

The following is the text of *Perceval, or the Story of the Grail*, by Chrétien de Troyes.

The left column is the line number, corresponding to the original Old French text. The middle column is the Old French, and the right column is the English. The line breaks are such so the Old French and English correspond. They are not to be construed as actual breaks in the text; any section break is indicated by a long series of dashes.

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Such bright and magnificent angels . . .

69	Ce fu au tans qu'arbre florissent,	IT WAS THE TIME when the trees were in bloom,
70	Foillent boschage, pre verdissent,	when new leaves grew lush in the woods,
71	Et cil oisel en lor latin	and the meadows were grassy green;
72	Cantent doucement au matin	when the birds twittered sweet songs
73	Et tote riens de joie aflamme,	to welcome the dawn,
74	Que li fix a la veve dame	and all things were ardent with joy.
75	De la gaste forest soutaine	The son of the Widowed Lady
76	Se leva, et ne li fu paine	of the Forsaken Forest
77	Que il sa sele ne meist	arose and cheerfully
78	Sor son chaceor et preïst	saddled his hunting horse,
79	Trois gavelos, et tout issi	grabbed three javelins
80	Fors del manoir sa mere issi.	and left his mother's manor.
81	Il pensa que veoir iroit	He thought he would visit the farmers
82	Herceors que sa mere avoit,	
83	Qui ses avaines li herçoient;	who cultivated her grain,
84	Bués .xii. et .vi. herces avoient.	with their twelve oxen and six plows.
85	Ensi en la forest s'en entre,	As soon as he entered the forest
86	Et maintenant li cuers del ventre	his heart was filled with delight,
87	Por le dolç tans li resjoï,	feeling the pleasant weather
88	Et por le chant que il oï	and hearing the joy in the birds' songs.
89	Des oisiax qui joie faisoient;	
90	Toutes ces choses li plaisoient.	All these things made him happy.
91	Por la douçor del tans serain	Since the weather was mild and calm,
92	Osta au chaceor le frain,	he took the bridle from his horse
93	Si le lascia aler paissant	and let it graze as it pleased
94	Par l'erbe fresche verdoiant.	among the fresh green grass.
95	Et cil qui bien lancier savoit	He was skillful with a javelin,
96	Des gavelos que il avoit,	and he practiced throwing
97	Aloit environ lui lanchant,	the javelins he had brought
		all around him:
98	Une eure [arriere,] et autre avant,	one behind him, one in front,
99	Une eure en bas et autre en haut,	one above and another below.
100	Tant qu'il oï parmi le gaut	Then he heard in the woods
101	Venir .v. chevaliers armez,	five knights, armed from head to toe,
102	De totes armes acesmez.	
103	Et molt grant noise demenoient	their weapons making such a racket,
104	Les armes de ciax qui venoient,	
105	Que sovent hurtoient as armes	cracking often against the branches
106	Li rain des chaines et des carmes.	of oaks and hornbeams.
107	Les lances as escus hurtoient	Wood banging against steel,
108	Et tout li hauberc fremissoient;	spears against shields,
109	Sone li fus, sone li fers	coats of mail clinking;
110	Et des escus et des haubers.	everything resounded.
111	Li vallés oit et ne voit pas	The boy heard, but could not see,
112	Ciax qui vienent plus que le pas;	the knights coming toward him quickly.
113	Molt se merveille et dist: «Par m'ame,	Awestruck he said "My mother
114	Voir se dist ma mere, ma dame,	spoke the truth, by my soul,
115	Qui me dist que deable sont	when she said that devils
116	Plus esfreé que rien del mont;	were the most frightening things in the world!

117 Et si dist por moi enseingnier
118 Que por aus se doit on seingnier,

119 Mais cest ensaing desdaigneraï,
120 Que ja voir ne m'en seigneraï,
121 Ains ferrai si tot le plus fort
122 D'un des gavelos que je port,
123 Que ja n'aprochera vers moi
124 Nus des autres, si com je croi.»
125 Einsi a soi meisme dist
126 Li vallés ains qu'il les veïst,
127 Mais quant il les vit en apert,
128 Que du bois furent descovert,
129 Et vit les haubers fremians
130 Et les elmes clers et luisans,
131 [Et les lances et les escus
132 Que onques mais n'avoit veüs,]
133 Et vit le blanc et le vermeil
134 Reluire contre le soleil,
135 Et l'or et l'azur et l'argent,
136 Si li fu molt bel et molt gent,
137 Et dist: «Ha! sire Diex, merci!
138 Ce sont angle que je voi chi.
139 Et voir or ai je molt pechié,
140 Ore ai je molt mal exploitié,
141 Qui dis que c'estoient deable.
142 Ne me dist pas ma mere fable,
143 Qui me dist que li angle estoient
144 Les plus beles choses qui soient,
145 Fors Diex qui est plus biax que tuit.
146 Chi voi je Damedieu, ce quit,
147 Car .i. si bel en i esgart
148 Que li autre, se Diex me gart,
149 N'ont mie de biauté la disme.
150 Ce me dist ma mere meisme
151 Qu'en doit Dieu croire et aorer
152 Et suppliier et honorer,
153 Et je aor[e]rai cestui
154 Et toz les angles avec lui.»
155 Maintenant vers terre se lance
156 Et dist trestoute sa creance
157 Et oroisons que il savoit,
158 Que sa mere apris li avoit.

