in shame and anger,
'A lady tis you seek to smother;
Address yourself to someone other!'
She seemed grieved but, ignoring this,
The young lad forced her mouth to his.
While he crushed her breast to breast,

Of her ring she was dispossessed.
Then a brooch on her shift he saw,
And, from it, this he roughly tore.
All women's wiles were the lady's,
But his strength was as an army's.
Nonetheless she fought the fight.

The winner now complained outright,
Of raging hunger: 'Don't dine on me,
Choose other fare for there is plenty,'
Cried the fair one, 'there's good bread,
And wine, and partridges instead;
The maid left them, though not for you.'
Little he cared; she reclined anew;
He filled his belly and drank the wine,
While she thought him a tedious swine,
Some page perchance who'd lost his wits;
The shame nigh had the girl in fits.
'Young man you must return my ring,
And my brooch, for the hour will bring
My husband, and you'll feel such anger
As you'd be spared; scorn to linger.'
Why should I fear your husband so?'
The lad replied, 'and yet I will go,
If it harms your honour in some way,
And to the couch he made his way
And then another kiss was taken
Though, unless I'm much mistaken,
It gave the lady great annoy.
Then, without leave, the foolish boy
Rode off, though he cried: 'God bless you!
That's what my mother said to do.'

Duke Orilus de Lalander scolds his wife

THE lad was happy with all he'd won,
And all that he had said and done.

When he'd ridden on, a little while,
(In truth he'd gone nigh on a mile)
Her lord appeared, of whom I'll tell.
From the tracks he knew full well
(Some of the ropes were slack, alas,
Where the lad had trampled the grass)
That someone had sought his lady;
Count Orilus found her, utterly
Wretched, standing there within.
'Ah, madam,' thus he did begin,
'Is it for this I gave my service?
Shall my fair deeds but end in this,
Sad disgrace? You love another!'
The lady swore she loved no other,
And claimed that she was innocent;
He feigned to know not what she meant.
'A madman rode this way,' she sighed,
'A fool, but handsome, and did abide,
And then he stole my brooch and ring.'
'Oh, you liked him, and did the thing
With the fellow!' 'Nay, God forbid!
Twas against my will, all he did;
His boots and javelin I did fear,
Both of them came far too near;
You but shame me to say twas so!
To love such a lout were but low.'

'Madam, scant wrong I do to you,'
Replied the Count, 'except tis true
That for my sake, to your distress,
Your title is now that of countess,
Not queen; but there I'm the loser;
My skill is such that your brother,
Erec son of King Lac, has cause
To hate you for it; the applause
I win from all those who can judge
Proves tis so, though he did budge

Me from my seat before Prurin.
Yet o'er his crupper I drove him,
And won the glory at Karnant;
For a straight lance I there did plant
On him, and I drove your favour
Clean through both shield, and armour;
While your brother did surrender.
But that you'd found another lover,
My lady Jeschute, I'd have you know,
Little did I dream that might be so.
Come, credit me for another win;
Galoes, the son of King Gandin,
Him I slew with a thrust of mine.
Nor were you far away that time,
When Plihopliheri did advance
Against me there to break a lance,
And pressed me hard, and yet he went
Over his crupper in brief descent,
His saddle no more troubled him.
Many an honour I did win,
Full many a knight I laid low;
Yet sad disgrace I now must know;
I have failed thus to reap the fruit.
They all hate me, beyond dispute,
All those men of the Round Table,
Eight of whom I did disable
At Kanedic, before a crowd
Of young ladies, who cried aloud,
To see it; of all I was the talk,
When I fought for the sparrow-hawk,
And gained it for you, my lady,
And for myself the victory.
King Arthur watched me, at your side,
With whom my sister doth reside,
Sweet Cunneware, who'll not wear
A smile until she sets eyes there
Upon the finest knight on earth,

The man of most illustrious worth.
If only he might come my way!
There would be fine sport this day,
Like this morning's, when I fought
A prince, who challenged me and sought
To unhorse me. He fell instead;
A single lance-thrust saw him dead.

I'll not speak my anger; for less
Men strike their wives; I seek redress,
And if of right or favour there's aught
I owe you, let it still be sought,
I'll warm to your embrace no more,
Those white arms where I lay before,
On many a pleasant day gone by.
I'll teach your lips to fade, next I
Will teach your eyes your lips' redness.
I'll steal from you all happiness,
And so I'll school your heart in sighs.'

The Countess gazed with piteous eyes
And mouth: 'Oh, treat me with honour,
Chivalrously, for you are ever
True and wise; I'm in your power,
And you can deal me woe this hour,
But listen first to my defence,
For I've committed no offence.
I beg you in the name of woman;
Punish me then, though if some man
Were to kill me now, and so spare
You from shame, I should not care
How death came, for it would be sweet
Now your hatred proves so complete.'

Then the Count said: 'Lady, you grow
Too proud, but that you shall forego.
An end to our eating and drinking

Together, and as for our sharing
One bed, that is over and done!
Regarding clothes you shall have none
But those that you now are wearing.
Your palfrey will not be dining;
A twist of lime-bark its bridle,
And this for your pretty saddle!’
He tore the rich brocade away,
And all her good saddle did flay.
Modest, loyal, she bore his spite,
And then must suffer the delight
Of a saddle with lime-bark retied;
His sudden rage she must abide.

‘Now, madam, let us ride,’ he said,
‘How pleasant if our journey led
To him who enjoyed your favours!
I’d try my fate, though he labours
Hero-like, or breathes fire upon
My face, raging like a dragon.’
Far from pleasure, drowned in tears,
The lady set forth, hedged by fears,
Not thinking of what she endured,
But of the sufferings of her lord;
His wretchedness was her distress,
And death to her a true kindness.
Her loyal love deserves your pity,
Since she’ll now feel his enmity.
Though I were hated by the sex,
Though each one my heart did vex,
I could not fail to be irate
At Lady Jeschute’s bitter fate.
Thus they rode, following his trail,
While on ahead the lad did sail,
Not knowing they came on behind.
For indeed, he passed the time,
Greeting all those he chanced to see,

Adding: 'So mother asked of me.'

Parzival finds his cousin Sigune with a dead knight in her lap

OUR simple lad was riding down
A trail traversing sloping ground,
When a woman's voice he heard.
Below a cliff; with sorrowful word
A lady mourned lost happiness.
The lad was moved by her distress,
And rode towards her in some haste.
Hear, now! Twas Sigune in that place
Who sat there weeping with despair,
And tearing at her long brown hair.
Now the lad gazed down upon her,
And lo, Prince Schionatulander
Lay dead there, in her lap, and so
Her thoughts were but of endless woe.

'Sad or joyful, not to forget
To greet all folk, all that I met,
So said my mother: God keep you,'
Said the boy, 'tis a grief to view
That sad thing lying in your lap,
How have you come by this mishap?'
Unabashed, he asked: 'Who slew him?
Was it with some sharp javelin?
It seems to me that he is dead.
If whoe'er faced him lies ahead,
I will willingly catch the man,
And fight and kill him, if I can.'
And the lad clutched at his quiver
Of javelins, all set to deliver
Some lasting blow. Had he yet known
His father's practise which, I own,
Once learnt, stayed with him forever,
The thought would have played far better

Back where he had found the Duchess,
Who thanks to him knew great distress;
For he still had the brooch and ring
He'd taken from Jeschute, causing
Her spouse to scorn her for a year
Or more. She was much wronged I fear.

**She tells him his true name, and of the dead knight,
Schionatulander**

NOW hear of Sigune. She did express,
With sad looks, her unhappiness.
'You seem fair,' she said, 'all honour
To sweet Youth that doth you favour!
For I feel sure that some fine day
Good fortune will bless your way;
It was no javelin slew this knight,
He lost his life in noble fight.
You too must come of nobility,
If you feel pity for him you see.'
Ere she allowed him to ride on,
She asked his name, for he was one,
She said, whose features, as a man,
Seemed as if wrought by God's own hand.
'*Bon fîz, cher fîz, bêâ fîz,*'
Such, in mother's house, they called me.'
Now, from these words, she knew his name.
Hear him addressed by that true name,
(For he's the hero of our tale)
As he stands there with her, in the dale.
'Upon my word, you are Parzival!'
She of the red lips cried: 'Withal,
You shall "pierce to true worth," indeed,
Through many a great and noble deed.
Mighty love pierced such a furrow
Through your mother's heart, for sorrow
Your father left her when he died.

Tis not idly I speak.' She sighed:
'Your mother is my mother's sister,
I'll tell you who you are; your father
Was an Angevin, but Welsh are you
On your mother's side, for I tell you,
At Kanvoleis you were born,
And know, for tis true as the morn,
That you are King of Norgals too,
And at Kingrivals should wear the crown,
In that city of high renown.
This prince, his loyalty unmarred,
He died for you, while he did guard
Your lands as he has ever done.
My sweet young and charming one,
Two brothers have done you great wrong.
Lahelin who stole your kingdom;
The other Orilus, who slew
This knight with Galoes your uncle too,
And thus drowned me in misery.
This prince of your own fair country
Gave to me his service freely,
While your mother fostered me.
Good kind cousin let me tell how
His death came about, for I vow
A bitch-hound's leash led to the fight,
Earning a swift death for the knight,
Which he won in service to us two,
And bringing me such grief anew,
So great the love for him I bore.
I know not the reason, I'm sure,
Why I denied him true content.
For, in thus refusing my assent,
It must become the source of woe;
Dire misery from this did flow,
And now but a dead man I love.'
'Cousin,' said he, 'your sufferings prove
A grief to me, and shame me greatly,

If ever I may avenge you, truly,
I'll settle accounts with Orilus.'
He was full eager to battle thus,
But she pointed the opposite way,
Lest he too might be slain that day,
And she meet harm at Orilus' hand.

Parzival lodges with a churlish fisherman

HE took the broad, paved road that ran
To Arthur's court, and catching sight,
Of any man, merchant or knight,
Waking or riding, he would greet
Them with a speech, fair and sweet,
Saying his mother had so advised;
Nor had she erred; for such was wise.
As evening fell, he grew weary,
A fair house he came to shortly;
Within a churlish host was found,
The sad kind that do still abound,
A fisherman devoid of grace.
The hungry lad approached the place,
And told the fellow of his hunger.
'Not a loaf you'll win,' said the master,
'In thirty years, for, if any man
Thinks to see me with open hand,
He seeks in vain, tis all for naught.
I feed myself on what I've caught;
Next my children; you'll not enter
If you wait all day crying hunger.
Yet if you'd aught of worth to pawn,
I might relent yet, come the dawn.'
The simple lad did then approach,
Offering Lady Jeschute's brooch,
And when the churl saw the thing
His face, of a sudden, wore a grin.
'Dear child', he said, 'come stay with me,

All shall treat you respectfully.'
'If you do feed me well tonight
And on the morrow set me right
As to the road to Arthur's court,
Whom I love, the gold you sought
Is yours.' 'I will,' the churl replied,
'So fine a lad I ne'er espied.
I'll show you the King's Round Table,
And see what comes; for tis no fable.'

He and the fisherman ride to Arthur's court at Nantes

THE lad stayed the night; next morn,
For he could scarce await the dawn,
They were gone, for the fisherman
Ran on ahead, you must understand,
While the lad followed on his steed,
And both seemed in a hurry indeed.

(Now, my lord Hartmann von Aue,
I send you a stranger, this hour,
To greet your lord and lady, here,
King Arthur and Queen Guinevere.
Kindly shield him from mockery.
For he's no fiddle or rote you see,
To be strummed upon, let the folk
Find some other butt for a joke,
Otherwise your Lady Enide,
And her dear mother Karsnafide
Will find their reputation gone,
When all my tale is said and done;
If I, to such jibes, an ear must lend,
I must seek to defend my friend.)

The noble lad and the fisherman
Came to Nantes, as was their plan;
Near that city, 'God be with you,'

Cried the latter, 'Now, in plain view,
Lies the gate where you may enter.'
Said the lad: 'Guide me no further.'
'Nor will I! There they are so fine
They shun a common face like mine.'

Parzival encounters the Red Knight, Ither of Gaheviez

THE boy rode on, and soon had sight
Of a great meadow, its flowers bright.
Now, he knew naught of fine manners
(No Curvenal, fair Tristan's tutor,
Had sought to raise this home-bred lad)
A twisted lime-bark bridle had
His little palfrey, that was pleased
To stumble, and fall to its knees,
Full oft. No patch of fresh leather
Had adorned its saddle ever.
As to fair ermine or samite,
Not a trace of it was in sight;
No need of silk cords for his cloak
In the manner of gentle folk;
Instead of a tabard and surcoat,
He had his javelin, we note.
Alas, his father King Gahmuret
Whose elegance none can forget,
Was so much better dressed when he
Showed himself at Kanvoleis!

Riding towards the lad there came
One whom he greeted in the same
Way as ever with: 'God keep you!
For this my mother told me to do.'
'God reward her and you, my lad!'
Said the knight. Now this lord, who had
Been reared by Uther Pendragon,
Was Arthur's paternal aunt's son,

And to Britain he now laid claim,
As his heritage. The knight's name
Was Ither of Gaheviez, otherwise
The Red Knight; twas no surprise,
Since his gear was of such a red
It reddened the eyes in one's head.
His warhorse was a sorrel steed,
Its head-plates crimson, as indeed
Were its trappings, of red samite;
A crimson shield he bore, this knight,
And his sword was red, his choice,
With hardened edges; he did rejoice,
This noble King of Cumberland,
At the goblet he clasped in his hand,
Seized from the Round Table there,
For of red gold was that brave affair.
His skin was white, his hair was red,
He turned towards the lad, and said:
'A blessing on your handsome face!
A fine woman, of noble race
Brought you into the world, my lad.
I've ne'er seen another who had
So fine a form, and you possess
Love's very glance, her success
And her defeat, for joy entire
In many a woman you'll inspire,
Yet grief will weigh on her also.
Dear friend, if onward you would go,
Into the town, tell King Arthur
And his knights that no further
Shall I stray, nor would I flee,
I wait here for any who'd be
Pleased to arm, and dares to fight,
And not for naught,' said the knight,
For I rode to the Round Table here
To claim my lands; though, I fear,
I snatched this goblet, clumsily,

And spilt the wine, gracelessly,
Straight into Queen Guinevere's lap,
While staking my claim; a sad mishap;
Grasped I a burning wisp of straw,
Lo, I'd have been blackened for sure.
Twas not taken as plunder, indeed,
My royal wealth doth quell the need.
Tell the Queen twas not with intent
I splashed her, before the noblemen,
Whose weapons they had but forgot.
Kings or princes, why do they not
Come to retrieve his golden cup,
And let the King his fresh wine sup?
If they refuse, their boundless fame
Doth lag somewhat behind their name.'

Parzival is brought before King Arthur

'ALL you request, sir, I shall do.'
Said the lad; without more ado,
He left him, and then, riding on,
Into the town of Nantes was gone.
There all the little children sought
To follow him to the great court
Before the palace, where he found
A vast crowd covering the ground.
He was jostled about, but Iwanet,
An honest page, our hero met,
And offered him his company.
'God keep you!' cried the lad, gladly,
'For that my mother told me to say,
Ere I did leave home, on a day.
Now I see many an Arthur here,
Which will knight me?' 'None, I fear!'
Laughed Iwanet, 'he's not in sight,
But you may soon see such a knight.'
And he led him into that place,

Where were gathered a noble race.
Above the noise, he sought to call:
'God keep you, fair folk, one and all,
Especially the King and his Lady!
My mother enjoined me, strictly,
To give these two a special greeting.
Those at the Round Table meeting,
Those too, yet one thing I would know,
Who is the master here? But show
Me to him, for outside the gate
I saw a brave knight who doth wait,
All shining red indeed was he,
And he sends this message by me,
That he awaits there any knight,
Who intends, as he does, to fight.
He is sorry he spilt the wine,
Over the Queen; if it were mine,
That red armour, the King's gift,
I would my faithful javelin lift,
And fight for it, it seems so fine!'

The fearless lad was jostled about,
For none could quite make him out,
Though from his looks they could see
Never was handsomer progeny
Sired by any. God was indeed
In a fair mood when he decreed
Parzival's making, whom no fear
Could grip, nor terror force a tear.
So the lad, in whom God contrived
Such perfection, at last arrived,
Before King Arthur; while the Queen,
In leaving the hall, she too had seen
The lad, and looked closely on him,
For it was difficult to dislike him.

'God reward you for your greeting

Young gentleman,' declared the King,
While contemplating this raw youth,
'I'd hope to deserve it, in truth,
Given life and wealth, I assure you.'
'God grant it! And yet I say to you,
It seems to me a whole year blighted
All this time that I go unknighthed.
Tis scarcely happiness I feel,
Delay no longer, but here reveal
How you will make a knight of me.'
'As honour lives in me, it shall be,'
Replied his host, 'you so delight,
With your charm, that as a knight
My gift will prove a right fair one.
I'd hate to deny you. Anon,
I shall equip you; all will follow;
Simply wait until the morrow.'

Now, the noble lad stood there,
Trampling like a bustard: 'I'd dare
To ask for naught here,' he said,
'If I could not claim, in its stead,
The armour of that knight outside
Who toward me but now did ride,
I care not to hear of a king's gift,
Since my good mother will make shift
To grant me one; for she's a queen.'
Arthur said: 'The knight you mean,
Is formidable, and his red armour
I dare not grant; I lack his favour
Even now, through no fault of mine;
In wretchedness I drink my wine.
Ither of Gahevies, that same
Curbs my happiness, mars my fame.'

'To balk at such a gift,' said Sir Kay,
'Would see you ungenerous, I say.'

Give the lad his gift, let him loose
On Ither, for here's a fair excuse;
If from your goblet you would sip,
There's the top, and here's the whip,
Let the boy take to the ground
Watch as he flogs him round and round;
To the ladies we'll commend the fun.
Many trials he'll face, ere he is done,
And I'm concerned for neither there.
To win the boar's head, one must dare
To sacrifice the hounds, I fear,
However fine they be, or dear.'

'I should be sad to deny him,'
Said the king, 'yet, if I try him,
I fear indeed he might be slain.
He seeks his knighthood now to gain,
And I should aid him,' said the king,
True in this, as in everything.
Yet the lad accepted the trial;
Dire it proved in a little while.

Sir Kay strikes the Lady Cunneware

PARZIVAL swiftly left the king,
With young and old all following.
Iwanet took him by the hand,
And led him thus, you understand,
Below a long low gallery;
From end to end of it he could see.
Twas so low, that up there he saw
Too woeful an action to ignore.
It was then the Queen's pleasure
To sit by the window at leisure
With knights and ladies about her;
She gazed now at the lad below her.
There Lady Cunneware sat too,

Proud, and radiant, to the view,
Who never smiled nor ever would
Until she saw the man who could
Win the highest prize, or held it;
For she'd rather die, than see fit
To laugh or smile in other case.
No such smile had crossed her face,
Until the lad went trotting by,
But now her laughter rose on high.
It made her back to smart, indeed,
For Kay the Seneschal it did lead
To seize her by her curling hair,
And clench it, hard as he did dare,
And wind her tresses round his hand,
The lady's, Cunneware de Lalant.
Twas not her back had sworn the oath,
Yet his staff was applied to both,
And it sank upon clothes and flesh,
Until his thoughts he dared express.
'You've lost your good name for a lie!'
He cried, greatly enraged thereby,
'But I'm the one to restore it now,
For I shall hammer it home, I vow,
Till in your bones you feel it there.
Many a true man doth oft repair
To Arthur's court and yet doth fail
To raise a smile, yet now a gale
Of laughter sweeps through you for one
Who's not a notion, ne'er a one,
Of knightly manner, or fit dress.'
Now anger leads us to excess,
And his right to so strike the maid,
(Her loyal friends were sore dismayed),
No king or emperor would uphold.
The blows indeed were overbold
If she were a hardy knight, yet she
Was a princess born; and certainly,

If her younger or elder brother,
Had seen this insult to their sister,
Orilus or Lahelin I mean,
Fewer blows would there have been.

Antanor predicts that the lady will be avenged by Parzival

ANTANOR, who was thought a fool,
Being ever silent as a stool,
Although he spoke not, the while,
For the same reason she'd no smile,
An oath they'd taken, Antanor,
That had said not a word before
The lady laughed, who thereafter
Had been beaten for her laughter,
Opened his mouth and said to Kay:
'God knows, Sir Seneschal, I say,
Because of the boy you raised your hand,
Against poor Cunneware of Lalant,
And the lad, on some future day,
Will much discomfort you, Sir Kay,
However friendless he may be.'

'Since your first words threaten me,
I swear you'll have no joy of it!'
Cried Sir Kay, in his spiteful fit,
And then he tanned Antanor's hide
And his two fists had much beside
To whisper in that wise fool's ears;
For Kay was quick to rouse his tears.
Young Parzival could only linger
And watch the 'fool' and lady suffer.
He was angered at their distress,
He clutched his javelin no less!
But round the Queen too great a throng
Were packed, to hurl it in among.

Parzival slays Ither, the Red Knight, and takes his armour

IWANET took leave of our hero,
Who then set out for the meadow,
To meet with Ither, and he brought
The news that none within the court
Were keen to come and break a lance.
'The king did a gift to me advance.
I told him, for such was your intent,
That you spilt the wine by accident,
And now regretted your clumsiness.
Since none is eager to seek success,
Give me your steed, and all your gear,
For it was gifted to me, tis clear,
And I'm to be made a knight therein,
And, if you will not, why tis a sin,
For I'll retract my greeting to you;
So if you're wise, tis what you'll do.'

'If Arthur did thus my armour grant
To you,' said the King of Cumberland,
'And you can strip that same from me,
My life he'll grant you! Thus, does he
Favour his friends, perchance? Did you
Serve him in aught which you did do,
That earned you his good will, today?
Your service is prompt to gain its pay.'
'I'll seek to earn what's due to me;
There's no denying he gave it me.
Hand it over, come, stall no further,
I'd be a suppliant no longer,
But follow the path of the shield,
That doth the fruits of chivalry yield.'
Seizing the other's bridle, he cried:
'Is that not Lahelin, there inside,
Of whom my good mother warned me?'

The knight reversed his lance, swiftly,
And thrust at the boy, with such power,
He and his horse fell midst the flowers;
Then, angered, beat him fore and aft
With the butt end, and with the shaft,
So that the blood sprayed in a cloud.
Parzival leapt to his feet, full proud,
He flung his javelin and, there,
Where helm and vizor leave bare
A narrow slit, the tip made entry,
Piercing Ither's eye, then fully
Passing through the nape, while he
A knight devoid of treachery,
Fell earthwards, breathing his last breath.
Many a woman mourned that death.
Ither of Gaheviez left
A legacy of tears. Bereft
Of her knight, any fair lady
Who felt affection for him, she
Saw happiness vanish, joy yield,
And love escorted from the field.

The raw lad turned the body over
Seeking to remove the armour,
But made little progress there,
Quite baffled by the strange affair.
Helmet or greaves his hands failed
To loosen, for the straps prevailed.
He twisted them, and tried in vain,
That foolish lad, yet Ither's bane.
The little palfrey and the charger
Whinnied so loudly that, farther
Away, at the moat's edge, by the wall,
Iwanet the squire, heeded the call;
He was Guinevere's page and kin,
And swiftly he came riding in,
Finding the mounts both riderless,

And drawn by friendship no less
For this Parzival. There he found
Ither's dead body on the ground,
And Parzival in perplexity.
He ran to him and effusively
Praising him, spoke of the honour
He had won in slaying the other,
That great king of Cumberland.

Iwanet aids and advises Parzival with regard to the armour

'GOD bless you! Help me understand
How do I strip him, and don it?
'I'll show you all, in a minute.'
Said Iwanet, to Gahmuret's son.
No sooner said, than it was done,
For, on the field of Nantes, the dead
Gave armour to the living instead,
Though that was but a simple boy.
'Those boots you shall ne'er employ,'
Said Iwanet, 'for now your entire
Self must show but knightly attire.'
Parzival jibbed at this decree.
'Nothing my mother gave to me
Shall e'er leave my body,' he said,
'For better or worse'. To Iwanet,
This seemed strange, yet the squire kept
His patience and to show respect
To the boots clad them with bright steel.
Now shining greaves did them conceal,
With them went spurs worked in gold,
That silk, not leather, cords did hold.
These he attached and then, ere he
Offered the chain mail, at each knee,
He laced on the steel guards, and so,
The lad was armed from head to toe,
Despite his restlessness; demanding

His quiver: 'No, not one javelin
Will I hand you!' cried Iwanet,
'Chivalry bids that you forget
The use of such weapons,' but he
Girded the sword on carefully,
And told him how to draw the blade,
And never to flee, nor seem afraid.
Then he led up the Castalian steed,
The dead man's mount, long-legged indeed,
Yet Parzival, the stirrups scorning,
Fully-armed to the saddle leaping,
Showed manly vigour, in full play,
Which many praise in our own day.
And Iwanet taught him further
How to deploy, and manoeuvre
Behind his shield, and wait the chance
Against the enemy to advance.
He placed a lance in Parzival's hand:
'What's this?' the latter did demand.'
'Why, if a man meets you in the field,
You must thrust it through his shield,
So hard that it splinters; if you do
The ladies shall hear praise of you.'
No painter of shields from Cologne
Or Maastricht, not the finest known,
Could have shown him, the tale says,
To better effect, or earned more praise,
Nor the fine steed he sat upon.

'Dear friend, and my companion,'
He said to Iwanet, 'I have gained
What I wished, and have attained
The armour and the goblet; now go,
Greet King Arthur, and tell him so,
Give him the goblet thus, and say
That I endured dishonour this day,
For a boorish knight offended me

By punishing a fair young lady
Who honoured me with her laughter;
Pity for her moved me thereafter,
Her pain has more than touched my heart,
Nay it is lodged there like some dart.
In true companionship, feel my shame.
God keep you, – I go to win a name –
For He has power to protect us all.’

The mourning for Ither

NOW, Ither of Gaheviez,
He abandoned him where he lay,
And Ither’s body, that yet still bled,
Was fair of form, though he lay dead,
Whom Fortune favoured while alive.
If in knightly combat he’d died,
Of a lance-thrust that pierced his shield,
Who’d speak of tragedy on that field?
He died of a javelin’s base powers.

Iwanet gathered the brightest flowers
To cover him, and his next action
Done to recall the Crucifixion,
Was to plant the javelin shaft above,
And then, with dignity and love,
He forced a stick through its head
To form a cross o’er that fair bed;
Then to the city did repair,
To bring news to the fair folk there.
Many a lady did lament,
Many a knight his head now bent
And wept, and by his mourning showed
His deep affection, and sorrow’s load.
Great affliction they suffered there.

The corpse they bore in with care.

The Queen rode out from the city,
Ordering the monstrance, in piety,
To be brought there, and raised,
(Ere she spoke of that lord in praise)
Over the King of Cumberland,
Who had died at Parzival's hand.
And then the Lady Guinevere
Words of grief spoke, loud and clear:
'Alas, this deed shall mar the fame
Of Arthur, and tarnish his name;
That he who should, by every right,
Be placed above every fair knight
Of the Round Table, must lie here,
Before Nantes; for it doth appear
He but claimed his inheritance,
Yet death received, and by no lance.
He was indeed of our company,
In his courtesy and his chivalry,
Such that no true ear ever heard
Of him an ill or graceless word.
If treachery's wild, he was tame,
From his book they erased that same.
Now, all too soon, is he interred,
The seal upon fame's scroll, conferred
By the courteous heart wrought there,
That, formed in honour, ever fair,
Counselled him perfectly when he
Sought woman's love, so we might see
Proof of good faith, and dauntless will.
The seed of grief is sown here, still,
Among us women, yet to flourish,
While we our deep sorrow nourish.
From out your wound, lament, Ither,
Issues forth, and doth fill the air.
So red were your locks that never
Could blood dye the flowers redder.
Woman's laughter you drain away,

You have squandered it all this day!’
So King Ither was laid to rest,
Royal pomp did his rites invest;
His death brought forth fair women’s sighs.
His bright armour proved his demise;
For foolish Parzival’s desire
For that brave armour quenched his fire.
Later, when he was wise, indeed,
How Parzival regretted that deed!

Parzival comes upon the castle of Gurnemanz de Graharz

PARZIVAL’S mount had this virtue
That whatever road it did pursue,
Whether o’er stone or fallen trees,
It ever picked its way with ease.
And whether it was hot or cold
It ne’er sweated, so we are told.
And Parzival never had need
To tighten the girth on his steed
By so much as a single hole,
Though he rode for two days whole.
The simple lad rode it as far,
That day, as any old warrior
Without his gear would seek to do
If he’d been given a day or two,
And Parzival rode in full armour,
And at a gallop moreover,
Rarely a trot, and never rested.

Towards eve his gaze was arrested
By the sight of a castle tower,
And as he neared, within the hour,
More and more of them could he see,
And so, in his simplicity,
He thought by Arthur they were sown,
And a plenteous crop had grown,

All due to Arthur's sacredness,
Thinking him one that God did bless.
'My mother's people farm not so,'
He said: 'of all her crops, none grow
As tall as this, though it be plain
Tis not for lack of heavy rain.'

Now Gurnemanz de Graharz owned
The castle, and was there enthroned.
Below the walls, stood a linden tree
In a green meadow where it was free
To spread its boughs, for long and wide
The meadow stretched on either side.
The path and mount conspired to lead
The lad to where the master, indeed,
Was seated, while great weariness
Made Parzival's shield, I do confess,
Swing in a way, to front and rear,
Not too deserving of praise, I fear.
Prince Gurnemanz sat all alone,
Where the linden tree's leafy dome
Shaded, no doubt as it should,
A man whose heart e'er sought the good,
A captain of true courtesy.
And Gurnemanz did courteously
Receive this guest, as he was bound;
No knight or page was to be found.

Born out of youthful ignorance,
Parzival returned his advance:
'My mother told me, on a day,
To seek out one whose hair was grey,
And, in return for his counsel,
To learn from him, and serve him well.
And I shall give good service, know,
Since mother said I should do so.'
'If you come here to seek advice,

Then your goodwill shall be the price
While my counsel I do furnish;
If good advice is what you wish.’
The prince now loosed a sparrow-hawk
From his fist, and while they did talk,
It flew to the castle; as it did soar,
The gold bell tinkled that it wore,
In summons, for a crowd of pages
Handsome, and of sundry ages,
Hastened to join them; Gurnemanz
Requested them, as they did advance,
To escort his guest, and seek his ease.
‘Mother was right; true as the breeze,
An aged man’s words are guileless!’
The lad cried, pleased by his success.

The pages led him to where he saw
A throng of knights before the door,
There they begged him to dismount.
‘A king dubbed me; on his account,
This rider will not leave his seat.
My mother said that I should greet
You all.’ They thanked both him and her.
Greetings done, they sought to offer
Many a plea, ere they found success
(The horse was weary, the man no less)
In persuading him to descend,
But he reached his room in the end.
‘Let us remove your armour, now,
And ease your limbs, if you’ll allow.’

Disarming him, whether or no
He wished it, they made to go,
Though they were truly horrified
By his fool’s garb, his boots beside
Were scarce acceptable; dismayed,
His state to their lord they relayed,

Who was troubled at the thought
Of this boy and of what he sought;
He well-nigh despaired of the lad,
Such his pain at how he was clad,
How ill shod, as he went his way.
Yet one courteous knight did say:
'I swear that ne'er did my eyes see
So noble a child; it seems to me
That his form is such as Fortune
Would gaze on gladly, late or soon,
Showing the traits of noble birth,
As noble as any on this earth.
How is it then that Love's fair glance
Is found in this sad circumstance?
I regret to see the Court's delight
Clad in the manner of this knight.
Bless the mother that bore a son
Possessed of such true perfection.
His armour too is a splendid sight,
And made of him a splendid knight,
Till it was removed. There I saw
Marks of bruises, bloody and sore.'
'No doubt suffered for some lady,'
His master commented swiftly.
'Not so, my lord, with his manners
No lady would ever suffer
Him to serve her, though he doth seem
Well-favoured for such a scheme.'
Said his lordship: 'Come, let us go,
And see the wonder that dresses so.'
Off they went, to visit Parzival,
Who was wounded, you'll recall,
By a lance that failed to shatter.
Gurnemanz, like a kind father,
Tended the lad most carefully,
And gazed at him most tenderly,
As if twas a child of his own,

Cleansing, bandaging him, alone,
With his own hands. Then to supper,
The lord led the hungry stranger.
He'd had no breakfast when he left
The fisherman's, and was bereft
Of nourishment; then his armour
Won at Nantes, with its weight brought
Him famished, weary, to the court
Of King Arthur, where they allowed
Him to go hungry midst the crowd,
And with his wound, to add to all.
Now he might sit and sup withal,
And so the lad dined with a will,
And a mass of good things did fill
His stomach and sink out of sight,
The master smiled at his appetite.
Lord Gurnemanz begged him to eat,
Heartily, till he felt replete,
And, thus, put by his weariness.

The time then came to seek his rest,
'You are weary?' asked the master,
'How early did you rise?' 'My mother,
Still slept, and heaven knows that she
Never rises early, unlike me.'
Gurnemanz, smiling, led the way
To the chamber where his bed lay,
And told him he must now undress;
He jibbed at it, but nonetheless
It had to be, then, upon the bed,
A coverlet of ermine was spread,
That served to cover his naked form,
So handsome a lad was never born.
His weariness and his lack of sleep
Meant that his posture he did keep
All night, nor turned from side to side
Until the dawn light shone betide.

The lord had them a bath prepare
At mid-morning, while he lay there;
And they did so, at the carpet's edge,
And strewed rose-petals and sedge,
And though they made little sound,
He woke from sleep, and so he found
The tub, and sat, enjoying it.
I know not who had prompted it,
But the loveliest girls, finely clad,
Entered, with due regard for the lad,
And massaged his bruises away,
All their soft white hands in play.
Little cause did he have to feel
Unloved (though he could not conceal
His foolishness, orphaned as he was
Of common-sense) that was because
His innocence, and his simple heart,
Brought no unkindness on their part.
There he sat in contented ease,
While the modest girls sought to please,
Washing him not quite all over;
Nor did he say a word moreover,
Howe'er they prattled. He did see
A second morn shine there, graciously,
In them; the one vied in brightness
With the other, his face no less
Radiant, as it sought to quench
Both bright lights in their excellence.

They offered a robe but, bashfully,
He refused it, since they might see;
And so the young girls had to leave,
Since that robe he'd not receive.
They could stand there no longer, though
I think they might have liked to know,
If he had sustained some harm unseen,

For women are so kindly, I mean,
Pity will move them whenever
They deem that some friend may suffer.
Their guest now approached the bed,
Where a white doublet lay. He fed
A belt of golden silk around it,
To hold his breeches then in hose
Of scarlet the brave lad did pose,
Ah, those legs, what a splendid pair!
What elegance was apparent there!
Tunic and mantle they were brown,
Long, well-cut, lined, all around,
With dazzling ermine, and adorned
With trimmings that no eye might scorn,
Broad, and of sable, black and grey;
In these he did himself array.
Another fine belt he fastened on,
Costly, a rare clasp set thereon.
Above it all, his handsome head
Showed a pair of lips glowing red.

Now his faithful host did appear
With a company of knights drew near,
To greet him, and they did all declare
They'd not seen the equal anywhere
Of his fair form, and praised that she
Who had brought forth such progeny.
No less in truth than in courtesy
They cried: 'Why, any fair lady
Of whom this lad may seek favour
Him with her kindness will honour.
Fair welcome and the joys of love
Are his for the asking, if she prove
Appreciative of this knight's worth.'
All paid him tribute, free of mirth,
These and others, in time to come,
Who saw all that he might become.

His host now took him by the hand,
And led him midst the knightly band,
Asking him how he'd slept that night,
Beneath his roof; thus spoke the knight:
'If on that day I left my mother
She'd not told me to seek the master,
I find here, how I'd have suffered!
'Sir, you're kind; may God reward her!'
Our simple warrior now did pass
To a chapel wherein the Mass
Was sung to God, for the master,
And there at Mass did the latter
Teach him what would still today
Add to one's true blessings, I say,
To make his offering and then
The sign of the cross, whereby men
Defy the Devil, and punish him.
And then all the company went in
And sat to table, in the hall,
The guest beside the host; and all
The food he saw the guest did eat.
'I hope it proves not indiscreet,'
Said his host, politely, 'if I ask
Where you journeyed from, this last.'
And the lad told him, and detailed
All that his travels had entailed,
How'd he left his mother behind,
How the ring and brooch he did find,
And how he had won his armour.
Gurnemanz knew it must be Ither
He had slain, and so he sighed
Pitying how Ither had died;
Yet he insisted it was right
His guest be named as 'The Red Knight.'

Gurnemanz trains Parzival in the arts of chivalry

NOW, after the board was removed,
The lord a gentle teacher proved,
And sought to tame the raw and wild:
'My friend you speak as doth a child,
'Why do you speak still of your mother?
Turn your mind to something other;
Take my advice, avoid all wrong;
Think to what lineage you belong.

I shall begin; now hear the same;
Ne'er must you lose your sense of shame,
If shame be gone, what use the man?
You'd live like a hawk on the hand,
Moulting its feathers; as the bird
Its plumes, you'd lose, in a word,
All your virtues, like plumes that fell,
Downwards, pointing straight to Hell.
You have good looks, a trim figure,
And of a realm may prove the ruler;
If you're of noble, aspiring stock,
Bear in mind the key to the lock,
Have pity on poor folk's neediness,
With kindness solace their distress;
Be generous and humble too,
For a decent man, not unlike you,
Who chances to fall on evil days,
Must wrestle with his pride always,
(A bitter struggle for any man)
You should offer a helping hand.
If you relive such a man's distress,
Then you are such as God will bless;
Such men are in a plight that's more
Vile than those who beg door to door.
Whether poor or rich, be temperate;
The noble who squanders his estate

Shows a base spirit, while if he
Hoards his wealth too excessively,
Then great dishonour it will bring.
Be moderate then, in everything.
Tis clear that you need good advice.
Eschew your raw ways; think twice.

You should refrain from questioning,
Yet if someone asks you a thing,
Offer them a thoughtful answer,
One that's to the point, however.

You can see, hear, taste and smell,
And so may be led to reason well.
Temper your courage with mercy,
In such a matter come, follow me;
When you win a man's surrender,
Accept the plea that he doth tender,
And let him live, and so live long,
Unless he's done you mortal wrong.

You will oft bear arms, but when
Those arms are laid aside again,
See that you wash your hands and face;
High time, if iron has left its trace!
For you will be handsome once more,
When women's eyes your looks explore.

Be manly and cheerful in your station,
Such will enhance your reputation.
And hold the ladies in high esteem,
It heightens a man's worth I deem.
Scorn not their cause a single day,
Such thoughts inspire a man always.
Lie to them, you'll deceive many,
But listen, ere you trouble any:
Cunning prospers but not for long,

Compared to love, fine and strong;
The dry branch in the thicket snaps,
And then the watchman who naps,
Wakes, the noise declares the thief.
Many a fight breaks out beneath
The trees, and in the heathland waste.
Compare this with a true love graced
With sure defence against deceit.
Earn Love's disfavour and you'll meet
With every manner of disgrace,
A lasting shame on all your race.

And take this lesson now to heart,
Treat not man and woman apart,
For women and men are all one,
As are the daylight and the sun,
Nor can they be parted, indeed,
They rise from the self-same seed;
So note it closely and remember.'
The lad bowed in thanks; moreover
He said naught about his mother,
Though in his heart he did so ever,
As a loving son might do today.

'Now learn more of the knightly way,'
The lord continued, 'And think how
You first approached, for I avow
Many a wall where shields are strung
Showed each one of them better hung,
Than the one slung round your neck!
Tis not too late to rein in check
Such things; hasten to the meadow,
Where far more skilful you shall grow.
Let pages come too, bring his steed,
And every knight what he doth need,
And good fresh lances bring them too!'
And so the prince rode out anew,

Onto the field where horsemanship
Was revealed, and tightened his grip,
And showed him how to alter speed
With only a touch of spur, at need,
Thighs beating like wings, and how
To lower his lance and prepare now
For the thrust, and employ his shield
To defend himself upon the field.
'Let me show you,' the lord would say,
And taught him thus, in a better way,
How to shun impropriety,
Than with the supple stick we see
Many a teacher in school employ,
When he'd correct some wanton boy.

Then he asked some skilful knight
To ride against him in true fight,
And led the lad as if to tourney,
Who dealt a thrust so furiously,
In a manner all thought extreme,
That he flung a knight of high esteem,
From his horse and to the ground,
Though he recovered at a bound.
A new opponent did now advance,
And Parzival raised a fresh lance.
Youth, strength, and spirit he had;
Gahmuret's blood was in the lad
And to his courage he was heir,
And though but a beardless boy there,
He nonetheless spurred on his steed,
Made to gallop, and charged at speed,
Aiming at his opponent's shield.
The knight his seat was forced to yield,
And measured his length on the earth,
Midst broken splinters, and some mirth.
In this manner he downed five men.
Then his lordship led him in again.

Parzival proved his worth and more
In sport, and, later on, in war.
The skilled knights who looked on,
Seeing how this young lad shone,
Acknowledged his courage and skill,
'As for our master, now, he will
Be done with grief, and live anew.
If he is wise, he will wed him to
His daughter, and so end his woe,
Since Fortune her fair face doth show,
And, for his three dead sons, amends
Through this stranger, she extends.'

Parzival takes leave of Gurnemanz

AND then they all returned, at eve.
Orders the servants did receive
To lay the board, while his daughter
Was summoned there, for he sought her
Presence at table, with them all.
On the fair Liaze he now did call,
When he first saw the girl appear,
'Allow this true knight to draw near
And kiss you; show him due respect;
Fortune herself his path has decked.
As for you sir, we would demand
That you left the ring on her hand,
If she had one, yet she has none,
Not e'en a brooch like that you won
From the lady in the meadow there.
Who'd grant one to this daughter fair?
While the first had one who gave her
What you chose to acquire from her.
Naught from Liaze can you acquire!'
The lad kissed her lips, red as fire,
While he blushed. None sweet as she,
With the virtue of true modesty.

The table was both long and low,
No need for my lord to elbow
His neighbour, for he sat instead
In sole possession, at its head.
He then seated the fair stranger
Between himself and his daughter.
Whene'er our Red Knight wished to eat,
Liaze with her white hands, soft and neat,
Must carve and slice as her father bade,
None was there whose presence weighed
On their deepening acquaintance.
Well-bred, Liaze did yet enhance
All that her father asked of her.
And those two made a handsome pair.
After the meal, the girl withdrew,
And, in this way, each night anew
They dined for a fortnight; and yet
There was one matter made him fret:
He wished to fight on many a field
Ere to a woman's arms he'd yield.
Twas noble ambition, so he thought,
That led to the victory he sought
In this life, and the life hereafter;
Words that are true now, as ever.

One morn he begged leave to depart.
His host went forth, with heavy heart,
Beside him; from Graharz they rode,
To the open country, where they slowed:
'I lose a fourth son now in you,'
Sighed the prince, with feelings true:
'I thought myself repaid for the woe
Of my threefold tale of loss, for so
It seemed; till now there were but three.
Yet if someone were to courteously
Cut my heart in four, and bear away
Each quarter, I would gladly pay,

Such a price, one quarter for you
Three for my noble sons all who
Died gallantly, for such the reward
That chivalry does to man afford,
Grief borne at the end, without fail,
As the crupper's borne by the tail.

One death stole all my happiness,
That of Schenteflurs my eldest.
Condwiramurs he sought to aid,
When a strong defence she made
Of her lands, and her fair person.
He fell to Clamide and Kingrun,
So that my heart is pierced through
By sorrow's lances; and now tis you
Who ride away, too soon, from me,
And leave me here in my misery.
I should die now, since you like not
Liaze the Fair, nor my lands, I wot.

My second son was Count Lascoyt,
Slain by Ider, the son of Noyt,
Competing for the sparrow-hawk.
Thus, robbed of joy, I walk and talk.
Gurzgri was the last of the three,
Lovely Mahaute he wed, for she
Was given in marriage by Ehkumat,
Her proud brother, and after that,
My son fell at Schoydelakurt,
Where he came of his mortal hurt,
Near the royal city of Brandigan;
Mabonagrín slew no finer man;
Mahaute lost her shining beauty,
While his mother died of misery.'

The guest now felt his host's deep pain,
For he had made the reason plain.

‘My lord, he said, I am not wise,
But if I should win fame, in this guise,
Such as would let me sue for love,
I would then ask you to approve
My marriage to Liaze the Fair,
You daughter. Tis great grief you bear;
But if when the time comes I may free
You from your woe, assuredly
I shall not suffer you to grieve.’
And so Parzival took his leave
Of the faithful lord, and his men.
After three sad throws, now again,
The prince had lost a fourth also,
Doomed once more to a life of woe.

Book IV: Parzival and Condwiramurs

Parzival reaches the city of Belrepeire

PARZIVAL journeyed on his way,
While showing every sign that day
Of the noble and well-bred knight,
Though, sadly, he was forced to fight
The many pangs of those who part.
His eyes were subject to his heart;
The fields seemed to confine him,
Narrow spaces to define him,
All that was green seemed dry and sere,
Blank his red armour did appear.
Now he'd lost his early rawness,
Gahmuret's traits he did possess;
His feelings gave him no respite
His thoughts on Liaze did alight,
Who'd offered friendship, short of love,
To one of whom she did approve.
Whichever path his mount would take,
Whatever speed it chose to make,
He was powerless to alter there,
Involved in thought, filled with care.

His passage through the wooded waste
Far from neat hedges interlaced,
Wayside crosses, ruts cut by carts,
Saw him riding midst distant parts
Where such travellers seldom go,
By hills and dales he did not know.
A proverb folk oft quote today
Is pertinent to this, they say
That any knight who goes awry,
Receives a hammering by and by,
And stones and logs lay all around,
So many a hammer there he found.
And yet he went not far astray,
For while as yet it still was day

He rode directly from Graharz
Into the kingdom of Brobarz,
Passing midst peaks jagged and high.

And there, as evening drew nigh,
He came to a torrent whose sound
Could be heard from miles around,
Its waters flowing down with force.
He rode beside its widening course,
And reached the city of Belrepeire,
Bequeathed by its king, Tampenteire,
To his daughter; he'd lately died,
And many grieved with her, and sighed.
The waters of the torrent flew down
Like feathered darts, below the town,
Bright bolts, hurled from a tense crossbow,
Humming above the endless flow.
And all was spanned by a rope bridge,
With a wattle floor, from ridge to ridge,
Where the torrent entered the sea;
And the town it defended readily.
You must know how a child will go
When a swing is swung to and fro;
So that bridge went, though, truly,
Twas not youth made it so lively.

Now sixty knights and more beside
Were stationed on the other side;
Helmets laced, naught did they lack,
And they all cried: 'Go back! Go back!
Though each one was weak from hunger,
They raised their swords, ever eager
For the fight, for he who rode there
Over the meadow, with kingly air,
Towards the bridge, appeared to be
Clamide; they knew it must be he.
Their loud cries had caused the steed

To shy from the bridgehead, no heed
Would it give to his sharp spurs at all.
But, fearless as ever, Parzival,
Dismounted, and led the horse across
As the frail bridge did pitch and toss.
No coward would have dared to ride
Against such force as there he spied;
And then great care he had to show
Lest they fall to the depths below.
Meanwhile there, on the farther side,
The shouting ceased, the clamour died,
The knights withdrew; helm and shield
And bright sword the way did yield,
While the defenders closed their gate,
Fearing that others followed straight.

And, thus, Parzival crossed over,
And rode onto a field, moreover,
Where many a man death did suffer
On the path to knightly honour,
There at the gate of Belrepeire,
Below the lofty palace there.
A knocker in the shape of a ring
Was on the gate, he struck the thing,
But none seemed to heed his call
Except for one fair maid withal,
Who through a window saw the knight
Waiting there and, all polite,
Said: 'If you come here as a foe,
You waste your time there, you below.
We've suffered enough by land and sea
From a fierce and hardy enemy,
Without you joining in the fight!'
'Madam, he cried, here stands a knight
Who'll aid you all, if he but can.
Your sweet smile would reward a man;
I am your most devoted servant.'

At this, the girl took thought, and went,
As fast as she could, to see the Queen,
(Condwiramurs, tis she I mean),
Then helped him within the wall.
This was destined to ease them all
Of great hardship. Her he did greet;
Folk lined both sides of the street;
Marching down it,, in full array
Long ranks of soldiers stretched away,
Men with slings, and archers bold,
And lines of men-at-arms untold,
With long sharp lances unbroken,
And there was more than a token
Force of merchants standing there,
With battle-axes, and then a share
Of them held javelins, so they say,
As the guilds demanded that day;
All their bellies were empty too!

The Queen's Marshal had much ado
To lead our hero through the crowd,
To a courtyard, one well endowed
With every means of close defence.
Turret above chamber immense,
Barbican, donjon, angle-tower,
On every side there did glower,
More than he'd e'er seen before.
From every place around did pour
A host of knights to welcome him,
On foot or horseback, all looked grim,
Ashen the face of each man there.
Our Count of Wertheim, I declare,
Would have loathed the very place,
Lacking the means to feed his face.
Famine starved them in this fashion;
Of bread or meat denied their ration,
They needed no toothpicks; no wine

Soaked greasy lips, none there did dine.
Lean bellies, eyes gaunt and sunken;
The skin upon their ribs shrunken,
So dry and shrivelled altogether
It showed like Hungarian leather;
Famine had chased the flesh away,
Scant fat dripped on the fire I say.
Now, twas the King of Brandigan,
Who was a proud and noble man,
He to this state, did them bring,
Twas the cost of Clamide's wooing.
No mead now was spilled there ever,
No pan saw a Trüdingen fritter,
All such sizzling was cut short.

I'd be a fool though if I thought
To shame them for it, for when I
Dismount at home, and they all cry
'Master', no mouse cheers at that.
Slight is its chance of growing fat;
It steals the scraps none should hide,
And little do I find there beside.
For I, Wolfram von Eschenbach,
Often must sit there, in the dark,
And the same hunger do I earn.

Enough of my woes, the tale must turn
To Belrepeire, and its folk's travails,
And the misery their plight entails.
These loyal warriors suffered greatly
Thanks to their courage, and your pity
They deserve, for Death's upon them,
If God cares not to aid their freedom.
Hear more of men, wrought of the best,
Who with shame received their guest,
Thinking him of such a nature
He should not have sought their shelter,

Given their hopeless state indeed,
Yet he knew naught of their dire need.
They spread a carpet on the grass,
Where a linden tree's leafy mass,
All walled about, cast pleasant shade,
And then honour to him they paid;
Retainers removed his armour,
And when he'd washed in the water
Of a stream, and removed the dust,
His appearance was other I trust
Than theirs; he might have dimmed the sun
In all its glory; they thought him one
To be esteemed, and offered their guest
A cloak that went well with the rest
Of his fine clothes, its sable trim
From a fresh pelt, it seemed to him.
'Do you wish to meet our fair Queen?'
They asked, and he said he would deem
That an honour, so our true knight
Climbed to the palace, to which a flight
Of stairs led, and soon reached the place.

He has audience with Queen Condwiramurs

THE lovely radiance of her face,
And the sweet glow of her bright eyes,
Preceded the Queen, in such wise,
That a blaze of light around him
Shone, ere her presence found him.
Katelangen's Duke Kyot,
And his brother Manpfilyot,
Played escort to their niece the Queen,
Grey-haired, yet handsome I ween,
Each duke had renounced the sword,
Out of profound love of the Lord.
Those noble princes led the lady,
With a fair show of ceremony,

To the centre of the long stair;
The Queen kissed Parzival there,
The one's lips red as the other's,
Then, between the two brothers,
Gave him her hand, and he was led
To where they might all sit instead.

The ladies there and the gentlemen,
Stood or sat, greatly weakened then
By their ordeal; their Mistress bright
And her Household, in such a plight,
Had taken leave of happiness.
But Condwiramurs loveliness
Set her apart from those I'll name,
Whose beauty so deserved its fame:
Jeschute, Enide, she did supplant
And Cunneware, her of Lalant,
And those whose fair charms ever new
Were most praised, both Iseults too.
Condwiramurs outdid the rest;
Beyond all others she possessed
'*Le bêâ curs*', the lovely form.
Fine the mothers who did adorn
The Earth with this fair couple.
For, all about them, her people
Did naught but gaze with growing pride,
As there those two sat, side by side;
Parzival found admirers there;
Yet I'll tell his thoughts, if I dare:
'Liaze is there, Liaze is here,
To ease my sadness; sweet and dear,
Liaze I see, and not this other;
Noble Gurnemanz' fair daughter.'
Yet Liaze's beauty was as naught
Compared with her his eyes now sought,
Whom God had granted true perfection.
She was the flower of this nation,

For she was like the fair hedge-rose;
From out the dew-wet bud it glows,
Revealing, from that pristine bed,
Its fresh glory of white and red.
This troubled her new guest indeed;
Yet his self-command, that decreed
By Gurnemanz, was so entire,
Curbing whate'er mere fools desire,
Forbidding him to question aught
Except when common sense had sought
An answer, that in silence he
Sat beside her, that splendid she,
And not a word fell from his lips.
(Near to her though; close their hips);
And many a brave man who doth pay
Women compliments, might today
Be as tongue-tied, or so I find.
A thought was in the fair Queen's mind:
'I deem the man speaks not to me,
Because my spare form he doth see.
No! Rather tis for this reason,
That I should start the conversation,
For I'm the hostess, and he the guest.
Since we sat down, to take our rest,
He has looked upon me kindly,
And shown respect and courtesy.
We have been silent for too long,
I must speak, or be in the wrong.'

Her uncles Kyot and Manpilyot provide food for all

'MY lord, the Queen said to her guest,
It is incumbent on your hostess
To speak; I won your kiss of greeting,
With my fair welcome, on meeting,
And then you seek to serve us here,
Or so from my maid, it doth appear.

Alas, we're unused to overmuch
 Kindness from strangers, and such.
 I'll ask you, sir, whence come you?'
 'Why, from a lord, flawless and true;
 This morning, madam, I rode away
 Leaving him to his sorrows this day;
 Gurnemanz of Graharz his name,
 And I come to you from that same.'
 'If another man had told me this,'
 Replied the noble maid, 'I'd insist
 He could not be here in but a day,
 For whene'er my messenger, I say,
 Has ridden it, I'll confess to you
 He has not reached that place in two.
 Your host's sister was my mother,
 And if my uncle's fair daughter,
 Is not much the worse for mourning,
 That's no wonder. Both lamenting,
 We have wept with eyes ne'er dry,
 Many a day, Liaze and I.
 If you bear affection for him now,
 Accept what our state doth allow
 Of meagre nourishment this night,
 Much as we must do in our plight.
 If you do you will serve him too.
 Now I'll tell of our ills anew,
 Famine it is that brings us low.
 'I'll send you a dozen loaves, oh,
 And three fine shoulders of ham,' cried
 Her uncle Kyot, 'and then beside
 The ham, eight great round cheeses,
 And two wine kegs, for it pleases
 Me so to do, and my good brother
 Will aid you this night, moreover.'
 'I shall send the like, dear lady'
 Manpfilyot said, 'depend on me.'

The Queen was overjoyed, and she
Thanked both her uncles effusively.
They took their leave, away they rode
To a hunting lodge, their true abode,
Not far from there, in a mountain gorge;
A truce of some kind they did forge
With the besiegers, so went unarmed,
Careless as if their lives were charmed.
Their men returned at the double,
And were rewarded for their trouble.
The famished folk did soon revive;
That hoard must keep them all alive,
Though many must die of starvation
Before it reached its destination.
The Queen insisted all must share
The bread, and likewise all the fare,
Meat, cheese and wine, without question;
All this at Parzival's suggestion.
Thus, little was left to feed these two,
Yet, without quarrelling, they ate too.

Parzival comforts Condwiramurs in his bed

THE provender was soon consumed,
Saving those who'd seemed but doomed.
Though they'd gorged like raptors there,
None grew fat; the plates scraped bare,
All bore the marks of famine still,
But Parzival; naught could them fill.
A room they readied for their guest,
A bed e'en softer than the rest,
And he begged leave then to retreat.
A couch fit for a king did meet
His eyes, lit by candles and they
Not such as you find every day;
A carpet stretched before this bed.
He asked the band of knights who'd led

Him to the chamber to depart;
The pages placed his clothes apart,
And soon he slept, until he heard
A sorrowful cry and thus disturbed
Awoke, to find a world of sighs,
And heart's rain falling from bright eyes.
I'll tell you why the thing was so,
Twas no female indiscretion, no,
The girl whom I describe to you,
Was chaste and ever-faithful too.
War's distress, the death of those
Who served had stolen her repose,
And pained her heart thus, cruelly,
Her eyes forced open constantly.
No, not for such love had she come
As makes a sweet maid a woman,
This Queen she sought a friend's kind aid;
Then, she in armour was arrayed,
A silken shift of purest white.
What better challenge to a knight
Than a woman advancing so,
And in a shift as white as snow,
Beneath a mantle of brocade?
Her wandering steps now betrayed
The weight of care upon her heart.

She'd left her ladies there, apart,
All her chamberlains fast asleep,
As to that far room she did creep,
Where Parzival lay; night part gone,
The candles at his side still shone.
Her path towards his chamber led,
She knelt on the carpet by his bed,
But as far as lovers' embraces went
He and the Queen, both innocent,
Were dunces; the matter went so:
The maid, ashamed, was full of woe;

Did he draw her into bed with him?
Why, he knew naught of such a thing!
He lacked experience, yet sought
To solace her, and so he brought
Her within, yet in such a way
That neither's limbs did seek to stray,
Though neither asked them to, you see;
The Queen was wretched, and when he,
Roused by the sound of her weeping,
Loud in his ears as he was sleeping,
Woke, and saw, with some surprise,
The sad tears pouring from her eyes,
He felt sorrowful, and yet glad too.
He sat now, and gently as he knew,
Said: 'Madam, to God you should kneel,
Mock me not!' then made his appeal
To her, to sit down beside him,
Or lie down, where he was lying,
While he sought to rest elsewhere.

Queen Condwiramurs tells her tale of woe

'IF you'll honour me with your care,
Respect my presence, and not try
To embrace me, then I may lie
By your side.' He nodded his head,
And so she joined him there in bed.
Twas dead of night, no cockerel crowed,
(Though not one at roost now showed,
For hunger's needs had seen to that)
The sorrowful lady asked him pat
If he would hear her tale of woe.
'I fear that it may pain you though
And so may rob you of your sleep.
My lands and forts, but for this keep
Of Belrepeire, Iserterre's king,
(Clamide that is, tis all his doing)

Has, with his Seneschal, laid waste.
King Tampenteire's death had placed
A vast, brave army at my command;
Though an orphan, my father's land
Sent forth kinsmen, princes, vassals,
High and low, to defend my castles;
Yet half were slain in their defence.
None could but weep at such offence.
I would rather slay myself, indeed,
Than yield my person to the greed
Of this Clamide, and be his wife;
He with his own hand took the life
Of Schenteflurs, whose faithful heart,
One born for every chivalrous art,
Harboured many a manly virtue;
That flower of beauty, sprung anew,
Liaze's brother, quelled all baseness.'

Liaze's name brought fresh distress
To Parzival; he, her servitor,
Recalled his longing from before;
His spirits sank, filled with the love
He bore that girl, he was moved
To say: 'Could aught then solace you
Madam, aught that a man might do?'
'Yes, save us from the Seneschal;
Kingrun has conquered one and all,
Many a fine knight in combat here,
He'll come tomorrow, such my fear;
His vision is that he will see
His master's arms embracing me.
Were my palace never so high,
I would leap from its crest, say I,
Headlong, greet my father, dead,
Ere Clamide has my maidenhead.
Thus would I rob him of his boast.'
'From whichever fair country's coast

He hails, a Frenchman or a Briton,
You shall be defended by one
Whose sword he will wield that hour
To the utmost of his true power.'

Parzival fights Kingrun the Seneschal

THE night ended, and morning broke,
The lady rose, and donned her cloak,
Bowing her head to him, gratefully.
She stole away, while none did see,
None there to witness her departure
But Parzival, who slept no longer.
The sun in haste to scale the height,
Pierced the morning cloud with light;
He heard the clamour of many a bell.
Those for whom Clamide did spell
An end to happiness, rose and went
To the church where his path was bent.
There the Queen's chaplain sang the Mass,
In honour of God, and his lady, alas.
Her guest gazed, till, the blessing over,
He turned from her, and sought his armour.
His courage he'd prove, for, indeed,
Fighting bravely, he must succeed.

Now Clamide's forces came in sight,
With many a pennant, in full might,
Kingrun spurring far in advance;
On his Iserterre steed he did prance.
They say that Parzival did await
His coming there, beyond the gate,
And with him went the prayers of all.
For this sword-fight, outside the wall,
He took a wide sweep for the charge,
So that the shock falling full large
Snapped the girths on both their horses,

Each recoiling on its quarters;
Neither man had forgot his sword,
Unsheathed, the weapons sent abroad
Sharp blows; each man gave of his best.
Kingrun, wounded in arms and chest,
Felt them as blows to his prestige,
His pride quenched, and under siege.
His reputation had gone before,
Strength and courage, skill and more,
Unhorsed the half a dozen knights
Or so, he conquered in his fights.
Yet Parzival's strong arm replied
To his blows so readily, he sighed,
This man was like some mangonel
That hurled its missiles all too well.
No such assault though was it here
That cleft his helmet, falling shear.
Parzival knocked him to the ground,
Kneaded his chest, and then he found
Kingrun, as ne'er before, did render
Himself to a knight, in surrender.
Yet his foe scorned it, in advance,
Bade him submit to Gurnemanz.
'No, my lord, I would rather die,
I slew his son, for it was I
Who stole from Schenteflurs his life.
God has aided you in this strife,
And grants you honour for, where'er
Brave knights are told how you did fare
Against me, now at your mercy,
They can but praise your victory.'

'Another choice then I'll grant you,'
Said young Parzival, 'in full view,
Make your submission to the Queen,
Whom your lordship would demean.
She's long endured your enmity.'

‘Why that would put an end to me!
They’d scatter me those swords, I deem,
Like motes that dance in a sunbeam!
I have angered many in that place.’
‘Then I grant you parole, go trace
The road from this plain to Britain;
At Arthur’s court seek the maiden,
Who had to suffer, for my sake,
That which (for it was no mistake)
Was not her due; nor was it right;
And say that I, who am her knight,
Will soon avenge her, and that she
Will ne’er behold true joy in me
Till I have pierced that knight’s bright shield,
Somewhere, and the man doth yield.
Greet Arthur and his queen from me,
And all his household, courteously,
And say I’ll not return to court
Till that dishonour I have sought
To wipe away, that which I share
With the lady who suffered there
For but greeting me with laughter,
Who met with such violence after.
Say I remain her humble servant.’
Kingrun agreed and, in a moment
The foes parted, and our brave knight
Strode to his waiting mount outright;
All set to save it, in due course,
The city’s champion gained his horse.

Parzival and Queen Condwiramurs are wed

THE foe without were astounded
At Kingrun’s fate, while, surrounded
By a throng, Parzival was brought
Into the Queen’s presence, at court.
She embraced the knight most warmly,

And held him close, admiringly.
'To none but him I clasp', she said,
'Shall I in this whole world be wed.'
And she helped them unarm him then,
And honoured him once and again.
After his labours, he was served
With a meal worse than he deserved,
Then the men from all the city
Hastened to swear him fealty,
Claiming that he should be their king.
The Queen confirmed it, agreeing
That he must be her husband now,
He who had forced Kingrun to bow.

At this moment two gleaming sails
Were spied from the walls, fierce gales
Had driven them towards the harbour.
The holds were filled with provender,
To their joy, food enough to save
Them all, and thanks to God they gave.
A famished crowd now hastened there,
To board the ships and strip them bare;
They flew like leaves blown in the breeze,
Lean and sere. Yet, ere they could seize
The ships' supplies, the Queen's Marshal
Mounted a strict guard thus to all,
On pain of death, they were forbidden;
While the merchants now were bidden
To go with him to their new lord.

Parzival, buying the stores aboard,
Would have offered to pay double,
In bringing an end to their trouble,
But the merchants would but take
Their due. A veritable lake
Of fat dripped now to the hot coals.
Good food and wine filled their bowls.

Oh, I'd be a mercenary there,
And trade small beer for royal fare!
A wise course Parzival pursued:
He first portioned out the food,
Then asked all there to take a seat,
He wished them all to feel replete,
But not to gorge, having fasted so.
They his every wish did follow,
Eating sufficient, and no more.
Yet, having thus laid down the law,
That kindly, yet temperate man,
Gave more at eve, such was his plan.

'Would they wed, and the city bless?'
He and the Queen both answered 'yes'.
Now Parzival lay beside his bride,
And yet to her his body denied,
With such restraint as would not please
Many a woman, in days like these,
Were they so treated. Consider
How they do make a man suffer,
By feigning to act modestly,
Yet dressing most outrageously,
Demure indeed, yet their desire
Accords more with their scant attire;
Their caresses pain a lover.
Yet a faithful man who's ever
Shown restraint knows how to spare
His mistress' feelings; he may dare
To think, and it may well be true:
'I've served this lady, and am due
My reward, while she offers me
Solace, and yet, assuredly,
It would once have proved enough
To be allowed to touch the stuff
Of her gown, with my bare hand,
While if I were to now demand

Possession of her I should seem
Untrue to myself; dare I dream
Of seeking such tribute from her,
Only to shame both, or rather
Is't not kindness here should feature,
More-suited to a woman's nature?
With such thoughts, part-satisfied,
The Welshman lay beside his bride.

Though all called him the Red Knight,
Scant awe did he inspire at night:
He left the Queen a maiden yet.
Although not once did she forget
She was his wife; she dressed her hair
With love, a royal band did wear.
The virgin bride bestowed her land,
With all its strongholds, on the man;
He was the true love of her heart.
For two days they were ne'er apart,
Happy indeed; a third night came.
Oft Parzival thought, all the same,
He should behave as his mother
Had advised and clasp his lover;
Gurnemanz too, when all was done,
Had claimed man and woman were one.
(Their legs and arms entwine, you know,
If you'll forgive me saying so.)
He found their closeness very sweet,
In the ancient way they did greet
Each other, and were truly glad,
And afterwards were not too sad.
An ancient tale yet ever-new.

King Clamide lays siege to Belrepeire

NOW King Clamide small pleasure knew
On hearing of Kingrun's defeat,

That his surrender was complete.
A page it was, whose spurs had scarred
His horse's flanks, came riding hard,
As the king approached in strength,
And told him all the tale, at length,
How before Belrepeire they'd met,
Kingrun's fiercest encounter yet,
And how the Seneschal in that fight
Had been belittled by a knight:
'And now our leader makes his way
To Arthur's court this very day.
Our mercenaries we still deploy
In the position they did enjoy
Before he left, but, my lord, you,
And your armies, both these two,
Will find Belrepeire defended,
As no doubt the Queen intended,
And within lies this noble knight,
Who cares for nothing but the fight.
Your soldiers claim tis no other
Than the Red Knight, that Ither
Of the Round Table, whom the Queen,
Sent for; his colours we have seen,
And he has borne them with honour,
For he's the flower of Cumberland.'
'I shall claim her, and all her land,
And she must have me,' Clamide cried.
'My Seneschal declared, with pride,
That they'd be forced by starvation
To yield the city, and so the nation,
And that the Queen would offer me
Her royal love, and so twill be.'
The page won naught but ill-will there.

The King with his forces did fare
Onwards, and quite soon a knight
Hot from the army, came in sight;

He had not sought to spare his mount,
Yet rendered up the same account.
This dampened Clamide's martial spirit,
A blow indeed, but close upon it
A certain prince, of his company
Declared: 'My lord, it seems to me,
That Kingrun did not wage his fight
As our champion, but a lone knight.
Say that he had been killed, what then?
Must that drain courage from our men?
Two strong armies should not lose heart.
If they will fight, then on our part
We may show them a thing or two,
And put an end to their crowing too.'
He begged his lord not to despair.
'Now, once more, further this affair,
Urge on your kin and vassals so,
Under two banners meet the foe.
Along the slope we'll ride, and then,
On foot, attack the gate, again,
In numbers; when this foe we greet,
We'll there avenge Kingrun's defeat!'
This advice did Galogandres
Offer, brave Duke of Gippones;
Indeed, he brought those at the gate
To a most sad and sorry state.
And yet he found his death there too,
Amongst the ramparts, lost to view,
As did indeed the Count Narant,
He a famed prince of Ukerlant,
And many a lesser knight did yield,
Whose corpse was carried from the field.

Hear what defence the city made.
The citizens great logs conveyed
To the outworks, and sharp stakes
They drove into them, great rakes

Let down on ropes from high above
And turned on pulleys, to remove
Their assailants, and cripple them.
And this was all devised by them
After Kingrun's defeat and ere
Clamide their efforts could impair.
Moreover, in the ships, Greek fire
Had been brought, and made a pyre
Of those siege engines, mangonels,
Scaling towers, and whatever else
Their foes had dragged towards the wall,
Spiked frames too, clawed 'cats' and all.
True to its nature, that clinging fire
Now burnt them to the ground entire.

Kingrun the Seneschal reaches Arthur's court

MEANWHILE, Kingrun the Seneschal,
Reaching Britain, at Karminal,
A hunting-lodge in Brizljan,
Found King Arthur, and so began
To perform Parzival's command.
To Lady Cunneware de Lalant,
He made submission, treating her
As ordered when taken prisoner.
And she was filled with pure delight
That him they'd named the Red Knight
Had championed her cause; and then
The news was spread of this event.
The lord had audience with the king,
To Arthur and the court conveying
The words that Parzival had spoken.
Sir Kay started, and turned crimson.
'So you are Lord Kingrun, my friend?
How many Britons did you send
To the earth, how many did fall,
King Clamide's brave Seneschal?

Though it seems that I may never
Win your conqueror's good favour,
You shall profit from your office.
As Lord of the Kitchen, for that is
My role here, and yours in your land,
That is in Britain and Brandigan,
With pancakes and such, help me win
Cunneware' good graces, for my sin.'
Naught else to her would he offer,
But let that mischief pass, however,
And turn to where we left the tale.

Clamide challenges Parzival to single combat

CLAMIDE did Belrepeire assail.
The besieged resisted for their part.
Bodies revived, and in good heart,
They showed that they were warlike men,
Soon masters of the field again.
Their king, Parzival, did advance,
Clearing the way with sword and lance,
The gates left open wide behind him.
His arm rose and fell, blade sinking
Through steel helms, and as men fell
The burghers behind him fought as well,
By causing the fallen much distress,
Stabbing them through their mail, no less,
Through slits and seams, till Parzival,
Forbade it; and so denied this, all
Took captives; twenty, in that way,
Were dragged, alive, from the fray.
Now Parzival could quickly see,
That Clamide and his company
Were either splendidly concealed
Or fighting elsewhere in the field.
And so the valiant youth rode out,
Crossed open country thereabout,

And spurred in a curving manner
Towards Clamide's royal banner.
Clamide's pay was now hard earned;
Those from the city soon learned
To deal with them in such a way
Their own shields were whittled away,
Parted from the hand-grips, withal,
Such that their leader Parzival's
Was hacked to bits at each new blow.
Small joy had the attackers though,
Who deemed him the scourge of all.
They saw their standard-bearer fall,
Galogandres, the Duke outstanding
In support of his lord, the king,
Who was now himself in danger.
Faced by this imperious stranger,
King Clamide called the retreat;
The city's victory was complete.
Thus their battle-seasoned army
Thwarting attack, won the glory.

Parzival ordered the captive men
To be well-looked after; he, then,
On the third day took their parole,
Offering freedom to every soul;
Though the foe had grown more anxious,
The proud young king proved generous:
'Return here when I summon you,'
He cried, and forth they did issue
Without their armour, to return
To their friends, and wrongly earn
Pity for their sad famished state,
Though dining had but been their fate,
And all of them were flushed with wine.
'Waste not your pity, we are fine,
And they have such a wealth of food
That if we camped here, and viewed

The walls for a year, they would be
Well-fed as us, and as happy.
Their Queen's spouse is in the field,
The handsomest to sport a shield,
Of noble lineage certainly;
All the honour of chivalry
Is in safe keeping where he's pleased
To ride.' Clamide, at this, was seized
With regret for his wasted labour.
He sent then to the Queen, to tell her
That 'if he who shares the Queen's bed
Seeks single-combat here instead,
And is nominated by her,
As one who's ready to defend her
And her wide lands, in duel with me,
Truce twixt the armies let there be.'

Now Parzival felt great delight
That he was challenged thus to fight,
Alone, and the valiant man replied:
'I pledge my honour none inside
These walls will seek to take the field
E'en though I may seem to yield.'
A truce was struck thus, twixt the moat
And the enemy lines; his coat
Of armour each man then donned,
And each to each did correspond,
A pair of warrior smiths thus clad
To strike with everything they had.
And now the King of Brandigan
Mounted his fine Castilian,
An armoured steed called Guverjorz,
Bred by his kinsman King Grigorz
Of Ipotente, with gifts sent forth,
Over Lake Uker, from the north,
And brought to him by Count Narant,
With a thousand men from that land,

Armed but for their shields, their pay
All settled for two years and a day,
If the tale I read doth speak aright.
Grigorz sent not one valiant knight,
But five hundred, with helms laced,
Ready for action, who'd embraced
Many a battle, well-tried in war.
Then Clamide had sat down before
Belrepeire, laying siege by land,
And by sea and, on every hand,
Penning them so, they did suffer
Great distress ere they could recover.

Parzival defeats Clamide

PARZIVAL rode onto the field
Of combat where God would yield
A clear judgment as to whether
He must quit Tampenteire's daughter.
And then rode proudly to the place
Of their contest, at furious pace.
His steed ready to meet the foe,
Red samite coverings did flow
Over its steel armour, while he
Was in red also, and, eagerly,
Mounted on that steed, did wield
A lance all red, and a red shield.

Clamide began the fight. He'd brought
An untouched lance, full strong yet short,
Aiming thus to unseat his foe,
And swept about ere charging so.
Guverjorz galloped to the attack,
And those fine youths, who there did lack
A beard between them, battled away,
Neither missing his mark that day.
No fiercer duel was ever fought

By man or beast, as each man sought
Advantage till their mounts did founder,
Their steeds steaming from their labour.
As one the two brave knights touched ground,
As one their naked swords they found,
No downing tools was there, as each
Towards the other's helm did reach,
Intent on striking fire from steel,
Their shields did showers of splinters yield,
Like feathers in the wind, and yet
That steadfast son of Gahmuret
Seemed still unwearied; Clamide though
Felt the full weight of every blow,
As if the truce were broken now,
And some mangonel, he'd avow,
Fired stones at him from the city;
He cried out to his adversary
To save him from such ill-intent,
But Parzival would ne'er relent,
Saying he had pledged his word,
And this plaint that he now heard
Could not be true, while he alone
Could protect him, skin and bone,
Ribs, skull, thighs, and end his woe
If he'd but yield now to his foe.
Clamide was pale with weariness,
And liking it little, I confess;
A conflict won, a conflict lost,
Was decided there, and the cost.
For Clamide stumbled at a blow,
Blood from nose and ears did flow,
Dying the earth red; Parzival
Barged him down; as his foe did fall,
He tore the helm from Clamide's head,
Baring it, such that, once twas shed,
The vanquished man, ready or no,
Sat waiting that last, mortal blow.

‘My wife is free of you now, say I,’
The victor cried, ‘prepare to die!’
‘No, no, valiant knight, your honour
Was proven here, thirty times over.
What greater glory could you win?
Condwiramurs has, with reason,
Declared me an ill-fated man,
While fortune but strengthens your hand.
Your fair country has been regained,
While, as when a vessel is drained
Of its cargo, unballasted quite,
It drifts about, its strength is slight,
My ship now is of shallower draught
Its force deemed less, before and aft.
Why kill me? Shame I must bequeath
To my scions; you wear the wreath
Of advantage, and of true glory.
What need then to end the story
With my death? For I shall suffer
A living death, that may never
Know the woman who has, I find,
Imprisoned both my heart and mind
In her fair realm, all unrequited.
And so I must, by fate benighted,
Yield her, and all her lands, to you,
All without let or hindrance, too.’

Parzival thought of Gurnemanz
Who his wise counsel had advanced,
That a brave and gallant victor,
Feeling pity, should mercy offer,
So, he did as Gurnemanz said.
‘Then you must go, and stand instead
Before Liaze’s father, and render
To him your complete surrender,’
Said he to King Clamide: ‘No, no,

I have done him great wrong also!
For I slew Schenteflurs his son,
Who would if Kingrun had not come,
Have despatched me there, as he sought;
For Condwiramurs we two fought.
Sent by Gurnemanz de Graharz
With a mighty force to Brobarz,
Schenteflurs attacked me there;
Nine hundred knights, I declare,
On armoured steeds he possessed,
And they fought bravely, all attest.
Fifteen hundred foot he did field,
All fully clad, but for the shield,
A mighty force, yet, in the end,
Scarce enough did Graharz send
Since few enough returned to sire
Another army; none fled entire.
Since then I've lost many a knight
More than they and, in your sight,
Am beggared of honour and ease.
What else then might I do to please?'

Clamide is sent to King Arthur to join Kingrun

'QUELL now your fears. Go to the land
Of Britain (where Kingrun, your man,
Has gone before) greet King Arthur
On my behalf, and say, moreover,
That I still seek his sympathy
For the insult, assumed by me,
Dealt a lady, for her laughter.
Naught has grieved me thereafter
As much as the beating she won.
Tell her it rankles yet; that done,
Offer the girl your submission.
Once you've fulfilled that mission
Then obey her every command;

Or choose to die now, by my hand!’

‘If that be the choice, I’ll not say no,’
Cried Brandigan’s king, ‘I will go.’
After swearing his oath, that man,
Of whose great pride the thing began,
This that had led to his downfall,
Now quit the field, while Parzival
Went to regain his weary steed.
He who had never found the need
To use the stirrup, leapt up now,
As lightly as ever and, I avow,
He set the shavings all a dancing
Upon his shield, with his prancing.

The citizens showed their delight,
While sorrow did their enemy blight,
For Clamide ached in flesh and bone.
He was released to join his own,
And saw his dead now laid to rest.
Then he set out upon his quest,
Riding cross country to Löver,
As his armies matched from there.

Clamide at King Arthur’s court

ALL the Round Table, bar none,
Were ensconced at Dianazdrun,
Where King Arthur held his court.
Without a lie, they must have brought
More tent-poles to the flat plain there,
Than Spessart’s hills tall trees do bear;
For Arthur had brought his retinue
To Whitsun feast, and no small few,
Had brought with them a lady fair.
Pennants, shields were on show there,
Their fields unquartered; in our day

Such would be thought a grand display.

Who'd care to stitch the travelling-wear
For the ladies riding to that affair?
And then each one was sure that she
Would lose worth if she failed to see
Some admirer there; I'd not bring
My wife to any such gathering,
Far too many young bloods around,
And jostling strangers to be found!
Some fellow would, in a whisper,
Tell her that she made him suffer;
Her charms brought pangs, lost was his joy;
And if only she could but employ
Her mercy, he would serve her ever,
Before, and after, and forever.
Rather should we hasten away.

Enough of my own affairs, I say!
Now hear how Arthur's company
Can be found, amidst all we see.
Unmatched in their gaiety all there
Feasted with him, and many a fair
And gallant man proved not too slow
In doing deeds; the ladies also,
Took jousts as arrows, in their pride,
Their lovers fired at the other side;
While if the true knights, in their turn,
Fought hard, then perchance, in return,
Their ladies might grant recompense.

Clamide sought King Arthur's tent;
An armoured steed, a steel-clad knight
Suddenly met Guinevere's sight,
His helm and shield all hacked about,
And his dull armour scarred without.
All the ladies were soon aware

Of his sad state, and all did stare,
Though he had little choice indeed.
He now dismounted from his steed,
And, passing through the crowd, did stand
Before Cunneware of Lalant.
He said: 'Perchance you are that lady,
Whom I must serve now, most humbly?
For I'm commanded so to do;
His compliments he sends to you,
The Red Knight, and his sympathy
You've won (these words he said to me)
For the wrong that was done to you;
By me, he asks King Arthur, too,
To make common cause with him.
You were beaten because of him
Were you not? My lady, I offer
My submission, abject surrender,
As directed by him who fought
And conquered me, though I'd sought
To conquer him; if tis your wish
I shall honour it though, as it is,
Unhorsed and wounded on that day,
I was under threat of death, I say.'
The Lady Cunneware de Lalant,
Now grasped Clamide's gauntleted hand,
In the presence of Queen Guinevere,
Who shared a table set not so near
The king's own; and Kay stood there,
And of the matter was thus aware,
And he heard every word they said,
And was startled, and blushed red,
Delighting the much-injured lady.
'Madam, what this man says, why he
Was ordered to speak thus,' said Kay.
'Yet he was imposed upon that day,
For what I did, I did for the sake
Of the courtly code, and I did take

Exception to your judgement indeed,
And wished to amend it, at need,
For which your ill-will I do suffer.
I would advise you now, however,
To have them unarm this captive, or
He may find standing here a bore!’

The proud lady had them remove
Helmet and coif, and they did prove,
The one unlaced, the other peeled,
That King Clamide they’d concealed.
Now, Kingrun knew him instantly;
Troubled at how this thing could be,
He wrung his hands in bitter woe.
The Seneschal rocked to and fro,
Then he thrust the table from him,
Begging his lord to inform him
Of those sad happenings, for he saw
His lord was sore wounded, and more.
‘I am ill-fated,’ Clamide cried,
‘My army lost, can it be denied?
No mother ever nourished any
Born to a darker destiny.
But that loss is naught beside
The anguish that I must abide,
Lacking the love that I forego,
That which pains my spirits so,
And allows me joy no longer,
Such that pleasure is a stranger.
For Condwiramurs I grow grey.
Whate’er, on that great Judgement Day,
His Maker may yet have in store,
For Pontius Pilate or, e’en more,
For Judas, who deceit displayed,
And Jesus, with a kiss, betrayed,
I would accept their torment now,
If Brobarz’ queen would but allow

Our marriage, and I kissed her after,
Whate'er might befall thereafter.
Her love, alas, Iserterre's king
Cannot win, all my kith and kin,
All Brandigan must rue that ever.
(There Mabonagrin did suffer
Long, he my paternal cousin)
And now, Arthur, I have ridden
To your court, for so a knight
Commanded me; his the right;
Though in my country dishonour
Has been done to you, yet favour
Me with your mercy, noble man,
While I am captive in your land;
Keep your displeasure far from me.
Cunneware too who, graciously,
Accepted my submission, shall,
I trust, defend me from reprisal.'
King Arthur pardoned him for all
The wrongs Clamide did thus recall.

Now all the people were aware
The King of Brandigan was there,
The news had spread, 'Come see, come see!'
Clamide requested, courteously,
The company of my Lord Gawain.
'Please commend me to that same,
Madame, if you think me worthy.
I know for his part, he would be
A true companion; if that knight
Would do so, honour would alight
Upon the Red Knight, and on you.'
Then Arthur asked his dear nephew,
Gawain, to keep him company,
Though he would have done so freely.
And then they all did warmly greet
Clamide, so courteous in defeat.

Said Kingrun to Clamide: 'Alas
That such a thing should come to pass,
That any Briton should behold
You prisoned in his royal fold.
More powerful than Arthur, you,
Both in troops and in revenue,
Were greater, and then youth is yours.
Is Arthur now to win applause
Because Sir Kay, in his anger,
Struck a fair princess whose laughter
Revealed that she divined and chose
The man whose present fame now shows
Him as the greatest knight of all?
They think, these Britons, to flatter
Themselves in this very matter,
Yet it was not their labours brought
Death to King Ither when he fought,
Nor my Lord Clamide's surrender.
That same knight myself did render
Hors de combat, without deceit,
Or deception; his sword did beat
Sparks from many a helm there, and
Spun the sword in many a hand!'
High and low, all agreed that Kay
Had done wrong; be that as it may,
We must return to Parzival.

