

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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The Maiden in the Tent

635	Au matin au chant des oiselés	IN THE morning, when the birds started singing,
636	Se lieve et monte li vallés,	the young man rose and mounted his horse.
637	S'a au chevaucher entendu	He had planned to ride
638	Tant que il vit .i. tref tendu	but soon saw a tent,
639	En une prairie bele	standing in a beautiful meadow,
640	Les le sort d'une fontenele.	close to a spring.
641	Li tres fu biax a grant merveille:	The tent was wonderfully beautiful,
642	L'une partie fu vermeille	red on one side
643	Et l'autre verz d'orfrois bende,	green on the other, with golden braid.
644	Desus ot une aigle doree.	At the top was a gilded eagle
645	En l'aigle feroit li solaus	that gleamed with the reddish light of the sun
646	Qui molt estoit clers et vermaus,	
647	Si reluisoient tout li pre	beaming across the meadow
648	De l'enluminement del tre.	the radiance of the tent.
649	Entor le tref a la roonde,	All around this tent,
650	Qui estoit li plus biax del monde,	the most beautiful in the world,
651	Avoit ramees et foillies	stood huts and bowers
652	Et loges galesches drechies.	made with leafy branches in the Welsh style.
653	Li vallés vers le tref ala,	The young man went toward the tent
654	Et dist ains que il venist la:	and said, before he entered,
655	«Diex, or voi je vostre maison.	“My Lord, this is your home I see!
656	Or feroie jou mesprison,	What a sin it would be
657	Se aorer ne vos aloie.	to not enter and worship you.
658	Voir dist ma mere tote voie	My mother was certainly right,
659	Qui me dist que mostiers estoit	when she told me that there was nothing
660	La plus bele chose qui soit,	more beautiful than a church,
661	Et me dist que ja ne trovaisse	and that, if I were to see one,
662	Mostier qu'aorer n'i alaisse	I should enter and worship
663	Le Creator en cui je croi.	the Creator I have faith in.
664	Je li irai prier par foi	Well, I'll go and pray to him,
665	Qu'il me doinst anqui a mengier,	that he may give me food today,
666	Que j'en aroie grant mestier.»	for I need some badly.”
667	Lors vient au tref, sel trove overt,	He came toward the tent and found it open;
668	Enmi le tref un lit covert	in the middle was a bed
669	D'une colte de paile voit;	covered with a fine quilt,
670	El lit toute seule gisoit	and lying alone, on the bed,
671	Une pucelete endormie.	was a sleeping damsel.
672	Mais loing estoit sa compaignie,	Her company was elsewhere.
673	Alees erent ses puceles	Her maids had gone far away
674	Por coillir floretes noveles	to pick small spring flowers
675	Que par le tref jonchier voloient,	to sprinkle on the floor of the tent,
676	Ensi com faire le soloient.	as they usually did.
677	Quant li vallés el tref entra,	When the young man entered the tent,
678	Ses chevax si fort s'esproha	his horse stumbled so loudly
679	Que la damoisele l'oi,	that the damsel heard it,
680	Si s'esveilla et tressali.	and woke with a start.
681	Et li vallés, qui niches fu,	The young man, who was simple,
682	Dist: «Pucele, je vos salu,	said to her, “Maiden, I bid you hello,
683	Si com ma mere le m'aprist.	as my mother taught me.
684	Ma mere m'ensaigna et dist	For my mother told me,

685 Que les puceles saluaise
 686 En quel que liu que jes trovaisse.»
 687 La pucele de paor tramble
 688 Por le vallet qi fols li samble,
 689 Si se tient por fole provee
 690 De che qu'il l'a sole trovee.
 691 «Vallet, fait ele, tien ta voie.
 692 Fui! que mes amis ne te voie.»
 693 — Ains vos baiseraï, par mon chief,
 694 Fait li vallés, cui qu'il soit grief,
 695 Que ma mere le m'ensaigna.
 696 — Je voir ne te baiseraï ja,
 697 Fait la pucele, que je puisse.
 698 Fui! que mes amis ne te truisse;
 699 Que s'il te trove, tu es mors.»
 700 Li vallés avoit les bras fors,
 701 Si l'embracha molt nichement,
 702 Car il nel sot faire autrement.
 703 Mist le soz lui tote estendue,
 704 Et cele s'est molt desfendue
 705 Et gandilla quanqu'ele pot;
 706 Mais desfense mestier n'i ot,
 707 Que li vallés en .i. randon
 708 Le baisa, volsist ele ou non,
 709 .XX. fois, si com li contes dit,
 710 Tant c'un anel en son doit vit
 711 A une esmeraude molt clere.
 712 «Encor fait il, me dist ma mere
 713 Qu'en vostre doit l'anel presisse,
 714 Ne que rien plus ne vos fesisse.
 715 Or cha l'anel! jel weil avoir.
 716 — Mon anel n'aras tu ja voir,
 717 Fait la pucele, bien le saches,
 718 S'a force del doit nel m'esraches.»
 719 Li vallés par le poing le prent,
 720 A force le doit li estent,
 721 Si a l'anel en son doit pris
 722 Et en son doit meïsme mis,
 723 Et dist: «Pucele, bien aiez.
 724 Or m'en irai je bien paiez,
 725 Et molt meilleur baisier vos fait
 726 Que chamberiere que il ait
 727 En toute la maison ma mere,
 728 Car n'avez pas la bouche amere.»
 729 Et cele pleure et dist: «Vallet,
 730 N'en porte pas mon anelet,
 731 Que j'en seroie malbaillie
 732 Et tu en perdroides la vie,
 733 Que qu'il tardast, jel te promet.»
 734 Li vallés a son cuer ne met
 735 Rien nule de che que il ot,
 736 Mais de che que jeüné ot
 737 Moroit de fain a male fin.
 738 .I. bouchel trove plain de vin
 739 Et .i. hanap d'argent selonc,
 740 Et voit sor .i. trossel de jonc
 741 Une toaille blanche et noeve.
 742 Il le sozlieve et desoz trove
 743 .III. bons paste de chievrol fres,
 744 Ne li anuie pas cis mes.
 745 Por le fain qui forment l'angoisse,
 746 .I. des paste devant lui froisse
 747 Et mengüe par grant talent,
 748 Et verse en la colpe d'argent
 749 Del vin qui n'estoit mie lais,