159 Et li maïstres des chevaliers
160 Le voit, et dist: «Estez arriers!
161 Qu'a terre est de paor cheüs
162 Cil vallés qui nos a veüs.
163 Se nos alions tuit ensamble
164 Vers lui, il aroit, ce me samble,
165 Si grant paor que il morroit,
166 Ne respondre ne me porroit
167 A rien que je li demandisse.»
168 Il s'arestent et cil s'en passe
169 Vers le vallet grant aleüre,
170 Si le salue et asseüre
171 Et dist: «Vallet, n'aiez paor.»
172 — «Non ai je, par le Salveor,
173 Fait li vallés, en cui je croi.
174 N'iestes vos Diex? — Naie, par foi.
175 — Qui estes dont? — Chevaliers sui.
176 — Ainc mais chevalier ne connui,
177 Fait li vallés, ne nul n'en vi
178 N'onques mais parler n'en oï,
179 Mais vos estes plus biax que Diex.

She told me more, she taught me
that to protect myself I must
make the sign of the Cross.
But I'll never make that sign,
I don't need that lesson, now.
No! I'll strike the strongest one
with one of my javelins
and none of the others
will dare come near me, I'm sure!"
That is what the boy said to himself
before he saw them arrive.
But when at last he saw them
coming out of the woods,
when he saw their sparkling mail
and their bright shining helmets,
their spears and shields,
things he had never seen before;
when he saw the white and red
gleaming in the sunlight,
and the gold, blue and silver;
he found it so beautiful and noble
that he cried out, "Oh Lord, my God, forgive me!
Those are angels I see!
What a terrible sin of mine,
what a terrible thing,
to have thought they were devils!
My mother was not telling lies
when she said that angels
were the most beautiful of all things,
more beautiful than all, except for God.
But this must be our Lord, God himself!
Because the one I see is so handsome,
that the others, God help me,
are not even one tenth as magnificent as him.
My own mother said
that we must believe in God and worship him,
bow down before him and honor him.
I will worship this God
and all His angels, too."
He then threw himself to the ground
and started reciting all the prayers,
his mother had taught him.

The leader of the knights saw him,
and said to the others, "Stop where you are!
This boy is so frightened of us
that he has fallen to the ground.
If we all go to him together
he would, most likely,
be frightened to death
and be unable to answer
any of my questions."
They all stopped, and the leader hurried to the boy.
He bid greetings and tried to reassure him
saying, "Young boy, fear not!"
"I fear nothing, thanks to my faith
in our Savior," said the boy.
"You must be God!" "Not at all!"
"Who are you, then?" "I am a knight."
"I have never met a knight before," said the boy,
"nor seen, nor heard of one.
But you are more handsome than God.

180 Cor fuisse je ore autretieux,
 181 Ausi luisanz et ausi fais.»
 182 Maintenant pres de lui s'est trais,
 183 Et li chevaliers li demande:
 184 «Veïs tu hui par ceste lande
 185 .V. chevaliers et .iii. puceles?»
 186 Li vallés a autres noveles
 187 Enquerre et demander entent;
 188 A sa lance sa main li tent,
 189 Sel prent et dist: «Biax sire chiers,
 190 Vos qui avez non chevaliers,
 191 Que est iche que vos tenez?»
 192 — Or sui je molt bien assenez,
 193 Fait li chevaliers, ce m'est vis.
 194 Je quidoie, biax dols amis,
 195 Noveles aprendre de toi,
 196 Et tu les vels oïr de moi.
 197 Jel te dirai: ce est ma lance.
 198 — Dites vos, fait il, c'on la lance
 199 Si com je faz mes gavelos?
 200 — Naie, vallet, tu lez toz sos!
 201 Ains en fiert on tot demanois.
 202 — Dont valt miex li .i. de ces .iii.
 203 Gavelos que vos veez chi;
 204 Que quanques je weil en ochi,
 205 Oisiaux et bestes au besoing,
 206 Et si les ochi de si loing
 207 Come on porroit d'un bozon traire.
 208 — Vallet, de che n'ai je que faire,
 209 Mais des chevaliers me respont.
 210 Di moi se tu sez ou il sont,
 211 Et les puceles veïs tu?»
 212 Li vallés al pié de l'escu
 213 Le prent, et dist tot en apert:
 214 «Ce que est et de coi vos sert?
 215 — Vallet, fait il, ce est abés,
 216 Qu'en autres noveles me mes
 217 Que je ne [te] quier ne demant.
 218 Je quidoie, se Diex m'amant,
 219 Que tu noveles me deïsses
 220 Ainz que de moi les apreïsses,
 221 Et tu vels que je les t'apraigne.
 222 Jel te dirai, coment qu'il praigne,
 223 Car a toi volentiers m'acort:
 224 Escu a non ce que je port.
 225 — Escu a non? — Voire, fait cil,
 226 Ne le doi mie tenir vil,
 227 Car il m'est tant de bone foi
 228 Que se nus lance ou trait a moi,
 229 Encontre toz les cops se met.
 230 C'est li services qu'il me fet.»
 231 Atant cil qui furent arriere
 232 S'en vindrent tote la charriere
 233 Vers lor seignor plus que le pas,
 234 Si li dient isnellepas:
 235 «Sire, que vos dist cist Galois?
 236 — Il ne set pas totes les lois,
 237 Fait li sire, se Diex m'amant,
 238 C'a rien nule que li demant
 239 Ne me respont il onques a droit,
 240 Ains demande de quanqu'il voit
 241 Coment a non et c'on en fait.
 242 — Sire, sachiez bien entresait
 243 Que Galois sont tot par nature
 244 Plus fol que bestes en pasture;