Parzival ventures forth again

THAT land, where he was king withal,
Recovered from its devastation,
As fresh joy renewed the nation.
Tampenteire had left great store
Of gems, and red gold, and more,
And these he granted generously,
Such that the folk were readily

Won to him; true hearts did field
Many a pennant and fresh shield;
They rode to many a tournament.
Fearless ever, he found content
In showing valour at the borders,
Repelling a host of invaders,
And proving his skills of the best.

And the Queen? All she possessed
Brought her happiness, and what more
Could she desire? You may be sure
That sweet young girl, for her part,
Had all that here delights the heart.
Her love was strong, therefore she
Knew naught of infidelity;
She knew her husband to be true,
Each found it in the other anew;
He was her love and she was his.
Yet now I must reflect on this,
Their parting, loss is here indeed;
I'm moved to pity that fate decreed
Such for her. He had saved the land,
Herself, her people, by his own hand,
From great distress, and thus did earn
The love she'd offered him in return.
Yet one morning, he spoke a word:
(Many a knight there saw and heard)
'If it please you, madam, I ask leave
To visit my mother, for I receive
No news if she now be well or ill;
Thus I do seek to know your will;
And then, I'd find adventure too.
For all that I have done for you
Your true love can repay me so.'
In such terms, he asked leave to go.
She loved him, so the story says,
Nor did deny him aught always.

He rode away, twas his destiny,
With never a soul for company.

Book V: The Grail Castle

Parzival meets the Fisherman

WHOE'ER would learn where he did go,
(Twas adventure that spurred him so),
May hear of many a wondrous thing;
Let Gahmuret's son keep riding;
Kind people everywhere will wish
Luck to one destined for anguish,
Yet for honour and joy no less.
One fact caused him some distress,
That he was far from that woman
Of whom the books and tales say none
Was ever more virtuous or fair.
Thoughts of the Queen troubled him there,
And might have addled his wits quite
If he'd not been a steadfast knight.
His mount trailed its reins, its knees
Deep in mud, o'er fallen trees,
For no man's hand proved its guide.
The story says no bird might glide
The distance that he rode that day;
And if my source doth not betray
His matter, the journey he made,
After his javelin Ither laid
On the meadow, when from Graharz
He reached the kingdom of Brobarz,
Was shorter by far than this affair.

Would you hear how he did fare?
He came to a lake as evening fell,
And there, upon its gentle swell,
He found some anglers in a boat

(Twas their lake) at anchor did float.
They watched as Parzival drew near,
Quite close enough to shore to hear;
One of those who was there aboard
Was so dressed had he been the lord
Of all the earth none could be finer;
All of peacock's feathers, moreover,
Was his hat, lined, and with a band;
So Parzival asked the Fisherman,
In God's name, of his courtesy,
To tell him where'er there might be
A place to shelter for the night,
And, sadly, he answered the knight.
'Sir, he replied, 'on either hand,
For thirty miles or so inland,
I know of no such habitation.
Nearby, there is a lonely mansion,
And I'd suggest you visit there,
Since there's no other anywhere
That you could reach ere fall of night.
Pass the cliff, then turn to the right;
When you reach the wide moat, where
You have to halt, then ask them there
To lower the drawbridge anew,
And open thus the way for you.'

He took the Fisherman's advice
And his leave. 'If that doth suffice,
And you can find the right way there,'
Said the Fisherman, 'I'll take care
Of you myself this evening, and then
You may give thanks, as and when,
Regarding the treatment you win.
But take care though, as you begin;
Some paths may carry you well wide,
Far astray on the mountainside,
And I'd not wish that upon you.'

He reaches the Grail Castle of Munsalvaesche, at Michaelmas

PARZIVAL then set forth anew,
At a brisk trot, towards the right,
Until the wide moat came in sight.
And there he found the drawbridge raised.
Upon the outer walls he gazed;
Naught had been spared there, to create
A mansion, strong, immune to fate,
Towers smooth, round as from a lathe.
Unless attackers were to brave
The wind and fly there on broad wings,
It seemed secure from mortal things.
Clusters of turrets, and many a hall
Stood all about, strong stone withal.
Had all the armies in the world
Attacked headlong, banners unfurled,
For thirty years, not one defender
Had need to think of its surrender.

A page appeared now, and that same
Asked what he wished, and whence he came.
'The Fisherman sent me here,' he said,
'I thanked him, and his words have led
Me to this place, with hopes I might
Find shelter gainst the coming night.
He said you the bridge would lower,
If I asked, that I might ride o'er.'
'If twas the Fisherman, I gauge
That you are welcome,' said the page,
'You shall be treated with honour,
And housed in the fairest manner,
For his sake, who sent you hither.'
Then the drawbridge he did lower.

Parzival is made welcome

AND then our brave knight rode within,
Entering the long wide court, therein,
Whose green lawn had ne'er been marred
By knights a-jousting in the yard,
For none such vied, in chivalry,
Or sported there, like those we see
At Abenberg, in the meadow, where
The pennants fly, in the summer air.
It had not known, for many a day,
Bright deeds; upon it sorrow lay.
Yet Parzival was welcomed now,
Nor made to feel the woe, I vow,
For a crowd of young gentlemen
Vied to take his bridle, and then
Held his stirrup, while down he came
From his mount, and then that same
Steed removed, while knights did lead
Him to a chamber, fine indeed.
The knights unarmed him right swiftly,
Though all was done most courteously,
And they the beardless youth did honour,
Counting him rich in Fortune's favour,
Once they'd seen his charming nature.

The young man now asked for water,
And soon the dust, acquired that day,
From hands and face he washed away,
Such that it seemed the fresh dawn light
Shone from his looks, to daze the sight,
He the image of a fine young king.
Those who thus saw to everything,
Now brought a cloak, its every fold
Bright with Arabian cloth-of-gold,
At which the handsome lad did gaze,
Donned it unlaced, and won much praise.

‘Repanse de Schoye, our fair princess,
Was wearing this herself, no less,’
The Master of the Wardrobe said,
‘She lends it to her guest instead;
As yet no clothes are cut for you
But I asked it of her, for one who
Is a man of worth, if I judge aright.’
‘May God reward you,’ said the knight,
‘If you judge right, tis well indeed,
And God rewards a kindly deed.’

They filled his cup, and drank at leisure,
Despite their grief, all shared his pleasure,
Showing him honour and esteem.
And, indeed, there was more, I deem,
Of food and drink taken, that night,
Than at Belrepeire, in its sad plight,
Ere he’d delivered that fair city.
Yet a jest caused near-enmity,
A loquacious fellow, in mock anger,
Felt free to summon this stranger,
To meet his host, and for his jest
Near lost his life; the irate guest,
Not finding his fine sword at his side
(They had placed his weapons aside)
Clenched his fist so hard the blood
Spurting from his nails in a flood,
And wet his sleeve. ‘Hold, sir!’ all cried,
‘This man must not be so denied;
Though we are sad, he is allowed
With jests to entertain our crowd;
Bear with him, as a gentleman.
You were but meant to understand
That the Fisherman is now here.
Go join him, for he doth appear
To value you; go, noble stranger,
Shake off all your weight of anger.’

**He meets the Grail King (Anfortas, his maternal uncle,
Frimutel's son)**

THEY climbed a stairway to a hall
Where a hundred chandeliers, all
With many a candle, shone on high,
Over their heads, as they passed by,
And many a sconce on every wall.
A hundred couches were in that hall,
With as many quilts, and on each one
Sat four companions, and every one
With ample space, and on the ground
A carpet before it, fair and round.
King Frimutel's son could well afford
Such things, who of all this was lord.
Nor was it thought too great excess
That the three fireplaces did possess
Three square andirons of masonry,
In marble, supporting each a fiery
Burning pile of sweet aloes wood;
(Here, at Wildenberg, none would
Of such great fires e'er be aware!)
Wondrous workmanship was there.
The lord of the castle was in place,
Propped near one great fireplace.
He and ease had settled accounts,
With each other, and the founts
Of life, low in him, did scarce strive
To keep his weakened body alive.
Parzival with bright look did enter;
His host did welcome the stranger,
A host indeed, who'd sent him there;
Bade him approach, and took good care
To seat him, not leave him standing.
'Sit close by me, to have you sitting
Far off would be to treat you rather

As some most unwelcome stranger
And not indeed as my worthy guest,
Such was the sorrowful lord's request.
Because of his ailment this nobleman
Maintained great fires on either hand,
And wore warm clothing, amply made,
With a sable lining and trim displayed,
On his pelisse, and the cloak above.
Their meanest fur of worth would prove,
Being of deep black flecked with grey.
On his head too he bore, that day,
A cap of the same fur, sable, bought
At great price, doubled, worn at court,
With an ornate Arabian border
That ran around its edge; moreover,
At the centre, on top, it bore
A glowing ruby without a flaw.

He witnesses the Grail ritual

THERE sat many a sombre knight,
As witnesses to a mournful sight.
A page from a doorway did advance,
Who bore in his right hand a lance,
(This rite was to evoke deep woe)
And from the steel tip blood did flow,
Ran down the shaft, as all did grieve,
Until it nigh-on reached his sleeve.
All wept throughout that lofty hall;
The folk of thirty lands might all
Mourn deeply and not realise
Such floods of tears from out their eyes.
He bore the lance around all four
High walls, then hastened out the door;
And then their tears ceased to flow,
Which had been prompted by the woe
That his sad progress did recall.

Now, if it will not tire you all,
I'll speak of their rich ceremony,
One rendered with all due sanctity.

At the hall's far end, Parzival saw,
There now flew open a steel door;
Through it a pair of maidens came.
Now let me tell you of those same,
Who to one worthy of being loved
Love's payment in full had proved.
Shining clear, those ladies there,
Had each a garland on her hair,
And no other head-cover wore.
Each a gold candelabra bore.
Their long flaxen hair fell so,
It hung down in fine strands below,
And as they moved, bearing light,
The air about was gleaming bright.
And let us not ignore their dress.
The fine robes of the fair Countess
Of Tenebroc were of umber hue,
And those of her companion too,
Gathered together above the hips,
Clasped by belts with silver clips.
Then came a duchess, silently,
And her companion; of ivory,
Were the two trestles that they bore;
Their lips glowed red. Now all four
Bowed their heads, and then the pair
Set them before their master there.
They stood together, each as fair
As the other, and served with care,
And all alike these four were dressed.

And now, behold, he saw the rest,
Four more pairs of ladies, and four,
Of these fair eight, great candles bore,

While the other four brought a table
Of precious stone the sun was able
To penetrate by day, this stone
Was hyacinth-garnet, as tis known.
Long and wide it was, and the man
Who had measured it to his plan,
Had cut it most thin, so it was light.
The lord of the castle dined this night
At this, as a mark of his rich state.
Bowing their heads as one, all eight
Advanced, in order, before their lord,
And four of them, all in accord,
Set the table on those snow-white
Ivory trestles, all gleaming bright,
That had been placed there before,
Then went to join the other four.
These eight ladies wore green brocade,
Rich samite, in Azagouc made,
Green as grass, of ample fashion,
For length and breadth, in addition,
Fine belts clasped them at their waist,
Long narrow girdles, richly faced.
And each of them did also wear
A dainty garland o'er her hair.

Now two fine ladies dressed in style,
Who had journeyed many a mile,
To serve there, two fair daughters,
(Brought to court by their fathers,
The one Count Iwan of Nonel,
The other Jernis, Count of Ryl)
Bearing a pair of knives, advanced
From each of which the bright light glanced,
Keen as fish-spines, sharp as pins,
Wondrous things, on white napkins,
Fashioned of pure silver were they
Skilfully made, whetted that day

To an edge fit to cut through steel.
And these two trod upon the heel
Of four noble and faultless maids
Summoned to serve them as their aides,
Who went before the silver bright
And each one bore a gleaming light;
All six of them did thus advance.
Hear how, as if in sacred dance,
They bowed low, then bore the silver
To the stone table together,
And set it down, most gracefully,
And then returned, decorously,
To the first twelve, so that if I
Have made no error in all of my
Calculations, midst this affair,
Eighteen ladies are standing there.

Behold! Another six advance,
In dresses, cut for elegance,
One half cloth of gold, the other
A rich brocade from Niniveh.
The former six wore fair gowns too
Of costly fabrics, rich and new.

Following them, came the Princess,
Her face revealing such brightness,
To all it seemed the light of dawn.
This maid, as fair as is the morn,
Wore costly stuffs of Araby.
She bore, on green silk Achmardi,
The perfection, here, of paradise,
Root and blossom, before their eyes;
A thing it was they called the Grail,
Beside which Earth's perfections fail.
She whom the Grail did there allow
To bear itself, bound by her vow,
Repanse de Schoye was her name.

Such was the nature of that same,
The Grail, that she who had its care
Was required, that she might it bear,
To be of perfect chastity,
Renouncing all mere falsity.

Lights before the Grail were borne;
No mean things, but bright as dawn,
Six slender vials of purest glass,
Where balsam burnt, as they did pass,
Carried by young girls, to whom she,
The princess, bowed, most courteously
When they had reached the proper place,
And they returned the bow with grace.
Loyally, the princess set the Grail
Before his lordship (here the tale
Declares that Parzival gazed intently
On the bearer, and well might he
Consider her, since he now wore
The cloak that had been hers, before.)
All seven of then when this was done
Turned and, with all due decorum,
Joined the first eighteen, while parting
Ranks, to admit the noblest, making
Twelve now on either side of her;
She made, I'm told, a wondrous picture,
The maid with the crown, standing there.

The Grail provides a cornucopian feast

CHAMBERLAINS, who had in their care
Golden bowls, were now assigned
One to every four knights, I find,
Who were seated within that hall,
Pages with towels at their call.
What luxury was there displayed!
A hundred tables too were laid,

One before each group of four,
And pure white tablecloths each bore.

The host, one crippled in his pride,
Washed his hands and, at his side,
So Parzival did also, which done
There hastened to them a count's son,
Who offered them towels graciously,
Presenting them on bended knee.
There were pages, designated
To each table there, who waited
On those seated. While one pair
Knelt and carved the other there
Brought the food and drink and saw
To the diner's needs. I'll say more;
Four wheeled tables had been set
With many a precious gold goblet,
One for each knight sat in the hall.
Each one they drew along a wall,
And knights there would reach out a hand,
And on their board the cup would stand,
Until a clerk who owned the task
Of gathering them in again, at last,
After the supper, counted them in.

On further matters I'll here begin.
A hundred pages received the bread,
The loaves on which this gathering fed,
In white napkins, held respectfully
Before the Grail, then, graciously,
Moved together, then fanned out,
And handed all the loaves about.
Now I am told, and I tell you
On oath, and ask it of you too,
So if I err, you'll err with me,
That if some other had equally
Stretched out a hand before the Grail,

Whate'er they looked for, without fail,
Would be there, ready and to hand,
Every costly dish you understand,
Whether they sought for hot or cold,
For flavours new, or flavours old,
The meat of creatures wild or tamed:
'There ne'er was such as you have named!'
Many will feel the need to say,
But tis ill-temper they display,
For the Grail was the fruit of grace,
The world's sweetness in one place,
And not far short, it thus did prove,
Of what men say of Heaven above.

In tiny vessels of pure gold
That they before the Grail did hold,
They received their pickle or sauce,
Salt and pepper to suit each course.
The frugal man and the glutton too
Had what each man thought his due,
Served with gracious ceremony.
And whate'er the wine was that he
Desired, when he held out his cup,
Ruby, mulberry, once raised up,
He found it then, or red or pale,
Brimming, by virtue of the Grail.
For they partook that company
Of the Grail's hospitality.

Parzival fails to ask the vital question

PARZIVAL marked what did befall,
The wealth and wonder of it all,
Yet true to Gurnemanz' direction,
He asked not a single question.
'The prince of Graharz counselled me,
And twas with true sincerity,

Against my questioning freely.
If I stayed, and it may well be,
As long as I did with the prince,
I would have learned long since,
How matters stand in this place.’
While he mused there, bearing apace,
A sword, its sheath worth no doubt
A thousand marks, or thereabout,
Whose hilt a precious ruby bore,
Came a page, and handed his lord
The weapon, a sharp blade indeed,
One fit for many a wondrous deed.
The lord bestowed it on his guest.
‘Sir, in battle, against the best,
Many a time I bore this sword,
Ere I was crippled by the Lord.
Let this gift my amends now be
For the lack of hospitality
You may have suffered at this court;
Twill stand you in good stead; in short,
Whene’er that blade’s put to the test
Twill serve you well, against the rest.’

Woe, that he asked no question then!
Hear how that pains me once again.
The sword was given for good reason,
That Parzival might ask a question.
For his gentle host, I breathe a sigh,
Maimed by an edict from on high,
Which a question would rid him of.

Sufficient have we heard thereof.
Those pages ordained so to do,
Removed the boards, and not a few,
Once the cups were gathered in.
And then those ladies did begin,
The princess first, to rehearse

Their tasks again, but in reverse,
For she was assigned to the Grail,
And gracefully, so runs the tale,
Bowing to their lord once more
And Parzival, back through the door
The maids bore all that they had brought,
With such ceremony, to the court.

As they went, Parzival gazed after,
And on a bed, within a chamber,
Ere its door was closed once more,
The handsomest old man he saw,
That he had e'er heard of, or seen;
His hair it was more silver e'en
Than hoar-frost, so I do attest,
Nor do I seek but to impress.
As to who that old man might be,
Later you'll learn all his story,
The lord's names, and his castles too,
And lands; when tis time so to do,
I'll tell it, with authority,
Nor thwart your curiosity.
You'll behold the straight bowstring,
No slackened bow, for here's the thing,
The strung bow is my metaphor;
Its action's swift, and yet, be sure,
The arrow it lets fly is swifter,
So its aim must be the straighter.
The bowstring fires a straight story?
Then it brings the teller glory;
When the arrow's flight's untrue,
The teller works deceit on you.
A well-strung bow the string is straight,
(Except when drawn) yet if one's fate
Is but to fire a tale that's bound
To weary folk, that flies around
In one ear, and out the other,

And no lodgement doth discover,
Tis then a waste of all one's labour;
Drawing the string to find disfavour.
One might as well clear one's throat
And tell the tale to an old he-goat,
Or a tree-stump that lacks all sense;
Twould prove a better audience.

He passes the night there

I shall indeed speak further though
Of those people; so full of woe,
That where Parzival had ridden
None to the dance were bidden
Nor the joust, none ever sought
Entertainment at that sad court.
Where'er there are folk even those
Of humble station hide their woes,
And seek out many a pleasure,
And there was both wealth and leisure,
At this court, as you have seen.

'Your bed here for the night has been
Prepared,' the host said to his guest,
'If you are tired, please seek your rest.'
Now, as they part, I should lament,
For harm will come and discontent.
Parzival rose from where he sat,
And set his feet upon the mat.
His host wished him goodnight, then
The knights, gathering round again,
Lead him swiftly to his chamber,
Richly-furnished and moreover
Adorned with a great bed, so fine
I'm irked by this poverty of mine,
Since earth doth bear such opulence;
Poverty had been driven thence.

Across it a silk coverlet lay,
And such a gleam did it display,
The fabric seemed almost alight.
Parzival thanked each noble knight,
Dispatching them to take their rest,
With but the one bed for their guest;
And so they took their leave, but now
Further attention must he allow.

The lights and his fair glowing face
Vied with each other in that place,
In shedding brilliance, how could day
Be brighter than that room, I say?
The couch, at the foot of his bed,
Was by a splendid quilt o'er-spread;
He sat there; pages came in sight,
And from his legs, all gleaming white,
Swiftly removed his boots and hose,
And stripped him of his other clothes.
Such handsome lads they were! What more?
Young maids, of whom there were four,
Entered, whose duty was to see,
That he'd been cared for graciously,
And that his bed was to his taste,
And naught attended to in haste.
Before each a page bore a light,
Candles burning clear and bright,
So the tale tells; brave Parzival
Dived under the coverlet withal.
He won a race with haste indeed,
Yet a swift glimpse, so fate decreed,
Of his white body met their eyes,
Ere he'd recovered from his surprise,
While the thoughts of his red lips,
His youthful form, now in eclipse,
His face where not one hair yet grew,
Caused not one flutter but a few.

‘You must not slumber yet awhile,’
Said the maids, as they did file
Past the bed; in her hands one bore
A flask of some sweet wine, he saw,
Another a mulberry cordial,
A third brought mead; the last of all,
On a napkin that dazzled his eyes,
Such fruit as grows in paradise.
The fourth knelt before him then,
And though, the most kindly of men,
He bid her be seated, she said:
‘Yet let me be, for were I led
So to do then I could not serve
In the way I ought, and you deserve.’
He spoke with them pleasantly,
Drank a little, then presently
They took their leave of him, and went.
Parzival lay down, most content,
And the pages set the candlesticks
On the carpet, and trimmed the wicks,
And seeing him asleep, they left.

Yet of company he was not bereft:
Toilsome struggles filled his dreams,
Future sorrows sent forth, it seems,
Their harbingers as he lay asleep,
Such that his anguish was as deep
As his mother’s was for Gahmuret;
With woeful dreams she too had met.
The quilting of Parzival’s dream
Was joined and stitched at the seam,
By sword-tips and lance-points; there,
In sleep, twas but a grim affair,
Pain and distress did interlace
With thrusts delivered at full pace.
Death he’d have been glad to suffer

Far more than thirty times over
When awake than bear with all this
Disquiet, now robbing him of bliss.

Parzival wakes to find the castle silent

FROM this oppression he awoke,
His every limb the sweat did soak,
As through his window shone the sun.
‘Where are the pages? Nary a one
Is in attendance here!’ he cried.
‘Am I my clothes to be denied?’
With such thoughts lingering then
He turned about, and slept again.
No one spoke, none made a sound.
All were in hiding, I’ll be bound.
Mid-morning, he once more awoke
Yet all was silent, still none spoke.

There lay on the floor, by his armour,
Two swords, one was that of Ither
Of Gahaviez, forged in that land,
The other his host set in his hand.
‘Alas, what means all this?’ he asked,
‘It seems, indeed, that I am tasked
With dressing and arming alone.
Such trouble in my sleep was sown,
I fancy there’s much toil in store,
Now I am full awake once more.
If this realm’s lord does now demand
Aid from attack, then his command
I shall be happy to obey,
Also, most faithfully, this day,
That of the lady who lent me
Her new mantle, so graciously.
If she’d take me as her servitor,
It would be fitting, although more

For her own sake than any love,
Since Condwiramurs I do approve,
A wife as radiant as is she,
Or more so, thus it seems to me.’

Parzival did what he had to do;
He dressed and armed himself anew,
From head to heels, so as to fight
As doth become a valiant knight,
And both the swords he girded on,
Then out the doorway he was gone,
And found his steed tethered where
His shield and lance stood, by the stair.
This was as he wished, but, before
He mounted, he oped many a door
Of that stronghold seeking out
Its denizens with many a shout,
But to his boundless confusion
He saw or heard, not one person.
With indignation, he now sought
The place where, amidst the court,
He’d dismounted the day before,
There the morning dew, and more
The grass and earth, had been marred
By trampling hooves. About the yard,
Shouting loudly, the young man ran,
Then to his mount, and thus began
To ride forth, and he found the gate
Open wide, and saw there, of late,
Many a steed had been ridden by.
He waited not, went out thereby
And crossed the drawbridge at pace.
A page, hidden but for his face,
Dragged on a cable so sharply,
It all but toppled them wholly,
Into the moat, he and his horse.
Parzival looked back, of course,

In hopes of discovering more.

‘Go, and be damned, a fool for sure,
Where’er the sun doth light your way!
Why had you not the wits, I say,
To ask the question of my lord?
Lost is your wondrous reward!’
Parzival begged that he might know
All he meant, yet it ended so
Without an answer. Howe’er he called,
The page upon the gate’s bar hauled,
As if in dream, and slammed it shut.
For our brave knight this proved all but
A disaster, in its suddenness,
Snatching from him all happiness;
Joy had vanished without a trace.
When he’d chanced upon the place,
And saw the Grail, a single throw
Was his, for either joy or woe,
A cast of the eyes, not dice, or hand;
Trouble before him now did stand,
Rousing him to wakefulness, yet
He with but little woe had met
Thus far, had known little sorrow
Such as he might find the morrow.

He meets his cousin Sigune again and learns more

PARZIVAL now pursued the trail,
Following hard, so says the tale,
Thinking: ‘The men ahead of me
Are no doubt fighting, manfully,
In their good master’s cause this day.
If they so wish, their martial array
Would profit from my being there,
And I should not prove lacking, where
The fight seemed desperate, but I

Would stand by them and, thereby,
Pay for that supper, and this blade,
The gift of which their lord has made,
To one who had deserved it not.
Think they cowardice is my lot?
Thus he, who was the opposite
Of base, followed what was writ
In hoofprints on the dust ahead,
Noting the marks there he read.
How his departure from that place
Saddens me! Sorrow I embrace.

But now the tale grows stranger.
For the tracks grew ever fainter,
Those ahead had soon dispersed.
Thus, the trail they had rehearsed
Once broad and clear, now grew dim,
Till their way ahead evaded him.
This young man was soon to learn
All that pain and woe doth earn.

Soon the warrior's ear was bent
On a woman's voice, in sad lament.
The grass was still drenched with dew;
Before him there appeared to view
A maid who sat by a linden tree,
A slave to her own fidelity.
In her arms a dead knight lay,
The corpse embalmed, and I'd say
That any who saw her sitting there,
And felt not pity at her despair,
Lacks the milk of human kindness.
'Tis sad to witness your distress.'
Said Parzival approaching her,
And then his aid did offer her.
By his voice she knew the man:
'You're Parzival! That maid I am,

Whom you found grieving earlier,
She who told you who you were,
My maternal aunt's your mother,
You have no reason to be other
Than proud that you are kin to me,
For she's the flower of modesty,
That needs no help from morning dew,
To shine so brightly. God bless you,
For showing pity for my friend;
A lance-thrust brought about his end.
And here I hold his body still,
Judge of my sorrow that God's will
A longer life would not grant him.
For all the virtues lived within him.
His dying, it tormented me so,
And ever since has been my woe;
As day has followed day, so I
Have found new cause to weep and sigh.'
'Alas, is this Sigune? Madame,
You who informed me who I am,
Where are your red lips and where
Your brown tresses? Your head is bare.
When in the forest of Brizljan
I saw you there, I, another man,
You were fair despite your woe.
Your colour and your health also,
You have lost. Grim company,
As you have here, would trouble me
If it were mine. Come, let us plan
How best to bury this dead man.'

(Hear more of this maid's fidelity:
For such thoughts as another lady,
Lunete, once drew upon, to her
Were ill, for that Lunete, further,
Said: 'Let him live, the villain who
Did slay your husband, and to you

Make amends.' Sigune desired
No amends, unlike women mired
In disloyalty, and there are many,
Though, here, I'll not mention any.)

The tears that from her eyes bedewed
Her clothes were ever there renewed,
Yet she thanked him, mournfully,
And asked him how he came to be
In that place: 'Tis true wilderness,
Nor should you here seek ingress,
For great harm befalls the stranger;
I have heard, and seen moreover,
That many here must lost their lives,
In armed combat; no warrior thrives;
Turn back from this road, sir knight.
Now say where you passed the night.'
'A castle back there, a mile or more,
One finer than any I e'er saw,
In splendour and magnificence,
From that place I issued hence.'

'You should not be so swift to cheat
Such trusting people as you meet,'
She cried: 'Here you are a stranger!
Crossing the forest in this manner
Would have proved too much for you.
Timber nor stone, and I speak true,
Has been cut from this harsh ground
For more than thirty miles around
To build a dwelling; none decreed,
None was brought about, indeed,
But for one single castle, ever,
One place rich in earthly splendour.
If a man sought, with firm intent
To find it, he'd know discontent.
He'd find it not, though many men

Attempt that very thing; yet when
Someone is meant to see that keep,
It comes about as though in sleep.
I deem that you know not its name.
Munsalvaesche they call that same,
And the wide realm that serves it all,
Terre de Salvaesche, they do call.
It was bequeathed by Titurel
To his fair son, King Frimutel,
Such was that brave warrior's name,
Many the laurels, great the fame,
He did win with his mighty hand,
Until Love had him join the band
Of servitors and die while jousting.
He left four noble children living,
Of whom three, for all their birth,
Now live in misery on this earth,
The fourth in humble poverty,
In God's name, a penitent he.
The name he bears is Trevrizent.
Anfortas his brother, doth present
A sorry picture, for, understand,
He cannot walk or even stand,
He can ne'er lie down, nor ride,
But leans, and so must e'er abide.
Of Munsalvaesche he is the lord,
And misfortune doth him accord
Its company, decreed on high.
If you that mansion had come nigh,
And found that woeful company
Then that sad lord had been set free
From all the suffering he has borne
Many a year, both night and morn.'
'I saw great wonders there, he said,
And many a fair lady, nobly bred.'
This our Welshman told the maiden.
And she replied: 'Come, tell me then,

Saw you the Grail and the master
Bereft of joy? And what news after?
If he was freed from agony,
Praise on your heaven-blessed journey,
And joy to you, for you shall be
High over all that is but earthly,
All that the sky above doth cover;
Every tame, every wild, creature
Shall serve you, for true majesty
Is yours without limit, endlessly.
If aught could bring me joy,' she said,
'Twould be this one thing, that it led
To that man of sorrows being free
Of his living death; infirmity
Makes his existence such, I say.
Yet if you helped him, on a day,
You've earned high praise; the noble sword,
At your waist, was borne by that lord.
Knowing the secret of the blade,
You may fight yet be unafraid.
Its fashioning, its edge so true,
To high-born Trebuchet is due.
By Karnant there flows a spring,
That gave its name, 'Lac', to a king.
A single blow the sword may make,
But on the second blow will break.
It may be rendered whole again,
If that far stream it can regain;
Go take the shattered weapon back
To the spring whose name is Lac,
Yet only draw its water where
Beneath the rock it rises there,
Before tis lit by light of dawn.
Take the blade where it was born;
If the fragments of the sword
Have not been scattered far abroad,
If they are then pieced together,

Once they're wetted by the water,
Their edges melding, then the blade
Will be as one whole sword remade,
And twill be stronger than before,
Its patterned surface gleam the more.
A magic spell it needs, you'll find,
Though I fear you've left that behind.
If such your lips have learned to utter,
Good luck will follow you forever,
And wax within you, and bear seed.
All the wondrous things indeed,
Dear cousin, you have ever known
Will be at your command, your throne
Shall be on high, and you shall wear
A crown of bliss in reigning there.
You shall have all, and know no dearth,
All one might wish for on this earth.
None will be held in such honour
As to vie with you in splendour,
If you but asked the question there.'

'I asked no question, that I'll swear.'
'Woe, that I have him in my sight,
The man who asked it not outright!
You witnessed such great wonders then,
And yet sought not to ask it, when
In the clear presence of the Grail!
You saw it all, and still did fail,
Those faultless ladies, Garschiloye,
And the noble Repanse de Schoye,
The sharp silver, the bloody lance.
Hear then my sharp remonstrance!
What drove you to greet me here?
A base man, and accursed, I fear,
Revealing a wolf's venomous
Fangs, once the gall's poisonous
Canker took deep root in you,

And, marring your true being, grew.
You should have shown deep compassion
For one whom God, in wondrous fashion,
Has visited with infirmity,
And asked about his ills, in pity.
You live, and yet to grace are dead.'

'Cousin, be kind to me,' he said,
'If I've done wrong, I'll make amends.'
'You are not asked to make amends,'
Replied the maid, 'I know, right well,
At Munsalvaesche it so befell
Your knightly honour fled away,
True worth, from you, that very day.
This the last word you'll have of me.'
Thus the knight departed, slowly.

Parzival meets with Orilus and Lady Jeschute

INDEED, it caused him great remorse,
Our Parzival, that, in the course
Of his visit to that stricken king,
He'd failed to ask a single thing.
Thanks to the heat, and his regret,
His body soon was bathed in sweat;
His helm he unlaced, swiftly, there,
Untying his ventail, to feel the air,
And, under all the dust, his skin
Was thus revealed, bright within.
He carried the helmet in his hand.
A fresh trail led across the land,
For ahead of him a steed had gone,
And a nag, not a horseshoe on.
Now this sad palfrey bore a lady,
Along whose trail he rode, and he
Her and her mount soon decried,
The nag such that, through its hide,

Every rib you might have counted
On the creature, ere you mounted,
Its coat as white as ermine there,
Its halter a poor lime-bark affair;
Its mane hung down to the ground
Its eyes deep-set, the sockets round
And large; the lady's wretched mount
Seemed altogether of small account,
Jaded and neglected, moreover
Oft afflicted with sharp hunger,
Such that it looked dry as tinder.
A wonder it could even stagger;
It was ridden by a lady
Unused to grooming, certainly.
It bore a saddle with its harness,
A narrow one, in sad undress;
From it the bells had all been torn,
The saddle-bow ruined and worn,
And much else it lacked indeed,
Her sorry long-suffering steed.
The sorrowful lady's surcingle
Was a mere rope, but a single
Strand, unsuited to her rank,
And brambles, on every bank,
Reaching down, had often torn
Her tattered shift with branch and thorn.
Where'er it had been pulled apart,
Knotted strings, with seeming art,
Tied it, yet, beneath, there shone
Her skin far whiter than a swan.
Naught but a net of rags she wore,
Dazzling whiteness Parzival saw,
Where scant privacy she'd won;
Elsewhere she'd suffered from the sun.
Whichever side you'd come at her,
It would have been free of cover;
(No overdressed peasant went there,

In places she was well-nigh bare).
Her lips were crimson, nonetheless,
Their colour bright as fire's excess.
Trust me, kind folk, twas undeserved
The treatment with which she was served;
Mindful of feminine virtue,
She was a woman good and true.
And the tale of poverty I've told?
Well I'd take her like, twentyfold,
Despite all her impoverished show,
Rather than some women I know,
Well-dressed as they are; she is fine
Just as she is, to these eyes of mine.

When Parzival uttered his greeting,
She knew him, at once, on meeting.
He was the handsomest anywhere,
The lad from that previous affair.
'I've seen you before, to my woe,
Yet may God treat you better though,
And grant you more, assuredly,
Than ever you deserve from me,
All happiness, and honour too.
For this all came of meeting you,
My clothes much poorer, as you see,
Than when you last accosted me.
Had you not troubled me, in fact,
My good name was as yet intact.'

Parzival tried the calm approach:
'Consider, ma'am, ere you reproach
Me, ever since I took the shield,
And I to knightly ways did yield,
No other woman I could name
Has e'er, by me, been put to shame.
Such would have dishonoured me;
While you have all my sympathy.'

The lady wept as on she rode,
 Upon her breasts she bestowed
 Tears like dew, those breasts all smooth,
 As if turned upon a lathe, imbued
 With whiteness, rounded and set high;
 No man was e'er so skilled, say I,
 That he could turn two shapelier.
 Fair was she, as he gazed on her,
 And so he could not but feel pity.
 She covered herself, in modesty,
 With arms and hands, from Parzival.
 'Here is my surcoat, ma'am, withal,
 Drape it about to good effect,
 I offer it with sincere respect.'
 'E'en if my future happiness
 Depended on it, nonetheless,
 I would not seek to touch the thing.
 If you'd save us both from dying,
 Then ride some way apart from me;
 Tis not for myself I'd be sorry,
 Tis your death I fear.' 'Dear lady,
 What man will prove our enemy?
 The Lord granted me strength, and should
 A whole army demand our blood,
 I'm ready to defend us now.'
 'He's a noble warrior, I avow,'
 She answered, 'one so full of fight,
 Were you yourself six times the knight,
 You'd be well occupied. Your riding
 So close, tis not to my liking,
 For I was once that brave knight's wife,
 But thus neglected, now my life
 Is but a serving maid's or worse;
 Thus, his anger he does rehearse.'

 'Who else is with your husband here?
 He asked, 'Were I to yield to fear,

And go, I know you'd not approve.
I'd gladly die ere I would move
For such as him; perish the day
That sees me scurrying away!
'He has none with him but for me,'
Declared the barely-covered lady,
(Though but the tattered skein, and all
The knotted tangle therewithal,
Was whole, in her humility,
She was the flower of purity.
True goodness perfect and unmarred,
A maid to cherish, and to guard)
'But scant assurance that supplies,
Whate'er the tactics you devise.'

He defeats Duke Orilus in single combat

PARZIVAL fastened his ventail,
Adjusted his helm and chain-mail,
Till he saw well enough ahead;
Meanwhile his mount dipped its head,
Towards the palfrey, gave a whinny,
And Orilus turned around swiftly,
(He it was who was riding slowly,
Ahead of Parzival and the lady)
To see who had joined here there.
Wheeling his mount for this affair,
Angrily spurring the horse clear
Of the trail, the Duke did appear
Poised for battle, and well-prepared
To joust with any man who dared.
From Gaheviez came his lance,
Its paint his blazon did advance;
His helm was from Trebuchet's hand;
In Toledo, King Kaylet's land,
His shield was wrought, its steel rim,
And solid boss, protecting him.

At Alexandria, in heathendom,
The costly silk there was spun
Woven into that rich brocade
That the coat and tabard made
Which this proud nobleman now wore.
The chain-mail that his charger bore
At Tenebroc was forged, his pride
Drove him to flatter either side
With a fine brocade spreading
Over the horse's steel covering.
Greaves, mail-cap, mail-shirt there
Were splendid and yet light to wear,
And he was armed that fearless man
In knee-pieces from Bealzenan,
Anjou's capital (the lady,
Who followed him dejectedly,
She was dressed quite otherwise,
Lacking the means for such a guise).
From Soissons came his fine breastplate;
His warhorse had been won of late,
At joust, by his brother Lahelin,
Who had then gifted him his win;
And Lahelin did from Brumbane
De Salvaesche that steed obtain.

The brave combatants were well-paired,
Parzival was as well prepared,
As Duke Orilus de Lalander;
He rode to meet that commander,
On whose shield there appeared
A life-like dragon; another reared
From his helm now laced for war.
On his housings there were more,
Tiny golden dragons, and then,
On his surcoat, were more again,
Set with gemstones and, likewise,
Each one had rubies for its eyes.

Each warrior rode a curving course
Before engaging; spurred his horse
Then charged, with no challenge given;
By no treaty was that forbidden.
Following their first bold advance,
Showers of splinters from each lance
Flew high in the air. I'd boast if I
Saw such a joust with my own eye;
Perchance no finer has been seen.
Jeschute thought she'd never seen
A fiercer, watching with alarm,
For she wished neither hero harm.
Both their steeds were bathed in sweat,
As, seeking victory, those men met.
Sparks from each man's helm and sword,
Lighting the scene, scattered abroad;
And whate'er the outcome was to be,
Two brave men struggled valiantly.
Though their steeds turned at a word,
Towards each other they yet spurred,
Nor did the gleaming swords e'er rest;
Parzival bravest, I'd suggest;
A hundred dragons, if but one man,
Were attacking him, on every hand!
The dragon on Duke Orilus' helm
Parzival sought to overwhelm.
That brave dragon soon felt a wound,
And wound was added now to wound,
As bright gems scattered from the foe,
Catching the light as they did so.
All this was on horseback not on foot.
With blades that dealt cut after cut,
They fought for Lady Jeschute's favour,
Time after time they crashed together,
Those steadfast warriors, at each blow
Steel mail-rings flying, above, below;

They showed all their strength and skill,
I trust you'll agree, with dauntless will.

I'll tell you why the Duke felt anger.
His wife had been forced to suffer
The coarse attentions of this man;
While he was her lawful guardian,
And looked to him for protection.
He thought that she'd lost affection
For him, and then brought dishonour
On her name, by taking another;
He'd made her error his concern.
Such dire punishment did she earn
No women e'er endured a harsher,
Short of death; yet in this matter
Jeschute was wholly innocent.
Now, free from any man's dissent,
The Duke could withdraw his favour
From his spouse, now and whenever
He so pleased, none could prevent it;
Wives must do as spouses permit.
Parzival, was demanding, now,
At sword-point, that he should allow
His Jeschute to return to favour.
Till now I have heard none other
Than kind words used thus to sue;
Here were naught but swords in view.
As I see it, both men were right.
The Duke had cause, so did the knight.
He who makes the crooked and straight,
May He avert a tragic fate,
Since they strike at one another
So fiercely as to harm each other.

The joust reached fresh intensity,
Each man seeking his own glory.
Duke Orilus de Lalander fought

With skill; I doubt that any court
Saw one of such experience.
He possessed both knowledge and strength,
Known to fame on many a field,
And thought to make Parzival yield.
Relying on his might, he clasped
His arms about the knight, who grasped
The Duke, in turn, and jerked him out
Of the saddle, swung him about,
Tucked under his arm like a sheaf
Of oats, granting him no relief,
Leapt from his horse and, forcefully,
Thrust him against a fallen tree.
The Duke, his downfall near complete,
Was forced to countenance defeat.
'You shall pay in greater measure
For inflicting your displeasure
On one so fair,' cried Parzival.
'Unless to favour you now recall
This lady, you are lost indeed!'
'Not so fast, nor shall I concede.
You have not forced me so to do.'
Cried Orilus; Parzival strove anew,
And clasped Duke Orilus so tight
A shower of blood drenched that knight,
Forth from his vizor it did pour,
Forced now to do the will and more
Of Parzival, fearing for his life.
Here was an end to all their strife.
'Alas, bold warrior, when have I
Done aught decreeing I must die?'
He asked of Parzival. 'Live then,
If you'll return your wife again
To favour.' Parzival replied.
'That I will not! For she has lied,
A grievous wrong she did to me.
Once rich in virtue, yet thereafter

She has fashioned rare disaster.
Yet I'll perform aught else you wish,
If you'll grant me my life, though this
God granted to me long ago,
Yet now your mighty sword is so
Like the Archangel's, I, this hour
Must owe my life to your power.'

So spoke the prince, now grown wise:
'I'll buy life royally; your prize,
If you refrain from slaying me,
One of two mighty lands shall be;
Both these my brother holds in sway;
Take which realm you wish, this day.
He loves me well; he'll ransom me,
Bound by the terms we both agree.
And, in fee, my duchy I'll hold
From you, thus, ere the day is old,
I'll add to your wealth and honour.
But, exempt me, brave warrior,
From readmitting to my favour
This woman here; ask whatever
Else of me, you wish, that will serve
To bring you that which you deserve.
Whatever else may prove my fate,
I cannot with dishonour mate.'

Duke Orilus is the third to be sent to King Arthur's court

'LANDS and people, wealth, and all,
Avail you not,' said Parzival,
'Except you pledge your word to me
To ride to Britain, where you'll see
At Arthur's court a fair maiden,
Who by a certain man was beaten,
Vengeance on whom I'll not forego,
Unless the lady commands it so.'

To her, then, your person render,
And of my fond regard assure her,
Or you may stay here and be slain!
To Arthur, and his Queen, be fain
To speak my loyal compliments,
And ask them, of their fair intent,
To reward my services, and then
Make their amends to the maiden
For the blows that she received;
For, failing this, be not deceived,
You'll leave this place on a bier.
And I would see this lady, here,
Reconciled, full soon, with you,
And restored to your favour too.
Turn my words to deeds; so, vow;
Give me your word, here and now.'
'If gifts won't do it,' said Orilus
Then I shall do that which I must,
As you demand, for I wish to live.'

Meanwhile Lady Jeschute dared give
No aid to her spouse for fear of him,
And yet was sorry indeed for him.
Since he'd promised her his favour,
Parzival had him rise, with honour.
'Madam,' said the defeated knight,
'Since I was conquered in the fight,
And that defeat was for your sake,
Come and be kissed; I must make
Light of the blow to my renown,
Received through you; ne'er a frown;
We'll not be by anger riven,
Let the whole thing be forgiven.'
The lady slipped from her palfrey
To the grass, ran to him swiftly
And, though the blood from his nose
Had dyed his mouth, heaven knows,

She kissed him thus, at his command.

Parzival exonerates Lady Jeschute

THEN the two knights and the lady
Rode to a hermit's cell, promptly,
Carved out nearby, in a cliff-face;
And Parzival saw, in that place,
A reliquary, as they did advance,
And there, beside it, a painted lance
Was propped. Trevrizent was the name
Of the hermit, absent from that same.
Parzival did a good deed then,
He took the relics and swore on them,
Himself administering his oath,
Before the lord and lady both:
'If I have worth (and whether I do
Or not, those seeing that I pursue
The way of the shield, will place me
Among the ranks of chivalry;
And then the office of the shield
Tells us the virtue it doth yield
Has won it great renown alway,
And its name is honoured today)
May I forever in this life know
Disgrace, all my honour brought low,
(And let my wealth stand surety
In the eyes of Him who over me
Stands highest in power indeed;
The Lord, according to my creed)
If what I swear should prove untrue:
(May I be damned in this life too
As well as the next, by His power,
And suffer for it this very hour)
I mean, if she did aught amiss,
When I chanced, in being remiss,
To tear her brooch from her, there,

And her gold ring away did bear.
I was no grown man, but a fool,
Not wise enough himself to rule.
Weeping, bathed in perspiration,
She suffered much, in that station,
Enduring wretchedness. I say
That she is innocent; and may
My honour, and my hope of bliss,
Stand as my surety in this:
My true oath seeks not to deceive.
She shall be innocent, by your leave!
Here! I return the ring. By chance,
I lost the brooch, through ignorance.
Accepting the thing, the good knight,
Wiping the blood earned in the fight
From his lips, kissed his heart's joy,
Then his broad surcoat did employ,
Though its fine brocade was torn
By the blows that it had borne,
In hiding his darling's nakedness.
He replaced her ring. I confess,
I ne'er saw a lovely lady wear
A tabard so torn, nor an affair
Where such tears as theirs were shed;
Nor lances broken, with such ado;
It seems to me two fools would do
Better at tourney if such were staged.
The lady's woes were thus assuaged.

Turning to Parzival once more,
The Duke said: 'Knight, the oath you swore
So freely brings much happiness
And little sorrow, I must confess.
Defeat in battle brings joy again,
And that joy doth ease my pain,
For I may make amends with honour,
To her I banished from my favour.

Twas I left that sweet woman alone;
What could she do there on her own,
To thwart advances? Then I thought,
Since your good looks she did report,
It must have led to something more;
Now, God reward you, her I adore
Is cleared of infidelity.
I failed to treat her with courtesy,
In riding forth to that borderland,
Nigh the forest of Brizljan.'

Parzival, so the tale does tell,
Took with him from the hermit's cell
The lance of Troyes, which had been
Left there, by Dodines' brother (I mean
Taurian the Wild) forgotten there.
Now, the warriors, how and where
Will these two seek to pass the night,
Their shattered shields, marred in the fight,
And beaten helms, hacked and torn?
Where will this pair be, ere the morn?

Parzival took leave of the lady,
And her lover, upon which he,
The Duke, now wiser, suggested
Parzival would be more rested
If he joined him beside his fire,
But such was not the knight's desire
Howe'er he pressed and, finally,
The two men parted company.

The story says that Orilus
Repaired to his pavilion thus,
Where his people were, and they
Were overjoyed, on that fair day,
To see him favour the Duchess,
And she so filled with happiness.

At once they unarmed their master,
Who washed the blood, thereafter,
And all the dust from his body.
And then he led the graceful lady
To their couch, while baths were filled.
There Jeschute, anxieties stilled,
Lay beside her lover in tears,
Not of sorrow, roused by fears,
But tears of joy, such as still may
Be true of good women this day.
Of such the old proverb doth treat:
'Eyes that weep have a mouth that's sweet'.
This I'll add: true affection's so
Marked, forever, by joy and woe.
If one sought to set Love's nature
On the scales and then did measure
Its weight, it would always show
A weight of joy, a weight of woe.

They took joy in their reunion
Most royally; twas thus begun:
First to their bath each one went;
Twelve lovely maids did present
Themselves, and these had cared
For her, since so ill she had fared
Due to her husband's displeasure,
Yet by no fault of hers however;
Despite her tattered shift by day,
These maids had made certain alway
That she was well-attired by night.
They bathed her now, with delight.
From his bath Duke Orilus came,
And Lady Jeschute, in the same
Manner, came forth most readily.
That woman, sweet gentle, lovely,
Stepped from her bath to his bed,
And, there, joy of sorrow was bred;

Her limbs found better covering
Than that she had long been wearing.
In close embrace the love of these two,
The prince, now wiser, the lady too,
By all the means they did employ
Attained the very summit of joy.

Duke Orilus rides with Lady Jeschute to Arthur's camp

NOW will you kindly lend an ear
To how Duke Orilus came to hear
Of the journey King Arthur was on.
'That good king's grand pavilion,
And then a thousand tents or more,'
Declared a knight, 'all these I saw,
Pitched on a broad meadow there,
Then hastened to tell of the affair;
Noble Arthur, the Britons' lord,
Lies encamped beside a ford,
With a great company of knights,
And lovely ladies; I saw these sights
Not a mile away, as the crow flies,
For beside the Plimizoel he lies,
And they are camped on both its banks.'
Duke Orilus expressed his thanks,
And swiftly had his armour brought,
While his wife her maidens sought
Who their mistress did soon attire,
In a fine gown all must admire.
Those two sat on their bed eating
Little birds caught while roosting,
Jeschute received many a kiss;
Orilus being the culprit in this.

They led forth a handsome palfrey
All equipped to suit the lady,
It was possessed of a fine bridle,

One as fine as was the saddle
Onto which they now lifted her,
For she was to ride forth with her
Valiant husband, whose charger
Was caparisoned with no other
Trappings than those of the fight.
The same sword too was there in sight,
Slung, in front, from his saddle-bow.
Orilus armed from head to toe,
Strode to his mount, leapt to the saddle,
As she watched, sat there astraddle,
Then, ere he and Jeschute rode out,
Ordered his people to turn about,
And make their way back to Lalant.

When they'd progressed, in elegant
Style, as far as this camping place,
A mile or so downstream, apace,
Orilus sent the knight away,
Who'd shown them the path that day.
Now the Duke had his lovely lady,
And no other, there, for company.
Arthur, the good and true, had gone
From supper, to a meadow whereon
He sat surrounded by many a knight,
And twas here Orilus did alight.
His helm and shield were badly scarred,
His coat of arms so greatly marred
It could not be discerned, such blows
Had Parzival dealt him, God knows.
He handed fair Jeschute the reins;
A crowd of pages were at pains
To hasten to them, and surround
Them both, for in a trice they found
Themselves amidst a little crowd.
'We shall care for your mounts!' The proud
And worthy Duke laid down his shield,

On the grass, all its scars revealed,
And then enquired for that lady
Whom he sought, as was his duty.

Duke Orilus offers his surrender to Cunneware, his sister

THEY showed him, on the instant,
To where Cunneware de Lalant,
Was seated, who was his sister!
He advanced now in full armour,
The King and Queen greeted him,
He thanked them equally, and then
Offered submission to the lady.
She would have known him readily
By the dragons on his surcoat (she
Knew thus twas her brother) yet she
Possessed the doubt as to whether,
(His face concealed by his vizor)
He was Lahelin or Orilus.
'You are my brother, kin to us;
Whichever brother I now detect,
From neither one will I accept
Any such abject surrender.
Both of you would ever render
Any service I requested;
If I were to see you so bested,
I would betray my kith and kin,
And the affection here within.'

The Duke knelt before the lady.
'Twas the Red Knight undid me;
Ordering me to submit to you,
And Orilus is here, so to do.
Come, accept my surrender now,
That I may then discharge my vow.'
Her white hands enfolding his,
She received his pledge in this,

And by doing so, graciously,
This Knight of the Dragon, set free.
Once this was done, he made complaint,
'The bond that ties us, not constraint,
Demands that I should seek redress.
Who was the man who did address
Such blows to you? I feel the pain
Of each of them; it shall be plain
To any who shall witness it,
That, when the time and place are fit
For my revenge, I too was wronged.
Moreover, he, to whom belonged
My defeat, and the boldest man
A woman bore, in any land,
Who calls himself the Red Knight,
He shares my cause, as if of right.
My lord the King, my lady Queen,
He pledges loyalty, and doth mean
Through me, to do so to my sister,
(Knowing not that I'm her brother),
Especially, asking you to requite
His humble duty as your knight,
And make amends to this lady
For the blows. Indeed, more lightly
I had escaped had we both known,
That knight and I, that not alone
Was he in feeling this great ill;
Close kin to her, I share his will.'

The anger then of many another
Towards Sir Kay strength did gather,
There by the Plimizoel. As one,
Gawain and Jofreit, Idoel's son,
And King Clamide, the prisoner,
Whose fall we witnessed earlier,
And many another known to fame,
Knights whom I could readily name

(If it were not my wish to be
One who e'er shuns prolixity)
Pushed forward with due urgency.
Their exertions met with courtesy.

Jeschute was now led in, still seated
On her palfrey, and thus was greeted
By Arthur and Queen Guinevere, who
Welcomed her, and there did ensue,
Among the ladies, much kissing then.
Arthur spoke: 'From the instant when
I learnt of it, I deplored your plight.
I knew your sire, a worthy knight,
King Lac, the mainstay of Karnant,
A man of honour, and valiant.
And then, indeed, you are so fair,
Your husband his ire should spare.
Did not your beauty gain the prize
At Kanedic, before our eyes?
He won the sparrow hawk that day;
It sat your fist, as you rode away.
Howe'er Orilus did wrong me,
I'd not wish yourself unhappy,
Nor would I find, in any place
Marks of sorrow on your face.
Tis joy that you return to favour,
And after travail's bitter savour,
Are dressed as a lady should be.'
'May God reward you,' the lady
Said, 'such courteous words ever
Serve but to increase your honour.'
Cunneware de Lalant did then
Lead Lady Jeschute forth again,
With Duke Orilus by her side.

Cunneware's tent sat there beside
The king's abode, on level ground,

(Where a clear stream could be found
Rising there) and upon the crest
A dragon floated o'er the rest,
As if, by it, its crown was clawed;
There, tethered to four ropes, it soared
As if alive, and on the wing,
And carrying off some tented thing,
To the realms of the upper air.
Orilus knew his emblem there,
For his device was hers as well,
Beneath its guardianship he fell,
And there the Duke doffed his armour.
His sweet sister showed him honour,
And saw to his needs, for she knew
In her wisdom, all one should do.

King Arthur's household said, as one,
That glory was now companion
To the Red Knight's bravery;
Not in whispers, but full loudly.
Now Kay asked Kingrun to attend
On Orilus, and did there depend
On him to wait there in his stead;
Kingrun, as if to that role bred,
Had long done such at Clamide's court
In Brandigan; for Kay now sought
To avoid that office, since ill-chance
Had led to that sad circumstance
Whereby he'd thrashed the sister hard,
With his staff, and her flesh had marred;
And thus, his sense of propriety
Made him forego this courtesy,
Since, indeed, the noble maiden
Scarcely deemed the man forgiven.
Nonetheless he made fair provision
Of food and drink; all this, Kingrun
Brought to Orilus, whose fair sister

Served it for him, her dear brother,
Being accomplished in everything
Commendable; hers the carving,
Effected by that soft white hand,
While Lady Jeschute of Karnant,
Ate delicately as women do.
Arthur chose to visit them too,
Where they sat, companionably,
At their meal. 'If poor fare it be,
Then such is far from my intent,
For you ne'er saw a master bent
On hosting you with a better will,
Or such sincerity. Eat your fill,
And my lady Cunneware please see
Your brother treated well, for me.
And now God bless you, and goodnight.'
Arthur retired, till morning light,
While Orilus sought his bed too,
Such that his lady Jeschute knew
The kind care of her spouse till morn,
Whereon the bright sun rose at dawn.

Book VI: Vengeance on Sir Kay

Blood on the snow

WOULD you care to hear how Arthur
Left Karidoel castle and, later,
Departed his realm completely?
On his council's advice did he
Ride out, for a good eight days,
Closely accompanied always
By noblemen, from far and near,
Seeking that man, he held dear,
Who'd styled himself the Red Knight,
Since he'd slain Ither in the fight,
With his javelin, his firm intent

Solving the king's predicament,
And dispatched to his fair kingdom,
King Clamide, and Lord Kingrun,
Demanding that they seek his court.
The Red Knight, King Arthur sought
To enrol in his fair company,
Of the Round Table; thus, did he
Ride out in quest of him, and set
The terms that, whoe'er they met,
All of these knights of the shield,
Rich or poor, must shun the field
And refrain from jousting, unless
He granted them leave, nothing less;
And this they'd sworn to on oath,
With hand-clasps, however loth.
'We must ride through many a land
That warlike action doth command,
And we may well see lances raised
And at the ready, but if, like crazed
Hounds the huntsman lets run free,
You race ahead, you'll trouble me.
I'll have no such wild commotion!
Yet once the enemy's in motion,
I'll command you, have no fear,
Have faith in my true valour here.'
Since you've heard about their vow,
Perchance you'd have me tell you now
How Parzival the Welshman fared?

Deep snow had fallen everywhere,
That night, and twas a wonder,
For all I've ever heard of Arthur,
Happened in the spring, or rather
At its height, and a while thereafter,
Blossom time, round Whitsuntide;
That man of May did e'er abide
Where'er the gentle breezes blew!

This tale appears of different hue,
White the colour that here doth show,
Green fields all hidden by the snow.
His falconers, from Karidoel,
Out hunting near the Plimizoel,
Had met with ill luck to their cost;
Their finest falcon there was lost;
She'd flown beyond the forest's door,
For, overfed, she'd shunned the lure,
And that night lodged near Parzival,
Where heavy snow had covered all,
Both of them cold enough to freeze,
The place unknown, amidst the trees.

When Parzival woke, at pains to go,
His path was lost beneath the snow.
He rode across that wild country,
Past many a rock, and fallen tree,
While the gleaming sun on high,
Rose higher in the morning sky.
Soon sparser trees let in the light;
To open country rode the knight,
With Arthur's falcon following;
There a lone tree-trunk was lying,
A crowd of geese all settled nearby;
The falcon dropped from out the sky,
Setting them calling, and struck one;
Under the fallen tree twas gone,
Too badly hurt to seek the air,
While, on the untrodden snow there,
Fell, from its wound, three drops of blood,
Bringing Parzival little good.
True affection brought him distress,
Twas loyalty to his fair mistress;
Seeing the red infuse the white,
The blood drops on the snow alight,
He asked himself: 'Who sets his hand

To these fresh hues, as if tis planned,
For, my Condwiramurs, these colours
May be likened to your favours,
Your complexion! Tis God's will
To bring me joy and beauty still
Finding your counterpart set here,
In red and white, the colours clear.
God's hand be praised for your features,
And then for all His fair creatures.
Condwiramurs, your likeness this;
The white with the red doth mix,
The blood reddening the snow,
Condwiramurs, and so doth show
Your fair person imaged thus;
For the comparison proves just!'
And he imagined two drops set
Against her cheeks, another yet
Beneath her lip, just as they fell;
Upon his mind they cast a spell.
The love he held for her was true;
The love that wavers not he knew.
And he gazed there as if in trance,
Not seeking retreat or advance.
Mighty Love held him enthralled,
So sweetly his wife he recalled,
So deep the longing; he had seen,
Mirrored, Belrepeire's fair queen,
In the hues there, and her presence,
Robbed him of all wit and sense.

He sat unmoving in the saddle,
As though asleep, still astraddle,
And who do you think found him there?
Cunneware's servant forth did fare,
Dispatched on an errand to Lalant,
And the lad glimpsed in an instant
The scarred helm, the dented shield,

That honoured his lady in the field;
An armed knight with upraised lance
Sat there, as if poised to advance.

Arthur's company is made aware of the knight's presence

THE lad returned whence he had come.
Had he his wits, he'd ne'er have done
What he did, roused the hue and cry;
He should have known the knight thereby,
Seeing his armour; as it turned out,
He ran to the tents and loud did shout
To Arthur's company and more,
As if the knight were some outlaw.
He'd lost all claim to courtliness;
And yet, once, so had his mistress.
'For shame, for shame!' the lad cried,
'Shame on you! Where is't you hide?
Are not Gawain, and this company,
And Arthur the Briton, held to be
Men of honour and high renown?'
Such is how he dressed them down,
'The Round Table admits disgrace,
The enemy's here now, in this place!'
At this, the knights rose in uproar,
And sought to know (all were unsure)
If arms and armour were in play.
They learned that a knight did stay
Alone, beyond the camp, all set
To joust, with any knights he met,
Regretting, for none there was loth,
That they had sworn King Arthur's oath.

Parzival defeats King Segramors

LUSTING for battle, Segramors
Ran forward, a knight ever more

Prepared to fight than all the rest,
One seeking ever some new contest.
He ran forth with many a bound,
His feet they barely touched the ground,
A man who where'er battle arose,
Had to be shackled from his foes,
Or he'd dive in; the Rhine in truth
Is not so wide, that if he, forsooth,
Saw fighting on the farther bank,
He'd refrain, e'en though he sank
In the freezing water, there within,
From furiously plunging in.
He came hot foot to Arthur's tent,
Where the king lay, quite content;
Yet Segramors burst through the door,
Beneath the guy-ropes, there before,
And snatched the sable coverlet
From those two who were dozing yet,
Such that they must wake indeed,
Jesting at his uncourtly deed.

'My Lady Queen,' (she was his kin)
He cried, as he came bursting in,
'Being close relations as we are,
All folk do know, both near and far,
That I look to yourself for favour.
Help me now with my Lord Arthur,
In a new venture, I'd advance,
And be the first to break a lance.'
'You swore on oath to obey me!'
Cried Arthur, 'not to fragrantly
Flout my wishes, an if you do
Many another brave knight too
Will take it as a precedent,
Urge that I alter my intent
And let them all quit their station
So as to grow their reputation;

Thus, my strength would ebb away.
Anfortas' realm lies close this day,
At Munsalvaesche they are based,
To defend the forest; not graced
With knowledge of their number,
We should do ourselves no favour.'

Guinevere pleaded with the King,
Such that he conceded the thing,
Much to young Segramors' delight.
When she won leave for him, the knight
Near died of joy; it would have proved
A blow to him, if twas approved
For any man to share the glory.
Then the youth, so runs the story,
Beardless yet proud, sought his armour,
Clad head to foot, found his charger,
And Segramors (who was a king)
Sallied forth from King Arthur's ring,
Over saplings and bushes leapt,
Gold bells tinkling, as he swept
Along; they did adorn his steed,
And himself; you could at need
Have flown the youth at a pheasant!
Would any learn if he were present?
They need but seek the music out!

Forth he rode to the encounter
With the knight, a man however
Sold now into Love's slavery.
Segramors challenged him swiftly,
Ere any blow of sword or lance,
Yet Parzival did not advance
But sat there still lost in thought,
Due to the drops of red blood caught
By the snow, and mighty Love.
(She to my heart a lance doth prove,

And of my senses ever robs me.
Alas, a lady doth assault me!
If she'll cease not from doing so,
Nor ever seek to ease my woe,
I shall hold her as in the wrong
And quit my hopes of her ere long!)
So, listen now to how they spoke,
And parted, not without a stroke
From the lance. King Segramors
Said: 'You sit astride your horse,
Sir, as though you were content;
A king lies there, within his tent;
Encamped in force our company;
Howe'er indifferent you may be,
You must grant him satisfaction,
Or I, who champion his faction,
Must die. You are come too near
In search of combat and, I fear,
You must surrender now to me,
And do so with due courtesy,
Or but receive what you deserve,
The snow for a soft bed may serve!
Although you might do far better,
For you may yet yield with honour.'

Now Parzival said not a word,
Despite the threats he had heard;
Love had assigned him other cares,
Absorbed thus in his own affairs.
Bold Segramors wheeled his mount,
Seeking to bring him to account,
And aimed his lance at Parzival
Whose Castilian, it did befall,
On which he sat oblivious,
Turned aside and Parzival, thus,
Lost sight of the three drops of blood.
His gaze troubled (twas to the good

As regards his knightly renown),
Seeing them not upon the ground,
Reason restored his awareness.

Segramors toward him did press.
Parzival lowered the painted lance
Of Troyes and with it did advance,
(Twas taken from the hermit's cell)
Segramors' thrust he answered well,
Receiving it through his stout shield,
While Segramors was forced to yield,
And quit the saddle, whilst, in fact,
The lance that downed him stayed intact.
Then Parzival, seeking not his name,
Returned to those blood drops again.
No sooner did they meet his sight
Than Love in her net wound him tight.
As if bereft of sense, once more
He sat and gazed there, as before.
The knights were near enough to see
Him sitting there, as equally
Motionless as before he'd been.
Though a victory they had seen,
Twas Love the victory had won,
Who'd even vanquished Solomon.

Segramors' mount sought its manger.
After his battle with the stranger;
Had its rider now sought to rest
He would have had to lean at best
(Although most people seek to lie,
As you have heard, and so have I).
What ease did he find in the snow?
How I would hate to lie there so!
For losers are but mockery's bait,
Heaven sides with the fortunate.
He soon returned to the company;

Received well, or with mockery
He doled abuse out, on every side,
Without fear or favour, anent his ride.
'Know, chivalry's a game of chance,
And many have fallen to the lance,
Even tall ships at sea may founder;
Yet he'd not have dared, this stranger,
To face me had he known my shield.
I resent it that he will not yield,
But remains there to joust again.
Else much praise from me he'd gain.'

He is approached by Sir Kay

SO spoke King Segradors, while Kay
Went to King Arthur and straightway
Told him the youth had been unseated,
And that the fellow he had greeted
Was waiting there, as keen as ever.
'My lord, I would bemoan it ever,
Were he to leave us now, unscathed,
Boasting that Arthur he has braved.
If you would value me hereafter,
Let me discover what he's after,
This man who waits there, lance erect
In sight of your wife, since I elect
To end this fellow's provocation,
Or quit your court, and my vocation.
The Round Table has met with shame.
Now give me to leave to fight this same,
His courage feeds on ours, I find.
Even if we were deaf and blind
You should forbid him so to do.
It is high time he fought anew.'

Arthur granted Kay leave to fight.
The Seneschal then armed aright;

A forest of lances he would break
With this stranger for Arthur's sake.
The knight though bore Love's guerdon,
Snow and blood the man did burden,
Twould be a sin to swell his pain,
While Love would little credit gain
From wielding her sceptre that day,
Merely in token of her sway.
Love, why then such short-lived joy,
To cheer a sorrowful man, employ?
Is it seemly you should overthrow
Manly thoughts, and ambition, so?
How swift you win your victory,
Slay a man with scant courtesy,
Conquering both noble and base,
And all you war with, in this place;
Truly, we must concede your might.
Yet, one merit is yours of right:
Affection keeps you company,
Or deficient your rule would be.
Love, you foster faithlessness,
In ancient ways win new success,
Robbing women of their good name;
Near kin or distant, prove the same;
Many a lord has wronged his man,
At your urging, and many a man
Has wronged his lord, many a friend
His companion, loyal to the end;
Thus, do your ways to hellfire lead.
Love you should be ashamed indeed,
That you instil such deep longing
In the flesh, as brings souls, weeping,
To such torment. Love, since you age
The young; a sad squire of the page
Do fashion though youth be but brief,
You work great ill, tis my belief.
This discourse suits no man other

Than one you have solaced never.
Had you helped me in other days
I'd not prove laggard in my praise.
You've cheated me many a day,
Diced my loving glances away,
Such that I've lost all faith in you.
My sufferings, you scorn those too.
And yet you are too noble ever
For me to deal with you in anger.
The sharp goad you wield proves bitter;
The burden on my heart no better.
(Heinrich von Veldeke; how he,
In his *Eneide*, most skilfully
Revealed, neath that tree, your nature,
Where Eneas so wooed his lover.
If he'd but taught us to retain you!
For in showing how to win you,
He slit mere slivers from the whole)
The prize that's won by some young soul,
Is oft marred by sheer ignorance.
Whate'er I learned of true romance,
Or may learn, I shall reproach you,
Love, who doth chain our reason too,
In that neither sword nor shield
Nor swift steed, nor fortress sealed
Adorned with many a lofty tower,
Avails us, for you overpower
All resistance. On sea or land,
What can elude your certain hand,
Evade your assault or even try,
Whether it run, or swim, or fly?
Love, it was violence on your part
When Parzival sat there apart,
In that trance of deep affection,
All through your pure misdirection.
She dispatched you through the air,
To be to him her messenger,

That lovely Queen of Belrepeire;
And Kardeiz son of Tampenteire,
Her dear brother, you took his life.
If you shield me not from such strife,
If this be the tribute you exact,
Then happy am I, who have, in fact,
Won not a thing from you. I speak
For all of us. Now, you who seek
More of our knight, I shall not fail;
Come, hear how things went, in the tale.

Parzival defeats Kay, the Seneschal

VALIANT Kay rode forth to fight,
Equipped as a well-trained knight,
Eager for battle, and such he won
In meeting King Gahmuret's son.
You ladies with knights in thrall
Must wish him luck, one and all,
For tis a woman has now brought
Him to this sad state, lost in thought.
Kay chose not to lower his lance,
Till he had hailed him in advance.
'Sir, since you thus insult the king,
If I may guide you in this thing,
For that will prove the best for you,
Let me lead you where he may view
Your person; you'll not escape me,
And if I lead you there forcefully,
Why then, sir knight, be not deceived,
More harshly shall you be received.'

Love's burden still constrained the knight
To silence. Kay advanced outright,
And with his lance he struck him, so
His helmet rang out, at the blow.
'Wake now!' he cried, 'for since you lack

A good quilt here, my next attack
Will grant you a soft bed of snow.
If a pack animal proved as slow
At bearing sacks to the mill, then he'd
Be thrashed as hard as I'll, indeed,
Thrash you; and rue his sluggishness.'

Love, do you hear? I would suggest
All this must be to your dishonour;
Here even a peasant would mutter:
'Consider this as done to my lady!'
Parzival would, if he were only
Able to speak. Love, let the man
Seek your revenge, as well he can.
For I have no doubt that this guest,
Would prove himself of the best,
If your dominion would so allow,
Your rule, beneath which he doth bow.

Kaye charged at him with a shout,
And then so forced his steed about
That the Welshman lost all sight
Of his bitter-sweet pain, outright,
That fair semblance of his queen,
The patch of reddened snow I mean;
Whereupon reason, as before,
Brought him to his senses once more.
Kay to the gallop set his steed,
Ready to joust, and gaining speed;
And as the pair did thus advance
Each of them now lowered his lance.
Where he'd aimed the tip to strike
Kay delivered it, and something like
A window made in the knight's shield;
To the counterstroke, forced to yield,
Sir Kay, King Arthur's Seneschal,
Yet tumbled from his horse withal,

And sprawled across the fallen tree
Neath which the goose had sought to flee,
And, thus, his offence was well repaid,
The man and the steed both unmade,
The man was wounded, the horse dead;
And in the fall, to his saddle wed,
Meeting a rock, Kay's right arm
And his left leg both came to harm,
Both were broken; saddle and girth,
Bell-harness too, all flung to earth.
Thus, the stranger obtained revenge,
A brace of assaults he did avenge,
First the one the maid did suffer,
While that from Kay was the other.

Parzival, up-rooter of all that's ill,
Was prompted by affection still,
To seek those blood drops, on the snow,
That robbed him of his senses so,
Such that the semblance of his queen,
And his thoughts of the Grail, I ween,
Afflicted him, though Love, surely,
In the scales, weighed more heavily.
'Love and sorrow do break brave hearts.'
Small wonder! From both, suffering starts.

Brave people should lament Kay's plight,
For he'd shown pluck in many a fight;
And though twas said by many a man,
He'd the manners of a ruffian,
My tale acquits him of the charge.
I say his courage was writ large,
A knight born to true loyalty,
Whether or not you all agree.
And I'll say more about him now,
King Arthur's court, you will allow,
Was the goal of many a stranger;

Yet Kay ever scorned the manner
Of those, some of whom were noble,
And others equally, ignoble,
Who set their stall out to deceive,
And yet he would with grace receive
Those who showed themselves well-bred,
With friendly thoughts in their head,
For those he would serve and honour.
I own he was a keen observer,
A sharp critic, who would afford,
In seeking to protect his lord,
Little grace to the imposters,
Sifting base folk from the others,
Falling upon their ill-doing,
Like a hailstorm, with a sting
Like a bee's but much sharper;
For was it not such folk ever
Sought to traduce his good name?
He knew the faithful, and yet blame
He reaped, and spite, from all the rest;
Scorning the worst, aiding the best.
(Prince Hermann of Thuringia,
I judge that certain of your inner
Court might better join the outer;
It strikes me that, altogether,
You could have done with a Kay,
Since your generosity doth pay
For so mixed a following; here
A rascal, there some noble peer.
Twas why Walther was forced to sing,
As he offered them his greeting,
'Good day, the noble and the base!'
And yet, the villains gain in grace
From singing out in such a style,
Kay aimed his sarcasm and guile;
He would not have sought such, nor
Sir Henry of Reisbach I feel sure.)

Witness now fresh wonders though,
Beside the Plimizoel, in the snow.

**Kay taunts the ever-courteous Gawain into approaching
Parzival**

SIR Kay was carried back, with haste,
And in King Arthur's tent was placed.
And many a friend, knight or lady,
Came there to voice their sympathy.
My lord Gawain came to his side,
'Alas, the day!' his lordship cried,
'Alas, the joust that wounds a friend;
Yet with God's grace he shall mend.'
So, ran his passionate lament.
'No doubt your pity is well meant,'
Said Kay, with signs of irritation,
'But, my lord, such lamentation
Suits old women, not such as you.
You are my fair sovereign's nephew,
Would I could serve you at leisure
Now, according to your pleasure.
For while God granted me the use
Of my limbs, then, scant excuse
I sought, but helped you in your cause,
And I would do so without pause.
Now stop your wailing, and be fain
To let me lie, and nurse my pain.
The brave king, your uncle, I say
Would ne'er again find such a Kay.
You are too noble to avenge me.
Yet, had you lost a finger, surely
I would have risked my own head now,
And gambled gainst fate, that I vow.
Yet take no heed of my taunting,
The knight there, who far from fleeing
At the gallop or e'en the trot,

Waits out there, knows how, God wot,
To settle a matter with a blow;
While there's no lady's hair that's so
Fine and fragile it would not serve
To tie your hand and so preserve
Your lordship from a fight. One who
When he is faced with such ado,
Shows meekness, honours his mother,
Yet needs seek valour from his father.
Follow your mother, Lord Gawain,
Avoid the thought of toil and pain,
Grow pale at the sight of a sword,
You'll be an unmanly sort of lord!
So was that most renowned knight
Attacked with subtle words, outright,
Which he could not repay in kind,
As happens with such men, I find,
Well-bred, full of that modesty
Of which the shameless man is free.
'Whenever aught was aimed at me,
None saw me grow pale, I fancy,
If they eyed my colour that day,'
Cried Lord Gawain, answering Kay,
'You have no need for anger now,
I've e'er been yours at need, I vow.'
That noble knight, my Lord Gawain,
Departed the King's tent again,
Mounted his steed, with firm intent,
And, lacking sword or spurs, he went
Forth, to find the Welshman who
Was enthralled by Love anew.
The shield Parzival bore was now
Holed in three places, I'll avow,
By three champions, for Orilus
Had, earlier yet, pierced it thus.
Lord Gawain rode towards him,
Neither galloping, nor charging,

Wishing to search out, amicably,
Who this brave stranger might be.

Now, Gawain greeted Parzival,
But of it he heard naught at all,
Since Love exercised her power
Over Herzeloyde's son that hour.
Susceptibility to love,
Born of his ancestry, did prove
Enough to bring oblivion;
Nothing of what King Lot's son
Had said did this Parzival hear,
Though his speech was crisp and clear.
'My lord,' said Gawain, 'since you
Shun my greeting, to fight anew
Must be your aim? And yet I must,
Being of firm heart, seek your trust,
Thence to persuade you otherwise.
You've put the king, you realise,
To shame, and have disgraced us all,
Yet if you'll answer reason's call,
And, as I counsel, accompany me
To his presence, I'll guarantee
To win your pardon; the offence
Shall be forgot by men of sense.'

But threats and entreaties were, as one,
Lost on King Gahmuret's fair son.
Gawain, the Round Table's glory,
Had love enough in his story,
He had come to know love's harm,
Stabbing a knife through his palm
When ruled by love, for this man
Was the friend of a noble woman,
Who saved him from death, a queen,
Who, after a joust, when he had been
At Lahelin's mercy, offered her head

As a pledge. Fair, and nobly bred,
Was she, sweet and loyal that same,
Inguse de Bahtarliez her name.
'What if Love oppresses this man,
As she did me,' was Gawain's thought,
'And his faithful heart, once caught,
Has had to yield to her?' Noting,
Where the Welshman was gazing,
His eyes followed his line of sight,
And then he flung his cape outright
O'er the blood drops (twas Syrian silk,
Lined with yellow cendale of that ilk).
When they were hidden, when no more
Of those blood-drops Parzival saw,
The Queen of Belrepeire released
His senses to him, yet ne'er ceased
To keep his heart fixed upon her.
Be pleased to hear what he did utter:
'Alas, my wife, and lady; who
Robs me of that fair sight of you?
Was it I who gained your noble love,
Through martial deeds a king did prove,
And won the crown of your country,
And, so, from Clamide set you free?
Many a knight of yours did groan,
Many a fair maid raised her moan,
There within your realm of sighs.
And yet a mist before my eyes
Has snatched you from me in broad day,
How I know not? Oh, where, I say,
Is the lance that I brought with me?'
The other sat listening, patiently:
'You broke it in a joust.' Gawain
Replied, 'Against whom was I fain
To do so?' asked the worthy knight,
'You've nor sword nor shield in sight,
What honour could I have of you?

I suffer your mockery now, tis true,
Yet later you may show respect.
I've prevailed when men did expect
I would not, once or twice; though I
Clash not with you beneath the sky,
Yet the world is wide enough, I say,
To seek toil and fame many a day,
And suffer many a joy and woe.'
'The speech that I granted you, though,
My lord Gawain replied, 'was meant
In friendship, to show good intent,
Full clear, not dark as marsh-water.
I seek no more than I did utter
And I stand ready to deserve.
A host of knights, the king I serve,
Camp here, with many a fair lady.
If you'll accept my company,
I'll ride beside you on the way
And keep you from attack this day.'

'Thank you, sir, and you speak fair,
I'll seek to be worthy of your care.
Since you offer me your company,
Who is your lord; who may you be?
'I name one as my lord from whom
I gain much, and shall now presume
To speak of him and myself outright.
He shows me honour, as a knight.
King Lot took his sister to wife,
And she did bear me; in this life,
Whate'er God has bestowed on me
I have sworn to this man, wholly.
He is King Arthur, and my name
Is scarcely hidden, I am Gawain,
So my friends call me; it, and I,
Are at your service, if, by and by,
You will do me that great honour.'

‘Are you Gawain?’ cried the other,
‘Small credit will I win from being
Welcomed by you with fair greeting,
For I have ever heard men say
You welcome all in such a way!
Your kindness I can but receive
With equal kindness, so believe.
Now tell me, if it you would please
Whose pavilions and tents are these?
For if King Arthur lodges here,
I cannot greet your King, I fear,
Nor the Queen, with any honour
Till I avenge a beating, that ever
Doth sadden me, and here’s the tale:
A noble maiden with a gale
Of laughter greeted me, and so
The Seneschal landed her a blow,
And more, indeed; because of me,
He struck her as one might a tree,
One that’s splintered in the felling.’
‘Tis now avenged, that very thing,’
Said Gawain, ‘twas you that shattered
His left leg and right arm; scattered
Fragments now doth the snow display
Of your lance, and but ride this way
And here’s his mount, and the boulder
That caught him, at thigh and shoulder.’
Seeing twas so, Parzival then
Pursued the matter, and spoke again:
‘Your word I’ll accept, friend Gawain,
That twas he who put me to shame,
And, on this understanding, shall I
Ride with you, nor your wish deny.’
‘I’ll not mislead you,’ answered Gawain,
‘Now Segradors also, as I maintain
A warrior whose deeds men praise
Most highly, he too fell lengthways

Before your lance thrust, twas done
Ere you downed Kay; you have won
Much honour here, with little pain.'

Parzival is greeted by Cunneware, and joins the company of the Round Table

THE Welshman and my Lord Gawain,
Rode in together; amidst a throng,
On foot and horseback, drawn along,
To greet Gawain and the Red Knight,
As they thought proper, and was right.
Gawain, at once, made for his tent.
Cunneware, meanwhile, was bent
On welcoming her knight, and she
Received her champion joyfully,
Who'd now avenged the wrong that Kay
Had done to her, and him, that day.
With her was Jeschute of Karnant,
And her brother, and hand in hand,
Parzival saw them all approaching,
Through the grime his face showing
Like a dew-wet rose blooming there.
No sooner had he shed his armour,
Than he sought to do them honour.
Cunneware spoke then graciously:
'Be welcome to God, then to me,
Since you hold to the path of valour.
I had refrained from laughing ever,
Till my heart told me what you were,
Then Kay did beat me like a cur,
And robbed me of all happiness.
But you avenge me; a kiss no less
Would I give you, were it not too
High an honour so to do.'
'I would have claimed it, if I'd dared,'
Said Parzival, 'a kiss we'd shared,

For your greeting brings me pleasure.'
She bade him sit, at his leisure,
And sent for fresh clothes; then her maid,
Brought a cloak of Nineveh brocade,
Which King Clamide, her prisoner,
Was to have worn, and gave it her;
Though, the maid said, it lacked lace.
Then Cunneware drew, from a place
At her fair side, a ribbon, and straight
Threaded it through, while he did wait.
By her leave, he rinsed the dust
Away and, free of grime and rust,
Emerged, red-lipped and fair of skin,
Handsome, and clean as a new pin;
And when he was robed, all thought,
Those who saw him there at court,
And did proclaim, his graces such
As other men could scarcely touch,
Such praise did his appearance draw.
Parzival's cloak looked well and more,
Cunneware fastened the neck close
With a fine green emerald brooch,
And gave him more, a rare and costly
Embroidered belt, with beasts richly
Formed of precious gems set there,
While a ruby clasped the whole affair.
How did the beardless youth appear,
The belt tied, in all his fine gear?
'Quite well enough', declares the tale!

None of all those present could fail
To wish him well, and all who then
Set eyes on him, women and men,
Held the knight in high esteem.
Arthur had heard Mass, and twould seem,
On finding he'd gone to Gawain's tent,
Greeting the knight being his intent,

He made his way now to that place;
They saw him approaching, at a pace,
With knights of the Round Table who
Had e'er proved faithful and true.
He that Kay had bruised, Antanor,
Darted forth, and hastened before
The King, all the way to Parzival.
'Tis you who have avenged us all,'
He cried, 'and much glory they say
He has lost to you, our Sir Kay.
His threat to us seems at an end;
Scant need now for me to defend
Myself from him, so weak his arm;
Twill not mend soon, so great the harm!'
Young Parzival, but for the wings,
Seemed an angel midst earthly things.
Together with his nobles, Arthur
Greeted him in friendly manner,
And all who saw Parzival there
Felt good will towards him; where
Hearts appraised him, none said no,
All cried yes, he charmed them so.
'You gave me joy and pain,' said Arthur,
'You have brought me greater honour
Than I've received from any man.
Had you achieved naught finer than
Restoring fair Jeschute to favour,
I'd still not deserve such honour.
If I'd had speech with you, indeed,
Kay had atoned for his misdeed.'
Arthur then told him what he sought,
The request to him that had brought
The King to undertake this journey,
And travel, thus, into that country.
Then, as one, they begged Parzival
To pledge companionship to all
The Round Table, of chivalry,

And each knight there, separately.
Nor was that request unwelcome,
He was pleased, and with good reason,
For her was true company indeed.
And, thus, he courteously agreed.