to always be courteous with girls
 wherever I meet them.”
 The young woman shook with fear
 seeing the young man, who seemed crazy,
 and thought herself crazy as well
 for having stayed alone, where he found her.
 “Young man,” she said, “move along.
 Go away, before my lover sees you!”
 “Not before I get a kiss from you, I swear,”
 he said, “And too bad for your lover!
 That’s what my mother taught me.”
 “A kiss! Never! Not from me,”
 said the maiden, “Not if I can avoid it.
 Get out! If my lover finds you here,
 you’re a dead man.”
 The young man had strong arms,
 he embraced her, clumsily,
 for he knew no other way.
 He held her beneath him;
 she fought him off as best she could,
 and struggled, trying to get free
 but it was no use!
 He stole from her, in spite of all she did,
 twenty kisses, so says the story.

Then, he saw a ring on her finger,
 sparkling with a bright emerald.
 “My mother,” he said, “also told me
 to take the ring from your finger,
 as long as I do nothing else to you.
 Give me the ring! I want it!”
 “No! It’s my ring! You won’t have it!”
 said the maiden, “you will not
 unless you take it from my finger by force.”
 The young man grabbed her wrist,
 straightened her finger by force,
 pulled the ring from her finger
 and put it on his own, saying,
 “Fair maiden, I wish you well!
 Now I will go, I have been well paid.
 Your kisses are far better
 than those of my mother’s chambermaids.
 Your mouth is not bitter.”

And she, in tears, said to the young man,
 “Don’t take my little ring!
 It will bring me much grief
 and you will die for it,
 sooner or later, I assure you.”
 But none of her words
 touched the young man’s heart.
 Hunger, however, tormented him.
 He was starving.
 He found a small cask of wine,
 and a silver cup next to it.
 On a bunch of rushes
 was a clean, white napkin.
 He picked it up and underneath
 he saw three nice venison pies.
 Here was a dish that whet his appetite!
 Gnawed by his hunger,
 he broke open the first one
 and ate heartily,
 he poured some of the excellent wine
 in the silver cup.

750 S'en boit sovent et a grans trais,
 751 Et dist: «Pucele, cist pasté
 752 Ne seront hui par moi gasté.
 753 Venez mengier, qu'il sont molt buen,
 754 Assez avra chascuns del suen,
 755 S'en i remandra .i. entiers.»
 756 Et cele pleure endementiers,
 757 Que que cil li prie et semont,
 758 C'onques .i. mot ne li respont
 759 La damoisele, ains pleure fort;
 760 Molt durement ses poins detort.
 761 Et cil menga tant com lui plot
 762 Et but tant que assez en ot
 763 Si recovri le remanant.
 764 Lors prist congié tot maintenant,
 765 Puis comanda a Dieu celi
 766 Cui ses salus point n'abeli.
 767 «Diex vos salt, fait il, bele amie,
 768 Mais por Dieu ne vos poist il mie
 769 De vostre anel, se je l'en port,
 770 Car ains que je muire de mort,
 771 Le vos guerredonerai gié.
 772 Je m'en vois a vostre congié.»
 773 Et cele pleure et dist que ja
 774 A Dieu ne le comandera,
 775 Car il li convenra por lui
 776 Avoir grant honte et grant anui
 777 Que tant n'en ot nule chetive,
 778 Ne ja par lui tant come il vive
 779 N'en avra secors ne aïe,
 780 Si sache bien qu'il l'a traïe.
 781 Einsi remest cele plorant.

