INFORMATION TO USERS

This reproduction was made from a copy of a manuscript sent to us for publication and microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted. Pages in any manuscript may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. Manuscripts may not always be complete. When it is not possible to obtain missing pages, a note appears to indicate this.

2. When copyrighted materials are removed from the manuscript, a note appears to indicate this.

3. Oversize materials (maps, drawings, and charts) are photographed by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each oversize page is also filmed as one exposure and is available, for an additional charge, as a standard 35mm slide or in black and white paper format.*

4. Most photographs reproduce acceptably on positive microfilm or microfiche but lack clarity on xerographic copies made from the microfilm. For an additional charge, all photographs are available in black and white standard 35mm slide format.*

*For more information about black and white slides or enlarged paper reproductions, please contact the Dissertations Customer Services Department.

UMI Dissertation Information Service
University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
RICE UNIVERSITY

Hartmann von Aue's Erec:
An Annotated Translation

by

Gary W. Crosland

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Master of Arts

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:

[Signature]
Susan L. Clark, Professor of German, Director

[Signature]
Joseph W. Wilson, Associate Professor of German

[Signature]
Deborah H. Nelson, Associate Professor of French

Houston, Texas
January, 1986
Abstract

Hartmann's von Aue's Erec:

An Annotated Translation

Gary W. Crosland

Until this decade there was no extant translation of Hartmann von Aue's Erec in English, thus limiting the readership of this important work to a few scholars versed in medieval German. This translation is designed to be a readable rendering into modern English that yet retains the medieval ethos in which it was originally written. This translation should broaden the audience to which it can appeal, making Erec available to all English speakers who engage in medieval studies.
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my Thesis Director, Professor Susan L. Clark, as well as the other members of my thesis committee, Associate Professor Joseph B. Wilson and Associate Professor Deborah H. Nelson for all the help and support they gave me towards the completion of this thesis.
Table of Contents

Introduction

Manuscript Versions of Erec vii
The Life of Hartmann von Aue viii
The Name of Erec x
The Translation of Erec xiii

Erec 1

Lacunae in the Manuscript of Erec 159

Notes 160

Bibliography 163
Introduction

Manuscript Versions of Erec

The most well-known manuscript of Erec is the Ambraser Handschrift, also called the Ambraser Heldenbuch commissioned by Emperor Maximilian I between the years 1504 and 1515. It is missing the beginning of the Erec story. There are also gaps between lines 1674 and 1676, between 4317 and 4318, between 4629 and 4630, as I have indicated elsewhere in my introduction. This manuscript is presently in the Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Vienna. Besides this text there is also the Wolfenbüttel fragment, consisting of two large and nine small parchment fragments from the thirteenth century. This is in Wolfenbüttel in the Herzog August Bibliothek. There is also a fragment of thirty-one lines (verses 10,047-10,135 of the poem) from the late fourteenth century in the Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv. In Koblenz at the Landeshauptarchiv there is a double-page parchment of thirty-five lines (that is, verses 7522-7705 and 8436-8604) from the early thirteenth century. The Wolfenbüttel manuscript was an especially important find; not for its completeness, for it is only a fragment, but that it contains fifty-seven verses which fill up a great part of the gap between lines 4629 and 4630 in the Ambraser Handschrift.

Manuscript scholarship and criticism are special studies in their own right and therefore beyond the scope of this thesis. For a more complete treatment, see Wolfgang Milde, "Zur Kodikologie der neuen und alten Wolfenbütteler Erec - Fragmente," Beiträge Zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache und Literatur, 104, No. 2 (1982), 196-206. See also Kurt Gärtner, "Der Text der Wolfenbüttler Erec - Fragmente und seine Bedeutung für die Erec - Forschung," Ibid, 207-230. See also Eberhard
The Life of Hartmann von Aue

We know precious little about the life of Hartmann von Aue. That he came from a place called Aue is clear from a reference he makes to himself in Der Arme Heinrich; he speaks of himself as "Dienstmann ze Ouwe", that is, servant at Aue. The location of Aue is disputed, but would appear to be somewhere in Schwaben or perhaps in what is the present day canton of Zürich at Eglisau or Reichenau. He was probably born around 1160 and began writing around 1190. The death of his lord precipitated a personal crisis, probably the factor moving him to go on a crusade. It would be logical to assume he went on the crusade in 1197, instead of the one in 1189, since he makes reference to Saladin being no longer alive, and we know Saladin died in March of the year 1193. We don't hear of references to him after the year 1210, so it is safe to assume he died somewhere between the years 1210 and 1220.

Hartmann must have been well-educated for someone of his station in the late twelfth century, that is one of the knightly class - minor nobility - since he makes special mention, at the beginning of both Der Arme Heinrich and Iwein of the fact that he could read: "Ein ritter so geleret was / daz er an den buochen las / swas er daran geschriben vant (der Arme Heinrich). Rudolf von Ems referred to him as "der wise Hartmann". Hartmann's first work, "dlu Klage" (the Lament) expressed traditional courtly sentiments, as did his first set of songs thereafter. Erec was his first courtly romance and the first of its kind in German literature. This type of tale would hold sway in Germany for the next three hundred years. Erec was followed by Gregorius, a church legend which illustrated the theme that danger and sorrows accrue
to one who would contravene the will of God and that one should be prompt in seeking penance for wrongdoing. Another set of songs were written which championed the service of God over the seeking of minne and ere, the values of courtly society. By this time, Hartmann's sentiments had moved in this direction; a significant change from the usual attitudes expressed in contemporary French literature which had so heavily influenced the German. Hartmann, with his strong moralistic tendencies considered merely striving after worldly honor (ere) and romantic love (minne) to be inadequate. He allowed his moral overtones to influence the theme of his stories, rather than merely telling an entertaining tale in highly polished and witty language after the French models. His last two and most sophisticated works are Der Arme Heinrich and Iwein. In der Arme Heinrich a rich noble is struck with leprosy for his presumption in taking all his good fortune as his by right instead of realizing everything comes as a gift from God. He may only be cured by the heart-blood of a pure maiden. He originally plans to be cured in this fashion, but realizes that would be far too selfish and decides to accept his fate. God grants him the mercy of a miraculous cure and he marries the maiden after all. Iwein basically follows the plot of Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain, itself derived from the Welsh Mabinogion tale Owain. Hartmann introduces the theme of Iwein in the first three lines; one should seek true kindness, which brings as its reward God's favor and honor. "Swer an rehtiu güete / wendet sin gemüete / dem folget saelde und ere. Iwein's mistake is seeking worldly honor (ere) in isolation from "rehtiu güete" and "saelde", causing him to succumb to the sin of pride (superbia). Iwein finally overcomes his superbia and achieves "rehtiu güete" at the end.
The Theme of *Erec*

The theme of Hartmann's *Erec* turns on the conflict between romantic love (minne) and chivalric honor (ere). Professor J. W. Thomas notes in his introduction to his translation of *Erec* that most of the criticism divides into two groups about the theme of *Erec*. One group sees it as the need to balance and resolve the conflict between minne and ere and the other outlines the conflict and resolution between the individual and society. Actually I find that both of these groups are really considering two halves of the same question. Ideal chivalric society was undergirded by the striving after ere, which consisted of practicing one's knighthood and unhorsing of as many opponents as possible. There were also many courtly rituals to strengthen the bonds of friendship, such as the forming of large hunting parties and the giving and enjoying of great festivals filled with entertainment. These were practices that had to be celebrated in common, requiring group solidarity and cooperation on the part of the knights and their ladies. A court's reputation depended on the striving after and winning of honor and participating in the celebrations attendant to this to attract new, capable knights of like mind. Failure to achieve "ere" by too much indulgence in "minne"—a private, individual pleasure—led to laxness in pursuing one's knightly vocation and caused the court to fall into disrepute. Possessive, sexual love was the solvent that damaged the enjoyment of courtly life in common, the "joie de la court", as Hartmann would later refer to it. This is precisely *Erec*'s problem. Early in the tale, *Erec* wisely refuses to participate in the feasting and merriment until he has proved his knighthood better than anyone else.
He performed in such a praiseworthy manner and gained a reputation that he was later rightly able to participate in a festival at Arthur's court with full enjoyment. But he is so taken with his new wife Enite that he soon spends all of this time making love to her. He fails to go on hunts, seek honor through jousts, and attends no feasts. The only activities he can manage are getting up just in time to go to Mass and showing up for meals. It is small wonder that everyone at court begins to feel he is heading for decadence. When he finally learns of his diminished respect at court he absents himself and goes on a series of adventures to regain his lost honor. Several of these underscore the danger of possessive love. The unnamed count, who previous to seeing Enite had always lived in a virtuous fashion, is suddenly inflamed by passion and decides to take Enite by force, even though she is already married to Erec. His unbridled passion leads to his ignominious defeat at the hands of Erec and the death of six of his knights, thus quenching the joy in his court. Later, Count Oringles, who prevents Enite from taking her own life following Erec's supposed demise, and who one would suppose is normally an honorable man, is suddenly filled with passion for Enite, causing him to treat her in a shameless fashion by marrying her against her will, and repeatedly striking her when she does not cooperate by eating at his feast. The joy of his court is thus destroyed, first by the court's outrage at his unchivalric treatment of Enite, and then when he is slain by the revived Erec, precipitating headlong flight by the guests who believe they see a dead man walking. The final example is in the "joie de la court" episode itself, in which it is revealed that Mabonagrin is a virtual prisoner because of his
wife's jealous, possessive love. Only his unforseen defeat at the hands of Erec frees him from this emotional bondage. Erec himself, having achieved "joie de la court" through this last episode is able to be reintegrated into Arthurian society and later take up his rightful place as king over his father's kingdom.
The Translation of Erec

This translation of Hartmann von Aue's Erec was begun and brought to completion for a number of reasons. Before I began, I noticed that much work had already been done in the realm of literary criticism on Hartmann's Erec as well as many of his other works, but to date, there had been no translation into English of Erec except for a few sample phrases to aid students learning medieval German. I had completed a good deal of the translation before I was aware that professor J. W. Thomas was working on the same thing. In fact, I didn't learn of it until the completed translation in book form appeared on the shelves of Fondren Library. By then, I felt I had already put too much time and work into it to change my topic. In addition to this I was convinced that it would be useful to have more than one version for students of medieval German to compare. While I don't believe that a translation replaces the original - the study of Middle High German is a worthy undertaking in itself in order to read original texts - I do believe that students can benefit from having a foreign work in their native tongue to clear up any confusion they may feel while reading. Also, students who are presently engaged in learning another medieval language such as old French can benefit from having the German work available to compare against the extant French version, as they may not have the opportunity to spend the time learning medieval German. It is for these reasons that I have persevered in completing the translation of Erec.

In this translation, I retained the spelling of the proper names as far as possible, with the exception of the frequently recurring name of "Enite", spelled this way to indicate proper pronunciation. Also, the
most familiar characters of Arthurian romance, Arthur, Guinevere, Sir Kay, Sir Gawain, etc., I gave the familiar English spelling. The titles of the nobles that Hartmann recorded in French I retained; for example, Erec fil de roi Lac.

In making this translation, I was fully aware of the problems confronting a translator who attempts to convey not just the general sense of the original language in English, but to capture as much of the flavor of the original work as possible. In the case of Hartmann's Erec, it was not just that it was in a foreign tongue, but also that it originated in a distinct and distant culture. It was necessary to become conversant with parts of medieval armor, medieval dress, and the accouterments of a horse in battle-readiness, for example. There were long passages describing these items in minute detail; doubtless geared to the interests of the aristocratic medieval audience. The main difficulty, however, was not so much in rendering isolated, problematical passages, but in giving the entire work a medieval feel, without losing the freshness of its appeal. The tendency in translating such works is either to veer in the direction of the deliberately archaic, with the result that it sounds artificial and stilted, or to go to the opposite extreme of making it sound far too modern, as if the author were really a twentieth century writer. The former of these tendencies is unnecessary and the latter is unfortunate. I have chosen what I trust is the "via media", retaining the flavor of the medieval wherever possible, without sacrificing readability.
With her and with her ladies was Erec, son of King Lac the excellent and virtuous one this tale is about. They had not ridden two abreast for long before they saw three figures riding the distance towards them over the heath. In front was a dwarf, in the middle was a lovely, well-dressed maiden, and last of all a knight.

The queen wondered who this knight might be. He was well-armored as befitted a good warrior. Young Erec asked his lady if he should find out. The lady demurred and bade him stay with her. She chose a young maiden to send there saying, "Ride there and learn who the knight and his companion are." The lady rode up to the dwarf as she was commanded. "Good day to you, friend," she said courteously. "Listen to my request. My lady, who is the queen of this land, has sent me. She commanded me in courtesy to greet you in her name, and would gladly know who the knight and this lovely maid are. If you may let me know this, no harm will come of it since my lady asks with good intent." The dwarf did not want to tell her and ordered her to be silent and not hinder him since he didn't know her reason for asking. The maiden did not let this trouble her, as she wanted to ride on and ask the knight himself who he was, but the dwarf barred the way. Erec and the queen then saw him use the whip he was holding to strike her disgracefully on her head and hands so that it raised welts.

[58] With such an answer she returned to her lady and showed her how grievously she was injured. The queen bitterly rued that this had happened right in their vicinity even before their very eyes. Erec thought it disgraceful of the knight not to lift a hand while the dwarf
struck the maiden. He said, "I'll ride over there and find out the reason for you." The lady said "Ride on, then."

Erec left quickly, and when he got close enough for the dwarf to hear him, he asked "Tell me, little man, why you struck the maiden? You have committed a grave misdeed. You should have refrained from this for virtue's sake. Tell me your lord's name. My lady would like to know who he and the lovely girl are." "Leave off your babbling," said the dwarf. "I'll only say the same thing will happen to you. Why did she want to find out who my lord is? What foolish people you are to ask so much about him today; this can indeed be harmful to you. If you want me to let you go, then be off with you at once, you whom the very sun hates."