Take counsel, hear, and judge whether
The Round Table, all met together,
Their strict decree did now maintain:
For Arthur their leader had been fain
To state that not a knight should dine
At court with him, at any time,
Unless Adventure there made one.
Since she was here, all now was done
To mark her favour, gladly gained.
The Table itself in Nantes remained,
Yet its ceremonies, transferred here,
In this snowy meadow did appear.
King Arthur did command the same,
So, to honour the Red Knight's fame.
A fair brocade of Acraton,
Brought from far-off heathendom,
Cut round not square, had been laid,
On the ground, such that it played
The Table's role, for courtesy
A simple rule did, there, decree,
That none should sit below the king,
All seats held equal in that ring.
The noble knights and ladies then,
Maidens, spouses, women and men,
Dined with Arthur, all those thought
Highly of at the King's fair court.

The members of the Round Table dine together

QUEEN Guinevere appeared, most fair
Amidst the host of ladies there,

And her princesses, all beautiful,
The circle being not so full
As to prevent many a lady
Sitting beside her knight, where she
Might be at ease, with no jostling.
Then, taking Parzival's hand, the king,
With Cunneware at his other side,
Who free of her woes did now abide,
Said, as he looked at the Welshman:
'My wife here I shall now command,
To kiss you, who have little need
To seek a kiss from any indeed,
For from Belrepeire you came,
Where resides the goal and aim
Of all your kissing; yet I will ask,
If I should visit you, your task
Will be to repay there, the kiss.'
'I shall do wholly as you wish,
There and elsewhere,' he replied.
The Queen stepped forward; on his side,
He advanced, and the Queen, at this
Welcomed Parzival with a kiss.
'I forgive you, and sincerely,
For all the woe that you caused me,
When you took King Ither's life.'
And at the thought, that royal wife
Though reconciled, now shed a tear,
For Ither's death brought pain, I fear,
To many a woman, and she was one.

King Clamide, when this was done,
Sat, with his back to the Plimizoel,
Beside him Jofreit, son of Idoel,
While the Red Knight they did name,
To sit twixt Clamide and Gawain.
My source gives judgement that no man
Born of woman sat, on either hand,

Round this circle, whose looks withal
Belied him less than did Parzival's,
For, there, he brought the glow of youth,
But yet no lack of strength, in truth;
And then, if you viewed him closely,
You had to say that many a lady
Viewed herself in a looking glass
Far less shiny than his mouth was,
And the complexion of all his face.
And for any woman, in any place,
His looks were a snare that caught
Her; then her loyalty, if sought,
Was firm, she scorned all fickleness!
I speak of those who break, no less,
The ties of faithfulness and forsake
Their lovers, for his looks did wake
Such brightness they proved a bond,
One that might be reckoned upon,
Of feminine constancy; where he
Was concerned, all was loyalty!
Their fickleness all gone, their gaze
Received him in most faithful ways,
And he, without semblance of art,
Passed through the eyes to the heart.

Cundrie La Surziere, messenger of the Grail, appears

MEN and women, all wished him well,
He enjoyed their esteem, as well,
Yet groans and sighs did end it all.
For, now, came a maid, as I recall,
Praised for her truth-saying, yet who
Appeared part-crazed, and she, tis true,
Brought painful news to many a one.
Hear of the mount she rode upon!
A dun-coloured mule, such was it,
A Castilian's height, its nostrils slit,

And marks of the iron, that we see,
On the branded steeds of Hungary.
Skilful hands had not proved idle
In making harness and bridle,
Both of these were rich indeed.
Fine the gait of her brave steed;
Yet she herself appeared no lady.
Why was she there? Whate'er might be
The reason, there she was, and naught
To be done. To King Arthur's court,
And his company, she brought woe.
She was a woman of talent though,
All languages she spoke, fine Latin,
French, Arabic; and, well-versed in
Dialectic and geometry,
Mastery of all such had she;
Skilled as well in astronomy.
You'd know her name? It was Cundrie,
'La Surziere' was her nickname,
Nor of speech was the woman lame,
For what she said, it did suffice,
To grieve the joyful in a trice.
Her appearance was not quite that
Of those called fine; astride she sat;
Her cloak, cut in the French fashion,
From bridal fabric in Ghent woven,
Was bluer than azure; good brocade,
Next to her body, clothed the maid;
And a hat from London, not so old,
Its inside lined with cloth of gold,
Its outside peacock-feathers, all new,
With a fresh ribbon, hung there too,
At her back. Her news bore grief,
Like a bridge, o'er the joy beneath,
For to banish all the merriment
Of that company was her intent.
A plait of hair fell from the hat,

And dangled on the mule, and that
Was long, and black, and coarse, not fair,
As soft as a boar's bristles! A pair
Of tusks, in fact, rose from her jaw,
Several spans in length or more;
Her nose was like a dog's, her brows
Hid her hairband, the tale avows,
And hung beneath, in long clumps, too.
I but speak to say what's true.
Though I err against propriety,
In speaking thus of any lady,
None other needs complain of me,
For I treat the rest with courtesy.
Cundrie's ears were like a bear's,
Her face not such as fuels affairs,
A mask unlikely to inspire
Passion, or rouse a man's desire.
In her left hand she held a knout,
Its lashes of silk, that wound about
The stock, which was of ruby stone,
Wrought of the finest ever known.
This darling's hands were the colour
Of ape's skin, and on each finger
The nail was none too lucent, more
Like to the hue of a lion's claw.
None oft broke lances for her love,
Nor sought their valour thus to prove.

Cundrie berates King Arthur and Parzival

THUS, it was that this source of woe,
Joy's oppressor, came riding slow,
Towards their circle and their lord,
Where they sat, in peaceful accord.
There, Cunneware shared a platter
With Arthur, while, beside the latter,
Queen Guinevere shared another

With Janfuse's Queen Ekuba.
King Arthur sat there, in high state;
Cundrie rode up (though I'll relate
What she said to him, in German,
While she spoke French to the man,
Yet it pleases me no better)
Here is her speech, to the letter:
'Son of King Uther Pendragon,
You have shamed many a Briton,
And yourself, with a foolish deed.
Here would sit the elect indeed,
Of every land, in high honour,
Were there not, within, a canker
To mar the glory of their name.
The Round Table all its high fame
Shall fade, destroyed by falsity,
All end, through your perversity.
Once you stood so high in honour,
Without peer, yet now, King Arthur,
Your fame, from that sublime ascent,
Sinks downward thus in swift descent.
Your standard foremost did appear;
It stumbles along now, at the rear.
And praise of you, once at its height
Now doth decline to dark of night.
Your reputation, tis here forfeit,
Your name, revealed as counterfeit.
The Round Table is marred, withal,
By the presence of Lord Parzival,
Who bears the marks of chivalry;
As 'The Red Knight' you readily
Proclaim him, after him who fell
At Nantes, and yet tis less than well;
Their two lives were dissimilar,
Lips ne'er told, concerning Ither,
Of any so perfect in their virtue.'

Leaving the king, this Cundrie drew
Close to the Welshman, 'You, now,
Thwart my fair custom, I avow,
By causing me to deny true greeting
To Arthur and his host, on meeting.
A curse on your face, and your form!
Did I grant peace amidst the storm,
You would go a-begging; a monster
You think me, but I am a lesser
Monster than you! Explain to me,
Lord Parzival, how it came to be
That when the Fisherman, in woe,
Leaned beside you, you failed, so
Completely, to disperse his sighs,
His grief apparent to your eyes,
That man of sorrows? Heartless guest,
No ounce of pity within your breast,
Your tongue as silent, for its part,
As void of feeling beats your heart.
Before the seat of Him on high,
You are assigned to Hell, say I,
As you would be, here, on this earth,
If clearly seen by men of worth;
You bar to salvation, curse on joy,
Scorner, who seeks but to destroy
Peerless fame! Where honour counts,
You are faint, your worth amounts
To naught, your illness so far gone
No leech can cure it. If someone
Will but administer the oath,
I'll swear, on your good looks, no oaf
Ever so wicked a song ere sang;
You feathered barb, you viper's fang!
Did not your host gift you a sword
You deserved not of that great lord?
By your silence you wrought great sin,
For you are the devil's sport, within.

Void of honour, Lord Parzival,
And yet you saw the Grail withal,
Borne into your presence after
The bloody lance, the knives of silver.
Quencher of joy, bringer of woe!
Had you thought to ask, to know,
At Munsalvaesche, one question there
Had brought you wealth beyond compare,
More than far Tabronit doth hold,
In heathendom, of fabled gold.
Feirefiz Angevin whose courage
Never fails him, that same courage
Your father and his once possessed,
Won that country's queen; success
Followed his valiant deeds of arms,
And he was graced by all her charms.
Your brother, who confounds the sight,
Bears a mottled skin, black and white,
The Queen of Zazamanc's strange son;
And, with that, all my mind's begun
To dwell on Gahmuret, whose heart
Was free of those ill weeds that start
Among the crops; he took his name
From Anjou, and left you those same
Qualities, lacking in your least deed;
For you prove dead to honour, indeed.
Had your mother e'er strayed, then I
Might think you not his son, thereby,
But no, her faithfulness proved ever
A virtue, and yet made her suffer.
You should believe but good of her,
And likewise know of your father
That he was well-versed in loyalty,
A net to catch fame, of chivalry
Born; one free of venom and ire,
He was a snare, nay, a weir entire,
To catch the gleaming fish of fame!

Yet your deeds but betray his name.
Woe, that tis I who must proclaim
That far from the true path this same
Child of Herzeloide has strayed,
And I must see all honour fade!

**Cundrie names an adventure and departs, as Kingrimursel of
Ascalun appears**

CUNDRIE now gave herself to grief.
She sighed and wept without relief,
Wringing her hands, while tears fell
As fast as sorrow renewed the well
Of her eyes; pure kindness of heart
Had taught this maiden the sad art
Of lament for true woe. Now she,
Turned to the king, and cried loudly:
'Is there some knight of worth I see,
Whose valiant heart, out of chivalry,
Would seek renown and noble love,
His manly courage and valour prove?
For I know of four hundred ladies
With four queens, of high nobility;
At Schastel Marveile they reside.
What may be won there, set beside
All other ventures one might gain,
Of exalted love, renders them vain.
Though the journey galls me quite
I must be there this very night.'

And, without asking leave to go,
The woeful maid departed so;
Yet many a backward glance she gave,
Through the tears that her face did lave.
Hear the last words she uttered so:
'Ah Munsalvaesche, deep well of woe!
Alas, that none doth solace you now!'

Cundrie La Surziere, you'll allow,
Has mortified the man. What aid
Could a heart, as yet unafraid,
And nobility, yet deliver there?
And yet, regarding this affair,
He has not lost his sense of shame;
It may yet retrieve his good name,
And reigns supreme o'er all his way,
His deeds were free as yet, that day
Of all that deserves the name of ill,
And a sense of shame's rewarded still
With esteem, when all's said and done,
It is the soul's glory, granted one
Who practises that virtue ever.

The first to weep that this creature
Had denounced Parzival her knight,
Was Cunneware, and at the sight
Many a noble maid wept too,
Many a tear was now on view.
Cundrie, the source of their lament,
Had departed but, as she went,
A bold knight came riding nigh,
Whose brave armour, to every eye,
Seemed of the finest quality,
His crest, his adornments, nobly
Wrought; his charger such a steed
As befitted a fair knight indeed.
He rode towards the royal ring;
Women, men, and maids, lamenting,
There he found. What was his state?
His heart was sad, his pride was great;
From courage sprang his manly pride,
Some mortal wrong his woe implied.
He rode to the confines of the ring.
A crowd of pages darting in,
To make welcome this noble knight,

One unknown to them at first sight;
Nor did he doff his helm, this man;
He bore his sword in his two hands,
Sheathed to say twas justice he sought.
He asked for but two men of that court.
'Where now are Arthur and Gawain?'
When the pages showed them plain,
Through the ring his way he made,
In his fair surcoat of rich brocade,
Halting before the puissant king;
This the complaint that he did bring:
'God preserve the good King Arthur,
His knights, ladies, all who gather
In this place; to but one man here
Do I deny goodwill; I fear
That indeed he shall never know;
For my enmity is such I'd show,
Whate'er enmity he can muster,
That many a blow I would conjure
And, thus, a wrong I would requite.
Let me therefore name the knight;
Alas, he has so pained my heart,
Too great the woe it doth impart;
Tis Lord Gawain here that I mean,
Who fame and renown doth glean,
From his glorious deeds, full many.
Yet his was an act of treachery,
When his ambition had him slay
My lord as he greeted him that day.
Twas Judas' kiss inspired him then;
The deed did trouble a host of men,
That my lord should die by murder!
If Lord Gawain cries 'Nay!' however,
Denying the charge, let him take
The road to Schanpfunz, and make
His answer forty days from now;
For single combat he doth allow,

The King of Ascalun, in his city.
I summon him there, of chivalry,
To do me battle, unless he'd yield
Loyalty to the code of the shield;
For I'd seek to remind him further,
Of what he owes to his helm ever,
And knighthood's office. Chivalry,
Gains wealth for its rich treasury,
From two great streams of revenue,
A sense of shame, and loyalty true.
If Lord Gawain would truly share,
In the company, be seated there
At the Round Table, he should not
Act so shamelessly; has he forgot,
That were a traitor so seated,
Its purpose then would be defeated?
Yet I am not here to berate
The man, tis battle I await,
And demand, with its true reward;
A life of honour it shall afford
Or death, if fate should so decide.'

Arthur responds to Kingrimursel's charge levied against Gawain

The king sat mute at the Queen's side,
Ill at ease, filled with sore dismay,
Then answered the charge in this way:
'Sir, Lord Gawain is my nephew,
Of my sister's line, I say to you,
If he were dead, I myself would fight
Rather than his name bore this slight,
His bones unpurged of such a claim.
But if fortune pleases, Lord Gawain
Will with his own hand prove to you
That his conduct was fair and true,

Nor is he guilty of treachery.
If some other has wronged you, be
Not too eager to spread abroad
A shameful charge against this lord,
Without due cause; for if it should be
That, with his innocence proven, he
Is reconciled to you, your slander
E'en in this brief space will render
Harm to your own good name, I say,
In the eyes of all those here this day.'

Gawain accepts the challenge

HANDSOME Beacurs, Gawain's brother,
Leapt his feet, 'I, and no other,
Must stand surety for Lord Gawain.
Where'er this combat be, tis plain.
For it stirs me greatly he should be
Called a traitor. Come, speak to me,'
He addressed the stranger,' if you
Yet accuse him, I'll fight with you,
And wage this duel in his place.
Since high renown you would disgrace,
Such glory as Lord Gawain enjoys.
Arms must settle it, not mere noise!'
Beacurs knelt before his brother,
Pleadingly, he said: 'Remember,
Honour you always helped me to,
Now let me do this thing for you;
To spare you trouble, let me be
Your champion; undying glory
You shall acquire if I succeed.
So come, let me attempt the deed.'
And he continued so to entreat
His brother, kneeling at his feet,
For the sake of his brother's name.
'Sense enough have I,' said Gawain,

‘Not to grant your brotherly plea,
Though I know not why I should be
Required to fight, nor do I care
For duelling, and thus would wear
With your doing so, if it were not
That dishonour would be my lot.’
Beacurs still begged him, of his grace.

The stranger stayed rooted in place.
‘I know not the one who doth offer
Combat, wish naught in that quarter,’
He said: ‘though he be strong and brave,
Handsome, loyal, nor do I crave
A quarrel with him, tis naught to me;
Yet well that such stands surety.
The man for whose sake I did begin
This matter was my lord and kin,
Our fathers were brothers; never
Did one of that pair fail the other.
My birth entitles me to call
On crowned kings, amidst you all,
To meet in combat, and there avenge
The dead, and I thus seek revenge.
I am a prince of Ascalun,
The Landgrave of Schanpfanzun,
And Kingrimursel is my name.
If he cares for honour, Lord Gawain,
Will come, and duel with me there;
And none shall trouble him, I swear,
In all that land, but myself alone.
Outside the ring, he shall be shown
Naught but respect. May God preserve
All here, may they His grace deserve,
Except for one, who knows, say I,
Of this, the wherefore and the why.’
So saying, the great prince, rode on,
From Plimizoel’s stream he was gone,

And swiftly vanished from their sight.

Once Kingrimursel, that fair knight,
Had named himself, all there agreed,
Recognising his great fame indeed,
That with his far-flung reputation,
Lord Gawain had good occasion
To fear a duel with a man of skill
Of proven courage, and firm will.
Feelings of dread did there prevent
Them honouring him with due intent,
His news being such as might ever
Lead the host to neglect a stranger.
And then from Cundrie they knew
Parzival's name and lineage too,
How that a queen gave birth to him,
Who'd been won by the Angevin.
Many a man said: 'I recall,
How he charged, beneath the wall
Of Kanvoleiz, time after time,
And, with courage near sublime,
Earned that heavenly girl, of right;
He was e'er a chivalrous knight,
For fair Ampflise, France's queen
His tutor in courtesy had been;
And so, all Britons should rejoice
That one whose skill we now voice,
Has come among us, his reputation
As Gahmuret's, has firm foundation.
Nobility seems yoked with him;
And yet her speech afflicted him.'
Both joy and woe that day had come
To Arthur's company; they, as one,
Rose to their feet, filled with sorrow,
Such the existence they did follow;
Of dark and light their seeming fate.
And once arisen, they went straight

To where Parzival and Gawain
Stood close together, and were fain
To console them as best they might.

Clamide wins Cunneware

YET to Clamide, that high-born knight,
It seemed that his fate was the worst,
His torment keen, his life accursed;
Feeling it deeply, he thus spoke all
He felt, to the generous Parzival.
'Though you have met with the Grail,
Not all its splendours would avail
To requite me for my loss, there,
Beneath the walls of Belrepeire;
Not all the wealth of Tribalibot,
Its gold from out the Caucasus got,
Could recompense me for the pain.
Ill-fated, wretched, I complain,
For there you won a queen's fair hand.
Here is Cunneware de Lalant,
This noble princess is so set
On doing as you wish, she'll let
No man serve her, even though
She might gain much by doing so.
Perchance she tires of seeing me
Her prisoner, nigh her constantly.
Now, you must aid me to success,
If I'm to seek fresh happiness.
Let her honour herself, and me,
And thus make part-amends to me
For one you gained, and I did miss,
Who seemed the pinnacle of bliss.
But for you, I might have won her.
Help me to this girl, with honour.'

'That I will,' was Parzival's reply.

'If she would have it so, then I
Would gladly make amends to you,
Since the one whom you'd refer to
As the cause of your woe, is mine,
Condwiramurs, both fair and fine.'
She of Janfuse, the infidel,
Ekuba, Arthur, his Queen as well,
And Cunneware de Lalant,
With Lady Jeschute of Karnant,
Came to solace Clamide, then they
Made Cunneware his own (they say
He with love's fires for her did burn)
While he granted her, in return,
His person, and her head a crown,
Bringing her honour and renown.

Parzival expresses commitment to his quest for the Grail

WITNESSING all, Janfuse's lady,
Addressed Parzival: 'This Cundrie
Named a man, to you a stranger,
Whom I approve of as your brother.
Far and wide doth his realm extend.
The rulers of two kingdoms send
To know his will, obediently,
Fearing his power, on land and sea;
Azagouc, Zazamanc, two lands,
Both mighty, lie in his strong hand,
With wealth that is beyond compare,
Apart from the Baruc's, everywhere
Fabled, and Tribalibot's gold.
His looks are wondrous to behold,
He is, in hue, both black and white,
And, thus, seems as no other knight.
That lord sought to thwart, indeed
My passage, yet did not succeed,
Though I am cousin to his mother,

Being her maternal aunt's daughter.
He is a king though. Many a marvel
I may tell, none keeps his saddle
Jousting with him, such his valour.
None proves as generous. He is ever
The contrary to all things untrue.
In deeds, for ladies' sake, he grew
Inured to pain, Feirefiz Angevin.
Strange though it is for me, I win,
Here, new experience, and I learn
Of knightly deeds. Now I discern,
In you, marks of heavenly favour,
Which, if you behave with honour,
May work to Christendom's glory;
For in you one sees, and truthfully,
Handsome looks, and manly ways,
Strength, youth, all that wins praise.'

This rich and knowing infidel lady,
Had acquired a true facility
In speaking fluent French with ease.
He replied, in such words as these:
'May God reward you for consoling
Me, of your kindness; sad feeling
Holds me prisoner, as I'll explain.
I cannot show my wealth of pain,
Where many, ignorant of my woes
Treat me ill, and mock my throes.
I shall ne'er feel sound and hale,
Nor know joy, till I see the Grail,
Whether that sight be soon or late.
My thoughts directed there, by fate,
Naught shall keep me from it ever.
If I a woman's scorn must suffer,
Well, I have done as I was taught,
Gurnemanz' rules it seems have brought
Me to error, flawed they may be;

That noble man instructed me,
Not to question aught too freely,
And never to prove unmannerly.
Here stands many a worthy knight;
Gentlemen, come, teach me outright,
How I may now win your good will.
For I indeed am smarting still
From harsh words, nor do I shun
Any man whose reproach I've won,
Or favour I have lost, through them.
But if I should win esteem again
In days to come then deal with me
According to my deserts; you see
Me now poised to take leave of you.
While my deeds were fresh and new
You granted me your company.
Well, I declare you all, now, free,
Until I've gained the thing whose lack
Has seared my burgeoning joy; alack,
Great sorrow I must learn to know,
Such as fills eyes with tears of woe,
Since there, at Munsalvaesche, I left
That, which leaves me of joy bereft,
In the care of many a lovely maid.
Whatever wonders are e'er displayed
In mortal tales, the Grail holds more.
Its lord's sad life all must deplore.
What help Anfortas, did I provide,
By sitting, mute there, at your side?'

Parzival takes leave of Arthur's court

THEY could stand there no longer;
Forced to part from one another.
Of Arthur the Briton, Parzival,
And of his knights and ladies all,
Sought leave to go, though scant favour

It won; the judgement that I offer
Is that they grieved to see him ride
With woe following at his side.
Arthur promised him solemnly
That if trouble faced his country
Such as King Clamide had brought,
He'd call it war against his court,
And was angry still that Lahelin
Had wrested two whole realms from him.
Midst many a claim of devotion,
He left, and signs of true affection.

Cunneware did now command
The knight; she took him by the hand
And led him away; Lord Gawain
Now embraced him: 'It is plain,
To me, you'll not escape a fight,
Here or there,' said that brave knight
To Parzival, 'upon your journey;
May God give you then good tourney,
And help me serve you as I'd wish.
God in his power grant us this!'
'What then is God? The knight replied.
'Were He all-powerful, at our side
Working here, with His great might,
He'd not have brought us thus to shame.
Ever since I was taught His name,
I've sought to be a servant of His,
But as of now I'll quit His service.
If He is angered, that will I bear.
My friend, when battle you prepare,
Let a woman work for you instead,
And by her guiding hand be led.
Let the love of one, whom you know
To be virtuous and modest, show
The way, and so watch over you.
I know not if we'll meet, we two,

Yet good wishes go at your side;
May they all be fulfilled!' he cried.
Parting to them true sorrow did give,
A harsh neighbour with whom to live.

Lady Cunneware led Parzival
To her pavilion, then did call,
For his armour, and armed the son
Of Gahmuret; twas gently done.
'It is my privilege and my duty
Since, thanks to you, it is for me
The King of Brandigan has sought.
Care for your noble self has brought
Many a sad sigh, for when I see
You defenceless gainst misery,
Your woes prey on my happiness.'
His war-horse was for battle dressed,
Now greater troubles would begin.
The warrior too was penned within
Glittering steel and his surcoat, set
With gems; then with but his helmet
Requiring to be laced, he kissed
The young and lovely maid, for this
Is what the tale doth claim for her;
And those two, dear to one another,
Briefly, exchanged a sad farewell,
And, after that, the tale doth tell,
Gahmuret's son rode on his way.

Whate'er the wonders, ere this day,
You have known, let none compare
Till they have heard how he doth fare,
Which path he chooses, and where he
Is led to, upon his journey.
Let those who shun a knightly deed,
Think not of him meanwhile, nor heed
What's said of him, if, in their pride,

They're so inclined; but let him ride.
Condwiramurs, how oft your same
Lovely person will this man name!
With what adventures he will meet,
What exploits lay there at your feet!
The office of the shield henceforth
Herzeloide's child pursued, his course
Such as might bring him to the Grail,
Where he was co-heir, in entail.

Now, many of Arthur's men set out
Towards that place they'd heard about,
Schastel Marveile, and on did fare;
Four hundred damsels were there,
All prisoners, four queens also.
Yet what befell them there, no, no,
They may keep it; I bear no grudge;
Where'er the ladies are to judge
Of our reward, I lag far behind.
So Cliaus the Greek, did also find:
'For I missed the mark there,' he said,
'The Turkoyt sent me heels o'er head,
Florant of Itolac, his true name;
He unhorsed me, to my deep shame;
Nonetheless, he named the ladies
Fit to wear a crown, and worthy
Of doing so; though two are old,
Yet two are young, all this he told:
The first's Gawain's sister, Itonje,
The next her elder sister Cundrie,
The third, their mother, is Sangive,
The fourth her mother, Queen Arnive.'
The knights wished to see the place,
With their own eyes, but tis the case
They found it not upon their journey.
And were discomfited entirely.
Yet why should we deplore the fact?

To some who painful deeds enact
For women it may bring happiness,
Yet woe weighs others down no less;
And such is oft the way of Love,
Who sparse with her rewards doth prove.

Gawain departs for Ascalun, and the gathering disperses

THEN Lord Gawain prepared, as one
Who his own cause would champion,
Before Ascalun's king; though many
A Briton, many a knight and lady,
Many a wife, and many a maid,
Mourned the fact, and displayed
Their grief at this martial venture,
That drew him away, moreover
The Round Table would be bereft
Of all its glory. Yet, ere he left,
Gawain took good care to acquire
Sufficient gear, sound and entire.
Certain merchants, midst their wares,
Found some seasoned shields of theirs,
Not meant for sale, but, generously,
Of these they gave the warrior three.
He then acquired seven chargers
Trained to martial encounters,
And, from his good friends, a dozen
Keen lances, as wrought in Angram;
Each with a fine shaft of bamboo,
One chosen to be strong and true;
From the marshes of heathendom,
At Oraste Gentesin, they'd come.
Gawain now took his leave of all,
While Arthur gave him gifts withal
Rich and fine, fair gems, red gold,
Bright sterling silver, we are told.
Gawain was destined now for danger.

Ekuba, the infidel stranger,
Janfuse's queen, in re-embarking
Put an end to that great gathering.
The lords and ladies rode away,
Each set upon their separate way,
While Arthur left the Plimizoel,
And swift returned to Karidoel;
Clamide took leave of the king,
He and his Cunneware choosing,
With Jeschute and Count Orilus,
To pass another three days thus,
In those meadows, to celebrate
Their nuptials, while at a date
To be arranged, they'd later hold
Their wedding feast; and, so I'm told,
In his own country, without fail,
It did take place, on a larger scale.
Many a knight, noble but poor,
Remained in his train and, more,
All the travelling entertainers,
Joined his crowd of retainers,
As his munificence did demand.
And these he took to his own land,
Where his goods and chattels went
To fund them, such his good intent.
No dealing them some lame excuse!
At his request, the Lady Jeschute
Rode to Brandigan, with Orilus
Her dear lord, to honour things thus;
Orilus' sister, there, was crowned,
For Cunneware her place had found.

Wolfram defends his treatment of women

NOW any woman born, who's wise
And reads all this, tis my surmise,

If she's sincere, she must agree
That I have sung more pleasingly
Of women than I did once before
Of a certain lady; here's the score:
Queen Belacane, of all faults free,
Proved devoid of all falsity
When Isenhart wooed her, that dead king;
While Herzeloide's dream did bring
A veil of sighs to cloud her heart;
And Guinevere with tears did part
On that sad day of Ither's passing;
Then pity moved me that the King
Of Karnant's daughter, well-renowned
For modesty, Jeschute, was gowned
So ill, and thereby put to shame,
Paraded through the wind and rain;
Think how Cunneware, who greeted
Parzival, was thrashed, ill-treated,
Gripped by her hair; yet those two
Have been avenged, and so, anew,
Have found true esteem, and suffer
From such scorn and blows no longer.

Next, let some fellow take in hand
This tale, one who doth understand
How to tell a story, and rhyme
Sound couplets so they sweetly chime,
Though I would gladly tell you more,
Did I command a tongue more sure,
And did my awkward stirrups bear
Other feet than are dangling there.

Book VII: Gawain at Bearosche

Gawain meets with an army, and then a squire

THIS tale will follow for a while

Gawain, that knight devoid of guile,
Who never did a shameful deed;
For it takes friendly note, indeed,
Of many besides Parzival,
Though he's its hero, amidst all.
Deficient are such folk as praise
Their favourite yet scorn a phrase
That honours some deserving other.
A poet who the truth would utter
Whene'er his hero he commends,
On approbation he depends
To inspire him, for otherwise
His house is open to the skies.
Who but the wise can thus ensure
That words of sense forth do pour?
Deceitful tales, made but for show,
Are best left sprawling in the snow,
Without a patron, with none to care.
Then if they claim that truth is there,
Those lying tongues would surely freeze,
And God would worthy poets please,
Whose honesty sees them take pains.
For when a noble patron maintains
An audience for those who desire
Base works, he but honours the liar,
And shows a lack of discernment.
Had he a sense of shame, his intent
Would be to choose a better course.

Gawain was ever an honest force
In battle; valour clothed his name,
Cowardice ne'er touched his fame.
In war, he was a tower of strength
Looming above the fray, immense,
Apparent midst the worst melee;
And friend and foe, in such affray,
Declared his shout was ever clear;

As honour to him was ever dear,
Howe'er Kingrimursel had sought
To challenge him before the court.

How many days it was since he
Had of King Arthur taken leave,
I know not, but now, departing
A wide forest, he was crossing
A valley, with all his retinue,
When a large army came in view,
On the march, with many a banner,
A daunting sight that served however
Only to make his courage swell.
'Far too late to retreat, as well,'
He thought, and so he told his squire
That his charger he did desire,
The steed a gift from Orilus,
Unsought for, and most generous,
Named Gringuljete of the Red Ears,
From Munsalvaesche, as it appears,
Being that mount Lahelin did gain
Beside the shore of Lake Brumbane,
Thrusting a brave knight to the earth
Such that he died, that man of worth,
As Trevrizent would later relate.
'When a man is in such a state
He turns tail ere he is assailed,
Losing heart, his courage failed,
It adds but little to his good name.'
'I shall advance,' said Lord Gawain,
'Whate'er occurs; in any case,
They have seen us nearing apace;
There is ever some means of flight.'

He dismounted did that brave knight,
As though to make a halt; there rode
In company, on that valley road,

Countless squadrons, the riders wore
Well-cut tunics, and shields they bore
With emblems strange to him, he knew
Not these pennants that came in view.
'I'm as strange to them, as they to me,
I've ne'er before seen these I see,'
He said, 'yet, if they seek a fight,
Then I will joust with them outright
Ere ever I seek to turn away.'
Now Gringuljete was in full array,
A steed who'd met many another
Swift attack in some tight corner,
Such as was destined for him here.
For many a bright helm did appear,
Adorned with crests, and the pages,
In toilsome sport for little wages,
Bore many a new painted lance,
Their lords' emblems to advance.
King Lot's son, my Lord Gawain,
Saw lines of mules, a mighty train,
Bearing equipment, and then a host
Of deep-laden wagons it did boast;
Camp-followers, in usual manner
All confusion and ne'er a banner;
And 'ladies' with many a cincture
Given as pledge to win their favour;
No queens were they but those we call
Soldiers' sweethearts; bless 'em all;
And there too many a vagabond
Dragging his weary limbs along,
Young or old, though some had better
Graced the gallows than dishonour
Worthy folk by swelling the ranks.

Now, as to this, Gawain gave thanks
That, as he waited, it passed him by,
This army, pennants against the sky,

For any that saw him halted there
Thought him a part of their affair.
No prouder company might you see,
On this, or the other side of the sea,
All in high spirits, as they passed on.
Hard on their tracks, and they scarce gone,
Came a noble squire, at his saddle-bow
A riderless horse, while he bore also
A bran new shield and spurred away
At his mount, in haste to join the fray.
His clothes they were of the finest cut.

Gawain rode up to him, then put
A question to him, after greeting
Him most courteously on meeting,
As to whose retinue had gone by.
'Sir you mock me,' was his reply,
'Had I incurred your wrath before,
I could not be dishonoured more.
You and the others better know
Each other than I; why ask me so?
You are a thousand times better
Informed than I of all this matter.'
Gawain denied that he knew any
Of those who had passed, and many
An oath he swore that this was so.
'My travels are wide, and yet I know
None of these knights, to my disgrace,
None have I seen in any place
Where my services were needed.'

The squire tells Gawain of King Meljanz and Duke Lyppaut

'SIR, I was wrong,' the squire conceded,
'I should have answered you at first.
My judgement failed me; do your worst,

Deal with my error as you wish,
And I will tell you gladly of this.
First, I am sorry for my manner.’
‘All credit to your sense of honour;
Come, tell me who they are, young man.’
‘His bold advance none can withstand,
The one who marched by you, but now,
And a fine warrior, I avow,
His name is King Poydiconjunz,
With him Duke Astor of Lanverunz,
And with him rides a wretch who never
Freely won a woman’s favour;
He wears the crown of true dishonour,
And his name is King Meljahkanz,
Any pleasure that, by mischance,
He had of woman was had by force.
Death he’s earned, such the course
Of evil he’s embarked upon,
He is King Poydiconjunz’ son
And set on doing many a deed
Of arms, and so he does indeed,
Shows his courage and resolution.
What merit though, in such action?
Even a sow shows bravery
Defending her farrow, savagely,
Yet I ne’er heard any man praised
Whose courage was not appraised
Alongside his sense of decency,
And many here will agree with me.
‘Sir, listen to a wondrous thing;
I’ll tell you the tale, start to ending.
Meljanz of Liz, comes behind you,
A great army that king brings too,
Spurred on by his pride and anger,
Being but a thwarted lover.
I’ll tell it as it did befall,
My lord, for I witnessed it all.

King Meljanz' father did summon
His greatest nobles, every one,
To his bedside, the pledge it seemed
For his brave life was not redeemed
And so, he must surrender to death.
He commended, with his last breath,
Young Meljanz to all men present.
Now, privately, the king had sent
For a prince of the high nobility,
The faithful Duke Lyppaut, one free
Of guile, and asked him to raise
His son, "Teach him virtuous ways,
Prove your love; let him show honour
To kith and kin, and to the stranger,
And should any needy man
Desire him let him take his hand
And have him share in what he has."
Commending the boy, he died alas.
Now all was done by Duke Lyppaut
As was requested by King Schaut
On his death-bed, naught was ignored,
All was discharged well by this lord.
Duke Lyppaut raised the lad at home,
Where he had children of his own,
Whom he loved, and still does so,
An elder, the source of all this woe,
Obie, a daughter fit for a wooer,
And Obilot, her younger sister.

One day it seems this young king
Asked her to reward his wooing.
She cursed his addled wits and said
Too full of fancies was his head,
Of his senses he'd taken leave.
'If you were of age, then, I believe,
If you fought and proved your worth
Where events to honour give birth,

Amidst the fray, behind a shield,
Helm on head, and did not yield,
For five full years, and then did stand
Before me, all at my command,
And I said yes to your desire,
Twere still too soon; oh, I admire
You, as Annore did Galoes, he
Found death, and later so did she,
After losing him, in that fight!

‘I would not have you love a knight
So greatly madam, that you vent
Your anger on him, at all event.
If love is but to receive its due,
Then mercy must play its role too.
If you disdain my wooing so,
You go too far; all turns to woe.
You’ll outrun yourself; I thought
Twas in my favour that at court
Your father stands my loyal man,
From me he holds his towns and land.’
‘May any who do so, so deserve!’
She said, ‘I am not meant to serve;
The mark I set myself is higher,
To hold a fief is not my desire.
My freedom doth fit me instead
For any crown on a mortal head!’
‘Your father has put you up to this!
Your pride is swollen, as is his,
And amends now he shall make
For wronging me; make no mistake,
I shall wield arms to such effect
I’ll guarantee greater respect;
Hacking, thrusting there will be,
Lances shattered, in war or tourney!’

Full of wrath he took leave of her,

The retainers regretting his anger,
As did she. Faced with disgrace,
Blameless Lyppaut asked for grace,
Declaring he'd stand trial, though
Offering other amends; and so,
Whate'er the rights and wrongs might be,
He sought justice, and made his plea,
At a council of the princes and peers,
Claiming innocence, as it appears,
And seeking his sovereign's favour,
But Meljanz, consumed by anger,
Showing not an ounce of pity,
Withheld from him all hope of mercy.

Now it was not Duke Lyppaut's way
To harm his lord, indeed, to this day,
Loyal men ne'er mistreat their guest.
Misled by faulty judgement, at best,
The king departed without due leave.
Lyppaut's squires did sorely grieve,
Each being some great prince's son;
Lyppaut had tutored them, every one,
Denying them naught they might need.
Concerning them, he has indeed
Fear of none, except Lisavander,
Burgrave of Beauvais, commander
In France, whom he'd treated well.
These squires the affair did compel
To break with the Duke, formally,
Bowing to him on bended knee,
On assuming the shield as knights,
For the king, asserting his rights,
Invested many a prince this day
And other squires, in full array.
The army then that marches ahead,
Has a martial warrior at its head,
This King Poydiconjanz of Gors;

Many a knight in his concourse.
Meljanz is his paternal nephew,
The young man and his uncle too
Are both given to arrogant ways;
Ever the proud the proud do raise!
The anger's so great in this affair
That those two kings marching there
Will besiege Bearosche, and so,
There, ladies' favours will, we know,
Cause many a lance to be broken,
Harsh blows exchanged for a token.
Bearosche's defences are such
That had we twenty armies, much
Greater still than those met here,
We would not take it still, I fear.
I slipped away from my fellow squires
With this shield, for my lord desires
To be the first to joust, this shield
Is the first he's borne in any field.'
The squire glanced back and saw his lord,
Approaching with three mounts, aboard
Were twelve fair lances gleaming white,
All could see his intent to fight,
Racing ahead of the vanguard there
To lay a claim to the first affair.
'Now sir, I'd best ride back again,'
Said the squire to my Lord Gawain,
And turned to join his lord anew.

Gawain rides to the siege of Bearosche

WHAT would you have that brave knight do,
But gaze more closely at it all?
Yet he was unsure what might befall.
'If I look on while others fight,
Avoiding battle,' mused the knight,
'What then for my renown and fame?

Yet if I fight and fall, my name
Must be tarnished, as one who sought
To shun the fight he should have fought.
That shall not happen, I must still
Seek that promised duel, and will.’
Here was a painful quandary,
Were he to stay, what of his journey
To Ascalun? Yet he could not
Simply ride by, the siege forgot.
‘God preserve my life,’ he cried,
‘My skill, and strength, and all beside!’
Then he rode on, in the direction
Of Bearosche, seeking action.

Soon, before him, lay the town,
Its keep so fine that none around
Was housed as well, in every way,
As was this Duke Lyppaut, I’d say.
The castle decked with towers a-plenty
Seemed to him of striking beauty.
The enemy were all camped below
Where many a rich tent did show,
Pride displayed, banners on high;
A host of followers met the eye.
His decision still troubling him,
And pricking at his heart within,
Gawain rode straight through the foe,
Whose pavilions filled the field below.
Gawain noted all that was there,
And how each group of men did fare.
The calls of ‘*bien sey venuz!*’ did he
Answer with one word ‘*Gramerzi!*’
In numbers, there, on the one side
Men from Semblidac did abide,
Nearby, set apart, he could see
Mounted archers, from Kaheti.
Who loves a stranger? Lord Gawain,

King Lot's son, rode on again,
Since none invited him to stay,
And to the castle made his way.

'If I'm to keep myself intact,'
He thought, 'tis far better, in fact,
To be up at the castle than down
Here, and so besieging the town,
For I seek naught in all the ruck
But not to forfeit my good luck.'
Gawain rode on towards the gate,
Though many an obstacle of late
Had been placed across the way,
And all the towers were armed that day,
And every battlement was manned,
By marksmen, crossbow in hand,
Leaning forward, prepared to fire;
The work of war was their desire.
Lord Gawain rode on, up the hill,
Though all was strange to him, until
He reached the palace where he saw
A crowd of ladies, a balcony bore;
For the Duchess with her daughters
Had gone there, from her quarters,
To watch the happenings outside.
And, indeed, twas Gawain they spied,
Who soon heard all they chose to say:
'Who's this stranger upon the way?'
'And with servants too,' said the mother.
'A merchant!' cried the elder daughter.
'And yet they carry his shields, I vow.'
'Well so do lots of merchants now.'
'Tis never so,' declared the younger,
'You ought to be ashamed, my sister,
He was never a merchant; right
Handsome he is; he'll be my knight,
And serve me well, and seek reward,

Which I shall give, since he's a lord!

Now Gawain's squires could clearly see
A linden, and many an olive-tree,
Set there below the palace wall,
Thinking good fortune did befall;
Imagine now what they did do?
And King Lot's son alighted too,
Where he found the coolest shade,
As his chamberlain decked the glade
With a mattress and quilt; on these
The valiant knight reclined at ease,
While, above, a host of women met.
His clothes and armour all were set
Upon the grass, and then the squires
As this cool glade met their desires,
Neath the other trees took their place.
'Yet no merchant doth show such grace,'
Said the Duchess, to the elder,
'So, vilify him not, my daughter.'
'She doth allow her ill manner,
Ever to get the better of her,'
Cried Obilot, the younger maid,
'She was too haughty, I'm afraid,
With King Meljanz of Liz when he
Sued for her favour; cursed be
Such sentiments, I do avow!'
'I care not a fig where or how
He appears, that wretched man
Is but a merchant!' Obie began
To quiver, consumed by anger,
'He'll do a good trade, however,
Your valiant knight's goods are so well
Guarded that, best as I can tell,
He'll guard himself right closely too.'
Gawain suffered all this, for you
Should know their words had reached his ear.

The siege is preceded by a ‘tourney’

BUT let us leave the matter here,
And listen to events in town.
A navigable stream ran down
Beside it, neath a bridge of stone.
On its far side, the field alone
Was free of the enemy as yet.
A marshal now arrived, and set
Over the wide space of meadow
Placements for his lord, to show
He held the bridgehead, and his lord
Duly appeared. Help he'd afford
The town, for he had come in force,
And if you have not heard perforce,
Who came riding to Lyppaut's aid,
I'll tell you: Duke Marangliez,
His brother, from Brevigariez
Had marched his men, and there
For love of him, a valiant pair
Of knights came too; King Schirniel,
And Schirniel's brother Mirabel,
He wore the crown of Avendroyn,
The former that of Lirivoyn.

When those within the fortress saw
This aid approaching, they deplored
The measures they had undertaken;
The obstructions seemed mistaken.
'Alas, that Bearosche bars the gate!'
Duke Lyppaut grieved now at his fate,
'Now I must challenge my liege lord
My good manners go by the board;
Yet his favour would serve better
Than his enmity; shall I gather
Some lance-thrust through my shield,

Or worse still wound him in the field?
If any lady in her right mind
Were to praise that, she would find
Herself condemned as but a fool.
If my lord in a cell were to cool
Himself, then I'd have to free him,
And be obliged to pursue him,
And place myself in one of his.
Yet I give thanks to God for this:
I am not yet his prisoner,
Seeing that, such is his anger,
He lays siege to this fair place.
Give me counsel, of your grace,'
'He said to those around him, 'how
Shall we deal with this matter now?'

'If he'd but known your innocence
We'd not have needed this defence,'
All those of good judgement agreed.
They counselled, in his hour of need,
That the great gate be opened wide,
And then the best of those inside
Should ride forth and offer combat.
'Tis better the King replies to that,
Than from the walls, with difficulty,
We seek to fight with Meljanz' army.
Many a noble squire did he bring,
We'll win a hostage from the King,
Such as may serve to quell his anger;
And then knightly deeds may offer
A means to temper wrath, and so
Suggest that you are friend not foe.
Single combat would suit us more
Than that they, in true act of war,
Prise us from the walls. Were it not
That Poydiconjunz his back has got,
With the pick of their fighting men,

We'd drive them off; but then again,
There are Duke Astor's captive Britons,
And King Poydiconjunz' son,
Brave Meljahkanz, is also there.
Had Prince Gurnemanz had the care
Of that fellow, he would have stood
In high repute, tis all to the good
That we have reinforcements now.'
Twas sound advice, you will allow,
So, Duke Lyppaut oped the gate,
And his men marched to their fate.
Here was a joust, there another,
The enemy too had drawn together,
And with good spirit did progress.
The 'tourney' now met with success.
On both sides, countless companies
Sought to engage their enemies;
Many a great lord's page cried out.
(Some in Scots or Welsh did shout!)
The noble knights fought hard indeed,
Yet with no rules of ransom agreed.
Squires who came forth, from within
The ranks of the besiegers, did win
Many a joust, yet those who lost
Found they were treated, to their cost,
As countrymen deal with trespassers
At harvest-time, for the defenders
Bound them forfeit. None wore finer
Clothes than these squires moreover,
Except those old enough to be
Gifted clothes by some fine lady.

Meljanz rode a tall Castilian
Decked in a fine caparison;
His high spirits much admired.
His mount Meljahkanz had acquired,
When he thrust Kay into the air,

To such a height, in some affair,
He left him hanging from a tree,
And dangling there for all to see.
Since he had won it in fair fight,
Meljanz rode it here, as of right.
And, indeed, he gave of his best,
His deeds praised above the rest,
All viewed by Obie, the elder sister,
From the Palace where, together,
The two girls gazed upon the scene.

‘Look sister,’ she said, ‘there, I mean,
Where our two brave knights, I fear,
Seem scarcely equal; it doth appear
That yours is of the strong opinion
That we must fail in our mission,
And lose both the palace and town;
A bolder champion must be found!’
Such taunts the younger had to bear
From her sister, in this affair.
‘He can retrieve all, I believe;
He is sound enough to receive
Your sharp arrows and yet survive.
He must address himself, alive,
To me; I’ll grant him happiness.
Since he is a ‘merchant’ no less,
He can bargain for his reward!’
Gawain listened to their discord,
But, as was seemly, never stirred,
Nor gave a sign, nor said a word.
Tis death alone commits robbery,
And steals a true heart’s modesty.

Poydiconjunz’ army stood by.
Only one noble caught the eye,
The Duke of Lanverunz, Astor,
In action there, till the King of Gors,

Poydiconjunz, the tried campaigner,
Rode to him, and gathered together
Various knights to be led away.
For the 'tourney', he'd come to say,
Was over, with its sundry blows,
Bravely fought for love of those
Lovely ladies who reigned elsewhere;
Of wounds these knights had their share.

'Had you no thought,' Poydiconjunz
Now asked the Duke of Lanverunz,
'Of waiting for me ere you fought?
Twas but vainglory that you sought.
Is that your idea of a valiant deed?
Should Count Laheduman, indeed,
He of Muntane, and Meljahkanz
My son, who doth bravely prance,
And I myself, in arms, ride out
You'd see something to shout about,
Could you but a true judgement yield.
I'll not depart this battlefield
Till every man has had his fill
Of fighting the foe, or until
All the folk that there may be
In that great fortress yield to me!'

'Your royal nephew went before
With his army of Liz,' cried Astor,
And is your army then to sleep?
Are these the hours that your men keep?
Well, if that is what you teach us,
I'll sleep too when war's upon us.
For I sleep well while others fight!
And yet I think, if some brave knight
Had not appeared, the end of it
Was they'd have had all the credit,
And advantage, before your face;

Tis I have saved you from disgrace.
In God's name put aside your anger!
More was won by risking danger,
Than was lost by your folk; only
The cause, it seems, was Lady Obie!
Poydiconjunz' anger he now turned
Upon Meljanz, though he had earned
New-fledged fame, as was but just,
His shield pierced by many a thrust.
But tis Obie we'll consider.

**Obie, Duke Lyppaut's elder daughter, acts maliciously towards
Gawain**

HER ire was aimed altogether
At Gawain, though naught had he
Done to rouse it; maliciously,
Seeking to humble him, at that,
She sent a page to where he sat.
'Go ask if his horses are for sale,
And whether or not he has a bale
Or two of cloth in his panniers he
Would wish to trade; say that we
Women will buy them, everything,
And without a moment's haggling.'
When the lad approached Gawain
He met with anger, that was plain.
The glittering in Gawain's eyes
Terrified him, and his surprise
Was such he failed to speak a word
Of the message that he had heard
From his mistress' lips; Gawain,
Made no great effort to restrain
His ire: 'Wretch, begone!' he said,
'Come a step nearer, and your head
Will be ringing ere I am done.'
Off went the page then, at a run.

Now hear what this Obie did seek.
She sent a gentleman to speak
To the Burgrave of the town,
Scherules, a man of fair renown.
'You are to ask him for a favour;
Say I'd have him act with vigour.
By the moat, neath the olive trees,
Are seven chargers he must seize.
Those horses, and what else is there
He must take. Make him aware
That the merchant would cheat us,
And a Burgrave should protect us.
I rely on his powers to arraign
The merchant, and his goods obtain
All without payment, and then he
May keep them, as a gift from me.'
Off to this lord the young man sped,
And spoke all his mistress had said.
'I'm here to keep us from knavery,
Replied Scherules, I'll go and see.'
He rode to where our brave Gawain
Was seated and could see, twas plain,
The man was a most handsome knight,
Broad chested, strong, a goodly sight,
Naught lacking, a fine countenance,
So circumspectly he did advance.
'My lord,' said he, 'as a stranger here,
A lack of judgement, it doth appear,
Has left you without a lodging,
And, to me, tis most concerning,
So, I myself shall be your groom,
All my folk, and a pleasant room
I shall place at your command;
No guest could e'er find, at hand,
A more willing host to serve you.'
'Thank you, my lord, I see tis true,
Though little as yet I have done,

I'm grateful for your invitation.'

The Burgrave Scherules grants Gawain his protection

NOW, Scherules by all was known
For the kindness he'd e'er shown,
And his good heart led him to say
'Since it falls upon me, this day,
Here I shall be your guarantor
Against all loss; if, in this war,
These besiegers seek to rob you,
I shall be there, alongside you,
Fighting at your side.' He turned
To the pages, a smile they earned:
'Load up your gear, let naught remain!
Off, with his host, went Lord Gawain.

Obie had sent a minstrel, her name
Known to her father, to that same,
To tell him that a counterfeiter
Was on his way: 'His goods are better
Than most, and since my father
Pays his mercenaries in silver,
Horses and clothes, ask him outright,
As he is a true and worthy knight,
To use this man's wealth so to do,
Tis enough for seven men, say you.'
The woman repeated what she'd heard
To Duke Lyppaut, and word for word.
A knight engaged in war, a lord,
Was oft at a loss how to afford
To pay his mercenaries and so
The honest Duke once he did know
Of this matter thought: 'Tis wise,
To acquire the goods, and realise
All peaceably, or if not so won,
Then otherwise it must be done.

He met Scherules as he rode out,
Who asked him what he was about.
'A swindler have I in my sights,
A coiner, a cheater of knights.'
Scherules laughed; he knew Gawain
Was innocent, and it seemed plain
The spare mounts and equipment
Had led to this strange indictment.
'Whoever told you this, my lord,
Man, woman or maid, be assured
You are mistaken; he's my guest,
And innocent, as I here attest.
He's no merchant, let him speak,
And if tis a true knight you seek
You shall agree this man is one.
He's no trickster, and anyone
Be it my own child, or father,
A kinsman, e'en my dear brother,
Who harms him must deal with me.
For I'll defend him, willingly,
If it loses me not your favour.
I'd rather join some holy order,
Dress in sackcloth, leave this life
Of chivalry, and flee from strife
To some place where none know me,
Nor aught of my nobility,
Than that you harm him, and bring shame,
By doing so, on your good name.
Better to give fair welcome to
Those who are seeking to aid you,
Having heard of your woes, than steal
From them; so you ought to deal
With such a man.' 'Then show him me,'
Replied the Duke, 'no harm I see
In that.' He rode to seek Gawain.
As soon as his honest eyes did gain
A sight of the man, the Duke knew

He was noble, and handsome too,
And replete with manly qualities.

Now, when another doth so please
That affection makes us suffer
The pangs of love (the heart ever
Forfeit to true Love is, of old,
Mortgaged up to the hilt, and sold)
No lips can e'er recount them all,
All Love's wonders, that may befall.
Whether in man or woman, Love
A bar to self-knowledge may prove.
Obie and Meljanz loved so deeply,
They should earn your sympathy.
His anger, and then the hurt she felt
By his riding away, the blow it dealt
To her pride, roused her wrath too.
This she had turned upon Gawain,
Who of all was the least to blame,
And showed him her fierce displeasure,
While her companions shared a measure.
Obie proved less than ladylike;
The sight of a handsome man would strike
To her heart, like a thorn, and deeper,
Such that modesty vied with anger,
Since her heart said Meljanz must be
The finest of all! 'Well,' thought she,
'If he brings me woe, for his sake
I must suffer, and no mistake.
I love that dear and noble man
More than the world, and so my plan
Is forced upon me by deep feeling!'
Such the love she was concealing;
Even now Love occasions anger,
So be kind to Obie, dear stranger!

Gawain indulges the child Obilot and pledges to be 'her knight'

WHAT Duke Lyppaut said, hear now
When face to face with him, and how
He welcomed the knight to his domain.
'My lord,' he said to my Lord Gawain,
'Good fortune you bring, for my eye
Has never been so charmed (though I
Have travelled widely) by any man.
This day of your coming, see, it can
Console us in our woes, for tis true
You possess the power so to do.'
And he asked Gawain to join the fight.
'If you should lack aught that a knight
May need, let us provide the rest,
Join my detachment, as my guest.'
'I would be willing,' said Gawain,
'Since I'm prepared, but then again,
I am banned from all such action,
Till a certain term is past and done.
I would make common cause with you,
E'en with the odds clean against you,
But must not fight, though it be sought,
Until that private duel is fought,
In which my honour is at stake,
Such that, if I make no mistake,
Pledged to maintain my name,
I must defend that very same
In combat, or die in the attempt;
And I journey now, with that intent.'
To Lyppaut this news brought woe.
'Sir,' said he, 'I would beg you though
To hear my tale of innocence,
As regards the charge and dire offence
That caused this war; your nobility
And gracious breeding owe it me.
I have two daughters, whom I love,

And so, whate'er the Lord above
Has blessed me with in this pair,
I am content; though woe be there,
Yet I am fortunate to have them.
One shares a sorrow in common
With me though working differently,
For my lord doth treat her hurtfully
With his love for her, yet doth prove
As regards myself, void of love.
Because she'll not have him, he
Wishes to wreak revenge on me.
Yet I, indeed, love my daughter
What matter then if I must suffer?
I count it a blessing, such sorrow.
And as to my lack of sons, though
A daughter may not wield a blade,
She is as useful, when she's made
A marriage with some spirited match,
One that her modest ways may catch.
Providing her father helps her choose,
A son-in-law would prove good news.'
'May God grant your wish', replied
Gawain, while Lyppaut still tried
To tempt the knight to join the war.
'Pursue it not,' said he, as before;
'As a gentleman, nobly born,
Seek not for me to be foresworn.
Yet I shall see what I might do,
And, ere nightfall, I'll tell it you.'
Lyppaut thanked him, and made to go,
Yet in the courtyard, there below,
Found Obilot, his little daughter,
With Clauditte, Scherules' daughter,
Playing a game. 'Whence come you?'
He said, embracing the child anew,
'Father,' she said, 'I'm here to ask
This stranger to undertake a task;

Tis to be my knight-servitor,
For he will do so, I feel sure.'
'My daughter, he said nor no nor yes,
Now, to my most heart-felt request
That he should fight for us; yet pursue
The matter, for he may fight for you.'
So, off she sped to seek the stranger.

As Obilot entered his chamber,
Gawain leapt to his feet, and after
Greeting her, sat down beside her,
And thanked her for being kind,
When he was wrongly maligned.
'If e'er a knight was affected by
So charming a little lady, I
Confess myself charmed by you!'
'Heaven knows, sir, it is true,'
The sweet child said, 'I vow,
That this is but the first time now,
I was e'er alone with a man so.
If I may do so without a show
Of immodesty or indiscretion,
I should enjoy a conversation,
For my governess says I'll find
That fair speech adorns the mind.
My lord, tis for love's own sake
A request of you I would make,
And I will name it by your leave,
For though you think the worse of me,
I'll have spoken fittingly, too,
For I ask myself in asking you;
Though we are two, maid and man,
We are but one, if hand in hand.
Now have I asked both you and me,
If you dismiss me, shamefully,
With a refusal, your good name
Will have to answer to this same

Courtesy that I find in you,
Since I am a maid who seeks, tis true,
Your sympathy. Love I offer,
With all my heart, if tis your pleasure;
And then if yours be knightly ways,
I know you will serve me always,
I who am worthy to be served.
If my father has not deserved
Your aid as a kinsman or friend,
That is no reason not to lend
Your assistance for love alone.’
‘Madam, the music,’ he replied
Of your lips (and here he sighed)
Would part me thus from my honour,
Be not a friend now to dishonour,
For mine is pawned and must be
Redeemed or twill be death to me.
Granted I was to show devotion,
And gift you my every attention,
You must be five years older yet
Before your true love could be met
With true response, for only then
Can you be mistress among men.’
Yet he recalled how Parzival
Had placed good women above all,
Trusting less in God than them,
And his counsel echoed again
In my Lord Gawain’s heart, as though
It was some angelic voice, and so
He gave his promise to this child,
For he and honour were reconciled;
‘Let my sword be in your fair hand,
And if any would joust, understand,
You must attack them, forge ahead,
And fight them bravely in my stead.
The folk will see me fighting there,
But tis you who’ll order the affair.’

‘That will trouble me not at all,’
She said, ‘I’ll be your shield, and call
Myself your heart, and faith, and be
Your protection, most loyally,
Now you have freed me from doubt.
When misfortune seeks you out,
I shall be your friend and guide,
A shelter from the storm provide
And sweet repose. My love shall fence
You round with peace, be your defence,
And good luck charm, when you must face
Danger, in some hazardous place,
And then shall rouse your courage
To inspire you, and encourage
You to strive for your lord, anew;
For I am your lord and lady too,
And shall be ever at your side;
If your faith but in that reside,
Neither courage nor fortune will
Forsake you; you’ll possess them still.’
‘Madam,’ Gawain replied, ‘since I
Am at your command, then shall I
Receive your love, and the benefit
That you confer upon me with it.’
And all this time her little hand
Lay between his, you understand.
‘Now my lord, let me go,’ she said,
‘For I to my duty must be wed.
How would you fare without my token?
I must provide one, now I’ve spoken,
I shall not be found wanting here,
For you to me prove far too dear.
When you wear it no man’s fame
Shall mar the glory of your name.’

The child Obilot sends Gawain her love-token

AFTER making their devotion plain,
The girl and her playmate left Gawain,
Who thanked them, with many a bow.
'When you are grown, I do avow,
Twould be but a meagre yield for you
If the forest bore such lances true
As it has trees now in full number.
If young though you are, you render
Some man your servant and retain
Your charm till then,' said Gawain,
'Many a knight to you will yield
Obedience, and break many a shield!'
And away the girls went happily.
'Tell me, my lady,' said Clauditte,
What token do you think is meet?
Seeing tis naught but dolls we share,
If mine should have the prettier hair
Let him have her, I'll not argue;
No quarrels betwixt me and you.'

Now Duke Lyppaut was but half-way
Up the hill, while making his way
To the castle, when he saw the pair,
Obilot and Clauditte, walking there,
And called on them to stop. 'Father,'
Cried Obilot, 'your help I've never
Needed as much as now. Tell me,
What should I gift a knight, for, see!
The stranger's granted my request.
'You shall have of the very best,
Daughter; it eases a weight of care
That your love such fruit doth bear!
Your birth day was a happy one!'
'I'll whisper to you, when tis done,
You must counsel me what to do,
For indeed I now depend on you.'
Lyppaut had her lifted on high,

And set her on the saddle nigh,
‘What will become of my playmate?’
She whispered. There were a great
Number of knights, attendant there,
And they all vied in this affair
As to who would take Clauditte
As their ‘lady’; she was a sweet
And pretty child as well, and would
Adorn any brave man who should.
As they rode on, her good father
Sought to unburden his daughter:
‘Obilot, tell me of your concern.’
‘I did promise the knight, in turn,
A love-token; how mad that was!
What shall I do, now that he has
Offered to serve me in the field
If I can find no gift to yield?
If there’s no gift, then, as I live,
I’ll blush for shame; what should I give?
For no girl has so loved a man.’
‘Rest easy, daughter, I’ve a plan,’
Answered Lyppaut, ‘I will provide
What you need, twill be supplied.
You will have such from your father
If tis not conjured by your mother.
Heaven grant I see some benefit,
And gain the stranger’s aid by it.
Proud and noble he is, and I
Have great hopes of him, by and by.
Though I knew it not, it would seem
Twas him I saw last night in dream.’

Lyppaut and his daughter went
To the Duchess to gain consent.
‘My lady, he said, ‘grant what we need;
My whole being feels joy, indeed,
That God has given us this child

So, I to fate might be reconciled.’
‘What would you have,’ she replied,
‘Of all I possess?’ ‘You shall decide,
Madam, but new clothes she will need,
Thus, the matter should now proceed;
With so illustrious a knight,
Aspiring to her love, tis right;
For he requires a love-token,
And of serving her has spoken.’
‘That fine fellow!’ said the mother,
‘I take it you mean the stranger,
Whose glance is like the sun in May!’
And off she bustled, straight away,
Called for her samite to be brought,
Twas from Ethnise, and also sought
Uncut rolls of brocade that came
From Tabronit, of golden name,
In the far land of Tribalibot;
The infidel weave, in that spot,
Many such silks, adorned with gold
From the Caucasus, fine to behold.
Lyppaut ordered for his daughter
A rare gown, in splendid measure;
He would have seen the richest yet
Fashioned for her, without regret.
They cut to the little lady’s form
A stiff brocade, and did this perform
While removing one sleeve, the same
That was destined for Lord Gawain.
Such was Obilot’s formal present,
Brocade obtained from Nourient;
For out of far-off heathendom,
That rich material had come.
Obilot’s right arm it touched,
But naught was sewn there as such,
For not one thread was cut for it;
And this sleeve her friend Clauditte

Bore to handsome Lord Gawain,
And pleased indeed was that same.
Choosing, from his three, a shield,
He pinned it to that weapon's field.
Gladly, his thanks he now expressed
And, bowing, profoundly blessed
The path this young girl would take
Who'd shown kindness, for his sake,
And brought to him such happiness
With her sweet charm, and courtliness.

Duke Lyppaut's forces unite with those of his brother Duke Marangliez

DAY had ended, and it was night.
On both sides, gathered for the fight,
Were a host of valiant men; in fact,
Those within might have sought to act,
If the force without had not been
So great; as it was, they were seen
Bravely marking out the ground
In the moonlight, and twas found
That, by dawn, a dozen or more
Large redoubts they'd built, before
The town, walled and ditched, each
With three gates, the only breach,
For mounted sorties to ride out.

Now in the night a force without,
Duke Kardefablet's from Jamor,
He Lyppaut's brave brother-in-law,
Had entered Bearosche, and so
At morn he did his banners show,
His men prepared, and full of fight.
Thus, like a true and warlike knight
He joined the action, one who fought
When other men a refuge sought,

And, indisposed ever to yield,
Was oft in trouble on the field.
A long march his men had made,
Never the man was he to evade
A fierce fight; now his marshal held
Four of the gates, as did he himself.

Many with armour on their backs
Rode the streets scarred by tracks,
Many a pennant in clear moonlight
Could be glimpsed, many a bright
Helm, all marvellously adorned,
Whose wearer longed, ere the morn,
To ride to battle, and many a lance
Gaily painted; there to advance
A Regensburger-silk tabard,
Would have gained but slight reward,
There before Bearosche, if found
Parading o'er that level ground,
For many a tabard was seen there,
Many a more wondrous affair.

At Duke Lyppaut's request the men
On the far side of the bridge, had then,
Before the day broke, marched across,
To reach the town, with nary a loss,
Once those of Jamor were safe inside.
By dawn each gate was well-supplied,
Held by those who'd command its fate.
Scherules, the Burgrave, chose a gate
Which he'd defend with Lord Gawain.
Some voices rose now to complain,
(Among the allies, the best I deem)
That they had missed, it did seem,
A pleasant skirmish and a tourney,
Yet there were still jousts a plenty
To be had, out beyond the wall,

For any who on such might call.

The night was done, and a new day
Marched behind, though in this affray
Twas not the lark carolled the dawn,
But noises far less kind were born,
From many a loudly-shattered lance,
As the knights made their advance.
As if on high, the thunder crashed.
Here the army of Liz had clashed
With the warriors from Lirivoyn,
And those of the King of Avendroyn,
While the charges they received,
Popped, and cracked, and so achieved
A sound like chestnuts on the fire.
Oh, how the besiegers did aspire
To victory, and were repulsed,
As the lines and ranks convulsed!

Gawain joins the fight, at which Parzival, unbeknown to him, is present

A priest read a Mass for Gawain
And Scherules; that they might gain
Mercy upon their souls twas done,
And in hopes of their salvation.
He chanted it to God's true glory,
So says the author of this story,
And their own, for soon their honour
Would be enhanced, such the nature
Of the rite, and when this was done
They rode off to their proper station,
Where was many a worthy knight
Showing his bravery in the fight,
Manning the redoubt. What more
Shall I tell? A proud king they saw,
Poydiconjunz, arrive in strength.

Such that if you'd gazed at length
At his battalions you'd have seen
A forest of spears, denser, I mean,
Than if all the Black Forest's trees
Made lance-shafts formed like these.
He marched up, six pennants flying;
So, battle was joined in the morning.
The trumpet sounded and the blare,
Sharp thunder-cracks breaking there,
Was matched by the roll of the drum;
For so doth every battlefield hum.
(And if the grass is trampled down
Blame me not, though in that town
Of Erfurt the vineyard tells a tale
Of such a trampling, neath the hail
Of countless hoof-prints, I may say,
That doubtless ruined it on a day.)

Now Duke Astor was making war
Against the forces of Jamor.
And as lance was whetted on lance
Many a noble lost his stance,
And was swept onto the ground
As fiercely did the battle sound,
With many a shout and war-cry.
No few steeds went trotting by,
Empty-saddled without a rider,
Oft with no sign of the latter,
Who no doubt had taken a fall.
Gawain saw the field was all
A woven tapestry, with friend
And foe threaded from end to end.
Into the melee sped our knight,
Twas hard to keep the man in sight.
Scherules and his men spared not
Their mounts and yet twice as hot
His steed's flanks, oh the force

With which he struck all in his course!
We would seek glory for Gawain
If God did not his strength sustain,
This knight of the Round Table, here
Revealing not a trace of fear,
Amidst all the clanging of swords,
Of the men of Liz, nor those of Gors,
Against whom he'd set his hand.
Many a horse, from either band,
He captured, and then galloped them
To his host's banner, offering them
To all who wished; many cried yes,
All enriched by their valiant guest.

Twas at this point a knight appeared
One who spared not lances, nor feared
The foe any more than did Gawain,
A courtly battle did they maintain
Lisavander of Beauvais and he,
Until the young Burgrave, flung free,
Over his charger's quarters fell,
Among the flowers, and I must tell
You of the woe I feel, at this
For the sake of that squire of his
Who'd ridden in such courtly style
Explaining to Gawain the while
The reasons for the war, the day
Before, who now made his way,
To his poor master and bent low.
Gawain had recognised him, so
He returned the horse he'd seized,
And saw the squire bow, much pleased.

Yet see how Kardefablet stands
Amidst the field, with empty hands,
After a joust with Meljahkanz.
But now his followers advance,

With cries of 'Jamor' and fierce blows,
And snatch him up; the business grows
More savage, and with little room
For manoeuvre, a shock like doom
Each shock succeeds, and helmets ring
In the wearers' ears, as the swords sing.

Gathering his company, Gawain
Delivered a mighty charge again,
And, bearing the colour, in a trice,
A ring of metal, much like a vice,
They threw about the Lord of Jamor,
Felling knights, to aft and fore.
Believe it so, no more nor less
Doth the tale I honour profess.

Laheduman, Count of Muntane,
Advanced against my Lord Gawain,
And so, a splendid joust was fought,
Such that Laheduman was brought
To earth there, and despite his fame
As a fine knight, and his proud name,
Clasped hands with Gawain to render
His pledge to him, and his surrender.
Duke Astor too was there to the fore,
Next the redoubts, and Gawain bore
Charge upon charge; beneath the sky,
'Nantes! Nantes!' rose King Arthur's cry,
For many a Briton was fighting there,
An unwilling exile; while, bound to share
Their efforts, men from Erec's land
Of Destrigales, a mercenary band
Of hardy warriors skilled in war,
Showed their prowess, as all men saw.
Astor of Lanverunz was their leader,
His Britons captured from King Arthur
On Mount Cluse, in a grand campaign,

Fighting well enough here to gain
From Poydiconjunz their freedom,
And so, return to their true kingdom.
The beards of some were all but grey,
And 'Nantes!' was their cry that day,
While each man showed a dragon too
On helm or shield, to show anew
An emblem of Ilinot, Arthur's son.
At the sight of this escutcheon,
How could Gawain not feel woe?
Now must his tears of sadness show
For his cousin's death (Ilinot, he
Had loved Kanadic's Queen Florie),
So, he left those Britons to fight on
In the mead, and rode swiftly on,
Not seeking their hurt, in any way,
From friendship, as men do today.

Gawain headed for Meljanz' men.
Here the defenders, once again,
Were deserving of high praise,
But the opposition, at this phase,
Was such that pure courage alone
Was insufficient; they were thrown
Back towards the moat. One knight,
Clad in red armour, used his might
To launch attacks, continually;
'Sir Nameless' they dubbed him, he
Being unknown to all that army.
I shall tell it, as twas told to me.
The Red Knight had, three days past,
Joined Meljanz; and they had fast
Come to rue it, those in the castle.
Meljanz granted him, for the battle,
Twelve squires from Semblidac,
To bear fresh lances in each attack,
Yet however many they did haul,

He sought more, and broke them all.
His mount too would charge each steed
With a mighty clang of steel; indeed,
King Schirniel to him did render
His sword; and next the surrender
Of the brother, Mirabel, he took,
And then Duke Marangliez's luck
Expired; those three the spear-head
Were of the defence, yet, well-led,
Their men fought on, stubbornly.

King Meljanz was there, and he,
Whether their friend or their foe,
Was admitted by all, high or low,
To have acquitted himself better
Than any such youth had ever.
The shields he pierced; the lances
He shattered in his fierce advances,
As squadron battled with squadron!
His spirit was such he ploughed on,
Ever seeking honour to maintain,
All unsated, till he met Gawain.
The latter seized, from his nearest man,
One of the twelve spears of Angram,
He'd acquired at the Plimizoel.
Meljanz' war-cry was 'Barbigoel!'
From the capital of Liz, his land;
Gawain thrust fiercely at the man,
And the tough cane-shaft sank in,
That lance from Oraste Gentesin,
Through his shield, into the arm,
Teaching him the meaning of harm;
A wondrous blow that brought great pain,
Sending him flying, though Gawain
Found his own saddle strap severed,
So that both the knights, untethered,
Were obliged to regain their feet.

And battle on, to escape defeat.
With their blades they threshed away,
Like farmer's lads at sheaves of hay,
Flailing them to pieces, Meljanz
Dragging around the length of lance
Still in his arm, while blood and sweat
Baked and boiled him, at each onset.
Of a sudden, Gawain hauled the man
Into the depths of a barbican,
And there he forced him to surrender
Though he'd have fought on longer.
Had the wound not troubled him so,
He'd have brought Gawain more woe.

Prince Lyppaut was not found lacking,
As the King of Gors, in attacking
Him now, had found, though men and steeds,
Both suffered sorely from the deeds
Of those mounted archers of Kaheti,
Who charged, then retreated swiftly,
While the soldiers from Semblidac,
Forced those brave defenders back
Towards their outpost; they deployed
Their archers who were well employed
At the redoubts, and wrought as well
As any today that the ranks do swell.
What had he done this Duke Lyppaut,
To deserve it? For old King Schaut,
His lord, would ne'er have acted so.
Now brave men were led to know
The outcome of Obie's petulance,
That brought about this cruel defence.

Gawain defeats Prince Meljahkanz

THE squadrons were growing weary,
Yet Meljahkanz fought on, bravely.

You ask me if his shield was whole?
Joust on joust had taken its toll,
Barely a hand's breath did remain.
Duke Kardefablet sought to maintain
Pressure on him, and chased him far
Over the battlefield, seeking to bar
Him from the fight, while the men
On either side now breathed again,
For the two forces had come to rest,
On that flowery meadow, I attest.
And now Gawain reached the scene,
So that, if Meljahkanz had been
In trouble before, this son of Lot
Brought him more than Lancelot,
Who, angered that Queen Guinevere
Was held captive, whom he held dear,
Had fought Prince Meljahkanz, after
Crossing the Bridge of Swords for her,
And, thus, had set her free again.
He wheeled about, my Lord Gawain.
What now could Prince Meljahkanz do
But spur his brave mount on anew?
Th joust was watched by all around.
You ask who lies there on the ground?
Tis he whom Gawain of Norway,
Has lowered to the grass this day.
Many a lady, and many a knight
Sang Gawain's praises at the sight.
For the ladies had a clear view
From the Palace. And it seems, too,
That this Meljahkanz did so drench
The grass with blood, that the stench
Drove many a horse to the water,
Where some pestilence did slaughter
All of them, to the vultures' gain.
The victor there was my Lord Gawain.
Then Meljahkanz did Duke Astor

Recover from the men of Jamor.

Parzival, the Red Knight, leaves the field to continue his quest for the Grail

WHO there won a badge of honour,
And deserved their ladies' favour,
With their skill? I could not tell you.
Were I to name them all for you,
I'd be well-occupied indeed!
Obilot's knight wrought many a deed,
To be praised, for the defenders.
The Red Knight, of the besiegers,
Fared the best, amidst the fight.
These two won the palms outright.

Once the Red Knight had understood
That no thanks from his captain would
Be forthcoming, since he had been
Now led, a prisoner, from the scene,
He rode to his squires and addressed
His own prisoners, each his guest,
King Schirniel of Lirivoyn,
And Mirabel of Avendroyn,
And Duke Marangliez as well.
'My noble lords, now sad to tell,
The King of Liz himself did render;
And since you also did surrender
To me, please seek to set him free,
If all's to end, here, profitably.'
Then a well-framed oath they swore
To redeem that king, Meljanz, or
Show our knight the way to the Grail,
Ere to the town he'd let them ride.
But no news could any provide
Of where the Grail dwelt, except
That by King Anfortas twas kept.

In answer to this, the knight said:
‘If you know nothing on that head,
Ride to Belrepeire, surrender
Yourselves to the Queen; say to her
That he who battled with Kingrun,
And fought Clamide, as he has done,
Is filled with longing for the Grail,
And for her love, which doth prevail;
That he pines for both endlessly,
And tell her that you come from me.
May God preserve you, gentlemen!’
So, they took their leave of him, then.

‘You need not fear for a reward,’
He said to his squires, ‘but afford
Me one horse of all that were won,
For my own is wounded and done,
And all of you may share the rest.’
‘My lord,’ they cried, ‘may you be blest,
For we are wealthy young men now.’
He chose, according to his vow,
But the one creature, it appears,
Twas Ingliart of the Short Ears.
The horse had strayed from Gawain
While he was fighting, on the plain,
With Meljanz; he’d seized the charger,
And many a shield suffered later.
Then he took leave, and rode away
And fifteen splendid mounts that day
Those squires inherited, and more.
They thanked him and did implore
Their lord, begging him to remain;
At a distant goal, though, he did aim,
He went where small ease was won,
And little comfort for anyone,
For battle was then his sole desire,
While none in his day did so aspire.

Meljanz and Obie are reconciled, and will marry

WHEN Duke Lyppaut, within the town,
Heard that Meljanz was honour bound
To be his prisoner, he quickly sought
To know the cause; twas news that brought
Him some concern, yet joy would yield.
Gawain took the sleeve from his shield,
Most carefully, lest he tear the thing
(Although at other glory aiming).
He gave it to Clauditte, all holed
And hacked, a fine sight to behold,
Pierced in the midst and at the end.
And to Obilot, his pretty friend,
He bade her take it, which was done.
When the girl saw it there was none
As happy as she; she'd left bare
Her white arm, and now, with care,
Swiftly joined the sleeve and dress.
Her sister she would oft address,
As she ran by: 'Oh, who did this?'
While offering the sleeve a kiss,
Stinging her sister to anger.

The brave knights could toil no longer,
Wearied all; Scherules led Gawain,
With Count Laheduman, from the plain;
And there were other great lords there
Gawain had captured in the affair,
Single-handedly, on that field
That so many fair jousts did yield.
The Burgrave seated them, then he
Stood by, with all his company,
While the wounded Meljanz dined,
That true respect the king might find.
Gawain jibbed at this and, quietly,

Urged on by his sense of decency,
Said: 'My Lord, if the King please
You should sit here at your ease,'
Intervening, thus, between the two,
But his host declined so to do:
'The Duke Lyppaut is the King's man;
If the King wished it, he would stand
Here in my stead, yet, tactfully,
He absents himself, as you see,
Being out of favour, and should they
Mend their friendship, we'd obey
All his commands, as we do now.'
Meljanz replied: 'I must allow
Your courtesy has never failed;
Would that your counsel had prevailed,
I should be happier today.
So now be free to have your say,
Yet aid me, Count Scherules, for I
Know upon you I may rely,
Regarding this lord who's prisoner
I am, and Duke Lyppaut, who ever
I pray will show his kindness to me,
And a second father seek to be,
For both will respect your counsel.
Had his daughter not made a fool
Of me, I'd ne'er have lost his love.
For a harsh lady, she did prove.'
'A bond shall there be,' said Gawain,
'That unto death all shall maintain.'

The prisoners whom the Red Knight
Had captured, in the recent fight,
Entered now the royal presence,
And of their tale gave the essence.
When Gawain heard of the armour,
Of him whom taken their surrender,
And the words as regards the Grail,

He knew twas Parzival, without fail,
And rendered thanks to God that they
Had fought while far apart that day.
Each one's silence as to his name,
Meant that none had heard the same,
Though each was known of elsewhere,
Thus, they went nameless that pair.

'Sire,' said Scherules, 'it if please you,
Deign to see Lord Lyppaut, and true
Counsel hear from many a friend,
On both sides; thus, let anger end.'
This was approved and all came
To the Palace, where Lord Gawain,
Asked Laheduman and the others
Who had arrived, all his prisoners,
To transfer the paroles he'd won,
From them to Scherules; and twas done.
There too the Burgrave's wife,
Sought to smooth over the strife,
Gifting new clothes to King Meljanz,
And fastening, with her own fair hands
A veil, as a fresh sling for that arm
To which Gawain had caused such harm.

Through Scherules, Gawain sent word
To Obilot, which all there heard,
Saying he would like to see her,
Assuring her that he would be her
Knight-servitor ever, requesting
That she dispose, now, of the king,
Whom he thus placed in her hand,
Such that all might praise her, and
Took leave of her. King Meljanz said:
'Obilot will, when she is wed,
Prove the flower of womanly virtue.
Though I'm still captive, yet, tis true,

It will solace my poor heart to be
Under her protection; kind is she.'
'Well', replied the noble Gawain,
'She, and no other, I'll maintain,
It was that wrought your surrender,
And so, she should reap the honour!'

Now Scherules rode to the court,
Where the assent of all he sought;
And men and women, all retired
To seek fresh clothes and, attired
In their best, now waited to meet
All who had met with their defeat
In the field, and not least their King,
Meljanz. Lyppaut was found, sitting
With his wife and daughters, all fain
To greet the King and Lord Gawain.
Lyppaut ran to welcome his lord,
While all there, as with one accord,
Pressed forward, eagerly, as he
Received him, once his enemy.
'If it is not too much to seek,
A welcoming kiss on the cheek
My wife would ask, as a friend,'
He said, 'strife being at an end.
'I should like a welcoming kiss,'
Said Meljanz, 'although, in this,
Two ladies I would gladly greet,
While peace is not yet quite complete
With the third.' The elder two wept,
While Obilot her sweet silence kept.
With a kiss, each received the King,
And the two young kings with him,
And Duke Marangliez; Gawain
Too, must, in turn, accept a kiss,
And then must take this lady of his
In his arms, while clasping the child

Like a pretty doll, though reconciled
To her display of loving affection.
Turning in King Meljanz' direction,
He said: 'You, who to me did render,
Your pledge, I must, on your parole,
Surrender you, entire and whole,
For here you find, one next to me,
Who is the giver of joy; you see.
And you are now her prisoner!'
Meljanz who his fate must suffer,
Stepped forward now, as was sought.
She drew Gawain to her, as the court,
Strange though it seemed, all bowed
To Obilot; then she said, out loud:
'It seems to me, my lord the King,
That you did wrong, surrendering
To a man, whom my elder sister
Calls but a merchant adventurer!'
Then she ordered him to transfer
His homage to Obie, and to her
Pay his attentions as his mistress,
To the glory of chivalry, no less:
'While you, dear Obie, as his lover,
Must take him as your lord forever,
And no excuses on either side!'
God himself (can it be denied?)
Spoke through the child's lips, and so
It was done; and neither said no!

Now Love, with her great artistry,
Fashioned from depths of loyalty
Their affection as if twere new;
For Obie's hand appeared to view,
Slipped from out her cloak, and she
Took Meljanz' arm and, lovingly,
Kissed it, where the lance had passed,
As from her eyes the tears flowed fast.

What was it made her thus so bold,
Before the crowd? Love, ever old
Yet ever young, was there on view.
All Lyppaut's wishes had come true,
Ne'er had he known such happiness;
For God did him with honour bless,
He called his child his Sovereign Queen.

Gawain departs Bearosche

Now, of the future wedding scene,
Ask those who were there, not I;
Nor where they rode to, by and by,
To peace or warfare, I know not,
Yet I heard Gawain chose his lot,
And of Duke Lyppaut took his leave,
Though Obilot did naught but grieve:
'Take me with you, my lord!' she cried.
But her fond wish Gawain denied.
Her mother barely tore her away.
He said farewell, and went his way.
Lyppaut assured him of his outright
Devotion, grown fond of the knight,
While Scherules, his host, did ride
With Gawain, brave knights at his side.
Gawain's road led amidst the trees,
And Scherules for his greater ease,
Sent huntsmen to accompany him
For a good distance ere leaving him,
Bearing provisions; yet even so,
Gawain would be delivered to woe.

Book VIII: Gawain at Schanpfanzun

Gawain reaches Ascalun, and the castle of Schanpfanzun

GAWAIN outshone all men at court,

Those who at Bearosche had fought,
Alone though he was; though one knight,
Among the besiegers, gleaming bright
In his red armour, near matched his fame,
Despite none knowing him by name.
Gawain had shared, in full measure,
Good fortune, renown, and honour,
Yet now the time came to present
Himself for the duel, though innocent.

Both wide and deep the forest there,
That he must pass, if that affair
Were to be performed; indeed
He now missed his faithful steed,
That Ingliart of the Short Ears,
Than which none better it appears
Was ridden by Moors of Tabronit,
The forest varied, for parts of it
Were woodland glade, but here and there
Lay rocky patches, sparse and bare,
That a tent would more than cover.
Eventually he came, however,
To the ploughed fields of Ascalun
And sought the way to Schanpfanzun
Of passers-by, to reach which place
Such high slopes he'd dared to face,
So many broad plains he'd traversed;
And on the route he now rehearsed,
He came to a castle, shining bright;
On, to its splendour, rode our knight.