If only I could be like you,
 so bright and magnificent.”
 As he spoke, the knight approached, and asked,

 “Have you seen five knights and three maidens,
 pass today through this moor?”
 But the boy had other things on his mind,
 and had so many questions to ask.
 He reached out his hand and took hold of the lance,
 and asked “Dear, kind Lord,
 you, whose name is Knight,
 what is this that you are holding?”
 “What luck I have,” said the knight.
 “Or so it seems.
 It was I, my kind friend, who hoped
 to get tidings from you,
 and here you are asking me questions.
 I will tell you: this is my lance.”
 “And do you throw it the same
 as I throw my javelins?”
 “Not at all, my young friend, how foolish you are!
 You strike from close range.”
 “Then even one of these three javelins,
 that you see, is better than that.
 I can kill whatever I wish,
 birds or beasts, whatever I need,
 and I kill from as far away
 as you would shoot a longbow.”
 “I don't care, young man,” said the knight,
 “Answer my question about the knights,
 tell me if you know where they are.
 And have you seen the maidens?”
 The boy moved close to the shield,
 grabbed it, and asked bluntly,
 “And what could this be? What is it used for?”
 “Young man,” answered the knight,
 “You mock me, changing the subject
 from that which I seek.
 I had thought, God help me,
 that I would get news from you,
 instead of having to answer all your questions.
 Do you want to know everything about me?
 Well, I'll tell you, for I like you.

 This object I carry is called a shield.”
 “A shield?” “Indeed,” said the knight,
 “One I respect,
 and a faithful one, at that.
 If someone shoots an arrow, or throws a spear
 it comes between me and the blow.
 That is its purpose.”
 Then the knights who had stayed behind
 came walking along the road,
 rapidly, up to their lord,
 and said to him,
 “My Lord, what has this Welshman told you?”
 “He knows nothing of our ways,”
 said the knight, “God help me.
 He has answered none of my questions properly,

 but, for each thing he sees,
 asks its name and what it's used for.”
 “Be aware, my Lord, that Welshmen
 are, by their own nature,
 more foolish than any beasts of the field,

245 Cist est ausi come une beste.
246 Fols est qui dalez lui s'areste,
247 S'a la muse ne velt muser
248 Et le tans en folie user.
249 — Ne sai, fait il, mais se Dieu voie,

250 Ains que soie mis a la voie,
251 Quanqu'il voldra tot li dirai;
252 Ja autrement n'en partirai.»
253 Lors li demande de rechief:
254 «Vallet, fait il, ne te soit grief,
255 Mais des .v. chevaliers me di
256 Et des puceles autresi
257 S'ui les encontras ne veïs.»
258 Et li vallés le tenoit pris
259 Au pan dl le hauberc, si le tyre.
260 «Or me dites, fait il, biax sire,
261 Que c'est que vos avez vestu?
262 — Vallet, fait il, dont nel ses tu?
263 — Je non. — Vallet, c'est mes haubers,
264 S'est ausi pesans come fers,
265 — De fer est il? — Ce voix tu bien
266 — «De ce, fait il, ne sai je rien,
267 Mais molt est biax, se Diex me saut.
268 Qu'en faites vos et que vos vaut?»
269 — Vallet, c'est a dire legier.
270 Se voloies a moi lancier
271 Gavelot ou saiete traire,
272 Ne me porroies nul mal faire.
273 — Dans chevaliers, de tels haubers
274 Gart Diex les bisses et les cers,
275 Que nule ocirre n'en porroie
276 Ne jamais après ne corroie.
277 Et li chevaliers li redit:
278 «Vallet, se Damedieux t'ait,
279 Se tu me ses dire noveles
280 Des chevaliers et des puceles?»
281 Et cil qui petit fu senez
282 Li dist: «Fustes vos ensi nez?
283 — Naie, vallet, ce ne puet estre
284 Qu'ensi peüst rule riens nestre.
285 — Qui vos atorna dont ensi?
286 — Vallet, je te dirai bien qui.
287 — Dites le dont. — Molt volentiers:
288 N'a pas encor .v. ans entiers
289 Que tot cest harnois me dona
290 Li rois Artus qui m'adouba.
291 Mais or me redi que devindrent
292 Li chevalier qui par chi vindrent,
293 Qui les .iii. puceles conduient.
294 Vont il le pas ou il s'en fuient?»
295 Et cil dist: «Sire, or esgardez
296 Le plus haut bois que vos veez,
297 Qui cele montaigne avironne.
298 La sont li destroit de Valdone.»
299 — Et que de che, fait il, biax frere?
300 — La sont li herceor ma mere,
301 Qui ses terres sement et erent,
302 Et se ces gens i trespasèrent,
303 S'il les virent, sel vos diront.»
304 Et cil dient qu'il i iroint
305 Avec lui, se il les i maine,
306 Dusqu'a ceus qui hercent l'avaine.