Erec tried to get past him, but the dwarf would not let him, and struck him with the whip, just as he had done to the girl. Erec would gladly have avenged himself, but he wisely mastered his anger: the knight would have killed him, since he was as unarmed as a woman. He had never lived through a more miserable day than that, because of the lash of the whip, and had never been so ashamed, for the queen and her ladies witnessed this dishonor.

[108] After being struck with the whip, he rode back in humiliation, with reddening cheeks he lamented grievously: "Lady, I may not deny it, since you saw it yourself. Right before you I suffered more disgrace than any of my companions ever had. That such a small man has struck me so viciously and I have to endure it shames me so greatly that I may never dare face you or these young maidens again. My life is pointless unless I can rectify that which happened right in front of
you. If I don't die right away, I'll try. Lady, give me leave to depart. May the King of Heaven guard your honor. You will not see me any more if I do not avenge myself on this man whose dwarf injured me so. If God grants me favor and good fortune that I achieve success, as my heart hopes, I will return after three days, barring ill health."

The queen was dismayed that one so young would ride so precipitously on such a hazardous venture: she bade him forget the journey. But he craved leave for so long that she finally granted it to him.

The young lord thought it too far to ride back to where his armor was; however quickly he rode he would never get back in time, they would surely have eluded him. Thus he hurried after them unarmed as he was.

[159] When he had hastened after them, he came upon the trail of those who had dishonored him and soon spotted them. He didn't try to overtake them, however he rode after them at such a distance that he could see them without their seeing him. He did as one does who has suffered mistreatment and takes thought of how best to accomplish vengeance. On the way they never escaped the watchfulness of his eyes - never all day long until evening arrived. Then he saw there, glimmering before him, the castle called Tulmein that belonged to Duke Imain. The knight in front of him rode into it. He was well received then, as one should be at a friend's house, and as it befitted the host.

I'll tell you why he came there with his lady. If the tale is true, Duke Imain had held a festival there for the last two years, and it was now being held the third time. It was held annually for the entertainment of his people. He excluded no one from the affair. Poor and rich, young and old alike came to his festival when they heard about
it to amuse themselves. In the midst of a meadow, high on a silver perch, the duke had set a small falcon. The lady who won the contest by being the most beautiful would take the falcon. The knight had taken it twice and had come for it a third time. If he succeeded in this, he would retain it in full honor always without further ado. Now it was said that many women there were more beautiful than the knight's lady, but his boldness is explained by this: he was so formidable that he just took it by force. He was relieved of the need for fighting; no one dared challenge him. Now Erec knew nothing of this and had ridden after the knight on this adventure because of the harm done him. Day was beginning to end when he rode into the market town below the castle. He avoided the castle so that he would not be noticed by the man he had followed there.

He then rode seeking one who would be hospitable enough to take him in for the night, and on the way encountered a great throng of people. All the houses were full of guests, and nowhere could he find anyone to take him in. He was also without any wherewithal. He had not taken that precaution for he had started on his journey in haste, as I have already told you. He was quite troubled, for he only had his apparel and his palfrey. Moreover he was unknown there, so that no one spoke to him or looked at him in a friendly fashion, but the streets were full of merriment as they should be at a festival.

[249] Abandoned in this way, he rode until he made out old ruins in the distance before him. Since shelter was so scarce, he took a path that would bring him there, and decided to remain there the night, since he couldn't find any other place. He looked at the castle and thought
it empty, which cheered him up. He thought, "Things are going well for me now, since I can stay in some corner until morning, since I may not find anything better. Surely no one will bother me here; I can well see it lies empty. When he entered the house he looked for a corner fitting for him to stay in. He noticed there an old man with snow-white hair which was clean, well-cared for and combed carefully over his shoulders. According to the tale the old man had on a sheepskin garment and hat, both as good as someone in his estate could have: he was not a rich man. But the bearing of the man who was sitting in the ruin leaning on his staff was very noble, even like that of a lord.

Erec was downcast, for he feared that he would be sent away once again. He tied his palfrey to a post and laid his cloak on it. He extended his hands before him as befits a well-bred man, and went up to the old man. "Sir I am in need of shelter," he said with hesitation, blushing with shame at the request. Yet when the man heard him he said, "You are welcome to all I have to offer you," and Erec son of King Lac thanked him.

[307] Now in his household the old man had only one child, one of the most beautiful maidens of whom we have ever heard, and the lady of the house. By that one could see that he was a noble soul, since he had taken in such a poor guest. He called the maiden and said "My daughter, go and take care of this lord's palfrey who deigns to be our guest. Tend it well lest I reproach you for anything." "That I will do, sir," she answered.

[322] The maiden had a lovely form, but her green dress was torn and tattered. Under it her shift was faded and also threadbare, so that
her body gleamed through as white as a swan. It is said that no other maiden displayed a body so perfect, and had she been rich, she would have made an excellent wife. Her skin showed through her faded clothes as it were a white lily standing among black thorns. I imagine God displayed great skill in creating her beauty and perfection. Erec was troubled on her account. He said to her father: "Let us relieve the young lady of the task given her. I think she has seldom done this before. It befits me better to do it myself." At this the old man replied "One should let the host do as he wills. Since we have no stable boys, it is proper for her to do it."

[351] The maiden did not fail to do as her father bade. Her white hands cared for the palfrey: I ween that if God himself rode here on earth he would be satisfied with such a stable-hand. Although her clothing was tattered, I am sure that no one ever had a sweeter squire than Erec, son of King Lac, had as she who took care of his palfrey. It was rightly pleased to get fed by such a stable boy. Here too the guest was provided for as well as could be. Good rugs spread out and on them the most elegant bedding in the world, covered with samite and so much gold that one man could not lift it but needed three more to lay it down; over it a quilt of taffeta bright and richly colored for the honor of great lords; one would not find these that evening by the fire. In fact they had to make do with clean straw as bedding, covered with an unadorned white linen sheet. There was plenty of knight's fare - the best a wise man could imagine - but they did not carry it to the table. They showed him good will a plenty at that house: this is a pledge of all kindness.
Now you shall hear who this old man was who did not fail to show the stranger a welcome in spite of his poverty. Once he had possessed greater riches and honor. He had been a wealthy count but some stronger than he had seized his inherited lands. He had done no evil to be plunged into this poverty; a war was responsible for it. Those more powerful than he had taken everything that he had. This formerly rich man was so dishonored that he could not afford a single servant. Now he and his good wife bore this poverty in their old age with wisdom, so that whatever they had to do without they did it as honorably as possible and secretly, so that no one was aware of it. No one was in the least aware that poverty had got the upper hand with them. The poverty that he endured seemed to the master of the house as sweet as mead in contrast to the shame he felt.

The old host was called Coralus, his wife's name was Karsinefite, and their daughter was Enite. Whoever would not have felt pity for these nobles would have been harder of heart than a stone. The young lady's uncle was lord of the land, Duke Imain, whose festival this was: she was not of humble lineage.

[439] We shall now speak of the matter at hand. When the palfrey had been taken care of, the host said to the guest "I shall be glad to make the time less tedious for you." Erec, still troubled by the injury which he had received, asked about the reason for the large throng he had seen in the market place. The host told him about how things stood, both of the festival and the falcon contest, just as I have told you. When the host explained this, he asked further about he knight, asking if he knew who he might be the one who had ridden into the other castle
ahead of him, as I have said to you before, but concealed from the old
man his discomfort. The old man said, "Everyone in this country knows
him; he is called Yders, son of Niut." He also said that his purpose in
coming with this lady was to claim the falcon. As soon as Erec learned
this, he questioned him further until the host made known his own story.

When he had told him this, Erec stood up and said, "Be so kind, my
lord and host to favor my request. Since it stands thus with you, I
seek your help and advice. If you are disposed to show me kindness, I
will tell you that I received an injury from this knight which will
always grieve me unless I can avenge myself. His dwarf struck me
viciously and I could not avenge it, since his master was armed and I
was not. The dwarf used this to his advantage. I had to suffer much
shame then, and my heart will always lament it if God does not grant me
my day of vengeance. I have come riding here hoping for just such an
adventure, as I have told you. I ask for your favor: help and fortune,
Sir, are completely in your hands. I will tell you what I have in mind.
I have ridden here on my horse, and if you could supply me with armor
somehow, he would not lack combat. If you would let me ride to the
festival with your daughter, Enite, I would proclaim that she is
prettier than the knight's lady and would take the falcon. See if that
may come to pass, with the terms that if I am victorious I will take
your daughter to wife. You must not refuse thinking we would be
mismatched, for she will gain honor by it. I will reveal my father's
name to you - King Lac. I will make people, land and myself - all that
I have - subject to her rule."
[524] Then the old man's eyes began to cloud with sorrow: his heart was so quickly moved to grief that he was hardly able to answer. He was close to tears. He said, "For God's sake, lord, have done with this ridicule. Your words are without pity. God has fated for me what he will, and my life is now other than what it should be. I will submit to almighty God, who makes the rich poor and the poor rich whenever he wishes; his power is apparent in my case. For God's sake I ask you to stop this mockery of yours; unless I am greatly deceived, you asked for my daughter's hand only as a jest. You can well do without my daughter as a wife since she has no goods. But however great a lack I now suffer, you may believe me that I have seen the day when your father King Lac called me friend. We received the order of knighthood together in his country."

Erec blushed at these words and said "Sir, how were you forced to the conclusion that I have done this as an insult? You should drive this thought from your mind and hold my words to be in earnest. Why should I jest about this? As surely as I want God to aid my body and soul I will gladly take your daughter to wife. You won't have to wait any longer than the end of the combat at the festival, if by your aid everything comes out in my favor. I hear you lamenting her poverty; you should not speak of it anymore. I do not blame you for it, since I can well do without her dowry. If I had a base mind, then I would let property decide things for me. Think about that. Since the contest is to be early in the morning, let us not delay any more. My honor is completely in your [585] keeping. And you may rest assured that I will do what I have promised."
This answer made the old man glad and he said, "Since you are thus intended, we have here some excellent armor, both supple and strong. My poverty never brought me to such despair that I could do without it, I retained it with the thought that one of my friends might need it, and for this reason I would have lent it to him. As long as God permitted me I would have worn it myself to defend my friend until old age bested me and left me bereft of strength. Now we can avoid begging armor from a stranger which would make us appear unworthy. Thus far I have also kept a shield and a spear." Erec thanked the old man and requested that he be shown the armor to see if it were right for him, being neither too narrow or too heavy. It was both light and strong, which pleased Erec greatly.

[621] The day on which they were to ride to the festival soon dawned. When the sun was shining brightly they rode to Tulmein where they were warmly greeted by Duke Imain. He was surprised to see them. They took him aside, explained their errand and why Erec had come and sought his advice about it. The duke said, "I'll tell you what I will do. My good will and all my goods stand at your disposal because of your bravery and my niece's honor. Only follow my advice and allow me to clothe her better." Erec spoke against this saying, "This cannot be. Whoever judges a woman by has clothing her perceived falsely. One should judge on the basis of her person whether a woman is praiseworthy, not on her clothing. Today I'll show knights and ladies that were she as bare as my hand and blacker than coal my spear and sword will ensure her full praise or I'll lose my life in the attempt."
"May God send you good fortune," Duke Imain returned. Of this you may be certain, your bravery will bring you all that is good." With such talk they came to the chapel and heard the mass of the Holy Spirit, as those that turn to knightly deeds and love tournaments frequently do. Their meal was ready by then and they were served in a courteous fashion. When that had ended, each amused himself in the manner he found pleasant according to his mood and inclination. This took place on the meadow where the falcon was perched. All watched to see when Iders fil Niut would go with the lady to seize the falcon, as he had previously done. Then they saw Erec come with his lady Enite. He led her to where he had seen the falcon and in the nearing of the knight he said, "Lady, loose the cords and take the falcon on your hand, for you are certainly the most beautiful here." Iders was irritated and said rudely, "Leave the falcon be! Else it will go ill with you, you beggar. Have you taken leave of your senses? Leave it to her who is more worthy, my lady here. She had a right to it, being more deserving."

[700] "Sir knight," said Erec, "you have taken the falcon unjustly these past two years. You should know full well you won't get it again unless these folk agree. Knightly jousting must decide this matter for us." "Young one," said he, "if you value your life, cease this childish quarrel now, for it will soon go much worse for you - you will be in mortal peril. I will tell you at the outset what will happen to you. You will receive no mercy from me: when I am victorious over you of which I have no doubt - my mind is set against accepting ransom for your life. Whatever man or woman advised you in this is one who loves to see you fail."
"Sir," said Erec, "my speech stands as it is and I shall alter nothing." They separated quickly and armed themselves: the knight as he wished, Erec as well as he could.

Iders was well equipped, since he had prepared himself for knightly combat as one ought. His spears were brightly hued, his helmet was crested and decorated, his horse was richly caparisoned (Erec lacked these things). His surcoat was just as elaborate, grass-green samite trimmed with a rich border, and according to the tale, his armor was praiseworthy. He looked exactly like a noble knight. Erec also rode up. His shield was old, heavy, long and broad; his spear thick and unwieldy, his horse and he were half unprotected by the armor the old man had lent him. Fortune did not refuse him her aid: All the people there spoke as one "God keep you today." They all cleared a wide ring for them at once. Young Erec's knightly prowess served him well - his bravery gave him great strength. Both were moved by great anger. They spurred their horses on, one could see their legs flying. One of them was deceived by his own arrogance; he thought he was fighting a child. When they came together, however, he discovered that Erec had in fact a warrior's courage. Erec struck him so hard in the charge that the knight's [770] shield rebounded off his head stunning him so he could scarcely remain in the saddle. This had never happened to him before. The joust was so violent that the horses were driven back on their haunches. Their broken spear shafts flew from their hands over their shield's rims. Iders had never experienced anything like this before.