Now, listen to a wondrous tale;
Let pity, as you do, prevail.
Aid me as I lament the pain
That here must visit Lord Gawain.
As I tell it, my listeners, slow
Or quick-witted, born to know,

Grant companionship to me;
Come, join me now in sympathy.
Oh, I should speak no more, alas!
But no, his fate must come to pass;
Let him plunge in, who had reason
To thank good fortune for a season,
But sinks towards great trouble now.

This castle, it displayed, I vow,
Such beauty that when Aeneas came
To where fair Dido, known to fame,
Once forfeited her life for love,
To Carthage I mean, the walls above
Seemed not more regal. What palaces,
What towers on high! A count of these?
More than the towers of Acraton,
The which, apart from Babylon,
Had the broadest limits (so they tell,
In old tales, among the infidel).
Those walls, around and next the sea,
Were so high, that no enemy,
No assault, was to be feared,
Howe'er vicious it appeared.
Below it lay a plain, miles wide,
Across this Lord Gawain did ride,
And met five hundred knights or more
Moving towards him, o'er its floor,
All in fine clothes of the very best;
Yet one was lord over the rest.

Gawain encounters King Vergulaht, out hunting

THEIR falcons were hunting heron,
Or whate'er took flight before them,
Such the tale. Vergulaht, the King,
On a Spanish steed came riding,
His aspect like some star at night,

Shining sun-like and as bright.
Now, twas the faery Mazadan
Sent forth from out Mount Famurgan
His scions; Vergulaht was one
Of that faery race; many a one
Seeing his beauty would have thought
It was the flowery May he brought,
Such lustre he shed; my Lord Gawain
Thought twas Parzival here again,
A second Parzival, and well-met,
Bearing the looks of Gahmuret,
His father when, as has been told,
He rode to Kanvoleis' stronghold.

A heron, so as to 'scape pursuit,
Flew to a marsh; following suit
Went a rush of falcons, and the King
Missed his way, and found a wetting.
Freeing his falcons from that moat,
He lost his mount, and his surcoat.
The royal falconers, as forfeit
Took the steed. Had they right to it?
Yes, and were left the surcoat's heirs,
For they were due what now was theirs.
Someone lent him a horse, and then,
He dressed himself in a coat again,
Leaving the falconers to their gain,
And set to traverse o'er the plain.

Gawain now came upon this scene,
Welcomed as warmly as had been
Erec, at Karidoel, when he sought
To return again to Arthur's court,
After the fight, and Enide came there,
Accompanying him, that lady fair,
She who'd restored his happiness,
After his skin was scarred no less

By Maclisier the dwarf's cruel whip,
All in plain sight of her ladyship,
Queen Guinevere. The hurt and pain
Led to the duel fought, at Tulumeyn,
For the sparrow-hawk, where Ider,
The son of Noyt, was forced to render
His pledge, to preserve his life.
Yet let that be, with all its strife,
And listen once more to my tale.

I doubt not but that you might fail
To find a finer welcome, ever,
Than Gawain received; however
That son of Lot may harshly yet
Be quit of the burden of his debt.
If you wish, I shall say no more,
Lest I should add thus to your store
Of sorrows; but, if not, then hear
How a clear mind was, I fear,
Muddied by others' treachery,
And follow and lament with me,
While I continue with my tale.

'Come, my lord, may I prevail
Upon you to ride in; though now
I will hunt on, if you'll allow,'
Said King Vergulaht, 'yet, if not,
Then let the hunt be here forgot.'
'If it doth please you, sir, remain,
Tis only right,' replied Gawain,
'Do so with all my heart, go hence,
Be sure I shall not take offence.'
'Behold before you Schanpfunz,'
Declared the King of Ascalun,
'And my young sister she is there
Who of beauty has her full share,
If you care to view it perchance,

She shall be asked, in advance,
To entertain you till I am there.
I shall return soon, though I dare
To say, once you've met my sister,
You'll be happy if it be later.'
'I'll look forward to seeing you,
And her indeed, for, it is true,
Great ladies ever make time fly,
Whene'er they deal with such as I,'
Said Gawain proudly, so the King,
Sent a message onwards, telling
The young lady to take such care
Of Gawain, that ere he came there
The hours should like minutes fly.
Gawain rode in. Now, with a sigh,
I'll end the tale, a troubling one,
Should you wish it. No? I'll say on.
The road and his horse took Gawain
To where the gate he might attain,
To this fortress. An architect
Could speak far better, I expect,
Than I about the strength of it,
Yet, not just for the size of it,
I'd say it was the finest place
Of any that this world doth grace.

Gawain meets with Princess Antikone

Now let me leave its praise, I pray
Since I have much indeed to say
About the lady, this King's sister,
Who was, instead, a work of nature,
Though, here too, size was to the fore;
Seemly comment shall be my law,
If she had beauty, it became her;
If her heart was good, it rather
Tended towards nobility;

Thus she, in manner and majesty,
Was like that Margravine, of whom
The ample form would often loom,
O'er the Marches, from Heitstein.
Happy, he to whom she'd resign
Her charms in private conversation.
Believe me, in that pleasant station,
He'd find more pleasure than elsewhere.
Now, I may comment on ladies, fair,
As I see them, with no ill-intent,
Relying ever on your discernment,
And good breeding. Let honest folk
Hear my tale! For to those I spoke,
Not those who'd ever seek offence
And then, with meagre penitence,
Forfeit salvation; thus, their soul
Is doomed to suffer wrath untold.

Gawain entered the courtyard there,
While his appointment in this affair,
The King sought to arrange for him,
Who yet would soon dishonour him.
A knight now led him to the court;
To Princess Antikone he brought
Lord Gawain, where she was sitting.
If good repute is for the buying
In the market, then she had bought
A goodly store, nor ever sought
Deceit, and ever thus won praise
For her kind and courteous ways.
(Heinrich von Veldeke, alas,
That you so wise, so soon did pass
From this world! You had ever
The means to have praised her better).

Now, as Gawain considered her,
Came hastening in a messenger,

To give the king's message entire;
At which, the Princess did require
Gawain to approach: 'Come, my lord,
You shall instruction now afford
To me, in courtesy and decorum,
Command me now, for if I am
To entertain you well, all must
Be as you say, for tis only just;
As my brother doth commend you
So favourably, then I will do
As courtesy allows, and receive
You with a kiss; I give you leave
To say yes or no, as you see fit.'
And then she rose, to allow of it.

'Madam, your lips, so apt for this,
Demand you greet me with a kiss,'
Replied Gawain; her mouth was not
Reluctant, twas full red, and hot.
Gawain his own lips presented,
And a kiss, nigh unprecedented
Twixt two total strangers given,
Was delivered, and was taken.
The noble guest now sat beside
This 'learned' maid; on either side
There was no lack of conversation,
Of true and charming application.
They found many a means to duel,
On his side pleas, on hers denial,
Such that Gawain, in deep distress,
Begged her to show greater kindness,
And she replied as I will tell:
'Why, I have treated you so well,
So that my brother I might please,
That Gahmuret by his Ampflise
Was ne'er treated better, short
Of granting him all that he sought.

Mine would weigh, my integrity,
Much greater, if twas me and she
One weighed. If you are otherwise
A gentleman, let that suffice,
For, sir, I know not who you are,
And yet you seek to travel far.’
‘My gift for such things, tells me plain,
And I shall tell you,’ said Gawain,
‘That I am the son of the brother
Of my dear father’s darling sister;
And, if you’re inclined to mercy,
Doubt not my true nobility,
For so my birth doth equal yours,
Making a perfect match perforce.’

A maid poured out the wine and went,
Then some ladies, also present,
Remembered things they had to do.
The knight who’d led him there left too.
Seeing that all had gone their way,
Gawain reflected that, on a day,
Even a little eagle may take
A great ostrich, and no mistake.
He thrust his hand beneath her cloak,
And then gave her soft thigh a stroke,
I fancy, which made his torment
Far worse, and thus both their intent
Had been fulfilled (for their desire
Rose like some ever-growing fire)
If eyes of malice had not spied
Them; from the place where he did hide,
An aged knight, did now appear;
He’d recognised Gawain, I fear,
And, naming him, gave the alarm.
Now approach both woe and harm!

Gawain is again accused of slaying Kingrisin of Ascalun, Vergulaht's father

‘ALAS! Was it not enough for you
To kill the father? The daughter too
You now assault!’ Men forever
Heed the alarm, and as ever
Custom was well-honoured here.
‘Madam, what must we do? I fear,
Neither has a weapon to wield.
Oh, had I but my sword and shield!’
Said Gawain. ‘Let us yet retreat
To the tower above, we may meet
With better fortune,’ was her reply.
Soon they heard all the hue and cry,
Knights ran here, tradesmen there,
The town all stirred by this affair.
She led Gawain to the tower above
And further trouble as it would prove.
She called to the crowd to disperse,
But those below did shout and curse
Such that none heard her; set upon
Violence, they soon reached the door
That Lord Gawain now stood before.
He tore an iron bar from the wall,
That was used as a bolt, and all
Drew back at every pass he made
With that weapon and, thus delayed,
His ill neighbours fell back in fear.
The Princess, she ran here and here,
In search of aught to form a shield,
Until she found, but half-concealed,
A set of chessmen with a board,
Strong and large enough to afford
Ample cover, with an iron ring
By which Gawain could grip the thing.
This she brought; twas fine, inlaid,

Many a chess-game had been played
On its fair surface, and yet this day,
In a harsher game twas hacked away.

Now hear more of that fair lady.
Those great chess-pieces were heavy,
Yet king, rook, pawn she flung hard
At the foe and, though they did guard
Themselves as best they could, I'd say
She toppled more than a few that day.
The Princess fought like a true knight,
At Gawain's side, her spirit bright
As the market-women at Dollnstein,
Of a Shrove Tuesday, though benign
Their fight, and all in harmless play.
If one were to judge of their array,
Women who arm themselves forget
Their nature, and modesty's debt,
Unless tis true affection drives them.
Antikonie, there, in Schanpfunz,
Felt sorrow, humbled in her pride,
Nor could her hot tears be denied,
Yet she gave proof of the loyalty
That between loving friends we see.

And what was Gawain thinking?
When he had the leisure to bring
Himself to consider the maiden,
Her face, her eyes, her lips, why then
The sight roused his courage anew,
For I doubt one would ever view
A spitted hare shapelier than she,
From hips to breast her entire
Form was made to rouse desire,
Nor an ant more neatly jointed
There, where her cincture rested.
She stood with him in their plight.

His life was surety, this brave knight,
And with no concession given,
But when he viewed the maiden
He thought little of their attack,
And many died there, or drew back.

A truce is brought about

NOW Vergulaht arrived, the King
Saw the warlike force contending
With Gawain; I cannot, tis true,
Without seeking to deceive you,
Hide the fact that he will shame
Himself now and disgrace his name
With regard to his noble guest,
Whose bold defence proved of the best.
Lord and host, though he was, the King
Did such that I grieve for King Gandin,
He of Anjou, whose noble daughter,
Flurdamurs, had borne no other
Than this son who led a company
Against a guest, as his enemy.
Gawain paused till the King had armed;
He advanced, but Gawain, unharmed,
Though forced to retreat did so
Without dishonour, even though
He drew back under the tower-door.
But, see! Here comes one who, before
Arthur, had challenged Lord Gawain;
Twas Kingrimursel, the very same.
The Landgrave tore his hair, for he
Had pledged his word Gawain would be
Safe from all there, except one man.
Young or old, he drove every man
From that tower the King was out
To demolish. He raised a shout,
Kingrimursel, to where Gawain

Stood tall. 'Brave knight, let me gain
The stair, grant me passage to you,
And I will share your hardship too,
As a comrade in your hour of need!
If I'm not to save your life, indeed,
The King must needs kill me first!'
Gawain did so; the Landgrave cursed
Those below, and joined him there.
At this the crowd felt their due share
Of doubt, and old and young now fought
More circumspectly; into the court,
Gawain, followed by the Burgrave,
Leapt down, for both proved brave.

The King exhorted the crowd again:
'How long must we suffer these men?
My cousin has now decided he
Will defend this man, my enemy,
On whom he should wreak revenge
For wrong, and my father avenge!'
Urged on by loyalty, certain there
Chose a spokesman, in this affair:
'Sire, if we may, here many a brave
Man will not challenge his Landgrave.
May God lead you to seek a way
More peaceable; were you to slay
A guest then you'd suffer blame,
As would tarnish your good name;
And as to this other, he is your kin.
He gave his word; twould be a sin
For him to break it. You should refrain,
Naught can this bring on you but pain.
Strike a truce with the sun in sight,
And let it last throughout the night;
You may still do what you decide,
Let shame or honour be your guide.
Lady Antikone, you forget,

Stands there beside him, weeping yet;
And if that moves you not, although
One mother bore you both, come, know
Discretion, for twas you who sent
Him to the girl, who's innocent.
Even if none his side should take,
Spare him now, for your sister's sake.'
So, the King allowed a truce until
He'd taken counsel how he might still
Avenge his father, and yet Gawain
Was guiltless for, I should explain,
It was proud Ekhunat, whose advance
Has slain Kingrisin with his lance,
While leading Jofreit, son of Idoel,
Towards Meljanz' city of Barbigoel;
Jofreit was captured nigh Gawain;
Twas Ekhunat who'd caused this pain.

Contention over Gawain's fate

ONCE the truce had been agreed
All departed, and then indeed
Antikone clasped the Landgrave tight,
Kissing her cousin there, outright,
For saving Gawain, in doing so
Saving himself from wrong also.
'You are a true cousin indeed,'
She cried, 'no friend to grave misdeed!'

If you would care to listen now,
I shall tell you of that, I avow,
I spoke of earlier, namely
How by others' treachery,
A clear mind was muddied, I fear.
Such behaviour as we saw here,
In this assault Vergulaht had made
At Schanpfanzun, rightly weighed,

Was not inborn in him from either
His father, or his noble mother.
Indeed, the youth felt great shame
When the Princess spoke his name
To upbraid him, for this was how
She appealed to his true nature now:
'Vergulaht, had God pleased that I
Should be a man, and should thereby
Wear a sword, and follow the shield,
You had now been forced to yield.
But I was an unarmed girl, although
A shield I bore had an emblem so
Fine, if you'll deign to hear it,
I will equally deign to name it:
Fair seemliness and modesty,
Intertwined with true loyalty.
This I wielded to shield my knight,
Whom you sent to me; I did fight
With no other form of defence.
Though you repent of your offence,
You dealt a woman ill, for we
Should be treated respectfully.
And I have always heard it said
That if a man, one nobly bred,
Sought refuge with a woman, all
Gallant pursuers, as I recall,
All men of honour, cease to fight.
Lord Vergulaht, thus, the flight,
Of your guest to my side, I claim,
Will bring disgrace upon your name!'

Kingrimursel spoke too: 'My Lord,
When to Gawain I did afford,
Safe passage for all of this affair,
At Plimizoel, in the meadow there,
I placed all my firm trust in you.
And your word was pledged thus too.

If he should come to this country,
On your behalf I did guarantee
One man alone he should fight.
My lord, before all here in sight,
I say your deed diminished me!
We reject such acts of infamy.
If you so treat men of renown,
Then we shall diminish the Crown!
If you possess aught of decency
You must own you are kin to me.
E'en though I were but your kinsman
Through some amour, still rash man
You would have gone too far this day!
I am a knight whom none can say
Was ever false, who was ever just,
And may I die so; in God I trust,
And so, from me, above doth rise
That plea, in hopes of Paradise.
Where'er tis said that Arthur's kin
Schanpfanzen did enter within,
Under my escort, and any know,
Whether they be strangers or no,
Of France, Britain, or Burgundy,
Galicia, or Punturteis, that he
Was placed in danger, then any
Renown I have dies instantly.
His battle here will kill my fame;
It brings disgrace upon my name,
Uproots all happiness, and further
Puts to pawn all my past honour!'

At this, one of the King's own men
Stepped forth to condemn Gawain,
Duke Liddamus, for you must know
That Kyot himself names him so.
Now, Kyot Laschantiure was one
Whose art ensured it was begun,

This story, that shall please anew
Joyful hearers, and no small few.
Kyot is the noted Provençal,
Who found this tale of Parzival
Inscribed in a heathen tongue;
And what in French he has sung
I may possess the wit to tell,
In the German tongue, as well.

‘What is this fellow, who has slain
My lord’s own father, this Gawain,
Who has nigh dishonoured my lord,
Doing here? Why should we afford
This fellow room?’ Liddamus cried.
‘If my lord will own to regal pride,
He’ll take revenge with his own hand,
Being a true-born nobleman,
And let one death requite the other.
That same fate the man should suffer.’
Now see what comes to Lord Gawain,
For now, indeed, the risk is plain!
‘Men so ready to state what’s right,
Should be more eager for the fight,’
Said Kingrimursel, ‘whether you
Attack from near or far, tis true,
That you are easy to fend away;
I fancy, Lord Liddamus, this day
I’ll save this noble man from you,
For even if he’d done wrong to you,
I deem you’d leave it unavenged.
Your tongue seeks to be revenged,
It runs away with you, I conceive;
Not at the front should we believe
Your place to be, nor do we see
You there, but, on the contrary,
You seem averse to battle and so,
It would appear, are the first to go;

And when all your friends engage,
Like some woman, you disengage.
The crown of a king who heeds you
Is guaranteed to sit askew.
I myself, in the duelling-ring,
Sought to champion the King,
Resolved that it should take place here,
If so wished, and the man appear.
But with the weight of this misdeed,
The King bears my anger, indeed,
Since, tis true, I'd hoped for better.
Lord Gawain, true thus to the letter,
Give me your hand that you will be
Full ready to account to me,
In single combat, a year from now,
If the King your freedom will allow,
And I will give you fair battle then;
Let us but choose the place again.
I challenged you by the Plimizoel,
Let our meeting be at Barbigoel,
Before King Meljanz; cares I'll know
Enough to weave a wreath, e'en so,
Ere I shall meet you in the ring,
Where your right hand may bring
Care enough that it's true nature
Will be apparent, in full measure.'
Gawain did courteously reply,
That with this plea he would comply.
Yet Duke Liddamus spoke again,
Shrewdly making his views plain.

He said, for speak he must: 'If I
Do enter battle and fight, or fly
When things are adverse, my lord,
Just as circumstance doth afford,
Be the judge what cowardice
Or glory may pertain to this.

Though I'll never win your pay,
I'm content with myself this day.
If you'd play Virgil's Turnus now
In your arrogance, then I avow
I'll play Dances, and censure you!
Come, keep humility, in view.
For though among my peers you reign,
I too am a lord, and retain,
Throughout Galicia, many a town
Far as Pontevedra, up and down;
And if your Briton or you should dare
To seek harm to me or mine, there,
Then I'd not coop a single fowl
For fear of you, fair wind or foul.
With this knight from Britain, I see,
You seek a duel; tis not with me!
Avenge your lord and kinsman then,
But if someone among these men,
Has slain your dear uncle, to whom
You were a vassal, tis that man's doom!
Settle it with him, I harmed him not,
Nor shall any claim tis my lot
To avenge him; while I concede
His loss, his heir is now indeed
Our king, fit to be my overlord.
Queen Flurdamurs did accord
Him birth, and that same Kingrisin,
His father, was son of King Gandin,
His maternal uncles thus Gahmuret
And Galoes; unless I were set
On harming him, then honourably
From him I'd take my lands in fee.
Let those fight who would do so,
As to the outcome, let me know.
Let proud ladies reward their knight
For winning honour in some fight,
For my part Love will ne'er fool me

Into seeking risk, needlessly.
Why should I play the mad Wolfhart?
Cautiously, I e'er play my part,
My path to battle moated away,
Hooded my keenness for the prey.
Though you forgive me not for it,
I'd rather do as Lord Rumolt did,
Who advised King Gunther, as he
Left Worms for Hunland, riskily:
Twere better indeed to stay at home,
And eat and drink than to roam
At invitation; as well be done
To a turn, or boiled in a cauldron!'

The Landgrave said: 'You speak here
As you have spoken many a year.
You'd have me do what must be done,
While you do as the cook did, one
Who watched the Nibelungs set out,
To where vengeance came about
For what they'd done to Siegfried.
I shall wreak vengeance indeed,
Or Gawain must strike me dead.'
'Indeed, tis true,' Liddamus said,
'And even if I were offered
Without constraint, all the coffered
Riches his uncle, King Arthur,
Owns, and the wealth of India,
I'd forgo them to 'scape the fight.
You may have the glory outright.
I'm no Segradors who's bound,
To keep him from the battleground.
Yet the King accepts me as I am.
Sibeche, he ne'er gave a damn
For battle, and e'er looked to flight,
Yet many men bowed to his might.
Though he ne'er set sword to helm,

He received fiefs, well-nigh a realm,
From King Ermenrich. My flesh
Will never be marred to impress
You, Lord Kingrimursel, such
Is my resolve; no, nary a touch.'

'Enough of your wrangling, have done!'
Cried the King, 'in neither one
Is such freedom of speech pleasing.
Raise not your voices nigh the king,
It is not fitting.' To his sister
He turned, and issued an order:
'Take the Landgrave, and your guest,
Along with you. Those of the rest
Who wish me well come now with me
And help me weigh this carefully.'
'Add to the scales the pledge you gave,'
She said, 'to him, and your Landgrave.'

The King's council, and his request of Gawain

King Vergulaht to the council went,
While Antikonie, with their assent,
Led forth her cousin, and her guest,
Though anxiety, I would attest,
Made a fourth. Claspng Gawain's hand,
She said: 'Twere a loss to every land
If you had not escaped.' Together,
All the three entered her chamber,
Where, thanks to her good chamberlain,
The room itself did but contain
Her bevy of young ladies. There,
She entertained Gawain, with care
And courtesy, for whom she felt
The tenderest feelings; and dealt
The Landgrave many a compliment,
With whose presence she was content,

For, indeed, she feared more strife,
I'm told, concerned for Gawain's life.
Thus, Kingrimursel and the knight
Remained there till the fall of night,
When they dined. Wine, mixed with clary,
Her ladies served, and with mulberry,
Plates of pheasant, partridge, and fish,
With the finest white bread in a dish.
Gawain and the Landgrave had met
With great risk and now were set,
Since it was the Princess' pleasure,
On food and drink, in full measure.
Antikonie herself carved the meat,
With a courtesy all too complete;
While those delightful cup-bearers,
Her young maids, like fresh flowers,
Knelt to pour the wine, who might
Have seemed ready now for flight,
Having changed their true condition
As doth, her plumes, a moulting falcon.
Nor, indeed, should I be surprised,
If that new state had been realised.

Before the council ends, hear now
What advice was given, and how,
By his wise counsellors to the King.
Each man voiced his understanding,
And closely examined the matter,
While the King spoke thereafter:
'Not a week past, midst the Forest
Of Laehtamris,' the King confessed,
'Riding in search of adventure,
I met a knight in fierce encounter.
Too much honour he had of me,
Unseating me, most valiantly.
He made me promise without fail,
To seek, and gain for him, the Grail.

Though I die, that promise indeed
Must be kept. I have urgent need
Of your advice; I clasped his hand,
To fend off death, you understand.
The knight is brave and spirited!
And, furthermore, he demanded
That if I failed to gain the Grail
Within the year, o'er hill and dale,
I must ride, and no evasion,
To that fair lady who, with reason,
Wears the crown in Belrepeire,
She the daughter of Tampenteire,
Rendering myself her prisoner,
As soon as I've set eyes on her.
To her, a message he doth send,
That, should her thoughts his way tend,
The greater were his happiness;
For it was he who had, no less,
From King Clamide saved her there.'

On hearing news of this fresh affair,
Liddamus held forth once more:
'Sire, give me leave to take the floor.
By all means, now debate again,
But I suggest that Lord Gawain
Take on what this other has wrung
From you, who, in the air, is hung,
Glued to your fowling-stick, there!
Request that Lord Gawain doth swear
In our presence, that, without fail,
He'll seek and gain, for you, the Grail.
Then let him ride forth, Lord Gawain,
Unharm'd, that very thing to gain.
Were he to be slain, neath your roof,
Twould bring shame on us all, in truth.
Pardon his misdeeds, let this prove
A way to regain your sister's love.

He suffered here; with every breath
He now draws closer to his death;
So well-defended no place may be
As Munsalvaesche, in any country!
The path which to that place doth lead
Is filled with a world of strife indeed.
Leave him at ease until the dawn,
Tell him our verdict in the morn.’
The councillors agreement shared,
And so, Gawain’s life was spared.
That night the warrior lay at ease
In fair lodgings that did him please.
Then, after Mass, there did gather
Nobles and commoners together
In the Palace, and to the King
My Lord Gawain they did bring,
As counselled, the intent, perforce,
To urge him to no other course
Than you yourselves heard but now.

There the Princess, who I allow
Was very fine, came with Gawain,
And her cousin, and then again
No few others of the King’s men.
Into Vergulaht’s presence then
She led the knight, hand in hand,
And on her head, a fresh garland;
Yet her lips stole the splendour
Of the chaplet, since no flower
Was e’er as red as they, and when
She kissed the knight once again
He was fired, by her advances,
To break a forest-worth of lances!
We should welcome her with praise,
Antikone, sweet in all her ways,
True-hearted, full of modesty,
And of base slander ever free.

All who learned of her high repute
Would have all evil tongues be mute.
Her constancy, like burning balm,
Was as unwavering as her charm;
And her clear, her far-sighted eye,
Like a falcon's, keen, neath the sky.
'Brother,' cried the sweet young lady,
Ever mindful of true courtesy,
'I bring you a brave knight whose care
You charged me with; all are aware.
Treat him with kindness for my sake;
Let this not vex you; a moment take
To think of a brother's love, and then
Without regret, work your will again;
For a firm integrity sits with you
Better than hatred e'er could do,
Others' I mean, and mine as well,
If I could hate you; all anger quell.'

'I shall do so, sister, if I but can,'
In answer, the young nobleman
Replied, 'and you must counsel me.
You fear twixt me and Nobility
Misconduct did sweep down low,
And drove me from Eminence so.
Were that the case how could I be
Your brother? If all bowed to me,
Every realm, I'd yield them all,
At your wish; no worse could befall
Me than to be despised by you.
I'll act but as you instruct me to,
I care naught for fame or happiness.
Lord Gawain, hear now my request.
You came to us for honour's sake,
Now, for honour, help me to make
Peace with my sister, and so win
Her kind forgiveness for my sin.

Rather than lose her affection,
I will overlook the action
You performed, the wrong you wrought
Against myself, and all this court,
If you will give your word that you
This fresh adventure will pursue,
That you, out of your courtesy,
Will seek, and gain, the Grail for me!'

Gawain goes to seek and gain the Grail

Once all were reconciled, Gawain
Was sent forth on the road again,
To find and then to gain the Grail.
On Kingrimursel he did prevail
To forgive the King who had so
Lost his loyalty, through treating so
Lightly a pledge of safe-passage.
This was done. Now, little damage
Had occurred to Gawain's men;
Not one lad was wounded, for when
The fight was on, all weapon-less,
They had been held, in slight duress,
Their lives, under truce, being saved
By a man of worth, who had behaved
With kindness towards them, and all
Their swords still hung there in the hall.
Now Frenchmen, Britons, or whate'er
They were, his squires and pages there,
Were freed and led to Lord Gawain,
And when they saw their lord again,
The pages clasped him, all in tears;
For, there, wept Count Liaz, the son
Of Tinas of Cornwall, he was one,
And Duke Gandiluz, Gurgri's lad,
Whose valiant father sadly had
Lost his life at Schoydelakurt;

That place brought many a lady hurt,
Liaze then was this page-boy's aunt.
His mouth and eyes Love doth plant
On those who seem to represent her.
Gazing at him, gave all folk pleasure.
With these two there came six others.
In birth all eight, like noble brothers,
Came of high and faultless lineage.
They loved him as kin, and each page
Earned but true honour, as his reward,
And the kind treatment he did afford.
'Bless you dear kinsmen,' cried Gawain,
You had grieved for me were I slain,
I do believe!' That was more than clear
As each lad brushed away a tear.
'And I was anxious on your account,
Where were you when they did mount
That fight? They told him, and spoke true.
'A falcon, a moulted merlin, flew
While you sat with the Princess there,
And we ran to see that whole affair.'

Those who stood or sat in the hall,
Took close stock of him, princes all,
Judging him as well-bred and brave.
He asked leave of the King who gave
Him his permission to now depart.
With the Landgrave he went apart,
And then the Princess led these two,
And Gawain's young gentlemen too,
To where they were waited upon
By young ladies who insisted on
Seeing, at once, to their every need.
When they had breakfasted (indeed,
I tell the tale, as Kyot told it)
Sentiment turned to woe, to whit
'Madam,' he said to the Princess,

'I cannot help, should the Lord bless
Me with life, devoting my deeds
Of knight-errantry, and the needs
Of chivalry, to the service of your
Womanly virtues for evermore.
A blessed fate has led you I see
To eschew all need for falsity,
Such that on truth you ever call,
And so, your honour exceeds all!
My lady, I ask leave to depart.
Grant it me, with a loving heart.
May nobility preserve your fame.'
His departure must give her pain,
And many a lovely girl wept too.
'Could I but have done more for you,
My happiness would now exceed
My grief,' she said, 'twas meant indeed,
'As it is, the terms are as they are,
No better, but, where'er you are,
When hard-pressed, whenever care
Weighs on your knightly calling there,
In victory or defeat, tis true,
My Lord, my heart will be with you,'
The noble Princess kissed Gawain,
On the mouth, and this fact was plain,
He was more than a little distressed
To part so abruptly, and, for the rest,
It distressed them both, if you ask me.

Gawain's pages had swiftly brought
His horses there, to the Palace court.
Beneath the shade of the linden tree,
He mounted his charger, gallantly.
The Landgrave had been joined there,
By his men, I hear, and all did fare,
Beyond the town, and there Gawain
Asked him, courteously, to maintain

Himself as a guide to his retinue,
Until Bearosche came in view:
'There Scherules resides,' he said,
And they may ask then to be led
To Dianazdrun, where some Briton,
Or another, will escort them on
To my lord, or Queen Guinevere.'
Kingrimursel quelled his every fear,
And promised so to do, and then
Gawain took leave of all his men.
His charger Gringuljete was clad
In steel, and then the warrior bade
The pages arm himself the same.
His kissed them all, did Lord Gawain,
Pages and noble squires as well.
The vow he'd made did now impel
Him onwards to pursue the Grail,
And all that journey might entail,
And so, as he was, one man alone,
He rode forth to perils unknown.

Book IX: Parzival and Trevrizent

Parzival encounters his cousin Sigune for a third time

'OPEN!' To whom? Who goes there?
'To enter your heart thus, I would dare.'
'Then you try too narrow a space.'
'How so? Can I not seek a place?
I promise not to jostle and press,
I would tell you wonders, no less.'
'Is't you, Lady Adventure? Pray
How does he fare, your knight, this day?
Tis noble Parzival I mean,
Whom, with words harsh and lean,
Cundrie drove forth to seek the Grail,
A quest he sought, whate'er it entail,

Despite a wealth of ladies' tears.
He left Arthur, and toiled for years,
So how then is he faring now?
Take up the tale, the when and how,
And say if sorrow is his story,
Or if he has achieved great glory,
Whether his fame spreads far and wide,
Or has shrivelled away and died.
Tell us his deeds with all their pain.
Has he seen Munsalvaesche again,
And gentle Anfortas whose sighs
A troubled heart did realise?
Speak, it would console us so.
Is he free of suffering or no?
Let us hear if Parzival was there,
Your lord and mine in this affair;
Reveal the life that he has led.
How has that child, of Herzeloyde bred,
Gahmuret's son, fared all this while?
Tell us if, riding many a mile
To fight, he has won joy or woe.
The Grail does he still seek to know,
Or does he fester in idleness?
Tell us his life, no more nor less.'

The story tells us that Parzival
Had ranged widely, and twas all
On horseback, or o'er the sea.
None who fought him, certainly,
Kept his saddle, unless he were
Kith or kin, for in each affair,
He tipped the scales for his foe;
For his fame rose as theirs fell low.
He has defended himself full well
In many fierce wars, the tale doth tell,
Such that any who'd lease his fame
Must fear and tremble to gain that same.

The sword Anfortas had given him,
While with the Grail, failed on him,
Broke in a duel, and was re-made,
All with the well at Karnant's aid;
Lac was the name of that spring.
The blade proved a powerful thing
In battle, and helped him win fame.
He sins who believes not that same.

Now, the tale says, it did befall
That to a forest did Parzival
Come riding, the hour I know not,
Where, in a most secluded spot,
By a fast-flowing stream, he saw
A new-built cell, one end more
Over the water than beside it.
Our brave young knight had lit
On a place where he might further
His endless search for adventure;
God was pleased to lead him so.
There he found an anchoress; know,
That she had dedicated her life
To God, of love, and was a wife
To woe, renouncing happiness.
Ever the seed of woman's sorrow
Grew in her heart, every morrow
Saw it bloom and die, twas fed
By a love that was never dead,
For Schionatulander, twas he
Lay buried, while Sigune, she,
Above his tomb, led that life of woe.
She needed not the Mass to hear,
Her life was one long prayer here,
Her red lips all withered and dry,
Now that joy had passed her by.
No maid e'er endured such pain.
In solitude her sorrow did reign

In sorrow she had made her vow;
Sigune loved this dead prince now
For the sake of the love that died
With him, though ne'er his bride.
(Had she been his wife, e'en so
Lady Lunete had been full slow
To offer that counsel in distress,
She once gave to her own mistress:
To wed the man who slew her love,
And thus, his deed nigh-on approve.
Yet even today one can still find
A Lady Lunete of such a mind,
Who'll give counsel out of season.)
If a woman, for whatever reason,
Shuns amorous ties, and doth strive
While her husband is yet alive,
To honour marriage and decency
He has been blessed, it seems to me,
With a rare treasure beyond price;
Her temperance needs no advice.
No restraint suits her so well,
As I, being witness, would tell.
Let her circumstances guide her
If he dies, yet if their honour
She doth maintain then no more fair
A garland could a woman wear
Were she her beauty to enhance,
To seek out pleasure at the dance.
Yet why do I speak of pleasure,
Seeing the woe, in full measure,
To which Sigune's love brought her?
Better, then, if I drop the matter.

Parzival rode to the cell window,
Over fallen trees he must go,
Since no path at all lead there,
Though he merely sought to fare

Near enough to ask the way
Through the forest, I may say.
'Does any person here reside?'
He asked, and, 'Yes!' a voice replied.
Since twas a woman's voice he threw
His mount about, and then he drew
The steed onto the untouched grass.
Reproaching himself that, alas,
He'd not at once dismounted, he
Tethered the horse to a fallen tree,
And hung his worn shield there too.
Then, if bold, yet modest and true,
He ungirt his sword from his side,
And gently laid the weapon aside,
As courtesy bade, and then did go
To ask what he desired to know
Beside the window in the wall.

Empty of joy, and bare of all
Pleasure was that place of woe.
To the window he bade her go,
And, pale and worn, she courteously
Rose from her prayers. As yet he
Had no notion who she might be,
Little of her person could he see.
She wore a coarse hair-shirt within
Her grey cloak, next to her skin.
Her lover was Sorrow, and thereby
She must breathe many a sigh,
For he had laid all joy to rest.
The maiden now did meet her guest
At the window and greeted him
In gentle welcome; near to him,
She held a psalter, he could see,
And a ring on her finger, that she
Had kept there for her true love's sake,
Despite this retreat that she did make.

Its gem was a garnet stone that shone
Forth fiery rays, with the light upon
Its facets from the window, where
A mourning head-dress hid her hair.
'There is a bench by the wall outside,
She said, 'be seated, you may bide
A while, if such be your pleasure,
And you own a moment's leisure.
May God, who doth ever reward
Honest greetings, to you accord
Grace, for bestowing yours on me.'
The knight accepted, courteously,
Seating himself by the window
Requesting that she should also
Be seated there inside. 'Never,'
She said, 'have I sat here ever
In the presence of any man.'
Our knight, Parzival, then began
To question how she kept alive,
With no crops around to thrive:
'I know not madam how you may
Lodge in this place day after day,
A wilderness far from any road,
Or feed yourself in this abode.'
'Cundrie La Surziere doth bring
Me food, each Saturday evening,
From the Grail, so she provides,
For all this is as she decides.
Little my trouble on that score;
Would that were all, and no more!
That twas untrue, he did conceive,
For she might yet seek to deceive.'
'For whose sake do you wear that ring?'
He asked, 'for I know of a saying:
That the anchoress and the anchorite
Should refrain from love outright!'

'If your words possessed such power,
They'd make me out a liar this hour;
Cry foul, if ever I learn to cheat;
Please God, I am free of all deceit.
It is not in me deny the truth.
I wear this fair token as proof
Of my true love for a dear man,
Of whose love you must understand
I ne'er took possession, indeed,
By any form of mortal deed;
Yet my maiden's heart doth impel
Me to love him, and love him well.
Here, within, lies one whose ring
I have worn, since in the jousting
Orilus slew him; and thus, always,
I shall love him for all my days,
The joyless days that are left to me.
True love he doth deserve of me,
For he strove that love to advance,
Chivalrously, with shield and lance,
And in my service met his death.
I am a virgin, yet every breath,
Though I am unwed, cries that he
Is my spouse before God; for we
Should be wed if twas mere thought
Engendered deeds, for there is naught
In my mind gainst our marrying.
His death has wounded my being.
And so, this ring, that signifies
True wedlock, shall, in God's eyes,
Assure my safe passage on high.
The torrent that doth feed my eye,
Welling from my heart, doth prove
A moated defence to my true love.
For there are two here,' she did sigh,
'Prince Schionatulander, and I.'
Parzival from her words did know,

That this was Sigune, and her woe
 Deeply affected him; in haste,
 He bared his head, ere she graced
 Him with further speech, and she,
 Glimpsing his face, at the sight,
 Recognised the valiant knight.
 ‘You are Parzival! To what avail
 Fare you now, as regards the Grail?
 Have you learned its nature, at last?
 If not, what places have you passed
 On your quest, and where go you now?’
 ‘Much joy have I lost, I will avow,
 In that endeavour,’ he told the maid.
 ‘The Grail has care upon me laid.
 I left a land, where I wore the crown,
 And a noble wife, of high renown,
 No fairer born of human kind.
 I long for her, and have often pined
 For her modest and courteous ways,
 For thus do I yearn for her always,
 Knowing her tender love for me,
 Yet even more for a chance to see
 Munsalvaesche and the Grail. Alas,
 The thing has not yet come to pass.
 Cousin Sigune, twere wrong this day,
 Knowing not all my pain and woe,
 To treat me somewhat as your foe.’
 ‘Cousin, my censure, with its reason,
 Your sad error, shall be forgotten,
 Since, by not asking, as you ought,
 The one question, that would have brought
 Honour to you, while Anfortas
 Was your host, it has come to pass
 That you’ve foregone much happiness.
 A single question, would have blessed
 You with all that the heart desires.
 But now your happiness retires,

And your spirit limps on behind.
Care dwells near your heart, I find,
Yet would have been a stranger still
Had you but questioned him, at will.'
'I did as ill-fated men will do,
Yet, Cousin, counsel me anew.
Remember, we are kin, and say
How matters stand with me this day.
I would mourn for your sorrow,
Did not a greater weight of woe,
Burden me, a weight that's more
Than any man has borne before,
For it seeks to crush me indeed.'
'May He who views every deed,
To whom all suffering is known,
Grant you aid. What if some unknown
Path led you where you might see
Munsalvaesche now, fortuitously,
The very place which you confess
Is bound up with your happiness?
Cundrie La Surziere took her way
From here, not long ago I'd say,
Although I asked her not whether
She rode there, or someplace other,
I regret to say, for tis near at hand.
When she is here her mule doth stand
There where the clear spring doth flow
Out of the rock. I'd have you go
After her, since you may catch her
Full soon, as you ride the faster.'

He fights with a Knight Templar of Munsalvaesche

FORTHWITH, the warrior departed
And along the fresh track started;
That way Cundrie's mule had gone,
Yet soon the undergrowth, upon

The path, so blocked it, to his cost,
That once again the Grail was lost.
All his hopes were swiftly dashed.
If to Munsalvaesche he'd passed,
Surely, he'd have asked the question
He'd failed to ask on the occasion
That you learned of earlier, reader,
And yet now must journey further.
So, let him ride; where's he to go?

A mounted man came riding though
Towards him, one whose head was bare;
A splendid tabard he did wear,
Belted o'er his gleaming armour.
But for his lack of helm, this other
Was decked out as became a knight;
He advanced on Parzival outright.
'Sir,' said he, 'it displeases me,
That you beat a track thus, wantonly,
Through forest owned by my good lord,
I shall you this warning afford,
Such a one as you will regret.
Munsalvaesche must never let
Any man close, nary a knight,
Without demanding that he fight
In fierce encounter, or doth proffer
Such amends as death doth offer.'
He bore a helm, in his left hand,
Twas silver-corded, his right hand,
Bore a fresh lance tipped with steel,
Armed he was from head to heel
But for that helm, which he placed
Now on his head, and once laced,
Showing anger, prepared to fight,
(Though his warlike threats alight
On one who will cost him dear,
As brave a warrior, without fear,

Who has shattered many a lance
As fine as this he doth advance).

‘Now were one riding o’er his field,
At harvest-time, then one might yield
A point,’ Parzival thought, ‘to anger,
But here is wilderness, naught other,
And, unless my right arm fails me,
He shall not for ransom bind me.’
They gave free rein on either side,
Then spurred on their mounts, to ride
Full tilt, and neither missed his aim.
Parzival oft had braved the same,
And, on his chest, he took the blow,
While, thrust with skill, his stroke so
Caught the other precisely where
His helmet-lace was knotted, there
Where a knight hangs his shield
At tourney, in the jousting field.
The outcome was that this Templar
Of Munsalvaesche, now flung afar
From his mount, into a gulley,
Rolled without rest, till finally
He reached a stop, while Parzival
Following through, escaped a fall,
For while his horse ran on and fell,
Breaking nigh every bone as well,
He himself grasped a cedar bough,
With both his hands (allow it now;
Twas no disgrace that he did suffer
Hanging, no executioner
Being present!) then his feet found
A purchase on the rocky ground.
His charger lay dead, but not his foe,
In the thick undergrowth below,
For the other knight, indeed,
Was climbing to safety, and at speed.

If he'd intended to share whatever
He won from Parzival, the matter
Now ended such that twould avail
Him better to seek it of the Grail.

Parzival now climbed back again,
And grasped the other horse's rein,
Which was dangling down below,
And had trailed along the ground so,
That the horse had then stepped through,
And halted, as if told so to do.
Parzival thus renewed his stance,
Having lost naught but his lance,
And, having found a fine steed,
Was reconciled to that, indeed.
Not even mighty Lahelin,
I'd say, nor proud Kingrisin,
Nor Irot's son, King Gramoflanz,
Nor Lascoyt, scion of Gurnemanz,
Had so splendid a joust e'er run,
As that in which this steed was won.
Now, Parzival rode on, not knowing,
In the slightest, where he was going,
But on that path, none did he see
Of Munsalvaesche's company;
It grieved him that the Grail thus hid
Itself from him, as now it did.

**On Good Friday he meets with an aged knight coming from
confession**

I'LL tell, if any doth care to hear,
How Parzival progressed from here;
Yet I'll not count the weeks he saw
While seeking adventure, as before.
One morn, a light mantle of snow
Lay covering the ground, although

Twere deep enough to trouble us now;
Through a dense forest he did plough,
And there an aged knight appeared,
Naked beneath his grizzled beard;
His wife was as grey-haired as he.
O'er their bare flesh, draped loosely,
They both wore coarse cloaks of grey;
On pilgrimage, they made their way
To and from confession, nearby.
His daughters, pleasing to the eye,
Urged on by their chaste hearts, also
In similar cloaks of grey did go;
And all were barefoot, Parzival
Saluted the knight (it did befall
That his counsel would later bring,
Parzival good fortune) on seeing
That he'd the appearance of a lord.
The ladies' lap-dogs ran at their sides,
And other knights and squires besides,
In seemly and humble attitude,
Made that pilgrimage, pride subdued.

Our noble warrior gave such care
To his clothes and armour that, there,
Being clad as befits a worthy knight,
They outshone the other's grey outright.
With a tug at the reins, he turned aside,
Then questioned them, ere he did ride,
About their journey, and received
A mild reply, though the other grieved,
And reproached him, in that the day,
Of that holy season, brought no stay
To his journey nor gave him cause
To ride unarmed, or better to pause
And walk there barefoot, as did they.
'My lord,' said Parzival, 'what day
Of the week it is, or when this year

Began, or the weeks gone by I fear
I know not; and then I used to serve
One called 'God', till He did reserve
Such shame for me, and yet I never
Failed Him in true devotion ever;
Still there is no help for me there.'
'Unseemly the armour that you wear,'
Said the other, 'if you should mean
Our Lord born of the Virgin Queen,
And, thus, believe in his Incarnation,
And the remembrance of the Passion
Which we are observing on this day!
For, know, Good Friday it is today,
Such that the world should rejoice
And at the same time, with one voice,
Cry woe. What greater loyalty
Could any on earth below e'er see,
Than that which God showed for our sake,
When to the Cross those men did take
Him, and hung him there on high?
If you are pledged to the faith, say I,
Let this knowledge bring you pain,
Recalling that great loss again:
He bartered his noble life, His death
Redeemed our debt, with His last breath,
For Mankind, damned, was destined for
Hell, through our sins, by God's own law.
If you're no heathen, remember
What day this is, ride on further,
Retrace our tracks, not far away,
Is a man so holy that he may
Counsel you, and grant, indeed,
A just penance for your misdeed.
If to a true confession you win,
Then he'll absolve you of all sin.'
'Why so unwelcoming, father,
In this weather?' asked a daughter,

‘Why give him such chill counsel?
Lead him where, for a goodly spell,
He may warm himself. However
Fine he looks in his steel armour,
He must be cold, three times over.
You have tents and warm shelter,
If even King Arthur came here,
You could feed him, now appear
As a good host should, and take
This knight with you for pity’s sake.’
‘My daughter speaks true,’ the father
Said, ‘each year, despite the weather,
As the day nears of His passion,
He who rewards our devotion,
We come here, to a place nearby
In this wild forest; we shall share
With you the poor and humble fare
We brought with us to eat this day.’
The girls entreated him to stay,
And be their most honoured guest.
When Parzival their looks addressed
He saw their lips though frosted o’er
Were warm and not quite in accord
With the sorrows of that occasion,
And hesitated, with good reason.
(Had they some small debt to pay,
I’d have been loath to ride away
Rather than take a kiss in fee,
Should they wish to settle with me.
Women are women, a valiant man,
They’ll win over, they always can
And do, as they often have before!)
Parzival listened to all the four,
And thought: ‘The girls are so lovely
Twere ill to join their company,
Riding beside while they walk on,
When counsel tells me to be gone,

Twere more fitting that I go by,
Considering, as well, that I
Am now at odds with Him they love
With all their hearts, and approve
As their true help, yet Who bars me
From His aid, and exposes me
To sorrow.' He offered his reply:
'My lord and lady, let me go by.
May you prosper, in happiness!
And, young ladies, may your excess
Of courtesy be rewarded, truly,
And your thoughts of hospitality.
Now, though, allow me to depart.'
He bowed his head; on their part,
They inclined theirs with regret.

Herzeloide's child rides further yet.
His knightly order urged modesty
And compassion, and true mercy,
And, since Herzeloide gave him
A loyal heart, remorse gripped him.
For only now did he dwell further
On the Creation, and his Creator,
And how powerful He must be.
'What if God has such power, He
Can relieve all my misery?'
He thought: 'Oh, if ever a knight,
Who was remorseful, in His sight,
Earned His favour and His reward,
Or if wielding a shield and sword,
With knightly ardour, may obtain
His aid, and ease life's cares again,
And if this be the day to aid a man,
Then let Him help, if help He can!'

He looked back, in the direction
From whence he had just ridden;

The good-hearted folk were standing
Where he'd left them, yet regretting
His departure, and with their gaze
The girls watched him on his way,
While he to his heart did confess
That they pleased his sight no less,
Their beauty full clear and bright.
'If God's power,' thought the knight,
Is so great that it guides all things,
Creatures, people, and aid it brings,
Then I will praise it, and if He
In His wisdom guides us surely,
Then let Him lead me to success,
And this Castilian steed no less.
Let Him, of goodness, show His power!
Now, go where God chooses this hour!'
Loosening the reins, he spurred his horse,
Then let his mount decide their course.

For Fontane La Salvaesche it made,
Where to Duke Orilus he'd conveyed
The truth on oath. Twas the dwelling
Of Trevrizent the austere, who dining
Sparsely many a Monday, did seek
Naught finer any day of the week.
He had forsworn both bread and wine,
And, abstaining further, had no mind
For fish, or meat with blood within.
Such was the life, now free of sin,
That this man led. God had inspired
Him to prepare for his desired
Entry among the heavenly host.
He fasted, truly more than most,
Self-denial proving his weapon
Against the Devil's intrusion.

Now, by Trevrizent, Parzival

Will be tutored and, amidst all,
Many a thing will be revealed
About the Grail, as yet concealed.
All those who have questioned me,
And criticised, you earn, you see,
Naught but shame. For Kyot asked
Me to hide them, thus I was tasked,
Because his source had forbidden
Kyot too, from making mention
Of them till the story attained
The point where they must be explained.

Wolfram speaks about Kyot, his source, and Flegetanis

KYOT, that well-known master, found
The source of this tale, sadly bound,
In some corner of Toledo, twas writ,
In a heathen script. He deciphered it,
After learning its ABC, without
Necromancy's aid and, no doubt,
That he was a baptised Christian
Helped him, for otherwise no man
Had learned the tale; no magic art,
No hidden wisdom, on the part
Of the infidels. could e'er avail
In learning the nature of the Grail,
And how its secrets might be known.

A heathen, Flegetanis, well-known
For his skills, he and no other,
A natural philosopher,
Descended from King Solomon,
Of Israelite lineage a scion,
(His stock did many a sage yield,
Till baptism became our shield
Against hellfire) this man of note,
Of the true Grail's wonders wrote.

Yet he worshipped a calf as though
The thing was his god, even so,
Being a heathen like his father.
How is it that the Devil's laughter
Mocks people as wise as was he,
And puts them to scorn endlessly,
And that the Lord whose power
Is greatest, who at every hour,
Comprehends all wonders, wholly,
Fails to part them from their folly?
Flegetanis, this infidel,
The heavens understood full well,
The retreat and coming again
Of every heavenly body made plain,
And the time that doth appertain
Ere each doth reach its place again.
All humankind is affected by
Their rotation through the sky.
This Flegetanis thus did see,
And spoke of them reverentially,
The secrets that were concealed
In the constellations, as revealed.
He spoke of a thing called the Grail,
Whose name he read, without fail,
In the stars: 'A heavenly band
Left it here, upon earth did stand
And then they rose above the sky,
If innocence drew them on high.
Then a pure Christian progeny,
Bred to a pure life, had the duty
Of its guard. Worthy, says the tale,
Are all those summoned to the Grail.'
So Flegetanis wrote of this matter.

The wise master Kyot did, later,
Search in Latin texts for the tale,
To find where keepers of the Grail

Might have dwelt, for such duty fit,
And, so disciplined in guarding it.
He read the chronicles of each land,
Of Britain, and France, and Ireland,
Yet in Anjou he found the tale,
He read the truth about the Grail,
About Mazadan; the record there,
Of his scions, was laid out fair,
How, in the one line, Titurel,
And, in turn, his son Frimutel,
Bequeathed the Grail to Anfortas,
And then of how it came to pass
That Herzeloyde, his sister, bore
Gahmuret a son, as told before,
To whom this story doth belong,
And who is riding now, along
The fresh tracks the knight in grey,
And all his kin, had left that day.

Parzival encounters Trevrizent the hermit, his uncle

DESPITE the snow upon the ground
Parzival, gazing all around,
Recognised a field, where flowers
Had brightened it in other hours;
At the foot of a steep slope it lay
Where, with his right hand, on a day,
He had forced Orilus to relent
Towards Jeschute, all innocent,
And Orilus' anger had died there.
Yet now the tracks continued where
A path still led, pace after pace;
Fontane La Salvaesche was the place
It ran towards. And there its lord
He found at home, who did afford
Parzival a courteous greeting.
'Alas, sir! he cried, on meeting,

‘That you should be in such a state
On this holy day! Some desperate
Affair made you don your armour,
No doubt? If not, in some other
Garb perchance twere best to ride
If twas permitted by your pride?
Pray dismount, for to that action
I fancy you’ll make no objection;
Come, warm yourself by my fire.
If you ride forth from some desire
For adventure and Love’s reward,
And with true love you’re in accord
Love then, for love now you may,
Since Love indeed doth own this day!
And thereafter you may honour
Womankind, and seek her favour.
But come, dismount, as I suggest.’

Parzival did so, then, as his guest,
Stood before him, courteously.
He told him of those he did see,
Good people indeed he must own,
On the way, how the one had shown
Him the path to the hermit’s cave,
And praised too the advice he gave.
‘Sir, guide me now, I am a sinner.’
And the good man said, in answer,
‘I shall guide you, but tell me who
Spoke of myself, and directed you.’
‘Waking towards me in the wood,
A grey-haired man, his aspect good,
Saluted me kindly, as did his kin.
That honest man, absolved of sin,
Sent me here to meet with you,
And so, his tracks I kept in view.’
That was Gabenis,’ said his host,
‘And he is far nobler than most.

He is a prince of Punturteis,
And the mighty king of Kareis
Married his sister. No offspring
Of mortal line were in anything
Purer than his daughters you met
In the forest; far the purest yet.
And the Prince is born of royalty,
And every year he visits me.'

'When you stood there, in full view,
Were you afraid as I rode nigh you?
Did I trouble you?' asked Parzival.
'Believe me, sir, no, not at all.
A bear or stag I would fear more
Than ever I'll fear mankind, for
Tis but a man that here you see,
Possessed of human ability.
From the field I did ne'er remove
Myself, nor did a coward prove,
Nor of love was I innocent,
I was a knight, with your intent;
In bearing arms, I strove to win
The love of women, pairing sin
With chastity in thought, and I,
To win a lady's favour thereby,
Lived in a fine and courtly way.
But all of that is forgot, I say.
Hand me the reins, your steed may rest;
Here by the cliff foot were best,
And then bracken we may gather
And fir-shoots for I lack fodder,
Yet he will have sufficient feed.'
Now, Parzival held back indeed,
But the good man said: 'Trust me,
You are forbidden by courtesy
From contending with your host
Thereby shaming yourself almost.'

So Parzival yielded up the bridle
To his host, without a struggle,
And where a waterfall did flow
He led the knight's mount below
The overhanging rock; that place
The sun's rays did never grace,
It made a savage stable indeed.
A lesser man would have found
The cold bitter on its chill ground,
Freezing in steel armour there.
His host showing every care,
Led Parzival to his wide cavern
Sheltered from the wind, within
Which burned a bright charcoal fire,
Whose warmth the knight did much desire.
The master of this dwelling lit
A candle, while the knight did sit
On a bed of straw and ferns after
Removing his weight of armour,
And let the fire warm his limbs,
And add some colour to his skin.
It was no wonder he was weary,
Riding through rough forest many
A mile each day, and then at night
Sleeping unsheltered till first light,
And rising to find frosted ground.
Yet now a kind host he had found.

Parzival tells Trevrizent of his past deeds and current state

THERE was a warm coat lying there,
Which the hermit lent him to wear,
Then to the next cave he was shown;
Where were books, and an altar-stone
Bare of its cloth, as was but right,
In accord with the Good Friday rite;
On it there stood a reliquary,

Well-known to Parzival, for he
Had laid his hand on it to swear
His oath when Lady Jeschute there
Found her suffering turned to joy,
And new happiness without alloy.

Said Parzival: 'I know this vial;
I swore an oath upon it a while
Ago, and found a painted lance,
Beside it. Sir, I took the lance,
And later, before I set it down,
I was told it brought me renown.
Two fine jousts with it I fought,
Yet I was so absorbed in thought
Of my wife that I knew it not,
Obliviousness was then my lot,
Though honour had not forsaken me.
Yet now more care comes to me
Than e'er was seen in any man.
How long is it since I laid a hand
Here on the lance that I did find?'
'My friend Taurian left it behind,'
The hermit answered, 'he told me
He'd missed it, and twas precisely
Four and a half years and three days
Since on that lance you first did gaze.
I'll reckon it for you, if you care
To listen.' From his psalter there,
A full and true account he cast
Of the years and weeks gone past.

'It is only now,' said Parzival,
That I'm aware how long in all
I have wandered directionless,
And absent from true happiness.
Such is no more than is a dream
To me, or at least so doth seem,

For I ever bear a weight of grief.
And I'll say more: tis my belief
I've ne'er entered any place
Where God's praise is sung; my face
Is turned towards battle ever.
God I resent, since as godfather
To all my troubles He doth stand;
He has raised them in His hand,
And buried deep my happiness.
If only God's power would bless
And succour me, as an anchor
Joy would prove, that now doth rather
Drag through sorrow's silt and mud.
If my heart is wounded (how could
It be whole when her thorny crown
Woe doth set upon true renown,
Won by brave deeds from mighty foes?)
Then all shame upon Him who shows,
Though aid lies within His power,
No mercy to me, and aids me not;
For if tis true that, whate'er our lot,
He is ever prompt to help mankind,
No help from Him do I e'er find,
For all the good they tell of Him.'

Trevrizent preaches to Parzival concerning God

HIS host sighed, and gazed at him,
'Sir,' he said, 'if you would be wise,
And, thus, God's mercy would realise,
Then in God you'll place your trust.
He will help you, since help He must.
God aid us both! You must tell all;
Sit, though!' said he, to Parzival,
'Tell me how your anger arose
Such that hatred of God now grows
Within you; yet, as a man of sense,

Wait while I tell of His innocence,
Since you accuse Him to my face;
Ever present is His help and grace.
Though I was a layman I could read,
And copy, the sacred truth indeed:
That, as the Scriptures say, to gain
Help, His service we must maintain,
He who is never tired of granting
Aid to the soul at risk of plunging
Down to Hell. Be loyal to Him then,
Since God is forever loyal to men,
And steadfast in scorning falsity.
We should grant Him our loyalty,
For His sublime nature did take
Our form, for humanity's sake.
God is Truth, and is e'er named so;
Of falseness, He was ever the foe;
You should think upon that deeply,
For in Him there's no falsity,
So train your thoughts, to abjure
Falseness to Him, on any score.
You gain naught by your anger.
Any who heard you would rather
Think you of weak understanding,
For hating Him notwithstanding
What Lucifer and his company
Of angels reaped for their enmity.
As angels, lacking in bitterness,
Where did they find all that excess
Of malice that made them wage war
And earn the reward, furthermore
Of the fierce bitterness of Hell?
Astiroth and Belcimon fell,
Belet and Radamant, and more
That I could name, they all bore
The mark of their malice and envy,
A hellish hue that bright company

Of Heaven took on, when they fell.

When Lucifer descended to Hell
With his followers, Man came after.
For God made noble Adam later,
Out of earth, and from his body
God took that rib from which He
Formed the body of Eve, and so
We were consigned to grief and woe,
For she heeded not her Creator,
And so our bliss she did shatter.
By mortal birth then, these two
Had children, one son driven to
Take his grandmother's virginity,
Out of discontent, and vainglory!
Now many will be pleased to ask,
Not understanding me at my task,
How is that possible? Nonetheless
It came to pass through sinfulness.'

'I doubt that such a thing could be,'
Said Parzival, 'who then was he
Descended from; that sinner who
Did the deed, according to you?
Such as this you should scorn to claim.'
'Yet I will speak; let there remain,
No shadow of doubt; of deceit
Accuse me, if the truth complete,
I fail to tell; for Earth, she was
Adam's mother, and because,
Though she nourished Adam, she
Was yet whole in her virginity,
Then it remains for me to tell
Who stole her maidenhead. Blood fell,
Upon the earth, and it was gone,
Taken from her by Adam's son,
For Adam to that Cain was father,

Who for a trifle slew his brother,
Abel; thus, hatred among men
Began, and has endured since then.

Naught is pure as an honest maid.
Think of their purity; God made
Himself flesh, as the Virgin's child.
Two men came thus of virgins mild,
For God a human face took on,
That of the first virgin's son,
A condescension to mankind
From His sublimity. Now, we find
In Adam's race both joy and woe
For he shares our blood, although
He sits above angels now, and in
His lineage lies the root of sin
Of which we all must bear our load.
Yet may the mercy that He showed
Through his power, be present here,
And keep our spirits free from fear!
Since He in human shape contended
Loyally with disloyalty, then ended
Must be your quarrel with Him now.
In hopes of heavenly bliss, thus vow
Penance here for your sins, then be
Of your words and deeds less free.
Let me tell you of the reward
For those who in loose speech afford
Relief to their anger. They are damned
By their own mouths, thus, out of hand.
If old sayings teach of loyalty too
Then let all such be spoken anew.
In ancient times prophetic Plato
And the Sibyl claimed twould be so,
Foretelling, beyond doubt, that we
Would have, of Heaven, a surety
For our great debt. Of divine love,

He, in the highest, did yet remove
True souls from Hell, and behind
He left those souls to evil blind.

These glad tidings speak forever
Of the true and constant Lover.
The unwavering light, He shines
Through all things and so defines
Himself; and all those to whom
He shows his love, they find room
In their hearts for true contentment.
Twin offerings to earth he sent,
Love and anger; which aids more?
While the impenitent flee before
God's anger, and from his love,
Yet any that repentant prove,
Atoning for their sins, will ever
Serve him, to seek his favour.
To Man's thought he brings grace;
If thought denies the sun a place,
All locked away, without a key,
Secure from all things that may be,
Darkness lit by nary a ray,
Yet of its nature the Godhead may
Pierce the wall of night, and ride
Unseen and noiseless, there inside,
Without a leap or thud or jingle.
And when, from the heart, a single
Thought arises, tis not so rapid
As to pass the body, and lie hid,
And only if the thought is pure
Does God accept it, for be sure
He sees our every thought so plain
That our frail deeds must cause Him pain.
When a man denies God's name
And his benevolence, and in shame
God turns aside, what human aid

Can teach him not to be afraid?
What refuge has the wounded soul?
If you would wrong God, His whole
Being bent on Love, though anger
Is his sword, tis you who'll suffer!
Now so direct your thoughts that He
Rewards your goodness equally.'

'Sir, forever shall I feel gladness,
That you taught me, in your goodness,
Of Him who rewards all; indeed,
Requiting the good or evil deed.
I've spent my youth,' said Parzival,
'In care and trouble, in spite of all
I've learned, until this very day,
While woe my loyalty doth repay.'
'Unless you do not wish to tell,
I should like to assay, as well,
Your sins and your sorrows, now'
His host replied, 'if you'll allow
Me to be the judge of them so,
I might well judge of your woe
And advise in ways that you
Might not yourself be able to.'

'My deepest woe concerns the Grail,
Said Parzival, 'next, I grow pale
For my wife than whom this earth
To none more fair has given birth.
I pine and languish for them both.'
'And you are right sir,' said his host,
'In feeling such distress, the pain
You give yourself I too maintain
Derives from longing for your wife.
Howe'er you suffer in this life,
Or in Purgatory next are found,
If in true wedlock you are bound,

Your torments full soon shall end,
For on God's aid you may depend;
Yet all your longing for the Grail,
You foolish man, shall not avail
You, for no man alive can gain
The true Grail, I do here maintain,
Except one whom Heaven doth say
Is destined for it; tis thus alway.
This much I know of the Grail,
For I have seen it; without fail,
I hold this to be true indeed.'
'Were you there, or did so read?'
Asked Parzival.' 'Yes, I was there,'
His host his answer thus did share.
Parzival gave no sign that he
Too had been there, but eagerly
Asked to be told about the Grail.

He speaks of the Grail and its keepers

'TIS known to me, and tis no tale,
That many bold warriors reside
At Munsalvaesche, and forth do ride,
In search of adventure, and whether
They reap glory, or something other,
For their sins, they must bear it well.
With the Grail that company doth dwell,
And I will tell you of the nurture
They receive, each brave warrior.
They are kept alive by a stone,
And the name by which tis known
If you have heard it not, is this,
It is named there "Lapsit exillis".
It is by virtue of this stone
That the Phoenix dies, alone,
Burns to ashes, and is reborn –
Moults and rises with the dawn;

For then it shines as bright as ever,
Fair as before, in every feather.
Further, all mortals, however ill,
On seeing the stone, live on still
For a week, and from that day
Lose not their colour in any way;
If any, maid or man, could view
The Grail for a hundred years or two,
Then their colour you would confess
Was as it had been, and just as fresh
As in their prime, though it would grey.
Such power the stone confers, I say,
On mortals, that their flesh and bone
Renews, for young they have grown.
This stone they also call "The Grail".

On this Good Friday, a dove doth sail
Downwards from heaven, and doth bear
That which governs the Grail there;
A small white wafer it doth bring,
And leaves it there, and then takes wing,
All dazzling bright, and doth return
To Heaven; of it the stone doth earn
Its highest virtue, for the dove I say
Brings a wafer each Good Friday,
And then, of that, the stone doth yield
All that is good from earthly field,
Though of paradisaal excellence,
All food and drink; from its presence
Men take the flesh of all wild things,
That live upon the earth, with wings,
Or feet or fins, such the portion there
The Grail grants, of its power; a share,
To that brotherhood in chivalry.

Now those appointed; list to me,
Hear how it is that they are known:

Beneath the top edge of the stone
An inscription there makes plain
The lineage, and then the name,
Of one that's summoned to the Grail;
And then the name itself doth pale,
Such that no need for erasure
Appertains to it for, whether
It told of man or maid, outright,
The writing vanishes from sight.
Those there who are full-grown came
As children, summoned by their name.
Happy the mother of any child
Destined to serve there; if their child
Is chosen, both rich and poor, of grace
Bidden to send them to that place,
Rejoice; from many a land they come,
From many a place in Christendom,
And then are free of shameful sin,
And they to Heaven will enter in,
For a rich reward they may expect;
Paradise is theirs, in the next
World, whenever they die in this,
And, in that realm, they find their bliss.

When Lucifer and the Trinity fought
With each other, those who sought
Not to battle, those angels, worthy
Noble, were made to fly, swiftly,
To earth, and to that self-same stone,
Ever-pure. If they did atone,
I know not, whether God forgave,
Damned them forever, or did save.
If twas His will, he took them back.
Since that day, it has seen no lack
Of guardians, for tis in the care
Of those God appointed to share
In that task, and to whom He sent

His angel; a sacred complement.
And this, sir, is what doth prevail
In matters concerning the Grail.'

He speaks of Anfortas, Lord of the Grail

'IF knightly deeds with shield and lance
One's earthly self can thus advance,
And win paradise for one's soul,
Such chivalry has been my goal,'
Said Parzival, 'I fought where'er
Men fought, and found glory there
Within my grasp. If God can judge
Of warriors, He will not grudge
A place to me in that company
Howe'er noble and fine they be,
That, thus, they may know a knight,
One who has never shunned a fight.'
'There, of all places,' said his host
You must guard yourself the most
Against such pride, and cultivate
Humility as man's proper state.
Your youth may betray you yet,
Such that temperance you forget;
Pride ever reigns before a fall.'
His kindly host wept to recall
The tale he now began to tell;
For many a woeful tear did well.

'Sir, there lives a king, his name
Is Anfortas, that very same,
Who was punished for his pride,
His agony such that you and I
Should be moved to endless pity.
He it was brought harm to many
Through his youth and his riches,
And then seeking love to excess,

Beyond the marriage bond, a tale
Unfit for those who guard the Grail.
In its service, knight and squire
Must set a curb on their desire;
Humility their pride must master,
And guide their actions thereafter,
Those of that noble brotherhood,
Who have sought to serve the good,
Warding off, by strength of hand
And arms, the men of every land
So that the Grail has been revealed
Only to those summoned to yield
Themselves to the Grail company
At Munsalvaesche. And one only,
Came there without such direction,
Lacking as yet in discretion,
Announced, it seems, but unassigned.
And since he, as if dumb and blind,
Uttered not one word to question
His host regarding the affliction
That tormented that noble man,
He departed from out that land
Saddled with sin; tis not for me
To speak of blame but, surely, he
Is bound to pay for that error,
Not asking why his host did suffer.
For Anfortas bore a weight of pain
The like of which none did sustain
Before. Now, twas ere this very same,
That Lahelin came there, to Brumbane,
Where Lybbeals of Prienlascors
Waited to joust with him; his horse
Lahelin took, after he had slain
Lybbeals, and tis more than plain
By doing so, despoiled the dead.
Sir, are you Lahelin?' his host said,
'For the horse you rode here, I see,

Like to those of the Grail company,
Is of Munsalvaesche, for there,
On the saddle, that mark they bear
Of the turtledove, as does your own,
And that mark to me is known
As the same device that Anfortas
Employs, though that emblem was
Ever depicted upon their shield.
The dove they bear upon the field,
It was bequeathed by Titurel
To his dear son, King Frimutel,
Which he displayed, that brave knight,
When he was slain in fair fight.
Frimutel loved his wife so dearly
No man ever loved more deeply
With such devotion. And you too
Should that manner of love renew,
And love your wife with all your heart.
Follow his path and, for your part,
You resemble Frimutel closely,
In form and manner equally.
He too was lord over the Grail.
Ah, sir, from whence do you hail?
Come, say who you are.' In reply,
Parzival looked him in the eye.

Parzival declares his name and lineage

'THE son of one who, seeking honour,
And urged on by knightly ardour,
Lost his life jousting,' said Parzival,
'And I would ask that you recall
Him in your prayers, sir, his name
Was Gahmuret, and, sir, he came
Of Angevin lineage. No, I
Am not King Lahelin, and, if I
Have e'er despoiled a mortal man,

Tw'as that I did not understand
What I did; yet I did the thing,
For I am guilty of slaying
That King Ither of Cumberland,
Who, with my own sinful hand,
I stretched dead upon the grass,
And then took what I would, alas.'
'Ah, wicked world why do you so?
Cried his host. 'You bring more woe
And bitter sorrow than you do joy!
Is this the means that you employ
To reward us? Thus, ends your song?
My nephew, you did great wrong;
What counsel can I give you now?
Your own flesh and blood, I avow,
You did slay. If you stand before
God, with the deed unatoned for,
And He judges, with justice true,
Why then so much the worse for you;
For you and King Ither were kin.
And God made manifest in him
Those virtues, born of nobility,
That grant life its true quality.
All misdeeds saddened him, for he
Was the very balm of constancy.
From all ill-thought he stood apart,
All that was noble filled his heart.
Worthy ladies should revile you,
For the loss of one, fine and true,
His service so entire, that knight,
On seeing him their eyes shone bright.
May God have mercy, in that you
Were the cause that they must rue
His passing. And, sadly, my sister,
Herzeloyde, who was your mother,
On your account, died of anguish!'
'Ah no, cried Parzival, 'what's this?

For were this so, twould not avail,
If I myself were lord of the Grail,
Since naught could console me. Say,
Are these things so? And, I pray,
If I am your nephew, speak true
As good and honest people do.'

Trevrizent tells Parzival of their relationship to the Grail lineage

'Tis not in me to deceive,' he said,
'Once you had left, she was dead
Of her love for you, all the reward
That her care for you did afford.
You were the creature that she bore,
The dragon that away did soar,
In a dream that came upon her,
Sweet lady, ere she did suffer
In bearing you! I have a brother,
Still living, and so too a sister.
Another sister, Schoysiane, died
Bearing a child (here he sighed).
Her husband was the Duke Kyot
Of Katelangen, who then forgot
All thought of future happiness,
Tormented so by grief's excess;
The child, Sigune, his daughter,
Was thus entrusted to your mother.
Ah! Schoysiane's death hurts me.
How could it not? Her heart, you see,
Full of woman's virtue did float
Like an ark, like a sacred boat,
Above the tides of wantonness.
My living sister is no less
Virtuous and, as yet, unwed,
For, taking no man to her bed,
She still maintains her chastity.

Repance de Schoye, that is she,
One who is charged with the Grail.
Its weight is such, all would fail
Who were sinful, and lacked grace,
To lift that wonder from its place.
My brother, and hers, is Anfortas,
Who Lord of the Grail is and was,
By hereditary right. Alas!
Happiness lies beyond his grasp,
He has but the hope that his task,
With its sufferings, will, after this,
Earn, for his soul, eternal bliss.
Things have reached this sad state
In a wondrous way, as I'll relate,
And nephew, if your heart is true,
Pain, at his woe, must trouble you.

He tells the history of Anfortas' affliction

ON the death of Frimutel, my father,
Then his eldest son, my brother,
Was summoned to the Grail as King
Lord and guardian of everything,
Both of the Grail, and its company,
And Anfortas indeed was worthy
Of the crown, and of the kingdom.
At that time, we were but children,
But when my brother reached the age
At which beards start, at that stage,
Love attacked him, as is her way
With young men, e'en to this day;
One might call it shameful of her,
The way she doth make them suffer.
But any Lord of the Grail bowed
By other love than that allowed
By the writing, is forced to pay
With pain and suffering alway.

My brother chose as his lady
One whom he considered wholly
Pure in her conduct; as to who
She was, let silence be her due.
He served her bravely, many a shield
He pierced, many he taught to yield.
As knight-errant, charming, comely,
In all the lands of chivalry
He won such fame no risk he ran
Of being surpassed by any man.
“Amor!” was ever his battle-cry,
Though it lacks humility, say I.

One day, when urged on by Love,
(Although his kin did not approve)
Enjoying Love’s encouragement,
To seek adventure this king went.
Jousting, amidst his swift advance
He was struck by a poisoned lance,
Through the thigh, and thereafter
He could not his health recover,
So serious was your uncle’s hurt.
His foe, small comfort I’d assert,
He’d slain, a heathen of Ethnise,
Born where, out of paradise,
The Tigris flows. This pagan thought
By valour to gain what he sought,
The Grail. His name was on the lance,
And he had sought, through circumstance,
An encounter in some far country,
Some distant land, beyond the sea,
To gain the Grail. Twas his prowess
That, thus, destroyed our happiness.
And yet your uncle did not yield,
He left him dead upon the field,
And brought the lance-tip away
Lodged in his body; yet that day

When he returned to his family
His sorry plight was clear to see.

When the king returned, at length,
So pale and so drained of strength,
A physician probed full deep,
And found the lance-head, complete
With a piece of the bamboo haft,
Which was buried, and both the shaft
And the steel lance-tip he retrieved.
To the God, in whom I believed,
And do so now, I sought to pray,
And, on my knees I vowed, that day,
To renounce the path of chivalry,
In the hope that, to His glory,
He'd aid my brother in his need.
I forswore bread and wine, indeed
All the foods too, I used to relish,
Every kind of meat, every dish
Containing blood; yet, dear nephew,
That brought my people sorrow too,
That renunciation of the sword.
"Who now will be the Grail's lord,
And, of its wonders, the guardian?"
They asked, as tears filled the land.

They sought God's help by carrying
Him nigh the Grail, but when the king
Set eyes on it, came fresh affliction
He might not die such was its action,
Nor was it fitting that he should
Now that my own existence would
Embrace this life of wretchedness,
And our state was one of weakness.
The king's wound festered, and none
Of the books of physic, no, not one,
Yielded a cure for his wound; all

Antidotes on which we might call,
Against the hot and vicious venom
Of snakes: the asp, the ecidemon,
The echontius, the licis,
The jecis, and the meatrix,
And other poisonous serpents; all
The juice of herbs that withal
The learned doctors could extract
By the art of physics were, in fact,
(Let me be brief) of no use to him.
God thwarted us. We sought for him,
Some flower that might float upon
The waters of Gihon, or Pishon,
Tigris, Euphrates, where they rise,
All four, and flow from paradise,
Such that its fragrance is unspent
And their streams retain the scent,
Hoping, by this, to end our woe.
But all in vain, fresh sorrow also
Came there; yet we tried other means.
We obtained the twig that gleams,
From the golden bough the Sybil
Told Aeneas of, to dispel
The fumes of Phlegethon, and offer
Defence against all Hellish danger.
We sought to gain it lest the lance
Had been tempered in advance
In Hellfire, which had it cursed thus,
But with that lance, that tore from us
Our happiness, it was not so.
There is a bird of which we know,
Called the Pelican, that doth love
Its young to excess, and doth prove
Its innate fondness by piercing
Its own breast and then allowing
Blood into their mouths to flow,
And then it dies. To ease his woe,

We sought the blood of that bird,
To find if all that we had heard
Of its love might bring him aid,
And this upon his wound we laid,
As best we could; a hope forlorn.
There is a beast, the unicorn,
Monicirus, which so esteems
Virginal purity that, it seems,
In maidens' laps it falls asleep.
This creature's heart, to ease the deep
Pain the king felt, we obtained
And used, and from its brow retained
That red gemstone the unicorn
Doth grow at the base of its horn.
We stroked the wound with the stone,
And then went deeper, nigh the bone,
But still corruption it did show;
To him, and us, it brought but woe.
The herb they called trachonte, said
To grow, where some dragon has bled,
From that serpent, once tis slain,
We sought for, and did then obtain;
(It is said the herb doth partake
Of air's nature) this we did take
To ascertain if it might prove
(That Serpent in the stars above)
To counteract the many changes
Of the moon there, as she ranges,
And certain planets, their return,
Those that greater pain did earn
For his wound, and yet the virtue
Of that rarest herb failed us too.

And now, before the Grail, we knelt,
Where, of a sudden, we saw spelt
Out, beneath its edge, the message
That a brave knight would make passage

To us, and were he heard to ask
A certain question (his sole task!)
Then our woe would pass away.
Yet if it chanced, before that day,
That some child, man, or maiden,
Did forewarn him of the question
Then it would fail of its effects,
And the wound, in all respects,
Would seem exactly as before,
Though deeper pain would lie in store.
Twas writ then: 'Is it understood?
Forewarn the knight, and it would
Prove harmful. If he should omit
The question, that first eve, then it
Will cease to function, yet, should he
Be there in season and, correctly,
Ask the question, the man shall gain
The kingdom, and God will be fain
To end your woe; while, though healing,
Anfortas shall no more be king.'
On the Grail, and in this manner,
We read his anguish would be over
If the question were asked of him.
And so, we salved the wound for him,
With whate'er might grant him ease,
Nard that doth ever soothe and please,
Theriac, gainst venom proved good,
And the strong incense of aloeswood;
Yet the pain remained, nonetheless.
I chose this place; scant happiness
I've achieved with each passing day.
Since then a knight did ride that way,
Yet better were it if he had not,
That knight I told you of, whose lot
Was but to garner shame, for he
Saw signs of suffering, certainly,
Yet he failed to ask the question,

“Good sir, what is your affliction?”
Of his host, youthful ineptness
Saw that he thus failed to address
The question; and, in so doing, he
Lost that rare opportunity.’

Parzival dines with the hermit and confesses his error

THEY carried on their tales of woe,
Lamenting, till noontide or so.
‘Let me attend to dinner,’ said
The host, ‘and then your mount’s unfed;
Though I shall fail in this unless
God provides; no smoke doth bless
My kitchen; such your fate today,
And for as long as you shall stay.
If only this snow would allow
Of wild herbs I might teach you now.
God grant that the snow soon thaws.
Meanwhile for this horse of yours
We’ll gather bracken; though he ate
Better at Munsalvaesche, I’ll state
That neither he nor you e’er came
Where, more willingly, the same
Would not be had, if good fodder
Were at hand.’ They went together
To seek it, he for many a root;
Bracken was Parzival’s pursuit;
With such they must rest content.
The host flagged not in his intent,
His rule was, that of all he won
Ere three o’clock, he ate none,
But hung it on bushes, before
Going abroad to look for more.
(Many the day he ate them not,
And fasted to the glory of God.)
The two companions did not fail

To go to the stream and, there, avail
Themselves of its pure flow to lave
The roots and herbs; both were grave,
From their lips there came no laughter.
Both men washed their hands, and after
Parzival set some bracken before
His horse though the feed was poor,
And then they returned to their fire,
And reclined to eat; they did aspire
To no other course; the kitchen bare,
No stew, no roast was present there.
Yet stirred by affection for his host,
Parzival deemed that he'd almost
Eaten with more contentment here
Than with Gurnemanz in that year
When he'd taught him, or when many
A lovely, and a noble, lady
At Munsalvaesche had passed by,
Where the Grail had met his eye,
And had feasted him. 'Dear nephew,'
Said his wise host, 'scorn not to view
This poor repast, for you'll not find
A host, so it seems to my mind,
Who wished you good appetite more
Than I do, whom you sit before.'
'Sir,' answered Parzival, 'may the grace
Of God ne'er attend me, in any place,
If aught was better that I've received,
Or more fitly hunger relieved.'

Had they forgot to lave their hands
After meeting hunger's demands,
It would not have harmed their eyes
As handling fish doth, some surmise.
For my part, were I a moulted hawk,
You could have taken me a walk,
And I'd have risen from the fist

With ravening eagerness, fed on this!
You'd have soon seen me in flight.
Yet why mock the hermit and knight?
Tis ill of me! For you have heard
What had made them, in a word,
Poor in happiness, rich no more,
Oft cold now, though warm before,
That word was 'love'; deepest woe
They suffered now for loving so,
Pure love, naught else indeed, and yet
They had their reward, twas set
Upon the hand of God; His grace
The one had earned in that place,
And the other the Lord would take
Into that grace, for his love's sake.

Parzival and the good man rose,
To see to the horse. 'Heaven knows,
Viewing your meagre fare, I suffer,
Knowing you have so poor a manger,
(The hermit spoke sadly to the creature)
Given the badge that doth feature
On your saddle, that of Anfortas.'
As they tended to the steed, alas,
They found a further cause for woe.
'Now if shame would allow me so
To do,' said Parzival, 'my dear lord,
And uncle, to you I would afford
The history of a sad mischance
That befell me, through circumstance,
Which I beg you, of courtesy,
To forgive, and to pardon, in me,
For my faithful heart has sought
Refuge here, and contrition brought.
So greatly I erred, without intent,
That, if you accord me punishment,
Then farewell to a fair tomorrow,

For I shall ne'er be free of sorrow.
Condemn my youthful foolishness,
But grant me your aid, nonetheless.
That man who viewed the suffering
At Munsalvaesche, never asking
The saving question, that was I;
Such the error that makes me sigh.'
'What say you nephew?' cried his host,
Since you have approached almost
To rare success, and scorned it yet,
Then happiness we'll both forget,
And we'll attach ourselves to grief.
God gave you senses, tis my belief,
Yet no help did they grant to you,
Your pity they did betray, tis true,
With Anfortas' wound so presented;
Yet to my counsel you've consented,
You must not grieve then to excess,
Grieve now, but then seek happiness.
Human nature may prove perverse,
For youth may be foolish or worse,
And age may prove less than wise,
Clouding a life once clear, likewise,
Such that whiteness has been marred,
And the young fresh shoots barred
From bearing sound and noble fruit.
Could I see them green, in pursuit
Of restoring your heart and vigour,
That you might yet win high honour,
And not despair of God; why, then,
You might seek glory once again,
Having achieved new life, and lo,
Make full amends by doing so.
For God will ne'er abandon you;
So I do counsel, in His name too.

Trevrizent speaks further concerning the Grail King, Anfortas

AT Munsalvaesche, now, did you see
The lance? We knew, of a certainty,
By the wound, and the summer snow,
Of Saturn's return; here, below,
The frost caused your dear uncle more
Anguish, then, than ever before.
To the wound they must set the lance,
One pain quelled the other's advance,
And so the lance was red with blood.
Certain planets, tis understood,
That circle, near to us or farther,
Whose times of return thus differ,
Bring the people here much woe,
And then the moon's changes also
Are bad for the wound. No ease,
Then, comforts the King, no peace,
The frost it doth torment him so,
His flesh is colder than the snow.
And since the venom burns so hot
That from the spear-head is got,
Upon the wound the spear they lay.
The lance doth draw the frost away,
From his body, like to icy glass,
Which none could remove, alas.
Wise Trebuchet, he wrought however,
Proving skilful in such a matter,
Two knives of silver that cut through;
A charm it was that taught him to
Work so; twas writ on the King's sword,
And to him did its aid afford;
Many will tell you, and I in turn,
That asbestos fibres will not burn,
But when fragments of this glass
Touched them, such came to pass,
For they were lit by a fiery flame;

Wondrous the nature of that same
Poison that sets such things ablaze!