and this one, especially,
looks as thick as could be.
It's crazy to waste your time
unless you wish to have a good laugh
listening to his foolish remarks.”
“I know only too well,” said the knight,
“But, may God be my witness,
before we get back on the road,
I will not leave until
I have told him all that he wishes.”
And he asked again,
“Young man, take no offense,
But tell me about the five knights,
and the maidens as well.
Have you met them or seen them?”
The young man held tight
to the edge of his coat of mail, and tugged at it.
“And now tell me, my lord,
what is this you're wearing?”
“Young man,” said he, “don't you know?”
“No.” “This is my hauberk,
it's as heavy as iron.”
“Is it made of iron?” “As you well see.”
“I've never seen one before,
but, God help me, it's beautiful.
What is it for? What do you do with it?”
“Young man, that's easy to say.
If you threw a javelin at me,
or shot an arrow at me,
you couldn't hurt me.”
“My lord, Sir knight, may God never give
such armor to fawns and deer!
For I would no longer be able to kill them.
It would be a waste to run after them then.”
The knight then said,
“Young man, may God be with you,
can you give me any news
of the knights and the maidens?”
And the boy, who was not very bright,
said, “Were you born like that?”
“Of course not, boy, that's impossible!
Nothing in the world could be born like this.”
“Who, then, gave you such equipment?”
“Young man, I will tell you who.”
“Well, do so.” “With pleasure.
It was not five years ago
that King Arthur, as he dubbed me,
made me a present of all these accoutrements.
And now, tell me what has become of
the knights that came by here
escorting the three maidens.
Were they riding slowly, or were they fleeing?”
“My lord,” he answered, “do you see
the wood you up there,
around the mountain.
There is the Valdone Pass.”
“Yes, my friend, what of it?”
“My mother's farmers are there,
the workers who sow and till her fields.
If those you seek have passed that way,
they will have seen them, they will tell you.”
So, they said to him, they would go up there with him,
if he would take them
to those who till the fields of oats.

307 Li vallés prent son chaceor
 308 Et va la ou li herceor
 309 Herçoient les terres arees
 310 Ou les avaines sont semees.
 311 Et quant il virent lor seignor,
 312 Si tramblerent tot de paor.
 313 Et savez por coi il le firent?
 314 Por les chevaliers que il virent,
 315 Qui avec lui armé venoient,
 316 Que bien sevent, s'il li avoient
 317 Lor affaire dit et lor estre,
 318 Que il volroit chevaliers estre;
 319 Et sa mere en istroit del sen,
 320 Car destorner l'en quidoit l'en
 321 Car ja chevalier ne veïst
 322 Ne lor affaire n'apreïst.
 323 Et li vallés dist as boviars:
 324 «Veïstes vos .v. chevaliers
 325 Et trois puceles chi passer?
 326 — Il ne finerent hui d'aler
 327 Par ces destrois,» font li bovier.
 328 Et li vallés au chevalier,
 329 Qui tant avoit a lui parlé,
 330 Dist: «Sire, par chi sont alé
 331 Li chevalier et les puceles,
 332 Mais or me redites noveles
 333 Del roi qui les chevaliers fait
 334 Et le liu ou il plus estait.
 335 — Vallet, fait il, dire te weil
 336 Que li rois sejourne a Cardoeil.
 337 N'a mie encor passé quint jor
 338 Que il i estoit assejor,
 339 Que je i fui et si le vi.
 340 Et se tu nel troves enqui,
 341 Bien ert qui le t'ensaignera,
 342 Ja si destornez ne sera.»
 361 Tantost li chevaliers s'en part
 362 Les grans galos, cui molt fu tart
 363 Qu'il eüst les autres atains.