When they had jousted five more times in a praiseworthy fashion, neither missing once, but striking so firmly that their spears
splintered, Erec had only one spear left. This was a serious lack for him. He retained the old one that belonged to his father-in-law for the last charge because the shaft was thick and strong. He had also held back his strength until then. When he took up his spear as solid as the heavy shield before him, he rode out a little way where he saw lady Enite weeping. He spoke over the shield, "Be of good cheer, noble maid, for I remain unafraid: your cares will come to an end." He turned his horse to face the knight, his spear cradled under his arm. The knight came toward him equally as ready as he. They sped towards each other with all the power they could get from their mounts. They struck each other with such force that the knight's surcingle, breastplate, and both saddle girths broke. It had never gone this badly for him before. As valiant as he was, Erec separated him from his horse, to the great mirth of all the people there. When Erec had done so well by unhorsing the knight, he held back from him at some distance so that no one could say to his shame that he had killed a man lying on the ground. He wanted to be better spoken of. Erec dismounted and ordered the knight to stand up. Then they went after each other, and one could see they fought like good knights. Fire flew from their helmets. They fought as those do who are driven by grim need, for they set great stock by victory. There was nothing less at stake than life and honor, and they acted fittingly. They fought manfully for quite some time, and then Iders struck Erec on the helmet causing him to fall to his knees.

Enite saw this and her alarm was great. She began to bewail her companion, for she thought the blow was mortal, and he would remain lying there, dead. But he sprang up, threw his shield on his back and
 wielded his sword with both hands with a grim mood, like a madman. He hacked the knight's shield to pieces, then struck it from his hand, but his foe deemed it a slight thing and paid him back blow for blow, as if he had been loaned something and wished to pay him back since he might wish to borrow in the future. They were both playing a game at which one can easily lose - it's called fifteen on the head. They were sometimes paid beforehand and that in abundance. They grappled grimly. He would receive a yard long wound, he who tried to collect the debt. Many bets were made and then raised. Neither wished to yield for in so doing would lose life and honor. Many fiery blows were given and the fight continued from morning till mid-day, leaving the two with nothing more to wager since they were exhausted. They could not by any means carry on their bets since they hadn't the strength to move their arms as the had done before. Their rage and fighting spent, they could no longer carry on: their tired woman-like blows could do no harm.

Iders said to Erec, "Stop, noble knight. We bring disrepute on chivalry with what we do now, it merits neither fame nor praise. This useless fight is unworthy of good knights. We are fighting lamentably; the blows are unmanly. If you won't think it cowardly, it is my advice that we desist now and rest a bit." His words pleased Erec, and having removed their helmets, they sat down to rest. Then they had well rested, they went at each other and carried on their old game - I shall tell you about that now. They fought with great art, renewed strength and with similar mastery: after a long time neither the wise nor the unversed of the witnesses could tell which of the two was ahead by a single eyelash. This went on for some time rendering the outcome
uncertain as to who would win until young Erec began to think about the 
shame and suffering he had received on the heath at the hands of the 
dwarf. The sight of the lovely Enite also helped him to fight manfully, 
for this caused him to become twice as strong. With willing hand he 
grabbed the other's helmet. Although the other made the best throws 
anyone could wish for, this did not help him escape from Erec's blows, 
who attacked with such zeal that his opponent finally lost the joust and 
lay defeated before him. He had avenged the lash of the whip. When he 
tore off the helmet he also loosened the hood underneath as if he would 
slay him should he be unwilling to beg for mercy.

[956] "For God's sake, noble knight, have mercy on me," asked the 
knight. "Honor all women by sparing my life and consider that I have 
never done you any harm, virtuous man. You would do well to let me 
live."

Erec answered this by saying, "How is it that you say that now? 
You jest at me without cause. You wanted nothing else but my death. 
Yes, you and your great pride - it now stands humbled. In fact you were 
going to accept no ransom for my life. But God granted me grace and 
things turned out differently: See, things have gone so well that now I 
don't have to ransom my life. However God may preserve me otherwise, at 
least I am safe from you. If you had been less arrogant towards me it 
would have been better for you. You were felled by your own insolence 
today and given sorrow as your companion." The knight asked, "What do 
you mean? I never earned your hatred - I have never seen you before."
Erec however said, "You feel shame today on my account as I did 
yesterday because of you. The disgrace I had to endure cut me to the
heart. I will warrant that your dwarf's prowess and bad manners will not repay you enough to make up for the shame which came to you today."

[1000] But the knight said, "I regret any suffering you received on my account. Your bravery here has well avenged this misdeed. Let me live and I will repay the damage done." Erec took pity on him and spoke thus, "I will let you live which is more than you would have done for me." The knight then promised to serve in whatever way he was commanded in exchange for his life. After the promise was made, Erec commanded him to rise, and when both had bared their heads, he said, "Now I require you to do something for me: my lady the queen must be honored to atone for the dishonor she suffered. You caused her great distress, more so than she ever received before: you have wronged her greatly. You must atone for this for she rues it greatly. Your dwarf struck one of her maids yesterday at this time and he struck me as well, so that I received this welt. See, it is I, the same man. I would have ridden after you forever before I let you avoid my vengeance. Since I am so injured under my eye (that you may not deny) and that your dwarf even perpetrated such an outrage by striking the maiden are matters that I will by no means endure. By rights he should pay the penalty for this. I will tell you to what extent: crudity suits him so well he should be repaid in kind. I won't be merciful in this respect - he shouldn't have done that to the maid. I will take an acceptable forfeit from this dog - nothing less than his hand to teach him to honor ladies better in the future."

But Erec the good did not have it in his intention that Iders would actually do as he suggested, only that he should warn the dwarf to avoid
such behavior in the future, and he refrained from punishing him that way without great pleading [from Iders]. Even so a just penalty was imposed. He ordered the dwarf stretched across a table by two knights and thoroughly scourged with two great rods, so that the punishment would show on his back for twelve weeks thereafter. His misdeed was avenged until the blood ran down from him. All agreed that he had received his past due, since such crudeness was [1076] found in him. The dwarf was called Maliclisier.

Erec was irritated by the knight's hesitancy to leave and said, "Now I don't know why you delay and do not ride to my lady the queen. You should already have ridden away by now. You should give yourself over into her power and live as she commands you. Tell her correctly who you are, about our battle, and who it is who sent you - I am called Erec fil de roi Lac. I will come tomorrow if I can. I am riding to my villa. It is only seven leagues from here. Now reflect upon your oath." The knight, his lady and the little dwarf rode off to the court of King Arthur.

At this time King Arthur had once more left his castle called Cardigan where they were hunting the stag - as you were told before. It had so happened that Arthur had caught the stag with his own hands. Therefore to him fell the right which accompanied this: he could kiss any of the maidens he wished to. The king wished to exercise his right according to custom as soon as he had arrived at Cardigan. But the queen rightly requested of him that this should be delayed until she had told him the outcome of things on the heath, news of her embarrassment at the hands of the Knight. She told him precisely how things had gone
for her that day. She said, "Companions, I wish to lament to you: in such a manner were my maiden and Erec fil de roi Lac struck. Because of that very injury and pain he departed from me on the heath. He said, 'Believe me my lady, I will always be parted from you in Britain if I don't avenge my shame. And if I may avenge myself, I will return three days hence.' My lord, that is today. Hope and cares I have because of this young man of how things may stand with him. I do not want to fail him. May God send him back to us! My companions, I bid you out of love for him and me that you do not exercise your customary right until you find out how his affair turned out. I would much rather he would be here also. Now bide until early tomorrow morning: if he succeeds, he will come to the ceremony." This request was carried out at castle Cardigan. But Gawain and his friend Kay the seneschal linked arms shortly before this and had left the ladies to look around outside the citadel. Both of them saw a knight coming towards them from the woods far away. They immediately made this known to the queen. She quickly rose, took her ladies with her, went to a window, so that she could see clearly who was coming there. There she stood with the knights, unsure among themselves who the knight might be. Then the queen said, "It is none other than the man, as far as I can tell from a distance, and as my intuition tells me, that Erec pursued. Now see, there are three of them. His lady and the dwarf are riding here with him; it is no one else but he. There he rides, as if he had come from battle. It can be perceived that his shield is hacked to pieces clear up to his hand. His armor is blood-spattered. I tell you truly, either he has slain Erec, and is come here to boast that he has won the victory, or Erec has sent
the knight here in this land to the honor of our court: This is what I hope." Everyone now said to the queen it must be one or the other. But when this conversation was over, Iders at that moment rode across the courtyard to a stone which was large and set apart a little way from the steps. It was so placed at the house so that King Arthur could dismount and sit upon it. The knight thought, "Where could I better dismount than there?" At the stone he quickly dismounted. When he had been received and his horse taken, he went with his dwarf and his lady politely to the queen. She bid him heartfelt welcome. Then he fell at her feet and said, "Gracious lady, now receive into your power a man to whom God has left no honor. He of whom I speak is myself. I hurried to you. No necessity forced me but my business. For that I should stand penitent before you, for I have followed the foolish advice of my heart. Now too late I rue it. Yea, I warn myself at the wrong time, just like the hare as it lies in the net. My regret has grown great. It is no different than it says in the proverb that false pride easily harms a man. I have proved that myself to my great shame and am thus brought down, for he almost took my life with my honor. I will admit my guilt. You have suffered because of me. I am the one who rode towards you yesterday on the heath. That has come to a bad end for me, since I allowed the dishonorable striking of the girl by my dwarf. The uncivil incident regarding the whipping of Erec fil de roi Lac indeed has made reparations necessary for which my undesirable guilt demanded. He defeated me by his own hand and has sent me here, lady, that I for that very reason should gain your mercy and remain completely in your service. So then I will tell you more: you should not be anxious for
him. He is coming this very morning and is bringing with him a maid
that no one may affirm that he has ever seen one more beautiful, if he
were to tell the truth." At this news Arthur and the queen became very
[1260] joyful, and praised our Lord that it had gone so well with him
lately and that his first knightly deed came about in such a
praiseworthy manner: for he had never tried it before. Unless it were
a jealous person, no one there bore him any enmity. Never was one more
beloved of a retinue, because Erec had earned it of them from childhood,
and they were joyous in all ways. The queen said to the knight, "Your
penance shall be less than you actually earned. I want you to remain
[1283] here and become part of our retinue. This must be so without
argument." Thus went the conversation. The king said to the knight,
"Now we should welcome him well as a reward. We should by right direct
all honor to a man who can so well earn it. He has begun well and
should be praised for it. Everyone agreed with this.

Thus it came to pass, as you have heard earlier, that Erec
succeeded so well at the house of Tulmein in forcing Iders to become his
loyal vassal forever. And then lady Enite was made worthy through combat
and many rejoiced at his good fortune both rich and poor, and everyone
alike claimed that without a doubt he was the noblest man that ever came
into that land. There was no one present who was downcast at his
victory; they praised his manhood. They elaborated their game, but in
his honor. A great bohoit began then and dancing elsewhere. Count
Ymain disarmed him, the maid Enite laid her husband's head in her lap
after the joust. Her manner was very demure, just like a maid. She
hardly spoke to him, for that is the custom of them all, at first they
are as shy and demure as a child. Thereafter they learn the tricks that they well know is good for them and would be pleasant for them, what at first they thought was difficult. They would rather take a sweet kiss instead of a blow, and a good night instead of a bad day.

Then Duke Imain bade him and his lady be pleased to spend the night with him, and also asked the same for his brother-in-law. Erec refused. He quickly answered him, "Lord, how should I do this? Should I leave my host who has done me so much good? He received me yesterday, he and your sister, although I was completely unknown to him. Therefore I must repay him. I know well a better host he could not have been. He gave me his daughter. For that reason let it be and be not angry. He will not be so overlooked by me. Should I now bypass him he might well think I am slighting him because of his poverty, which he, God knows, should not suffer. I will be very happy with him. My steadfastness will be manifest to him. And if I should live a half year more I will make him rich, that is true. He will be lacking nothing good from me. If my courage does not fail me, I will bring him along the road to greater wealth than he ever had." Then Duke Imain said, "Since you don't wish to stay with me, then we should stay with you and go with you to shelter." For that Erec the noble one thanked him warmly, and his father-in-law too. Then they stood up, clasped each other by the hand, went to the hostelry and led Lady Enite at their sides between them. She had joy enough indeed, for she carried on her hand the sparrow-hawk that had been won: that was pleasant. Thus the maid had blissfully gained praise and much honor. But she rejoiced more on account of her dear husband which she had gained that day.
For a man who was predisposed to joy, the entertainment was great. There were great cries of joy at the hostelry: There he had to entertain guests without number, knights and ladies. For they had invited there everyone who came to the festival. Enite's father could not have accomplished it; he had to rely on the duke. From his house they carried enough food.

As the next day dawned, Erec fil de roi Lac did [1401] not wish to stay there any longer. He told his affair, and said he had to ride off and lead the Lady Enite. But her uncle, the Duke of Tulmein said that she must be outfitted better. Erec contradicted this. Gold and silver were offered to him. Erec said that was unnecessary for him. Both horses and weapons Erec refused, except Erec took a horse that seemed to him fit to ride, from her niece a maid, who was, so they say, related to the duke and his niece there. In a goodly manner she asked him long enough until he received it from her. And know well that previously no man in the world ever gained a more beautiful horse. It was neither too fat nor too thin, its color was ermine white, its mane deep and wide (so the story goes) with sturdy legs, neither too large nor too small. His head he carried right high. It was gentle and [1483] joyful and had a long tail. One would be glad to ride it often. Its back and feet were good enough: O, how gently it rode! It went very swiftly over fields, beautifully like a ship, with a good stride. It moved so gently it did not wobble. The saddle was just as comfortable that it well befitted the horse: the decoration was of red gold, just as it should be. Why should I dwell on the workmanship? About much of that I will have to be silent, for if I would tell it all,
the speech would be too long. I will end the praise for you with few words. The saddle belt was of silk and gold.