The king is confined all his days,
Unable to ride, walk, lie or stand,
Thus, he reclines you understand,
He cannot sit, for he suffers pain
That with the moon's changes doth gain
Power over him. There is a lake
Called Brumbane, and they take
Him there, for the clear breeze
Quells his wound's stench, and doth ease
His anguish; and he calls those days
His days for sport; for all his catch,
Racked by agony, he needs match
It, back at home, with plenty more.
Yet twas claimed, by any who saw,
The he was indeed a fisherman,
And so that most unhappy man
Has been forced to suffer the tale,
Though he ne'er had aught for sale;
Salmon or lamprey, he had neither.'

'I came upon him, seated, at anchor,
On that lake,' said Parzival, swiftly,
'And thought him so. My journey
Was long and wearisome that day,
From Belrepeire I took my way
By mid-morn, and so by evening
Safe shelter I there came seeking.
My uncle granted it there and then.'
'The path you rode was perilous when
You travelled so,' cried Trevrizent,
'Past many a sentinel you went;
They keep sharp watch, and they man
Their posts such that no mere plan
That serves you in warfare will do,

If they ride forth, and then pursue.
Till now any who sought to fight
In joust with them, that brave knight,
The path of mortal danger did take,
For the warriors their lives do stake
Against the foe's; the braver wins;
Such is their penance for their sins.'
'Yet I rode there, and sought the king,
Without such challenge; that evening,
I found his palace so full of woe,
How can they seek contentment so?
For from a doorway a squire ran in,
And the lamentation, there within
The palace, set all echoing there.
Towards all four walls he did bear
A lance, and its tip red with blood,
At the sight of which all that good
Company were suffused with woe.'
'Nephew, his host said, 'even so,
For the king had never before
Felt pain so great, as that he bore,
When Saturn announced its entry,
For its coming bodes ill, you see,
That planet brings the frost indeed.
Merely laying the lance, at need,
Upon his wound failed to aid us;
Deep our thrust, and injurious.
For Saturn rules with such power,
The wound sensed it, at an hour
Ere the chill frost itself arrived,
For the deep snow, that fell outside,
Came only on the second night,
Amid summer's splendour bright.
While frost from him we cut away,
His people wept both night and day.
'Such is the pay that grief demands,'
Said Trevrizent, 'tears wet our hands.'

The lance that cut them to the heart
Destroyed their joy, and on their part,
Their tears did thus perform anew
The rite of baptism rendered true.’
‘There five and twenty maids I saw,
Of noble bearing, who stood before
The King,’ said Parzival to his host.
‘God ordained the Grail should boast
A virgin band, to minister there,
And He entrusted it to their care.
The Grail chose noble servitors;
Thus the knights who guard the doors
Practice all the virtues that we
Associate with chastity.
God has overlong maintained
His wrath against them, for so pained
Are they, both young and old; ah! when,
Shall they find happiness again?

He speaks of his personal history

‘NEPHEW, I shall tell you a thing
You may believe, Fortune doth bring
To those of Munsalvaesche gain and loss.
They garner children, but at what cost?
Gain noble scions, and yet if any
Lord should die, in whatever country,
And the hand of God is credited,
If they seek to replace the dead,
And ask from the Grail company
A new lord, their prayer will be
Granted, yet then they must revere
Him, since God blesses his career.
God sends the men forth secretly,
But sends the maids out openly.
Know that King Castis made offer
For Herzeloyde, and your mother

Married him with due ceremony,
Yet it was not his destiny
To enjoy her, death laid him low,
(He had made over to her though
The lands of Wales and Norgals,
And Kanvoleis and Kingrivals,
Their cities) dying on the journey
While returning to his country.
She thus ruled as high queen over
Two lands when Gahmuret won her.
Thus, the maids are openly sent
From the Grail, while the noblemen
Go forth in secret, so they may
Breed children in a godly way,
In hopes those children will return
To serve the Grail, and thereby earn
Their place within its company,
And fill its ranks, in chastity;
For men who serve the Grail and prove
Faithful, forgo woman's love.
Only the king may take a wife,
And those other lords whose life
God may assign to lord-less lands.
In serving a lady for her love
I a base recusant did prove.
That lady, of true nobility,
And my fair youth prompted me
To serve her in many a fight,
Since her love did my heart delight;
And for her sake, I took the field.
Fresh adventure, with sword and shield,
Was to my liking, not the tourney.
Inspired by passion, I did journey
To seek glory in every region.
I sought her love fighting Christian
And heathen both alike, I thought
Her reward needs be dearly bought.

Such was my life then in all three
Continents; lived, for that lady,
In Europe, and then in Asia,
And then the depths of Africa.
When fair jousting was my plan
I would ride beyond Gaurian,
And, at the foot of Famurgan,
Broke many a lance, and was in
Many a joust neath Agremontin;
Issue your challenge on one side
Of that mount, and forth do ride
Burning men to joust with you;
On the other, men just like you.
Beyond the Rohitscher Berg I rode,
Seeking adventure; on that road,
Noble Slovenes in company
Appeared, all set to challenge me;
Twas from Seville, I'd sailed forth
To reach their Celje, east and north,
From Aquileia, through Friuli.
In Seville, I had met your father,
He whom you spoke of earlier,
Fated thus, when I marched in,
To meet with that noble Angevin;
He'd found quarters ahead of me.
Alas, to Baghdad he must journey,
And so was slain, jousting there;
It troubles me always, that affair,
I shall lament his death forever.
And then, being rich, my brother
Would send me forth secretly,
Armed and clad magnificently.
Leaving Munsalvaesche I'd fare,
With his seal, to Carcobra, where
The lake is fed by the Plimizoel,
And so to the sea at Barbigoel,
Where on the strength of that seal

The Burgrave would let me steal
A band of squires and the trappings
Required for chivalry and jousting
In wild regions. Greeted there,
Unaccompanied, from each affair
I would return, while my retinue
I'd leave behind, and start anew
For Munsalvaesche, alone again.

'Now, listen nephew, I'll explain;
In Seville, your worthy father
At once claimed me as the brother
Of his wife Herzeloyde, though he
Had ne'er before clapped eyes on me!
Indeed, a beardless youth, I seemed
Fair as she, and none fairer deemed.
When Gahmuret claimed me, I swore
It was not true, he pressed me more
And forced me to confess, the knight,
That it was so, to his great delight.
He gifted me some treasures of his,
And I returned the gift, and this,
My reliquary, which you have seen,
I had cut, from a gem as green
As clover that he gave to me.
He left his maternal kinsman
With me, Ither of Cumberland,
As my squire, whose honest heart
From all faithlessness kept apart.
We might not delay our journey,
And, thus, we parted company,
Gahmuret to serve the Baruc,
While I a divergent course took
Sailing forth, and then riding there,
Past Celje to the Rohitscher, where
At its foot I fought three tourneys,
All on three successive Mondays.

Thinking that I'd fought well there,
I journeyed then to where Ither
Was well-known, into the wide
Gandine, thus, I did swiftly ride,
After which your grandfather,
King Gandin, was named. Ither
Loved Queen Lammire, the lady
Of that land of Styria, for she
Her father, Gandin of Anjou,
Had crowned her queen there; and you
Are nephew on your father's side,
To that lady. That place beside
Is where the Grajena flows of old
Into the Drava, that bears red gold.
Those men who would follow the shield
Must often wander far afield.

And now I grieve for my lost squire,
For whose sake this Queen Lammire
Honoured me; for of that same race
Are you, yet, ignoring every trace
Of common blood, you raised your hand
Against Ither, and here you stand;
But God has not forgot, and He
Can detect those traces instantly.
If you would be trusted by Him,
You must atone for two great sins;
You slew Ither, and I tell you now,
In sorrow, you must to sorrow bow
And mourn the death of your mother.
Because of her love she did suffer,
Her love for you, while yet alive;
Your leaving she could not survive.
Now act as I here advise; for you,
Penance for all your sins must do,
And think indeed of your own end,
So that your toil on earth may tend

To earn peace for your soul, above.
And now, remember her deep love.'

Gently, his host questioned further;
'Nephew, whence came your charger?
'I won it in single combat, sir,
I spoke with Sigune, leaving her
I met a knight and thrust the man
From his saddle and took in hand
His steed; it seems he was a knight
Of Munsalvaesche.' 'Tis his by right,
And did the man you fought survive?'
'I watched him make his way, alive,
From out the gorge; he left his mount.'
'If you rob them and, on that account,
Think to win their lasting friendship,
Those bound to the Grail fellowship,
Your mind's a mass of contradiction.'
'I won it, fairly, in that same action,
Sir, and whoe'er deems that a sin,
Consider the plight I was in,
For I lost there a steed of my own.
By what name is that maiden known
Who bears the Grail?' Parzival spoke
Once more, 'for she lent me her cloak.'
'She's your aunt on your mother's side,
Dear nephew,' his gentle host replied,
'And if she lent the cloak twas not
For you to boast of it, though what
She hoped was that you would be lord
Of the Grail, and hers and mine. A sword
Your uncle gave you, too, and, then
Came sin with it, for ne'er a question
Did you ask, though I'd have said
You've a ready tongue in your head.
But let that sin lie with the others;
Tis time for bed.' Neither bolsters

Nor mattresses had they, they lay
On the bracken they'd cut that day,
As you'll recall; too nigh the earth
For those two kin of noble birth.

A good fortnight did Parzival stay,
His host nourished him day by day
On herbs and roots, such was their fare,
Of necessity, and he chose to bear
The hardship for those glad tidings,
His host absolving him of his sins,
And counselling him as a knight.
One day Parzival asked outright:
'Who was it lay before the Grail
All silver-haired, and yet not pale
His skin seemed but firm and clear?
'Twas Titurel, so it would appear,
And he is your great-grandfather;
(For of his line came your mother,
His son Frimutel was her father)
He was the first to whom the banner
Of the Grail was commended,
As his fiefdom, to be defended.
The gout doth plague him, and that same
Illness serves to render him lame
And helpless, although his colour
Fades not, for he doth endeavour
To gaze so often on the Grail
That o'er him death cannot prevail.
And, bedridden though he may be,
He still counsels them all, wisely.
As a youth, he was forever riding,
O'er field and ford, to seek the jousting.'

'Twas this day Parzival was to leave.
'If, in your life, you would achieve
Things far nobler yet, and finer,

Never seek to vent your anger
On a woman or priest, for they
Are those who go unarmed alway.
God's blessing is upon the priest,
Alone, so serve him and, not least
In hopes of a good ending, place
Your trust in him, and seek grace.
Naught like to a priest can you find,
Naught can compare, to my mind,
For his lips pronounce the Passion,
That doth save us from damnation.
Into his consecrated hand,
He takes the highest pledge that can
E'er have been granted for a debt.
If he doth not true virtue forget,
And performs his office chastely,
Where is there a life more holy?
Yield me your sins,' said Trevrizent,
'I'll vouch for your being penitent,
Before the Lord; do as I've said:
Undaunted, seek the path ahead.'
They each spoke their farewells; of this,
Conceive the details, if you wish.

Book X: Gawain and Orgeluse

Gawain, cleared of guilt, pursues his quest for the Grail

NOW we approach the strangest tale,
That may o'er happiness prevail,
And yet in turn may bring us joy,
Both powers this story doth employ.

The set term, of one year, had passed;
The quarrel was resolved at last,
That duel, sought at the Plimizoel,
And then transferred to Barbigoel

From Schanpfunz, was now set by,
Kingrisin unavenged thereby.
Though Vergulaht accused Gawain,
Yet their kinship was made plain;
Moreover, twas Count Ehkumat,
Had slain Kingrisin, and yet that
It was they'd laid at Gawain's door;
The Landgrave, Kingrimursel, saw
Gawain cleared of the accusation,
And thus was ended their division.
Now King Vergulaht and Gawain
Both sought the Grail to obtain,
And at the same hour, on a day,
Each man went his separate way.
It was a quest that would demand
Many a conflict, sword in hand,
For whate'er man desires the Grail
Must don his armour without fail,
Only thus is glory striven for.
How the guiltless Gawain now bore
Himself, and all that then was done
When he set out from Schanpfunz,
And whether he was forced to fight
Let those relate who saw the knight;
Yet he will meet with battle here.

One morn, Gawain did thus appear
On a green meadow where a shield,
Which had been pierced in the field,
Hung from a bough; and a palfrey,
Harnessed there for a noble lady,
All equipped with a costly saddle,
Was tethered to it, by the bridle.
'Who can this woman be,' he thought,
'That a warlike shield has brought?
Should she choose to launch an attack,
How shall a poor knight answer back?

Tis better now if I dismount,
Then of myself give true account.
Though she, if foot to foot we fight,
And we both go the distance, might
Topple me, yet may I win favour
From this affair, or find disfavour.
Though Camilla herself were come,
Who earned her fame at Laurentum
By deeds of arms, and Camilla
Were to challenge me with vigour,
I'd try her mettle nonetheless.'
The shield had known much distress,
Twas badly gashed Gawain now saw;
A window, wide as any door,
A broad spear-head had opened there;
The battlefield had laid it bare.
Now, who would pay the blazoner,
If such proved his only colour?

The body of the tree was wide,
Behind it, on the farther side,
Sat a lady, on the clover,
Grieving as if joy were over,
So deep it seemed was her woe.
As round the tree Gawain did go,
And, thus, the lady came in sight,
He saw, laid on her lap, a knight,
The cause indeed of all her pain.
As he greeted her, Lord Gawain
She acknowledged, with a bow;
Her voice was hoarse, suffering now
From her cries of pure distress.
He dismounted, and did assess
The wounded knight who, pierced right through,
Bled within, and outwardly too.
Gawain asked the knight's lady
Whether he lived, for, so badly

Was he wounded, he could not know.
‘He lives yet, sir,’ she said, ‘although
It cannot be for long, I deem.
God has sent you, it would seem,
Sustain me then with your counsel;
You must know such matters well,
Grant me your aid and comfort, then.’
‘Madame I shall,’ he answered, ‘when
Blood presses on the heart, then one
Employs a hollow tube; if done,
Then I would guarantee his life,
Twould cure him such that, free of strife,
You might see and hear him, oh,
Full many a day; no fatal blow
Was this.’ Gawain then took a stem,
Slit and peeled its sheath, and then
He took the hollow tube it made,
(Skill was his, in bringing such aid)
And sank it in the knight’s body,
Through the wound, yet delicately,
Then told the lady to suck until
The blood the hollow tube did fill,
Whereon the warrior regained
Consciousness, and strength obtained
To speak, and thank Gawain, seeing
The knight across his body leaning,
And praised him that he had brought
Him from out his swoon, and sought
To know if to Logroys he came
Pursing chivalry, and fame.

**Having saved the life of Urjans of Punturteis, he reaches
Logroys**

‘I myself sought adventure here,
Roving from Punturteis; too near
I did ride, to my deep regret;

If you're a man of sense forget
This place; for truly I dreamt not
That Lischois Gwelljus, nigh this spot,
Would wound me, and set me down,
Behind my horse, upon the ground,
With a great blow, piercing sorely,
Wounding thus my shield and body.
Twas after that this noble lady
Helped me here, on her palfrey.'
He begged Gawain then to stay,
But the knight would make his way
To the place where it was done.
'If Logroys lies so near, then one
May overtake the man outside
Its walls,' my Lord Gawain replied,
'And he will answer there to me,
And justify his enmity.'
'Do nothing of the sort', the knight
Answered, 'I can explain, outright.
Tis no child's play to travel there,
Towards mortal danger you'll fare.'
The knight's wound, then, Gawain bound,
With a kerchief the lady found;
He spoke a charm, and left them there
Commending both to God's good care.
He found the trail they'd left behind
All bloody, as if from stag or hind,
And thus it served to point the way.
Full soon, Logroys before him lay;
Both praised, and honoured, everywhere.

The castle was both strong and fair,
A path about it, spiralling round;
A child's top was that castle mound!
When simple people saw that sight,
They thought it spinning in the light.
Folk claim of that place even now,

None could attack it, and I'll allow
Men there had little fear of aught
Malice could do, or anger sought.
All round the hill a palisade
Of cultivated trees, a glade
Was planted, pomegranates, figs,
Olives; vines, close-pruned to sprigs,
And other fruiting things grew there.
Gawain had ridden near to where
The path ended, when glancing right
There came in view a pleasant sight.
Though twas destined to bring him pain,
It gladdened the heart of Lord Gawain.

Gawain encounters the lovely Orgeluse de Logroys

FROM the rock there flowed a spring,
Beside which there stood a pleasing
Lady. He gazed with true delight,
Despite himself, did our brave knight.
She was the fairest flower, the lovely
Pinnacle of female beauty.
But for Condwiramurs, no fairer
Woman was born in this world ever.
She was of radiant looks, refined
In courtly ways, her form defined
In shapely manner, and her name
Orgeluse de Logroys, that same
Of whom the story tells that she,
Being a fair and wondrous lady,
Was ever a lure to love's desire,
Sweet balm to the male eye afire,
A means to pluck the least heartstring.

Gawain offered her fair greeting.
'If I might descend, by your leave,
Madame, and should you conceive

A wish, indeed, for my company,
Then I declare, of a certainty,
Joy would replace my every woe,
No knight could prove happier so;
I'm fated to die without seeing
Any woman to me more pleasing.'
'Tis well, but what is that to me?'
She said, inspecting him carefully,
And her sweet lips went on to say:
'Praise me in not too fine a way,
Or from it you may reap disgrace.
Not every man may judge my face,
For if every fool were free to praise,
Not just those with discerning ways,
And the words were naught but flattery,
What credit would that bring to me?
How would my praises be worth more
Than others'? For I mean to ensure
That mine are those of the discerning.
Of who you are, sir, I know nothing,
Tis time you went, but you, in turn,
Shall now my own true judgement earn:
You are near my heart, but not in it.
If you'd have my love, must earn it.
Many a man who insists on gazing
At that which his heart finds wounding,
Hurls his glances about so wildly,
A sling in battle works more gently.
Bowl your desires, however fine,
At some other target than mine.
If you are a man who serves for love,
If need for adventure you doth move,
Deeds of arms for a lady's favour,
Here, of me you'll win no honour.
If I speak truly, dishonour here
Is all that you will earn, I fear.'

‘You speak truly, and no disguise,
Madame, at risk now from my eyes,
Is my heart indeed, for they dwell
On you so, that, as you may tell,
I am your prisoner; treat me then
As a true woman should do, when,
Though she wishes me to depart,
She’s prisoned me within her heart.
Loose or bind me, for you will find
Such is the tenor of my mind,
That if I had you where I wish
Then all were paradisaal bliss.’
‘Take me away with you,’ said she,
‘And aught that you may win from me
With your wooing, will only end
In regret, to disgrace twill tend.
I would see if you would make
War on other men for my sake,
Yet, if honour’s dear to you, refrain.
Let me counsel you once again,
And labour to do as I shall say,
Go seek for love some other way.
For if with my love you would toy,
You will fail of both love and joy.
Take me away with you, and see
Trouble to you will come of me.’

‘Who then, without deserving it,
Is for a lady’s true love fit?’
Said Lord Gawain. ‘If I may speak,
A man that a lady’s love doth seek
Without deserving it, doth sin.
For any man that’s eager to win
A noble love, must serve before,
And after, he wins it; tis my law.’
‘If you’d serve me,’ said the lady,
‘You must lead a life of chivalry,

Yet all you'll win is dishonour,
I need no coward's service. Further
Along the path now you must go,
Follow the track (there is no road),
It reaches the orchard by and by,
Over a bridge, narrow and high;
Cross the bridge, and there'll you see
My palfrey tethered to a tree,
And a crowd of people dancing,
And sweet love songs they'll be singing,
Playing on flutes and tabors too.
Loose the mount; it will follow you.'

Gawain leapt down from his charger,
And sought to find a place to tether
His horse, so it might await him so;
Naught by the spring suited though,
And he wondered if it were seemly
To seek assistance from the lady,
And ask her to hold his mighty steed.
'What troubles you, I too can read,'
She said: 'Come leave your mount with me,
And go your way in security,
I'll hold it till you're here again,
Though in serving me there's little gain.'
By the bridle the horse he led:
'Hold this for me, my lady,' he said,
'Why, you're a fool!' she cried, 'For see,
Your hand has touched it, as for me,
I'll not lay hold of it.' 'Madame,
This end I touched, fool that I am,
But not the other,' the hopeful said,
'Well, I'll take it; now, once you've sped
O'er the bridge and back, bringing me
My mount, as to keeping company
Then I shall grant you your wish.'
Gawain was well content with this.

He left her and o'er the bridge did go,
And in at the orchard gate, and so
Came where many a fair lady,
And bachelor knights a plenty,
Many more than one and twenty,
Sang, and danced about there, gaily.

Now at the sight of Lord Gawain,
Dressed so finely, they were fain
To grieve, in that orchard, for they
Were good-hearted; of all who lay
Or sat, in their pavilions, or stood,
Not one there, be it understood,
But voiced their woe. Many a knight,
And lady, grieved there at the sight:
'With her deceitful ways, tis plain,'
They said, and said the thing again,
'My Lady plans now to entice
This man (they repeated it twice)
To toil for her, and so he will,
And yet win sorrow for it still!'
Many a worthy man did take
His hand, and give it a friendly shake.
He then approached the olive tree
Where the palfrey, as he could see,
Was tethered, its harness and bridle
Worth many a mark. By it did idle,
A knight with a grey braided beard,
Who, as my Lord Gawain had neared,
Bewept him coming for the horse,
Yet spoke him kindly, in due course:
'If you are open to sound advice,
Then I would bid you, sir, think twice,
And lead not the palfrey this day,
Though none will stand in your way.
For if you've ever done what's wise,
You'll leave the horse, as I advise.

Accursed indeed shall be My Lady
For causing the deaths of so many.’
Gawain said no, he’d not do so.
‘Then, alas, for what doth follow,’
Cried the old grey-bearded knight,
He then unloosed the halter quite’
‘There is no need to wait, allow
The palfrey to follow you now,
And may He whose hand divine
Made the seas with all their brine,
Grant you aid in your hour of need.
Beware, lest her beauty, indeed,
Makes mock of you, for her sweetness
Is bound up with a deal of sourness,
Like a hailstorm in bright sunlight.’
‘In God’s hand be it!’ said our knight.

He continues his travels, in company with Lady Orgeluse

HIS leave he took, and here and there
That of others, while grief and care
And mournful cries were now expressed.
The palfrey followed him, midst the rest,
Along the narrow path, to the gate,
And o’er the bridge to meet their fate,
For the Lady of the land was there,
His heart’s mistress in this affair.
Though his heart sought refuge with her,
Through her, twould be made to suffer.

The fastenings of her headdress she
Had pushed up on high, summarily,
And when one sees a woman so
She’s ready for conflict, although
She may have a mind to sport, also.
And what else was she wearing? Oh,
If I thought to say aught of her attire,

Her looks would absolve me entire.
As he approached, this was the way
Her sweet lips addressed him: 'Hey,
Welcome back you goose, if you
Will serve me, you'll find tis true,
None have ever borne such a load
Of folly as you'll bear on the road,
Yet you've good cause to forbear.'
'Though you've anger and to spare,
Now,' Gawain said, 'yet, in the end,
Sweet favour to me you'll extend.
Though you may scorn me further,
You'll grant me satisfaction later.
Meanwhile my service I'll render
Till my reward you shall tender.
I'll help you mount, if you desire.'
'I asked you not, I'll not require
Your unknown hand to work so,
Seek some baser forfeit, below!'
And from midst the flowers she leapt
On to her horse, twas most adept,
And had him mount and ride ahead.
'What a pity it would be,' she said,
Were I to lose my fine companion,
Yet God may bring you to confusion.'

Now he who would heed my advice
Will not malign her, but think twice.
And not exercise his tongue till he
Knows the full tale, and all that she
Might feel now, in her present state.
Though I, tis true, might remonstrate
With that lovely woman somewhat,
Yet whate'er the earful Gawain got
From her in her bouts of ill-humour,
Or the trouble she brought him later,
No matter the pain, or its amount,

I exonerate her on every count!

Orgeluse now started, not like one
Eager to prove a good companion,
For she came riding towards Gawain
In such a fury that, it was plain,
He needs have small hope of release
From care through her, or any peace.
They rode o'er a heath bright with flowers,
And here Gawain who knew the powers
Of many a herb spied one whose root,
He said, some grievous wound might suit.
The noble knight descended, then
Dug up the root, and mounted again,
While the lady did not forbear
To exclaim, as she watched him there:
'If my companion works skilfully
In physic, and not mere chivalry,
And learns to hawk salves and things,
Why, a decent living such toil brings.'
'I rode by a tree, and there had sight,'
Said Gawain, 'of a wounded knight,
And, if he is there yet, the strength
Of it should restore him at length.'
'I should like to see that,' she said,
And learn physic to earn my bread?'

**Her squire Malcreatiure, brother to Cundrie La Surziere, rides
after them**

A squire there came riding swiftly
With a message, and when, shortly,
Gawain halted, as he drew near,
He was struck by what did appear;
A monstrous proud squire was he,
Called Malcreatiure, and Cundrie
Was his fair sister, and like to her

Was he, but of a different gender.
His two fangs, on a similar plan,
Suited a wild boar, not a man,
Though his hair was not as long
As that which dangled down upon
Cundrie's mule, but short and prickly,
Like a hedgehog's coat exactly.
Such folk are found in Tribalibot,
Beside the Ganges, tis their lot
To suffer this mischance at birth.
Once God had seeded life on Earth,
Adam, our father, named each thing,
The wild and tame understanding
The nature of each, and the seven
Lights that circled him in heaven
With their innate powers, and he
Knew of each herb some property.
Now when his daughters reached
Child-bearing age then Adam preached
To them of intemperate excess,
And on them he would e'er impress,
When a child they were carrying,
That to ensure that their offspring
Was undeformed, and an honour
To their race, all in their power
They must do, to seek not to eat
(And, thus, with good fortune meet)
Any herb 'but those God created
For us, when He sat, and mated
Flesh to bone, in achieving me.
'My daughters, be not blind,' he said,
'To how true happiness is bred.'
Those girls (is it any wonder?)
Did according to their nature.
Some, led by frailty, to forget,
Ate that on which their hearts were set,
So that to Adam's bitter sorrow,

Deformed progeny did follow.
Yet he was firm of purpose still.

Now a queen there was, Secundille,
Whom, with his deeds of chivalry,
Feirefiz won, queen, realm, and all,
And she had many such folk withal.
Since ancient days they'd appeared,
Bodies ill-formed, features weird.
Secundille was told of the Grail,
And how its splendours did avail,
The finest thing on earth it was,
And guarded by King Anfortas.
She found it strange for, to her land,
Many rivers brought gems not sand,
And she had mountains full of gold.
'How shall I his secrets unfold,
This man who commands the Grail?'
She wondered, and, so runs the tale,
Sent him a gift, a human wonder,
Namely Cundrie, and sent with her
Malcreatiure her brother,
And, I swear, a deal of treasure
Such that you could never buy,
For none has it to sell, say I!
Anfortas, whose very nature
Was generous, gave this creature
To Orgeluse, to be her squire,
Though born of intemperate desire,
That set the man, body and mind,
Far from the mass of humankind.
Gawain waited for him; kindred
To herbs and stars, the man shouted,
As he approached, on a sorry horse
That limped and stumbled in its course.
(Lady Jeschute rode one far better
That day when Parzival saw her

Return once more to Orilus' favour,
Which no fault of hers had lost her.)
'Sir!' cried Malcreatiure, angrily,
Fronting Gawain, 'from decency,
You might have chosen to refrain.
A fool you are if you to seek to gain
Aught from absconding with my lady
In this manner. Praise would surely
Come to you, could you but evade
Punishment for the choice you've made.
If you're a warrior, cudgels shall so
Scrape your hide that, at every blow,
You'll think yourself far otherwise.'
Gawain looked him hard in the eyes.
'My person has never suffered such;
Tis the shiftless mob, not overmuch
Given to manly deeds, who deserve
That such a lesson you should serve;
No man has punished me before.
Should you, and this lady, ignore
All courtesy, and insult me here,
Tis you shall have reason to fear,
What you may rightly call, my anger.
Howe'er dreadful the face you offer,
Your threats I'll counter readily.'
Gawain seized his hair and, promptly,
Flung him from his horse to the ground,
Where the wise squire could be found
Gazing up at him timidly.
Yet his hedgehog bristles deeply
Pierced Gawain's hand, and blood
Covered it; a revenge made good.
The lady laughed: 'I love to see
Such fine folk quarrelling over me!'

Gawain finds the wounded Urjans once more

THEY set off again, the squire's horse
Limping beside them till, in due course,
They arrived where the wounded knight
Was lying; kindly addressing his plight,
Gawain bound his wound with the herb.
'What nest of troubles did you disturb,
On leaving here?' said the wounded man.
'You bring a lady whose sole plan
Is aimed at harming you. Through her,
Came my injury, for she led me, sir,
Into narrow straits, and fierce strife,
At the risk of my property and life.
If you would save your own, allow
That faithless woman to vanish now;
Have nothing more to do with her.
Judge from my sad state what further
Pain her counsel may bring to you.
Yet I might recover wholly too,
If I could but find a place to rest.
Help me to that, and so be blessed.'
'Ask aught from me you might name,'
Said Gawain, 'I'll attempt that same.'
'There's a hospice, not far away,'
Said the wounded knight, 'if this day
I might reach it I'd seek their care.
My companion's mount stands there,
Set her upon it, place me behind.'
Gawain, with this intent in mind,
Untethered the palfrey from its tree,
And led it towards her, carefully,
But the wounded man cried: 'Stay,
Would you trample me along the way?'
So Gawain slowly circled round.
A sign from the man on the ground
Sent the lady following Gawain,
At a gentle pace, till she might gain
The saddle, with his help; and now

The wounded knight, leapt, and how,
Onto Gawain's Castilian steed.
If you ask me, twas a sinful deed.
They sought not to prolong their stay,
And, with the spoils, they rode away.
Gawain gave vent to anger, though
His lady found more in his woe
To laugh at than he found pleasure.
He'd lost his steed, thus she did utter
These words from her sweet lips: 'I,
Thought you a knight yet, by and by,
You turned surgeon, and now I see
Tis as a footman that you'd serve me!
If any can make a living still
From his wits, a place you'll fill.
But, do you still desire my love?'
'Yes, my lady, could I but prove
I possessed it then it would be
Dearer than aught on earth to me.
If I were offered a choice between
The riches of every king and queen
Beneath the sky that wears a crown
And wins joy, honour, and renown,
And you, my lady, then my true heart
Would leave the riches, for my part,
To them. For tis your love I wish.
And if I may not win it in this
Manner, I'll die a bitter death!
On me, your own, you waste your breath,
For if I was ever free before
I now am subject to your law;
And I judge it your given right.
Whether you name me as a knight,
A squire, peasant, footman, yet you,
By the jests you subject me to,
And your mockery of my service,
You win a burden of sin in this.

Were I to profit from some deed,
Then you will change your tune indeed.
Though your scorn ne'er vexes me,
It lowers your worth, assuredly.'

The wounded man rode back again,
And called to our knight: 'Are you Gawain?
If you e'er borrowed aught from me,
Tis now repaid, of a certainty.
Lord Gawain, you should remember
That I was one you did overpower
And in that joust took my surrender,
And led me off to your King Arthur,
Who saw that with the hounds I ate,
And hungered a whole month straight.'
'Are you Urjans?' Gawain replied.
'Why should I suffer for your pride?
I won the King's pardon for you.
Ignoble thoughts you did pursue,
And were excluded from the Order
Of Knighthood, beyond the border
An exile, for denying a free
Maid her inviolability,
And due protection of the law.
King Arthur sought to ensure
You saw the gallows; had not I
Spoken for you, why then, say I,
You'd have hung high in the air.'
'Whatever might have happened there,
Here we are. You will have heard
The saying, tis an ancient word,
That, if a man should save another
From death, he'll be his foe thereafter.
I've my wits about me, tis known,
Babes do weep, not men full-grown,
And so, the charger I'll keep this day.'
He spurred hard, and galloped away

Much to Gawain's anger, indeed,
As he watched the departing steed.
Then he turned to his fine lady,
And began to tell her the story.

He tells Lady Orgeluse the tale of Urjan's crime

'HERE is the tale,' said Lord Gawain,
'It was when Arthur did maintain
His court at fair Dianazdrun,
Attended there by many a Briton.
Now to his land had come a lady,
As envoy from another country,
While Urjans, a mere outsider,
Had come there to seek adventure.
He was a guest there, so was she.
And yet his base thoughts, sinfully,
Led him to seek from her his pleasure,
Against her will, he had full measure.
Twas nigh a forest, and her cry
Was heard as we hunted, nearby.
The King, he called aloud, and there
We all hastened, and I did repair
To the place ahead of the rest,
This I found the villainous guest,
And led him back, my prisoner,
To the king but a short time later.
The maid rode back along with us,
Although her state was piteous;
No loving servitor was he
Who'd stolen her virginity,
Nor indeed had his knightly fame
Increased, in tarnishing his name,
By raping a defenceless maid.
Kind-hearted Arthur was dismayed,
Well-nigh beside himself with anger,
He could restrain himself no longer:

‘This outrage should stir our pity!
Perish the day this savagery
Was enacted, in this kingdom,
Where I seek justice! Young woman,
Bring a case now, don’t hesitate
And be your own best advocate,’
He said, while turning to the lady,
Who followed his counsel promptly.
There came a host of noble knights,
To hear the girl defend her rights,
Who gathered where, Urjans, the lord
From Punturteis, stood before
Arthur of Britain, both his honour
And his life at stake, while over
Against him, where rich and poor
Could hear her, she took the floor,
And bravely petitioned the King,
In the name of womankind, asking
Him to take her shame to heart,
For maidenly honour, on her part,
And the rules of the Round Table,
And as an envoy, and were he able
So to do, pronounce his judgement,
And said with this she’d rest content.
She begged the company of knights
To apprise themselves of her rights,
For she’d been robbed of what she
Could ne’er regain, her virginity,
And they should ask the King also
For judgement, and speak her woe.
The guilty man, devoid of honour
In my view, sought a defender,
An advocate who did his best
Though all in vain; for the rest,
Prince Urjans was condemned to die,
With loss of honour, for by and by,
Of willow they’d twist a garotte,

Strangulation was to be his lot,
Wherein no blood would be shed.
Then he appealed to me, and said
That it was I took his surrender,
Granting him life. I feared my honour
Would be lost, and asked the lady
Since she had witnessed the manly
Manner of vengeance I had wrought,
To quell the anger in her thought,
And accept that her beauty might
Have maddened the aforesaid knight.
'If ever a lady has helped a man
Whose deep desire grew out of hand
In the sequel, honour it now,
And mercy on this wretch allow.'
I begged the king, and each follower,
If I had done him service ever,
To bear it in mind and, of his right,
Lighten the sentence on the knight,
And avert the shame I would incur.
I entreated the Queen (for with her
I had ever sought refuge at court,
Winning help of the King's consort)
By the love born of ties of blood,
For he had reared me from childhood,
To help me, now, and she did so,
Spoke with the King and then also
Sought a further word privately,
With the girl, as the injured party,
And thanks to this he was saved,
Though his action was depraved.
Nonetheless he was made to suffer,
Was punished still with dishonour,
For with the hounds he must eat
Out of the trough, and complete
His atonement in four weeks, thus,
The lady proving magnanimous.

Yet though she did her wrong avenge,
This deed, madam, is his revenge!’

‘It shall not succeed,’ said Orgeluse,
‘All favours to you I might refuse,
But he shall have his reward before
He leaves my realm, and count it more
Of a disgrace than he found there;
For the King, in this whole affair,
Has quite failed to avenge the deed,
In his land, where the lady indeed
Suffered from that shameful action,
Yet, here, I have jurisdiction;
Though I knew not either’s name,
Before, you’re subject to the same
Law, my law; he must be brought
To battle and a lesson taught,
Though for that lady’s sake alone,
Not, lest you think it, for your own!
Great misdeeds should be repaid
With thrusts and blows, of lance and blade.’

Gawain went to Malcreatiure’s steed,
And caught its bridle, twas frail indeed.
The squire came to them, and the lady
Told him in heathen speech, swiftly,
All she wished done at the castle.
Now it is nearing, Gawain’s peril!

Malcreatiure went off on foot
While Gawain took a closer look
At the squire’s horse, but thought
It too poor a creature to be fought.
The squire had it from a peasant
Ere he mounted, yet, at present,
Gawain could do naught but suffer,
Doomed to employ it as his charger.

Maliciously, the lady said,
‘Why do you not ride on ahead?’
‘I shall do so when you grant leave.’
Answered Gawain: ‘Then, I believe,
You’ll wait forever!’ the lady cried,
‘Yet I’ll serve to gain it!’ he replied.
‘Then you are a fool so to do!
I tell you twill be the worse for you;
You’ll go not as the joyful go,
But ever find fresh trouble and woe.’
‘I must serve you, in sorrow or joy,
Riding or walking, tis my employ,
For love, it was, so instructed me.’

Standing now, beside the lady,
He inspected his poor charger,
Its lime-bark stirrups, moreover,
Were unfit for the mildest battle,
And oft he’d had a finer saddle;
He feared to ascend, lest his feet
Rendered its harness incomplete.
The creature had a hollow back,
Such that in mounting, to attack,
It might well cave in altogether,
A thing he must avoid; however,
Though in the past he well might
Have balked at it, as a proud knight,
A victim, now, of circumstance
He led it, carrying shield and lance.
The lady, source of so much pain,
Laughed joyfully at Lord Gawain.
As he tied his shield to the steed,
She asked: ‘Are you now turned indeed
To a merchant, with goods to sell?
Whom should I thank? For tis well
To possess a doctor and a trader;
Beware though of my tax-gatherer,

He'll rob you of your good humour:
Beware the customs posts, your honour!'
But with her jests he was well-content,
Not minding what she said, intent
On that which drove the pain away:
To him she was the spirit of May,
The blossoming of all things bright,
Sweet to his eye, a shining sight;
And yet a bitterness to his heart.
Since a man could, in equal part,
Both lose and find his joy in her,
Then ease the pain he must incur,
It made him, at all times, he found
Both wholly free yet tightly bound.

Wolfram's comments on True Love

MY authorities make the claim
That Cupid and Amor, those same
Whose mother is Venus, oft inspire
Love in folk, with their darts and fire.
Such love is suspect, yet if a true
Faithfulness lives there in you,
You will never be free of love.
Now joy, now woe, such love doth prove,
Yet true loyalty is love benign.
Cupid your arrows, oft fired blind,
Miss me, your target, and what's more,
So does that lance-thrust from Amor;
If you o'er love possess the power,
With Venus' torch from which we cower,
The pangs they bring I never feel.
If I the marks of love reveal,
Then they derive from faithfulness.
If I'd the knowledge, nonetheless,
To aid a man against Love's pain,
Well, I'm so fond of Lord Gawain,

I'd help him, and forego the pay.
When all's said, no shame this day
Is his that he is chained by Love,
Love, that all defence doth prove
In vain. He is so capable
Of strong defence, forever able
To prove himself a man of worth,
No woman, howe'er fair, on earth
Should harass his noble person,
Nor work her harm on such a one.
Ride near, Lord Tyranny of Love!
You savage Joy, as if you'd move
To pierce her full of holes, and Woe
To that same source of pain doth go.
Indeed, Woe's tracks are so plain
That had her march swerved again
From Heart's Deep, I'd have said
Joy's was the advantage instead.

If Love should seek to misbehave,
She is too ancient, yet she'll save
Her sharpest darts for lover's fears,
And blame it on her tender years!
I could condone her wantonness
In youth more readily, I confess,
Than her misbehaviour in old age.
Yet she is trouble at every stage:
Which age of hers shall I condemn?
If youthful urges prompt, and then
She scorns the old and settled ways,
She'll lose both renown, and praise.
She needs to comprehend more clearly:
That love is pure I prize more dearly,
All who are wise agree tis so.
For where such tender feelings flow
Towards their like, transparent, calm,
Neither demurring where Love's balm

Burns true, Love sealing their two hearts,
(Free of mistrust and subtle arts),
With strong and lasting faithfulness,
High above all others, tis blessed.

Orgeluse departs on the ferry

PLEASED though I should be, I say,
To fetch my Lord Gawain away,
He cannot now escape love's woe;
What aid then from me could flow,
Despite my words? A man of worth
Should not deny true love its birth,
If only because Love must save him,
Love's embrace may yet redeem him.
Gawain must toil because of love:
She shall ride, he on foot must move.

Now Orgeluse, and our brave knight
Entered a forest, dark as night;
To a tree-stump his steed he led,
And took the shield that, as I said,
It carried, slung it round his neck,
Mounted, and resumed the trek.
The horse scarce managed to provide
A seat, till on the other side
Of the forest where ploughlands lay
He saw a castle, and, truth to say,
His heart and eyes both confessed
They'd ne'er known a castle blessed
With such magnificence, its towers
Its halls, more numerous than ours.
Nor could Gawain help noticing
Fair ladies, at the windows leaning,
Full four hundred of them, or more;
Of famous lineage, there were four.

A causeway the marsh led over,
Towards a navigable river,
Broad and swift; his lady and he
Now rode towards it, cautiously.
Beside the quay lay a meadow
Where courageous men did follow
The arts of war, and jousts deliver;
The fortress loomed above the river.
In the meadow he saw a knight,
One not known to shirk a fight.
Proud Orgeluse, said haughtily,
'Bear me out, you now will see
I never break my word; I said
Be all this upon your own head;
I told you you'd reap dishonour,
Now if you would save your honour
Defend yourself as best you can.
He'll topple you, that nobleman,
His strong right arm will achieve
Your downfall and, I do believe,
You run the grave risk you'll tear
Your fine breeches, here and there,
And then you must bear the shame,
For the ladies may then proclaim
The fact, all those who sit and gaze,
And view whate'er the field displays!'
The master of the ferry now brought
The vessel over, as Orgeluse sought,
And, to Gawain's sorrow, she cried
As she boarded: 'Stay on your side!
You may not join me here on board,'
Her words scant courtesy did afford,
'For fortune's pledge you must be!'
'Why so fast? he cried, woefully,
Must I then view you never again?'
'That honour, if such you seek to gain,
You may win, but not soon, I deem.'

Her parting words flew off downstream.

Gawain encounters and defeats Duke Lischois Gwelljus

NOW Duke Lischois Gwelljus came.
If I were to say he flew, you'd blame
Me for it, yet his speed was such
His charger scarcely seemed to touch
The ground. 'How then shall I receive
This knight?' Gawain thought, 'I believe,
If he comes at me full tilt, he'll ride
O'er us, and down the other side;
His mount will stumble over mine,
Then if he offers to fight tis fine;
With both on foot, if that's his wish
I'll grant it, e'en though after this
The lady who would have me fight
Bestows not a smile on her knight.'

Naught could stop them now, for he
Who fast approached, in gallantry,
Was the match for he who waited;
To a long struggle they were fated.
Gawain prepared for his advance,
On the saddle he couched his lance,
And the two thrusts were so exact
The impact so great that, in the act,
Both lances shattered, and each man
Lay on his back; twas Gawain's plan,
The man with the finer mount fell,
And he and Lord Gawain as well
Reclined a while amidst the flowers.
Yet soon both regained their powers.
What then? They leapt up sword in hand,
Both eager, and neither one unmanned.
There was no sparing of shields then,
Both were so carved by these men

That little above the grips remained,
(Shield are ever most sorely maimed)
And you could see the sparks rise
From their helms, to scorch their eyes.
Whichever God grants the victory
Must first cover himself in glory,
Yet count himself right fortunate.
They fought so long, in that state,
On that wide expanse of meadow,
And dealt so many a hefty blow,
Two strong blacksmiths would have tired.
Yet to renown they both aspired.
Though who shall praise the pair,
Fighting for no good reason there,
Other than that Fame might smile
Upon the winner, for a while?
Rash men, they had no great matter
To decide, no cause to flatter
Themselves for holding life so cheap;
Neither man had a grudge to keep,
Nor had committed any wrong.

Now Lord Gawain was skilled and strong
At pinning a man to the ground,
After throwing him, and had found
That if he blocked the other's blade,
And grappled him, his foe was laid
Flat on his back, at Gawain's will.
Forced to defend himself he still
Gave good account. Now he grasped
The brave young knight, and clasped
Him; though he too was fit and strong,
Turning, he threw the man headlong,
Then pinned him beneath his weight.
'Surrender, knight, such is your fate
If you would live,' Gawain now cried.
Lischois, lying beneath him, sighed,

Ill-prepared his pledge to render
Being unaccustomed to surrender.
Twas strange to him that any man
Should have the power to demand
What none had ever sought before,
Much like a badge the vanquished wore,
A sworn oath, such as he had wrung
From others before; his praises sung
For the many jousts that he had won.
Whate'er the outcome of this one,
Having forced many a surrender,
He was more than loth to render
His pledge, whatever fate might come,
He'd rather die than be the one
To swear an oath, under duress;
To treat with death would irk him less.
'You are the victor now,' he said,
And it were better I were dead
Than have my friends, by and by,
Learn that one, who flew so high,
Has been vanquished here. The lady
Was mine, and I had all the glory,
While God wished it so, your hand
Must my present death command.'
Gawain demanded his surrender,
But Lischois would not so render
Seeking swift death; then Gawain
Asked himself: 'Why seek again
To kill the man? Would he obey
In all else, I'd free him this day.'
And he tried to gain agreement
To such terms, but Lischois, intent
On dying thus, would not concede.
Gawain, averse to such a deed,
Let him alone, and that was that;
There amidst the flowers they sat.

Now Gawain, still discontented
With that steed he so resented,
Thought, wisely, he might mount
Lischois' own charger, on account,
And spur the horse, and trial it so.
Warlike it stood, steel-clad below
A second covering of brocade
And samite, so his way he made
Towards the steed; having won it
In this venture why not ride it?
He'd not known the horse as yet,
But saw now it was Gringuljete;
Urjans had gained it, through deceit,
Rendering his dishonour complete.
'Tis you then, Gringuljete!' he cried,
All set for a noble knight to ride,
Thus, God, who often ends our woe,
Of His grace, has returned you so.'
Dismounting, he saw that the steed
Bore the true Grail device, indeed,
A dove, branded on its shoulder.
Riding it Lahelin, proving bolder
And more skilled, had slain a knight
Of Prienlascors, and twas his right
To seize the creature, then the horse
Had come to Orilus in due course,
Who gifted it to Gawain that day,
By the Plimizoel, where Arthur lay.

Now his spirits that had sunk so low,
Oppressed by a dire state of woe,
(For his loyal devotion to his lady,
Had yielded for him but scorn lately,
Though his thoughts still pursued her)
They rose; proud Lischois however,
Ran now to where, upon the grass
Lay the sword that slipped his grasp

When Gawain threw him, and then,
Those watching saw them fight again.
Their shields were both in such a state,
They let them lie, and battled straight,
Each a brave-hearted, fighting man
Now met together, blade in hand.
Many a maid sat, at her window,
Watching the fight unfold below.
And now their fury blazed anew,
Each was of such lineage, too,
It would have irked him to bow
To the other's greater valour now.
Their swords and helms suffered badly,
Scant shields against death, as madly
They toiled, and those who saw the fight
Would have judged both in sore plight.
Lischois Gwelljus fought like this:
His noble heart inspired the wish
For boldness, courageous action,
Many a swift sword-stroke; often
He leapt away, but then attacked;
Gawain sought, by his every act,
To clasp him close: 'If I can see
A way to grasp you, I shall surely
Repay the debt in full,' he thought,
'A lesson now you will be taught.'
Sparks of fire their sword-arms brought
From the other's armour, they sought
To manoeuvre, and yet why fight
At all? For all their toil they might
More fittingly let the matter rest.
My lord Gawain, grasping the chest
Of Lischois, threw him to the ground,
Beneath him (may I not be found
In such a loving embrace as he,
For it would prove the death of me!)
Gawain demanded his surrender,

Once again, yet he would not render
Himself, refusing as before.
'You but waste your time, my lord,
I offer my life this day, instead,
Let my renown, and I, lie dead;
God has cursed me, who cares not
For all the glory a man has got.
For love of the Duchess Orgeluse,
Many a knight renown did lose,
Many a worthy man did yield
His fame to me, upon the field,
So that, by slaying me, that same
Renown will gather to your name.'
'Truly, I must not,' thought Gawain,
'Were I to slay the man, then Fame
Would never again smile on me.
From love of her, he fought, and he
Was driven by that same torment
That pains me. I should rest content,
And let him live for her dear sake.
Is she's to be mine, he can make
No move that will avert what fate
Bestows on me, and, at any rate,
If she has seen the battle we fought
She'll credit me, as one who sought
To, thus, deserve her love. God knows,
I'll spare you for her sake!' He rose,
So Lischois could stand; in distress,
Both aware of their weariness,
They sat down once more, well apart,
Yet neither man seeking to depart.

He pays the master of the ferry, Plippalinot, his due

THE ferry now came to the shore,
Returning to where it lay before,
And the master of the ferry strode

Towards them; a grey merlin rode
On his fist. Each loser must yield,
When knights jousted on that field,
Payment to him of their fine steed,
While he would offer praise indeed
And honour the knight that had won,
And noise his fame abroad. So, one
Raised revenue from that meadow,
And many a steed he had to show,
Equalled only when his fair hawk
Swooped upon some crested lark.
He had no other income, but he
Was well content with his fiefdom. He
Came of high and knightly descent
And his breeding proved excellent.
He went to Gawain and, courteously,
Asked of him the appointed fee.
'I sell not in the market-place, so,
Good sir, you may spare me your toll.
Said Gawain: 'My lord,' he replied,
My lawful due shall not be denied,
For many a lady saw you conquer;
You must concede it, as the victor.
You won the steed, and great renown,
When you thrust him to the ground
Who ruled supreme till this fair day.
Your victory, sweeping him away,
Has robbed the man of happiness,
While your good fortune is no less;
It fell like a blow from on high,
On him; you benefit thereby.'

'He unhorsed me,' replied Gawain,
'Though I exacted payment again.
If a jousting tax is paid to you,
Then let him pay whate'er is due.
The little steed he won in battle

Take that from the knight if you will;
But mine shall be the better horse,
Destined to bear me, in due course.
You speak of what's owed; yet you
Owe it to me not to part from you
On foot. I'd be sorry and you also,
If, lacking a horse, you saw me go.
You'd regret it, if it were known,
For this morn, it was still my own,
Beyond all doubt. If you would ride,
Mount a hobby and strut with pride.
Twas Orilus of Burgundy
Who gifted this creature to me,
But Urjans of Punturteis,
Took the horse, and made it his
For a while. Take what he stole?
Sonner get you a she-mule's foal!
But I can still grant you a favour,
Since you do the knight full honour,
Instead of the war-horse, feel free
To take the man who rode at me,
Whether he likes the fact or no.'
The ferryman true joy did show:
'I've ne'er known so rich a gift,'
He cried, with laughter on his lips,
'If it were proper to receive it.
Yet sir, if you will guarantee it,
It far exceeds my own request.
Now, for a warrior of the best,
Five hundred steeds were fair trade,
If in such coin one might be paid.
If you'd have me rich, indeed,
I'd call it a right handsome deed,
If, like a true knight, you would,
Into my boat, upon the flood,
Deliver the man. 'I shall do so,'
Said Gawain, 'and he shall go,

As your prisoner now, on board,
And off again, be thus assured,
Until he stands before your door.'
'You'll be welcome all the more,'
Cried the ferryman, bowing low,
In gratitude, 'and let me show
You honour, come spend the night
In my humble house, sir knight,
Find comfort there, no greater
Honour befell my peers ever,
Those that ply the ferry I mean;
It would be well if I were seen
To entertain such a nobleman.'

'I would welcome so kind a plan,
Being overcome by weariness,
The which dictates that I should rest.
She who commands me, tis her manner
To turn whate'er is sweet to bitter,
To make the heart poor in delight,
But rich in cares; such is her right,
Yet tis no fair reward. Alas,
Loss, that at first sight came to pass,
You weigh upon the breast, I fear,
That rises free when joys appear,
While the heart that lay beneath
Has vanished. I endure this grief
Without her aid, where shall I find
That which might relieve my mind?
If she were a true-hearted woman,
Would not she, whose powers can
Wound me so, bring happiness?'
Hearing that love did so oppress
Gawain, seeing him struggle so
With love's cares: 'Such here below
Is e'er the rule, amidst the meadow
And the woods, concerning sorrow:

Sad today, and glad tomorrow,
Said the ferryman, 'everywhere
Where Clinschor's lord. Your weight of care,
Not cowardice nor bravery
Can alter one iota, you see.
You may not be aware, but all
That in this country doth befall
Is marvellous, you understand,
Tis a great wonder this whole land,
And its magic holds night and day.
If a man is brave, then fortune may
Aid him here. But the sun is low,
And on board you both should go.'
The ferryman urged them so to do.
Gawain led Lischois, and the two
Boarded the ferry, the prisoner
Patiently, and without demur,
While the ferryman led the steed,
And once it was secured, indeed
The ferryman delayed no more.
Thus, they crossed to the other shore.

Gawain is a guest of Plippalinot, and meets his daughter Lady Bene

'NOW in my house come play the host,'
The master said. Arthur could boast
No finer dwelling at Nantes indeed
Where he oft stayed. Gawain did lead
Lischois within, while the master
And his household did him honour.
'See to the needs of this great lord,
And every comfort do him afford,'
The master said to his daughter,
'He grants us much; go together.'
While she saw that this was done,
Gringuljete was housed by his son.

She did as bidden, most courteously,
And Gawain followed her as she
Led him to an upper chamber
Whose floor was strewn all over
With fresh rushes and bright flowers,
Companions of our happier hours.
The sweet girl unarmed him there.
'May God reward you, for your care,
Said Gawain, 'I am shamed, madam,
For were it not so decreed, I am
The object of too much attention.'
'I wait on you for no other reason
Than your good favour, sir,' she said.
The master's son, a squire, well-bred,
With bolsters and cushions appeared.
Away from the door, a space he cleared,
Arranged them neatly, by the wall,
And laid a carpet before them all,
Where Gawain might sit, then spread
A red sendal coverlet o'er the bed,
And prepared a couch for his host.
Then a second squire who did boast
Fine table-linen, wine, and bread,
Entered the chamber in his stead,
And laid the table, as bidden him.
Next, the lady of the house came in,
Who warmly welcomed Lord Gawain:
'We who were poor are rich again,
And Fortune smiles on us,' she said.

His host entered; ere Gawain fed,
A squire a basin of water brought,
He washed his hands, as his host sought
To ensure all fitting for his guest.
And now Gawain made a request,
And asked his host for company:
'Let this young lady dine with me.'

‘She never dined with lords before,
Or sat beside them, what is more,
For fear she’d run to pride’s excess,
Yet this is but one more kindness,
You have done us; daughter, I say,
Do as my lord doth wish, I pray.’
The girl, Bene, blushed, and again
Obeying, sat down beside Gawain.
The host’s two fine sons now brought
Crested larks his merlin had caught
On the wing; they served all three
To their guest, with a sauce, while she
Cut tasty morsels for Lord Gawain,
And on the good white bread was fain
To lay them, with her own fair hand,
For fine manners she did command.
‘Sir, of these birds, pray you, grant one
To my mother for she has none.’
He told her he would do her wish
In aught she might ask, as in this,
And so a lark was served promptly
To the lady of the house, and she
Acknowledged the gift with a bow,
While the host his thanks did avow.
Then one of the sons, to their guest,
Brought lettuce and purslane dressed
With vinegar (such a diet extended
For too long is scarce recommended
As the best way to give one strength
Or colour, yet what’s won at length
From what one eats e’er speaks true,
While, all too often, a lady’s hue
Is laid on o’er the skin these days;
Yet ne’er has won resounding praise.
I think the woman of constant heart
Bears a finer glow than that of art.)

Had Gawain fed on goodwill alone,
He'd have thriven well there, I own,
For no fond mother has ever wished
Her child more joy than his host wished
The guest who now did eat his bread.
And, once my Lord Gawain had fed,
And the host's wife left the chamber
A bed of soft down, with a cover
Woven of green samite, was brought;
Though twas not one of the better sort.
A quilt then, of brocade, was spread
For Gawain's comfort, o'er the bed,
Brocade without the thread of gold
Brought from heathen lands of old,
Quilted o'er 'palmat' silk, o'er this
Soft sheets of snowy linen, for his
Greater ease, were drawn; on them laid
Pillows, and a cloak, of ermine made,
Such as a young lady might wear.

The lord of the ferry left him there,
And went to his bed. Thus, tis said,
The girl was now host in his stead.
I think did he wish aught from her,
With his request she would concur,
But he needs to sleep, as best he can;
When daylight dawns, God aid the man!

Book XI: Terre Marveile

Gawain questions Lady Bene, and then her father Plippalinot

GREAT weariness had closed his eyes.
He slept thus, waking past sunrise.
One wall of his chamber he found,
Had glazed windows to the ground,
And one of these stood open wide;

Through it he stepped, and went outside,
To see what he could, breathe the air,
And hear the small birds singing there.
The fine keep he could not ignore,
Which he had seen the eve before,
Ere he had met with his encounter,
And soon noticed one, and another,
Lady gazing from out their window,
And he wondered that they did so,
Rather than sleeping still; as yet
The sun was low, the dew full wet.
'I'll sleep again for their sakes, then,'
He thought, and took to his bed again.

The girl's cloak was his coverlet,
Did any wake him? No, not as yet,
Since his host would not allow it;
But now the sweet girl, whose habit
Was to sleep at her mother's feet,
Broke her slumber, and went to greet
Their guest, and offer him company.
Yet he still slept, contentedly,
So mindful of her role, instead,
She sat on the carpet by the bed.
(I cannot say I ever see
Such a vision in front of me,
Of an eve, or at early dawn!)
Gawain woke later in the morn,
He looked at her, and smiled, and said:
'God save you, lady, out of bed
For my sake, and seeking to serve
Me far beyond what I deserve,
Sacrificing your sleep like this,
Troubling yourself in my service.'
'I seek naught but your good favour,
Ask naught of you, for my labour;
My lord command me as you may,

I shall perform whate'er you say.
All who dwell here with my father,
We three children, and our mother,
Will always see you as their lord,
Such kindness to us you afford.'
'How long then have you been here?
For had I but known of it, my dear,
I'd have asked a question or two.
Would you answer me if I do?
Yesterday, and now this morning,
I saw many ladies leaning
From the windows there, above me,
Please tell me now who they may be?'

She was startled. 'Oh, ask me not!
I cannot speak, such is our lot.
Whate'er I may know, I am bound
To silence, and so ne'er a sound
Can I make, concerning this, to you.
Be not offended, ask me, anew,
Of other things, such is my plea.'
He asked again, most pressingly,
Regarding all the ladies he'd seen,
Those seated in the palace I mean,
But the faithful girl wept bitterly,
Showing her grief quite openly.
While it was early, her father came,
All disinclined to speak of blame,
Though perchance the lovely girl
Had disturbed more than a curl,
She was behaving, or so he read,
As if she had, sat by the bed.
Her father said: 'Weep not daughter,
Though at first it may stir anger,
All that happens in gentle fun
Is forgot as soon as its begun.'
'Nay, naught occurred,' said Lord Gawain,

'Other than that, which we'll make plain.
 I asked the girl a question, but she
 Thought it might bring some harm to me,
 And so, she begged me to refrain.
 Let me now ask the question again
 Of yourself, dear host, come, tell me,
 Who is each and every lady,
 Seated there above; ne'er did I
 Hear of any place, under the sky,
 Where so many women ever
 Appeared, so dazzlingly, together.'
 'In God's name, my lord, say not so!
 For there lies woe beyond all woe,'
 The host cried, and wrung his hands.
 'There's reason, then, to my demands,'
 Answered Lord Gawain, 'and no less
 Cause for concern at their distress.
 Why should my question trouble you?'
 'Because of the spirit, sir, in you;
 For if you cease not from asking,
 The outcome of your questioning
 Will but bring your heart deep pain,
 And sadden me, and those again,
 In this place, born to serve you,
 All my children who honour you.'
 'You shall reply!' said Lord Gawain,
 'If any such silence you maintain,
 Denying me truth, I yet will learn
 How matters stand, and you in turn
 May suffer.' 'Alas my lord, yet I
 Cannot but suffer should I reply.'
 Cried his host: 'A shield I'll afford;
 Arm yourself for battle, my Lord;
 You are in Terre Marveile, and here
 There lies the wondrous bed, I fear,
 The Lit Marveile; the perils, my Lord,
 Of Schastel Marveile, none before

Have conquered, the dangers there
Remain as great, and this affair
Will send you swiftly towards death.
Whate'er you've known, in a breath,
Of perilous ventures, what before
You have attempted, yet far more
Risk is in this. Woe comes your way!
'I should be filled with sore dismay,
Said Gawain, 'if I left these ladies
Without seeking their pains to ease,
And learning all. I've heard before
Of this castle; come, tell me more,
Since, now, that I have come so near,
For their sakes, I'll dispense with fear.'

He learns of the perils of Schastel Marveile

'NO hardship is there to compare
With that of one who enters there
To undertake the perilous venture,'
The host told his guest, 'tis ever
Sharp and dreadful, my lord, believe
I am not speaking thus to deceive.'
His voice expressed his deep woe,
Yet Gawain ignored it, even so.
'Counsel me now on this battle!
Please God, I shall, at this castle,
Achieve great deeds of chivalry.
I value all that you say to me,
Yet twere wrong to ride away,
"Coward!" my friends and foes would say.'
His host now redoubled his cries,
No such woe ere troubled his eyes,
He turned to Gawain, and he said:
'Should God preserve your life instead,
You will be lord of all this land.
If you possess the strength of hand,

To free the ladies prisoned here,
(Since you show not a trace of fear)
Knights and men-at-arms, and all,
You'll be honoured in every hall.
You'll win such fame as no knight
Has garnered till now, in any fight,
For none ere now has proved as true;
God himself will have honoured you.
You'll be lord over many a beauty
From many a near or distant country.
But no dishonour twould be to go,
Now that Liscois Gwelljus has so
Surrendered all his renown to you.
And he was full worthy of it too,
For many a deed of chivalry
Had he wrought, with true bravery.
The Lord ne'er made so fine a heart,
Ither of Gaheviez apart,
So filled with every quality.
Yesterday, upon my ferry,
That very knight-at-arms I bore,
Who slew Ither at Nantes, before,
God bless him, he gifted me five
Great war-horses that kings did ride,
And dukes. Whatever spoils he won
There, at Belrepeire, will be sung,
For each was his sworn prisoner,
His shield bears the scars. And here
Had he come riding to seek the Grail.'
'Which way went he? Tell me the tale,
Good host, did he, being so near,
Learn of the peril that you so fear?'
Cried Gawain. 'Sir, he learnt it not.
To speak naught of it, is my lot;
I should be blamed had I done so.
And if you had not sought to know,
And so, yourself, asked the question,

You, also, had ne'er heard mention
Of what's wrought here: great sorcery,
That's fraught with dread and misery.
Should you not turn from your intent,
If from here to your death you went,
Then it would prove the direst blow
I, and my household, e'er did know.
Yet should you win the victory,
Twill put an end to my penury,
For you'll be lord of all this land
And I know your generous hand
Will raise me to wealth and fame,
And so bring honour to my name.
Joy without sorrow you will win
If you survive what you'd begin.
Now arm yourself against great woe.'
Gawain yet lacked his armour though,
And so, he called for all his gear;
With it his host did swift appear.
But he was clad, from feet to head,
By the sweet, lovely girl instead.
His host went off to fetch his steed.
Now, on one wall there hung, at need,
A strong, tough shield, one that later
Saved Gawain's life; so the charger
Was brought, and with it came the shield.
The master of the house did yield
His counsel: 'I will tell you how
You must deal with the danger now;
For my good shield you must bear,
The which is not pierced anywhere;
I never fight, full whole is its state.
Now, when you reach the castle gate,
You'll find a merchant sitting beside
The entry; leave your horse outside.
Buy aught of him, no matter what,
He'll guard your steed better for that,

Should you leave it there, as good will.
And if you can retrieve it still,
You'll be glad of your steed again.'
'I may not ride in?' asked Gawain.

'No indeed, those ladies, sir knight,
Will all stay hidden, from your sight.
The hour of peril is now at hand;
In a deserted place you'll stand.
Naught that's living will you find there,
Great or small. Be in God's care,
Entering that chamber, Lord Gawain,
That doth the Lit Marveile contain.
All the wealth, tis a treasury full,
That Commander of the Faithful
Has, in Morocco, would not meet
The cost of that bed, all complete.
If you lie there, tis your fate, too,
To suffer all God intends for you.
May the outcome be full of joy!
If chivalry be your sole employ,
Remember, sir, never to yield
Either your sword or your shield,
For just when it appears, sir knight,
Your trials are over, then the fight
Will commence!' When Lord Gawain,
Once more, his saddle did regain,
The girl's spirits sank full low,
While all around gave way to woe.
'If God' willing, I'll not prove slow
To reward you, that you did show
Faithful service in lodging me,'
Gawain assured his host, as he
Took leave of the maiden, whose tears
Were natural, born of her fears.
He rode away, while they did weep,
And made his way to the castle keep.

And if you'd know how he did fare,
I'll tell you, most willingly, there.

Gawain enters the castle

JUST as I heard it, I'll tell the tale.
Now, before the gate, without fail,
Gawain found the merchant, and he
In his booth, one far from empty,
Held goods to make me wild with joy
If such treasure I might employ.
Gawain rode up and dismounted.
Ne'er such wares had he counted
In all his life; the booth was made
Of samite, and, to serve the trade,
Was tall and square, and capacious.
And its worth, for the curious?
Were it a question of buying it,
No man could have afforded it;
Not e'en the Baruc of Baghdad,
Could meet the cost of all he had,
Nor the Catholicus of Rumkale;
Nor when Byzantium, on a day,
Still had its treasure, its Emperor
Could himself have done no more,
Not even if they had helped twice
Over, such was that merchandise.
Gawain greeted the trader; when
He'd looked at it, and then, again,
Viewed the wonders there for sale,
He asked to see what might avail
To keep his purse intact, a clasp
Perchance, or a belt with a hasp.
'Truly,' the merchant said, 'for years
Have I been here, yet none appears
But noble ladies to view my wares.
If your heart is fit for such affairs

As test a man, all will be yours.
Twas brought from far distant shores.
If you are bent on winning fame,
And seek adventure and a name,
And find success, why, you will see
Tis easy enough to trade with me;
All my wares you will have won!
Go your way, and God's will be done!
Twas the ferryman, Plippalinot,
Who sent you to me, was it not?
Your coming to this land many
Will praise, if you but set them free.
If you would try, leave the charger
Here with me, retrieve him later,
For of him I shall take good care.'
'I should be glad to leave him there,
If tis not lowering, for he has never
Met with so wealthy a groom ever!'
'Sir,' said the merchant, pleasantly,
'What more now would you have of me?
If you come alive from that place
All will be yours, and with good grace;
For who would own a better right?'

Now staunch courage roused the knight,
And sent him forwards, on foot, instead.
The castle was vast, as I have said,
And each of its flanks well-fortified.
If any had sought to breach its side
Naught would they win in thirty years.
Within lay a vast space, it appears,
(The Lechfeld's plain may be larger!)
Above the walls, rose many a tower.
When at the palace Gawain did gaze,
Of the tints the peacock displays
Seemed its roof, and brighter by far,
With hues no rain or snow did mar.

Within, all was well-executed,
The window shafts finely fluted,
The ceilings, high above, vaulted.
In alcoves lay couches; quilted
Fabrics draped them, and each one
Stood on its own, yet many a one
Was placed here and there, for countless
Ladies sat there, who nonetheless
Had now withdrawn. Thus, Gawain,
On whom a rescue from their pain,
And then a reign of joy depended,
A day of bliss, and sorrow ended,
Was not received by them at all.
If they had seen him in that hall,
What greater pleasure could they own?
None might do so, e'en one alone,
Despite his wish to serve them so.
It was not of their doing though.

Gawain's trials within Clinschor's Chamber of the Lit Marveile

MY Lord Gawain walked to and fro,
Viewing the palace; while doing so,
In one of the walls (ask not which side),
He saw a door, it was open wide,
And in the chamber to which it led
(The chamber of the marvellous bed)
He'd either win glory, or die
In the attempt. He entered thereby.
The floor was clear and smooth as glass;
Upon it stood, where a man might pass,
The Lit Marveile, the wondrous bed;
Below each post, and gleaming red,
Was clasped a ruby, finely rounded.
Thus, swifter than the wind it bounded.
The pavement there I now must praise,
Wrought by Clinschor in all the ways

He preferred; twas of chrysolite,
And jasper and sard, gleaming bright.
With subtle art Clinschor had brought
The spoil of many lands to his court.

The pavement was so glassy, Gawain
His purchase might barely maintain,
Nonetheless he ventured ahead.
Whene'er he took a step, the bed
Moved swiftly on from where it lay.
The heavy shield began to weigh
Upon him, which his host had so
Recommended against the foe.
'How shall I get at you?' he wondered,
'Are you avoiding me?' He pondered.
'I'll teach you a lesson, if I should fly
Through the air, I'll trap you thereby!'
At that moment the bed stood still,
So he leapt towards it, with a will,
And landed in the midst. Dear Lord,
No such speed could aught afford
A bed! It crashed from side to side,
Spared not a wall, as he did ride,
Hurling against the stones, until
The castle echoed to the thrill.
In this manner, my Lord Gawain
Rode many a charge, and, again,
If all the thunder that ever roared
Were in a room, and all the horde
Of trumpeters from all ages past
And the future, from First to Last,
Blowing away to earn their hire,
No greater a din could it inspire.
Though he was abed, he must wake;
What might he do for heaven's sake?
He was so pounded by the clamour,
He raised his great shield for cover.

He lay still, leaving his fate to Him
Who aids all those who trust in Him,
And seek His help in time of need,
Nor does he weary of help indeed.
When he finds trouble, a wise man
Appeals to God who, in His hand,
Bears plenteous aid, and will succour
A man of courage, and of honour.
This is what happened with Gawain;
He sought the help of Him, again,
To whose goodness and power, he
Ascribed his own renown, that He
Might watch over him in that way.
The sound and fury died away
The instant the bed came to a halt,
At the very centre of the vault,
The same distance from each wall.

Now a greater peril did befall.
Five hundred slings had been set,
With subtle art; their paths all met
At the place where Gawain now lay.
The shield was strong enough to stay
The hard, round pebbles that they threw;
Although the thing was pierced right through,
At several points, he was unharmed.
The violent hail of stones, thus charmed,
Was over. Never had he suffered
Such a bombardment. However,
Five hundred crossbows or more
Now let loose sharp bolts that bore
Upon the bed; and most anyone,
Used to that kind of attention,
Will know what it was like; full soon
The whirring died, which was a boon.
Whoe'er has an eye to his own ease
Should avoid fair beds like these,

Where no comfort's to be found.
Young men grew old, at a bound,
In that bed, their hair turned grey;
And yet he trembled not that day,
Though bolts and pebbles did fall
Upon his chain mail and, withal,
He was cut and bruised somewhat;
Pain and woe now seemed his lot.

Peace had descended on the knight,
Yet fame determined he must fight.
He had hoped his troubles were o'er,
But at that instant, through a door
Opposite him, a brawny rustic
Now appeared, as if by magic,
And he was terrible to behold,
Clad in a smock, on top a bold
Bonnet; in baggy breeches made
Of otter pelts was he arrayed.
A great club in his hand he bore
Its bulge a swollen orb, and for
Gawain he made to his annoy,
Angered by yet another ploy.
'This champion lacks armour,' he thought,
His defence is less than naught,'
And sat up straight as if each limb
Ached not and still supported him.
The other backed towards the door,
As if he were ready to withdraw;
Then he shouted, most angrily:
'Though you possess no fear of me,
All the same, I shall soon ensure
That you will die, to live no more.
That you live yet, tis a mark of evil,
And shows the power of the devil,
Yet though he sustains you, living,
Nothing can prevent your dying.

Once I've left, you'll meet your doom.'
With that, he departed the room.

Gawain cut from out his shield
The crossbow shafts that did yield
A clang as they had struck his mail,
Much like a milkmaid with her pail.
Now came a roar like twenty drums,
For, behold, a mighty lion comes!
Our fearless Gawain wondered then
What else was in store. Once again
He looked to his defence; his shield,
(Not being a knight prone to yield)
He grasped by its thong, and stepped
Onto the pavement. Fiercely it leapt,
This lion big as a horse, its hunger
Great; twas fated not to prosper;
It pounced on the man, but Gawain
Held his stance, though the lion was fain
To snatch his shield away, its paw
Sinking through it, claws and more.
And ne'er has such a beast before
Pierced such a shield with its claw.
He stopped the beast tearing the shield
From his grasp, his sword did wield
And sliced the right foreleg away,
So that the creature, held at bay,
Stood on three legs with the paw
Of the fourth caught fast, as before,
Wedged in the shield there, as its blood
Poured o'er the pavement in a flood,
Such that Gawain slid to and fro.
Time and again it sought to show
Its fangs, and leap at the stranger.
(Nor would I like to be its neighbour,
Twas trained to devour good people,
And so, all things being equal,

As he fought for his life, Gawain,
I would suspect, felt much the same).

Gawain had wounded the lion so,
As o'er the floor the blood did flow,
It sprang in fury at the man,
Who, with the blade in his right hand,
Stabbed it to such a depth the sword
Was buried to the hilt; it roared,
The creature, then stumbled ahead,
Fell to the floor there, and lay dead.
Gawain had overcome the danger.
His next thought was: 'I'll not suffer
Myself to sit here, drenched in blood.
What now will best work to my good?
This bed dashes around so wildly,
If I've any sense, I'll go carefully,
Not sit upon it, or lie down there,
For I'm done with all that affair.'

His head was reeling from the stones,
And crossbow bolts, and all his bones
Ached, and his wounds bled copiously,
Such that he sank on bended knee;
From there into a swoon he fell.
His head lay pillowed on the swell
Of the lion's chest, and his shield
Fallen beneath him half-concealed.
What strength and wit he possessed
Was lost to him, with all the rest,
So fiercely had he been assailed,
And yet his courage had prevailed.
His pillow was unlike that said
To have lain neath Kahenis' head,
Through the cleverness of Gybele
The maid from Monte Rybele.
He slept; she, the prize, slipped by.

Yet Gawain has won the prize say I,
And glory wings towards this man,
For you've heard how this all began
How, losing his five senses here,
He lies in a swoon, half-dead, I fear.

Gawain's plight is viewed by Queen Arnive, his grandmother

THE eyes of a hidden observer
Looked down on the blood-stained chamber;
Gawain and the lion seemed dead.
From a window, high overhead,
Gazed a young lady-in-waiting,
Whose bright face paled on viewing
The scene below, she ran to tell
The wise Arnive; at this, tears fell,
And tis Arnive I'll honour still,
For saving his life, as she will.

Queen Arnive now viewed the chamber,
But, from above, could not, however,
Tell whether joy would be on hand,
Or endless mourning for this man.
She feared indeed the knight was dead,
Couched on the lion, as twere a bed.
Much troubled, she cried: 'What woe,
If you but found death there below,
In fighting bravely for our sake,
We poor exiles; your virtues wake
Pity in me, be you young or old,
Faithful heart, so brave and bold.
You who are Christians now pray
To God for His blessing this day,'
She told her ladies; two she sent
To enter on tiptoe; she was bent
On knowing how the man did fare,
Such was her bidding to the pair.

You ask if either of them wept?
Both, I assure you; sorrow kept
Prompting fresh tears for the knight
Whom they found in a sorry plight,
His shield was all drenched in blood.
One worked, as gently as she could,
To unlace his helm, removing it,
And then the ventail, bit by bit;
A pale foam lay on his red lips.
She touched him with her fingertips,
Looking to see if he still breathed,
Or whether her senses were deceived,
For the issue was in doubt as yet.
On his surcoat was a dragonlet,
Cut in sable, she found a pair,
Such as Ilinot the Briton did bear
Bravely, he who had won glory
In early death; now, the lady
Plucked a little of the sable
Held it as close as she was able
To his nostrils, and sought to see
If it might be stirred but slightly,
By a breath; twas so, in the end!
At once, she told her lovely friend,
To fetch a basin of clean water,
This the latter swiftly brought her.
The girl worked a finger gently
Between his teeth, delicately
Pouring a few clear drops within,
Not too much, till he did begin
To ope his eyes, and so awoke.
His thanks most gallantly he spoke,
Saying to the sweet girl: 'I grieve
That you so find me, I conceive
Tis most ill-bred of me; a kindness
It would be on your part, no less,
To say naught, as a courtesy,

To any others, such is my plea.'
'You have lain, and here do lie,
On glory's field,' was their reply,
'You've revealed such brave intent,
Live long now, and rest content,
In the victory that's yours, today.
Now assure us poor souls; we pray,
That these your wounds are of a kind
That may yet grant us peace of mind.'

'You must help, if you'd have me live,'
He replied, 'fresh aid you must give;
Let skilled folk inspect my hurt,
That further harm they may avert.
Yet if I'm to fight again, then lace
My helmet on, and leave this place,
For I must look to make defence.'
'With armour you may now dispense,'
They said, 'one shall stay, the other
Must go to seek reward, however,
From four fair queens for bringing
Them the news you are yet living.
They will prepare an easeful bed,
And such medicines as are said
To cure, and salves that will gently
Soothe bruised flesh, and cleanly
Heal your wounds.' One of the pair
Ran with the news of this affair,
To tell the four he was not dead
But seemed strong enough instead;
That, God willing, he would bring
Them happiness, yet he was hurting.
'Thank God,' they cried. And now the Queen,
(Tis Arnive, old and wise, I mean)
Ordered them to prepare a bed,
And see that a carpet was spread
Before it, nigh a well-stocked fire.

Rare unguents she did then acquire,
For his wounds, prepared with skill,
And had four ladies do her will
And gently remove his armour,
Without shaming him however.
'Take a roll of silk, as a screen,
And so, unarm him at the scene,
Behind the silk; if he can walk,
Allow that, but if he doth balk
At such, have him carried where
I shall ready his bed, with care.
If he escaped the fight without
A mortal wound, I have no doubt
I shall restore him to good health,
Yet if venom, that works by stealth,
Proves fatal to him, then we too
Will be, as it were, slain anew,
And with this warrior's last breath,
Be doomed again to living death.'
All this was done; and thus, Gawain,
Relieved of armour, walked, in pain,
From that place, and was given aid,
By all those who such pains allayed.

Queen Arnive tends to Gawain's wounds

OF wounds he showed fifty or more,
From slingshot, crossbow-bolt, and claw,
Yet naught had pierced his chain-mail
To any depth; all such did fail
To pass the shield he'd held before
His body. The Queen, of her lore,
Took dittany steeped in warm wine,
And with blue sendal, silken, fine,
From his wounds wiping the blood,
Dressed them, as cleanly as she could,
So they might heal. As for his head,

Where sad dents in his helm had led
To bruised swellings, she contrived
To make sure that not one survived
Her potent salves applied with skill.

‘And greater help I’d offer, still,’
She said: ‘Cundrie La Surziere,
Doth many a medicine prepare.
She comes to visit, oft, and she
Supplies such things, and tutors me.
Since Anfortas was first afflicted,
Aid, from all things, he’s enlisted;
This salve is one he’s ever sought;
From Munsalvaesche it was brought,
Where Anfortas doth yet survive,
Soothed by the salve while he’s alive.’
When Munsalvaesche she did name,
Gawain was pleased by that same,
Thinking the place to be quite near.
‘You have restored my senses, dear
Lady, that took their leave of me,’
Gawain spoke with plain honesty,
‘My pain abates, and any strength
Or sense that’s mine, won at length,
Your servant owes to you, wholly.’
‘We must labour, most faithfully,
To seek your favour, sir,’ she said,
‘Now do as I say, keep your bed;
Talk little; and a herb that I keep
I’ll give to you to make you sleep;
A little of it will do you good,
But no other food or liquid should
Pass your lips, ere night doth fall,
(For, thus, you may recover all
Your former strength) when I
Will bring you fresh food, by and by,
To nourish you, until the morn;

Then let you slumber here till dawn.'

Now, in his mouth she placed the leaf;
He slept a sleep that brought relief.
She gently smoothed the coverlet,
And so, in that great lady's debt,
Warmed and easeful, lay Gawain,
Full rich in honour, poor in shame,
And thus, he slept throughout the day.
Now and again, a shudder, I'd say,
Ran through him, twas the action
Of the salve. A great commotion
Those ladies made, that company
Of the fair, there were so many,
Chattering, passing to and fro;
Queen Arnive gave them to know
That a grave silence must be kept
While the knight, their hero, slept.
The palace doors, at her command,
Were closed and barred, so no man
Might learn the news till next day.
Then fresh woe must come, I say.

The warrior slept until nightfall;
The wise Queen then removed all
The herb still left, from his mouth.
He woke to the taste of drouth,
And the lady told them to bring,
Drink, and food most nourishing.
He sat, drank, ate quite happily,
And was waited on, most nobly,
By the company of ladies, fair,
Who, decorously, served him there.
My Lord Gawain gazed right closely
At these, those, all; but the lovely
Orgeluse filled his thoughts again.
Ne'er in his life had Lord Gawain,

(Who had known both love invited,
And love denied, and unrequited)
Found his heart moved so deeply
By any woman. 'Now, my lady,
Said the knight to that wise Queen,
Who was his nurse, 'I may be seen
As far too strict, yet it offends me,
To see these ladies stand before me.
Ask them to sit, or dine, I pray.
'Sir, there'll be no sitting, I say,
By any except me; twere shame
Upon them not to serve your fame,
To whom we look for happiness.
Yet were we wise, we would bless
This eve, and do just as you wish.'
The noble ladies adhered to this,
Serving him with a right good will,
But asking, sweetly, that they, still,
Might stand there till he had dined,
For none would sit. He thus reclined,
While they his company did keep,
Until once more he sought to sleep.

Book XII: The Garland

Wolfram comments on Gawain's love-pangs

IF any sought to disturb his rest,
When Lord Gawain needs the best
Repose that he can find, I'd say
Much guilt upon that person lay;
For, as the tale bears witness, he
Has taxed his strength dreadfully,
And though crowned with all success,
Achieved it under great duress.
The suffering felt by Lancelot
On the Bridge of Swords, and what

The battle with Meljahkanz brought,
To Gawain's perils were as naught;
Lesser seem the deeds, as well,
Of proud and mighty King Garel,
Who drove the lion from the court
At Nantes. And then, the knife he brought,
That which caused him so to suffer
There, within the marble pillar.
Were a mule to be loaded, now,
With all the missiles he did allow
To be fired at him, by subtle art,
At the dictates of his noble heart,
The mule could not the burden bear.
The Perilous Ford, that whole affair,
Nor Erec's winning Schoydelakurt
From Mabonagrín, caused such hurt,
As did these sufferings of Gawain's;
Not e'en what came of proud Yvain's
Pouring water on the wondrous stone.
And if all these, not just one alone,
Were placed against those of Gawain,
Who, here, embraced a wealth of pain,
His sufferings would outweigh them all,
So they'd judge who can judge at all.
What suffering do I speak of? I,
(Though the sun's barely in the sky),
Will tell you plainly, the Lady,
Orgeluse, had entered deeply
Into Gawain's living heart,
A man who ever played his part
With true courage, steadfastly.
But how could any woman be
Hidden within so small a space?
By a narrow path she came apace
Into that heart, yet the suffering
That to that heart she did bring,
Banished all his woe and pain,

From her great joy it did obtain.
It was but a constricted place
Which, with her presence, she did grace,
Within one whose every thought,
Constantly that presence sought.
Let none mock that some woman,
Can dwell within a warlike man.