364 Et li vallés ne s'est pas fains
 365 De retourner a son manoir,
 366 Ou sa mere dolant et noir
 367 Avoit le cuer por sa demore.
 368 Grant joie en ot a icele ore
 369 Qu'ele le vit, ne pas ne pot
 370 Celer la joie que ele en ot,
 371 Car come mere qui molt l'aime
 372 Cort contre lui et si le claime
 373 «Biax fix, biax fix» plus de .c. fois:
 374 «Biax fix, molt a esté destrois
 375 Mes cuers por vostre demoree.
 376 De doel ai esté acoree,
 377 Si que par poi morte ne sui.
 378 Ou avez vos tant esté hui?
 379 — Ou, dame? Je le vos dirai;
 380 Que ja ne vos en mentirai,
 381 Car je ai molt grant joie eüe
 382 D'une chose que j'ai veüe.
 383 Mere, dont ne soliez vos dire
 384 Que li angle Dieu, nostre Sire,
 385 Sont si tres bel c'onques Nature
 386 Ne fist si bele creature,
 387 N'el monde n'a si bele rien?
 388 — Biax fix, encor le di je bien.

The young man jumped on his horse,
 and rode to where the farmers
 were plowing the land
 where oats were grown.
 As soon as they saw their lord,
 they all shook with fear.
 Do you know why?
 Because of the heavily armed knights
 they saw with him.
 They knew well that if the knights told him
 what they did and who they were
 he would want to be a knight
 and his mother would lose her senses.
 They had thought they could avoid
 his ever seeing a knight
 or ever hearing of their doings!
 The young man said to the herdsmen,
 "Have you seen five knights
 and three maidens come by here?"
 "They went through the pass,
 all day long," answered the herdsmen.
 The young man said to the knight
 he had spoken to at length,
 "My Lord, the knights and maidens
 have come through here.
 But tell me of the King who makes knights,

and where he can usually be found."
 "Young man," he said, "I will tell you.
 The King is residing in Carduel.
 Not five days ago,
 he was resting there,
 I was there myself and I saw him.
 And if you do not find him there,
 someone will tell you
 where he has gone."
 On those words, the knight rode away
 at full gallop, in his eagerness
 to catch up to the knights and maidens.

 The young man did not linger
 and went home to the manor
 where his mother waited sadly,
 with a heavy heart, because of his lateness.
 Her heart was gladdened as soon
 as she saw him! It was impossible for her
 to hide the joy that she felt.
 Being the loving mother she was,
 she ran to meet him and more than a hundred times
 called out, "Oh! My son! My beloved son!"
 "My beloved son, your lateness
 anguished my heart so.
 I was overcome with sadness,
 It almost killed me.
 Where have you been today, for so long?"
 "Where, mother? I'll tell you,
 without a false word,
 from something that I've seen
 has given me great joy.
 Haven't you always told me
 that our Lord God's angels
 are so beautiful, that Nature has never made
 any creatures as beautiful,
 and that there's nothing more beautiful in the world?"
 "I have said so, my beloved son,

389 Jel di por vor, et di encor.»
 390 — Taisiez, mere, ne vi je or
 391 Les plus beles choses qui sont,
 392 Qui par le gaste forest vont?
 393 Il sont plus bel, si com je quit,
 394 Que Diex ne que si angle tuit.»
 395 La mere entre ses bras le prent
 396 Et dist: «Biax fix, a Dieu te rent,
 397 Que molt ai grant paor de toi.
 398 Tu as veü, si com je croi,
 399 Les angles dont la gent se plaignent,
 400 Qui ocïent quanqu'il ataignent.»
 401 — Non ai, voir, mere, non ai, non!
 402 Chevalier dient qu'il ont non.»
 403 La mere se pasme a cest mot,
 404 Que chevalier nomer li ot;
 405 Et quant ele fu redrechïe,
 406 Dist come feme correchïe:
 407 «Ha! lasse! com sui malbaillie!
 408 Biax dols fix, de chevalerie
 409 Vos quidoie si bien garder
 410 Que ja n'en oïssiez parler
 411 Ne que ja nul n'en veïssiez.
 412 Chevaliers estre deüssiez,
 413 Biax fix, se Damedieu pleüst,
 414 Qui vostre pere vos eüst
 415 Gardé et vos autres amis.
 416 N'ot chevalier de si haut pris,
 417 Tant redouté ne tant cremu,
 418 Biax fix, com vostre peres fu
 419 En toutes les illes de mer.
 420 Biax fix, bien vos poëz vanter
 421 Que vos ne dechaez de rien
 422 De son lignage ne del mien,
 423 Que je sui de chevaliers nee,
 424 Des meillors de ceste contree.
 425 Es illes de mer n'ot lignage
 426 Meillor del mien en mon eage,
 427 Mais li meillor sont decheü,
 428 S'est bien en pluisors lius veü
 429 Que les mescheances avientent
 430 As pseudomes qui se maintiennent
 431 En grant honor et en proece.
 432 Malvestiez, honte ne pereche
 433 Ne dechiet pas, qu'ele ne puet,
 434 Mais les buens dechaoir estuet.
 435 Vostre peres, si nel savez,
 436 Fu parmi la jambe navrez
 437 Si que il mehaigna del cors.
 438 Sa grant terre, ses grans tresors,
 439 Que il avoit come pseudom,
 440 Ala tot a perdition,
 441 Si chaï en grant povreté.
 442 Apovri et deshïeté
 443 Et escillïe furent a tort
 444 Li gentil home après la mort
 445 Utherpandragon qui rois fu
 446 Et peres le bon roi Artu.
 447 Les terres furent escillïes
 448 Et les povres gens avillïes,
 449 Si s'en fuï qui fuïr pot.
 450 Vostre pere cest manoir ot
 451 Ichi en ceste forest gaste;
 452 Ne pot fuïr, mais en grant haste
 453 En litïere aporter s'i fist,