When the horse was brought to Erec the journey was no longer delayed. Lady Enite took her leave, as is well fitting for a child. She had many tears, for she was riding to a foreign land far from her dear mother. She said, "Mighty God the good, deign to protect my child!" In truth, the leave taking was long. That parting caused many tears for them both, and for her father too. He bid our Lord protect her. Erec said to the old man, that whenever his messenger came to him he would do for him whatever he wished, for he had the intention of relieving him of his poverty. Then he bowed at his feet and was happy with this hope. Then they took their leave of all the household and parted from them. Erec did not wish anyone to ride away from that spot with him. He bid them remain at home with God's blessing. Thus they both came onto the moor. Erec began to look at his lady. She also often looked at her husband shyly. Then they often exchanged friendly glances. Her heart was full of love: they pleased one another well, and [1495] ever more and more. Neither jealousy nor hate found any place to stay: loyalty and constancy possessed them. Now they rode very quickly, because he had promised to come that very day.

Because of the queen's story, the good knights all knew very well the time when Erec was to come. Also they had gotten it from the knight that had come there from whom Erec had won victory. The horses were ready for him; then he enjoyed his bravery. With King Arthur, Gawain and Percival rode from the house, and a lord so named: King Yels of Galors, and Tors fil roi Ares, and Lucanus the Publican appeared too in
the group also all of the servants, so they all welcomed him with
knightly tumult, in a friendly fashion as one should do for a friend who
was lost and now found. At that same time, coming [1525] towards him
over the moor to greet him was my lady the queen. She bid him welcome:
she rejoiced at his deeds of valor. She clasped Lady Enite and said,
"Lovely lady, you must change your clothes." Now the wealthy one led
her into a private room. There a bath was prepared, and she was bathed
very well after her ordeal. The lady with the crown dressed her dear
guest well, for very rich garments were prepared. She sewed a shift for
the girl with her own hands: it was white silk. She considered the
shift praiseworthy, with an overdress well-shaped after the Carolingian
style, neither too narrow nor too wide: it was of green samite with
wide seams. She then laced it up with spun gold on both sides as it
should be, from the hands down to the side. Also lady Enite was girded
with a sash from Hibernia; the ladies gladly wore these. On her breast
was [1562] laid a pendant as wide as a hand with a gleaming ruby on it.
But the maiden completely outshone it with her brilliant coloring. The
overdress was covered by a hanging coat fitted for it. The fur lining
was ermine. The overcoat was rich gold embroidered silk. This queenly
dress was lined with sable all the way to the hands. A ribbon, just the
right width, bound her hair laid crosswise over her head. So pleasing
was the ribbon's appearance, there could be none better. Her dress was
rich, she herself was good.

Now Lady Poverty hid her head in shame, for she was robbed of her
place in a friendly way. She had to depart, from her house she fled;
wealth took her place. The maid looked so pretty in poor clothes, so
they say, that in such rich clothes how well she now stood for praising! Gladly I wish to praise her as I should. Now I am not such a wise man, and I should fail if I attempted that. Such skill is unknown to me. Also many a wise mouth has showed its art in women's praise, that I do not wish to know what kind of praise I may find for her; at this time I could not praise a woman better. She must remain unpraised by me according to her rightful due; that would be beyond my ability as an ignorant fellow. But I will try to do the best I can. As I have perceived, it was undeniable that Lady Enite was the most beautiful maid of all, so they say, of all that has ever come into the king's court.

The queen took her amiably by the hand and went to where she found the king sitting as was his custom with many a good knight there at the round table. Whoever was sitting there had undeniably gained the greatest honor. All among them affirmed that. For he, as they say, never practiced foolishness, but such manifold virtue that he is still considered as one of the most valuable men that ever won a place there. For that reason he had good right to a place. Gawein, the good knight, and there with him Erec fil de roi Lac, and Lancelot from Arlac, and Gornemanz from Groharz, and li bels Coharz, and Laes hardiz, and Meljanz from Liz and Maldwiz li sages, and the wild Dodines, and the good Gandelus, by him sat Esus, after him the knight Brien, and Ywein fil li roi Vrien, and swift to all honor Ywan from Lonel. In addition to these there were Iwan from Lafultere, and Ovain from Galiot, and Gasosin from Strangot. Also there at hand were the one called Tristram with the golden bow, and Grel, Bliebleherin and Titurel, Garedeas from Brebas, Gues from Strauz and Baulas, Gaueros from Rabedic, and the queen's son
from Ganedic, Lis from quinte carous, Isdex from mun dolerous, Ither
from Gaheriez, Maunis, and kal Galez, Glangoains and Gareles, and Torz
fil roi Ares, Galagaundris and Galoes, and fil Dou Giloles, Lohut fil
roi Artus, Segremors and Paueraus, Blerios and Garredomeschin, Los and
Troy marlomeschin, Brien lingo mathel, and Equinot fil cont von Haterel,
Lernfras fil Gain, and Henec sustellois fil Gawin, Le and Gahillet,
Maneset from Hochurasch, and Gatuaie Batewain fil roi Cabacflir, (1675
- line missing), Galopamur, it is true, fil Ysabon and Schonebar, Lanfal
and Brantrivier, Marlivliot from Katelange and Barcinier, the loyal
Gothardelen, Gangier from Nerendan, and Scos his brother. The keen
Lespin, and Machmerit Parcelfal from Glois, and Seckmur from Rois,
Inpripalenot and Estraragaot, Pehpimerot and Lamendragot, Orugodelet,
and Affibla delet, Arderoch Amander, and Ganatulander, Lermebion from
Jarbes, fil mur defemius a quater bardes. Now I have named you the
entire virtuous company. According to an accurate count, there were 140
in all.

Now the queen led Enite towards the multitude. She was completely
beautiful, just as the white lilies are shot through with rose color
flowing together, so her mouth was completely rose colored, just like
she was. One never saw a more noble woman. When those who went first
through the door came in and saw her sitting, embarrassment made her
uncomfortable. The rose color paled in her. She often became red and
then pale in turn because of the glances. It is, I tell you, as the sun
in bright daylight shines in its fullness, and suddenly a thin narrow
cloud infringes [1721] upon it, so that its brightness is not as
complete as it appeared before. Just so Lady Enite suffered
embarrassment for a short while. But when they went in through the
doors, her lovely face got its wonderful color back and was more lovely
than before. But how fitting it was for her when her color changed!
Great embarrassment caused it, for she had never seen so many champions
sitting splendid in all virtue. When the maid went in, those that sat
at the Round Table were startled at her beauty, so that they forgot
themselves and stared at the maid. There was no man among them who did
not claim that she was the most beautiful that they had ever seen. The
king came toward her, took her by the hand, set her by his side, and on
the other side was the virtuous queen.

[1750] Now the king thought it time that he quickly end the
knightly dispute. You know that he was supposed to have exercised his
right (which you have well heard earlier), because he had succeeded in
capturing the white hart. Whoever was unanimously deemed the most
beautiful would be the one he kissed on the lips. He had delayed until
this moment at the request of the queen. Now it was denied by no one
that she was the most beautiful one there and anywhere else in the
world. For I will tell you exactly how her beauty surpassed that of
others. It was as if on a dark night the stars were disclosed, that
should one just see them he would rightly claim they were so pleasantly
beautiful there could be nothing more beautiful to come. And then when
the moon issues forth in his time in the night, one holds the beautiful
stars as nothing in comparison to the moon. They are thought
praiseworthy if the moon is not there, and if it doesn't blot them out
by its brilliant shining. In this way her face outshone that of other
women completely. The king moved uncompelled to exercise his custom, as
his father had handed down to him (his father was called Uther Pendragon) so that he took the kiss then, and for no other reason than that the good knights rightly concurred. The king then stood up, he quickly carried out his custom on his nephew's lady. That could be done without rancour, for Erec was his kin.

Now arose much joy in the house at Cardigan. That was done because of the love of him and his lady. Where might a greater joy have been than that they had there all of this time? They eagerly held tournaments, all that were there, in a joyful manner. And now the virtuous Erec considered in a knightly manner the poverty of his uncle, and sent him excellent goods by the messenger in his house. For that King Arthur gave him two pack horses. The load was quite heavy; they carried silver and gold because he was dear to the daughter. For that he dressed himself well, and prepared himself properly to travel to his father's country. It was called Destregales. By way of his messengers he asked King Lac his father to let his father-in-law rule over two houses that he would name in his country, and that they were his own. He designated them with the names Montrevel and Roadan. All of this was done. When he took the two houses for himself, the noble man was then compensated for what had hindered him before; he was completely affluent. He was dealt with in such a lavish manner that he was able to live opulently, as befitted one of his nobility.

Now they returned from the journey about which we have been speaking. When Erec came to the court, and the king exercised his right, Lady Enite was charmed by it. She sat there like a beautiful angel, ringed round with riches, so that Erec's thoughts turned to her
in a heartfelt manner. He thought the day too long, that he would have to delay their enjoyment of love until the coming night. She also carried hidden from him a mood the likes of which would probably, if no one were watching, would have resulted in a friendly embrace. I want to tell you truly, that was the victory of love. Love dominated them and caused them great discomfort. When one of them saw the other, it was no better than when food is accidently brought before the eyes of a hawk, so that hunger torments him. And when food is shown him, and he has to forego eating for a long time, it is worse for him than if he had not seen it. Thus the delay tormented them to the limit and then some. The thoughts of the two stood thus: I will never be happy unless I can lie with you for two or three nights. More love seized their minds and they were overwhelmed. Just as a lost child longs for its mother that treated it well, so that for them their greeting like this, and they offered their hands.

Now it was time for the wedding, for it was fitting for both of them. Noble King Arthur would not permit it unless their wedding would be in his house for the joy of his country. Quickly he sent out letters and messages wherever he could that the nobles and all who heard of it were to come to him from all the far lands to this wedding. The wedding took place at Pentecost.

Now I will tell you all the counts and princes who came to the wedding at which Erec took Lady Enite. The guests were rich. Count Brandes from Doleceste brought there five hundred companions in his train. Their outfitting was praiseworthy; they were all dressed like him. Margrave Margon, born in Glufion: the man from the old mountains
(these are near Britain) and Count Libers of Treverin with a hundred of his companions, the wealthy Count Gundregoas and Sir Maheloa of the Crystal Isle: it was so in his country that in it no stormy weather happened. There was also great security, because one never saw a snake there. It was never cold nor hot, as one knows for a fact.

Gresmurs Fine Posterne, one saw him there gladly, and his brother called Gimoers: worthy Avalon is the name of his country. His joy was not small for he loved a fairy, her name was Marguel. Also David of Luntaguel came, count Guelquezins came there with a noble band. His land is called the 'Highwoods'.

Now all of the dukes and counts have been named. Now learn the names of the kings. There were ten, so they say, five young and five old, all wealthy and powerful. They had grouped themselves in especially knightly fashion; the young with their kind, the old with theirs. Orderliness was observed. The young ones were, so they say, mounted and dressed in armor; the old were the same, in proper fashion as was seemly. Now I will examine the clothing of the young: samite and gold-worked silk woven together, adorned in the middle with multi-colored pelts, rightly according to their wishes cut neither too narrow nor too wide after the Carolingian fashion. They were as black as a raven. They could really trot. These rode in front in that land. Every one of them carried a four-year-old sparrow-hawk. The company was praiseworthy: Everyone there brought three hundred companions in his train. Their garb was cunningly made. The first king was Carniz, his land is called Shores, and the king of the Scots Angwisiez with his two
sons (one was called Coin, the other Goafilroet), [1975] and King Beals of Gomoret. That was the young knighthood.

Now there came in stately array five old wealthy kings. They were mounted and armored. They had adorned their age with seemly garments, as some have noted, the best brown cloth that could be found in all England. The fur linings were gray, and no one anywhere else, not even in Russia or Poland might have had any better. It was long and wide, everywhere inlaid with gold leaf, which was worked as it should be. It was well-made, beautiful and so artistic that one would have to praise it - it had a wide sable lining right down [2000] to the feet. No man had found a richer sable in all of Iconium. That land is ruled by the sultan, because it is subject to him. It is broad and wide and lies between the two lands of the Greeks and the heathen. The best sable available in the world comes from there. That was the clothing of the princes. Underneath they were wearing garments as rich as the outer ones. Everything they wore was good sable. I should tell you they were well travelled. Their horses were pale snow white. On them was laid all the craftsmanship that befitted those wealthy old men. Their harness was equally good. It shone with pure gold. The metal work was supposed to be this: inlaid with silver and encrusted with gold. Their belts were wide and stitched with gold.

When this company rode into Britain every one of them had a beautiful falcon sitting on his hand in their sixth moulting or better. There was great rejoicing for three miles along the way. They found good eating here; both brook and swamp were full of ducks. The things that hawks catch were found there in abundance. One never saw such a
good falcon hunt with such good flying. The wild duck and hen, heron
and pheasant, the crane and the wild goose were in the field. In the
daytime their pages came from the traps, their saddles well loaded down,
for they had caught everything they had stirred up. The fields were
completely divested of birds and wild game. Whenever the hare was
startled, that was his last action. While they rode in the falcon hunt
and friendly competition, there was discreet rivalry: everyone there
wanted his falcon to have flown the best ever. This still happens to
this day.

Now King Arthur rode towards them from his castle with all his
train and received the noble company with great worthiness. Their
coming was very pleasing to him. The good knights were received as was
fitting for their standing and they were well cared for.

Now I will name for you the old ones. There was King Jernis of
Riel, praiseworthy and wise. He brought with him there a praiseworthy
band of three hundred companions. Let us hear tell of his venerable
age. All of his hair and beard were the color of snow, which was so
long it curled around his belt. The youngest of them, it is true, was a
hundred and forty years old.

Now listen to their tale. The dwarf king called Bilei and his
brother called Brians: their country is called Antipodes. Never were
the children of one mother as unlike as these that were called brothers,
Brians and Bilei. The true tale informs us that Brians was a half span
larger than anyone else at that time in all the wide lands: we are also
told that no dwarf was shorter than Bilei. Whatever he lacked in
height, the short guest had completely in inner virtue. Also, one did
not find many his equal in fortune. He arrived there splendidly. His company was large, he brought two of his peers, also lords over the land of the dwarves. They were called Grigoras and Glecidolan. I have named the kings. King Arthur now received these quests in his house at Cardigan as well as he might.