Heavens, what then doth all this mean?
Tis Mistress Love; she vents her spleen
On one who's gained the victory,
And earned himself no little glory.
She found him mighty enough then,
And since he yielded to her when
He was as yet unscathed, she might
Have shown favour to her knight,
And not used force upon him now,
When pain and suffering pales his brow.
Mistress Love, if you seek honour
Such brings naught but dishonour.
Gawain has lived his whole life ever
At your command, as did his father,
King Lot; his mother's family
Acknowledged your authority,
Since, long ago, when Mazadan
Was taken to Mount Famurgan
By Terdelaschoye, there, where you
Aroused deep passion, as you do.
Of his descendants we have heard
None were spared, all were stirred,
By your attentions. And King Ither,
Of Gaheviez, was such a lover
And bore the mark of your seal.
His name alone did e'er reveal
Your power when it was spoken
Among ladies, a true token,
Of Love's might to all who saw him,

A bright light, that will ne'er grow dim.
For they, indeed, knew how to love!
Great loss his death to you did prove.

Must death now be Gawain's sad lot?
Will you hound him like fair Ilinot,
His cousin, who, we understand,
Fled from his father Arthur's land,
When but a youth? Twas your power
Made him strive (yet, alas the hour!)
For the favour of Kanadic's Florie.
As an exile from his own country,
He was raised by that same Queen,
Yet she, whom he loved, was seen
To drive him beyond her border;
And you'll have heard moreover
How he died in her service there.
Gawain's line has known much care
And anguish, oft by love assailed.
I'll name one more that love has paled,
His kinsman too; why did the snow,
Blood-tinged, torment Parzival so?
The queen, his wife, was the cause.
Brave Gahmuret obeyed your laws,
And Galoes, his brother, and you
Consigned them to their biers too.
Itonje, Gawain's sister, did prove
Faithful and constant in the love
She bore King Gramoflanz, and she
Was young, noble, of great beauty.
Mistress Love, you did, further,
Through her love for Alexander
(Of Byzantium he was emperor),
Plague Surdamur, Cligès' mother;
Nor did you ever spare from pain
The many kin of Lord Gawain,
Both these, and every other too,

Who rendered their service to you,
Mistress Love. Now, glory you seek
Oppressing him, wounded and weak,
To whom you should grant repose,
And reserve your strength for those
Who are well and strong. Full many
A man sings of love's pain, though he
Knows no such torments as Gawain.
Yet sweet silence I should maintain,
And let the love-poets now lament
The state of this knight, who lies spent,
After that perilous venture,
And yet achieved glory and honour,
When Love's fierce hailstorm, no less,
Broke o'er him, in his helplessness.

'Alas,' he mused, 'that ever I saw
This pair of beds; that one, before,
Wounded me, and brought me pain,
This other has stirred my love again.
The Duchess Orgeluse must show
Me mercy, if happiness I'd know.'
He tossed and turned impatiently,
Bursting his bandages; thus, did he
Lie in anguish, before the dawn.
But lo, the sun heralds the morn,
And shines down on him who waited,
Though to no small discomfort fated,
For in the past he had endured
Many a joust with lance and sword
With greater ease, felt more blessed
Than now, when he but sought to rest.
If any love-poet would maintain
He suffers as much as Lord Gawain,
Let him receive that hail of fire,
From crossbow-bolts, and acquire
As many wounds; they'll make him smart,

More than all those achieved by art.'

Gawain gazes on the wondrous Pillar

GAWAIN was weighed down with love
And other ills, but the sun did prove
So bright the rays it cast outshone
His bright candle; the night was gone;
He rose. His smallclothes did share
Stains of blood and armour, but there
Beside the bed were doublet and hose
Of fine buckram, which I'd suppose
He'd welcome gladly; a sleeveless
Robe, of marten fur I would guess,
And a jerkin, of like fur, there was,
And then, of some cloth of Arras,
A garment to sit above them all.
A pair of boots too were on call.
All these new clothes he put on,
Opened the door, and strode on,
Till he came to the palace hall.
So fine was it, both wide and tall,
He'd ne'er seen aught to compare.
At one side of the great hall there,
A spiral staircase, broad and strong,
Rose through the space, and beyond,
And bore, within it, a fine pillar
Not made of fragile wood but harder,
And burnished, and so tall in height
Camilla's sarcophagus might
Have rested there, quite fittingly,
(A fine tomb, in story, had she).
Clinschor had the rare work brought
From Feirefiz's realm to this court.
The pillar was rounded, like a tent,
And all the measured skill that went
To its making, would now surpass

The skills of Master Geometras,
Were he to set his hand to such,
For subtle art that work did touch.
The stairway's windows glowed bright
With precious gems, a wondrous sight;
There topaz, garnet, chrysolite,
Amethyst, diamond, shed their light,
Emerald, and sard, and ruby,
So, it seems; so runs the story;
And the windows were as wide
As they were tall, on every side,
While the ceilings above them set,
Were styled like their columns, yet
No window-column could compare
With that pillar within the stair;
The tale tells of its wondrous nature.

Alone as he was, that watch-tower,
With all its costly gems, he climbed,
To view the scene, and he did find
Such marvels as he never tired
Of gazing at, as round he gyred;
For it seemed to him that every land
Showed in the pillar, close at hand,
And there they all went, swirling round,
Great mountains, clashing there, he found,
And he saw people in the pillar,
Riding, walking, here some other
Running, standing; so, he sat then,
In a window-bay, to study again
All this wondrous thing, and see
All its marvels more completely.

Queen Arnive explains its nature

AND now there came the wise Arnive,
And with her, her daughter, Sangive,

Gawain's mother, and sweet Condrie,
And another sister of his, Itonje.
All four advanced towards Gawain,
Who needs must rise to his feet again.
'You should be sleeping,' said Arnive,
'You who seemed barely alive,
Are too badly hurt to scorn your rest,
If with fresh trials you're to be blessed.'
'My lady, and mistress of the art
Of healing, you now, for your part,
Have so restored my mind and body
That I must be your servant wholly.'
'If you submit to me as mistress,
Then greet these ladies with no less
Than a kiss; so to do is fine,
As all three are of royal line.'

Happy to do so, Gawain, at that,
Kissed those lovely women; they sat
All four, and so did Lord Gawain.
He gazed at the daughters again,
Though the image within his heart
Of she, who did from him depart,
Compelled him to admit that they
Were scarce as bright as a misty day,
Compared with her, such loveliness
He found in Orgeluse, the Duchess
Of Logroys, towards whom his love
Turned, she whom he did so approve.

**In the pillar, Gawain sees Orgeluse, with the Turkoyt, Florant
of Itolac, approaching**

NOW Gawain had been presented,
To all three ladies; all consented
To a kiss in greeting; and all three

Were so dazzling, that full readily
A heart that knew not pain before
Might have been pierced to the core.
He sought now to know the nature
Of that most marvellous pillar.
And Arnive replied 'Sir Knight,
This stone has shone day and night,
Ever since I first came to know it
Over the countryside below it,
Through a space of six miles wide,
Around the castle on every side.
All that happens within that space,
All that on land or sea takes place,
Can be seen within the pillar,
It acts as if it were a mirror,
For bird and beast, every stranger,
Or local, known or unfamiliar,
All of them are reflected there!
It shines six miles through the air,
And, then, is so solid and entire
A smith might labour and yet tire
To flaw it, for with all his might
He could hammer yet, and still
He'd fail; twas had of Secundille
The queen in royal Thabronit,
Without her leave, I must admit
To thinking.' Now, in the pillar,
Gawain saw, as in a mirror,
At that instant, riding swiftly,
A knight, it seemed, and a lady.
He thought that lady very fair.
Man and steed were armoured there,
The helm adorned with its crest.
They rode in haste, and as if pressed,
O'er the causeway, to the meadow.
Gawain was their object, and so,
Through the marsh they made their way,

On the track Lischois took that day
When he was conquered by Gawain.
The lady led the knight, twas plain,
By his horse's bridle, and the knight
Clearly was brought there to fight.
Thinking the pillar lied, Gawain
Now turned away from it in pain,
Then saw twas Orgeluse indeed,
Who, with a noble knight, at speed,
Approached the quay; this he saw,
And yet like pungent hellebore,
So swift to act, she stung his eyes,
This Duchess, and in similar wise
Pressed onward to his heart, to prove
Him helpless in the face of love;
Just such a man was Lord Gawain.
He turned to Queen Arnive again,
His mistress, on seeing the sight.
'Madam,' he said, 'here is a knight
With upraised lance who, to my mind,
Doth seek the fight which he shall find;
Yet tell me now, who is the lady?'
'The Duchess of Logroys, that lovely
Woman is she; whom doth she seek,
For on that one great harm she'll wreak?
He is the Turkoyt, of whose spirit
All oft have heard, a man of merit,
Who with his lance has earned great fame,
Enough to grant three lands a name.
You should avoid so brave a knight,
Tis much too soon for you to fight,
Sadly-wounded as you are now.
And even were you not, I vow,
You ought to decline the battle.'
'If I'm the lord of this fair castle,
As you say,' said my Lord Gawain,
'When a brave man seeks, as is plain,

Single combat, upon my honour,
I must reach for arms and armour.'

Gawain defeats the Turkoyt

THE ladies wept, all four: 'Fight not,
Or fame and fortune may be forgot,'
They cried, 'for, should you be slain
That would but bring us deeper pain;
And if from death you should escape,
With your wounds in their sad state,
And all armoured, you still would die.
Either way, we'll suffer thereby.'
Gawain with all this must contend:
The Turkoyt did his honour offend,
His wounds gave him endless pain,
And now Love troubled him again,
Not to mention these ladies four
Whose woe pained him as before,
Full mindful of their sincerity;
'Weep not, dear ladies!' was his plea.
He asked then for his fine charger,
And his sword, and his steel armour,
And those four ladies led him down
To where the rest were to be found,
Those other ladies, sweet and fair.
He soon was armed for the affair,
Bringing tears to many an eye,
And giving rise to many a sigh.
This was all done most secretly,
Lest any other man should see,
Apart that is from the chamberlain
Who clad the mount of Lord Gawain.
He tiptoed out to where Gringuljete
Was standing, but his wounds as yet
Were so painful he scarce could carry
His shield, well-clawed by his quarry.

He mounted his war-horse, and then
Rode from the castle, and again
Sought out the master of the ferry,
Whose service proved exemplary.
He gave Gawain a good fresh lance;
(For him twas common circumstance
To gather such things from the field)
Once Lord Gawain a lance did wield,
He asked to be ferried o'er the flood,
To where the proud Turkoyt now stood.
He and Plippalinot, thus, did glide,
With Gringuljete, to the other side.

Now, the Turkoyt was of high renown,
For all he met with he threw down,
All who fought him, seeking honour.
Full free of all stain of dishonour,
He'd sworn his fame he would advance
Employing nothing but the lance,
And sword-less would win his fame.
If any could his downfall claim,
Unseat him wholly, and so render
Him unarmed he would surrender.
Gawain had this of the ferryman,
Plippalinot, who did ever stand
To gain the mounts of those who fell,
If the winner kept his saddle well,
Without that winner, or the loser,
Resenting his gain, moreover,
For he played the stake-holder there;
Such were the terms of each affair.
The loser's horse he'd lead away,
And leave it to the ladies to say
Who'd won, and who'd lost renown.
While they saw many a joust go down,
He cared little how they were fought!

Thus, to the shore Gawain he brought,
And, telling him to keep his seat,
He led the horse ashore; complete
With lance and shield, Gawain waited.
The Turkoyt barely hesitated,
Now, at the gallop, he did advance,
Neither too high nor low his lance.
Gawain now steered his Gringuljete
Towards the meadow where they met
(The steed from Munsalvaesche obeyed,
Gawain advancing unafraid).
Come, let them joust, now! King Lot's son
Rode manfully; in his heart twas won.
Where helmet-laces are knotted, there,
The Turkoyt's thrust did land; but fair
Was Gawain's, and caught the other
Full squarely amidst his vizor,
And clear it was which man must fall.
Gawain had lifted helm and all
From the Turkoyt, on his brave lance,
Tearing it from him in his advance,
And there upon the ground he lay,
The flower of excellence till that day,
Clothing the grass in sad manner,
The flowers vying with his armour,
In the dew. Gawain rode to the man
And took his surrender, the ferryman
Claiming the horse, as was his due,
And who would deny him? Not you.

'Oh, you might well be proud indeed,
If it were cause for pride, this deed,
Where a lion's paw, half-concealed,
Follows, embedded in your shield!'
Cried Orgeluse, to vex Gawain,
'And now you'll seek to proclaim
Your renown, since the ladies here

Have witnessed your luck. No fear!
For we must leave you to your bliss.
Yet you may dance for joy at this,
That the Lit Marveile let you go,
Your shield somewhat battered though,
As if you'd suffered in some fight;
Your wounds too are scarcely light.
You silly goose! Go prize a shield,
That at each point was forced to yield
Pierced by bolts, holed like a sieve;
Great honour indeed such doth give!
Flee now; nurse each ache and pain,
And be witness, thus, to my disdain.
Retire! How could you contemplate
The dangers that must be your fate,
The mountains that you must move,
If you would serve me, out of love!

'Madam,' he answered the Duchess,
'If I am wounded, yet I may bless
The aid I found here. If such desire
To help a man may be yet entire,
And be reconciled with the favour
Of accepting the service I'd render,
There is indeed no danger so great
I'd not embrace it. Such be my fate;
In serving you, pain may be defied!'
'Then in my company you may ride
And fight more battles seeking honour!'
Said she, and, thus, Gawain did render
Proud and happy in the extreme.
The brave Turkoyt, whom he did deem
His prisoner, he sent to the castle,
With his host, asking him to tell
The ladies there to honour the man.

Now, Gawain still held in his hand

His stout lance, which was yet whole,
E'en though, in racing to their goal,
The knights had charged ahead, full tilt,
Ere to the grass the one was spilt.
This lance he bore from the meadow.
While fair ladies wept to see him go.
'He on whom our hopes were pinned
Has chosen a lady, for our sins,
Balm to his eyes, and yet one born
To be to his amorous heart a thorn,'
Lamented Queen Arnive, 'Alas,
That ever it should come to pass
That he, with the Duchess Orgeluse,
Towards the Perilous Gorge pursues
A path that for his wounds bodes ill.'
Four hundred ladies, grieving still,
Watched him ride forth to win renown;
Yet any pain that might raise a frown
He banished, faced by the radiance
Of Orgeluse, as they did advance.

Gawain is set the challenge of the Garland

'YOU must win me a garland,' said she,
'From the branch of a certain tree,
And, if you grant it me, I shall praise
That deed, for the rest of my days,
And you may ask for my love again.'
'Madame, wherever,' replied Gawain,
'That tree may be, whence I may win
Such honour and bliss I may begin
Once more to speak of my passion,
In fond hopes of your fair attention,
I'll cull the garland, unless death
Shall rob me of my every breath.'
Howe'er bright the flowery meadow,
Its light was naught beside the glow

That the Lady Orgeluse shed there.
His thoughts of her were such, no care
Or suffering troubled him at all.

Riding forth from the castle wall,
She travelled with her companion
Down the wide road they were on,
For some two miles or so, until
They came to a grove of brazil
And tamarisk trees, willed there
By Clinschor, and now in his care.
'Where shall I find this certain tree,
And this garland, to mend for me
My happiness that is all threadbare?'
(Yet he ought to have left here there,
As happened since to many a lady).
'I'll show where you may prove to be
The doyen of skill and chivalry,
And demonstrate your love, to me,'
She said, and they rode o'er the plain,
Towards a cliff, and there they came
To where they both could see the tree
To grant him a garland. 'Sir,' said she,
'He robbed me of my happiness,
He who tends that tree, no less.
Win me a garland, and no knight
Will have, in his fair lady's sight,
Won such noble renown ever,
As a servitor, for true love of her.'
Thus, she spoke, Lady Orgeluse,
'I'll go no further. If you choose
To ride on, be it in God's hand!
From your charger you need demand
But one great leap, from here to there;
Once he's borne you through the air,
The Perilous Gorge you will be o'er.'
She halted on the meadow, and saw

Gawain ride onwards, without cease.

The Perilous Gorge

HE heard a torrent midst the trees
Roaring now, in the deep broad bed
It had cut, yet his journey led
Beyond it though it barred the way.
The noble warrior thrashed away
At his steed's flanks and spurred him on.
The creature landed, his forelegs on
The far side only, and so the leap
Caused a spill; and she did weep,
The Duchess (much to your surprise?)
The tears fell fast from out her eyes.
The current too was fast and strong,
That carried Lord Gawain along,
Weighted down by all his armour,
Who sought to live a little longer,
Exerting his great strength. Then he,
Seeing a branch of a mighty tree,
That rooted in the river bank,
Seized it, ere he downwards sank.
His lance too, as it did descend,
He seized, and sought to ascend
The bank. Meanwhile Gringuljete
Still struggled in the foam as yet,
Now above it, and now below.
Gawain turned to aid him, though
The steed was driven far downstream;
He hard put to it, it would seem,
To run behind in all his armour
And now weakened even further;
Yet a whirlpool retained the steed.
He reached it, in its hour of need,
At a place where a weight of rain
Had carved a cleft in the terrain,

Cutting through the downward slope,
Such that the breach there gave hope
Of saving Gringuljete. Gawain,
Grasped him by the floating rein,
And to the shore did him advance
With judicious use of his lance.
He hauled the charger to dry ground,
Who shook himself, now safe and sound.
Girthing his horse, he counted the cost
And found his shield had not been lost.
If any there are who'll not protest
At all his sufferings, let them rest;
He endured much, twas Love's will;
Fair Orgeluse, she drove him still
Towards the tree, and that garland.
The thing itself was close at hand,
So well-guarded, had there been two
Gawains they would have, tis true,
Both have struggled there to gain
The garland. Yet the one Gawain
Achieved that very thing, we'll find.
The Sabins, it was, flowed behind
His back, and a rough ride had he
Through all its perilous territory.
Howe'er radiant was her face,
That Duchess, I would shun the place,
Nor seek love on such terms as those;
I draw the line there, heaven knows!

Gawain gains a Garland from the tree

NOW, the tree, King Gramoflanz kept;
And let none imagine that he slept.
For when Gawain a branch did get,
And, breaking it, then a garland set
Upon his helm, a handsome knight,
In the prime of life, came in sight.

His proud spirit was such that he
Scorned to fight unless two or three
Opposed him, no matter the wrong
Done to him, and, proud and strong,
Shunned a joust with a lone knight
And let things rest, without a fight.
The son of King Irot, Gramoflanz,
Greeting Gawain, did thus advance.
'Sir, I have not let this thing pass
Unseen. Had there been two alas,
To break that branch from off my tree,
And thought to call it victory,
And add to their renown today,
I would have driven them away.
Tis beneath me to fight but you.'
For that matter, on his part too,
Gawain was disinclined to fight,
Before him was an unarmed knight,
Who carried on his fist a hawk,
Twas a fine moulted sparrow-hawk,
That Itonje, Gawain's fair sister,
Had gifted him. From Sinzester,
Came his peacock-feathered hat.
A splendid cloak he wore, and that,
Was of grass-green samite lined
With bright ermine, its cut refined,
Such that the points on either side
Brushed the ground as he did ride.
The palfrey that carried the king,
Was of middle height, not lacking
In marks of beauty, good and strong,
Of Danish stock; he rode along,
Unarmed, for he wore no sword.
'You shield, indeed, seems badly gored,'
Said Gramoflanz, 'there's little there.
The Lit Marveile was your affair;
It seems you have endured, I find,

A venture which was rightly mine,
Yet Clinschor chose to set for me
A kinder precedent, while the lady,
I'm at war with, through her beauty
Has won, twould seem, love's victory.
Alas, her disdain, and her anger
With me, it seems must last forever,
Her just cause lies in deeds long past,
For I slew her husband Cidegast,
One of a company of three.
I abducted Orgeluse, and she
Has since spurned my every offer
To obey her rule and serve her,
And my crown, and all I possess.
I held her one whole year, no less,
Subject to my pleas, yet failed
To win her love; her wrath prevailed,
To my deep sorrow. Now, tis clear,
You have her love, and so are here
To bring about my death. Had you
Brought another, if you were two,
You could have fought me, or died
For your trouble, salved your pride.
My heart is set on another love;
Since, of Terre Marveile, you prove
The lord, thereby gaining honour,
All now depends on your favour.
If you'd deliver me a kindness,
Come, aid me now, in my distress,
With a young lady, for through her
My poor heart does naught but suffer.
Of King Lot, she is the daughter,
No other girl on earth has ever
Gained such a strong hold over me;
I have her love-token, you may see
It here. Convey to that young lady
The strength of my devotion. She,

Is well-disposed, I believe, for I
Fought for her, full ready to die.
Once Orgeluse had, furiously,
Denied me love, and openly,
Any renown I won, or fame,
Aught achieved in joy or pain,
Was brought about by Itonje.
I have scarcely seen her, sadly;
But, if you'd bring solace here,
Deliver this ring, to that dear,
And most sweet, and lovely lady;
For you shall be exempt entirely
From battle here, unless you bring
A greater number to the ring,
One more or two, for what credit,
If I killed you, would I gain by it,
Or if I forced your surrender?
And then, on such terms, I've never
Sought to fight, nor e'er agreed.'

Gawain agrees to fight King Gurnemanz at Joflanze

'Though I'm a man equipped, indeed,
To counter aught,' replied Gawain.
If you'll win nor renown nor gain,
By slaying me, nor will I earn
Aught for this garland here, in turn.
What credit would accrue to me
Slaying an unarmed man? Let be.
I'll bear your message, and the ring,
And convey your duty, telling
All the matter of your sad story.'
The King thanked Gawain, profusely.
'If tis beneath your dignity,'
Said Gawain, 'to fight here, tell me,
Who you are.' 'Think not the worse
Of me, if I should now rehearse

My name,' the King replied, 'Irot
Was my father, slain by King Lot,
And, thus, King Gramoflanz am I.
My spirit, that's ensconced on high,
Decrees that I shall never fight
With one alone, ne'er a lone knight,
Whate'er the wrong he's done to me,
Except one knight, unknown to me,
Yet highly praised, on every hand,
Such that I long to meet the man,
And, in battle, avenge my sorrow;
For his father, this fact I know,
Slew my father, treacherously,
In the act of greeting him; I see
Reason to fight, thus, in that quarter.
But now King Lot, Gawain's father,
Is dead, and this Gawain, the son,
Many an honour he has won,
Fame no other knight can equal,
Among those of the Round Table.
The day then must surely come
When battle twixt we two is done.'
'If you'd fight so,' said Lord Gawain
'To please the lady, and yet maintain
Her father did a treacherous deed,
And would slay her brother, indeed
She, if she is your love, would be
Right full of wickedness, if she
Did not oppose such on your part.
If she had the love of kin at heart,
She'd defend her father's name,
And her brother, and shield that same,
And seek to quell your enmity.
A father-in-law's crime can be
No adornment for a man; if you
Yourself should fail to bear a true
And lasting burden of deep shame

Attacking, thus, a dead man's name,
His son will ensure that you do so.
Should his sister cause you scant woe,
He'll risk his own life in the task.
Gawain am I, if you should ask!
Whate'er you claim my father's done,
Now he is dead, address the son.
To defend him from such calumny
All the honour that's come to me
I'll stake in battle, here and now!'

'If you are that man, then, I avow,
Your noble nature brings me joy,
My prowess I shall thus employ
On one worthy of the honour
Of single combat; tis a favour
That I concede to you alone;
And yet, it saddens me to own
There's that in you that pleases me.
Then, it would enhance the glory
If, both, fair ladies did invite,
As witnesses, to watch the fight;
Full fifteen hundred I might bring.
From Schastel Marveile, to the ring,
Bring forth your dazzling company;
And King Arthur too, of courtesy.
Bems, on the Korcha, in the land
Of Löver, holds his knightly band;
Your uncle can be here in a week,
His glad presence we should seek.
At the field of Joflanze, I vow,
On the sixteenth day from now,
I shall appear, to exact a toll,
For the fair garland that you stole.'

The King now asked my Lord Gawain
To accompany him, o'er the plain,

To Rosche Sabins, his castle there.
'O'er no bridge may you now fare.'
'I shall return the way I came,
All else I'll do, to meet your claim.'
They pledged their word to appear
At Joflanze, the terms being clear.
He took his leave; my Lord Gawain,
Now giving Gringuljete free rein,
Far from wishing to check his steed,
Spurred onward to the gorge; indeed,
His heart was light, his venture blessed:
He sported the garland as his crest!
Gringuljete timed his leap so well,
That neither he nor his master fell.
Orgeluse rode straight to the place.
Gawain alighted, while Her Grace
Dismounted opposite on the grass.
Given all that had come to pass,
She threw herself down, at his feet,
His triumph seeming thus complete.

Orgeluse seeks Gawain's aid

'Oh, my lord, I did ne'er deserve
That you should thus, so nobly, serve,
Such suffering should undergo.
Truly your trials oppress me so,
With such pain as a loyal woman
Must feel for so renowned a man'
'Well, if no hidden scorn should lie
In what you say, madame, thereby,
You may retrieve your good name.
Yet you've proven much to blame,
If knighthood shall receive its due.
The office of the shield have you
Mocked, madame; tis one so high
That none who practise it, say I,

May mockery such as yours allow.
All that have e'er seen me, I vow,
Engaged in chivalrous deeds, agree
On my courage and ability,
Yet several times since we met,
You have said otherwise. And yet,
No matter; receive this garland now.
But madame, you must ne'er allow
Such conceits to your lips again,
Or seek to speak in such a strain.
By your fair looks, if I'm to be
The object still of your mockery,
I would rather myself remove,
And live on so, without your love.'
'My lord,' fair Orgeluse replied,
(At this point she wept and sighed)
'When I tell you of the distress
That weighs upon my heart no less,
You will hold mine the greater woe.
Let all those I've mocked, now show
Their courtesy, by pardoning me.
No greater joy from me can flee
Than that which I lost in Cidegast,
My peerless lover, to the last!
Inspired by a wish for true honour
His renown was such that, ever,
Men acknowledged his great fame
Unmatched by any other name.
He was the fount of virtues, he
A man all unmarred by falsity,
His youth all that proves excellent.
From obscurity, he made ascent,
Unfolding, thus, towards the light,
And raised his fame to such a height
That it could be attained by none
Whose honours were but basely won;
Springing, thus, from his heart's seed,

His glory grew so great indeed,
It o'er shadowed all those below,
As Saturn, in its course, doth go
Beyond the other planets on high.
My spouse, my paragon, for know
That I can truly call him so,
Was, like the unicorn, a creature
That proves so loyal in his nature
Maids at his death must cry their pain,
Since for love of purity he's slain.
He was my life, and I his heart,
I lost him, and I, for my part,
A woman fraught with loss remain.
By King Gramoflanz he was slain,
From who you took the garland here.
My lord, if it truly should appear
That I have used you ill, twas so,
Because I wished by it to know
If you were worthy of my love.
Though I well know that I did prove
Offensive in some things I said,
It was but to provoke your aid.
Quench your anger now, graciously,
Forgive me, of your courtesy,
In that you are a gallant knight.
You are the gold, glowing bright,
That's purified within the fire,
Your true spirit, purged, rises higher.
That warrior whose harm I sought,
I yet would see that fellow brought
To battle and great harm, ere long,
For he has done me mortal wrong.'

'Unless death forestall my plan,'
Gawain replied, 'I shall, madame,
Acquaint that king with my fury
And check his arrogance, entirely.

I have pledged my word to ride
And fight him, and then his pride
Shall suffer, when we battle there.
My lady, your part in this affair
I have pardoned. If you would now,
Without a frown upon your brow,
Be so civil as to receive my plea,
I might then counsel what would be
To your honour, as a woman quite,
And what nobility seeks of right.
We are alone; upon my honour,
Madam, grant me, now, your favour.'

'I ne'er warm to a mail-clad arm,
She said, 'but then I see no harm
In your claiming, at some later date,
The fair reward you've earned of late.
Meantime I'll mourn your suffering
Till you are well, and seek to bring
You comfort till you're healed anew;
I'll up to Schastel Marveile with you.'
'Then you'll make me a happy man,'
And the ardent lover took her hand,
And, clasping her, helped her mount.
(She had thought him of small account,
And of such a favour most unworthy,
When she'd addressed him openly
Beside the spring, where they first met)
Gawain rode happily on, and yet
Her tears they never ceased did flow,
Till he had joined her in her woe,
And asked why she was full of care,
And in God's name bade her forbear.

**She speaks of Anfortas, Clinschor and her attempts against
Gramoflanz**

'I must complain,' she said, at last,
'Of he who slew brave Cidegast,
Bringing my heart great woe, thereby
Where happiness had dwelt, while I
Enjoyed his love. I am not so slight
A power, that I have not that knight
Sought to trouble, as best I may,
For many a joust has come his way;
And you indeed will grant me aid,
And so, avenge me, the grief repaid
That lends the edge to all my anger.
I accepted what one king did offer,
In search of Gramoflanz' demise,
That king most precious, in my eyes,
The lord of earth's greatest treasure,
Service he gave in no small measure.
And with it, for my own benefit,
The merchandise, from Tabronit,
That stands yet before your gate,
Lost to all but the fortunate.
Sir, that king's name was Anfortas,
Yet he gained little by it, alas,
For he was wounded in my service,
Instead of him finding love by this,
I was forced to seek fresh sorrow.
For Anfortas' wound dealt me woe
As great as that which Cidegast
Had power to bring me, at the last.
Now tell me how am I, poor woman,
And loyal heart, to keep my reason,
In the face of that pain and woe?
My mind is filled with trouble so,
And almost brings me to despair,
When I think of him lying there,
Helpless, the man to whom I turned
To solace me for the harm I earned
Through the cruel loss of Cidegast,

And likewise claim revenge at last.

That rich merchandise at your gate,
How Clinschor gained it I'll relate.
When Anfortas, who gave it me,
Renounced all bodily ecstasy,
I went in fear of being shamed,
For magic arts Clinschor has tamed,
And he can bind women and men,
With his spells; he troubles them,
All those on whom his eye doth fall.
And so, I gave to Clinschor all
My precious goods, so I might be
Left in peace; he made me agree
That I would seek love of the man
Who adventured here, twas his plan.
Whoe'er succeeded in the venture,
I must seek to gain his favour,
Yet were I viewed unfavourably,
The goods would all revert to me.
Such the terms sworn in his presence.
And as things are, then the essence
Of those terms is that we'll share
Possession of the rich goods there.
I'd hoped that Gramoflanz would be
Destroyed by that adventure; sadly,
No such vengeance was brought about.
Had he ventured, as you did, no doubt
He would have met with equal pain,
And there been overcome, and slain.
Clinschor is both wise and subtle,
He lets me deploy my people,
For the sake of his own renown,
In deeds of chivalry, up and down,
With sword and lance, throughout the land.
Each day, all year through, I command
My folk to keep sharp lookout for

Proud Gramoflanz, and what is more,
They watch by night as well as day;
Whate'er it costs me, he must pay.
Oft they've fought with him, I know,
Yet not why he's protected though
I seek his death in many a way.
Many a man serves me this day
For love, not reward or promise,
Unrequited, favouring me in this.
None e'er saw me whose service I
Could not have secured, by and by,
Except one who wears red armour.
My retinue he did promptly scatter,
Riding up to Logroys, and then,
Menacing, unhorsing my men,
Strewing them around, at leisure,
Granting me but little pleasure.
Five of my knights, gone in pursuit,
He discomfited, did there uproot,
Between Logroys and the ferry,
Delivering their mounts promptly
To the ferryman. And I rode after
The knight myself, and I did offer
Lands and person. He made clear
He had a wife whom he held dear,
Far lovelier, he claimed, than me.
Piqued, I asked who she might be.
"She is the fairest of the fair,
And is the Queen of Belrepeire,
And my own name is Parzival.
And I seek not your love, withal.
My pursuit of the Grail demands
That I meet trouble in other lands."
And, thus he departed, angrily.
Tell me, was it so wrong of me
To offer a noble knight my love,
Seeking vengeance? By that move,

Is my love worth any the less?’
Gawain answered thus: ‘Duchess,
That man whose service you desired,
I know is by such merit inspired,
That had he sought you as his lover
Your worth in no way could suffer.’
Gawain, and fair Orgeluse likewise,
Looked deep into each other’s eyes.

Gawain seeks to maintain his anonymity at the Castle

THEY were nearing the castle again
Where our knight had met with pain,
And yet where he’d achieved success.
‘My lady,’ said he, ‘may I request,
That, within, you conceal my name.
Though the knight gave out that same,
He who rode off with Gringuljete,
I would not have it mentioned yet.
And, if they should ask it of you,
Answer that you cannot say who
Your companion is, nor his name;
He has ne’er told you that same.’
‘Since tis your wish I withhold it,’
Said she, ‘I’ll most gladly hide it.’

Gawain, and the lovely lady, turned
Towards the keep, where all had learned
Of the knight and his bold venture,
How the lion he’d sought to conquer,
Slain it, and then, in combat, brought
The Turkoyt down, so well he fought.
They rode through the meadow slowly,
Towards the landing, and the ferry,
Watched from the walls; many a knight
Came riding forth, perchance to fight,
Thought Gawain; they were mounted

On Arab steeds, this host uncounted,
Pennants flying, raised a mighty din,
As they came forth, to lead them in.
Seeing them at a distance, Gawain
Turned to the Duchess: 'Are they fain
To attack us here?' but she replied:
'Clinschor's company thus do ride
To welcome you with joy, for they
Have long awaited so fair a day;
Let it not rouse your displeasure,
Tis but happiness in full measure.'

He and Orgeluse are entertained by the ferryman

NOW Plippalinot, the ferry-master,
With his proud and lovely daughter,
Brought the ferry o'er the water.
The girl walked a long way, over
The meadow, to meet Lord Gawain,
Then greeted him, joyfully, again.
He in turn saluted her, while she
Kissed his stirrup then, gracefully,
Welcomed Orgeluse. By the bridle,
His steed she held; from the saddle
He now leapt to assist the lady,
And both went aboard the ferry,
At the vessel's bow, a carpet
Was laid ready, and next it set
A quilt, on which, at his request,
The lady sat, by his side, to rest.
Bene, the daughter, once again
Unarmed him I've heard, and then,
When that onerous task was done,
Brought him a cloak, the very one
Which had served to cover the knight
When he'd lodged with them that night;
Indeed, it proved most timely now.

He received the cloak, with a bow,
Donned his own surcoat, and then
The cloak, as she went from them
Carrying his armour; the Duchess
As they sat side by side, to rest,
Could, only now, study his face.

Sweet Bene next brought them a brace
Of larks, a glass of wine, and two
White loaves on a fresh napkin, new
And white as a napkin could be,
Laying them all down carefully.
The merlin had caught, on the wing,
Those larks. They washed their hands, serving
Themselves with water. Now, Gawain
Was filled with joy, all free of pain,
Dining there with the lovely lady,
For whose sake he was full ready
To garner hardship or pleasure.
When the wine-glass she did offer,
Her lips had touched, then the thought
That he would drink there also, brought
New joy, and all his pain and sorrow
Lagged behind as his heart did borrow
Wings, and flew far ahead of him.
The sight of her sweet mouth, her skin
So fair, had chased away his care,
Wounds and woes all forgotten there.

The ladies in the castle had sight
Of all this, while many a knight
Had come down to the far shore
There to practise games of war.
Gawain thanked the ferry master
For the meal, likewise his daughter,
As did the duchess, on her part.
'That knight I saw as I did depart

Yesterday, what became of him there?
Asked the Duchess, 'in that affair,
Was he beaten, did he live or die?'
'I saw him alive today, for I
Exchanged the man for a brave steed.
Madame; if you'd wish him freed,
Let Swallow (that Queen Secundille
Once owned, then Anfortas, until
He sent the harp to you) be mine.
If amongst your goods that fine
Gilded harp, you will grant to me,
The Duke of Gowerzin goes free.'
'This lord, who sits here', she said,
'Holds all the power, on that head,
And commands all the other wares,
If he so wishes. In such affairs
He must decide. If, however,
I was dear to his fond heart ever,
Then Lischois, Duke of Gowerzin,
He will ransom; I'd also win
Freedom for one who is the knight
Who commands my watch by night,
Florant of Itolac, one that I
Do value greatly; and so high
Is the value I place on that man,
As my Turkoyt, you'll understand
That I'll ne'er be happy, I know,
If brave Florant is full of woe.'
'You'll see both free ere nightfall,'
Gawain promised, 'if that be all.'

Gawain is welcomed back to Schastel Marveile

THEY now crossed to the farther shore,
Where Gawain handed her once more
On to her palfrey. Many a knight
Received them there with true delight,

And as they turned towards the castle
Their escort, riding as if to battle,
Displayed such skills, most eagerly,
As did great honour to chivalry.
What more? Except to say Gawain,
And she, were welcomed once again
To Schastel Marveile, in a manner
To satisfy the one and the other.
Count him a lucky man that day
That such fair fortune came his way.
Arnive led him to a fine chamber,
To rest, granting him her favour,
And those skilled in medicine,
Attended to his wounds therein.

He writes to Arthur to request his presence at the duel

‘MADAME, I need a messenger.’
Said Gawain, to the Queen, later
And Arnive sent her young lady,
Who returned with a squire, manly,
And discreet, as ever a squire
Can be, to meet Gawain’s desire.
The youth swore on oath that he,
Whether all went well or badly,
Would not divulge the message to
Any other than those folks who
Were intended. And then Gawain
Sought ink and parchment, and was fain
To write a message with his own hand,
Which must be carried to that land
Called Löver; and most elegantly
He penned it; his most humble duty,
He offered to his lord, King Arthur,
And Queen Guinevere and further
Assured them of his loyalty,
And went on to say that, if he

Had attained the least fame at all,
Then it would be erased withal,
Unless they helped him, indeed,
By recalling, in his hour of need,
Those bonds of kinship and loyalty,
And bringing all their company,
To Joflanze with their ladies, fair,
And that he would meet them there,
For he must fight for justice' sake,
And his whole honour was at stake.
He said the terms agreed further
Required of him that King Arthur
Come with all due ceremony.
He asked that each knight and lady,
Think of their loyalty towards him,
And that they thus advise the king
To do so, and enhance their honour.
He sent them his respects, moreover,
And told them of the difficulty
The duel placed him in; and lastly,
Folded the message, without a seal,
Since his known hand would reveal
Who had sent it. 'And now delay,
No longer, come, be on your way!'
Cried Gawain, 'the King and Queen
At Bems, by the Korcha, are seen.
Seek her early one morn, then do
Whatever the Queen tells you to.
And keep this well in mind, say naught
Of my being lord here, of this court.
Nor must you e'en say that you serve
In this place; now, my thanks deserve!'
The squire was in haste to be gone.
Yet Arnive caught him, whereupon,
She asked him where he was going.
'Oh, Madam, I may tell you nothing,'
He cried, 'such is the oath I swore.

God keep you! I can say no more.’
And he went his way, full loyally,
In search of that famous company.

Book XIII: King Arthur’ Expedition

Gawain frees Duke Liscois and the Turkoyt

ARNIVE found this fellow annoying;
And sought to know where he was going.
‘See, when that squire returns,’ said she
To the guard, ‘that he waits on me;
I’ll question him; deploy your skill.’
Vexed that the squire thwarted her will,
From the duchess she sought the same,
Who yet made sure that Gawain’s name
Ne’er passed her lips, as he had sought.
Of him, and his lineage, she said naught.

Now the sound of trumpets rang out
Within the palace, and all about,
And other instruments were played,
And many tapestries, finely made,
Were hung as seat-backs on the walls;
Fine carpets too now floored the halls.
A miser might have been dismayed.
Throughout, the couches were o’er laid
With soft cushions, and all be-spread
With rich quilts, like some royal bed.

After his labours, Gawain lay
Still fast asleep beyond midday.
His wounds had been so expertly
Bandaged, indeed, that if he
Had lain beside a loving friend
It might well have helped him mend,
Though he was more disposed to rest

Than dream again of the Duchess.
He woke as evensong drew near,
And yet in sleep, once more, I fear,
In the lists of Love, had he fought
With Orgeluse, whom he yet sought.

Now, so I'm told, a chamberlain
Brought fine clothes to Lord Gawain,
Gleaming brocades, in greens and reds,
Weighted down with golden threads.
'Let me have more of these!' he cried
'And as fine as these, and provide
The same to the Duke of Gowerzin
And fair Florant who doth ever win
Great renown in many a land.'
He sent a message, in his hand,
By his page, to Plippalinot,
Begging that Lischois be not forgot,
But led to him; and thereafter,
Came with him the lovely daughter,
Bene, because good will she bore
Gawain, and also, what is more,
When Gawain had left that day,
(She did weep, as he rode away),
He had, then, promised her father,
A handsome gift, and his favour.
Next, the Turkoyt arrived, and lo,
He was welcomed warmly also,
After which all gathered near,
Waiting for the clothes to appear.

These were of wondrous quality,
Richly tailored to suit all three.
A master-weaver named Sarant,
(Whose origin was far Triande)
From whom Seres took its name,
A man most eager to win fame,

Fine cloth of gold, 'saranthasme',
Had devised there, in fair Thasme,
(A place in Secundille's fair land,
Larger than Nineveh, and planned
On a vaster scale than Acraton)
With great skill he worked thereon.
Now, ask me not if it looked fine,
For twas far costlier than mine!
Gawain and the others then dressed,
And went forth to join the rest,
The crowd of knights thronging the hall,
And the ladies; among them all,
A good judge might have said,
The Duchess seemed far ahead
Of the other ladies there. The host
And his male guests, dazzled almost,
Stood before Orgeluse, and he,
Gawain, set those two princes free,
Florant the Turkoyt, and also
The fair Lischois, and did show
His favour to them; for her sake,
This noble gesture he did make,
For which she, as free of deceit
As wise in all that doth complete
A woman's glory, thanked Gawain.

He speaks with his sister Itonje and offers his aid

MEANWHILE, close by, he was fain
To notice beauty; there he had seen
The lovely trio, with the aged Queen
Arnive, and asked the princes then
To step forward, and then, again,
The three younger queens, to show
Them welcome, and a kiss bestow.
Bene was in his company,
And she too was greeted warmly.

Much disinclined to standing there,
He asked the two princes to share
Themselves among the ladies who
Were seated, as they chose to do,
For the men seemed quite content
To pursue his most courtly intent.

‘Where is Itonje?’ my Lord Gawain
Whispered to Bene, ‘I must gain
Her leave to sit down beside her,
If I may.’ The lovely daughter
Pointed her out, since twas his wish.
‘There! The lady with crimson lips,
And dark hair, and shining eyes.
If you’d speak with her, be wise,
Private, discreet, in that affair,’
Said decorous Bene, well aware
Of Itonje’s love and languishing;
For Gramoflanz, the noble king,
Was paying homage to her heart
With all of fond devotion’s art.
Gawain sat done beside the maid,
(According to the tale relayed)
Addressing her with that discretion,
That he had e’er in his possession.
For her part too, the fair Itonje
Owned to decorous ways, fully
In accord with her youthful years.
The question Gawain, it appears,
Would ask the girl, was whether she
Was in the throes of love, already.
‘Whom should I love?’ was her reply,
‘My lord, for since the day that I
Oped my eyes I ne’er said a word
To any knight, but this you’ve heard.’
‘Nonetheless,’ said my lord Gawain,
‘From fair report, you yet might gain

Knowledge of great honour achieved,
Bravely, through some chivalrous deed,
And of some knight, of valiant heart,
Ready to serve love, on his part.’
‘No word of serving me for love,’
Said the fair maid, ‘did any move;
Only, I know, brave knights desire
To serve the Duchess for their hire,
No doubt from love; no few such men
Have jousted here, yet none of them
Came so near, as you have, to us,
Your venture proving glorious.’
‘Against whom do her company
Of chosen men campaign?’ said he,
‘Who is he that’s lost her favour?’
‘King Gramoflanz, to whom honour
All accord, for he wears the very
Garland of worth and chivalry.
That is the most that I have heard.’
‘Then you shall have, in a word,
Better acquaintance of that same;
He is hard on the tracks of fame,
And pursues the matter manfully.
I have heard (this he said to me),
That driven by a passion of his,
He seeks to offer you his service,
If you’d deign to accept the same.
I seek your help, now, in his name,
To solace him, through love of you.
That love’s sweet pain should stir anew
In a king, through a king’s daughter,
Is as it should be. If your father,
Madame, was indeed King Lot,
Then it is to you he doth allot
A place in his heart; it is for you
That his sad heart goes weeping, too.
If you’re named Itonje, e’en so

Are you the cause of all his woe.
Let me now play the go-between.
Take up this ring, tis his; I mean,
The handsome lord; he sends it you.
I shall, in all, be good and true;
Take heart, and leave the thing to me.'

The girl changed colour, suddenly;
Red as her lips her cheeks did blush,
She turned quite pale, and in a rush
Spoke, as she stretched out her hand
To take the ring, at his command,
In fine confusion; she knew it well:
'Tis clear, sir, if tis right to tell
Of such matters, that you are here
To speak for the man who is dear
To my heart. If with courtesy,
You'd act, be sworn to secrecy.
This gift was sent me once before;
For the noble king's hand, it bore
This true token, you understand;
He received it from my own hand.
I am innocent of his suffering;
Whate'er he asked I've granted him
In my thoughts, and this he'd learn
If I could pass these walls in turn.
I kissed the Duchess Orgeluse,
Who seeks his death (it is not news
To you, I think) and so, that kiss
Was what they call a Judas kiss.
And twas faithless of me to grant
A kiss to the Turkoyt, Florant,
And to the Duke of Gowerzin!
Those who hate the noble king,
Gramoflanz, with unending hate,
I can scarce countenance of late.
Yet say naught to my dear mother,

Nor to Condrie, my sweet sister,
Itonje pleaded with Lord Gawain.
'My lord, you made me, once again,
Receive the Duchess' kiss, and I
Was wounded to the heart, thereby.
If the King and I are e'er to be
Happy, to that you hold the key.
He loves me, above all the rest,
And I would see that he is blessed
With fair reward. He has my favour,
And that beyond any other.
May God inspire you with counsel
And aid, that, so, all may be well.'

Gawain said: 'Tell me how, my lady.
You may possess him here, while he
Possesses you out there, and yet
You dwell apart. If such may be met
With any true service I were fain
To give, from which you both might gain,
I'd undertake it most faithfully.'
'You shall dispose of us both', said she,
'May your help, and God's blessing,
So aid our love, that I might bring
All the king's sorrows to an end.
On me his happiness doth depend.
Since I a loyal woman would prove,
My heart would grant him my love.'

Feasting and entertainment at the palace

NOW the time had come to bring
The table-cloths and many a thing,
Into the ladies' presence there.
The linen was both white and fair,
And, upon it, good bread was laid.
A simple decree had been made,

Whereby the knights had one side
All to themselves, the distance wide
Between them and the ladies there.
Gawain saw to the whole affair,
Seating the Turkoyt at his table.
Lischois shared a platter, as well,
With Gawain's mother, fair Sangive;
The Duchess too with Queen Arnive;
And his two sisters did Lord Gawain
Ask to join him, if they would deign.

No student of the culinary art,
I lack the knowledge, for my part,
Of all the various dishes brought,
With due ceremony, for the court.
Fair maids served the host, and then
The guests and ladies, while the men
Served the knights, and each restrained
Himself from jostling, and retained
A proper distance from each maid,
As food, and wine, they each conveyed.
The meal might well be called a feast,
For such a sumptuous spread, at least,
Had not been theirs since Clinschor
Had bound them with his magic lore.
The knights and ladies seldom met
Despite their dwelling there; as yet
Many had not exchanged a word.
Now Gawain, by this feast, conferred
The power on all that company
To converse, each knight and lady,
And of his grace granted pleasure,
To them all, and in full measure.
He lacked no small contentment too,
For the fair Duchess he could view,
Glancing at her, amidst them all,
The one who held his heart in thrall.

Not the light had weakened so,
The sun's radiance burnt so low,
That those clear harbingers of Night,
The twilight stars, gleaming bright,
Hastened, midst the clouds, to claim
Lodgement on earth, in her fair name.
Till, pursuing her banners, came
Night herself, to endorse that same.
Many a splendid chandelier
Hung midst the halls, far and near,
And soon their candles were all lit,
With others that were left to sit
Upon the tables, and burned away,
Although the tale goes on to say,
That Orgeluse shed such brightness
That even had the lights been less
In number, night would not have been
About her, for twas said her sheen
Was such that she shed daylight there.

From envy you should now forbear,
And grant that you ne'er saw a host
So pleasant; joy that feast did boast.
Glances fraught with longing passed
Both to and fro, and thick and fast,
Between the knights and ladies now,
And if any there did nod or bow
Who'd been less intimate before,
I'll not cavil; I'll say no more.
Gluttons excepted, they all ate
Till their appetites they did sate.
Gawain asked if there were to hand
Any fiddle-players; up did stand
Many a squire well-versed in such,
And yet, however skilled their touch,
Twas but old tunes they could play,

None that were new (as in our day
Come here to us, from Thuringia).
Now, thank the host, he was never
A one to thwart their enjoyment,
Fair ladies skipped past, their employment
Dancing in some woven pattern,
'Knights amongst the ladies' often;
Their aim to fend off pain and woe.
You could see the brave knights go,
With a lady there on either hand.
And you could see, amidst that band,
The joy won by knights who thought
To offer their service there, and sought,
(It being allowed to serve for love)
Poor in care rich in joy, to prove
The fact, by passing the time in talk
With sweet lips that did not balk
At such advances; and no small few;
Many the speech both good and true.

Gawain watched quietly, near Sangive,
Viewing the dance with Queen Arnive,
And there the lovely Duchess came,
And sat her down, by Lord Gawain.
He took her hand in his, moreover,
Speaking of one thing and another,
And he was glad that she was there.
He had forgot all sorrow and care,
For his happiness flowed, in full spate,
Gone, all that had plagued him of late.
Whatever joy might the dancers fill,
My Lord Gawain's was greater still.
'Have a thought to your comfort sire,'
Said Queen Arnive, 'you may desire
To rest your wounds. If the Duchess
Has chosen now to be your mistress
Of healing, and bear you company,

This night, she owns many a remedy.’
‘Pray ask her,’ he replied, ‘For here
I’m in your hands, so it would appear.’
‘I shall have him in my own care,
’Said the Duchess, ‘so, let all there
Go to their beds, and I’ll attend
Him better than a lover. Now, send
Brave knights to the Turkoyt, and to
The brave Duke of Gowerzin, too,
To entertain them.’ And, presently,
The dancing ceased; many a lady
Was seated next a knight; if any
Of those knights sought and received
A sweet response, then they believed
Happiness had avenged their woe.
The host called for the wine-cup though,
Which was the signal for dismissal,
Much to their sorrow, yet, in all,
He was a suitor as much as they,
And stirred by love, in the same way.
They, he thought, sat there too long.
Noble love spurred his heart along.

Orgeluse tends to Gawain’s comfort

SQUIRES led the knights to their rests,
Lighting them on, while his guests,
Lischois and Florant, he commended
To all, and thus the feasting ended,
That pair retired, while the Duchess
Graciously wished them of the best.
And now the ladies, in company,
With courtly gestures, left quietly;
Sangive departed, with Itonje,
To seek repose, as did fair Condrie.
Bene and Arnive made sure Gawain
Was settled at ease, and there again

Was the Duchess, to assist him.
These three brought comfort to him.
Two couches stood in his chamber,
I shall tell you naught however
Of how they were adorned, the tale
With other matters shall you regale.

‘Look to his comfort,’ said Arnive,
‘Should he need help to stay alive,
All that you give will do you honour,
Duchess; now I’ll stay no longer,
Except to say that his bandages
Are so bound well that passages
Of action, bearing arms, would not
Harm him, and yet, such is his lot,
That you must show him sympathy.
If you can soothe his pain twould be
Beneficial. And were you to raise
His spirits, you would gain our praise.
Now all the help you may, afford.’

After taking leave of her lord
Arnive departed; Bene did light
Her going, with a candle bright.
Lord Gawain then barred the door.
Now, I’m equipped to tell you more,
For if they knew how to steal love,
And thus, a pair of thieves did prove,
I might soon tell how it was done,
Except tis deplored by everyone,
Such intrusion on other’s privacy.
There’s a charge of impropriety,
If secret matters are disclosed,
And whoe’er does so is disposed
To damn himself. Let decorum be,
As regards Love, the lock and key
To guard Love’s rites. Now, the woe

That is love, and Orgeluse, had so
Worked to erode past happiness,
That had it not been for that Duchess
He would yet have perished, withal.
If all the philosophers, and all
Who ever tried to comprehend
The abstruse arts, and did lend
Their minds to such; as wise Thabit
Ibn Qurra, and then that smith,
Trebuchet (he who engraved
The fine sword, King Frimutel's blade,
That of itself worked a marvel)
And all the physicians as well,
Had sought to ease his distress
With potent herbs, nonetheless,
Death had cured all his misery,
But for this woman's company.
In short, he found the true hart's-eye,
The wild dittany, and that, say I,
Helped to heal him, such that all
That was baneful ebbed withal;
(That herb shows purple on white).
Gawain, Lot's son, that noble knight,
(A Briton on his mother's side,
Though Lot in Norway did abide),
Sought soothing balm for his pain,
With gracious help, and did attain
It, by a means which he sought
To keep hidden from the court.
And, once well, he set to rights
All the ladies and the knights,
And all their sadness did dispel.

Gawain's squire hands his letter to Queen Guinevere

NOW of Gawain's young squire hear tell.
To Bems, on the Korcha, he'd been sent,

In the land of Löver, and there he went,
And found King Arthur, and the Queen,
Who midst a great host might be seen,
Many a lady and courtier.

Now hark to what the squire did here.

At early morning, he made his way
To the chapel where she did pray,
And there the fair Queen he did see,
Reading her psalter on bended knee.

The squire he knelt there before her,
And then his joyful gift did offer.

She took the letter from his hand
And, by the writing, did understand
Who had penned it, ere the squire
Could name his lord and his sire.

‘A blessing on the hand that writ
You,’ said the Queen, addressing it.

‘For I have been so full of care
Since I last saw the hand that there
Has placed the letters,’ and her eyes
Showed bright tears, though I surmise
That she was glad to see it too.

‘My Lord Gawain’s squire, are you?’

‘Yes, Ma’am, he sends all that is his,
True loyalty, and yet with this
Small joy, unless you make it great;
His honour is in a wretched state.

Then, further, he would have me say,
If I should meet with you this day,
That he would feel naught but pleasure
Should you console him in full measure.
Within the letter you may see,
Far more than you may learn from me.’

‘The purpose of this,’ said the Queen,
‘Is more than clear. As you have been
Good and true, likewise good service

I'll perform; I'll gather to this
Encounter all my ladies, fair,
Of this age's fairest, for there
Are few to equal them; but for
Orgeluse, and Condwiramurs,
Parzival's wife, I know none
So lovely in all Christendom.
When Lord Gawain did up and go
From Arthur, I felt naught but woe,
Fearful of what might lie in store.
Meljanz of Liz told me he saw
Gawain later, at Barbigoel.
Alas, that upon the Plimizoel
My gaze did ever light; sorrow
Befell me there; since that morrow,
My companion I've ne'er seen;
Sweet Cunneware de Lalant, I mean.
Many a thing was spoken before
The King there, that breached the law
Of the Round Table. Tis now four
And a half years and six weeks (sure
Is my count!) since brave Parzival
Rode forth to seek the Grail, withal.
It was then that Gawain, Lot's son,
Set out, to ride to Ascalun.
There too Jeschute, and Ekuba,
Said their farewells; full many are
The regrets I feel, all which I find
So troubling to my peace of mind.'
To many a woe did she confess.

Guinevere sends the squire to seek King Arthur

'NOW go from me, with swift address,'
She told the squire, 'go hide away,
Till the sun is high, and all is day,
And all the folk, knights and squires,

All the household, dames and sires,
Are moving in and about the court.
Then trot to the courtyard, in short,
And, leaving your mount, go further,
To where the noble knights gather.
They will ask what news you bring.
Elbow your way, then, to the King,
Who'll not forbear to welcome you,
Finding your errand good and true.
Hand him the letter, and from it he
Will soon learn your news, and see
Your master's wishes, which he'll grant,
As will all the nobles in the land,
For all will consent, and I'll say more:
Speak openly, where three or four
Of the noble ladies, and I, can see,
That we may be seen to agree,
If you would save your master pain.
Now tell me, where is Lord Gawain?'
'That I may not say,' the squire replied,
'Yet joy and pleasure are at his side.'

He was content with her instructions,
And hid, according to her directions,
Appearing when he was told to do.
At mid-morn he rode, fresh and new,
To the court, as openly as he could.
The courtiers thought his clothes quite good,
And judged him to be some lord's squire.
His mount, they saw, had earned its hire,
Twas scarred on both flanks by the spur.
He leapt from his horse and made a stir,
As he'd been told, amidst the crowd,
And if his cloak was lost, he vowed,
(Or sword, or spurs, or e'en his horse),
To leave it so, and take his course
To where the brave knights did stand,

And give his news, at their command.

They say twas a custom, at that court,
No guest could dine unless they brought,
Fresh news of some strange adventure,
And thus, the courtly rule did honour.
'I may tell you naught, 'said the squire,
'My business presses, tis my desire
To see the King; of a courtesy,
Tell me, now, where your lord might be.
I would have spoken with him sooner,
For I must, now, my mission further;
And you shall learn what I may tell,
Then God may inspire you, as well,
To grant him your aid, and sympathy.'

Arthur agrees to attend the duel at Joflanze

THE squire's mission was such that he
Cared not who jostled him, till he
Forging a way, persistently,
Reached the King, and was welcomed there.
He handed him the letter, with care,
Which, as Arthur read, brought no less
Sorrow than it did happiness.
'A blessing on this day!' he cried,
'For its brave light doth here provide
News of my nephew. If it lies
Within my power, as I surmise,
To do him service; if loyalty
To our friendship, and equally
Our ties of blood, mean aught at all,
I'll answer his plea, whate'er befall.
Tell me,' he said, 'doth he maintain
Good heart and spirit, my Lord Gawain?'
'Yes, Sire, joy's his true companion,'
Replied the squire, 'yet if you abandon

Him to his fate, he'll lose all honour.
Who could be happy thus? However,
Your help will lift him to the height
Of happiness and, there, delight
Will chase the cares from his heart,
Beyond sorrow's gate! For his part,
He sends his devotion to the queen,
And hopes the company, I mean
All the knights of the Round Table,
Recall his loyalty, and feel able
To seal his happiness, and advise
You to attend, and they likewise.'
His lords begged the King to agree.
'Take this letter, now, faithfully,
To the Queen, let her read the same,
And see of what we must complain,
And what gives reason for delight.
To think that this arrogant knight,
King Gramoflanz, should work so,
Bringing my own blood such woe!
He thinks Gawain but a Cidegast
Whom he conquered, at the last,
Though it brought him trouble enow.
Well, I'll add to his trouble, now,
And teach him better manners too!'
The squire obeyed, without more ado,
And went where he was well received.
He gave the Queen the letter, which grieved
Many a maid, who shed a tear,
As twas read aloud, or so I fear,
As her sweet lips told of the wrong
That circumstance did now prolong,
Of which my Lord Gawain complained,
And the plea that his words contained.
The squire spared no effort to woo
Them all to the cause he did pursue,
Nor were all his efforts in vain.

King Arthur, being kin to Gawain,
Sought the approval of his men,
For an expedition, the Queen again
Lost not a moment in persuading
All her ladies, as to their going.
'Came there ever a man,' said Kay,
Like this brave lad, from far Norway?
Seize him! After him! Yet he'll be
Skipping somewhere else entirely!
Like a squirrel, gone round a tree,
You'll but lose him, it seems to me!'

'I must hasten back to my lord,'
Said the squire, 'Madame, afford
Him aid, pursue his interest,
With all the powers you possess.'
'For this squire's comfort now, obtain,'
The Queen said to her chamberlain.
'Whatever he may require in dress,
Or ready money, his wants address,
Inspect his mount, and if the steed
Is unfit for riding, meet his need
With the best the castle here sires,
And supply what else he requires.'
Then she spoke to the squire again.
'Give my respects to Lord Gawain,
I'll make your farewells to the King.
Relay to your master everything
Spoken here, and the King's intent,
And pass on his every compliment.'

The squire returns to Schastel Marveile

The King mounted his expedition,
Such that the formal constitution
Of the Round Table was honoured.

The news they had learnt, moreover,
That noble Gawain was living yet
Raised their spirits whene'er they met.
All the Round Table's solemn rites
Were observed by the band of knights,
The King presiding, amidst those men
Who'd garnered fame, time and again,
As the prize for their endeavour;
And, to all, the news gave pleasure.

Now the squire who had conveyed
Gawain's message, and had obeyed
Every instruction of the Queen,
Prepared to leave; and he had been
Supplied with money, and a mount,
And a change of clothes, on account.
He set out cheerfully since Arthur
Had sworn Gawain's fears were over.
Though he went by the swiftest way,
How long he took, who can say.
At Schastel Marveile, Queen Arnive,
Was pleased to see him yet alive;
The guard had told her he'd returned
In good time, for his steed had earned
A goodly rest, he'd so spurred him.
Arnive went secretly to meet him,
When he entered, so she might ask
Where he had been, and of his task.
'I must be silent,' replied the squire,
'I dare not tell, may not conspire
To say aught being bound by oath.
And to break that I am full loth,
For my lord would be displeased,
And think all loyalty had ceased.
Pray ask him yourself, my lady.'
She tried to corner him, but he
Replied, 'No point detaining me,

My duty doth not leave me free;
Madame, I shall fulfil my oath.'

He found Gawain seated with both
His guests, and the ladies, within;
For, beside the Duke of Gowerzin,
Florant the Turkoyt sat with them,
The Duchess of Logroys, and then
That host of ladies. The squire came,
To present himself to Lord Gawain,
Who rose to his feet and took the lad
Aside and welcomed him, and bade
Him say what reply he had brought
To his message, from Arthur's court.
'Did you hand the letter to the King?
Is't good news or bad that you bring?'
'Yes, my Lord, both the King and Queen
I found there, and they both have seen
The missive, greet you, and consent,
To assisting you in your intent.
I said you were alive and well,
And of your loyalty I did tell,
And a noble gathering I did see;
The Round Table, and its company
Were there, and if ever a name
Had force among those men, if fame
And noble qualities were to count
Among them, your fame must mount
To the heights, and there preside
Over all others' both far and wide.'
Then he said how he saw the Queen,
And heard her counsel, and had seen
The many knights and ladies who
He would see, when the time fell due,
At Joflanze. And so, Lord Gawain
Banished care and did thus attain
In his brave heart true happiness;

For joy had ended all his distress.
He forbade the squire to say a word,
And, silent regarding all he'd heard,
Sat down once more. Thus, he stayed,
At ease in his palace, till timely aid
Arrived. Now hear of joy and woe.

Arnive speaks of Clinschor and his magic arts

GAWAIN seemed quite contented, so.
One morning, when many a knight
And lady was there, out of sight,
Gawain and Arnive sat together,
In an alcove, above the river;
And she knew many a strange tale.
'My dear lady, I must not fail
To ask about matters hidden
From me, if that may be forgiven.
Through your aid I've lived awhile
Amid rare pleasures, in fine style,
And benefited from your kindness
Such that my suffering grew less,
And was assuaged in due course;
For the Duchess captured, by force,
My manly heart, if twas ever such.
Had not your aid brought me much
Easement, and so delivered me
From my bandages, assuredly,
I should have died of my love,
And my wounds. Yet you did prove
My salvation, for now I thrive,
Tis thanks to you, I am alive.
Now, most blessed lady, I'd hear
About the magic that was here
And is here yet, and why Clinschor
Has wrought those spells and more;
Spells that nigh cost me my life.'

Now, no young woman, no fair wife
E'er grew old and brought such glory
To her sex as this wise lady:
'My lord, the rare enchantment
He weaves here (tis ever-present)
Is naught beside the mighty spells
He casts elsewhere. He who tells
Tales of us, and casts the blame
Upon us, sin clings to that same.
Clinschor has vented his spleen
On many a land and race, I ween,
Now, sir (I'll speak more openly)
Terre de Labor was his country;
From Virgil of Naples his descent,
Who, in his time, was ever intent
On devising enchantments rare.
Clinschor wrought as follows there.
His capital city was Capua.
The paths he trod seeking honour,
Were so high that honour he won.
Thus, this Duke Clinschor was one
To whom men and women did bow;
Till disaster struck, and this is how.
There was a King of Sicily,
Called Ibert, and his fair lady
Was Iblis, the loveliest wife
That ever graced this mortal life.
The Duke fought as her servitor,
And she rewarded Duke Clinschor
With her love. Twas for this the king
Wrought on him a shameful thing.
If I am to tell his secret now,
Your good leave must such allow,
For tis improper of me to name
The circumstance that brought him shame,
Through which he became a sorcerer.

A cut made a capon of Clinschor.’
He could not refrain from laughter,
But she continued, ‘He did suffer
This blow at Caltabellota,
Near Sciacca, known for its strength.
It seems the king had, at length,
Discovered Clinschor with his wife
Asleep in her embrace, his life
Was forfeit but, for that warm bed,
He left a down payment instead,
Clipped twixt his legs by a royal hand,
The sovereign’s due, you understand.
The king had trimmed his body so
That he was no longer fit to go
With any woman for her sport.
And many have suffered, in short,
For this. Twas in far Persida,
(The place, not the land of Persia)
That true magic was first derived.
Clinschor sought it, and contrived
The means, by rare enchantment,
Of mastering his every intent.
Because of all his bodily shame
He no longer, through that same,
Bears to man or woman goodwill.
Since it gratifies his heart, still,
To deny those who are worthy
All such happiness entirely.
Of Rosche Sabins there was a king,
Irot, who feared just such a thing.
So, he offered to grant Clinschor
All that he possessed and more,
And so escape his persecution,
Thus, Clinschor gained, by his action,
This place, famed for its great strength,
And land around, eight miles in length.
Upon the rock, as you can see,

Clinschor wrought ingeniously,
To found this castle, and did bring,
To it, many a precious thing.
Should any wish to besiege it,
Provisions are stored within it,
Sufficient to last thirty years,
Allaying the defenders' fears.
Over all that haunts the aether,
Clinschor displays great power;
All of those beings, between
Earth's boundary and the unseen
Firmament; all things malign;
And even those which are benign,
Except the ones God doth protect.
Yet since, failing of dire effect,
The danger to you was averted,
His gift from Irot has reverted,
To yourself, and never again,
Shall Clinschor, my Lord Gawain,
Concern himself with this place,
Nor this land will he now grace
With his presence. We had heard,
And Clinschor's a man of his word,
That whoever strove with honour
And succeeded in that venture
Would be free of persecution,
And the gift rest with that person.
Your many subjects, here, have come
From every part of Christendom
Men and women, and maids too,
Whoe'er came within his view.
Here too dwells many an infidel
Constrained to live in this castle.
Let us return, all this company,
To the distant places where we
Are mourned. Exile chills my heart.
May He, who, with eternal art,

Framed the stars, guide you now
In aiding us; and may you allow
All here to find true happiness.
What mother is it bears no less
A child than its own grandmother?
From water ice, from ice forever
Comes pure water. Of happiness
I was born, and should I confess
To joy again, then, of this mother,
One progeny would bear another.
And you may bring all this about.
Tis long since happiness was out.
A ship moves swiftly under sail,
Walk aft to fore you cannot fail
To progress yet more swiftly still.
If you understand this parable,
Your fame will prosper. Now you
Have the power to move us too,
And make us shout for joy, and so
Take joy with us, whene'er we go,
To many friends who fear for us.
Once my life was full glorious
I wore a crown, my daughter too,
Regally crowned, princes did view,
As she passed with due solemnity
Before their eyes, both I and she
Enjoyed high station. Sir, I never
Have plotted harm to any man
Respect for all was e'er my plan.
Thanks to God, I was ever seen,
Rightfully as my country's queen,
For I ne'er did wrong to anyone.
Let every decent woman be one
Who treats honest people kindly,
For she can be rendered, easily,
So wretched e'en a serving-lad
Might aid her escape from the sad

Circumstances that shut her in.
I have watched and waited herein
For many a day, and none, my lord,
Came to this place that knew me, or
Looked to free my heart from care,
Or my true counsel sought to share.'
'If I live, madam,' said Lord Gawain,
'You shall know happiness again.'

King Arthur comes to Schastel Marveile

THAT very day, good King Arthur,
Of whom Arnive was the mother,
She who was lamenting but now,
Arrived there, to honour his vow,
And the bonds of kinship. Gawain
Saw banners moving o'er the plain,
While mounted squadrons did cover
The fields, from Logroys to the river,
Their pennants bright against the sky.
He was right joyful then, say I,
For when a man waits thus, delay
Makes him afraid that, on the day
That reinforcements come, he'll find
Them far from enough. Yet his mind
Was clear now, all doubts were gone;
How bravely he saw them coming on!
He shrank from being gazed at then,
Lest he was seen by his own men
To shed a tear; his eyes shone bright,
Nor would they serve as watertight
Cisterns, for they shed drops of joy!
Arthur had reared him since a boy,
And such was their mutual loyalty
Twas never threatened by perfidy,
But ran strong and true evermore.
Nevertheless, Queen Arnive saw

His tears. 'Come, raise a shout of joy,
My lord,' she said, you must employ
Some means to cheer all who are here.
Guard against sorrow, for now appear
The Duchess' men; twill console you.'
Pavilions and banners came in view,
Borne to the meadow, yet only one
Of their insignia did this Queen
Recognise, for there she had seen
That of Uther Pendragon's Marshal,
Isajes, though twas borne withal
By Maurin of the Handsome Thighs,
The Queen's Marshal, to her surprise,
For this Queen Arnive could not know
Uther, and Isajes, were dead, and so
Maurin now held a place, of right,
Like to his father, that true knight.
Towards the quay, o'er the meadow,
The Great Household now did flow.
The Queen's men-at-arms set down
Tents and pavilions on the ground,
Beside a clear swift-running stream
Well-suited for the ladies, I'd deem.
Many a fine tent rose on high.
Arthur, and his knights, would lie,
Not far distant; they'd leave many
A wide track behind on this sortie.

Gawain sent Bene down to his host,
Plippalinot, to order the ferryboats,
And other vessels, to be made fast,
So that the army might not pass
The river, that day, and Bene won
A first gift from King Lot's son,
For Gawain, from his goodly store,
To her, with his own hands, he bore
Swallow; that rare harp she'd play,

Famed yet, in England, in our day.
Bene went happily to her father
While Gawain gave out the order
That the outer gates be barred.
Now young and old he did regard,
And uttered a courteous plea:
'Across the river, as you can see,
A mighty army seeks to gather,
Nor have I e'er seen a greater
Massing, whether on land or sea.
If they attack, I shall be ready
To offer them battle, with your aid.'
Signs of agreement they relayed,
Then asked the fair Duchess if she
Knew whose was this great army.
'I recognise nor banners nor men,'
She replied, 'perchance once again
King Gramoflanz invades my land
And seeks to harm me as he planned
Before; perchance beneath the wall
At Logroys, his men fight and fall,
For, I fancy, the defenders their
Will fight well in such an affair,
And match the foe there, man for man,
At each redoubt and barbican.
If King Gramoflanz there did stand
He seeks revenge for the fair garland.
Whoe'er it might be, he would face
Raised lances, poised, in that place.'
Her last words were true, indeed;
Arthur's men worked many a deed
Of chivalry ere his army passed,
The high walls of Logroys, at last.
His knights had incurred much harm
And repaid it, many a strong arm
Had wielded weapons, in their reply,
And many were hard pressed thereby.

Now here there gathered those, tis said,
Who'll fight for their shirts, if well led.
Weary from the fighting they came,
Tough warriors, their place to claim.
Some losses had both sides suffered,
Garel and Gaherjet were captured,
And King Meljanz of Barbigoel,
And brave Jofreit, son of Idoel,
All four were taken into that place,
And did the halls of Logroys grace.
The Britons had won from Logroys,
The Duke Friam of Vermendoys,
And Count Ritschart of Navers,
Who broke but one lance in such affairs,
For no matter whom he opposed
Those men fell to his skilful blows.
Arthur felled him with his own hand,
That warrior known in many a land.
Thereupon without thought of danger,
Such charges they'd sought to deliver
On each side that, were lances trees,
A forest had been cleared with ease.
Joust after joust made splinters fly,
As the Britons had sought thereby
To press and counter the Duchess' men.
Arthur's rear-guard had charged again
This foe, that harassed them all day,
To where the mass of their army lay.

Now, truly, Gawain should have told
Orgeluse that her own stronghold
Might face his ally on her own land!
Then none had fought at her command.
But he had said naught of this affair,
Till he knew that Arthur was there;
For he acted, now, as it suited him.

His tents and baggage, he did begin
To prepare for his march to meet
King Arthur. Now he did greet
His knights and squires and men,
Handing out lavish gifts to them,
And the ladies, with such a will,
Their every need sought to fulfil,
On such a liberal scale that he
Seemed rid of this world; all did agree
True aid had come to them at last,
And they were free of sorrows past.
He ordered baggage-mules, armour
For the knights, and sought to honour
The ladies with palfreys. He took care
To encase the men-at-arms in steel;
He clad them, fully, head to heel.
And then he took four knights aside,
Made one his Marshal there to ride,
Another his faithful Chamberlain,
A third his Butler, a fourth, again,
His Steward, such that all these four
His coat of arms and emblems bore,
And would perform his every wish;
Thoughts of the duel he did relish.

Gawain's troops ride to Joflanze

NOW, let Arthur unmoving lie;
Gawain all greeting did deny,
Though he found it hard to refrain;
So, trumpets blaring, once again
Arthur rode forth, at early morn,
To Joflanze, the rear-guard sworn
To defend the army from attack,
Yet they soon followed in his track
On seeing no sign of an enemy.
Gawain observed them, eagerly,

Then he drew his officers aside,
And ordered his Marshal to ride
To Joflanze and the meadow there,
Seeking to hasten the whole affair.
'I seek my own camping-ground,
And there that army will be found;
Now I must name their lord to you,
Tis Arthur, my uncle, whom I view
As a second father, for at his court
I was raised; and his aid I've sought.
Equip our march to Joflanze field
With noble armour, lance and shield,
So that its splendour will be plain
To all eyes, and, for now, refrain
From letting the fact be known here
That tis for my sake, he doth appear.'

They did as he asked. Plippalinot
Gathered his vessels to the spot,
Every boat, and barge, and galley,
And with the Marshal he did ferry
All that brave company across,
Horse and foot; without a loss,
The Marshal marched them away,
Upon King Arthur's tracks, I say.
A great pavilion too they bore,
(Which Iblis had sent to Clinschor,
As a love-gift, thus was it known
That they were lovers) and, I own,
Naught was spared in its creation,
Never a better, without question,
Was e'er wrought, with cunning art,
But for that owned by Isenhart.

Now the pavilion was raised high,
With many another pitched nearby
To form a wide and spacious ring,

This was to be Gawain's lodging;
Arthur's tent stood not far away.
All gleamed in magnificent array,
While the King, in his inner court,
Of the Marshal received report,
Of who was pitching camp beside
Them in the field, nor did he hide
That Lord Gawain was on his way,
And would arrive ere close of day.
This was the common talk of all.

Gawain had now set out, withal,
Marching with his grand company,
As fine as sight as one might see,
So noble that it seemed a wonder.
There went many a burdened sumpter,
Bearing field-chapels, and dress,
Piles of weapons, of shields no less,
And brave helmets topping the load,
While beside them, along their road,
Paced many a fine Castilian horse;
Knights and ladies held their course
Riding behind them; in full strength
The army stretched a league in length.
Gawain ensured each lovely lady
Had a brave knight for company,
And foolish they'd have been if no
Talk of love accompanied them so.
Florant the Turkoyt rode that day
With the fair Sangive of Norway,
Lischois rode beside sweet Condrie,
While Gawain's sister Itonje
Was asked to ride next that lord,
As Arnive the Duchess did afford
Her companionship on the way.

He meets with Arthur

Matters transpired thus that day:
Gawain's encampment was placed
Such that to reach it his steed paced
Through that of King Arthur's army.
And all must gaze at this company
Passing there amidst them, slowly.
Gawain asked that the first lady
Halt at King Arthur's ring, her 'knight'
At her side, and yet not alight,
While the Marshal saw that another
Pair rode up, and halted beside her,
And on round in the same manner,
Young or old, lady and 'lover',
And so on till all of Arthur's ring
Was circled by ladies' glittering
In the light. Only now Gawain,
Thrice-fortunate, by Arthur was fain
To be received, and, if you ask me,
He greeted him most affectionately.
Arnive dismounted, and her daughter
With the fair children of the latter;
Gawain, and Orgeluse, and Florant,
Lischois too; as Arthur advanced
Towards these illustrious persons
Welcoming them in friendly fashion.
As did his Queen, who met Gawain
With affection, while now, and again,
The ladies exchanged many a kiss.
'Who are your companions in this?'
Asked King Arthur of his nephew,
As they all passed before his view.
'I must see my lady kiss each man
For their lineage urges such a plan.'
Florant was kissed by Guinevere,
As was Lischois who waited near.

They first retired to his pavilion,
Then Arthur mounted his Castilian
And rode around the splendid ring
Of ladies, and the knights attending
On them, and gave them welcome,
Every man, and every woman
For it seemed, where'er he did go,
That fair ladies filled the meadow,
Since it had been Gawain's desire
That all should keep the ring entire
Till he himself has ridden away;
Such was courtliness in that day.

Arthur dismounted and went within,
Sat with his nephew, asking him
About the ladies, and his adventure,
So, Gawain these words did venture,
Courteously addressing the Briton:
'You, sire, come of Uther Pendragon
Born of his wife here, Queen Arnive,
And here now is my mother Sangive,
And these two are my lovely sisters
Are they not fairer now than others?'
(Here was a new round of kissing,
Laughter and tears were in their meeting,
For great joy affected them so,
Lips conveyed laughter and woe,
With the presence, in equal measure,
Of past grief, and present pleasure)
'Nephew,' the king asked again,
'Who is this lovely fifth?' Gawain,
Said, courteously: 'the fair Duchess
Of Logroys is she, and I no less
Than her liege lord. Now I am told
Against her your men made bold
Incursion; tell me then the cost
Of what you or she have lost.

And be not silent, like a widow,
Come tell this lady all you know!
'The Duchess has your maternal
Kinsman Gaherjet, and Garel,
Tireless in attack, her prisoner;
Snatched from my side, was the latter,
As we drove close to their barbican.
And then the feats of that bold man
Meljanz of Liz, in sorry manner,
Captured beneath his white banner,
Where the black, sable-cut arrow,
Stained with heart's blood, did show,
His emblem denoting suffering.
All the company round him riding
Shouted 'Lirivoyn!' right fiercely!
Yet all that they won, so gloriously,
They took with them to the keep.
Jofreit, my nephew, he doth sleep
A captive behind those four walls.
I led the rear-guard, thus it befalls,
While our attack met with disaster.'
He'd much to say about the matter.

'There was no dishonour in the act,'
Said Orgeluse, with a woman's tact,
'You've never sought favour of me;
If you've harmed me in some degree,
For you, indeed, captured my friends,
May God help you to make amends.
You have ridden to assist Gawain
Who had he fought me, I maintain,
Had found me without all defence,
And thrust at me in like innocence.
If he would renew the contest so,
Never a sword need strike a blow.'
'How then if we,' said Lord Gawain,
'With yet more knights did fill the plain,

For we may achieve that readily.
I am sure the Duchess will free
Her prisoners, and order her men
To join us, strengthening us again.'
'Agreed!' cried Arthur. The Duchess
Did both matters swiftly address,
And never, in all imagining,
Was there a more splendid gathering.

Gawain asked leave to go his way
To his pavilion, and would not stay.
The King so granted; the company,
My Lord Gawain's, went cheerfully;
All, indeed, who'd ridden with him,
To his quarters now accompanied him.
His camp was luxurious, poverty
Marred not the splendour of chivalry.
Many knights came to greet him then,
Who had regretted his leaving them.
As to Kay, recovered of the pain
That he by the Plimizoel did gain,
In that painful joust, he gazed long
At the riches of this pavilion.
'We feared no rivalry then,' he cried,
When his father was at our side,
Brave Lot, the King's brother-in-law;
No separate rings of tents we saw!'
Kay was still brooding on the fact
Gawain had seen fit not to act,
And avenge him, when he met harm
And Parzival shattered his right arm.
'It seems God's wonders never cease!
Who has granted Gawain all these
Ladies?' said Kay, whose mockery
Of his friends was scarcely seemly.
A loyal friend should rest content,
And joy at a friend's advancement.

Tis the disloyal one that cries woe
When his friend doth Fortune know,
And he's there to witness her favour.
Gawain met with Fortune and honour.
Who is the man has need of more?
Though some will envy him, tis sure,
Yet it should gladden a man of spirit
If a friend's actions do him credit,
And he scorns dishonour. Gawain
Who every treachery did disdain,
Was mindful of manly faithfulness,
And no man should have felt distress,
If he was granted Fortune's favour,
Winning fame on the paths of honour.
You'll ask how that man of Norway
Cared for all of his guests that day.
Arthur and all his retinue
Had the opportunity to view
All the wealth and hospitality
Of Lot's noble son, and his courtesy.
But they are entitled to their sleep,
After that supper, nor would I keep
Those lovely ladies from their rest!
Thus, they departed, every guest.

Arthur sends envoys to King Gramoflanz

NEXT morn, ere the sun rose, came there
A force of the Duchess' knights, and fair
Gleamed their crests by the moon's light
As from the camp men viewed the sight;
All through that camp they went riding,
To the far side, and Gawain's tent ring.
A man who such forces can command
Through the strength of his right hand,
He deserves full credit indeed.
Gawain asked his Marshal to proceed

With the task of leading them to where
They might pitch their tents, and there
The men of Logroys set many a ring
Of fine pavilions; by mid-morning,
They were all lodged. But now new
Cares approach, and more than a few.

Arthur sent envoys on their way
To Rosche Sabins, who were to say
To King Gramoflanz that since he
Would not waive the duel set to be
Fought with his nephew, that same
Would grant it him, if he but came
To meet them soon, for it appeared,
Or so King Arthur greatly feared,
He'd not forego it, were another
Would yet have foreseen dishonour.

Gawain rides forth and encounters Parzival

NOW Gawain asked Lischois and Florant
To show him the knights of many lands
Who were Love's servitors, that army
Of Love, who had, devotedly,
Served Orgeluse, in hopes that they
Might garner high reward someday.
He rode to them and spoke so well
They acclaimed him; for all could tell,
The noble nature of the man.

This done, he carried out the plan
In his mind and, in secrecy,
He made his way, all privately,
To his great wardrobe chamber,
And cased his body in armour,
To find if his wounds had healed
Sufficiently to address the field,

Now wishing to test every limb,
As knights and ladies, watching him
In the duel, would seek to judge
Whether he suffered overmuch.
He asked, then, for Gringuljete,
And gave the steed rein, for, as yet,
He knew not if they both were fit
For battle, and would thus acquit
Themselves well in the coming fight.
No excursion of the gallant knight
Troubles me as much as does this.
For from the camp he did vanish
And rode far off over the plain.
May Fortune guard my Lord Gawain.

Beside the Sabins ran his course.
A knight, motionless on his horse,
He saw there, whom we might call
A touchstone of manliness, a fall
Of sharp hail descending fiercely
On many a brave knight. Perfidy
Was never an entrant to his heart,
Nor was he tainted in any part;
He bore no burden of dishonour.
Never a span, not half a finger
Of baseness touched the man. A word
Or two, of him, you may have heard
Already, for now the tale returns
To its true stem, and new glory earns.