I have said so and say it again.”
 “Quiet, mother! Haven't I seen
 the most beautiful things alive
 go by in the Forsaken Forest?
 Yes, more beautiful, I think
 than God and all His angels.”
 His mother took him in her arms and said,
 “You are in God's hands now, my beloved son,
 and I fear greatly for you.
 I think you have seen
 the angels that people grieve about;
 the ones who kill all they meet.”
 “No, mother, I didn't! Not at all!
 Knights; that's what they said they're called.”
 His mother swooned,
 hearing him say the word Knight.
 When she got up,
 she was very upset. She said,
 “Alas! What sad fate is mine.
 Oh, my sweet child, I had hoped to protect you
 from this business of knighthood;
 you would never have heard me speak of it,
 nor would you ever have seen any knights.
 A knight! You should have been one,
 my beloved son, had the Lord God but spared
 your father and all your other friends!

 There never was a knight of such excellence,
 who inspired such respect and fear
 as your father, my beloved son,
 never, in all the islands of the sea.
 You can be proud:
 you need not feel any shame
 for his lineage, nor for mine.
 Because I descend from knights,
 from the best in this land.
 In the islands of the sea, in my time,
 there was no lineage higher than mine.
 But sometimes even the great may fall.
 It is well known everywhere
 that misfortune strikes good men,
 those who persevere
 in honor and in valiance.
 The cowards, the shameful, the idle
 need not fear their downfall, they cannot fall.
 But the fate of the good is to fall.
 You do not know this, but your father
 received a wound between his legs,
 that maimed him.
 His vast lands, his great wealth,
 which his valor had earned him,
 all fell into ruin.
 He became destitute.
 Poor, deprived, driven away;
 this is what happened, unjustly, to the noble families,

 after the death of Uhter Pendragon, who was king,
 and father of the good king Arthur.
 The lands were ravaged,
 and the poor people disparaged.
 Those who could, escaped.
 Your father owned this manor,
 here in the Forsaken Forest.
 He was unable to flee, so hurriedly
 he was carried here on a litter,

454 Qu'aillors ne sot ou il fuïst.
455 Et vos, qui petis estiiez,
456 .II. molt biax freres aviiez;
457 Petis estiez, alaitans,
458 Peu aviiez plus de .ii. ans.
459 Quant grant furent vostre dui frere,
460 Au los et au conseil lor pere
461 Alerent a .ii. cors roiaus
462 Por avoir armes et chevax.
463 Au roi d'Escavalon ala
464 Li aisnez, et tant servi l'a
465 Que chevaliers fu adoubez;
466 Et li autres, qui puis fu nez,
467 Fu au roi Ban de Gomorret.
468 En .i. jor andui li vallet
469 Adoubé et chevalier furent,
470 Et en .i. jor meïsmes murent
471 Por revenir a lor repaire,
472 Que joie me voloient faire

473 Et lor pere, qui puis nes vit,
474 Qu'a armes furent desconfit.
475 A armes furent mort andui,
476 Dont j'ai grant doel et grant anui.
477 De l'ainsné avinrent merveilles,
478 Que li corbel et les corneilles
479 Ambesdeus les oex li creverent;
480 Einsi les gens mort le troverent.
481 Del doel del fil morut li pere,
482 Et je ai vie molt amere
483 Sofferte puis que il fu mors.
484 Vos estiez toz li confors
485 Que jou avoie et toz li biens,
486 Car il n'i avoit plus des miens;
487 Rien plus ne m'avoit Diex laissiee
488 Dont je fuisse joians ne liee.»
489 Li vallés entent molt petit
490 A che que sa mere li dist.
491 «A mengier, fait il, me donez;
492 Ne sai de coi m'arraisonnez.
493 Mes molt iroie volentiers
494 Au roi qui fait les chevaliers,
495 Et je irai, cui qu'il em poist.»

496 La mere, tant come il li loist,
497 Le retient et si le sejourne,
498 Se li apareille et atorne
499 De canevas grosse chemise
500 Et braies faites a la guise
501 De Gales, ou on fait ensamble
502 Braies et cauces, ce me samble;
503 Et si ot cote et caperon,
504 De cuir de cerf close environ.
505 Einsi la mere l'atorna.
506 Trois jors sanz plus le demora,
507 Que plus n'i ot mestier losenge.
508 Lors ot la mere doel estrange,
509 Sel baise et acole en plorant
510 Et dist: «Ore ai je doel molt grant,
511 Biax fix, quant aler vos en voi.
512 Vos irez a la cort le roi,
513 Se li dirés qu'armes vos doinst.
514 De contredit n'i ara point,
515 Qu'il les vos donra, bien le sai.
516 Mais quant ce vennra a l'essai