Now the day had come the Erec fil de roi Lac should wed Lady Enite. Why should they wait any longer? They were both happy. At that time they gave each other their hand in the presence of a bishop from Canterbury in England. Then began a wedding feast that was given highest praise. No poverty showed itself there. There were so many good knights there that I will tell you the measure of their feasting: they paid more attention to the honor of others than to gourmandizing. I will tell you a little of their banquet. There was everything in abundance of what people and horses need to live: it was given to them without measure, for each one took it as was seemly for him. Jousting and dancing were begun, and so the feasting continued, lasting until night. So great was their joy that sorrow and care were soon forgotten. They went to the ladies who received them courteously. Their behavior there was noble. Their mood was gladdened, so that there was much playing of stringed instruments, and other amusements: storytelling, singing, and swift springing about. There was all the cunning craft from the masterworks of all craftsmen. All the best players that the world had ever had, and were called masters, of those there were easily three thousand and more. There was never greater honor either before or since than at that very wedding feast. Whoever of the commoners that came there that received goods instead of honor, he was disdained.
Whoever gave much to one and not to everyone for that he received the envy and malediction of those at the feast. None came into conflict, because everyone there was just as rich. Everyone gave with prodigality. Thirty marks were given to many a man who had never earned half a pound. They were all so wealthy that perhaps it will never be so again. Both horses and clothing were given to the common people that no one had provided for before. They were so well looked after that no one was jealous of another because of his goods. They were given enough of everything. No one was shamed, all were given equally. The reception did not come to an end until the wedding feast was over: that was on the fourteenth day. Thus was the wedding of Erec fil de roi Lac.

As the wedding came of an end, many a well-wishing player took his leave joyfully and full-handed. They spoke well of the wedding with one accord. They wished Erec and Lady Enite all the happiness, which was prepared for them for many a long year. Their wish had come true completely. Never had two lovers experienced such a love for each other until death parted them, the lover from the beloved. The princes who had come here would have taken their leave. The host extended the wedding feast [2216] fourteen nights. Arthur did that for the love of Erec for he had enthroned him in his heart, and also on account of Enite. In the second set of festivities, their joy stood just as before, it was not less, it was more.

Now enough said about that. It would be unfitting if such a good man were to leave there without having held a tournament, for they were come for joy's sake to the land of Britain. Gawain quickly answered they should all find joy there. He soon held a tournament against these
four companions. Hear their names spoken: Entreferich and Tenebroc, Meliz and Meljadoc. The tournament was set for three weeks from next Monday. According to the tale of adventure, the tournament was to be held between Tarebron and Prurin, halfway between each of them. Now these four men took their leave from there so they could prepare themselves for it, because it was not too early for them to do that.

[2248] Erec fil de roi Lac thought many thoughts of how he would best fulfill what was seemly for his name, for he had never started a tournament before this time. He thought many times about how a young man stands in such honor in the early years, if only he could keep it that way! He feared a lasting disgrace. His greatest effort was given to thought of how he could do well. He was not so wealthy that he could fulfill his desires with his present goods. Whatever he lacked (that is, he was a stranger there, his land was far away) Arthur the king gave him what he promised before, but it was uncomfortable for him to be beholden to him for anything. He evaded his generosity by giving in submission whenever he could as befit his embarrassment. He would have worked wonders if he could have had a free hand according to his will. Since it stood thus with him now, he set his mind to it. His armor was not so good nor was his entourage, as if he had control of goods. He began as befitting his power.

Now the young man looked for three similar shields, and three sets of riding equipment just alike, all with the same heraldry, only the colors were different. One of them was suitable for the tourney, made from a bright mirror: it shone from afar. On it was a silk sleeve just the right length as is fitting, completely inlaid with gold. The second
was red cinnabar. On it he had a silver-white sleeve placed; it was prepared with such diligence that no better one could have been made in such a short time, and none like it for nobility; it was knightly enough. The third one was golden, both inside and out, sleeved in sable; it could not have been better. On it was laid a buckle, widely spaced, made of silver. The rim was neither too wide nor too narrow; it surrounded the shield completely. That's what the sleeve was like.

Inside was the figure of a lady in the top part. The shield rim was bordered with precious stones; there wasn't just one alone. They were all inlaid in the rim in the fashion. Now he carefully and skillfully tested three banners to find one to match his shield. Erec received through Arthur the King of Britain's help five horses from Spain, a helmet from Poitiers, cuirass from Schamliers, cuisse from Glenis. He led spirited horses, had ten spears from Loфаinge with shafts from Etelburc, painted in a knightly fashion – his helmet was beautifully adorned; on its top was an angel of worked gold. His surcoat and coverture were artistic enough, rich, green samite cloth, sown together with well-worked borders. He got fifteen pages, so capable that no better ones could be found anywhere in Britain. The armor of each was excellent; chain mail, an iron helmet, and well-made staff. A cart carried his spears to where the tournament was to take place, between Tarebron and Prurin, before Erec was ready, as I have told you earlier. This was the location of the tournament; many good knights came there. And when he wanted to ride away and take his leave from Lady Enite, a loyal exchange took place; and I will tell you just how. The very loyal
man carried her heart with him then, while his remained with his wife, enshrined within her.

On Saturday night, King Arthur came there in all his might. He brought his entire retinue. Now the best of them on the way were sheltered in their accustomed fashion. They struck up knightly songs. Inns were bedecked with lights everywhere truly the entire night.

[2378] Erec guested there, a bit apart from the others. He didn't celebrate with the others: he behaved as a wise man in a reserved fashion, and did not wish to act as a good knight as was his right. If he had wished to celebrate, he would have done so to his heart's content; but he didn't consider himself ready - still untried in his manhood that such things would be allowed to him. Whoever of his companions that sought out his inn for the sake of companionship was well received there, with greetings better than elsewhere. And whatever other things he was not able to bring about, it seemed to him that everyone was happy to praise him in whatever way possible. Everyone who saw him loved him. He was as one bound to the service of fortune; they could not have spoken better about him. Now this knightly company experienced the usual joyful abundance as they prepared for the joust. The next day, Sunday, they prepared after the manner in which each was equipped. They had their armor brushed and bound on. There was no one who did not enjoy the joust. It was barely noon when Erec fil de roi Lac quietly put on his armor, earlier than anyone else, to break a lance and be courteous to the others wherever he found an opportunity. Now at the same time and with the same intent came two companions, good knights both. As they saw him, they hastened to him, certain of their own
prowess. One of them jousted with Erec. This one he knocked off his horse. The same happened to the other one. He didn't concern himself with their horses, for he looked for further knightly deeds. He enjoyed the honor and praise he was graced with, for he jousted for five hours — never a knight had done better. Two graces made this possible for him: fortune and great worthiness; these God had given him. This joust he took before anyone else had come to the field; since it was quite early. But in the meantime a group of knights had ridden up. To his good fortune many saw the horses from which he had unhorsed the knights, running to and fro. They all said, "Yea, lords, and who must have unburdened these horses? It is likely that Erec has." Then he was well praised. How the mighty vesper oaths arose quickly on the heath. It was quite good that the strength of the knights was equal on both sides. Enough jousts were done there, much charging with the lance, and many sword blows. As long as the joust lasted Erec fil de roi Lac caused great unrest. Whoever was taking note of him could not let his eyes rest: one saw him here and there — never a knight josted better. They all took note of the fact that he was the first there and the last to leave. In the evening Erec won the prize all around — all concurred without dissent. He rode until night prevented him. When men came to their lodging place, no other conversation was heard than "Erec fil de roi Lac — he is the most excellent man of his age that our country ever had. He couldn't have proved himself better." To that hearty assent was given. That evening the greatest things were said about him, since he sought honor.
In the morning at the break of day, Erec got up. His first act was knightly: he went to church and commended himself to God, whose grace towards him had never yet failed. There never was a very devout man, who if he sought succor from him in everything could not rely on His granting success. Erec trusted Him completely with his knightly honor, that He would have mercy on him.

When the benediction ended, shield and horse were prepared for him. Now they considered his bravery praiseworthy and great, for he came to the field without armor and unaccompanied, except that he took five pages along, each one carrying three spears. These three he dispatched in proper joust, without wearing armor, so that none of his friends were aware of his participation. After this whole thing he stole himself into church, as if none of this concerned him. But Lady Fame had sent a servant to the field to see what was happening with Erec concerning honor and praise. This person, ready with words, made this known to King Arthur, whom he found still lying abed. He began to scold and berate him for his sleeping. He said: "Why are you lying here? Whoever won any honor while sleeping? Today Erec has well wielded spear and sword. May God grant him success whenever he seeks it. I always want to say good things about him. In him I have recognized such manly bearing that he should always have honor." He has quickly made himself more friends, and stands in higher esteem than ever before. He took a short rest, for as soon as he came back inside, everyone else went out, and had heard mass, as well they should, being ready to joust. He ate and drank little; his thoughts which he had did not allow him to consume much. Many armed themselves manfully in amazing haste; he did the same.
But it did not happen so quickly that they failed to see the four companions, Entreferich, Tenebroc, Meliz, and Meljadoc riding in an adjacent field with their banners. They had great strength and bold knighthood and many a rich multi-colored banner. Erec and Gawein and whoever of the knights who were there quickly made ready. Then one could hear many a battle cry before the banners. Erec was the first who came to them, as is seemly for a knight. His surcoat and crown made him stand out in such a way that no other knight stood out as being special. Erec rode so far that he always found an opportunity to joust. Towards him rode a brave man, the proud Lando. Together they josted then. He had truly done so well previously that he was called the best in his land. But Erec did so well that he unhorsed him. He josted hard, and even more than this, dispatched twelve men among the crowd. His bravery must have shielded him, that he remained out of danger. He carried this on until his shield was pierced and shattered so that it was completely useless. As cautiously as possible, he left the tournament. He gave up his shield and horse, and sat on another and outfitted himself with a better shield and new banners. He did that so quickly that others didn't notice him riding away. Now he wanted to joust again among the company. There was now a lot of hacking and thrusting; many lances were broken. Both groups of knights tested themselves together with equal and willing strength. There is nothing with which to compare the sound of the spear-clashing, except that of a forest being felled by a mighty wind. And Erec fil de roi Lac did more than anyone for on the Monday he unburdened many horses. His hand quickly wrought these deeds, and he took no spoils because he had not come to win booty. His mind was set
on winning honor. I wish to say truly, he held back nothing. Wherever joust was held, he was to be seen nowhere else but in the thick of it. There he had to receive and give blows. He could be seen acquitting himself manfully.

When he had josted enough and struck enough with this sword that he became exhausted, he absented himself from them then for a rest. As he dismounted from his house, a mercenary took it and gave him thanks and praise. His rest did not last long. His pages were there at once and removed his helmet so that he could cool off, but that was not to be, for he saw his men withdrawing and retreating, albeit slowly. They pulled back more and more. He began to realize that they would be shamefully defeated. He mounted his horse so quickly that he forgot his helmet. He mounted bare-headed: As it turned out he did grab both shield and lance. He didn't wait longer than that. He came riding gloriously with his banner. If he had not come swiftly to aid his side, they would have been shamed and disgraced. One could well see they were all in rout; no one was holding out with weapons except these three: Sir Gawain the noble, who was not slack and possessed all the virtues, fil Dou Gilules held forth by him and Sagramors. These three held firm against them all. Know that they did it better than [2672] any three knights, for no one was able to budge them from their place with hacking or with thrusting. But they would have been taken, and that by the overwhelming opposition, which is the master of all things, against which no one can do anything. But then Erec fil de roi Lac came riding in gloriously just like a blast of wind, as is fitting for friends in distress. His manly strength was so great that he quickly routed
everyone. If he had spared the aid of his hands, it would have happened quite differently. When his men saw this, they quickly returned - Boyduran joust with him. He unhorsed that noble knight with his lance as well. In this he besought fame. He quickly disgraced the enemy for a good three quarters of a mile. At that point his companions came to his aid with their strength and attacked them without resistance nearly up into their fortification. He gave up the third horse. His companions won a lot of honor, which would not have occurred without him. Many a man enjoyed that day, winning much because of him. Great was their gain. This was mentioned to him in a gracious way. They found this event bespoke his honor. They thought rather well of him that he did not shrink from riding in gloriously though his head was bare and unprotected, and he routed the enemy so decisively. Gawain performed that day as well as he had at other times, as usual for him. It was such, so they say, that no one had ever seen the like. It happened in such a way, that whenever knighthood is practiced he would always be mentioned with the remark that no one exceeded him in deeds; for that his praise still stands. His mind was fixed on knightly deeds; in him appeared nothing but good. He was rich and noble enough. No one could sway his heart against this. He was loyal and generous without regret, constant and well-fashioned. His words were without guile. Strong, handsome and manly, in him was all the strength of virtue. He was content with fine virtues. He was so blessed by fortune as no one else in King Arthur's court had been. How well he graced the company. He undertook tasks for honor's sake. He demonstrated much great manhood that day. About Erec il de roi Lac: no one sought after honor more
than he. He quickly captured two knights: one was called Binses, the other Gaudin de Montein. These Gawein captured. Erec fil de roi Lac: I praise him before all others on that day. More than this I dare not: for it is said, the likes of him never came to Britain. If anyone were to go there (like Erec) it would have to be Erec, that can be seen in his virtues. After their foes were polished off, as I have said, Erec asked whether any man wished to joust any more for the honor of his lady. Then a knight quickly said (he was called Royderodes) that he wanted to joust if it could be done 'under protection'. That was agreeable to Erec: he allowed him protection. He rode towards him on the field, because he was unafraid in his manhood. That he had often proved. They rode with lances towards one another. Without exaggerating, each broke twelve lances then. Now virtuous Erec dismounted quickly from his horse and gave it away. He then sat upon his fifth horse which had been prepared for him. He thought to bring the combat to completion. He didn't want to hesitate any more, he bid him give room. He slung the lance under his arm - they both were in high spirits. Now he made contact with him in such a way that the lance struck the shield in the part where the four nails meet the hand. He struck him so hard that the horses' breastplate broke, saddlegirt and overgirt, just as if it were a bird's skin. A weak guaranty was left him - the reins broke in his hands. He fell, unfortunately, three spear lengths from his horse. Since Erec remained in his saddle, he was given much praise, because he gained much honor from it. There was nothing more to be done.
Now the joust was ended. The company left then without misbehavior. Erec the virtuous man was given the highest praise. He sought honor so completely that they began to compare him to the wisdom of Solomon, the beauty of Absalom, the strength of Samson. His generosity was so great it reached the measure of none other than Alexander. His shield was so broken and thrust through with lances, one could have shoved a fist through it. Thus Erec earned his praise.