Book XIV: Gramoflanz

Gawain and Parzival joust, neither recognising the other

NOW, should Gawain seek to advance
And to joust there with the lance,
I fear for his success. Ought I

To be anxious for the other? Why,
In war that knight was worth an army,
And here's but the single enemy.
His surcoat and trappings did show
Far redder than the ruby's glow,
His crest was of some heathen land,
O'er the seas, the shield in his hand
Was pierced by lance-thrusts, for he
Sought adventure, and from the tree
That Gramoflanz guarded, he too
Breaking a branch, had wrought anew
A garland, such that my Lord Gawain
Knew it, and thought the King again
Awaited him there. If that were so,
If twas Gramoflanz challenged, though
Not one lady was then in sight,
He had no option but to fight.

From Munsalvaesche were both their steeds.
Spurring them on to valiant deeds,
They charged together, at full tilt.
This joust was not on gravel or silt,
But bright green clover, wet with dew.
Their sufferings pain my heart anew.
Their charge was all that men desire,
For a jouster did each warrior sire.
He who gains the victory now
Loses much, gains little, I vow,
For he will rue it when he learns
From whom that victory he earns,
Since both are bound by affection
And a loyalty that no such action
Can tarnish, now, or in time to come.

Now hear what in the joust is done,
In swift onrush are those two met
Yet in a manner both must regret.

High kinship and noble company,
Meet here to fight, in all enmity.
The happiness of whichever wins
Forfeit to sadness, the fight begins.
Each drives his lance with such force
Each must fell both rider and horse,
And here's what they are then about,
Hammering wedges, clout for clout,
Dealing blow after pickaxe blow,
With their keen swords, while, like snow,
Shield fragments cover the grass,
With each pass and counter-pass.
Late ere a decision shall come,
Early come to it, and yet none
Undertakes to make peace there
For they are alone in this affair.

**Arthur's envoys have audience with King Gramoflanz at
Rosche Sabins**

HEAR now how Arthur's envoys found
King Gramoflanz, and on what ground,
He'd placed, and encamped, his army.
Twas on a meadow by the sea.
To one side flowed the broad Sabins,
On another the Poynzaclins,
Here was the estuary of the two.
On the fourth side one might view
Rosche Sabins his great capital,
Guarding the meadow, as its castle
Enfolded it with moat and wall,
And many a mighty tower tall.
Over a space a full mile wide,
By half a mile, there did abide
The host of his retainers who
Upon that meadow one might view;
Here Arthur's messengers rode by,

Full many a stranger met their eye,
Knight, or man-at arms, or archer,
Encased in his bright steel armour,
And there gleamed many a stout lance,
While other companies did advance
Towards the envoys, stepping high,
Their banners waving, neath the sky.
Trumpets blared, and they could see
Vigour and life filled this enemy,
Ready to march to Joflanze now;
And there was beauty, I'll avow,
Sounds of ladies' bridles jingling,
For about King Gramoflanz' ring,
There rode many a lovely creature.

Now, if the story I can master,
I'll tell you who had ridden there
To aid the King in this affair,
Lodging by him in the meadow;
And, should you not already know,
Then let me yield you my account.
There, seated on his lively mount
See King Brandelidelin,
Out of water-girt Punt, with him
Six hundred ladies he had brought,
Of glittering beauty, to that court,
Each of whom kept in her sight
Her lover armed for gallant fight,
And knightly deeds, and renown,
Brave hearts had those from that town.
If you'll take it on trust from me,
Bernout de Riviers one might see,
Whose powerful father, Count Narant,
Had left him all of Ukerlant.
Over the sea in ships he'd sailed
With a host of ladies, who ne'er failed
To garner praise from all, anew,

Two hundred unwed girls, and two
Hundred more with their spouses,
All were born of the noblest houses.
There, if I have the number right,
Five hundred lords, all set to fight,
Supported Bernout, son of the Count,
And many soldiers, in vast amount.

In this manner, King Gramoflanz,
Sought his just cause to advance,
And avenge the stolen garlands,
In single combat, where one stands
To lose, and the other to gain,
And so, the winner may maintain
His right and be judged the most
Glorious there, before the host.
Thus, all the princes of his realm
Came there with shield and helm,
Together with their ladies, fair;
Splendid was the gathering there.

Now, Arthur's envoys found the King,
On a thick mattress calmly sitting,
Of palmat silk, quilted, I'm told,
All over with broad cloth of gold.
Bright and fair young ladies graced
His presence, as they deftly cased
His legs in steel armour, below
A canopy, whose brocade did glow,
Rich and costly, and it was woven
In Ecidemonis; there twas chosen,
And now it swung, raised on high
On a dozen lances, neath the sky.
The messengers now spoke aloud,
Thus, to the proudest of the proud:
'Sire, we are sent by King Arthur,
Whose own name lacks not in lustre,

For, on occasion, he's won honour,
Though his glory you would lower.
Why seek to vent your displeasure
On that brave son of his fair sister?
Had he done you greater wrong,
Lord Gawain could still count upon
Every knight of the Round Table,
Since all are his friends, and loyal.'

'I shall deliver, with this same hand,
The duel I pledged there, understand,'
Replied the king, 'and in such manner
That I will chase this Gawain either
To his glory, or his disgrace.
I've heard that to the duelling place
Come Arthur and his Queen, in force,
I'll bid them welcome, in due course.
If the wretched Orgeluse has sought
To set him against me and my court,
He shall not act as her mere tool,
For whate'er comes I fight the duel,
And have so many knights on hand
I fear no violence in my own land.
But whate'er tis my fate to endure
From one man alone, then be sure
I shall accept it, and bear the pain,
For were I to seek, now, to refrain
From my intent, and abandon this,
Tis a loving service I'd relinquish.
Lord Gawain may thank that lady
To whose sympathy and mercy
I have surrendered life and joy,
For this duel, for I ne'er employ
My powers upon but one enemy,
Tis because of his labours only,
That have borne such fruit, that I
Will not his right to combat deny.

So, my valour stoops, for I never
Fought so few opponents ever.
None denies it, ask if you please,
For I have fought many, with ease,
Who yielded fame to this firm hand,
And I ne'er fought with but one man.
Nor should the ladies now praise me
If I should gain the victory.
It warms my heart that she was freed,
For whom this duel is fought indeed,
Or so I'm told, and one has heard
Many strange lands obey the word
Of this famed Arthur, and it may be
She comes here with him, that lady
I'll serve till death, as she commands,
Through joy and woe; tis in her hands.
What more could stir me, than that she,
Of good fortune, herself might see
True service in this, as everything?'

Lady Bene brings Gramoflanz news of her mistress Itonje

FAIR Bene sat beside the King;
He rested his arm against her.
No objection did she offer
To the duel, knowing his skill
In the joust, and his firm will;
A fearless look she did maintain.
Yet had she known that this 'Gawain'
Was her Lady Itonje's brother,
And he involved in this matter,
Her content had vanished away.
She'd given Gramoflanz, that day,
The very ring Gawain had brought
Over the Sabins, for to that court
Princess Itonje had sent the ring,
In token of her love for the King.

Bene had sailed, by fast galley,
Along the Poyznaclins, the lady
Bringing him news that Princess,
Itonje, who was her fair mistress,
From Schastel Marveile had set out,
With the other ladies; and, no doubt,
Told the king of the affection
That was aimed in his direction,
And the esteem, both far greater
Than any young lady of tender
Years, had ever felt for a man,
(She fulfilled Itonje's command)
Which her lady sent, through her,
To him; and that her lady did suffer;
And that to deserve his love meant
More than all else to her; this sent
The King into transports of love;
And yet against Gawain he'd move!
If such is the cost, then I'd rather
Go through life without a sister!

Gramoflanz sets out for the jousting field

NOW accoutrements were brought
Of such splendour none who sought
A lady's favour, driven by passion,
Could to greater lengths have gone,
To please the fair, not Gahmuret,
Nor Galoes, his brother, nor yet
King Kylicrates; for no finer
Brocade adorned a man ever,
Bought from Ipopotiticon,
Or brought from spacious Acraton,
Woven in Kalomidente,
Or in Agartysjente,
Than was chosen for his person.
He kissed the ring with passion

That Princess Itonje had sent,
For as a love-token twas meant,
Believing so in her loyalty
That when care troubled him, he
Found her love a steadfast shield
Against the woe events did yield.

And thus, the King was fully clad,
And twelve young ladies now he bade
Support the splendid cloth of gold
Beneath whose roof the proud and bold
King would ride; each held a pole
And on a pony rode, her role
To bear the costly canopy,
As one of that fair company,
And shade the warrior, while two
Young ladies, the loveliest too,
Supported the King's mighty arms;
No weaklings they despite their charms!

Parzival realises his opponent is Gawain

KING Arthur's envoys, on their way
Back to that camp where Arthur lay,
Came to where that courteous knight
Gawain was still engaged in fight.
Filled with concern, they shouted out,
As danger hedged him all about,
For his opponent neared success,
Gawain's strength now proving less,
Due to his wounds, such that Gawain,
The noble, would have known the pain
Of defeat, had they not loudly
Named that knight, most indignantly.
Then the man who fought Gawain
From further conflict did refrain
And flung his sword to the ground.

‘Alas, to Misfortune am I bound,
And thus accursed!’ cried the stranger.
‘Grievous is the fault, that ever
Saw my engagement in this matter;
The blame is mine, and the error.
Misfortune has taken to the field,
Good Fortune herself must yield,
Misfortune’s coat of arms I bear,
As in the past; to think that there
Tis not Gawain whom I attack,
But I myself, and at my back
Comes Misfortune; Fortune fled,
On the instant, and honour’s dead.’

Gawain heard, and perceived, his woe.
‘Alas, sir, who thus speaks in sorrow
And with such kindness towards me?
If such had been said previously,
While I yet had a little strength,
Why then we had not fought at length,
Nor I have lost the renown I fear
Which you have taken from me here.
Now would I like to know your name,
And thus, where I may find that same
Renown should I seek it later.
As long as Fortune followed after,
I fought well if there were but two.’

‘May I make myself known to you,
My Lord, for I am at your service,
And shall be ever, as in this,
For I am your kinsman Parzival.’
‘Then,’ Gawain answered, ‘all is well.
Perverse folly is rendered straight,
Two hearts, that are one, sad Fate
Made battle each other, in enmity,
And tire each other, foolishly,

Till your hand overcame us two;
Regret it then, if your heart be true,
Since yourself also you overcame.'
On ceasing to speak, he was fain
(Staggering then, all giddily,
His head spinning, furiously)
To stand no longer, all his strength
Had ebbed, and he fell, full length,
Onto the grass. A page, swiftly,
Ran o'er the field, to his aid, for he
Was one of Arthur's most loyal men
Sent out as an envoy, who then
Pillowed him, his helm did unlace,
And fanned cool air across his face
With his white peacock-feather cap,
Cushioning his head upon his lap.
These attentions paid Lord Gawain
Brought him to his senses again.

Gramoflanz insists that the duel take place

NOW the forces from both armies
Were arriving in brave companies,
Each advancing to their places,
Gleaming logs marking the spaces.
Gramoflanz did their cost incur,
Since he was here the challenger.
A hundred burnished trees did stand,
Fifty, I'm told, on either hand,
At a distance of forty courses,
A goodly field for the horses.
Light gleamed from side to side.
To this ground entry was denied,
For here the duel would be fought.
Gawain and Gramoflanz both sought
To keep their folk from entering
As though this wide jousting ring

Were circled by a castle wall,
Or a deep moat, restraining all.
Detachments from either army
Had come to view this, merely
To see who might win the fight,
Seeking the names of each knight
Who would, thus, enter the ring;
Yet the strangeness of the thing
Was that neither force, twas thought,
Their usual champion had brought.

King Gramoflanz appeared anon,
After that combat, one on one,
In the flowery meadow, was o'er.
He came there eager to ensure
His vengeance for the fair garland,
And satisfaction he would demand.
He learnt that a duel had been fought
Fiercer than any erstwhile sought,
And that those who waged the fight
Did so causelessly, at first sight.
He rode forth from his company
Towards the pair, now battle-weary,
Deploring all their wasted labour.
Gawain had felt the pangs of honour,
And so, had now regained his feet,
Rendering the courtly scene complete.
Now Bene had ridden after the King,
And reached the site of this fighting,
Where these knights had met with pain,
And there she found my Lord Gawain,
Whom she had chosen to be her joy,
Though he could scarce a reed employ.
She gave a cry of deepest sorrow,
Slid from her palfrey, and did go
Swiftly there to clasp him tight.
'Cursed be the hand of that knight

That taught your fair body such woe,
For your brave countenance was so
Much a mirror of manhood, you
Outshone all others; oh, I speak true!
She sat him down, upon the grass,
Her bright tears falling, full and fast,
And then, sweet child, wiped the blood
And sweat from him, as best she could;
He was well-heated in his armour.

‘It grieves me much to see you suffer,’
Said Gramoflanz, ‘though I would wish
To render your state much like this.
If you’ll return to this meadow,
To do battle, on the morrow,
I shall be pleased to await you.
At this moment, it is most true,
I’d rather fight a feeble woman,
Than attack your weakened person.
Unless your limbs fresh strength were lent,
What praise were mine? Be content
To rest this night, and linger not,
If you’re to answer for King Lot.’
Parzival showed scant weariness,
Or pallor and, free of all distress,
His helmet he’d but now unlaced
As the noble monarch he faced.
‘Sir,’ he said, ‘let me undertake
In any matter that’s now at stake,
The part of my kinsman Gawain.
If he has offended you, again,
I am it seems still fit to fight;
Should your anger on him alight,
I shall halt you with my sword.’
‘Sir, Gawain, shall indeed afford
Me, tomorrow, all that is due,
In debt for the garland, for new

Fame shall it reap, or my name
Will be tarnished by fresh shame.
I doubt not you're a warrior, too,
And yet this quarrel is not for you.'

Bene turned swiftly to the King,
As from her sweet lips did ring,
Angry words: 'Tis treachery now
You bring to this matter, I avow,
For your own heart rests in the hand
Of that man from whom you demand
Your due; a heart that's filled with hate.
To whom have you rendered your fate,
And surrendered, in Love's fair name?
She needs his aid, and you proclaim
Your own defeat; Love's lost her right
To you; for if you loved, sir knight,
Twas but in bad faith on your side.'

The King now drew fair Bene aside,
After her outburst, saying: 'Madame,
Be not so angry. Tell her I am
Truly her bondsman, and will be
Her loyal servant, endlessly.
Remain here now with your lord,
And to his sister, Itonje, accord
My respects, and yet I must fight
And take my vengeance on this knight.'
Finding her lord was no other
Than her lady's noble brother,
Pledged to do battle on that field,
Her sorry heart was forced to yield
To a whole shipload of sorrow
For she was a loyal spirit, and so,
'Away with you!' she cried, 'Your heart
'And loyalty dwell far apart!'
The King rode off with his company

While Arthur's pages, valiantly,
Caught at the mount of each knight,
For the steeds their own duel did fight.

Parzival dines with Gawain

NOW Gawain and Parzival went
With Lady Bene to Gawain's tent.
Parzival had won such honour
With his knightly skills that ever
Men were right glad to see his face,
Gathered to praise him in that place.
And I'll tell you more, if I may:
Veterans in both armies that day
Spoke of the deed that had gained
One there, renown, and maintained
That was Parzival; I say twas he,
While trusting that you will agree.
He was handsome, none more so,
As many a knight and lady also
Declared when Lord Gawain brought
Him there, and clothes for him sought.
(They were robed in the very same
Precious fabrics that I'll not name)
Soon it was known everywhere
That Parzival had entered there,
He of whom they had often heard,
A valiant knight, as all concurred.

'If you would wish to visit four
Ladies of your lineage, and more
Fair ladies besides, I will gladly
Come, and keep you company,'
Said Gawain. 'If there are to be
Fair ladies in your company,'
Parzival answered, 'ne'er let me
Be cause of offence, for I see

Many a witness, and whoe'er
Beside the River Plimizoel there,
Heard Cundrie treat me with scorn
Will curse the day that I was born.
God keep woman's honour in sight!
To me they are a source of delight,
And I so feel my sad disgrace,
I'm loth to have them view my face.'
'Well, indeed you must,' replied Gawain,
Leading Parzival, despite his pain,
To where four queens granted a kiss.
The Duchess was troubled by this
Having to kiss one who'd resisted
Her, howe'er much she'd insisted,
Spurning her when she had offered
Her love, and too she'd proffered,
When below Logroys he'd fought,
And she his present aid had sought.
She was fraught with embarrassment,
While Parzival appeared radiant,
Having been drawn, thus, artlessly,
Into letting his heart course free
Of misgiving, while shame was caught
And led captive from the court;
So that he felt cheered once more.

Gawain forbade Bene, I'm sure,
On pain of the loss of his favour,
From telling fair Itonje, moreover,
That Gramoflanz did now demand
That Gawain appear, lance in hand,
On the morrow, and so must fight
The appointed duel with that knight,
And all for his theft of that garland.
He said: 'Your tears you must command.'
'I have good cause to weep,' no doubt,
She replied, 'and let tears stream out,

Since whichever of you, Gawain,
Should fall, she will suffer the pain.
She is killed, if either is slain.
What then should I do, again,
But lament, for my lady and I?
How does it help,' here, she did sigh,
'That you're her brother, if for your part,
You seek to wage war on her heart?'

The army had gathered, it was time
For Gawain and the others to dine.
Parzival now received the request
To share a place with the Duchess,
To whom Gawain commended him.
'Will you commend one whose sin
It is to scorn all women?' said she,
'What should I do with such as he?
Yet I'll treat him as you demand,
And share with him, at your command.
If it flatters his pride, what care I?'
'Madame,' was Parzival's reply,
'You do me wrong, for I'm well versed
In good manners and, thus rehearsed,
Scorn to mock any of the sex.'

The dinner was fine, in all respects;
There was plenty, and it was served
With all the ceremony it deserved.
Men and women dined pleurably,
And yet twas plain to fair Itonje
That Bene was weeping quietly,
And, her face o'ercast completely;
She was refraining from eating.
'What is this, why the sighing?'
She asked herself, 'did I not send her
To the man for whom I suffer,
And who possesses my poor heart?'

What comes now to drive us apart?
Spurns he my devotion, my love?
Yet he no more in me can move,
No more affection stir for him,
Than that I die of grief for him!’

He again seeks to fight on Gawain’s behalf

IT was past noon, the meal was done,
And Arthur, with many a one,
Knight and ladies, and his Queen,
Came where Parzival might be seen,
Seated amidst the young and fair,
And he not the least handsome there;
Good form prescribed that, in meeting,
He must be kissed, in sweet greeting,
By many a lovely woman. Arthur
Showed him every due honour,
And praised him for the high renown
He had won, famed now as the crown
Of chivalry, both far and wide.
‘When we last met, Sire,’ he replied,
‘My honour was much under attack,
There scorn’s whiplash scarred my back.
But now, since you deign to speak so,
I too have heard that some may know
Of me, and concede me a little
Honour, and though I may struggle
To convince myself, I’d be glad
To believe it so, if those who had
Knowledge of me, and my past shame,
But thought me worthy of such fame.’
All those who sat there declared
That he in such deeds had shared
Abroad, to such heights did aspire,
His honour was rendered entire.

And now Orgeluse' knights arrived
Where Parzival sat, at Arthur's side,
And the King received them, as one,
Within his host's pavilion,
Though he had sat in the meadow,
As a most courteous man, to show
All due politeness, and not because
The tent was not, of itself, spacious.
Now all, again, sat round the King,
In that mead, in a courtly ring.
Strangers were met here together,
But to tell you of one and another,
Who all they were, each Christian,
By name, and then each Saracen,
Were more than a lengthy matter.
What knights there served Clinschor?
Who were those, of the fair noblesse,
From Logroys, sworn to the Duchess?
Which valiant knights had Arthur brought?
If one were to count every court,
All of their castles, and domains,
Who could recall all their names?
Yet they were as one in saying
That Parzival was so dazzling
That all women must dote on him,
And in all that might distinguish him
Nobility had failed of naught.
Gahmuret's son addressed the court:
'Let all consider now, and aid me
In that which I lack most keenly.
I was lost from the Round Table
In strange manner, as if in fable,
And I ask that noble company,
Of your companionship, help me
To that fair gathering again.'
What he now asked Arthur was fain
To grant, then to the inner circle

A further request of that noble
Gathering he now made, namely
That Lord Gawain should simply
Allow him to spend all his power,
On the morrow, at the given hour,
In the duel. 'I'm more than content,
He said, 'to attend that same event,
And wait the coming of that knight,
King Gramoflanz, as he is hight.
Early this morning, from that tree,
I broke a branch, purposefully,
To weave a garland, so he might
Come forth, all prepared to fight.
Let me, thus, in your cause appear,
I scarcely thought to see you here,
Dear kinsman, and never did regret
Aught so greatly as that we met
In battle. I thought you that king,
Come to fight, for I was planning
His death. If he's to be brought low,
Tis I must toil to make it so,
And deal him harm, with such intent
That after our joust, he'll rest content.
Kinsman, my rights here are restored,
Thus, true friendship I may afford
Yourself, and are we not related?
Leave me to address this, tis fated;
My worth shall not remain concealed.'
'Kinsmen and brothers, here revealed
With the King of Britain, I possess;
None may seek, of their high noblesse,
In my stead, to contest the fight.
I rely on my cause, for it is right,
With luck I'll gain the victory;
I'm not so feeble; it lies with me.'
Gawain replied. Arthur had heard,
And put an end to it, with a word,

Returning to his seat in the ring.
Gawain's butler soon came running,
With all his brave young gentlemen.
Gold cups, bright with many a gem,
They brought with them, and when
All had drunk their cup, they again
Retired, when all went to their rest.
Night fell, as Parzival addressed
The question of his martial gear.
Aught that did to his eyes appear
Broken, or worn, he saw restored,
And a new shield they did afford
Him, for his own was pierced so
With many a fierce thrust and blow.
They brought him a fine solid one,
By men-at-arms all this was done
Who were all strangers to him; some
Were Frenchmen, bold and handsome.
As to his steed, that splendid charger
Ridden against him by the Templar,
When they fought, beside the stream,
A squire ensured it had ne'er been
Sleeker-looking, since that day.
It was night, and time to obey
Sleep's fair summons; his gear complete,
And all his equipment at his feet,
He did as darkness might suggest,
And settled himself down to rest.

He fights and defeats King Gramoflanz

NOW, King Gramoflanz felt anger
That a duel, sought by some other,
Concerning the garland perchance,
Had been fought, and that his chance
To exact vengeance had been lost;
For his men had failed, to his cost,

By not daring to resolve the matter.
What course took he, this warrior?
Ever-accustomed to glory,
By daybreak, so runs the story,
He and his mount were fully armed.
Were wealthy ladies then so charmed
By him that they'd adorned his gear?
It was lavish enough without, I fear!
He'd adorned himself as servitor
To Itonje, her most faithful lover.

Parzival, too, went forth that morn,
All secretly, at the crack of dawn,
Fully armed, with a good fresh lance
Of Angram, he'd freed, in advance,
Of its pennant. Now, as he wore
Towards the burnished logs, he saw,
King Gramoflanz was waiting there,
Ready to further this affair.
Without a word, the tale doth say
Each put his sharpened lance in play,
And drove it through the other's shield,
To such effect that both did yield
A rain of splinters, whirling high
Into the air from both, thereby.
Both men were skilled in weaponry
And every manner of chivalry.
Over the meadow's wide expanse
The dew was marred by their advance,
While their helms rang to the blows
Of their blades, for, heaven knows,
They fought bravely, trampling the grass
Everywhere that they did pass.
I sorrow for the blood-stained flowers,
And even more those warriors,
Enduring much pain and distress,
Without a qualm, yet nonetheless

No pleasure to such doth belong,
Unless a man has suffered wrong.

Meanwhile, Lord Gawain prepared
For the duel; ere mid-morn he fared
Abroad, and learned that Parzival
Had ridden out; was it to call
For peace and truce? (Yet the knight
Was acting otherwise, he did fight
Manfully with that proud king!)
At high morn, the bishop did sing,
A Mass for Lord Gawain, and there
A great host of armed men did share
The space around; fair ladies bright,
On horse-back, each with her knight,
Waited in Arthur's ring, before
The bishop's chant began, and saw
King Arthur himself standing nigh
The priests, whose voices rose on high.
After the benediction, Gawain,
Armed himself and, I maintain,
Before the Mass his legs were clad
In steel leg-pieces, for he had
Already begun to arm. And now
Maids began to weep I avow.
The whole army went to view
That place where was heard anew
The clash of swords, the crackle
Of sparks as two helms did rattle,
And the sounds of many a blow.

King Gramoflanz had scorned to know
Single opponents in the field,
Yet now he felt that he must yield,
As if from the force of six, to one
Who gave him proof, ere he was done,
Of his fighting skill, and so taught

The King a lesson, which is thought
Of worth in our day, for thereafter
King Gramoflanz, despite his bluster,
Did never again presume the honour
Of challenging two men together;
One man, out there, is serving him
More than enough to vanquish him.
Meanwhile both the armies did reach
Their places on the meadow, and each
Gazed at, and judged this bitter game.
The warriors' horses quietly came
To a standstill, while their riders fought
On foot, maintaining their onslaught;
And time and again, each man made
To turn his sword, and shift the blade.
In this manner, the King did stand
To win sore payment for his garland,
While this kinsman to his fair love
Itonje, brave Parzival, did prove
The recipient of but little joy,
Labouring in another's employ,
And toiling for her, of whom, by right,
He should have won honour outright.
They who had oft much honour sought,
Now paid dearly for what they bought.
On behalf of his friend, one did fight,
The other Love's subject as her knight.

Tw'as now that Gawain did appear,
As the crucial moment drew near,
For tw'as now the victory was all
But won by the Welshman, Parzival.
Also, Bernout de Rivieres,
Affinamus of Clitiers,
And Brandelidelin, those three,
(The latter King of Punturteis)
Rode bare-headed to the place,

While Arthur and Gawain did grace
The meadow on the other side,
And towards the weary pair did ride.
These five agreed to end the fight,
And then, the moment too seemed right
To Gramoflanz, who now did yield;
Thus, all concurred upon that field.
'My lord King,' said King Lot's son,
'Now I shall do as you have done,
And advise a short rest, as you
Advised me yesterday; you too
Should pause, I say, for you have need.
Whoe'er forced you to this, indeed
Sapped your strength to counter me,
And now I alone may seek to be
Your opponent; though you seek two
To fight ever, I'll fight with you
Tomorrow, and may God make clear
Whose cause is just; let truth appear!'
Now, after stating that he would,
Come to the meadow and make good
His cause there, the King rode away,
And joined his followers. 'Now, pray
Kinsman,' thus did noble Arthur
Address Parzival, 'though, earlier,
You begged leave to duel, and though
On seeking such, Gawain said no,
Did you not go from us like a thief,
To fight this man and, tis my belief,
Careless of whether we wished it so?
We should ne'er have let you go,
Had we but known; and yet Gawain
Need not be angry, I now maintain,
Though men will praise your victory.'
'My kinsman's fame ne'er troubles me,
Replied Gawain, 'if I must appear
Tomorrow, the time is still too near,

While if the King were to excuse me,
I should think the man most kindly.'

Gramoflanz sends envoys and a letter to King Arthur

The army returned in its companies,
There too were many lovely ladies,
And brave knights so caparisoned
No army was ever so well adorned.
The men of the Round Table there
Most glorious tabards did wear
Which like the fair Duchess' train
Were rich, and woven in the main,
From cloth of gold of Cydinunte,
And fabric bought from Pelpiunte.
The horses' trappings were ornate too.
Parzival was now praised all through
Both armies, and his friends pleased.
King Gramoflanz' knights ne'er ceased
To claim, when all was said and done,
None was so splendid neath the sun,
So formidable, not e'en in story,
And that he alone should have the glory
Whate'er the deeds both sides begot.
And yet, even now, they knew not
Whom it was that was so acclaimed.
Now Gramoflanz' people maintained
That he should send envoys to Arthur
Seeking assurance that no other
Of his company should seek to fight,
But that he'd send forth the knight,
With whom he wished to contend,
Gawain, Lot's son, he did intend
To battle. Two pages, therefore,
Well versed in manners and lore,
Were sent as envoys to that king.
'Attend, and judge who is most fair

Of all the ladies that you see there,
Said King Gramoflanz, 'use your wits,
Watch her beside whom Bene sits,
Note how she appears, most closely,
And whether she seems sad or happy.
You'll see from her eyes, moreover,
Whether she's pining for her lover.
Give my friend Bene this letter,
And this ring, and to no other;
She knows to whom they both must go,
Do all discreetly, discharge it so,
And you will have acted loyally.'

Arthur is apprised of Itonje's love for King Gramoflanz

NOW, in the other camp, Itonje,
Had learnt that her own brother
And the dearest man that ever
A girl had taken to her heart,
Would fight, refusing to depart
From his pledge. Her suffering
Conquered reticence, deep feeling
Triumphed o'er modesty in this,
And whoe'er scorns her anguish
Does so without my concurrence,
Since she loved, in all innocence.
Itonje's mother, the fair Sangive,
And her grandmother, wise Arnive,
Led her away to a silken tent,
Where Queen Arnive seemed intent
On reproaching her for her sad state,
Condemning her behaviour of late,
And since there seemed no way out
She confessed what she was about,
All she'd concealed from them so long.
'My brother will do me great wrong,
Yet he'd have reason to refrain,

Did he but know,' and she was fain
To speak of love; when she was done,
Arnive spoke: 'Go, seek out my son,
And have him come alone,' said she,
To a gentleman-in-waiting, and he
Duly went and fetched King Arthur.
She would speak of her granddaughter,
And let him know whom she pined for,
In the hope that he would deplore
Her plight, and so remove the cause.
Thus she addressed him, without pause.
It was then that Gramoflanz' envoys
Arrived at the court, the two boys
Dismounting in the field, where one
Saw Bene near the pavilion,
A young lady, by her, asking
A question of the noble King:
'Does the Duchess think it right
To have my brother slay outright
One who loves me, on a whim?
The deed must bring shame on him.
What wrong has he had of the king?
He should be gracious in this thing,
And, as I am his own dear sister,
Look upon the king with favour.
If my brother can feel at all,
He'll see our love is true withal,
And if my brother is true to me
He'll know tis no true chivalry
To seek my death, on the morrow,
Brought about by bitter sorrow.
Should he slay the king, let him be
Arraigned before you, instantly!'
Such was her complaint to Arthur:
'You are my uncle, remember;
By the bond, then that unites us,
Halt what is most injurious.'

‘Alas!’ said Arthur, ‘that you reveal
Such noble love so young, and feel
For him so, dear niece,’ full wise
In experience, he added, ‘likewise,
The fair Surdamur, your sister,
Loved the Emperor Alexander
And rued her love, as you shall too.
And yet, sweet girl, if I but knew
That his heart and yours were one,
I’d end this duel, and have done.
Gramoflanz, son of Irot, he
Is of such a nature I foresee
This duel must be fought indeed,
Unless your love forestalls the deed.
Has he, at some feast or other,
Set his eyes on you, this lover?’
‘Never; though we love each other,
We have ne’er seen one another.
But of true love, and affection,
He has sent me many a token.
For my part, he has but received
All that is true love, undeceived,
Banishing all doubt between us.
The King is constant and serious
In his attachment, all this while,
And his kind heart is free of guile.’

King Gramoflanz’ envoys deliver his letter

BENE who seemingly had caught
Sight of the king’s envoys who sought
Audience with King Arthur, now said:
‘None should be standing there, instead,
By your leave, I shall order those two
To withdraw themselves from our view.
If my lady is moved so to lament

And with such passionate intent,
And doth not soon her rank recall,
Twill be the common talk of all.’
Lay Bene was sent forth by the King.
One of the pages pressed the ring,
With the letter, into her hand.
They’d heard, from where they did stand,
The anguish her mistress did express.
They said they were there to address
King Arthur, if she’d seek audience.
‘Wait there then, till I fetch you thence,’
She said, and, once within the tent,
Reported the messengers’ intent:
‘I wish to prevent their watching,
Or hearing aught we are saying,
For otherwise one well might ask:
Why I am making it my task
To show my lady to them, in tears;
What grudge of mine thereby appears?
‘Are those two lads,’ declared the King
That I saw riding towards the ring,
In search of me? Well, they are both
Of high birth, I am nothing loth
To having them share our counsel,
For both the lads will speak well.
Both are well-bred and courteous.
One or the other is full curious
Enough not to have thus ignored
The signs of her love for their lord.’
‘I know naught of that,’ she replied,
‘By your leave, the king’s supplied
This ring, and letter; one of them
Handed me both, as I spoke to them
There, outside. Take them, my lady!’
The letter was kissed, fulsomely,
Then pressed to her heart. Itonje cried:
‘Sire, read for yourself, here inside,

Whether the King loves me or not!’

Arthur reads the letter and speaks to the envoys

ARTHUR viewed it thus, on the spot,
And found what Gramoflanz, who knew
What it is to love, had spoken through
His own lips, as if he’d been there.
Arthur could see that all seemed fair,
And, as far as his knowledge went,
That he’d ne’er seen a more innocent
Expression of love, nor so complete.
With most fitting words he did meet:
‘I now salute her,’ the missive read,
‘Whom I should salute, for service led
To my obtaining salute from her.
Young lady, to you I now refer,
Since with hope you solace me.
And our two loves keep company,
Which is the source of all my joy.
Since your heart doth ever employ
Itself in constancy, your lover
Finds solace here beyond all other.
You are a seal on my faithfulness,
The banisher of my woes, no less.
Your love ensures that no misdeed
Will ever be seen in me, indeed
Your goodness speaks of loyalty
That never alters; our constancy
Is like to that of the Southern Pole,
That opposite the North Star holds
Its station, neither quits its place,
And our loves stand thus, face to face,
Never, through faithfulness, to part.
Now young lady, consult your heart,
Remember me, and the suffering
I have felt for you; in this thing

Be swift to aid me; if any man
Seeks to part us, should hate demand
He does so, then bear this in mind,
Love has the power to be kind,
And so, requite us, and take care
Lest womanly honour in this affair
You might wound, and let me be
Your servant, best as I may be.'

'You are right,' said Arthur, 'the King
Salutes you honestly; with the ring,
This letter tells me such a tale,
I confess none did e'er regale
Me with so fine an invention
On the theme of Love's affection.
Keep him from suffering pain anew,
And he must do the same for you.
Leave this to me. The duel I'll halt.
Cease your tears, and their sharp assault,
Though you're indeed a prisoner!
Whence came this love for each other?
You must pay him your love as hire,
Since service is what he doth desire.'
'She who brought it about is here,'
Itonje said, 'though none did hear
Of the matter; if you wish it, she
Will now arrange for me to see
Him to whom I give my heart.'
'Show her;' said Arthur, 'for my part,
If I am able to, for your sake
And his, fair efforts I shall make,
And shall ensure that your fond wish
Is fulfilled, entirely, in this,
And you find happiness, together.'
'Twas Bene,' she said, 'none other.
His two envoys are here as well,
If you value my life, have them tell

Whether the King, with whom truly
My happiness rests, would see me?’

As discreet as he was courteous,
King Arthur went forth, and thus
Finding the lads, welcomed them there.
The one addressed him then, with care:
‘Sire, King Gramoflanz,’ said the boy,
‘Asks, of your honour, that you employ
Your good offices, to maintain
The pledge twixt him and Lord Gawain.
And he requests that no other knight
Should appear, to contest the fight.
Your army is so vast that should he
Have to face them all, twould not be
Right or proper. Let Lord Gawain,
Alone, the honour of this maintain
For twas agreed, between the two,
That the duel was theirs to pursue.’
‘I’ll clear us of accusation there,’
Said Arthur, ‘for never, I may swear,
Was my nephew sorrier that he
Fought not that joust personally.
As for the knight who met your lord
His victory, that all men applaud,
Is in his nature, as Gahmuret’s son.
In these three armies there is none
Knows of a warrior more skilful,
Nor of one so brave in battle.
All that he does is glorious, all!
I speak of my kinsman Parzival,
Of the fair looks, whom you shall see.
In light of the oath, of chivalry,
I shall comply with the request.’

King Arthur seeks a meeting with Gramoflanz

HE and Bene, and, at his behest,
The two pages, rode all about,
While Arthur gladly pointed out
The various lovely ladies there.
They saw too, that dazzled pair,
Many a crest fluttering on high,
On burnished helm, against the sky;
(Nor would it harm a lord today
To behave in as generous a way.)
They all rode around, while Arthur
Named for them many a warrior,
While they took their fill of gazing
At the knights, and the pleasing
Faces of the maids and ladies,
A host of these, and many beauties.

The army was encamped in three
Sections, and with a space left free
Between each one, and King Arthur
Rode with the two envoys further
Into the meadow, away from there,
Then, privately, addressed the pair:
'Bene, sweet girl, of fair Itonje,
A sorry tale it was she told me!
She could scarcely contain her tears.
You two will understand my fears
If I say that Gramoflanz has all
But quenched her bright eyes, withal.
Now aid me you two, Bene as well,
And have the King these fears dispel,
By riding to meet me here, today;
Tomorrow let him fight as he may.
I'll have Gawain at my elbow,
To greet the King in the meadow.
And if he rides through my army
Today, he'll win the greater glory
Tomorrow, mighty Love will yield

Him a brave weapon and a shield,
Which his opponent will be glad
To be quit of, the strength to be had,
I mean, from Love's inspiration,
That in many a confrontation
With the foe, wreaks such dismay.
Let him bring his courtiers, I say,
I'll reconcile the Duchess to him
And he to her; now go to him,
Work discreetly to serve our ends,
You'll garner great credit, my friends.
And yet I must complain to you,
What, to your king, did Arthur do,
That he should treat my family
To this war of love and enmity,
(For such this odd tangle seems)
As though but a trifle he deems
All this? My peers should surely
See fit to treat me courteously?
If he should reward her brother
With hatred, yet seek to love her,
He needs but pause to realise
That when his own heart so defies
Generous thought, then it doth prove
Naught but a traitor to true Love.'

'Indeed, if courtesy he'd sustain'
A page replied, 'he should refrain
From that, Sire, which troubles you.
There is the old quarrel, in view
Of which it might prove better
If my lord waits at a distance, rather
Than riding here to meet with you.
Duchess Orgeluse doth still pursue
Her feud with him, yet complaining,
To all she speaks with, of the king.
'Let him come here, with but a few,'

Answered Arthur, 'let me review
The matter with her, and I'll seek
A truce, ere he and I shall speak.
I'll grant him a fitting escort,
My nephew Beacurs, from my court
Shall ride to welcome him mid-way.
He shall have safe passage this day,
Nor should think it any dishonour;
For I shall show him every favour,
And he shall meet with many a peer.'

King Gramoflanz rides to Arthur's court

THE envoys took their leave, I hear,
Leaving the King alone in the field,
Thinking on how all might be healed.
Lady Bene rode with the pair
To Rosche Sabins and on, through there,
To Gramoflanz camp, on the far side.
He was well-pleased, as they replied
To his questions, and thought their news
Of Fortune's making, nor could refuse
The suggestion, once they'd spoken.
His companions, were thus chosen:
Three princes rode forth with the King,
His maternal uncle too did bring
Three likewise, Brandelidelin
The King of Punturteis I mean;
Bernout de Rivieres was seen
To join the King, and Affinamus
Of Clitiers, he most courteous,
And these latter each took one
True and loyal companion;
So that they made twelve in all.
Gentlemen in waiting, withal,
A crowd of them, and then a host
Of men-at-arms, that ride did boast.

And the clothes they wore? I'm told
They were brocades, bright with gold.
The King's falconer rode at his side,
Ready for sport, while they did ride.

For his part, Arthur sent, that day,
Beacurs to meet the King mid-way.
Now o'er the wide space of meadow
Where'er a path he could follow,
Through marsh and brook, rode the King
In pursuit of game, yet ever yearning
For his love. Beacurs met him there,
And their greeting was a glad affair.
Nigh on fifty handsome pages too
Had ridden with Beacurs, in review,
Young counts and dukes, of high race,
While princes too the field did grace,
And all exchanged courteous greeting
Fair salutation upon meeting,
And made acquaintance cheerfully,
In a spirit of true amity.
Beacurs was of handsome visage,
And the King questioned a page
As to who this fair knight might be.
'King Lot's son, Beacurs, that is he,'
Bene replied, for she was there.
The King mused: 'Heart, go with care,
And find the maiden who, I deem,
An image of this youth doth seem.
She sent the hat from Sinzester,
With the hawk, and is his sister.
If she showed me further favour,
Above Earth's riches I'd prize her,
Were Earth twice its present size.
Her love must be sincere, while I
Come here in hopes of her mercy.
Till now she has encouraged me.

That being so, I'm sure that she
Will rouse my spirits, lovingly.'
Her handsome brother he now took
The king by the hand; each man shook
The other's, both were fine and white.

He meets with Arthur

NOW, to King Arthur's great delight,
Free of any great show of might,
He had obtained a truce outright
From Orgeluse, who felt, at last,
That for the loss of Cidegast
She had received due recompense.
Despite a sorrow so intense
It troubled her yet, her anger
Occupied her mind no longer,
For with Gawain's embraces, she
Was less inclined to enmity.
Arthur thus led courtly ladies,
All fresh and lovely beauties,
Wed and unwed, to a rich tent;
A hundred, in all, therein went.
To Itonje, naught could be sweeter,
As she sat there than to see her
Lover; she was, therefore, happy,
Yet one might read, in her lovely
Eyes, that Love still tormented her.
A host of knights were gathered there,
Though Parzival outshone them all.
King Gramoflanz came there, withal.
That fearless monarch wore brocade,
In Gampfassasche his coat was made,
Threaded with gold that shed its rays
Far and wide, and dazzled their gaze.
Arriving, his company dismounted,
Pages, too many to be counted,

Ran ahead and entered the tent;
The chamberlains, with firm intent,
Cleared a path towards the Queen.
King Brandelidelin was seen
To enter the pavilion before
His nephew and as all there saw
Was greeted by Queen Guinevere
With a kiss, and then she did share
The same with King Gramoflanz,
Count Bernout, as he did advance,
And Affinamus. Then King Arthur,
Turned to Gramoflanz: 'Ere ever
You think of seating yourself here,
Look about, since there may appear
To be some lady that you prefer,
And well, you have leave to kiss her.'
The king out in the meadows there,
Had seen one who did thus prepare
His eyes to recognise his lover;
I refer to that handsome brother
Of one who had declared her love
As his, for all the world did prove
Lesser than he, in her bright eyes.
King Gramoflanz could thus surmise
Where the one who loved him sat,
And his happiness soared, in that
Arthur had allowed them to meet,
And, with a kiss, each other greet.
Upon the lips, he kissed Itonje.

Brandelidelin, readily,
Sat him down by Queen Guinevere,
While King Gramoflanz sat near
The girl whose bright face, I fear,
Was suffused with many a tear,
Till now, this was all, in a sense,
She'd had of him; her innocence

Were punished if he said naught,
But simply sat by her in thought.
He must speak, and pledge to serve
Her, and then he might deserve
Her thanks for his coming there.
Yet naught issued from the pair.
The two seemed content to gaze.
If I should catch what either says
I'll examine what this may mean;
If a 'no' or 'yes' one can glean.

Arthur and Brandelidelin forge a reconciliation

With a 'Now you've had time to say
A word to my wife, come this way,'
Arthur led Brandelidelin
To a small tent, and so within,
While at his request the King
And his companions, sitting
Amidst the ladies, thus remained,
And not one of them complained,
Of being left among the fair.
The pleasure they all garnered there,
Dazed by beauty, on every hand,
Was such as might content a man
That sought comfort for his woes.

Drink was brought, and I suppose
If the knights and the ladies there,
With the Queen, all drank their share,
A better colour they had to show,
For it. Now cup-bearers did go
To Arthur and Brandelidelin,
And as they departed, the King
Began: 'What if it did ensue
That your nephew my nephew slew;
If he wished, my friend, to offer

Himself as suitor to his lover,
My young niece, who tells her woes
To him o'er there, as I suppose,
She, if she had her wits about her,
Would never see him as a suitor,
And then, as far as that may be,
His deeds had bred her enmity.
Where hatred seeks to play a part,
Then joy must flee the loving heart.'
He turned to the lord at his side,
And he of Punturteis replied:
'These maternal nephews rather,
May end this, with equal honour,
For you and I must ban this fight,
And then ensure that each knight
Shall not now from the other part
Without taking him to his heart.
Your niece Itonje must command
My nephew, first, to stay his hand,
And waive the duel for her sake,
For life and love are here at stake;
Then all the danger will be o'er.
Help you the Duchess to ignore
Any feelings she harbours still,
And regain for him her good will.'
'All this,' said Arthur, 'I shall do.
Gawain, my nephew, he too
Has such authority with her
That to us both she will defer,
Over this matter we'll preside;
You must resolve it on your side.'
'I shall,' said Brandelidelin,
And then the pair returned within
The great pavilion, and there
The King of Punturteis did share
A place again nigh Guinevere,
And Parzival who did appear,

No less fair, on her other side,
No finer a man had any eyed.
Then Arthur sought my Lord Gawain,
Who knew already, as twas plain,
That King Gramoflanz had come,
And next saw Arthur riding from
His pavilion, then dismounting,
So, he ran out to greet the King.

They found the Duchess would agree
To reconciliation, yet she
Set out her terms, that for her sake
Her beloved Gawain must make
Peace, and cease to seek this fight,
And that Gramoflanz must, outright,
Withdraw the charge against King Lot;
The whole matter must be forgot,
And he must let the garland go.
She asked Arthur to tell him so,
And Arthur, that sagacious man,
Departed, to consider his plan.

Whatever hatred Gramoflanz
Still harboured, in this instance,
For King Lot, had melted away,
As snow does in the heat of day,
Without his resenting a thing.
He'd quenched his hatred of that king
For fair Itonje's sake, since she,
As he sat by her, made him agree,
To all she asked! And now they saw
Gawain approach, with many more
From out that glittering company,
Nor could I name that host, truly,
Or say whence all their titles came.
Now all ill-feeling, and all blame,
Was laid aside, for affection's sake.

Peace is achieved

PROUD Orgeluse her way did make,
To the pavilion, without pause,
With her mercenaries and Clinschor's
Squadron, a part though, not the whole,
And there the sides from pole to pole
Of that tent had been drawn aside,
Beneath its roof, and naught did hide.
Arthur had asked the wise Arnive,
And her daughter the fair Sangive,
And her daughter Condrie to attend
The solemn scene which would end
All conflict, and let those who feel
This to be trifling, let them reveal
Their news of a finer occasion.
Jofreit, Lord Gawain's companion,
Led Duchess Orgeluse by the hand
Towards the tent where she did stand,
And a noble courtesy rehearsed
As the three queens entered first.
Brandelidelin at this,
Greeted each one with a kiss,
The Duchess kissing him in turn,
While Gramoflanz, hoping to earn
Her goodwill, now approached her
To make peace, and she did offer
Him a kiss (thus to mark the peace)
From her sweet lips, yet did not cease
To mourn the death of Cidegast,
And felt the urge to weep at last.
Even now her womanly grief
Compelled her to seek relief
In tears, and to mourn that kiss.
Call it loyalty, if you wish.

Gawain and Gramoflanz, also,
Set their own seal upon it so,
With a kiss, and then King Arthur
Acting as if for Lot her father,
Gave his niece to Gramoflanz,
In marriage; not a circumstance
That he was unaccustomed to,
Though delighting Bene anew.
Condrie too was married within,
To Lischois, Duke of Gowerzin,
Whose fond love for her had brought
Him many a fierce pang unsought;
His life was devoid of happiness
Till he found joy in that princess.
Arthur gave Sangive, Lot's widow,
To the Turkoyt, Florant, also,
And that prince took her most gladly,
As a gift to cherish wholly.
The King was generous in that way,
In giving lovely ladies away;
He never wearied of doing so!
(All was agreed beforehand though)

Gramoflanz and Itonje are wed

ONCE all was settled, Orgeluse
Announced that my Lord Gawain, whose
Service, for love of her, had won
Him great acclaim and distinction,
Was the rightful lord of her lands
And person, saddening many a man
That, as knight-servitor, had sought
Her love, and many a contest fought.
Gawain, with his noble company,
Arnive, the Duchess, and a bevy
Of lovely ladies, and Parzival,
And Sangive and Condrie, these all

Took their leave, while fair Itonje
Stayed with Arthur. Let nobody
Boast of a finer wedding feast!
The Queen, Guinevere, was pleased
To grant Itonje, moreover,
And King Gramoflanz, her lover,
(Who, by love and loyalty moved,
His true distinction had proved),
All her aid, and her attention.
Many a knight, I might mention,
Went to his quarters, wholly
Smitten by love of some fair lady.
And thus, I need speak no further
Of the substance of that supper,
For all those who loved outright
Wished only that day were night.

King Gramoflanz, spurred on by pride,
Despatched a messenger, to ride
To Rosche Sabins, where his army
Was now encamped, beside the sea,
Instructing them to join him, all,
Ere dawn broke, and his Marshal
To seek a proper gathering place,
And then prepare the site apace.
'See that it speaks magnificence,
Each prince with his own ring of tents.'
He wished to make a great display.
The man set out as day gave way
To darkness, when many a knight
Found himself in a sorry plight
Brought about by some woman,
For when one's service as a man
Comes to naught, one rapidly
Succumbs to pain and misery,
Unless that woman grants her aid,
Rewards the efforts one has made.

Parzival departs Arthur's encampment

AS to Parzival, he thought only
Of Condwiramurs, his lovely
Wife, her charms, her modesty,
For deep within his heart was she.
Might he take up with another,
For such love, his service offer,
Pursue the path of faithlessness?
Such a love he'll ne'er address.
His manly person and true heart
Have ever played the honest part,
Maintained by loyalty, and so
No other will he seek to know
But Condwiramurs, the fairest
Flower with which Earth is blessed.

'How Love has treated me,' he thought,
'Since first the realm of Love I sought!
Of Love's true lineage am I,
How then can Love be lost thereby?
If I must strive to win the Grail,
And yet my love for her prevail,
Challenged must I forever be.
If my eyes yield delight for me,
While my sad heart speaks of woe,
They shall oppose each other so.
None win joy in such a manner.
Fortune guide me in the matter!'
Nearby his armour lay. 'Since I,
Lack what the joyful own, and by
That I mean Love which sets aright
A man's sad thoughts and brings delight,
Since I am denied my part in such,
I care not what happens, overmuch.
God does not will my happiness.

If our love, mine, and hers no less,
That drives me to languish for her,
Proved a bond that fate might sever,
One plagued by doubt and despair,
For another love I might prepare.
But this, the love that she inspires,
Parts me from other love, aspires
To no other hopes of happiness,
For no other love may I address.
No escape shall I find from woe.
May Fortune to those others though
Grant the joy that they long for,
True and lasting. May God secure
Joy for all those fair companies!
I from amidst the joys that please,
Shall ride.' He reached for his armour,
Not needing aid from any other,
And soon encased himself. For now
A fresh field of toil he'd plough.
And when that man, forsaking joy,
Was fully clad, he did employ
His own hands saddling his horse.
He found his shield, and in due course
The knight took up his lance. His riding
Forth so early in the morning,
Would be lamented thereabout.
Day was breaking, as he set out.

Book XV: The Infidel

Parzival encounters the Infidel, his half-brother Feirefiz

FROM those impatient that the end
Of the story lay hid from them,
Who failed however hard they tried,
To unlock it, I'll now take pride
In not withholding it, needlessly,

Since in my mouth I bear the key.
I shall make known, in plain speech,
The tale of how (the truth I teach)
The fair and gentle Anfortas came
To be made sound and whole again.
And how the Queen, furthermore,
Of Belrepeire, Condwiramurs,
Remained a woman chaste in thought,
Till she won what many have sought,
And entered into a realm of bliss.
Tis Parzival shall enable this,
If I've the skill to tell the tale,
For I'll recount for you, without fail,
Such toils as our knight, ne'er before
Undertook, for his deeds in war,
Or jousting, were gentler any day
Than such; indeed, were mere child's play.
Could I but waive my obligation
To tell the tale, on this occasion,
Then I'd not risk his life this day;
I'm loth to risk my own that way.
But now I shall commend his state,
Whatever bliss may prove his fate,
To his own heart, where bravery
Dwelt there beside true modesty.
His heart knew naught of cowardice,
And may he be assured by this,
That he shall keep his life intact.
Since tis his destiny to act,
A champion of every battle
Will soon his helm and shield rattle,
Jousting with him, at a venture.
That same man of courtly nature,
An Infidel, born to chivalry,
Was yet blind to Christianity.

Parzival rode, brisk as he could,

O'er open space towards a wood,
To meet with that valiant stranger.
Being so poor, it seems a wonder
That this knight can tell you aught
Of how splendidly was wrought
That Infidel's attire; were I
To speak of it till, by and by,
You grew weary of his wealth,
I'd be forced to try your health,
Sing on and on, in true report,
Were I to seek to tell you aught,
Of its magnificence. The sum
Of riches in Arthur's kingdom,
England, all Britain, would not buy,
The pure and noble gems the eye
Could gaze upon, on his tabard,
Enough to challenge any bard;
The coat was rarer, more costly,
Than ruby or chalcedony;
Pairs of salamanders within
The fires of Mount Agremuntin
Had woven it; twas set moreover
With gemstones of the first water,
And others opaque or lustrous,
Their virtues all unknown to us.
The Infidel sought for renown,
And love, and thus it might be found
That it was women in the main
Who, of admiration, had been fain
To grant him every last adornment
That upon his form was present.
Love brought spirit and true vigour
To his heart, as with every suitor,
Who might his lady's gifts display,
And quite as much as in our day.
To crown his fame, he wore upon
His helm, a creature, 'ecidemon';

Once a venomous snake scents it,
And meets the powers within it,
Its life is lost, due to the nature
Of this small but potent creature.
No such brocades might there be
In Thasme or in Araby,
Or in Thopedissimonte,
Or in Assigarzionate,
As his brave charger wore that day,
No trappings were as fine as they.
That handsome man, unbaptized,
Sought by all women to be prized,
And thus, he dressed with elegance.
His heart towards love must advance,
The highest and the noblest found.

The youth had anchored in the sound
By a cove, where stood many a tree,
Dense woods descending to the sea.
In keeping with his wealth and power,
Twenty-five armies, at that hour,
Had he, all well-equipped, yet none
Could understand another's tongue,
For he ruled as many territories.
Of varying aspects were all these,
Moors, and Saracens, and such like;
And in that host, that vast warlike
Gathering, drawn from far and wide,
Where unheard-of warriors did ride,
Many strange arms and armaments
Were seen amidst the princely tents.

For his part, he had left his army
There encamped, and alone had he
Ridden forth amongst the trees
Seeking adventure and to ease
His limbs. Since kings deem it right

To ride about in all their might
On their own, in search of glory,
I must let him ride, yet as surely
Parzival rode not so, for one;
Courage was his companion,
Who always fights so manfully,
That despite their mad frivolity
Women must praise him also.
Here two, gentle as lambs, do go,
Yet lions in valour, who do seek
Harm upon each other to wreak.
Alas that, though the Earth is wide,
They must meet, as on they ride,
This pair who'll fight, for no cause!
The matter would yet give me pause,
Given that I this man have brought
So far, were it not for the thought
That the Grail's powers will prove
His salvation, and also Love
Must protect him, for he has served
Both, faithfully, and never swerved.

The half-brothers fight each other

MY wit seems scarce fit to portray
The battle complete, yet I may say
Their eyes lit, as each saw the other;
Their hearts felt joy, yet a deeper
Woe lurked there, unseen; each man
Bore the other's heart, you understand,
Within him, thus each was closer
Than it seemed, although a stranger.
How shall I keep these two apart,
Christian and Infidel? My art
Is too weak to prevent the fall
Of a blow; it should sadden all
Good women, for each of this pair

Exposed himself to danger there,
For his mistress' sake. May fate
Avoid sad death, ere tis too late.

A lioness' cubs appear stillborn,
Yet are roused, ere she doth mourn,
Brought to life by their father's roar.
These were scions of joust and war,
Of lances shattered in the field,
And both had pierced many a shield
To the cost of the lances they bore,
Both had fought on many a shore.
From a canter they shortened rein,
And charging fiercely, took aim.
All points of the art they did meet,
Each man had adopted a firm seat,
Shaped himself for the encounter,
Closed his knees into the shoulder
Sinews of his mount, and then
Galoped to meet the other, when,
Those solid lances striking there,
Splinters went flying through the air.
Yet neither of the riders fell.
This fact incensed the Infidel,
For his opponent, Parzival,
Was the very first knight, of all
With whom he'd ever chanced to meet,
Who took the blow yet kept his seat.
Had they swords, when at high speed
They clashed together? Yes, indeed,
Broad blades and keen; their bravery
Was soon displayed, and skilfully
They fought, while the 'ecidemon'
Sorely wounded, and woebegone,
Gave the helmet there, beneath it,
Good cause to grieve at every hit.
Their chargers were soon worn out,

As their bold riders wheeled about,
Seeking advantage, till they leapt
From their saddles and, standing, swept
Their swords on high, till they sang,
Then on the gleaming armour rang.

The Infidel did harm thereby
To the Christian. His war-cry
Was 'Thasme!' and at each shout
Of 'Thabronit!' the knight stepped out
A single pace, and thus advanced.
The Christian (in and out he danced)
Was formidable in the charge,
Rushing near, striking at large.
The battle now reached such a pitch,
That it achieved a point at which
I must deplore their need to fight,
For tis the same blood in each knight,
The same life in each man's veins,
Their merciless attack maintains.
When all is said and done, that pair,
But the one father they did share,
Which grants the deepest loyalty.
The Infidel, known for bravery,
Had ever been disposed to love.
He had aspired his worth to prove
For the sake of Queen Secundille,
Who acted as a shield in peril,
At Tribalibot, granting him land.
Twas he now gained the upper hand:
What to do with this Christian?
Unless he turns to love, that man
Will slay him; let him not prevail!
Protect him now, O mighty Grail,
And you, the fair Condwiramurs!
The man who serves you both, is sure
To die, for here he stands, alone,

In the greatest danger he has known.

The Infidel raised his sword on high;
A rain of blows fell from the sky,
Upon the head of Parzival,
Forcing him to his knees, withal.
Whoe'er would say two fought there
Is thus allowed, in this affair,
To say 'they' fought, and yet but one
Were they, when all is said and done,
My brother and I share but one life,
As do a true man and his true wife.

The Infidel did harm thereby,
Raising his sword up on high.
Of tough asbestos was his shield,
That will not burn, or rot, or yield.
Surely, she loved, who gave it him!
And all its boss was lined, within
Its flanges, with precious stones,
Of many kinds, in varied zones,
Each of the finest water, too,
Emeralds, rubies, with the blue
Of turquoise, and green chrysoprase,
And, at its summit, you might gaze
Upon a gem, whose name I'll now
Reveal: for that stone, I avow,
In the East as 'anthrax' doth appear,
The red 'carbuncle' we name it here.
Queen Secundille in whose favour
He sought to live, had, moreover,
Granted him the 'ecidemon',
As his emblem, to place thereon,
And be companion to her love;
It was her wish that it should prove
His guardian, and shield his way,
So, twas set there, in bold display.

Pure loyalty to this they brought,
Great loyalty with loyalty fought,
Both, of their lives, trial did make,
In single combat, for Love's sake.
Each had so pledged; the Christian
Had faith in God, since that man
Of God, Trevrizent, had taught
That in Him aid should be sought,
Who holds the power to address
Our troubles, and so end distress.

The Infidel, tis true, possessed
Powerful limbs; as for the rest,
Whenever 'Thabronit!' he cried,
(Where Queen Secundille did abide,
At the feet of the Caucasus)
It rendered him more valorous;
He gained new courage to attack
This man who had seen no lack
Of encounters, who to all defeat
Had been a stranger, born to meet
Such challenge readily till now,
Unbowed; others to him did bow.

They plied their craft now skilfully,
Sparks, from their helms, flew fierily,
Their swords raised a bitter breeze,
One that many a heart would freeze.
God save Gahmuret's scions there!
For both of them I make that prayer,
The Christian and the Infidel;
I called them 'one', and both might well
Have themselves considered that so,
If they'd had space to come to know
Each other better, and not played
For such high stakes, the price paid
For that, perchance, being happiness,

Good fortune, honour, and success.
Should either conquer in this strife
Then he'll forego all joy in life,
If he cherishes the sacred bond
Of kinship, for the true and fond
There find heartless, endless woe.
Parzival, why thus prove so slow
To fix all your firm thoughts upon
That fair, and chaste, and loyal one,
Your wife I mean? Surely, you wish
To live and thrive in her service?

The Infidel possessed two things
Upon which his strength did hinge,
The first, enshrined there in his heart,
A constant love, set him apart
From other men, and another
The precious stones which did ever
Grant him vigour and add more
Power to his spirit, with their pure
And noble virtues. It vexes me
That the Christian grows weary,
And the Infidel must prevail.
If Condwiramurs and the Grail
Fail to come to your aid now
Then, valiant Parzival, allow
This one thought to hearten you,
That those sweet lads, those two,
Conceived of your last embrace,
Those two, fair in form and face,
Kardeiz and Loherangrin,
Whom your wife held there within
Her womb, and then granted you,
Must not live fatherless; tis true
That sweet children chastely got,
Are e'er a blessing on man's lot.

Fresh strength the Christian now sought,
Not a moment too soon, he thought
Of his wife the Queen, and her love,
That he had won when he did prove
The temper of his blade, below
The walls of Belrepeire, and so
Defeated King Clamide, while now
The sparks leapt as helms did bow,
To many a blow. Yet 'Thabronit!',
And 'Thasme!', both must now admit
A counter-cry, for Parzival, there,
Has raised his cry of 'Belrepeire!'
From full four kingdoms away,
Fair Condwiramurs, one might say,
Came to his aid, with the power,
Of her great love, in that same hour
Of need, thus the Infidel's shield
A host of rich splinters must yield.
And yet the blade broke, that day,
(Twas Ither's, of Gaheviez,
That which Parzival had taken)
By a fierce blow that had shaken
The Infidel's strong helm, and brought
The stranger, bravely though he fought,
To his knees. It no longer pleased
The Lord, that Parzival, who'd seized
The weapon from a corpse, should fight
With that blade, as if his of right,
As if to rob the dead were proper,
That fine sword he'd had of Ither,
In his foolish ignorance, knowing
No better, all youth's crassness showing.

They declare themselves and a friendship is established

THE Infidel, who had ne'er before
Fallen to such a blow, once more

Leapt to his feet, and so the matter,
Undecided, continued further;
The struggle must again begin,
The verdict, as to which might win,
Lies in the hands of God, on high,
May He ensure that none shall die.

The Infidel proved magnanimous.
'Tis clear to me,' for he spoke thus,
Politely, and in good French too,
'Brave warrior as you are, that you
Would seek to fight without a sword!
What honour then were my reward?
Cease, warlike man; say who you are;
Had your sword not snapped, by far
The better of us you'd have proved,
And all the jousts that I have moved,
All my renown, the deeds I've done
O'er many years; that fame had won.
Now, let there be peace between us
Till we are rested, seek honour thus.'
They both sat down upon the grass,
Musing on what had come to pass,
That well-bred pair, at rest again,
Not young or old, both fighting men.
'Now,' said the Infidel, 'brave knight,
Believe me, not once, in any fight,
Have I met a man more deserving
Of the fame won by our calling.
Deign, sir, to tell your name and birth,
So that my voyage proves one of worth
My journey here full prosperous.'
'If I'm to speak from fear, because
Duress rules here,' replied the son
Of Herzeloyde, 'and speak it, none
Need trouble to ask that same of me.'
'Then I'll speak,' said he of Thasme,

‘Name myself first, and undertake
To bear the reproaches any make.
I am Feirefiz Angevin,
And, with the power invested in
My rank, in lands beyond the sea,
Many pay tribute there, to me.’
Hearing these words, brave Parzival
Made this request of the Infidel:
‘What right have you to “Angevin”?
Anjou, and all that lies within,
Its lands and towns and fortresses,
Is mine, by inheritance no less.
Sir, pray choose another title,
If I must lose the noble castle
Of Bealzenan, you will have done
Violence on me; if anyone
May claim to be an Angevin
I am he, with my closest kin,
By true descent. Nonetheless,
I was told a true and fearless
Warrior, in some heathen land,
Both love and fame doth there command,
Through chivalrous deeds, and that he
Is said to be brother to me.
Those dwelling there grant him the palm.
Now, sir, and you shall take no harm,
Bare your head, for if I might see
Your features twould be clear to me
If you are the man they speak of so.
And if that far you’ll deign to go,
Then take my word for it, why then
I’ll do naught, till its clad again.’
‘I fear no harm,’ said the Infidel,
‘Had I no armour all were well,
I would win, yet not be flattered,
Since your sad blade is shattered.
All your skill in war were naught,

Unless I spared you, ere we fought.
Ere you e'en sought, thus, to begin,
My blade would pass through mail and skin.'
And then, with courteous intent,
The mighty Infidel swiftly sent
His sword flying through the air
Among the trees, crying: 'There!
It shall aid neither; should we fight,
Let all prove equal for each knight,
If we must war with one another.
Now, since it seems you have a brother,
Of your fine breeding, say how he is,
In appearance,' said Feirefiz,
'Describe his complexion, his face.'
'Tis like parchment a man doth grace
With writing, tis both black and white,
Such is the nature of that knight,
Such is his face,' replied the son
Of Herzeloyde, 'such is the one
Whom Ekuba described to me.'
The Infidel answered: 'I am he.'
Without delay each chose to doff
His dented helmet, and his coif.

Parzival found great treasure there,
Much the most precious anywhere,
For at once the Infidel was known,
Marked like a magpie, for his own.
They ceased their strife, with a kiss;
Much more fitting to end like this
As friends not bitter foes, the action
Resolved in closeness and affection.
'Happy am I now, and well met
Brave son of noble Gahmuret!'
Cried the Infidel, joyfully.
'My gods have looked kindly on me.
May my goddess Juno glory in this;

Great Jupiter has granted such bliss;
Gods, and goddesses, I adore you.
And may the planet be praised too
Beneath which I sought adventure,
And in that quest found a brother!
Praise be the dew, the breeze this morn
Which descended on me at dawn.
Fortunate are those women who
Are destined to see and greet you,
Gentle holder of Love's fair key.
How great shall be their felicity.'

He of Kanvoleiz said: 'How well
You speak; for I'd seek to excel
In such if I could, and so convey
My affection in some small way,
But, alas, am not so well versed
In oratory as to have rehearsed
Aught that might in fair words express
Your reputation, I thus confess.
God knows, I do not lack the wish.
Whatever arts I command in this,
Of heart and eye, they must proclaim
Naught else but that your noble fame
Is the choirmaster and they the choir,
I know that none else stands higher,
Nor was I ever, in honest fight,
Harder pressed by any knight.'
'Jupiter has neglected naught
In your making, and in short
Be not formal, my dear brother,
For after all we share one father.'
And with brotherly affection he
Asked that they speak familiarly.
This was not to Parzival's taste.
'Brother,' said he, 'you are placed,
In both power and wealth, alongside

The Baruc, and setting that aside,
You are the senior, and if I
Possess courtly manners, then my
Youth and poverty should keep me
From taking such a liberty
As to speak familiarly with you.’
Then this lord of Tribalibot,
Praised his god Jupiter, but not
More fulsomely than his Juno,
Who had arranged the weather so
That he and his army had made land,
Just where Parzival was at hand.
They sat down on the grass again,
Yet all due courtesy did maintain.

‘Now I shall grant you two rich lands,’
Said the Infidel, ‘your commands
They shall obey; my own they flank,
Fair Azagouc and Zazamanc;
Your father, and mine, both did gain
When young King Isenhart was slain.
Our sire abandoned none, unless
You’ll accept he left me fatherless,
Nor have I forgiven that wrong;
And his wife that bore me pined long
For the love she’d lost, and so died.
I’d like to meet him; tis denied
There e’er was a more perfect knight.
I’d hoped my eyes might have sight
Of him, and so have voyaged far
To find him.’ ‘In that, my eyes are
None the wiser,’ said Parzival.
‘I have been told, for men recall
His deeds in many a place still,
Of all he achieved, for his will
Was to garner fame and glory.
No sad misdeed marred his story.

He served fair ladies and, if they
Were sincere, none rued the day,
And so, requited it honestly.
He practised that firm loyalty
For which the Christian faith is praised,
The faith in which I too was raised,
And which is honoured yet. Aided
By his clear heart, ever unshaded,
He wrought true, in his every deed.
With that portrait all are agreed
All those, that is, who knew the man,
The sight of whom is all your plan.
You would commend him, I am sure,
Twas commendation he lived for,
If he lived still; but this servitor
Of ladies, was impelled to fight,
While serving as a loyal knight,
Brave King Ipomidon, neath the wall
Of Baghdad, where a host did fall.
There, in Love's name, his last breath
Was nobly rendered up to death,
Thus, was lost that most valorous
Knight, he who sired the two of us.'
'Woe, for harm past reparation,
Sorrow beyond all consolation!'
Cried the Infidel, 'Then is he dead?
I grieve; in truth, of bitter bread
I now must eat; all happiness
Is lost, and yet there is no less
A proof of it before my eyes!
At the self-same hour, I realise
My happiness, and lose it too.
Truly, I, my father, and you,
Were one; though ever seen as three,
No wise man deems them so. In me,
You fought yourself on this field;
I came to battle, not to yield

Myself, indeed, rather to slay;
By fighting fiercely, in that way,
You defended my life from me.
Jupiter, you worked wondrously;
Your power, aiding us, came between
Death and ourselves, as we have seen.’
He joyed yet wept too, inwardly,
Then showed his pain outwardly;
His infidel eyes began to scatter
Water-drops, in no small manner,
(As if sprinkled to the glory
Of the Baptism, whose story
Teaches love and loyalty.
Christ is love and loyalty;
And our Rule takes its name
From Christ, in whom that same
Was witnessed) The Infidel spoke.
I’ll tell you what words he spoke:
‘Let us tarry here no longer.
Ride me with a little further,
And I’ll order the finest army
That Juno e’er sped o’er the sea,
To quit the waves, and encamp here,
So that you might view them near.
Truly, and tis no empty boast,
I’ll show you a most noble host,
That pays me homage; ride with me.’
‘Have you such rule of your army
That they will wait on you today,
And for as long as you’re away?’
Asked Parzival. ‘Assuredly,
And tis a thing that you shall see.’
He replied, ‘Were it half a year
I should find them all fast here,
Without exception, high or low.
The ships are provisioned also;
No man or horse need be ashore,

Except to fetch fresh water or
Take the air awhile on land.’
‘Then, in return you understand,
I shall show you lovely ladies,
Amidst them radiant beauties,’
Parzival advised his brother,
‘Who shall, the one or another,
Occasion you courtly delight,
And with them many a knight
To our own noble lineage peer,
For Arthur of Britain lies here,
Encamped with all his following.
So, I left them, but this morning;
And all that charming company,
Many a fair lady you shall see.’

When the Infidel heard the name
Of woman (for that very same
Was to him his true life and soul)
He said: ‘With you I shall enrol,
Yet answer me this question too,
Shall I meet kinfolk when I do?
I have heard that this famed Arthur
Lives magnificently, moreover.’
‘We’ll see glittering ladies there,’
Said Parzival, ‘therefore prepare;
Our ride will not have proved in vain,
And we’ll find our true race again,
The very folk whose blood we share,
And royal crowns amidst them there.’
They rose; Parzival did remember
To fetch the sword for his brother
And sheathed it firmly, once more.
So, twixt them, their sorry war,
All hostility, at an end,
They rode together, friend with friend.

Parzival and the Infidel are greeted by Gawain

THE news was known at Arthur's court
Before ever his camp they sought.
That day the army knew great sorrow,
For Parzival had left that morrow,
And, after taking counsel, Arthur
Had resolved to ride no further,
But wait, that week, for Parzival.
Gramoflanz too was there with all
His army, and many a wide ring
Of bright tents was set for the King,
And there the proud nobles stayed.
The four brides could not have made
A sweeter or pleasanter journey,
Nor dwelt there more comfortably.

At this time a messenger came
From Schastel Marveile, that same
Reported a contest they had seen
In the Pillar, the which had been
'Greater than any sword-fight ever!'
As Gawain was seated by Arthur,
The man arrived, and this did say.
Then the knights 'gan right away
To question who had fought the fight.
'I'll suggest that one brave knight
Must be my kinsman,' said Arthur,
'He of Kanvoleiz who rode further
This fair morn,' as the pair rode in.
Their helmets and shields both had seen
Many a blow struck in a manner
That war and chivalry did honour;
Both their right hands were versed
In tracing the lines of war, rehearsed
On many a field for, in war,
Art is needed, and knightly lore.

They rode about King Arthur's ring,
And many an eye went following,
Seeing the Infidel richly dressed,
For many a tent for many a guest
Was set there, as that pair turned
Past the high pavilion, concerned
To reach Gawain's lodging there.
Did any show their weight of care
Was lifted, and how they felt joy?
I imagine so! Gawain's employ
Was to go swiftly from the court
For he had seen that they now sought
His own pavilion, and there did he
Receive them both most joyfully.
The two were still in their armour,
And in due, and courtly, manner,
That courteous man Lord Gawain
Soon had the pair disarmed again.
That creature the 'ecidemon'
Had witnessed its share of action,
And the surcoat the Infidel
Was wearing had suffered as well.
Twas of saranthesme, arrayed
With many a gem, and displayed
A tabard beneath it, snow-white,
Its pile embroidered, and the knight
Had costly jewels set there also.
Pairs of salamanders work so,
Weaving such fabrics in the fire.
The lady who dressed him entire,
Riskyed her love, lands and person;
Queen Secundille was such a one,
While he in turn was nothing loth
In happiness or in danger, both,
To serve her wish, for her desire
Was to bestow such rich attire
On the man, for his great fame

Had won the love of that same.
Gawain to his servants appealed,
To see that surcoat, helm and shield,
Were not taken far, nor marred,
For any fair lady twould be hard
To afford that tabard (the gems
Were costly, on all four items)
If she were not just as wealthy.
But a love both rich and lofty
Can well adorn such a knight,
If the wish and heart be right,
Coupled to the means that is,
And craftsmanship such as this.
Feirefiz, the proud, took care
To woo the ladies everywhere,
So none denied him his reward;
All did him their favour afford.

His armour was removed, all there
At this mottled man must stare,
And all those who liked to speak
Of wonders had not far to seek,
They'd proof of such before them,
His skin was of a strange pattern!
'Kinsman,' said my Lord Gawain,
To Parzival, 'now, I am fain
To seek acquaintance with your friend.
He looks so elegant, one might send
Far and wide to meet with the same,
I'd know his lineage and his name.'
'If I am your kinsman,' he replied,
'His kinship may not be denied.
And tis Gahmuret you may thank.
This is the King of Zazamanc,
That land where my father came,
And nobly won Queen Belacane,
She who bore this same noble knight.'

Feirefiz' skin shone black and white,
Though half his mouth was red as well.
Gawain now kissed the Infidel.

Splendid attire the servants brought,
For all three knights to wear at court,
Of Lord Gawain's wardrobe, and now
Fair ladies were come there, I avow.
The Duchess had Condrie and Sangive
Kiss him first, and then Queen Arnive.
Feirefiz was much pleased to behold
Such lovely women, so I'm told,
I fancy he was more than pleased
With kisses so pleasantly seized.

'Kinsman,' said my Lord Gawain
To Parzival, 'to the eye tis plain
Your helm and shield have undergone
New trials, once your armour was on.
You have fought, you and your brother,
Who then was the hostile other?'
'You never heard of a harder fight!
My brother was that other knight,
Who forced me,' replied Parzival,
'To defend myself fiercely withal.
Self-defence is a wall 'gainst death,
My sword, it shattered in a breath,
As I dealt this stranger a sharp blow,
But scant fear did my brother show,
Hurling his own sword beyond reach.
He would not my defence so breach,
Fearing to work a wrong upon me,
Even before my brother knew me.
Now I enjoy his love and goodwill,
And would deserve that of him still.'
'I heard of this battle, said Gawain,
'From Schastel Marveile it was plain

To see, in the Pillar that reflects
People, and things, and their effects,
Within a six miles distance from
My watchtower. Twas known, in sum.
Arthur, my uncle, claimed he knew
One of the knights seen must be you,
My kinsman of Kingrivals. Here
You confirm it, although tis clear
Twas already set to your account.
Believe me, when I now recount
We chose to wait a week for you
In this place, and to hold a feast.
Come, rest yourselves now at least
Tis troubling that you should fight
Yet if I read the thing aright,
Having fought you'll surely know
The other better for doing so.
Be friends where you were enemies.'

They dine with him and the fair company

GAWAIN supped earlier to please
Those two who'd not yet dined at all,
Namely his kinsmen, Parzival
And his brother Feirefiz Angevin.
A circle of mattresses, not thin
But deep and long, was covered o'er;
The various quilts that it bore
Were made of thick palmat silk,
Over them brocades of that ilk,
Of ample length, made fine array,
(Twas Clinschor's wealth on display!)
And many a soft downy cushion
Spread with quilts, in rich fashion.
Four great backcloths were made
To form a square, of fine brocade,
Against these the cushions were set,

And in a square those backrests met.
The whole circle took in a space
That six large pavilions might grace,
Without crowding; but I shall fail
In my task here, if I regale
You with every wondrous thing.
My Lord Gawain sent to the King,
With news of his guests' arrival,
Proud Feirefiz, and Parzival,
The former the mighty Infidel
Whom, beside the Plimizoel,
The heathen Ekuba had praised.
Jofreit son of Idoel liaised,
Asking the king to dine early,
And to gather lords and ladies,
Famed knights and fair beauties,
And go there with due ceremony,
And arrange all, of his courtesy,
Such that they might receive, as one,
And honour, brave Gahmuret's son.
'I shall bring all of distinction
I have here,' replied the Briton.
'He's full courtly, sire,' Jofreit said,
'Have no concerns upon that head,
Indeed, you'll find much to admire,
As many wonders as you desire,
For he comes from a wealthy land
And none could readily command
The wealth to buy his fair armour,
None such a vast debt could honour,
For one might not easily gain it,
E'en if one were to set against it,
Löver, and Britain, with England,
And all from Paris to Wissant.'

Jofreit returned, and meanwhile
All had been seated, in this style:

Gawain had placed many a knight,
Bound to the Duchess, on the right;
On the left dined Clinschor's men,
While opposite him, at the far end,
Were the seats set for the ladies
Of Clinschor's party, fair beauties,
And there too Feirefiz and Parzival,
Sitting, dazzled, amongst them all;
Noble brother shared with brother.
These sat opposite one another,
Amongst that splendid company,
The Duke of Gowerzin and Condrie,
Florant the Turkoyt and Sangive.
The Duchess shared with Queen Arnive
Who sat at my Lord Gawain' side,
With Orgeluse on her other side;
The Duchess and his grandmother,
Might thus entertain each other.
Nor were Jofreit and Lord Gawain
Neglectful, for they did maintain
Their old friendship, close together,
Dining there from the same platter.

All was elegance in that fair ring,
The many platters they did bring
Were served with due propriety.
Feirefiz observed: 'That I now see
My noble kinsmen, must be all
Jupiter's doing, and my landfall
He contrived to this certain end.
I have every cause to commend
The father I lost, since he came
Of noble lineage, great their fame.'
'You shall see more men of worth,
Who deserve your notice, no dearth
Of brave knights ranged about Arthur,
Who is their patron, moreover,'

Said Parzival, 'when the meal is o'er
You will see him, and many more,
Fit to be praised, and notable.
As to those of the Round Table
Now present, there are only three,
Our host, Jofreit, and there fell to me
That honour of being asked to sit
Amongst them, and I agreed to it.'

The places set for my Lord Gawain,
All having dined, were cleared again.
Gawain now rose, and most earnestly
Asked the Duchess, full courteously,
And his grandmother, Queen Arnive,
To take sweet Condrie and Sangive,
And to go and seek to entertain
The Infidel, Feirefiz, who was fain
On seeing the ladies approaching
To receive them, swiftly rising
To greet them, as did Parzival.
The lovely Duchess then did call
On all the knights and ladies who
Did also rise, to be seated anew,
As she took Feirefiz by the hand.
Yet, as she gave this fair command,
Arthur arrived with his company,
To a wondrous cacophony,
Trumpets, shawms, flutes, tabors, all
Blaring, piping, crashing, a wall
Of sound, for Arnive's son was there!
Feirefiz thought this a grand affair!

Feirefiz, the Infidel, is received by King Arthur

IN this fine manner rode the King
Towards Gawain's splendid ring,
Accompanied by Queen Guinevere

And many a knight did there appear
And many a glittering lady.
The Infidel could witness clearly
Their freshness of youth, and zest.
King Gramoflanz was still a guest
Of Arthur's, and his fair Itonje
Was also there, sweet and lovely.
The company of the Round Table
Alighted, with, as if in fable,
A host of beauties. Guinevere
Gave precedence to Itonje here,
In kissing their kin, the Infidel;
Then she approached him as well,
And greeted Feirefiz with a kiss.
Arthur and Gramoflanz, at this,
Received the heathen sincerely,
Offering him their humble duty,
While more of his kinsmen still,
Gave him marks of their goodwill.
Feirefiz was quick to realise
Many a friend, that met his eyes.

Knights, ladies, each took their seat,
With many a sweet girl to complete
The picture, and its splendour prove.
Now bold knights, keen to sue for love,
From sweet lips, could seek sweet speech,
For many a fine lady might reach
To greeting praise without offence.
No good woman ere sought defence
From a man who claimed her aid,
Nor such a man should she upbraid,
For tis the woman's right to say,
At such a moment, 'no' or 'yea'.
If happiness yields wealth, tis true
Love, that affords such revenue.
In this style did such nobles live;

Service its due reward did give,
Both were seated, there, side by side.
A mistress' voice can oft provide
The help that rescues her friend,
That he might his address amend.

Arthur sat beside Feirefiz, there,
Neither was reluctant to share
Question and answer, pleasantly,
And in full detail, and cogently.
'God be praised for the honour
Of greeting you,' said King Arthur,
'None out of Infidel lands, sir knight,
Come to those of the Christian rite,
Would I now serve more willingly;
Ask then what you would of me.'
'All my misfortune ended where
The Goddess Juno stirred the air,
Filling the sails so I might come
Here, to your fair western kingdom,
Feirefiz said. 'Arthur's a man
Much renowned in many a land;
In many a far-flung country,
Are you known, if you are he.'
'Whoe'er it was praised me to you,
And others, honoured himself too,'
Said Arthur, 'his good breeding
Prompted it, more than anything
I may have done; twas courtesy
To utter such fair things of me.
Arthur am I, and would gladly
Learn how you came to this country.
If for some lady you did venture,
That sent you in quest of adventure,
She must be fair for whom you sailed
Such distances. If you've prevailed
And she cheats you not of reward,

To such ladies' service twill afford
Fresh glory. But if you sailed in vain
All the sex shall hear us complain
We, their vast host of servitors.'
'I venture in a most worthy cause,
Tis the reverse,' cried the Infidel,
'Of how I came here let me tell.
So powerful an army I employ
That all those defenders of Troy,
And those who, in a distant age,
After a great and warlike voyage,
Fought them, would simply allow
Me free passage, if they lived now,
They all must go down to defeat
If they sought to attack my fleet.
And I have achieved much honour
Winning Queen Secundille's favour,
By deeds of arms, in many a test.
Whate'er she may wish, I attest,
Tis my wish too, she grants to me
An aim in life, great and worthy.
Tis she commanded me to give
Generously, while I may live,
And so be pleased, for her sake,
To find good knights, an army make,
And so have I done; men of renown,
In my vast following, may be found.
For all my toil with lance and sword,
In return, love is my reward.
As she commands, when in the field
I show the 'acidemon' on my shield.
Whenever I meet with any danger,
As soon as my thoughts fly to her,
Her love has come to my aid ever,
And inspired me, more than Jupiter,
My god, has done.' 'It is your nature,
And is inherited from your father,

And my kinsman, brave Gahmuret,
That, in far lands, you journey yet,
In a lady's service,' said Arthur,
'And I will tell you of another
Chivalrous service (than which none
Greater has ever yet been done,
For a woman of noble birth
Born to charm us on this earth,
I mean the Duchess sitting here.
Many a forest did brave men clear,
For fresh lances, to win her love.
And many a fine knight did prove
Traitor to his own happiness
And fame, in failing of success.'
Arthur told him of her army,
And of Clinschor's company,
Who were sitting to either side,
And of her war, and much beside,
Of the one and the other battle
That Feirefiz' brother, Parzival,
Had fought there on the meadow
At Joflanze: 'And, whene'er he so
Fights, he spares himself not at all.
He seeks a high prize, Parzival,
For he aspires to win the Grail!
But on your good-will I'll prevail,
For I would seek to know of every
Lord you enlisted, and his country.'