782 Puis n'ala gaires demorant
 783 Que ses amis del bos revint;
 784 Del vallet qui sa voie tint
 785 Vit les esclous, si li greva.

786 Et s'amie plorant trova,
 787 Si dist: «Damoisele, je croi,
 788 A ces ensaignes que je voi,
 789 Que chevalier a eü chi.»
 790 — Non a, sire, je vos affi;
 791 Mais .i. vallet galois i ot,
 792 Anieus et vilain et sot,
 793 Qui a de vostre vin beü
 794 Tant com lui plot et bel li fu,
 795 Et menga de vos .iii. pastez.
 796 — Et por ce, bele, si plorez?
 797 S'il n'eüst beü et me[n]gié
 798 Trestot, si le volsisse gié.
 799 — Il i a plus, sire, dist ele.
 800 Mes aniax est en la querele,
 801 Qu'il le m'a tolu, si l'en porte.
 802 Je volsisse mix estre morte
 803 Qu'il l'eüst ensi porté.»
 804 Ez vos celui desconforté
 805 Et angoisseus en son corage.
 806 «Par foi, fait il, ci ot outrage.
 807 Et des qu'il l'en porte, si l'ait;
 808 Mais je quit qu'il i ot plus fait.
 809 Se plus i ot, nel celez ja.

810 — Sire, dist ele, il me baisa.
 811 — Baisa? — Voire, jel vos di bien,

Several times he took long swigs
 then said, "Maiden,
 I can't finish these all alone
 Come eat with me, they're delicious.
 We'll each have our own
 and there will be one left."
 In spite of his invitation, and his pleading
 she kept crying, the whole time.
 The girl didn't answer
 but cried very hard,
 wringing her hands out of despair.
 And the young man kept on eating
 and drinking as much as he wanted,
 and covered what was left.
 Then, suddenly, he started to leave,
 and commended to God
 she who had not at all appreciated his farewell.
 "May God be with you, fair maiden." he said,
 "But, by God, don't be angry
 because of your ring I'm taking.
 Before I die a sweet death,
 I'll find a way to pay you back.
 With your permission, I'll go now."
 She was still crying, but she swore
 that she would never commend him to God,
 because she would now suffer much pain and grief,
 because of him,
 more than any poor woman had ever suffered.
 She would never, on any day of her life
 have any help or assistance.
 He should know that he has betrayed her!
 And she stayed there, crying.

 Not long after
 her lover came back from the woods.
 He saw tracks on the road
 left by the young man's horse,
 and was annoyed.
 He discovered his lady friend in tears,
 "My lady," he said, "I think,
 by the signs that I see,
 that a knight has stopped here."
 "No, my lord, you have my word
 it was just a young Welshman,
 a boor, a peasant and a fool
 who drank your wine,
 to his heart's desire,
 and ate your meat pies."
 "Is that why, my love, you are crying so?
 He could have eaten and drunk everything,
 with my consent."
 "There is something else, my lord," she said,
 "It is about my ring;
 he took it from me.
 I would rather be dead
 than his having taken it."
 Here he had a terrible feeling,
 he felt a pang of anguish.
 "My word," he said, "that's going too far!
 But if he has taken it, let him keep it!
 I was afraid that something else had happened.
 Was there anything else?
 Don't hide anything from me."
 "My lord," she said, "he stole a kiss from me."
 "A kiss?" "Yes, that's what I said,

812 Mais ce fu maleoit gre mien.
813 — Ainçois vos sist, et si vos plot;
814 Onques nul contredit n'i ot,»
815 Fait cil cui jalousie angoisse,
816 «Cuidiez que je ne vos connoisse?
817 Si fas, certes, bien vos connois;
818 Ne sui si borgnes ne si lois
819 Que vostre falseté ne voie.
820 Entree estes en male voie,
821 Entree estes en male paine,
822 Ne ja ne mengera d'avaine
823 Vostre chevax, ne n'iert saigniez
824 Jusque je m'en serai vengiez.
825 Et la ou il desfeerra,
826 Jamais referez ne sera;
827 S'il muert, vos me sivrrez a pié.
828 Ne jamais ne seront changié
829 Li drap dont vos estes vestue,
830 Ainz me sivrrez a pié et nue
831 Tant que la teste en avrai prise;
832 Ja n'en ferai autre justise.»
833 Atant s'assist et si menga.

but I couldn't do anything.”
“Say that it was with pleasure,
and you said nothing against it,”
he yelled, becoming crazy with jealousy.
“You think I don't know you?
Oh no, I certainly do!
I'm not so blind, my eyes are not so crossed
that I cannot see through your lies.
But now you'll pay,
and now you'll suffer.
Your horse won't eat any oats
nor will he be bled
until I get my revenge.
And, if he loses his shoes,
he won't get any new ones.
If he dies, you'll follow me on foot.
Never again will you change
the clothes you're wearing.
You'll end up following me naked and on foot
and will do so until I have his head;
that is the justice I'll exact.”
On these words, he sat down to eat.