for he didn't know where else to run.
And you, who were young,
you had two handsome brothers.
You were young, still at my breast,
you were barely two years old.
When your two brothers were grown,
following your father's advice and desire,
they visited the courts of two kings,
to receive arms and horses.
Your older brother went to the king of Escavalon
and served him so well
he was dubbed a knight.
Your other brother, the younger of the two
went to king Ban of Gomorret.
The same day, the two young men
were dubbed and made knights,
and that same day they both left
to return home;
they wanted to bring joy to me,
as well as to their father,
but he never saw them again,
for they were killed in battle.
They both died because of their arms,
and I am still full of sorrow and grief.
Wondrous things happened to your older brother:
ravens and crows gouged out his eyes.

That is how he was found dead.
Their father died from mourning their death,
and I have lived a bitter life since his.

You were my only consolation,
the only thing left to me,
because all of my family was gone.
God had not left me anything else
to give me joy and happiness.”
The young man paid little attention
to what his mother told him.
“Bring me something to eat,” he said.
“I don't know what you're talking about.
But I'll go with pleasure
to the King who makes knights
no matter what you say.”

His mother did all she could
to keep him there and make him stay
while she prepared his trappings:
a heavy homespun shirt,
Welsh-style trousers,
with breeches and leggings all in one piece,
if I am not mistaken.
There was also a tunic and a cape
made of deerskin which covered him well.
His mother outfitted him like this,
but she could only keep him three days, no longer!
Her cajoling became useless.
Then his mother was seized by a strange mourning.
In tears, kissing him, embracing him,
she said, “I feel very sad
my beloved son, seeing you leave.
You will go to the King's court,
and you will ask him to give you arms.
He won't argue,
he'll give them to you, I'm sure.
But when the time comes to bear them

517 D'armes porter, coment ert donques?
518 Ce que vos ne feistes onques,
519 Ne autrui nel veïstes faire,
520 Coment en sarez a chief traire?
521 Malvaisement, voire, ce dout.
522 Mal serez afaitiez del tout,
523 Qu'il n'est merveille, ce m'est vis,
524 S'en ne set che c'on n'a appris;
525 Mais merveille est quant on n'aprent
526 Ce que on ot et voit sovent.
527 Biax fix, .i. sens vos weil aprendre
528 Ou il vos fait molt bon entendre,
529 Et s'il vos plaist a retenir,
530 Grans biens vos en porra venir.
531 Chevaliers serez jusqu'a po,
532 Fix, se Dieu plaist, et je le lo.
533 Se vos trevez ne pres ne loing
534 Dame qui d'aïe ait besoig
535 Ne pucele desconseillie,
536 La vostre aïde appareillie
537 Lor soit, s'ele[s] vos en requierent,
538 Car totes honors i affierent.
539 Qui as dames honor ne porte,
540 La soe honor doit estre morte.
541 Dames et puceles servez,
542 Si serez partout honerez;
543 Mais se vos aucune en proiez,
544 Gardez que ne li anuiez
545 De nule rien qui li desplaise;
546 De pucele a molt qui le baise.

547 S'ele le baisier vos consent,
548 Le sorplus je vos en desfent,
549 Se laisser le volez por moi.
550 Mais s'ele a anel en son doi
551 Ou a sa ceinture almosniere,
552 Se par amor ou par proiere
553 Le vos done, bon m'ert et bel
554 Que vos em portez son anel.
555 De l'anel prendre vos doinz gié
556 Et de l'aumosniere congié.
557 Biax fix, encor vos veil dire el,
558 Que en chemin ne en hostel
559 N'aiez longuement compaignon
560 Que vos ne demandez son non;
561 Et ce sachiez a la parsome,
562 Par le sornon connoist on l'ome.
563 Biax fix, as pseudomes parlez
564 Et lor compaignie tenez;
565 Pseudom ne forconseille mie
566 Ciax qui tiennent sa compaignie.
567 Sor tote rien vos weil proier
568 Que a l'eglise et al mostier
569 Alez proier nostre Seignor
570 Qu'en cest siecle vos doinst honor,
571 Et si vos i doinst contenir
572 Qu'a bone fin puissiez venir.
573 —Mere, fait il, que est eglise?
574 — Uns lius ou l'en fait le servise,
575 Celui qui ciel et terre fist
576 Et homes et femes i mist.
577 — Et mostiers, coi? — Fix, ce meïsmes:
578 Une maison bele et saintisme
579 Ou il a cors sains et tresors,
580 S'i sacrefie l'en le cors