Feirefiz names the leaders of his army

'I shall name those, in command,'
Said the Infidel, 'and their land:
King Papiris of Trogodjente,
Count Behantins of Kalomidente,
Duke Farjelastis of Affricke,
And King Liddamus of Agrippe;

King Tridanz of Tinodonte,
King Amaspartins of Schipelpjonte,
Duke Lippidins of Agremuntin,
King Milon of Nomadjentisin;
From Assigarzionate, Count Gabarins,
From Rivigitas, King Translapins,
From Hiberborticon, Count Filones,
From Centrion, King Kyllicrates;
Count Lysander of Ipopotiycon,
And Duke Tiride of Elixodjon;
From Orastegentesin, King Thoaris,
From Satarchjonte, Duke Alamis;
King Amincas of Sotofeititon,
And the Duke of Duscontemedon,
From Arabia, King Zoroaster,
And Count Possizonjus of Thiler;
Duke Sennes of Narjoclin
Count Edisson of Lanzasardin;
From Janfuse, the Count Fristines,
From Atropfagente, Duke Meiones;
From Nourient, Duke Archeinor,
From Panfatis, the Count Astor;
The lords of Azagouc, Zazamanc;
From Gampfassache, King Jetakranc;
The Count Jurans of Blemunzin,
And Duke Affinamus of Amantisin.
One thing alone disgraces me.
People claimed, in my country,
Gahmuret Angevin, my father,
Was e'er the best astride a charger,
And that no finer knight e'er rode.
It was my wish, my knightly code,
To journey till I found the man;
To hone my skills, went hand in hand,
So I embarked a mighty army
Drawn from my kingdoms, ready
To seek out deeds of arms; where'er

I met with martial conflict, there
I, nonetheless, subdued the foe;
Through distant regions, I did go.
Two queens showed their love for me,
And those I served, accordingly,
And now a third, Queen Secundille,
Tis my place to obey her will.
For love of women, much I've done,
Yet he, of whom I am the son,
My father, Gahmuret, I learn, here,
Is slain, and I must shed a tear.
Come, let my brother tell his tale.'

Parzival names the knights he has defeated

'SINCE I departed from the Grail,'
Said noble Parzival, 'I have seen
Much in battle, and I have been
In many a hard fight in the field,
In close encounter knights did yield
To me, and I have dented the fame
Of men unaccustomed to that same,
Many a warrior, brave and true,
And I will name them here for you:
From Lirivoyn, King Schirniel,
His brother, of Avendroyn, Mirabel;
King Serabil of Rozokarz,
King Piblesun of Lorneparz;
King Senilgorz of Sirnegunz,
Lord Strangedorz of Villegarunz;
Of Mirnetalle, Count Rodegal,
Of Pleyedunze, Lord Laudunal;
King Onipriz of Itolac,
King Zyrolan of Semblidac;
Of Jeroplis, Duke Jerneganz,
Of Zambron, Count Plineschanz;
Of Tuteleunz, Count Longefiez,

Of Privegarz, Duke Marangliez;
Of Pictacon, Duke Strennolas,
Of Lampregun, Count Parfoyas;
Of Ascalun, King Vergulaht,
Of Pranzile, Count Bogudaht;
Lord Postefar of Laudundrehte,
Duke Leidebron of Redunzehte;
Of Leterbe, Lord Colleval,
Jovedast of Arles, the Provençal,
Of Tripparun, Count Karfodyas;
Thus, did I where'er I did pass,
Of honest tourneys, I did avail
Myself, while searching for the Grail.
Yet, if asked to name each last one,
I'd fail; when all is said and done,
Of those forgotten there are many,
Neglected from pure necessity;
And yet I think that I've named all,
Known to me, and whom I recall.'
The Infidel was so greatly pleased
With his brother's deeds, when he ceased
He yielded him thanks for the favour,
Since, from those, he too gained honour.

King Arthur lays out a Round Table, by moonlight

MEANWHILE Gawain, secretly,
Ordered the Infidel's panoply
To be brought within the ring,
The tabard, surcoat, everything,
Helm and shield also. All thought
Gazing at what craft had wrought,
The work fine; knights and ladies,
Reflecting on its various beauties.
The helm was moulded perfectly
While all admired the majesty
And splendour of the gems set there.

Let none ask what kinds they were:
Heraclius, Hercules, Alexander
The Greek, they could all better
Inform you, or wise Pythagoras,
Who observed the stars, and was,
Beyond doubt, so knowing none
Since Adam's time, no, not a one,
Equalled him in understanding;
For he could to such matters bring
Great knowledge of precious stones.
The ladies said, in whispered tones,
That should Feirefiz, however,
Prove false to that woman, ever,
Who had adorned him, his fame
Must be tarnished by that same.
It seems to me, that many a one,
Swayed by his rare complexion,
Were so disposed to him that they
Had wished his service any day.
Gramoflanz, Arthur, Parzival,
And their host Gawain, now all
Withdrew, leaving the Infidel
Amidst the young and beautiful.

King Arthur now prepared to hold
A feast, ere the morrow was old,
In the meadow there, without fail,
And on his followers did prevail
To give their energy and thought
To bringing Feirefiz, as he sought,
Within the Round Table's company,
As his kinsman, with due courtesy.
They swore to do so, one and all,
Unless Feirefiz refused the call;
But the Infidel asked to be one
Of that band, as their companion,
Agreeing to accept that same

Tribute to his honour and fame.
After their parting cup they went
To their rest, full of good intent.
(Many would be pleased next morn
By 'the sweet and shining dawn'
If I may so express myself)
Uther Pendragon's son himself
Could now be seen readying
A Round Table, made by laying
Lengths of fabric, drianthasme,
On the grass, most carefully,
Just as they had formed the Table
In the meadow by the Plimizoel.
This was cut in the same manner,
In a circle, marked by splendour.
They set a ring of seats around,
On the turf, the length of ground
Enough to joust, between the ring
And the Round Table, now sitting
There at the centre, not for any
Use that it might give, twas simply
An emblem to denote that same.
There, many a man without a name,
Would have been ashamed to sit
Beside the famous; a sin would it
Have been, to partake of their fare
And dine with the glorious there.
In the moonlight they marked it out,
And placed the seating all about,
And by mid-morn, when all could see
The ring was ready, its majesty
Was such as might have laid empty
Some lesser king's whole treasury.
Gramoflanz and my Lord Gawain
Bore the cost of it, in the main,
Yet with some help from King Arthur,
Though there he was but a stranger.

The Company of the Round Table gather

NE'ER do we see the fall of night,
Without the sun brings back the light
As is its wont, and that precisely
Is what happened there, for shortly
Day shone sweet, and clear, and bright.
Smoothing his hair, many a knight
Set a garland there; you might see
The fair white skin of many a lady,
Unpainted, just as nature made it,
(If Kyot speaks the truth about it!)
Their clothes were not of just one land,
The women wore head-dress or band,
Placed high or low upon the brow,
According to their nation, as now
They gathered, from many a country,
In which customs will ever vary.
No fair lady dared take her seat
At the Table unless complete
With her knight, on any pretext.
But if, like to others of her sex,
She received service that aspired
To its reward, and was required
To bestow it, she rode to the ring
Of that Table; the rest, forgoing
Any glory, each scarce content,
Left to remain there in their tent.

Once King Arthur had heard Mass,
Gramoflanz rode o'er the grass,
Beside him the Duke of Gowerzin,
And brave Florant along with him.
Each asked to join the Company
Of the Round Table, and readily
Did Arthur agree to their request.

And if you're asked which fine guest
Was the richest and most powerful
That ever sat at the Round Table,
You could not do better than say
Twas Feirefiz Angevin that day;
And so, we'll let the matter rest.
They rode to the ring, many a guest,
In fine style, and many a lady
Jostled, would, if her palfrey
Had not been well-girthed, gone down.
Splendid banners showed all around.
The guests rode together, sweeping
About the Table, outside the ring,
And that was a matter of courtesy
None rode within it, carelessly;
The meadow outside was full large,
Enough to gallop, and to charge
Each other, the fair knights I mean,
And delight the ladies, on the green,
With varied feats of horsemanship,
And bring sweet cries to many a lip.
Yet, at length, their frolics ceased,
They took their seats there at the feast.
Chamberlains, butlers, stewards brought
Food and drink, just as they ought
With all due pomp and ceremony,
And granted all they wished I fancy.
Each lady there beside her knight
Found her fame enhanced outright.
Many had been honoured by deeds
Inspired by hearts in which the seeds
Of love therein had roused desire.
Feirefiz and Parzival, like their sire,
Found a fair choice of lovely ladies,
And among them several beauties,
For their judgement, midst that band,
Some distant, others near to hand.

In field or meadow, faces fairer
Or sweeter lips, fresher, redder,
Were ne'er seen in such profusion,
(A source of pleasure and confusion
To the Infidel) in ring or tent.

Cundrie La Surziere again appears before the Round Table

HAIL to this day of fair advent!
And blessed, indeed, the sweet word
That now from virgin lips they heard!
For one they saw fast approaching.
Full richly dressed, she neared the ring,
Her costly clothes well cut, and done
With elegance, in the French fashion.
Her hood was of rich samite, darker
Than a genet's markings; all over
Were woven doves, in every fold,
Portrayed in Arabian gold;
They were the emblem of the Grail.
Towards the scene now let her sail;
And let all gaze as she doth ride,
Those curious folk on every side.
She rode over the field smoothly;
Despite its ambling gait, her palfrey
Bridle, saddle, were of great worth,
As costly as any upon this Earth.
Her wimple was high and white
And her whole face was hid from sight
Shrouded with many a thick fold,
Beneath that hood, and its rich gold.
They let her ride within the ring.
No fool of a girl, but full knowing,
She rode right around that ring,
As they all pointed out the king,
And she was quick to salute him.
Twas in French she gave her greeting.

And the reason she'd come there
Was to seek pardon, and declare
A wrong she'd done and so request
A hearing and, as for the rest,
She begged the King and Queen's aid,
And their approval, and then she made
A turn, to where she saw Parzival
Seated by Arthur; swiftly withal,
She leapt down from her palfrey
To the grass, and with courtesy,
Of which she had no lack, did kneel
Before him, and made this appeal,
Seeking his goodwill, as she wept:
That whatever anger still slept
In him, regarding her, he would
Set it by, pardoning, if he could,
Past wrong, though without the kiss
Of reconciliation. In this,
Arthur and Feirefiz did warmly
Grant support to her fervent plea.
Parzival, at his friends' request,
Agreed he would forgive this guest,
Sincerely, and without malice,
And in full, such was his promise.

She declares that Parzival is to be Lord of the Grail

THAT true and noble woman, whom
None might call fair, did now assume
Her feet, and to all who'd helped her
Bowed in thanks, now that her error
They'd forgiven, and then unwound
Her wimple, throwing to the ground
The costly hood, ribbons and all.
Cundrie La Surziere stood tall;
She was known, now they had sight
Of her face, and each valiant knight,

Knew the dove-emblem of the Grail.
They recognised her without fail.
Her features were as they had been,
Those that men and women had seen
As she'd approached the Plimizoel.
Of her strange looks you've been told;
The colour of topaz were her eyes,
Her teeth long, her mouth like skies
Before great storms, a bluish violet.
Except that she'd hoped to be met
With praise, she need not have worn
That costly hat that she had borne
Beside the Plimizoel, since the sun
Not a shred of harm had done,
Its treacherous rays could not impair
Her skin through that wealth of hair.

She stood there, and most solemnly
Gave utterance, much like prophecy;
And here's the speech now begun:
'O happy man, brave Gahmuret's son!
Now God reveals His grace in you,
A man found both honest and true,
You whom Herzeloyde once bore!
I greet too Feirefiz the pied, for
Secundille's sake, and the many
Honours, won so chivalrously,
By him since his boyhood days.'
To Parzival she spoke in praise:
'Now be humble and yet feel joy,
O happy man, at such employ,
You crown of man's felicity!
The inscription read, of a surety,
Tis you shall be Lord of the Grail!
And your wife too, I must hail,
Condwiramurs, she is assigned
There with you, and you shall find

Your son Loherangrin, he also,
With you to Munsalvaesche must go.
Twin sons she bore after you'd gone;
The other, Kardeiz, shall long
Rule all your lands, from Brobarz.
Were you to play no other part,
Find no good fortune other than
With true heart to address that man,
Noble, and gentle, Anfortas,
And with a question heal, at last,
His dire affliction, and banish his
Sore pain, who yet could match your bliss?'
Then seven lights did Cundrie name,
In Arabic; Feirefiz knew those same,
Heavenly bodies, the noble knight,
Seated before her, pied black and white.
'Come now, take note, brave Parzival:
The furthest of these is Zuhel,
Next, Al-mushtari, swifter by far,
And third the red orb, Al-ahmar,
Then Ash-shams, the glittering sun,
Promise of your fortune to come,
Bright Az-zuhara is the fifth,
Al-katib, 'the scribe', the sixth,
While Al-quamar is the nearest;
What I utter is of the clearest;
Bridling the firmament, these seven,
Counter the onrush of each heaven,
With courses, forever contrary
To the firmament, in swift journey.
All that these famed lights embrace,
Within their orbit, every last place,
All that they shed their light upon,
Marks the scope, as they move on
Of what you may win, for, indeed,
Your woe is doomed to pass, tis greed
Alone can deny you your portion.

The Grail denies a false companion,
Its power forbids. Cares and fears,
You nurtured in your tender years,
But happiness, approaching now,
Will banish such; I here avow,
You shall win to your soul's peace;
Joy, in this body; woes will cease.'

Parzival is allowed one companion on his journey

NAUGHT but delight felt Parzival;
Tears of joy from his eyes did fall,
The heart's spring. 'Madam,' he said,
As, gazing at her, he bowed his head,
'If I may have been found worthy
Of all that you've declared to me,
Such that my sinful self, my wife,
And children, are to share that life,
Then God has indeed proved kind,
For now it doth seem, to my mind,
As far as any amends you owe me,
Your words but showed sincerity;
Had I not failed to ask the question,
You'd have spared me your derision;
There indeed good-fortune failed me.
But now you grant me such mastery
That sorrow is fled, and all my care;
The emblems on your hood declare
The very same, for when I did pass
Those hours with woeful Anfortas,
At Munsalvaesche, the shields I saw,
Hanging there, that device they bore,
The dove; and, here, doves you show!
Now Madame, say, how shall I go
And when, on the path to happiness;
Let me not linger, to my distress!'
She answered: 'My dear lord, choose one

To go as your companion.
For guidance look to me this day,
You bear aid, so brook no delay.'

Now the word went around the ring
Of the news that Cundrie did bring,
And Orgeluse wept for joy because
The cruel suffering of Anfortas
Would be relieved by Parzival;
His one question would end it all.
Cundrie was now addressed by Arthur,
Ever courteous in seeking honour.
'My lady, ride on to your quarters,
And be seen to now by others.'
'If Arnive is here,' she replied,
'I shall seek shelter at her side,
Until my lord is ready to leave.
If from captivity she was freed,
Let me greet her, perchance more
Too, of those to whom Clinschor
Showed his malice, prisoning them
For many a year.' Two lords then
Helped her to mount her palfrey,
And the maiden, more than worthy,
Rode on, to seek out Queen Arnive.
An end to the feast did now arrive.
And once the courtesies were over,
Parzival sought to ask his brother
As they sat there, if he'd make one
On that journey, as his companion,
And Feirefiz said he'd gladly ride,
To Munsalvaesche, at his brother's side.

Parzival and Feirefiz set out, with Cundrie, for Munsalvaesche

THEN at once throughout the ring
All rose, with Feirefiz soon asking

King Gramoflanz if he would prove
His perfect and undying love,
For Itonje, his kin: 'Lend a hand
You and Gawain, now, and demand
That not one king, prince, or baron,
Must quit this place, not to mention
All of the landless knights, without
Viewing my treasure; for no doubt
I'd be much shamed were I to go
And did not a single gift bestow.
And all the strolling players too
Can look to me for payment true.
King Arthur, I beg your favour,
Seek to win your great lords over
To the thought, and not scorn it,
With your own example adorn it,
Granting each one the guarantee
He needs fear no loss of dignity;
Such wealth they may not comprehend.
Grant me messengers too, to send
To the haven where gifts may be
Unloaded swiftly, and brought to me.'
They promised the Infidel that they
Would not depart till the fifth day,
And he was pleased so I am told.
Arthur granted him men fourfold,
To send down to the ship at anchor.
Feirefiz took parchment moreover,
And inked a missive, not lacking
In the authentic marks, sprinkling
Them all about the letters, I fancy
No message e'er showed so many.
The messengers now left that place.

Then Parzival, in French, did grace
Them with a speech, informing all
(As Trevrizent, you may recall,

Had instructed him) 'none may avail
Themselves of force to win the Grail;
Summoned by God, the chosen one
By whom the blessing shall be won.'
That news soon spread to every land;
Twould not be had by force of hand,
And many did then forego the quest,
And that whole matter, and let it rest,
And, thus, it lies hidden to this day.

Parzival and Feirefiz, I might say,
Made many a lady sad. They rode
About the four armies and showed
Their regrets at going, as they ought,
Then their road they gladly sought,
Fully armed, 'gainst any encounter,
With lance and sword, shield and armour.
On the third day gifts were brought
From the Infidel's fleet, to the court
At Joflanze, gifts of such splendour
That any king who had the honour
Of anything from Feirefiz' bounty
Thus, forever endowed his country;
For none had e'er received such things,
So apt to their rank, knights or kings;
While pages set in each lady's hand
Fair gifts from Nourient and Triande.
I know not all that did there ensue,
For Cundrie departed with the two.

Book XVI: The Grail King

King Anfortas' plight

ANFORTAS and his people still
Sorrowed deeply; it was his will
That they, from love and loyalty,

Despite that love, should leave him be.
He often sought that he might die,
And would have done so, by and by,
If, on finding him weakened, frail,
They'd failed to show their lord the Grail.
'Since you are loyal, as I well know,
You should be moved by my deep woe,'
He told his knights, 'how long must I
Live in this sad state, yet not die?'
If justice finds you, you'll atone
Before God for this wrong; tis known,
That, from the day I first could fight,
I've wrought your wishes, as a knight.
I've paid in full for all my shame,
All that has tarnished my good name,
All that any here may have seen.
If you are loyal, and have so been,
Let me to death, in mercy, yield,
By our Order, of the helm and shield.
For, as you've kindly said before,
In deeds of chivalry such I bore,
Ranged o'er many a hill and dale,
Lance at the ready, and did prevail
In many a joust, and like sword-play,
Tiring my foes, though little it may
Have availed me, with any of you;
Nonetheless I have paid what's due.
An exile from joy, as I am now,
At the Last Judgment, I avow,
I'll charge you, one man against all.
If you'll not grant me leave, withal,
And let me die, tis your damnation
Shall be declared on that occasion.
My pain should prompt your mercy,
You have seen how it overtook me.
What use am I now as your lord?
A sorry surprise it would afford

All of you, if your souls perished,
Because of some hope you cherished.
What strange path is this you follow?’

They would have released him so,
But for that hope, which Trevrizent
Had voiced before, the message sent
And seen, writ there, upon the Grail.
A second time, he might prevail,
The man whom they yet awaited
Whose joy was a first time fated
To elude him there, who yet might
Achieve that liberation, if aright
His lips could frame the question.

Oft, for four days in succession,
The King kept his eyes shut tight.
Then they all did bear the knight
To the Grail, whether he would
Or no, and with the rush of blood
Pain forced him to ope his eyes,
And so live on, despite his sighs.
This was how they’d treated him,
Till brave Parzival came riding in
To Munsalvaesche, with Feirefiz,
That strangely pied brother of his.
All things had waited on that hour,
When Jupiter, with regal power,
And angry Mars, together burned;
For to conjunction they’d returned,
Such that Anfortas was again
Abandoned to distress and pain,
Suffering such endless agony,
Knights and maidens sorrowfully
Forced to bear his frequent cries
Endured the gaze of his sad eyes,
Knowing his wound past all cure,

For they could offer nothing more;
Nonetheless the story doth say
Help was even now on its way.

They were drowned in heartfelt grief.
Yet they brought him slight relief,
For when the sharp and bitter pain
Tormented Anfortas again,
They sweetened the air to quench
The noisome odour, for the stench
Was subdued by spices that lay
Upon his carpet and gave play
To scents of musk and terebinth,
And fragrant herbs, about his plinth.
And, to purify, they had theriac,
And costly ambergris, to attack
Foul odours with their wholesomeness.
Wherever folk trod, more or less,
Cardamom, clove and nutmeg lay
Crushed beneath their feet to allay
The stench with their kind fragrance,
Whene'er they passed by, perchance,
Or even when they simply stood.
His fire was burning aloes wood,
As I have told you once before.
Vipers' horns his bedposts bore.
And then, to grant relief again,
Sprinkled o'er his counterpane
Were spices, to a powder gone.
The cushions that he leant upon
Were of brocade of Nourient,
All quilted, comfort their intent,
Of palmat-silk his mattress made.
The bed, adorned and all inlaid
With precious gems none rarer,
Hung from cords of salamander.
Every luxury it did employ,

This bed of one devoid of joy.
Let none claim they've seen a finer,
Twas rich and elegant by nature
Of its gems, hear their names aright:
Red carbuncle and selenite,
Balax and gagathromeus,
Onyx, and then ceraunius,
Chalcedony, coral, bestion,
Heliotrope, and the union
Pearl, and next optallius,
Sagda and then pantherus,
Andodragma, hephaestitis,
Haematite and hieracitis,
Dionysias, prasius,
Agate and celidonium,
Sardonyx and chalcophonus,
Asbestos and tectolitus,
Jasper and cornelian
Aetites and lyncurion,
Iris, gagates, galactite,
Hyacinth, and brown orite,
Alamandine and enhydrus,
Chrysoelectrum and apsyctus,
Hyaenia, emerald's green fire,
Magnes, pyritis, and sapphire.
Also, in one place or another,
Were turquoise and liparea,
Ruby, balas, chrysolite,
Sard, diamond, malachite,
Peanites, diadochus,
Chrysoprase, and then medus,
Beryl and, topaz; some of these,
Possessed of healing properties,
Raised his spirits, cheered him anew,
Medicinal, and propitious too.
Those who were skilled in their use
Found they had powers and virtues,

Hidden within, that might sustain
Anfortas, their heart, and maintain
That source of their endless sorrow.

Parzival, Feirefiz and Cundrie reach Munsalvaesche

YET now we'll hear how from woe
Anfortas rose to happiness;
For riding into Terre Salvaesche
From Joflanze, came Parzival,
His cares now vanished withal,
With him, his brother, and the maid
Cundrie. I know not, I'm afraid,
The distance that they rode; yet now
They'd have had fighting, I'll avow,
Had she not saved them, their escort,
From a labour that neither sought.
They were approaching their goal,
When a troop of Templars, the whole
Force well-mounted, in full armour,
Galloped towards them; however
These knights saw, from their escort,
That joy was drawing near their court,
For, seeing the doves that did cover
Cundrie's garment, their commander
Cried: 'Here's an end to our sorrow!
All we have longed for, since woe
Ensnared us, nears us, without fail,
Bearing the emblem of the Grail!
Great happiness is ours! Rein in!'
As he spoke, Feirefiz Angevin
Was rousing his brother Parzival
To the encounter, but his bridle
Cundrie seized, checking his steed,
Then turned to Parzival: 'Take heed,
Their shields and their pennants, now
Do you not recognise; I'll avow

These knights are a Grail company
Halted here, and more than ready
To serve and obey you in all.'
The Infidel turned to Parzival:
'Then we'll not fight!' While the latter
Asked Cundrie to seal the matter
And ride towards that company.
This she did and, most courteously,
Speaking of joy now come to pass,
At which, descending to the grass,
Doffing their helms, one and all,
Hopeful now of what might befall,
They stood, to receive his greeting,
Which to them came as a blessing;
They welcomed Feirefiz the pied,
And then, with tears of joy, did ride,
Up to Munsalvaesche, and swiftly.

Parzival asks the question, and Anfortas is healed

THERE a crowd gathered, full many,
Fine old knights, pages, armed men;
That sad household knew joy again;
While Feirefiz, and Parzival,
Well-received on their arrival,
At the great flight of steps that led
Up to the palace, strode ahead.
There, in accord with custom, lay
A hundred round carpets every way,
And, on each, a cushion of down
And a samite quilt might be found.
They, with tact, somewhere or other,
Found a place to shed their armour;
And now a chamberlain drew near
With splendid robes, as I did hear;
Then the knights were seated, *en masse*,
And precious cups of gold (not glass)

Were set before them, and after this
Parzival went with Feirefiz,
To seek the sorrowful Anfortas,
Who seemed much as before, alas;
You, earlier, heard me speak of it,
Of how he reclined, could not sit,
Against a bed adorned full richly.
He welcomed them both joyfully,
And yet with signs of anguish too.
'I wondered, wracked by hope, if you
Might come to restore my happiness.
That time before, failed of success,
You left me in such a manner
That, if yours is a generous nature,
You must show remorse. If you,
Are a man of honour, speak true;
Ask those that my life maintain,
To let me die, and end this pain;
If you are Parzival, tell these knights
And maidens here, for seven nights
And eight days, were I not to see
The Grail, all then were well with me!
I dare prompt you in no other way.
Happy your state, were folk to say
That you had aided me. Now, see,
Your companion, here before me,
He should not stand, such a guest;
Why then do you not let him rest?'

Parzival, weeping, asked which way
The Grail lay, saying: 'If, this day,
God's goodness shall triumph in me
This company shall know, and see!'
In that direction, he bowed the knee,
Three times, to honour the glory
Of the Trinity, the while he prayed,
That the ills of this man be stayed,

And then he rose to his full height,
And spoke again like a true knight,
Questioning, thus, that man of woe:
‘Dear uncle, what afflicts you so?’
He who, for Saint Sylvester’s sake,
Did a bull return to life and make
Lazarus stand, helped Anfortas
To become again the man he was,
Whole and sound, and flourishing,
His complexion of that glowing
Bloom the French call ‘fleuri’,
Nor indeed was Parzival’s beauty,
Or that of Absalom David’s son,
Or of Vergulaht of Ascalun,
Or of Gahmuret, on entering in
To Kanvoleiz, folk praising him,
Or all who were of handsome race,
Aught to speak of beside that face,
And all the beauty, that Anfortas
Revealed, as his agony did pass;
God’s power to act in this way,
With art, being undimmed today.

Parzival is acknowledged as the Grail King

THERE was made no other Election
Than of the man the Grail inscription
Had named to serve as their true lord.
Thus, to Parzival, all did afford
The title of their Sovereign King.
If I am the judge of anything
To do with wealth, I think nowhere
Would any find a noble pair,
As rich as Feirefiz and Parzival.
The Lord and Master of that hall,
And his guest, were well-served,
And honoured too as they deserved.

I have no means to know for sure,
How many leagues Condwiramurs
Had ridden towards Munsalvaesche,
Her heart now filled with happiness.
For she had earlier learnt the news,
(Great joy did then her heart infuse),
That their sad state of separation
Was over. Duke Kyot, thereupon,
With other lords, of the worthiest,
Had escorted her to Terre Salvaesche,
To that forest where Segramors
Met with a lance, and what is more
The blood and snow had evoked her.
From there Parzival would bring her,
A journey he might well endure!
A Templar came to render it sure;
A troop of lordly knights, had brought
The Queen there, with due care, he taught.
Parzival chose a small number
Of the Grail company; together
They rode out to find Trevrizent,
Whose heart was at last content
Hearing of Anfortas' fresh lease
Of life, the question winning peace.
'Many are God's mysteries,' he
Told Parzival. 'Who of us may be
Of His council, or know His powers?
Not all the heavenly host He dowers,
Will ever fathom the depths of this,
So great the kingdom that is His.
God is Man, and His Father's word,
Such is the truth that we have heard,
God is the Father and the Son,
His Spirit has power to bring each one
Help indeed; what greater wonder
Than that, despite all your anger,

And your error, you yet have won
From God this gift, as you have done,
That His eternal Trinity
Has granted your wish; now let me
Atone for my error, for I failed
To speak the truth, the lie prevailed,
For I sought to distract you then
From what concerns the Grail, when,
My lord and nephew, to whom I owe
Obedience on this earth below,
I told you the exiled angels there,
At the Grail, did fully share
God's support till they might face
Him and be thus returned to grace.
But God is constant in such things.
He ever wars against those beings
I have named here as forgiven,
Who would His reward be given;
Fights against those angels, ever,
For they indeed are damned forever,
Since they chose their own perdition.
Forgive me your knightly mission;
Naught dictates that a man prevail
By battling to achieve the Grail;
I wished but to steer you away.
Now you pursue another way,
And your prize is all the greater.
Yet now lead your thoughts lower,
Guide them towards humility.'
'That woman I would wish to see
Whom I saw last five years ago,'
Said Parzival, 'For as you know,
Ere we two parted she was dear
To me, and still dear to me here,
Though I shall still seek your counsel
While we live, for it served me well
In the past, my need being great.

Now I would ride, though it be late,
For I have heard my wife is nigh
To the Plimizoel, and thither go I.'
He now asked Trevrizent's blessing,
Who then, to God, commended him.

He meets Condwiramurs his wife, by the Plimizoel

SINCE his knights knew the forest,
They rode all night, without a rest,
And, at dawn, approached a place
Where many a tent filled the space
Nigh the river; twas most pleasing.
Many a fine pennant was fluttering,
Emblems of Brobarz planted there,
With the shields borne in this affair.
The princes of his land were present;
In a moment, Parzival had sent
To know where the Queen now lay,
Whether in her own ring, and they
Showed him where her tent arose,
Circled by others, in costly rows.
Now Duke Kyot of Katelangen,
Had risen early, Parzival's men
Arrived while the sun's first rays
Painted the sky in silver-greys,
Yet Duke Kyot was quick to see
The Grail emblems that company
Bore, for the doves now met his eye;
And the old man fetched a sigh,
On seeing them, for Schoysiane
Had brought great joy to that man
At Munsalvaesche, yet she had died
Bearing Sigune, sorrow's bride.
Kyot now went towards Parzival,
Greeting him kindly, then them all.
To the Queen's Marshal now he sent

To request he find good lodgement
For whatever knights rested there.
Parzival himself he led, with care,
To where the Queen's wardrobe lay,
A buckram tent, half-hid away.
There they rid him of his armour.
Of all this the Queen, however,
Knew naught as yet, so in her tent,
Tall and spacious, where he now went,
He found countless ladies, fair,
Lying here, there, everywhere,
And his wife, with Loherangrin
And Kardeiz, still asleep within;
(Joy surely overwhelmed him there)
Kyot tapped the coverlet with care,
And told the Queen, thus, to awake,
And so, a draught of happiness take.
She saw her spouse as he oped her eyes,
And, in but her shift, in pure surprise,
She flung the coverlet around her,
Drew it close about her shoulder,
And sprang from the bed to the floor,
The shining-bright Condwiramurs!
As for Parzival, he clasped her,
And, I'm told, they kissed each other.
'Fortune sends you to me,' cried she,
In welcome, 'my heart's joy! Truly,
I should scold you, yet I cannot.
Hail to this hour, all cares forgot,
That has brought me this embrace!
My heart's desire is in this place,
And all my woe is fled from me!'
He turned towards the bed, to see
The twin boys now awake within,
Kardeiz and Loherangrin.
They lay there naked; he did kiss
Both children warmly, after this

Kyot had the boys carried out,
Most tactfully, while those about
Her, the maids, he signed to depart,
And this they took with good heart,
Not one their glad welcome forgot
To their lord returning. Duke Kyot
Commended the Queen's spouse to her
And did the young ladies gather
And led them away. It was as yet
Quite early; nor did he forget
To close the flaps ere he was gone.

Although on that prior occasion,
Deep in the silence of the day,
His wits had been snatched away
By seeing blood upon the snow,
(It was here, on this very meadow)
Condwiramurs now made amends
For that torment; thus, sorrow ends.
Never had he, from his mistress,
Love, sought aid for his distress
Elsewhere, though many a lady
Offered her love, many a beauty.
As far as I know, both he and she
Disported themselves, joyfully,
Until mid-morning, when the men
From Brobarz rode forth again,
Out from their camp, so as to gaze
At these Templars, who, in a phrase,
Were, to a man, 'clothed in splendour',
For every one was a man of honour,
Though dented, holed was every shield
From lance-thrusts on many a field,
And gashed too by many a sword.
Brocade or samite coats they wore,
They had doffed their armour, all
But the steel leg-pieces, as I recall.

There can be no more sleeping now!

Parzival's son Kardeiz is crowned king over his lands

THE King and Queen rose, to allow
The priest to sing the Mass; that ring
Was a witness to much jostling
Among the gallant knights, indeed
All who had once fought King Clamide.
After the benediction, those knights
Who were vassals, with feudal rights,
Received Parzival most loyally,
Showing him honour, equally.
The side walls of their pavilion
Were removed, the flaps were gone.
'Now, which son shall rule you all,
As lord of your lands?' asked Parzival.
'Of right, he'll hold Wales and Norgals,
Kanvoleiz and Kingrivals,
And he'll hold Bealzenan too
In our kingdom of Anjou,'
He proclaimed to the princes there;
'When he reaches manhood, fare
To that place with him; a true knight
Was my father and, by true right,
That inheritance he left to me.
He was Gahmuret; now we see
That I, by happy dispensation,
Inherit the Grail, let the nation,
If you prove loyal, as I believe,
From my son, your fiefs receive!'
This they did with a right good will.
Many pennants the air did fill,
As each came forth, and a tiny hand
Granted them their power and land.
Kardeiz, the child, was crowned king,
And later he ruled o'er everything,

From Kanvoleiz, o'er all that was
Once Gahmuret's, and kept its laws.

Benches were set, to form a ring
By the Plimizoel, the men did bring
Things for a hasty breakfast, there,
And, now the army must prepare
For the journey home, soon striking
Their camp, and riding with the king.
Ladies in waiting, and many another
Of the Queen's friends, took leave of her
Openly expressing their sadness.
And then that picture of loveliness,
That fair mother of Loherangrin,
Gathered him up, all set to begin,
Midst the Templars, swift progress,
Towards the keep at Munsalvaesche.

Parzival and Condwiramurs discover the dead Sigune

'ONCE, in this forest, I found a cell
Where a solitary maid did dwell,'
Parzival said, 'and beside it ran
A swift, clear stream; if any man
Knows of it, let him lead us there.'
His company knew of the affair:
'She is given up to lamentation,
Over her lover's tomb, a woman
Of precious virtue; we shall go
A path nigh to that place of woe.'
'We'll visit her!' the King replied,
And, willingly, his knights complied.
The troop rode on, at a brisk pace,
And, at evening, found the place.
There the Queen saw a mournful sight,
Sigune dead, on her knees, upright
In prayer. They broke apart the wall,

And Parzival on his men did call
To lift the stone slab o'er the tomb
And, for his cousin's sake, make room
For her, nigh Schionatulander,
Who was revealed (twas a wonder),
As if embalmed, all undecayed.
Close beside him, her corpse they laid,
She, who alive her chaste love gave,
Then, reverently, sealed the grave.
Condwiramurs made great lament,
As I am told, for that innocent
Her cousin, and happiness lost;
Many a tear that sad shrine cost,
Since the dead maiden's mother,
Schoysiane, who was the sister
Of Parzival's mother Herzeloide,
Had reared the Queen, and employed
Affection towards her, as a child,
Yet, here, from joy she was exiled.
If the Provençal's words are true,
Kardeiz' tutor, Duke Kyot, knew
Nothing of his daughter's death,
(This tale, its every truthful breath,
Flies straight ahead, like an arrow,
Not curved in form, like the bow)

They did all required, then, by night,
Rode till Munsalvaesche was in sight,
Where Feirefiz was whiling away
The pleasant hours, as best one may,
Awaiting them. Many a candle
Was lit, placed in every angle;
The bright flickering rose higher,
As though a forest were on fire.
The Queen, escorted by a Templar
Of Patrigalt, clad in full armour,
Through the great courtyard, rode;

There many a brave company showed,
Drawn up to welcome their fair Queen,
Their lord, and his son; a noble scene
It made; now Loherangrin
Was carried to Feirefiz, his true kin,
But finding his uncle black and white,
Refused to kiss him, in sheer fright!
Noble children in our own day
Are said to be to such fears a prey.
The Infidel merely laughed at this,
That the child had refused to kiss.

Once the Queen had dismounted,
Those in the courtyard, an uncounted
Many, dispersed, with the thought
Of the happiness she had brought.
Now she was led amidst the ladies
Many of whom were glowing beauties.
Feirefiz and Anfortas stood nigh
On the steps, where met the eye
Florie of Lunel, Repanse de Schoye,
And she of Greenland, Garschiloye,
Bright-eyed, fair of skin, those three,
Glorious in their virginity.
Lithe as a wand, there stood Ampflise,
The daughter of Ryl's Count Jernis,
Full of virtue, of comely stock,
With Clarischanze of Tenabroc,
A sweet girl, her looks unmarred;
Like an ant's her waist, claims the bard.
Feirefiz stepped towards the Queen,
His lady, in courtly terms I mean,
Who then asked him for his kiss;
She then kissed Anfortas, with this
Expressing joy at his deliverance.
Feirefiz now, at her insistence,
Courteously led her, by the hand,

To where Repanse de Schoye did stand,
And much kissing they did share.
Her lips were red beyond compare,
Condwiramurs, yet now she must
Endure an ordeal of kisses; I trust
You'll forgive me, if, for her sake,
I sigh, that I may not undertake
That labour for her, for she already
Was much wearied, from her journey.
Young ladies led their mistress away.

The Grail ceremony is repeated in a time of joy

THE Templars were at pains to stay
In the hall which was filled with light;
There many a candle shone bright.
Now solemn preparation was made
For the Grail. It was ne'er conveyed
Among them as mere spectacle
For that household, but visible
Only on certain rare occasions,
Joyful or woeful celebrations.
Formerly, when they did advance,
Carrying the blood-stained lance,
And in a desolate state, the Grail
Was borne in, that it might prevail,
For they needed aid, and thought
Consolation it might have brought;
Yet Parzival had swiftly left
Them to their woes, of hope bereft.
Now, since their sorrows are o'er,
In joy, it shall be seen once more.

Once the Queen had swiftly changed
Her travelling clothes, and arranged
Her head-dress, she returned once more;
Feirefiz received her at the door.

Her appearance was full queenly,
None had seen a woman as lovely,
Nor heard, or spoken of a peer;
In cloth of gold she did appear,
Twas worked by a most skilful hand,
A fabric created by Sarant,
In Thasme, in subtle manner.
Shedding radiance about her,
Condwiramurs now entered in
Escorted by Feirefiz Angevin.
Three great fires of aloes wood
There, amidst the palace, stood.
And there were forty carpets laid
And many more the seats displayed
Than when deep sorrow did prevail,
And Parzival had viewed the Grail.
One seat was finer than the rest,
As the story doth here attest,
And this Feirefiz and Anfortas,
(Who could sit and walk at last)
Were to occupy beside the lord
Of the castle. Those, whose reward
Was now to serve the Grail, behaved
With discretion, for such they craved.
You have all heard the tale before
Of how the Grail crossed the floor,
Brought to Anfortas. Now, likewise,
The Grail was borne before the eyes
Of Gahmuret's son and the daughter
Of Tampenteire. We wait no longer
For the maidens, for they are here
In seemly order they soon appear,
And their number? Five and twenty.
They who first did make their entry,
Hair falling loose, struck the Infidel
As fair indeed, but those did excel
Who followed, after, in costly dress,

Sweet faces, and lovely to excess;
And yet walking behind them there
Came a maiden and she most rare,
Repanse de Schoye; by her alone
The Grail would let itself be shown;
Great purity dwelt in her heart,
Her form without, free of all art,
A sheer blossoming of brightness.

If I were to speak of all the rest,
How many chamberlains began
To offer water for their hands;
How many tables were brought,
Beyond all those I did report
To your before; how vulgarity
Fled that palace; every trolley
They wheeled in, heavily laden,
With gold cups, a precious burden;
And how the seats were arranged
For the knights, the ladies ranged,
Then the tale would prove too long.
For brevity's sake we'll move along.
Food they received from the Grail;
With meats those diners it did regale,
Those of creatures wild and tame;
This man drank mead, this again
A pale wine, or dark mulberry,
Sweet sinopel, or claret, every
One to his custom or his taste;
Belrepeire was in different case
When Gahmuret first came there,
No wine sweetened that affair!

Feirefiz is smitten by love for Repanse de Schoye

HOW the gold cups at the Table
Re-filled, intrigued the Infidel,

A wonder that delighted him!
'My lord,' Anfortas addressed him,
Who shared his noble company,
'The Grail is there; do you not see?'
'I see naught but green Achmardi,'
Replied the pied Infidel, 'the lady
Brought that cloth, she, of high renown,
Who stands nigh us and wears a crown;
The sight of her has pierced my heart.
I thought myself a man apart,
So strong no woman, wed or not,
Could now disturb my happy lot.
If I was ever one that received
A noble love, I was deceived,
For such is now odious to me.
Bad manners oust the good, you see,
In that I speak my pain to you.
What use my wealth, my jousting too
For ladies' sakes, those gifts I gave,
If I must now be torment's slave?
O mighty Jupiter, why send
Me here to meet with this sad end?'
Love's power, low spirits, made him pale
Where his skin was white; he did ail.
Fair Condwiramurs had all but found
A rival there, his heart was bound
To the fair maid of dazzling beauty;
Repanse de Schoye was that lady,
In whose snare Feirefiz was caught,
The noble stranger; perchance he fought
Against it, yet his old attachment
Was lost despite his loyal intent,
All as naught, and to be forgot;
Secundille's love availed her not,
Nor Tribalibot, nor all her lands.
His heart was in a maiden's hands;
This son of Gahmuret thought but ill

Of the love of Clauditte, Secundille,
Olimpia, and others, elsewhere,
In every land, who'd praised him there,
For his service, through every nation,
And had furthered his reputation.
From the pallor, where he was white,
Anfortas recognised his plight,
And that his proud companion
Was in torment, his courage gone.
'Sir, I regret that my fair sister
Should give you reason to suffer,
Such as none has, for her, before,'
Said Anfortas, 'I am full sure
That no man has sought to serve her,
No knight has had reward of her.
She has been at my side in woe,
And her looks have suffered so
From her knowing little pleasure.
Her maternal nephew, your brother,
Perchance, can help in this affair.'

'If this girl, that a crown doth wear,
Is your sister, advise me how
(For I depend upon you now)
Her true love I may seek to win,'
Answered Feirefiz Angevin,
'My heart's longing is for her;
Would that all the honour I e'er
Have won had been for her sake,
And I my true reward might take.
The five lance-strokes, at tourney,
I've displayed: that given firstly
Full ahead, charging en masse,
The second to the right doth pass,
The third awaits the other's charge,
Choosing an adversary at large,
Then the straight tilt I've delivered

In regular joust, nor neglected
Thrusts in pursuit; of all the days
Since my proud shield I did raise,
This is my day of deepest woe.
At Agremuntin's foot, my foe
A knight of fire, I thrust at him
And but for my thick covering.
My surcoat made of salamander,
My shield of the asbestos fibre,
I'd have been burned to a cinder!
Ah, if only your charming sister
Had been the one who sent me there
And, for that matter, everywhere
I've risked my limbs and my life,
I should be hers in every strife!
Jupiter's harshness I'll resent,
If that great god fails to relent,
And relieve me of my sorrow,
For I am burdened by this woe.'

Parzival proposes that Feirefiz be baptised

KING Frimutel was the father
Of Anfortas and his fair sister,
And Anfortas, seen beside her,
Was as she in form and feature.
The Infidel's gaze sought her, and then,
Oft turned to Anfortas again,
And despite the food they brought
The Infidel's lips touched naught,
Although his eyes were feasting.
Anfortas now addressed the King,
Parzival, 'it doth seem to me,
My lord, your brother fails to see
The Grail.' And Feirefiz replied
That such was not to be denied,
Indeed, he saw it not; while all

The knights about them in the hall
Considered this a mystery.
Aged Titurel was told, and he,
That bedridden man, did declare:
'A heathen's eyes may not share
In viewing the Grail; unless he
Receives baptism, he cannot be
One with the rest; a subtle screen
Hides the Grail from him, I ween.'
This message he sent to Parzival,
Where he was seated in the hall.
He and Anfortas asked Feirefiz
To note the source of all their bliss,
The nourishment that all received
And (twas a thing to be believed),
That every infidel was denied
Sight of the same; thus, they tried
To gain the Infidel's agreement
To his baptism, since his consent
Would win him an eternal prize.
'If, as you seek, I was baptised,
Would baptism help win true love?
All that, ere now, I sought to prove
By battle, where love was concerned,
Was as naught, and little it earned,'
Said Gahmuret's son, 'for I avow,
Never was I more struck than now
By Love's dart. Good manners require
That I conceal my heart's desire,
But my heart has no power to hide
The truth of it. I'll forgo all pride.
'Who might you love?' asked Parzival,
'Who else but that one above all
The young lady who is the sister
Of my companion here; help win her,
And I will give her wealth, and power
Over broad lands, that very hour.'

‘If you would be baptised,’ his host
Replied, ‘then indeed you might boast
Of such a love, dear man, my peer –
For are not my possessions here
Equal to yours, thanks to the Grail?’
‘Then help me brother, to prevail,’
Answered Feirefiz Angevin,
‘Your aunt’s friendship I would win.
If baptism’s gained in fair fight
Send me there, and as her knight
Allow me to deserve her favour.
The music I did ever savour
Of splintered lance, and ringing sword.’
His host laughed, and it did afford
Greater amusement to Anfortas.
‘If that be your path to it, alas,’
Said Parzival, ‘then I’ll ensure
You are baptised by knightly law!
You must then forgo your Jupiter;
And Secundille, relinquish her.
Tomorrow I’ll grant such advice
As will prove apt to your device.’

Before the time of his affliction,
Anfortas gained some reputation
In knightly deeds, for love’s cause,
And had won, thus, great applause,
His heart inclined to sweet mercy
Full generous in his chivalry;
So there sat, now, before the Grail,
Three of the best knights to avail
Themselves of sword, lance and shield,
Men ever undaunted in the field.

If you’ll agree, the meal is done.
Tables and linen, they are gone,
In line with service rendered, now,

All the young ladies made their bow.
When Feirefiz Angevin saw
Their move to go, his heart was sore,
For she who bore the Grail away
Had noosed his heart, as beauty may.
As to how Condwiramurs withdrew,
Or how they set about anew
Providing bedding for Parzival
Who because of love, as I recall,
Nonetheless lay uncomfortably,
(As many do, it seems to me)
Or how the Templars granted rest
To everyone who was their guest
After the hardships they'd endured,
Too long a tale that would afford.
Instead, I'll tell you of the morn.

The baptism of Feirefiz

WITH the first gleaming light of dawn,
Parzival, and noble Anfortas,
Intent that all should come to pass,
Agreed to invite Love's victim,
The Lord of Zazamanc, within
The Temple, there before the Grail,
While Parzival did himself prevail
Upon the wise Templars to attend.
Thus, men-at-arms and knights did lend
Their presence, when Feirefiz entered.
The font was a ruby, and was centred
Upon a round, stepped pedestal,
Carved of jasper, that Titurel
Had installed, in its magnificence,
All had been done at his insistence.
'If you would win my mother's sister,'
Parzival now told his brother,
'All your gods you must forswear,

For her sake, and ever prepare
To fight the foes of Him on high,
And His commandments e'er live by.'
'Whate'er may win for me the maid,
Shall be done, its commands obeyed,
Truly, faithfully, and right well,
In all,' replied the Infidel.

Tilted toward the Grail, the font
Filled instantly, as it was wont
To do, the water, I am told,
Never too hot nor too cold.
An aged priest with silver hair
Was, solemnly, standing there,
For they had baptised, those hands,
Many a babe from heathen lands:
'You shall believe in God alone,
Seated there on the highest throne,
And keep your soul from the Devil.
To God's Trinity, all are equal,
All the world His rule doth span.
His Father's word, and yet a Man,
God is thus both Father and Son,
Who are honoured, three-in-one,
With His Spirit, and all the three
Will, of this water, keep heathenry
From you. By the Trinity's power,
He, from whom Adam, in dawn's hour,
Took his likeness, entered the water
For His baptism. Now, know further,
That from water trees gain their sap,
Thus, water in their leaves they trap.
All things are made fecund by water,
All those things that we call "creature".
By means of the eyes' waters we see.
Water grants souls a majesty,
That with the Angels' doth compare.'

'If it will ease my pain, I swear
To believe every word you say,'
Said Feirefiz to the priest, 'I pray
That she will reward me, if I fulfil
God's commandments, of His will.
If she has God, my comrade's sister,
I'll believe in Him, and her, ever,
(For never was I in such dire need)
All my gods I forswear, indeed,
I have forsworn Secundille too,
With whatever honour did accrue
To her through her honouring me.
In God's name, then, come, baptise me!'
So, they performed the Christian rite,
And baptismally blessed the knight,
And, as soon as he'd been baptised,
And the robing over, they supplied
All he desired, Frimutel's daughter,
An event he had sought moreover
With an impatience cruel to bear.
And as to viewing the Grail there,
Till the water had covered his eyes
He'd been blind, but did realise,
Thereafter, the sight of the Grail,
Brought as if from behind a veil.

Now, after Feirefiz' christening
Upon the Grail they saw writing,
Saying that any Templar granted
By God, to a distant land, drafted
There as their lord, then that same
Must forbid its folk to ask his name,
Or lineage, yet with his knights
Must help them to gain their rights.
If such a question be put to him,
No longer could they retain him.
Because the gentle Anfortas

Had for so long been in that pass
Where he endured bitter agony,
And where the question endlessly
Was withheld from him, all those
Of the Grail company oppose,
And are averse to, questioning,
Nor would wish to be asked a thing
Regarding themselves. Feirefiz,
The Christian, now asked if his
New brother-in-law Anfortas,
Would sail with him and so pass
Into his own country where he
Might share all his riches freely,
But Anfortas dissuaded him
From requesting any such thing.

Feirefiz, the Christian, departs

‘I would not wish my fervent thought,
To serve my God, to come to naught.
The Grail crown is of equal worth,
To any riches on this Earth.
Through arrogance I lost that crown,
But now humility I have found,’
Said Anfortas, ‘riches and love
From out my thoughts do remove.
You take with you a fine woman,
One who will love and serve her man
As all good women seek to do.
But, as for me, I shall prove true
To my Order, and thus shall ride
Many a joust, all wrongs defied,
In faithful service of the Grail.
Never again shall love prevail,
Such that I fight for any woman.
Bitter pain did she bring, that one,
To my heart, and yet I relinquish

All hatred of woman, with this.
They inspire man with proper zeal,
Whate'er the regrets I may feel.'

Feirefiz urged Anfortas again
To leave with him, to the gain
Of his sister too, but Anfortas
Declined, and let the moment pass.
Then Feirefiz thought Loherangrin
Might happily take ship with him,
But the boy's fond mother said no.
Nor would Parzival see him go:
'My son is destined for the Grail,
And if God above shall not fail
To grant him wisdom, on his part,
He shall serve with willing heart.'
So Feirefiz spent a pleasant time,
Waiting eleven days, by design,
And then on the twelfth departing.
When the great man asked the king
Leave to lead his wife to the army,
Parzival's heart was pained sorely.
For the thought of Feirefiz leaving
Brought regret, and woeful feeling.
He decided, with his councillors,
To send out a mighty force,
To escort him through the forest;
Anfortas rode forth with the rest,
That fine and gentle warrior,
That he might show Feirefiz honour.
Many maidens let flow their tears.
From there they made, it appears
For Carcobra, where the Burgrave
Received the order Anfortas gave,
To honour his vassalage, and all
The gifts that he might well recall,
And guide his brother-in-law further,

And 'his wife, my own dear sister,
Through the Forest of Laeprisin,
So that he might the haven win,
Wide and lonely, where his ships lie.'
Now came time for a brief goodbye,
For the Templars rode no further,
Cundrie was sent to bear the order,
And so the Templars took their leave
Of that courtly man, yet did grieve.

The Burgrave did as Cundrie required,
Feirefiz found all as he desired,
And was received with due courtesy.
With never a single hour left free,
They were soon guiding him further,
On his way, with a guard of honour.
How far they rode then, none do know,
Ere he came to Joflanze's meadow,
Where, upon seeking for the army
All had left for their own country;
King Arthur was gone to Camelot,
And, thus, the man from Tribalibot
Was free to ride to join his men.
The latter lay in the haven, then
As before, lamenting his absence.
But many a knight, in his presence,
Found fresh spirit. Now the Burgrave
Was sent home with many a brave
Gift. Cundrie found that the army
(A messenger had pursued its journey)
Had received news, she thought not ill,
Death having claimed Queen Secundille,
For Repanse de Schoye, only now,
Felt that their journey might allow
Of her happiness. Some time, later,
She bore a fine son, John, in India;
Twas 'Prester John' that boy became,

Since him, their kings bear that name.
Feirefiz sent letters through the land,
So the Christian rule might command
A better hearing, for, till that day,
It had failed to prosper in its way,
(Tribalibot we call India here).
Feirefiz asked Cundrie to appear
In Munsalvaesche, to tell his brother
How he had fared, and give the other
News, that Queen Secundille had died,
For Anfortas could now take pride
In his sister's being mistress there
Of many a realm, both broad and fair.

The tale of Loherangrin

THE genuine story you have now
Of Frimutel's five children, how
They acted in good part. Two died,
The first Schoysiane, who did abide,
In God's sight, with perfect loyalty;
Then Herzeloyde who drove falsity
Far from her; and, as for the living,
Trevrizent, bound to the winning
Of a lasting prize, had renounced
Sword and chivalry, and pronounced
Himself a servant of God's sweet love.
The heart of Anfortas still did prove
A haven of courage and chastity;
And as his Order enjoined, so he
Rode many a joust, and did prevail,
Not for the ladies but the Grail.

Now Loherangrin grew to be man
Both courageous and strong of hand,
One in whom fear was never seen.
Once he was of age, and had been

Trained in the art of chivalry,
Then he bore himself, most nobly,
In the true service of the Grail.
Would you know more of him? Then, hail
A lady, who some time after all
You have heard, ruled, I recall,
Her lands with utter integrity;
Lineage, and great wealth, had she,
This latter hers by inheritance.
In every known circumstance
It was her nature ever to be
A creature of unfeigned modesty.
She was impervious to desire,
Though many a man of higher
Rank had sought her, kings it appears,
As well as princes, they her peers.
Yet she was so humble not a thought
Gave she to many a noble court.
Many a count in her own country
Made much of her perversity,
Asking why she proved so slow
In taking a husband, she might know
Many were fit to be her lord.
But their angry words she ignored,
Trusting herself to God wholly,
And, also, her innate modesty,
For she had given no offence,
Chastity was her true defence,
Yet, knowing their animosity,
She called her lords to an assembly.
Many an envoy from distant lands
(She was a princess in Brabant)
Had sought her out, but she abjured
All other men than that true lord,
Assigned by God, for he alone
Would she cherish, as her own.
He, for whom God had destined her,

From Munsalvaesche was sent to her,
Brought by a boat, drawn by a swan,
And, at Antwerp, landed upon
Its broad river's nearest shore;
He proved all that she could wish for.
Here was a man of proper breeding,
Who, indeed, was thought outstanding,
For looks and bravery, in every land
Where news of him had come to hand;
A noble, tactful, and thoughtful man,
One who gave freely, you understand,
And sincerely, nor such gifts did rue,
Faultless in all respects, and true.

The lady welcomed him graciously.
Now hear what he had to say, for he
Spoke to both rich and poor lords, there,
Who stood here, there, full everywhere.
'Duchess,' he said, 'if I'm to be
The lord of this pleasant country,
Well, I left no less wealth behind.
I beg of you to keep this in mind:
You must never ask who I am!
For then I may stay in this land,
But if you choose to question me,
You must lose my love, utterly.
If you fail to heed this warning,
God will surely recall His giving.'
A woman's pledge she gave to him,
Later betrayed by her love for him,
That if God maintained her reason,
She would do naught, at any season,
Counter to his request, for she
Would do his bidding faithfully.

That night they rested hand in hand,
He was the Prince there in Brabant;

The wedding feast was a fine sight.
Many held fiefdoms of this knight,
And he judged fairly in that place,
And practised chivalry with grace,
And ever he claimed the victory.
Their children too were fair to see.
Many there are, in Brabant now,
Who recall the terms of her vow,
And how he came, and how he left,
And how a question left her bereft,
And how long he lingered so,
Being indeed full loth to go.
Yet his guide returned, the swan,
With its swan-boat. He stepped thereon;
He left a sword, a horn, a ring,
And so departed Loherangrin.
Lest he was Parzival's son, I'd fail
To do true justice to this tale.
He travelled, o'er water and way,
Back to the Grail's keeping, I say.
Why did the woman lose her lover?
When he came from the sea to her,
He had warned her not to question.
That knight, Erec, I might mention,
He needs say a word about this,
For he could rebuke, as well as kiss.

Wolfram's Farewell

IF Chrétien of Troyes the story
Has marred, good cause to be angry
He has given Kyot, who sent
The true tale here, with clear intent.
The Provençal tells us, precisely,
How the son of Herzeloyde truly
Achieved the Grail, as ordained;
Anfortas had lost all he gained.

The true tale was sent complete
From Provence, to us, to greet
Its audience in German lands.
And found itself in my fair hands.
I, Wolfram of Eschenbach, declare
I'll speak no more of this affair
Than what the bard himself has said,
And so, with honour crown his head.
I've named Parzival's sons correctly,
And his high lineage too, directly,
And have brought him to that end
A glad dispensation did intend,
Despite the trouble he's endured.
When a man's life is so assured,
And God not robbed of his soul,
Through the body's sins, his whole
Life one which gains the goodwill
Of his fellow men, and doth instil
Respect, and so serves his honour,
Then this I say is a worthy labour.
If any well-wishers are intent
On displaying their discernment,
Amidst good women, then I know
There I'll be valued; the more so
For having told the tale to its end.
If twas done that I might amend
My errors and, indeed, give pleasure
To a certain lady, then, at her leisure,
I trust she will own that I have said
Many a sweet word, in what is read.

The End of the Tale of Parzival

List of Characters

ADDANZ Son of Lazaliez, grandson of Mazadan. Parzival's great-grandfather in the male line.

AFFINAMUS OF CLITIERS A companion of Gramoflanz.

ALIZE Sister of King Hardiz of Gascony. Wife to Duke Lambekin of Brabant.

AMPFLISE (1) Queen, then Dowager Queen of France. Gahmuret's lady in a formal sense.

AMPFLISE (2) A Grail maiden. The daughter of Jernis of Rhyl.

ANFORTAS The Grail King, succeeded by Parzival. Parzival's maternal uncle.

ANNORE Queen of Averre. Loved by Galoes of Anjou.

ANTANOR THE SILENT A knight at Arthur's court.

ANTIKONIE Sister of King Vergulaht of Ascalun.

ARNIVE Widow of King Uther Pendragon. King Arthur's mother.

ARTHUR King of Britain, son of Uther Pendragon, grandson of Brickus, maternal uncle of Gawain, husband of Guinevere, who bore him Ilinot. Brother of Sangive.

ASTOR Duke of Lanverunz.

BEAUCURE Brother of Gawain.

BEAUFURS A faery. Wife to Pansamurs, mother of Liahturteltart.

BELACANE Queen of Zazamanc. Gahmuret's first wife. Mother of Feirefiz.

BENE Daughter of Plippalinot.

BERNOUT DE RIVIERS Count of Ukerlant. Son of Narant.

BRANDELIDELIN King of Punturteis. Maternal uncle of Gramoflanz.

BRICKUS Son of Mazadan, grandfather of Arthur.

CASTIS King of Wales and Norgals. Herzeloyde's first husband.

CIDEGAST Duke of Logroys. First husband of Orgeluse.

CLAMIDE King of Iserterre and Brandigan.

CLARISCHANZE OF TENABROC A grail maiden.

CLAUDITTE (1) Daughter of the Burgrave Scherules. Playmate of Obilot.

CLAUDITTE (2) A queen loved by Feirefiz.

CLIAS THE GREEK A knight at Arthur's court.

CLINSCHOR Duke of Terre de Labur. Maternal nephew of Virgil of Naples. Lover of Iblis.

CONDWIRAMURS Queen of Brobarz, and Parzival's wife. Daughter of King Tampenteire. Cousin to Sigune. Niece to Gurnemanz of Graharz.

CONDRIE Sister of Gawain. Daughter of King Lot of Norway and Sangive. Maternal niece of Arthur. Wife to Lischois.

CUNDRIE LA SURZIERE. Grail messenger. Sister of Malcreatiure.

CUNNEWARE Duchess of Lalant (Lalander). Sister of Orilus and Lahelin.

DODINES Brother of Taurian. A knight at Arthur's court.

EHKUNAT A count. Brother of Gurgri's wife Mahaute.

EKUBA Infidel Queen of Janfuse. Cousin to Belacane, being the daughter of Belacane's maternal aunt.

ENIDE Wife to Erec.

EREC Son of King Lac of Destrigales.

FEIREFIZ Infidel half-Brother of Parzival. Son of Gahmuret and Belacane. Husband, after baptism, of Repanse de Schoye. Father of Prester John.

FLEGETANIS Infidel astronomer and scientist.

FLORANT OF ITOLAC, THE TURKOYT Companion to Lischois. In service to Orgeluse.

FLORIE OF KANADIC Loved by Ilinot, son of Arthur.

FLORIE DE LUNEL A Grail maiden.

FLURDAMURS Daughter of Gandin. Sister to Galoes and Gahmuret. Paternal aunt to Parzival. Wife to Kingrisin. Mother of Vergulaht and Antikonie.

FRIAM Duke of Vermendoys.

FRIMUTEL Parzival's deceased maternal grandfather. Formerly a Grail King. Son of Titurel.

GABENIS A prince of Punturteis.

GAHERJET Gawain's maternal cousin. A knight at Arthur's court.

GAHMURET King of Anjou. Parzival's father (by Herzeloide). Feirefiz's father (by Belacane). Son of Gandin and Brother of Galoes. Servitor to Ampflise.

GALOES Elder Brother of Gahmuret, successor to Gandin. Uncle to Parzival. Servitor to Annore.

GALOGANDRES Duke of Gippones

GANDILUZ Son of Gurgri and Mahaute. Grandson of Gurnemanz.

GANDIN King of Anjou. Parzival's paternal grandfather. Son of Addanz, father of Galoes, Gahmuret. Lammire, and Flurdamurs. Husband of Schoette.

GAREL A knight in Arthur's suite.

GARSCHILOYE OF GREENLAND A Grail maiden.

GASCHIER THE NORMAN A maternal relative of Kaylet.

GAWAIN Son of King Lot of Norway, and Sangive. Maternal nephew of Arthur. Brother of Beacurs, Surdamur, Cundrie and Itonje. Husband to Orgeluse. Distantly related to Parzival through Mazadan.

GUINEVERE Queen of Britain, as Arthur's wife. Mother of Ilinot. Related to King Segramors.

GRAMOFLANZ King of a realm. His residence is Rosche Sabins. The son of Irot, maternal nephew to Brandelidelin. Husband to Itonje.

GRIGORZ King of Ipotente.

GRINGULJETE OF THE RED EARS A warhorse owned in turn by Lahelin, Orilus, Gawain, Urjans, Lischois, then Gawain once more.

GURNEMANZ Prince of Graharz. Parzival's first tutor. Father of Schenteflurs, Lascoyt, Gurgri and Liaze.
Maternal uncle of Condwiramurs. Brother-in-law to Tampenteire.
Grandfather of Schionatulander.

GUNTHER Historical King of Burgundy in the early 5th century, and a significant character in the *Nibelungenlied*.

GURZGRI Son of Gurnemanz. Brother of Schenteflurs, Lascoyt and Liaze. Husband of Mahaute. Father of Gandiluz.

GUVERJORZ A war-horse owned by Clamide.

HARDIZ King of Gascony. Brother of Alize.

HERLINDE A lady favoured by Vridebant.

HERNANT A king slain by Vridebant.

HERZELOYDE Parzival's mother (by Gahmuret). Daughter of the Grail King Frimutel, granddaughter to the first Grail-King Titurel. Sister of Anfortas, Trevrizent, Schoysiane and Repanse de Schoye. Wife of Castis. Queen of Wales and Norgals.

HIUTEGER A Scottish Duke serving Vridebant.

IBERT King of Sicily. Husband of Iblis.

IDER SON OF NOYT A knight.

IDOEL Father of Jofreit.

ILINOT Son of Arthur and Guinevere. Cousin to Gawain. Knight-servitor to Queen Florie of Kanadic, and died in her service.

IMANE DE BEAFONTANE A young lady abducted by Meljahkanz.

INGLIART OF THE SHORT EARS Gawain's war-horse, lost to Parzival.

INGUSE DE BAHTARLIEZ A queen. Lover of Gawain.

IPOMIDON OF BABYLON King of Nineveh, brother of Pompeius.

IROT A king, and father of Gramoflanz. Brother-in-law to Brandelidelin.

ISAJES Marshal to Uther Pendragon.

ISENHART King of Azagouc. Son of Takanis. Servitor to Belacane. Maternal cousin to Vridebant.

ITHER OF GAHEVIEZ King of Cumberland. Maternal nephew of Uther Pendragon. Partner to Lammire.
Related to Parzival through Mazadan. The Red Knight slain by Parzival.

ITONJE Younger sister of Gawain. Wife to Gramoflanz.

IWAN Count of Nonel, father of a Grail Maiden.

IWANET A kinsman of Guinevere, and squire at Arthur's court.

JERNIS Count of Ryl, father of the Grail Maiden Ampflise.

JESCHUTE OF KARNANT Wife to Duke Orilus. Sister of King Erec.

JOFREIT Companion of Gawain. Son of Idoel. Maternal kinsman of Arthur.

KAHENIS Brother to Iseult of the White Hands. In Eilhart von Oberge's *Tristrant*, he wishes to enjoy the favours of Iseult's handmaiden Gybele, who places a magic pillow under his head which sends him promptly to sleep, thus she sleeps with him but preserves her honour.

KARDEFABLET Duke of Jamor. Brother-in-law of Lyppaut.

KARDEIZ (1) Son of King Tampenteire of Brobarz. Brother of Condwiramurs.

KARDEIZ (2) Son of Parzival and Condwiramurs. Twin brother of Loherangrin.

KARNAHKARNANZ COUNT OF ULTERLEC Count, and rescuer of Imane from Meljahkanz.

KAY Lord High Steward and Seneschal at Arthur's court.

KAYLET OF HOSKURAST King of Spain and Castile. Maternal cousin of Gahmuret. Husband of Rischoyde, Titurel's daughter. Maternal uncle of Killirjacac. Paternal kinsman of Schiltunc.

KILLIRJACAC Count of Champagne. Kaylet's maternal nephew.

KINGRIMURSEL Landgrave and Burgrave of Schanpfanzun. Paternal nephew of Kingrisin. Cousin to Vergulaht.

KINGRISIN King of Ascalun. Father of Vergulaht (by Flurdamurs), Gahmuret's sister. Paternal uncle of Kingrimursel.

KINGRUN Seneschal to King Clamide.

KYLLICRATES King of Centriun, a member of Feirefiz's suite.

KYOT Duke of Katelangen. Brother of Tampenteire and Manpfilyot. Father of Sigune (by Schoysiane). Paternal uncle of Condwiramurs.

KYOT LASCHANTIURE THE PROVENÇAL Wolfram's alleged source for 'Parzival'.

LAC King of Karnant. Father of Erec.

LAHEDUMAN Count of Muntane, a member of Poydiconjunz's army.

LAHELIN King and Brother of Orilus and Cunneware de Lalant.

LAMFILIROST Burgrave of Patelamunt in the land of Zazamanc.

LAMBEKIN Duke of Brabant and Hainault. Brother-in-law of Hardiz.

LAMMIRE Daughter of Gandin. Paternal aunt to Parzival. Queen of Syria. Loved by Ither.

LANZIDANT A count of Greenland. Page to Queen Ampflise.

LASCOYT A count. The son of Gurnemanz.

LAZALIEZ Parzival's great-great-grandfather. Son of Mazadan.

LIADARZ Son of Count Schiolarz. Page to Queen Ampflise.

LIAHTURTELTART Son of the faeries Pansamurs and Beafleurs. Page to Queen Ampflise.

LIAZ A count of Cornwall. Son of Tinas. Page to Gawain.

LIAZE Daughter of Gurnemanz. Cousin to Condwiramurs.

LIDDAMUS A duke, and supporter of Vergulaht. A sovereign lord in his own right.

LISAVANDER Burgrave of Beauvais. A vassal of Meljanz.

LISCHOIS GWELLJUS Duke of Gowerzin in the service of Orgeluse. Husband of Cundrie, Gawain's sister. Companion to Florant.

LOHERANGRIN Son of Parzival and Condwiramurs. Twin brother of Kardeiz. Duke of Brabant as the Swan Knight.

LOT King of Norway. Father of Gawain, Beacurs, Surdamur, Cundrie and Itonje (by Sangive)

LYBBEALS OF PRIENLASCORS Grail knight.

LYPPAUT A duke. Lord of Bearosche. A vassal of Meljanz. Father of Obie and Obilot. Brother of Marangliez. Brother-in-law to Kardefablat.

MABONAGRIN Cousin to Clamide, and former lord of Schoydelacurte.

MACLISIER A dwarf. A character in Hartmann von Aue's romance 'Erec' based on Chrétien de Troyes tale, of the same name.

MAHAUTE Sister of Ehkunat. Wife of Gurgri. Mother of Gandiluz and Schionatulander.

MALCREATIURE A dwarf. Brother of Cundrie la Surziere. Page to Orgeluse.

MANPFILYOT Brother of Kyot of Katelangen. Paternal uncle of Condwiramurs.

MARANGLIEZ Duke of Brevigariez. Brother of Lyppaut.

MAURIN OF THE HANDSOME THIGHS Guinevere's Marshal.

MAZADAN A faery, associated with Mount Famurgan. Parzival's great-great-great-grandfather. Father of Lazaliez (Angevin line) and Brickus (Arthurian line) by the faery Terdalaschoye.

MELJAHKANZ Son of King Poydiconjunz, and abductor of Imane.

MELJANZ King of Liz. Maternal nephew of Poydiconjunz. Husband to Obie.

MIRABEL King of Avendroyn. Brother of Schirniel.

MORHOLT OF IRELAND Brother to Iseult the Elder, Queen of Ireland.

NARANT Count of Ukerlant. Father of Bernout de Riviers.

NOYT Father of Ider.

OBIE Elder daughter of Lyppaut. Sister of Obilot. Wed to Meljanz.

OBILOT A young child, daughter of Lyppaut, sister to Obie. Gawain's 'lady' in a formal sense.

OLIMPIA An eastern queen loved by Feirefiz.

ORGELUSE Dowager Duchess, through marriage to her first husband Cidegast. Loved by Anfortas. Wed to Gawain.

ORILUS Duke of Lalander (Lalant). Brother of Lahelin and Cunneware. Husband of Jeschute. Slayer of Galoes and Schionatulander.

PANSAMURE A faery. Husband of Beacurs. Father of Liahturteltart.

PARZIVAL Scion of the Grail through his mother Herzeloyde, and of Anjou through his father Gahmuret. Grail King and baptiser of his half-brother Feirefiz the infidel. Husband of Condwiramurs. Father of Loherangrin and Kardeiz (2).

PLIHOPLIHERI A knight slain by Orilus.

PLIPPALINOT Knight-ferryman near Schastel Marveile. Father of Bene.

POMPEIUS King of Nineveh. Brother of Ipomidon.

POYDICONJUNZ King of Gors. Father of Meljahkanz. Brother-in-law to Schaut. Maternal uncle of Meljanz.

POYTWIN OF PRIELASCORS A knight.

PRESTER JOHN Son of Feirefiz and Repanse de Schoye. A Christian priest-king in India.

PROTHIZILAS A duke and vassal of Belacane.

RAZALIC A prince in Azagouc.

REPANSE DE SCHOYE Grail-bearer. Daughter of Frimutel. Sister of Anfortas, Trevrizent, Schoysiane, and Herzeloyde. Wife to Feirefiz. Mother of Prester John.

RISCHOYDE Sister of Frimutel, Wife of Kaylet.

RITSCHART Count of Navers.

RIVALIN King of Lohneis.

RUMOLT Lord of the Royal Kitchen at Worms in the *Nibelungenlied*.

SANGIVE Sister of Arthur. Daughter of Uther Pendragon and Arnive. Wife to Lot, and mother of Gawain, Beacurs, Surdamur, Cundrie, and Itonje. Subsequently wife to Florant.

SARANT A master-weaver of Triande.

SCHAFFILOR King of Arragon.

SCHAUT King of Liz. Brother-in-law to Poydiconjunz. Father of Meljanz.

SCHENTEFURS Son of Gurnemanz. Brother of Lascoyt, Gurzgri and Liaze. Cousin to Condwiramurs.

SCHERULES Burgrave of Bearosche under Lyppaut. Father of Clauditte (1).

SCHILTUNC Father-in-law to Vridebant. Paternal kinsman of Kaylet.

SCHIOLARZ Count of Poitou. Father of Liadarz.

SCHIONATULANDER A prince, knight-servitor to Sigune. Son of Gurzgri and Mahaute. Dauphin of Graswaldan. Page to Gahmuret.

SCHIRNIEL King of Lirivoyn. Brother of Mirabel.

SCHOETTE Queen of Anjou. Wife of Gandin. Mother of Galoes and Gahmuret.

SCHOYSIANE Daughter of Frimutel. Sister of Anfortas, Trevrizent, Herzeloide, and Repanse de Schoye. Wife of Kyot of Katelangen. Died giving birth to Sigune (Hence Frimutel at his death leaves four not five living children)

SECUNDILLE Queen of Tribalibot in India. A mistress of Feirefiz.

SEGRAMORE A king in Arthur's suite, kin to Guinevere.

SIBECHE The evil counsellor of King Ermenrich in the *Dietrich* hero cycle.

SIEGFRIED The dragon-slaying hero of the *Nibelungenlied*, killed by Hagen.

SIGUNE Daughter of Kyot of Katelangen and Schoysiane. Parzival's cousin. Lover of Schionatulander.

SURDAMUR Daughter of Lot and Sangive. Sister of Gawain and Itonje. Wife of the Greek emperor Alexander. As Soredamor(s) she is the mother of *Cligès* in Chrétien de Troyes' tale of that name.

TAMPANIS Chief squire to Gahmuret.

TAMPENTEIRE King of Brobarz. Brother of Kyot of Katelangen and Manfilyot. Brother-in-law of Gurnemanz. Father of Condwiramurs and Kardeiz (1).

TANKANIS Father of Isenhart.

TAURIAN THE WILD. Brother of Dodines.

TERDELASCHOYE A faery (associated with Mount Famurgan). Wife of Mazadan, and ancestress of the House of Anjou and the Arthurian line.

TINAS Father of Liaz.

TITUREL First King of the Grail. Great-grandfather of Parzival. Father of Frimutel (deceased) and Rischoyde. Grandfather of Anfortas.

TREBUCHET A famous swordsmith and artificer.

TREVRIZENT Maternal uncle of Parzival. The hermit son of Frimutel. Brother of Anfortas, Herzeloide, Schoysiane, and Repanse de Schoye. Maternal uncle of Sigune.

TURKENTALS A prince of Wales or Norgals.

URJANS A prince of Punturteis.

UTHER PENDRAGON King of Britain. Grandson of Mazadan. Son of Brickus. Husband of Arnive. Father of Arthur and Sangive.

VEGUHLAT King of Ascalun. Cousin of Parzival. Son of Kingrisin and Flurdamurs. Brother of Antikonie. Cousin of Kingrimursel.

VIRGIL OF NAPLES Maternal uncle of Clinschor.

VRIDEBRANT King of Scots. Son-in-law to Schiltunc.

WOLFHART A berserker-type warrior in the *Nibelungenlied*.

YVAIN A knight in Arthur's suite.

End of the List of Characters

A Note on the Chronology of Parzival

Based on Wolfram's secular, liturgical, and astrological references in Parzival, this translation leans towards acceptance of the following **assumed schema** (unprovable, given the current lack of external corroboration). Please note that astrology is not credited here with any factual or scientific meaning, but was a belief system and psycho-drama of the medieval period and is therefore important in understanding artistic works of that age.

1. Wolfram sets Parzival's two visits to Munsalvaesche at the Michaelmas (September 29th) of AD1203 and AD 1208 respectively. In Book IX Trevrizent, on Good Friday, dates Parzival's first visit at four and half years and three days past, while Guinevere in Book XIII, on Ascension Day, says that Parzival left the River Plimizoel four and a half years and six weeks (forty-two days) before, Ascension Day being the thirty-ninth day after Easter Sunday. Calculation would indicate the Good Friday concerned as likely to be that of 1208, falling on April 4th, and the Ascension Day as being that of the same year. The Good Friday of AD1203, also fell on April 4th, exactly five years earlier, thus again pinning the liturgical calendar to the secular, and strengthening Wolfram's framework. Note, as regards dating the final edit of the work, the reference to the historical fight at Erfurt in the summer of 1203 (Book VII) and the looting of the treasury at Byzantium during the Fourth Crusade of 1204 (Book XI).
2. Michaelmas, the Feast of Saint Michael and all Angels, links Saint Michael, the militant Biblical vanquisher of Satan, to the warrior knight Parzival.
3. In Book IX Trevrizent tells Parzival that, on his first visit to Munsalvaesche, Saturn the farthest planet (of the then recognised Ptolemaic seven) caused the Grail King Anfortas his greatest pain because of its intense cold. Saturn, astrologically, is by tradition the planet of constraint, sorrow and coldness. At Michaelmas of AD1203 Saturn was in Aries, the sign of the Lamb, the sign of the Spring Equinox in Biblical times, and traditionally the sun sign at Christ's birth, and the position of the Sun at the Creation (see Dante's *Divine Comedy*). Saturn was in opposition to the Sun in Libra, and a constraining influence in Aries, whose ruling planet is Mars, indicating the debilitation of the Grail King, and of the martial Parzival, who fails to ask the vital question. Note the reference also to the malign effect of certain planets, regarding the use of the herb 'trachonte' in Chapter IX.

4. In Book XVI, covering the second visit to Munsalvaesche, Wolfram says, emphasising Anfortas' affliction, that it was at the time when Mars 'and' Jupiter (following the lesser known, but syntactically correct reading, rather than the better known, but weak and syntactically incorrect reading, of Mars 'or' Jupiter) 'returned to where they had set out from'. At Michaelmas AD1208, the most notable feature of the astrological chart is that Mars and Jupiter were in conjunction (within eight degrees) of one another, in Leo. If the traditional date of the Crucifixion is accepted, namely April 3rd AD33, then computer calculation shows that a like conjunction of Mars and Jupiter occurred on that date, though not in the same astrological house (Gemini not Leo), indicating a correspondence between the Grail Castle, with its lance that drips blood, and the Crucifixion itself. The conjunction is that of the warrior (Mars/Parzival) and the Grail King (Jupiter, king of the heavens), and the subsequent alignment of Parzival the knight with the Grail kingship itself. Since the planets are relatively slow moving the conjunction appertains to the traditional date of the healing Resurrection also, two days later. Mars and Jupiter had therefore 'returned' to their state of conjunction, though not the exact same position in the heavens. Ptolemaic calculation was remarkably accurate in practice despite the falsity of the underlying theory, and might well have been accurate enough to highlight the conjunction to Wolfram and his Medieval contemporaries. (**However**, it should be noted that Mars/Jupiter conjunctions in dissimilar signs are not at all rare, and indeed occur every two or three years. For example, similar conjunctions, prior to 1208, occurred in May 1204 and July 1206).
5. It is also worth noting the conjunction of Saturn with the Sun in Aries, on Good Friday AD1203, reinforcing the factors of constraint and coldness inflicted on Anfortas, with this astrological influence of Saturn in Aries following through to the Michaelmas of that same year.

Readers are hereby invited to check the astrological charts for the dates given (this can be done via various Internet sites or local software); search out any other possible significance of Wolfram's

references; confirm the traditional date for the Crucifixion as the date commonly acknowledged in Wolfram's day; confirm if possible the accuracy of the Ptolemaic system with regard to the configuration of planets at the traditional date of the Crucifixion, and consider whether the repetition of a Mars/Jupiter conjunction is sufficient to constitute 'a return' of those planets, in the absence of any other credible alternative. It should be noted that a return (a full circuit of the planetary orbit) of Jupiter occurs approximately every 11.9 years, and a return of Mars every 1.9 years, neither of which fits a five-year time frame, so the return does not it seems refer to Parzival's previous visit to Munsalvaesche. Any 'return' (assuming the text was intended to be astrologically meaningful) must therefore be to an astrological configuration at a given date (known or traditionally assumed) in the past, preferably one associated with the Christian tradition (Creation, Birth of Christ, Crucifixion, Resurrection) The astrological configuration could involve planetary alignments, planets in specific signs, planets in exaltation or fall, or something more abstruse.

6. Added here is a further note regarding the herb 'trachonte' and the Dragon constellation referred to in Book IX. It is unlikely that the constellation Draco near the Pole Star is intended, as that constellation has no particular relevance to any healing process. There is however another dragon constellation, that of Serpens. (In Latin serpens means a serpent, snake or dragon, the words for serpent and dragon being used fairly interchangeably in the past, especially in Norse, and related northern, literature). Of interest here is that the constellation Serpens is depicted as the head and tail of a serpent on either side of the constellation Ophiuchus, the serpent-bearer, which represents Asclepius (Aesculapius) the Healer, and the serpent is commonly depicted threading between his thighs, as he grasps the creature. In one mythological incident, Asclepius appeared to kill a snake, but the creature was subsequently 'resurrected' by means of a reviving herb placed on it before its death, by a second snake. Asclepius was said to revive 'dead' human beings using the same technique he had witnessed (Pseudo-Hyginus, *Astronomica* 2.14). These two constellations are in reasonably close

proximity to the Zodiacal constellations of Libra and Scorpio (the wounding scorpion). The healing constellation of Aesculapius is therefore well-suited in principle to countering the effects of inimical planetary alignments (for example Saturn in the constellation opposite Libra, that of Aries, in 1203, see above), though it fails to help Anfortas, as do the other powerful remedies. The passage may also refer to the Dragon's Head and Dragon's Tail of astrology (the lunar nodes, where the moon's orbit intersects the ecliptic) but there is no tradition of them possessing a healing nature. I would regard the connections here with a resurrecting healer (and the Resurrection itself); the snake passing between the thighs, where Anfortas was wounded; and the reviving herb, as at least worthy of consideration.

End of the Notes