When the news arrived and Lady Enite heard it, of such great virtues told of Erec her companion, then his manhood was both dear and painful to her. She felt love that he was well spoken of; she experienced pain in that she knew well her man was in such a frame of mind that unless God were to mercifully stand by him, she was afraid she wouldn't have him for long. For he risked his life for honor's sake so often, and since he would attempt [2840] it in a brave fashion, whether one spoke good or evil of him. But very quickly her two moods coalesced, since her man would rather be a warrior than a stupid coward and suffer shameful talk, and she was both proud and happy about his manhood. When the joust was over, the king rode to Cardigan with his company. Everyone's lady greeted them there with joy. Lady Enite did the same. They did not remain long there at court. He sought leave at once from King Arthur to ride home to his castle in his father's land. It was called Destregales. He thought it was high time, since he had not been there since he was a child. How could it have been a better time? When he was in the mood to make the journey, he took to himself sixty companions, that he had dressed like him and outfitted them well. The virtuous man led them into his company. He sent a messenger before
him home to his country so that he could make his coming known to his father. The messenger rode there at once towards Karnant (that was the name of the capital city) and found the king there and told him at once what his son had asked him. For that he received a great messenger's reward: for King Lac had never lived through a more joyous day than when he heard his son was coming. He was joyful and glad. Quickly he summoned both maid and man, of which he had five hundred, and rode towards Erec for three days. According to the tale they all received Erec and his wife in a friendly manner; ladies could not ask for a better reception than she received from them. Old King Lac made merry, for they were both a sight for sore eyes, Erec and Lady Enite. In whatever direction from his palace he looked he was happy, since they both looked wonderful. His son pleased him well, as a child who has succeeded well and stands to be praised should please a man. But he liked Lady Enite better. He made this well known to them. He led them home to Karnant and gave his country into their power; there he was counted as king and she as queen. He declared that they both had power.

Erec was praiseworthy and good, his mind was set on knightly things before he took his wife and came home. Then he turned all his skill to loving Lady Enite. He used in mind and everything else in turning to pleasure. He changed his ways. As if he weren't the man he was this is how he spent his day: Mornings he was lying abed making love to his wife until the bell sounded for mass. Then they got up very lazily. They caught each other by the hand and went to chapel. There they stayed for a long time until the mass was sung. That was the most effort they made. Then their meal was ready. As soon as the table was
cleared, he fled from the people to bed with his wife. Then there was love-making. He never came away from there until he went to table at night.

Thus Erec fil de roi Lac gave up knightly deeds. [2955] Of the virtue that he still had and clung to (even though he sought no jousts) was that he encouraged all his companions alike that they should go themselves. He bade them also to arm themselves just as if he himself were riding with them. I praise him for this custom. Erec accustomed himself to great pleasure with his wife. He loved her so much that he let all of his honor slide until he became so lax that no one respected him anymore. Knights and pages began to be offended there at court. Those before that were joyful became very worried then and soon made this known about him. For there wasn't a man or woman who had any doubt that he must be heading for decadence. Such praise he had won. A change had come over him: before he was well spoken of, and quickly the opposite happened with those that knew him. The whole world reproached him, his court was empty of joy and remained in shame. 10 No one sought him for joy's sake from distant lands. His relations began to curse this, and those who formerly had granted him good. They all said, "Woe be the day that our lady ever met us. That has ruined our lord." This talk spread so far that it got to the Lady Enite. When she heard the reproaches, she rued it much in her mind (because she was praiseworthy and good). She thought over all sorts of ways she might change the widespread hatred. She was concerned that it was her fault. She began to bear this burden in a very wifely manner. She didn't dare complain about this to Erec, she feared she might lose him.
Now it happened according to their custom that he was lying in her arms at noon one day. Now it was seemly for the sunshine to serve them, for it shone on the two lovers through a window, and had flooded the room with light, so that they were able to see all about them. "A pity, that," she began to think. She quickly turned away from him. She thought he was sleeping. She sighed deeply and fixed her eyes on him. She said, "Woe to you, poor man, and me, miserable woman, that I have to bear so many reproaches." But Erec heard this speech well. When she had lapsed into silence, Erec said, "Lady Enite, tell me, what are your sorrows, that you bewail thus in secret?" Now she wanted to deny it. Erec said, "Leave the denials be. Make it your task, for I want to know what you said. You must tell me the full extent of what I heard you lamenting about which you heretofore have been silent." She feared that she would be blamed for other things, and told him explicitly what he had commanded so that he wouldn't become angry.

[3050] When he had heard the tale which she had mentioned, he said: "That is enough!" He ordered her to get up quickly and dress well, to wear the best clothes of all she had. He told his squires to make his horse ready as well as that of Lady Enite. He said he was going to ride out for pleasure. Then they began to hurry. He armed himself secretly and stealthily wore chainmail under his clothes. He bound a helmet onto his bare head. He did this eagerly. He acted as a sly fellow ought. He said: "My helmet is not very good. I should rather have seen about it. If I were in great need of it, it would completely hinder me. I will tell you what is wrong with it: it should have better straps." There was no one there who could understand what kind of mood he was in.
From off the wall he took both shield and lance, and began to make noises as if he wanted to joust. Knights and squires wanted to ride with their lord, but he commanded them to stay there. He sent to the kitchen to make known to the cook for a fact how quickly they should come there so that the meal could be prepared for him. With such words he rode out and ordered his wife, the lovely Lady Enite, that by her life she must ride in front of him and quickly forbade her to speak of anything which camp up on the journey, whatever she heard or whatever she saw. This strange oath she had to abide by, for she feared his threat. They both rode then, now through woods, now through heath until day left them. When night came, the moon shone beautifully. The good knight Erec rode for the sake of adventure. Now the way led them through a thick forest. It was held by three robbers. Whoever chanced to ride at the time towards them would have to fight them. They guarded the way in order to take from him his goods, honor, and life. His wife had seen them first, because she was riding in front. This was the first heartache that happened to her on the journey. She saw by their bearing that they were robbers. She would gladly have made this known to him by gestures, but he would not have understood it. He also had not seen them; this was almost a tragedy for him. Lady Enite was both sad and uneasy, for she saw the danger, and she feared to lose the best man that ever woman won, for he was in great danger. How could one compare the suffering she felt because of the oath and the love of her husband? Then she rode in such a turmoil, whether she dared speak or should remain silent, so she said to herself: "Gracious God the good, by your mercy I seek advice. You know how it is with me. My cares are
great, for a difficult task has been dealt to me in such a short time. I cannot discern the best choice. What is to become of me, poor soul? Whichever way I choose, I still lose. If I warn my beloved husband, it will cost me, for this I would lose my life. If I forbear the warning, that would be the death of my companion. Such distress is truly the pain of a woman's heart." Now came the thought to her mind: "Better is my life lost, as an unlamented wife, than such a splendid man, for many would lose thereby. He is noble and generous; there is no comparison between us. I want to die for him, before I would see him lost. Let it happen to me as God wills. My companion shouldn't end his life if I can do anything to prevent it." She looked fearfully behind her at him and said: "Be on guard, dear lord, for great mercy's sake I want to tell you loyally (I may not be silent about your peril) there are knights close by who want to slay you, if it may be, if our Lord does not protect you." Then Erec sat up on his guard.

[3190] Now a robber spoke: "I will tell you good news that may well happen to us (he had seen them first). I see riding there a man. As I can descry from afar, he leads a lady. You can well see by their dress that they are rich. Their dress is noble. Here our poverty ends; I think they are carrying many possessions. Now you men should be warned to keep the word that we have promised each other. You should leave me the choice in this robbery, and allow this to me from both your mouths, this first joust which should take place here quickly against this knight, for I saw him first. If it happens that I take his life, I want nothing else than his wife. Anything else of his I don't want at all." Then they swore an oath to him.
He took his shield to hand, and when Erec came close to him, he spurred his horse on and said, "Sir, you have lost both life and goods." Erec, because of his grim mood, gave him no answer but struck him dead from his horse. His companions wanted to avenge him, but the same thing happened to them. Their legs and arms were bare of armor. Because of that Erec won the victory. They were sloppily armed, as befitted robbers; that was to Erec's advantage. Each one of them had an iron helmet in addition to their armor. For that reason Erec laid them low, one after another. Since it went well for him because of his virtue, he said to Lady Enite: "What now, you strange woman? I forbade you on your life to say anything. Who ordered you to break that command? I have noticed that about women, and have truly learned it completely - whatever one strictly forbids, it becomes necessary after that for them to test it. It is a lost cause, whatever one commands you to forbear, because you are fascinated by it in a way that can't be quenched. You should suffer for it! Whatever a woman would never do if someone had not forbidden it, she only bears it until she is forbidden. Then she can't keep herself from doing it any longer." She said, "Sir, if I hadn't done it for the protection of your life, I never would have said it to you. I did it because of my loyalty. If you wish me to rue it now, forgive it me by your hono r. I will not do such a thing any more." He said, "Whatever is done I will forgive. But if it happens again I will not tolerate it. But you won't get off scot free without my taking a bit of vengeance. I won't let it pass by unnoticed; you must take care of the horse well and properly. I won't let you out of being a squire on this trip." "My lord, that shall be so," said the very
excellent one, because she didn't take it too hard. In a womanly way she bore this unaccustomed work, and also that which happened to trouble her heart. She undertook the care of the horse, took the reins in her hands, and rode forth on the way. Erec ordered this. She cared for the horses as well as a lady may: she could do no better. At that same hour they had gone a ways, both riding not more than three miles, before they both unfortunately had another mishap; for she saw five robbers lying before her. It is said there was a fellowship among them, and they divided their spoils with those robbers that Erec had slain. One said to the others (these five and those three men of which I have already told you had the woods in their power, and lay by the way. Whoever escaped the first ones would ride right to the other ones). Erec had come from the three before with honor. As he came close to these, one of them became aware of him (Erec), he who was lying far from the others and doing shield-watch. Erec's approach heartened him. He said then to his companions: "Make merry, we'll all be rich! I see people riding that we can do battle with. There is only one man, as near as I can tell. He is accompanied by a noble woman. She is burdened: she leads three horses by the hand. She is, if I perceive rightly, not used to this service. I wonder why he has taken such a strange shield-squire. One should take her from him, it is true. As best as I can tell from this distance, I have never seen a more beautiful woman. You, sirs, should let me have her because I saw her first." They all agreed together she would belong to him by right. "Look," said his companion, "what I want to rob is nothing but his armor." The others quickly divided among themselves the five horses.
That was really unkind, since the good knight Erec had won them by right. He should well enjoy them. The robbers had lost their right to them.

Erec was oblivious to this conversation. One of them made for him quickly the moment he saw him. Enite went through much troublesome worry. She thought, "If I warn my husband, I will break his command. He will not waver for the sake of honor or God, except that he would take my life. Woe to me, miserable woman! If only I were dead, I would rather choose that over this distress. It would be much better for me. If I should see him slain, he who made me a lady with great riches out of great poverty, whereby I am greatly honored, (I am called a wealthy queen) I should rue that greatly: because by disloyalty my soul would go to ruin and rightly perish just like my body. God, advise me, poor woman, how should I begin without being too hasty? I think I should keep silent. But truly not so! I should tell him. In whatever peril I put myself, it will happen as before." With haste she looked around and said to Erec fearfully: "My lord, for God's sake, hear me: beware or you will be slain. I see five fellows who wish to slay you." As soon as she told him, he readied his weapons. One of them had separated himself and had come in front of the others. He jousted against Erec to his own misfortune, for Erec fil de roi Lac thrust him through, so that he lay dead under his horse. Then there were four. Another Erec just as quickly thrust dead from his horse, and in so doing broke his lance. Then his sword took up the task. The strife did not last long: he felled these three along with their companions. Thus when this one man had won victory over the five, he said to Lady Enite: "Tell me, you
ill-bred woman, why have you lied? For I tolerated it of you the first time, but you didn't think that was enough. You had to do it again. And if one wishes to foster any honor in women, one shouldn't let them off so lightly. I am taking your life at once." "Mercy, Lord!," said the woman, "for this you should let me live, since I did it for loyalty's sake. I would rather suffer your anger than have you lose your life. Whatever may happen to me now, had I hesitated a bit, sir, you would have been slain. Now I will gladly keep quiet. Now forgive me this for God's sake. If I ever break your command, avenge it straightaway." Erec said: "Lady, by your argument you only make things worse. You remain by no means free of punishment. Whatever you may have been thinking about, this must be the result for you. I intend to have you as a squire the whole time we are on this journey. Now take the horses in your care and guard them well; if one of them is lost I will reward you terribly. You must learn to bear my wrath gladly, if you are wise."

Lady Enite took them then. Before this there were three: now there were eight in all. She led these as best she could: she could not do very well. As much as it is against women's ways and against their rights, she led them without being difficult, in a light mood. Thereby she showed her goodness. The lady suffered great burdens, but she turned suffering into love in her heart, as she manifested her meekness. Whoever looked at it rightly would see that it would give four squires enough to do, should they properly lead and look after eight horses, which she had to bring along alone. Since Lady Fortune prepared her, and God's noble ways hovered around my lady and fought for
her, so that no great mishap occurred with the horses, her journey was not burdensome. Thus was the lady well protected. And by means of such a squire the horses gladly and by right left their stormy struggling and went along quietly.