and to use them, what will happen then?
How will you succeed
in something you have never done,
nor seen another do?
You will not, I'm afraid;
you'll be helpless with them.
There is nothing surprising, in my eyes,
to not know what you have never been taught.
What is surprising is to not learn
what you see and hear often.
I want to teach you something, my beloved son,
something worthy of your attention.
If you truly remember this,
you should fare well.
Soon you will be a knight,
if God be willing, and you have my blessing.
If, in your wanderings,
you meet a lady in need
or a maiden in distress,
give them your assistance,
if they so much as ask you,
for your honor depends on it.
He who does not honor women
loses his own honor.
Serve ladies and maidens honorably,
and you will be esteemed everywhere.
And if you ask one for her favors in love,
be wary of offending her,
do nothing that may vex her.
If you obtain a kiss from a maiden,
she will give much more.
But if she does agree to this kiss,
I forbid you what may ensue;
please, for me, renounce it.
If she wears a ring on her finger
or a purse on her waist,
and she offers these to you
out of love for you or on your asking,
I would agree that you may accept the ring.
For the ring you have my permission,
the purse as well.
My beloved son, I have one other thing to tell you:
on the road, or at an inn,
if you share the company of another for long
do not fail to ask him his name.
It is by his name that one knows a man.

My beloved son, you must speak with
and consort with men of honor.
A man of honor never gives bad advice
to those who accompany him.
But above all, I beg you now
to go to churches and abbeys
and pray to our Lord
that he may grant you honor in this world
and allow you to follow the right path
so that you will come to a good end."
"But mother, what is a church?"
"A place where masses are held
in glory of Him who created heaven and earth
and the men and animals that inhabit it."
"And an abbey, what is that?"
"It is this, my son: a glorious and holy place,
full of relics and treasures,
where the body of Jesus Christ,

581 Jhesu Crist, le prophete sainte
582 Cui juif fisent honte mainte.
583 Traïs fu et jugiez a tort,
584 Et soffri angoisse de mort
585 Por les homes et por les fames,
586 Qu'en infer aloient les ames
587 Quant elcs partoient des cors,
588 Et il les en regeta fors.
589 Si fu a l'estache liiez,
590 Batus et puis crucefiiez,
591 Et porta corone d'espines.
592 Por oïr messes et matines
593 Et por cel seignor aorer
594 Vos lo jou al mostier aler.
595 [— Donc irai je molt volentiers
596 As eglises et as mostiers,
597 Fait li vallés, d'or en avant.
598 Ensi le vos met on covent.>]
599 Atant n'i ot plus de demore;
600 Congié prent, et la mere plore,
601 Et sa sele li fu ja mise.
602 A la maniere et a la guise
603 De Gales fu appareilliez;
604 .I. revelins avoit chauciez,
605 Et partout la ou il aloit,
606 Trois gavelos porter soloit.
607 Ses gavelos en velt porter,
608 Mais .ii. en fist sa mere oster
609 Por che que trop samblast Galois;
610 Si eüst ele fait toz trois
611 Molt volentiers, s'il peüst estre.
612 Une roorte en sa main destre
613 Porta por son cheval ferir.
614 Plorant le baise au departir
615 La mere qui molt chier l'avoit,
616 Et prie Dieu que il l'avoit.
617 «Biax fix, fait ele, Dix vos maint!
618 Joie plus qu'il ne m'en remaint
619 Vos doinst il ou que vos ailliez.»
620 Quant li vallés fu eslongiez
621 Le get d'une pierre menue,
622 Si se regarde et voit cheüe
623 Sa mere al chief del pont arriere,
624 Et jut pasmee en tel maniere
625 Com s'ele fust cheüe morte.
626 Et cil cingle de le roorte
627 Son chaceor parmi la croupe,
628 Et il s'en va, que pas ne çoupe,
629 Ains l'en porte grant aleüre
630 Parmi le grant forest obscure;
631 Et chevalcha des le matin
632 Tant que li jors vint a declin.
633 En la forest cele nuit jut
634 Tant que li clers jors aparut.

the holy prophet is sacrificed.
He was humiliated by the Jews,
betrayed and condemned unjustly.
He suffered the torments of death
to save men and women
whose souls went to Hell,
after leaving their bodies.

He was tied to a pole,
beaten and then crucified
wearing a crown of thorns.
I advise you to go to church
to hear masses and matins
and worship the Lord."
"From now on," said the young man,
"I will go willingly
to churches and abbeys,
I promise you."
There was no reason to dawdle any longer.
He said goodbye to his mother, and she cried.
The saddle was already on his horse.
He was fitted out in the Welsh manner,

wearing large hobnailed boots,
and carrying, as he always did
wherever he went, three javelins.
He wanted to take all of them,
but his mother made him leave two of them behind;
he really looked too much like a Welshman!
And had it been possible
she would have done the same with the third.
In his right hand he held a wicker switch
to whip his horse.
It was time to leave. His mother, who loved him,
kissed him while crying,
and prayed that God might guide him.
"My beloved son," she said, "may God be with you!
And may he grant you, wherever you go,
more happiness than I have left to me!"
Once he was a stone's throw away,

the young man turned and saw his mother fallen,
at the end of the drawbridge,
lying there, in a faint,
as if she had fallen dead.
With one blow of his switch,
he lashed the rump of his horse
who jumped ahead
and carried him away speedily
through the dark forest.
He rode from morning
until the close of the day.
That night, he slept in the forest,
until the morning light shone forth.