[3471] Soon they left the woods and a beautiful day dawned. As night left them, Erec looked around, for he saw how the road led to a castle not far away, where the lord of the land, a wealthy count, sat. Now they both had ridden all night without a meal and had suffered mishaps. They were glad at seeing the castle, for they had thought to rest there during the day. When they saw the market which lay below the castle, they hurried towards it. Now they met a boy on the way who was selling cooked shoulder roast and bread. These he sliced when someone asked him, and busily wrapped them up in a linen towel. He had a flask of wine in his hand. Who this was wasn't told to me. When this boy rode towards them he began to take careful note of our burdened lady. Her way of travelling astonished him greatly. As he came riding towards her, she greeted him pleasantly. He nodded in thanks. The way led onwards. Erec then greeted him with a 'Good Morning', hidden under his helmet. The boy could easily see that he had suffered in the night, had ridden armed, and wanted to know their trouble. He said: "Lord, if you don't mind, I would like to know where you are heading. Tell me by your leave. I mean well when I ask that. I think you must be a stranger here. So was I before and am now the count's squire. I think it fitting and proper and bid you heartily that my lord would be honored if you would travel to his castle and rest after your trials. They are ready to serve you there. And I further ask you for the sake of God: I
believe you have fought and suffered many trials. If you feel any hunger, I have here shoulder roast, bread, and much good wine. Now be so gracious and bid your lady ride here and eat at this place." He did as the boy bade. That made the boy happy. He hurried over to the lady and took the horses from her. She then went to her husband. The boy bound the horses together and put his things on them. He took their care into his own hands and went to where he found water. He took his hat in his hands so that they could wash theirs, and went to the creek. He laid the towel on the grass, placed on it the food that was there, meat, bread and wine. There was nothing else besides.

When they had eaten and sat up again, Erec said to the boy: "Boy, you should rightly get some reward for that which you have done for us. You have well earned a reward. Now I have neither silver nor gold with which to reward you. My friend, now do as I bid, and take your choice from among the group of horses, one that is the most pleasing to you. And be sure of it, that if ever the day comes when I may do better by you, I won't fail to do so. You should take the horses for our sakes." That the boy did willingly. He would have given them all to him, but that would have been too easy for the woman. He forebore to make it difficult for her. When he had taken a horse that pleased him the best, he thanked him heartily. He said, "Dear sir, now take note of what I bid you, and treat me well for it, the lady suffers a lot from this task with the horses. I should lead them; that service is easy for me."

Erec said, "Boy, you must desist in that. This is certainly not done without cause. She has to bear with the inconvenience for the time being." He said, "Well then, I will ride forth." "God reward you, my
son: may your honor be protected by Him so that you live joyfully.
Boy, now go with God." He was happy with the gift. He rode back in haste for joy. Erec rode after him in a leisurely fashion.

Now his lord saw him and recognized him from afar, since he had gone in front of the castle gate. There he sat in front of it. He wondered greatly that he came back so swiftly, and asked information of him—whose was the horse that he led in his hand? He quickly told him the whole story. He said, "Lord, now take note of how they ride to you. Now I don't know why you don't go down now to the road, you will do ill if you don't. Yes, in the lady you will see the most beautiful woman that we ever saw. You should receive her graciously." To the road he went then; with gracious greetings he received them. As he saw them riding towards him, he went towards them and said, "Welcome, lady and lord," and bid them heartily to honor him by returning home with him and staying. "Lord, you should let us off—relieve us of the obligation," said the knight Erec. "The long way has made us unpresentable at court. We are very tired. I take note of your graciousness, but respectfully decline. You should let us ride further at our pleasure at this time."

They began to beg to leave, until he had to give in. He sent a boy to the best innkeeper in the area. Lady Enite was very glad of the rest she got then, when they took the horses from her. For her, it was as if the angel Michael had rescued her soul from a long stint in Purgatory. He had a bath prepared, since he was sweaty and dirty from the battle on the way. He made his body free of that sweat and dirt. As he and his wife bathed, the meal was made ready. As is told, he had the table made
ready. He did not let the Lady Enite eat with him, for he was sitting intentionally at one end of the table and she another.

Now the count began to rue it, and began to think against his conscience, that he had let the lady sit there, that he did not bid her to join him. Manifold were his thoughts as the lady's beauty began to torment him, of how he might win her. Disloyalty ran in his thoughts that he would come to the point that he would be so taken with her. That was against all right that he would take from the good knight his wife, since he (Erec) had come into his land he should protect him from anyone that would harm him. Love had put this thought in him. For we have heard tales of the count, that he was both praiseworthy and good, that he always kept faith, until this very hour. But powerful Love made disloyalty known to him and took away his good sense. For when Love's bands ensnare even such a wise man fast, no man can free him of it. Many a man in this world would never leave the straight and narrow by any misdeed if only Love would permit it. And if she never gave such rich thoughts, then the world would ever be good and well-balanced, if men forgot to serve her. Now no one has the power, once caught up in her mastery, to free himself from her. But whoever can wisely serve her in the right manner, she will not leave him the lurch. For him her rewards are prepared, so that he will not rue his labors if he keeps faith better than the count did. He was not constant in this. For Lady Love forced him into false thoughts, so that thoughts of taking the wife of that worthy man possessed his mind. He took four knights to himself. When he came to the inn, he found them at table. He took off his armor; with greetings he stood before them. But Erec then had no thought of
harming him as he had of him. The count was astonished that they sat so apart at table and didn't eat with one another. He said in his falseness: "Lord, if you don't mind, you should tell me why this is so done. Is this lady your wife? She is beautiful and so pleasant, that it is more fitting she should be by you than over there. Why have you placed her so far from you?" Then Erec answered him thus: "Sir, my intent is fixed that way." The count asked him further if he wouldn't mind him sitting by her while everyone ate. Erec answered: "If it pleases you, sir, I am happy too."

He said as he sat by her: "I tell you, lady, why I have come here; partly for your gain, and especially on account of your reputation. I never took so much pity on man or woman as on your beautiful self. Since I saw you suffer today such unseemly discomfort (which has never been fit for a lady) it cut me to the heart and caused me much pain. Your great poverty I don't object to for a bad reason, only that it causes me pain. You seem truly to belong to ladies of the realm. Who gave you, poor creature, such a man who neither may nor can honor you properly? He has you doing squires' work. That same companion of yours (may God save him!) persists in doing that which makes you suffer. And if God had given you into my care, you would be better honored. If you want, things can still go better for your. I will speak my mind to you, lady. And if it is that you are wise, you will concur without argument. I wish to make your burdens lighter. I'll tell you how things stand with me. I am this land's lord: neither near nor far have I found the woman better fit for me that I should wed her. Never by my life! Now
you please me so well that I would gladly make you the lady of this land: thus you would well have changed your life without shame."

"God must give you a wife," said that virtuous woman, "that would best grace you and your land. You would heartily and rightly rue it, and it would be against my marriage vow. When the world learned of it, the news coming before her, it would be none other than your disgrace. For that reason, and for God's sake, leave off this talk. For you deserve better than this: I am not worthy to be a countess; I have neither the birth nor the riches. Whatever my spouse does to me, that I suffer rightly. As wife and as squire, and as whatever he will have me, I am subject to him in everything. Sir, what more can I say? For I would rather be burned alive to ashes in a flash right here and now, and be strewn here and there, than that I would ever do that. Our standing is alike. We both are not rich, we stand in the moderate way. May God save me." As he heard this answer, and perceived her mind, he said: "Now I will tell you my mind. Thereafter decide what you will do. If you don't want to give in to my request gracefully, then it will happen against your will. Your opposition annoys me. Your companion can go where he will; you must stay here with me. This conversation is at an end." When she perceived his earnestness, and that he spoke from his heart, she looked at him pleasantly (that disloyal man!) and laughed in a charming guile. She said: "I think you are serious! Sir, don't be angry, for that is unnecessary. It was truly my thought that you said your words in jest. For it is the custom of you men to gladly deceive us poor women thus (I don't dare say 'lie'). For you say many charming things against your true mind. I have seen that often this causes women
much sorrow. Had I not feared that, I should have answered you better. For I, sir, am not so completely without sense, that if I wanted to change my affairs for honor and for comfort's sake, I would do it. For my life is so burdensome, as you yourself have seen. Rightly I will tell you from the beginning how my husband won me as a wife. I am not his social equal; he took me from my father, for he is truly noble and rich. He came often to court. After the manner of children I ran hither and thither. One day he played with us. You can see how easily children are tricked. Craftily he led me outside the gate. Then he packed me off and has had me ever since. Many a sorrowful time he has made me suffer. For that reason he had to leave off dwelling in his land. Shame and scandal are my accustomed lot at all times. Whoever would rescue me from it for better things I would gladly follow. May God reward him. I thought your offer was a joke. If it seems to me that you actually mean what you say to me with genuine sincerity, I am ready to fulfill your wishes." This answer made the count happy. He answered her laughing: "You may be assured without reservation, for I will swear fealty to you. His finger was laid upon it; the lady gave him an oath. She also gave him at once an unknown sign, to accomplish what he asked, her oath with a handclasp.

When the oath had been sworn, Lady Enite said craftily, "Sir, now I advise you well, as one friend to another should, (for I have never received from a man such good), that you follow my advice. It won't be too cumbersome for you, since you want to have me; therefore, I advise you to wait until early morning. Thus you will be able to take me without trouble and strife. When he is lying on his bed, then you come
here. Thus he will not be able to harm you, and thus you will be able to have your way with me unhindered; for tonight I will steal away his sword," she said. "I am fond of you now, for you have well earned it, and I will rue it, if you should suffer harm on my account. That would happen for a certainty if you don't do as I have told you. For if you took me right away, the fact is that he would be loathe to let me go. He has his sword with him; I know well that he would do harm." He said, "Your advice is good, it pleases me so well, that I follow it gladly." Thus with the cunning of beautiful women she protected her honor and her husband's life. Lady Enite was a loyal wife. She so convinced the man that he took his leave from there with such ignorance as I have told you.

When they had eaten, Erec bade her go to bed, but separately. He did not wish to let her lie with him. Then they went to sleep. Now they lay apart; that was really a wonder, that he decided angrily in his mind to do without such a beautiful woman. The lady suffered the burden of anxiety in her mind for the sake of loyalty and virtue. As the tale is told of him, he forbade her to speak of anything she perceived that came up, as I have told you before. But she didn't refrain: thereby she would have lost him, for he in his anger wouldn't keep her company, for he ate and slept separately.

Now the good lady thought to herself: "It has come to this of a certainty, the dearest man of all that ever woman had, would be taken from me if I don't warn him. I also know that I will pay the penalty if I break his command. Now advise me, noble Lord God! I have never been in such desperation. I know well it is my death. Because he has borne
it of me twice. What end will it serve if I am slain and if he takes my life? But I am not a complainer: he is noble and rich, my dear lord. Before anything would harm him I would choose death." Her loyalty commanded her to go to his bedside and plead with him on her knees and tell him the whole story. She was pale from fear. When everything was made known to him, he stood [4000] up quickly and bade the innkeeper to waken. He got up and told the innkeeper's servant to prepare the horses. That was quickly done. He bade the innkeeper come to him. He told him as he was coming: "You have dealt with us hospitably and well in your house, I owe you a reward. Now listen to what you have earned. I don't have silver or gold to reward you, but do as I bid: take the seven horses as a recompense from me." The innkeeper bowed low at his feet. He became very joyful, as a man must be when he is so fortunate. He then drank his health and commended him to the favor of Saint Gertrude. Thus he rode then into the night, the unfortunate man, and quickly quit that land with his wife, she who had deceived the count and lied without sin.

Before Erec had gone his way, the disloyal man had wondered if he should come to the woman, if he was going to enjoy her. He sprang up from his sleep, where he was lying on his bed, for he had the fearful idea that he had been tricked. He cried very loudly, "To arms! We have overslept. Get up now, my companions, those who want to help me!" Nineteen they were in all, and he the twentieth by count. When he had brought these with him and come to the inn, as an uncivil greeting he so smashed the door with his foot that it splintered. That was a bit unpleasant for the innkeeper, who would have cried 'To arms!' "Now you
can well see that it is only us," said the devious man. "Don't be afraid to tell me, what is the meaning of these lights here?" They were those Erec the virtuous man had left when he was making his escape. The count didn't know that.

"Where are your guests sleeping?"
"Lord, they have ridden away."
The count said angrily, "They haven't!"
"If I were lying, I would be a silly child."
"It's not true, you are joking."
"I am not, sir, so help me God."
"It is. Now show me where they are."
"Order your men to look around for themselves."
"Be assured, I will do that."
"Go right ahead and do so."
"How long must I keep asking?"
"Now you can see for yourself where they were lying. Why should I deny it to you?"

He said, and wanting to slay him, "You want to send me off on a wild goose chase!"

"Lord, they have ridden away, Christ knows."
"It is your fault."
"It is not by your mercy!"
"They would have stayed until daylight."
"Sir, they have just now ridden out."
"Tell me, can they have gotten far?"
"No, in truth, lord, they rode at this very hour."
"Where did they go?"

"I don't know."

His disloyalty forced him to great rueing in his heart. He cursed his sleeping. He said, "It was dishonorable of me that I have lost the most beautiful woman that I ever saw, in foreign lands, or at home because of my laxity. Cursed be the hour that I slept tonight." He called for his horses. He said, "Whoever gives in to comfort as I have done tonight, his honor will leave, and he will be ready for shame. Whoever won a prize without work? This has rightly happened to me." Now the knights came riding with the horses. They did not abide there longer. "Let's go, you lords," he said. Nothing but shield and lance had they brought as weapons; that was because of their haste.

When the day began to dawn, they saw the tracks and the hoofmarks clearly. They went after them post-haste. Meanwhile Erec had ridden a good three miles. It was because he feared for his wife (not his own life) that he left in such haste. He well knew he was being followed. Since there was still much to be said because the journey had been in such haste, he said, "Lady Enite, you have opposed me too many times. That I let you off even though I had charged you on your life, I rue a great deal, and it won't happen any more. Now I will tell you my mind: I won't suffer it of you any more." "Mercy, lord," said the woman, "you should let me live for it, and if I hadn't done it, you would have lost your life. It would have gone ill for you if I hadn't. I won't do it any more." Now she heard them riding towards them in an angry mood. However newly the good lady had promised not to warn him, the oath did not remain fast, for she quickly broke it. For loyalty's bonds forced
her to. At that time, they were still far away. She said, "Dear sir, a
great company is riding towards you. They want to do you harm. They
are in such haste." Now no one must ask 'Why is it that the lady both
heard and saw better?' I will tell you why that was. The lady rode
unarmed. He was armored completely, as a good knight should be. For
that reason he neither heard nor saw so well as he did unarmed. That's
why he needed warning, and it often saved him from death. As angry as
it made him, he could have lost his life on many occasions, not being
able to see, if his wife hadn't warned him.

She had hardly told him everything before the count came riding up.
And as she saw him, he spoke in an unknighthly fashion, with unseemly
grimness, in an unfriendly voice: "Look this way, you base thief! Who
could let this pass, that you, to the shame of everyone in this land,
abscond with a sweet noble woman? And know well, that your life is in
my hands. You, that enjoy the title of knight, I order you to be hanged
at once, without the knowledge or consent of supporters. Indeed it was
a worthless trick that you rode away from there at night. By this one
can well see that you have kidnapped her from her father. How else
could you possibly have got her? A fool could easily see that you are
not the social equal of this woman. If you want me to let you live, you
worthless villain, let the woman go. I want to give her back to her
king. She should not live in such a poor fashion any more. Now let her
go and get you gone!"

"You debase courtly customs greatly with me," said Erec. "Who
taught you that you could ever chastise a man who carried the title of
knight? You have been raised in a base court. You should be ashamed; you have lied. I am nobler than you are!"

Now the battle began. They no longer dallied with words; they rode towards each other in anger. Thereby the disloyal man received the recompense of his falsity, a reward for his actions which many times afterwards would not cease to pain him, for he was unprotected except for his shield. For that reason his arm broke when he was thrust from his horse. Then be began to rue his loyalty. His company tried to support him in whatever way they could. Here and there were those who wanted to avenge him quickly by the sword. Six of them he slew. That was enough fighting for them. The others were all cowards; they fled without being pursued. That was the end of the battle. Quickly knight Erec rode his way [4232] unscathed. He said, "Good Lord God, keep me under your protection, and help me to leave this land without disgrace. If it were known by the people of this land, they would quickly avenge all on me [and I would have to fight unaided]." But that thought was unnecessary, because no one took notice before he was completely out of the woods. That was good fortune for him. Thus it remained unknown: those knights who were not casualties and were with their lord, none of them wanted to leave him, ones who could have told the story. But the fleeing cowards did not dare to say anything because of their shame, until Erec had gone quite far from the land. The knights then bound up the count's wounds, and bore away home those that were dead with great sorrow. Thus he was rewarded for his falsity.

As Erec rode away with the certainty that the count would not pursue him, he took Lady Enite to task again for having broken his
command so often. His anger was great and more unpleasant and harsher than before. Now she promised that she would never do it again, but she didn't hold to this.

Whatever Erec had suffered in the way of difficulties until now, they were easy work and even child's play compared to what I am going to tell you now of what he still has to undergo in the way of suffering. He received a measure of both difficulty and discomfort. He was not spared this; he suffered much and enough. He soon found his way led him into an unknown land. He did not know its lord.

Wondrous tales have been told to us of the manhood of that same lord. He was a very short man, if they haven't exaggerated, almost the size of a dwarf, but that his arms and legs were very large. His chest appeared to be thick and strong enough. Inside it was a heart that was completely manly. It also gave him strength, for from it came everything. And know for a fact, that if a man were twelve arm-lengths long, and if his heart were weak and born to cowardice, all that extra flesh would be useless. This man was not like that. We must be silent about a good deal of his history. Much could be said about it, but the speech would be too long. For that reason I want to abbreviate it for you. The good Lord had given him fortune and a noble mind and he had without cowardice sought reputation by fighting many a man. For that reason people still say of him that he is not lacking in manhood to this day. Whoever came to him meaning ill, be he strong or weak, the short man always won the victory. He turned down no knightly deeds (and no one did it better), whatever he was able to accomplish by riding during his time. Whenever there was a battle to be found, there his loyalty
was to be discerned. When they had warned him, then they saw him riding
towards them in haste. He now greeted Lady Enite. When he came close
even to Erec that he could hear his words, he said: "Welcome, Lord.
Whether you come from near or far, riding into this land, I would think
without a doubt that you must be a warrior. That is apparent by two
things: you bring along, by my life, the most beautiful woman I have
ever heard tell of. Who would give her to a base man? To that add that
you are well-weaponed, as a knight should be who at no time would want
to be found weaponless and who seeks adventure. God willing, you may
find some of that here. And if it goes well for you, I tell you truly,
you would win the praise by which you will be greatly honored. Ready
your weapons, knight, it is time." Thus Erec answered him on account of
his anger: "May God prevent it, knight praiseworthy and good, that you
had ever done anything against your loyalty. You would rue it
thereafter. You gave me your greeting; how would you live down the
shame if you went against me? You would soon be without honor and
remain so. You should gladly and for God's sake leave me alone, for I
have done nothing against you. I have ridden far and suffered such
difficulty that my whole heart stands undisposed to fight." The man
thought: "He is a coward, since he complains about his troubles." He
said: "You will make ready in spite of that, just as I have bid you. I
have done nothing but what knighthood demands. Whatever may happen to
you from me, you will not be able to say anything against my loyalty. I
will never break it (my loyalty). Get battle-ready for the sake of your
beautiful wife, if you wish to retain your life." When Erec saw that he
would have to fight, he returned to his horse, as his bravery taught
him. Together rode those two men, in each of whom cowardice had no part. Strength and fortune had to decide the victory between the two. The lances struck so hard that they splintered. The joust was so vigorous that the horses were thrown back on their haunches. They had to release the bridles from their hands and control the horses in another way. They went at it with equal strength and certainly not lazily, and brought out their swords. Each of them was fully armed here, and had long asked God to send him a man with whom to test his strength.

Now they began to fight like good knights. This began about mid-day. Erec fil de roi Lac feared shame and death. He held his shield out in front of him and craftily began to cease giving blows. This thought was unknown to the other man, and he struck and shield hard all the way to the hand-grip, so that it fell from his hand. Because no one separated them there on the heath, he reached him and struck him a wound in his side. He thought he had found a coward in his guest. Lady Enite was also troubled. When his side began to bleed profusely, the good lady cried loudly: "O, woe, my sweet lord, if only it had been me instead of you! I think I must have lost you."

"Lady, your thought deceives you," said the unabashed man. "I have still got a ways to go before losing my life." He proved that to her quite well. He stepped forward a bit, and suffered more blows from the other, but struck him through the helmet so that the short man was wounded by it and lay before him. Erec fil de roi Lac would then have done a misdeed, for he wanted to slay him. "O no," said he, "good sir Knight, for your virtue's sake, and the sake of your lovely wife, let
me live and honor God by me. I will give you my surety gladly. Now take me as a vassal, and know that I have never met a better man. For your honor comes from your manhood, and I would rather die than that you should lose it (honor). No higher nobility would honor you more. I don't care who your father is - your virtue ennobles you so that I am glad to have you as my lord." Now the battle had lasted until Nones (3 PM) this summer day. Then Erec decided to grant him mercy and let him live. He lifted him by his hands and took off his helmet. He said, "I expect no more honor from you than that you should tell me your name unashamed; for I would know at this time what your name is." He said: "Sir, so be it. I will let you know that I am king over Ireland, called Guivrez le Petit."

Erec did not take him as vassal. Each began to lament the discomfort of the other. Erec quickly tore off a bandage from his surcoat. Now how could a more cordial binding take place at this time? Guivrez le Petit likewise took a bandage from his surcoat. They bound up each other's wounds, which they had struck with their own hands. This was friendly enough. Here Lady Enite was kind, as is her wont. She caught them both by the hand, each was glad of the other, and they sat together on the grass, for they needed a rest. The conflict had made them quite warm; both were covered with blood and sweat. Lady Enite sat there as well. She had joy and sorrow, as I can assure you. She was glad of her husband's victory, but he lamented his wounds.

Now the good lady cleansed the places of sweat and blood with the cuff of her sleeve. After a friendly chat, the two lords sat on the heath and cooled off to their pleasure. The king said to his guest:
"Don't take this for a jest, what I am going to say to you now, and don't let it displease you. Your manhood has caused me to want to be your vassal you have well earned it. Now your virtue is so clearly seen that I want to be your vassal even more. And I would gladly know, and it please your lordship, that you would make known to me - my honor would be that much greater - that which I received from you was never allowed to happen up to this time. It will still have gone well for me, and I will let it go without regret, if a nobleman has done this, and I will always be glad of it." Erec answered him thus: "I will tell you my birth: I know it as well as I can know any birth. My father is King Lac, I am called Erec." As soon as he had heard tell of who he was, he didn't remain seated long. He sprang up from joy and bowed at his feet. He said, "How gladly I would always be your vassal, however I may serve you. Your father is well known to me. Both life and land should be subject to you. You should let me enjoy steadfast loyalty to you, without regrets, my whole life long. And grant me this gift for this reason, I bid you earnestly: where is there more loyalty than friend should be with friend, both being loyal to each other? With this, I suggest for the love of me, that you should ride with me to my house, and there abide as long as you will. Let this be without demurring; that would be treating me well, so that I could always serve you." Erec said, "I will do as you say, but you shouldn't suffer it for so long. You must let this be without anger. I may not stay here any longer than early tomorrow morning. And I will tell you why that must be: I am not travelling for pleasure; whatever happens to me I won't pay much attention to it, for I don't wish to concern myself with it."
The king was delighted with his guest. He then went to his horses. He said: "We shall ride." Now he helped Lady Enite up on her horse; he did it with fine courtesy. He led her forth on the way. After her rode Erec. And as they rode towards the house, his nobles restrained themselves no longer, they leapt toward their lord from before the castle gate. There they received them with joyful cries, for they were all happy and delighted that he had as usual captured a knight. He said: "It hasn't happened as you think." And at that he told them in full the true story of how things had gone. To whomever I am most dear, he will put his mind to receiving him courteously, which I will always reward, the noblest man that I ever knew of." They did so. Erec was never treated so well anywhere else as he was there that night.

When they had eaten that evening and sat down, the host said:
"Lord, it is my advice that we have a doctor look at our wounds. If you leave at this time unehealed, I think that would be dangerous. You are, unfortunately, grievously wounded. Added to that, the country is strange to you and it may go very ill for you." Erec said: "Now let this talk be, for I may not abide longer than the morning." Now everything was prepared for the night honorably and seemly.

lines missing in MS

[4629]...that he wanted to say then he had struck him wounded and should have been captured. In this was to be seen that the world had never had such a strange man. His heart was mixed: here and there adorned with great loyalty, that caused him to rue all that he had done against all
right, and that he was free of falsity just like a mirror, and he
guarded himself by deeds and mind so that he would never do wrong. He
was not constant in this, for the day came when he was no longer loyal.
He would never have enough of falsehood, which he could craftily work
with deeds and with his lips. All his mind was directed to this.
Afterwards, in addition to this, he was bravely each day an arch-coward.
These were his two bad traits by which he degraded himself; the reason
all people disliked him and no one had anything good to say about him.
Because of his falseness, he was called Kay the Detractor.

Now Erec understood well what he was about when he saw him. He
said: "Sir, I have a long way to go, and may not, at this time, ride
out of my way. If I had the leisure, I would ride a thousand miles to
greet the king. At this time you should let me wend my way. May God
keep you." Then Kay the False said: "Lord, let this talk be. You
shouldn't leave like that. It is unseemly for both of us. I will
indeed bring you to the house of King Arthur if I may." Erec fil de roi
Lac was somewhat riled by this. He said: "I ween you may not. It
would be just as well for you to be assured that if you want to bring me
there, you will have to force me. But if you are brave, you will bring
me there; for I am well-disposed to you." "I know well," said Kay,
"that I am brave. Before you would win over me, and leave without
seeing my lord (for you may not prevent it), I will surely force you.
Therefore you should yield and see my lord. That must certainly
happen." That made Erec extremely angry. He spurred his horse. "Get
your hands off!" He threw back his weapon and drew his sword. Since he
was well-armed, he wanted to strike the hand off the troublesome coward.
But he pulled back at the right time and fled without a fight. But he rode to Gringolet on the best horse that Knight ever had, but all too slowly he travelled there; he was followed by Erec on the way back. And as he saw clearly (it happened to his good fortune) that he was weaponless, how well Kay reaped the reward of Erec's virtue. With unexpected haste, he turned the lance around to avoid hurting him in any way, and turned the shaft toward him and thrust him off with such strength that Kay lay as a sack under the horse, as was fitting for him unlike a good knight. Erec took the horse. Kay the Ignoble ran hard after him. He called loudly: "O no, good sir knight! For your virtues' sake, leave me the horse! Or forever I will be shunned and scorned. God knows it isn't mine!" The good Erec turned with a smiling mien and heard his plea. He said, "Knight, now tell me, what is your name? And tell me this horse's master. You may not demur. I want to know your name. You shouldn't be so ashamed. It has happened to many a man who never had a cowardly mind."

Kay said, "No, lord, I ask you earnestly. If you will have mercy on me, please do well by me and leave off asking what you have asked, that I tell you my name. My cowardice has brought me such shame, that a heart's ruine must come to me from this thing, if I should tell you my name. For I have well earned your scorn. Now for God's sake, leave off." Erec said, "Knight, tell me: there is indeed no one here except you and my wife; there can be no talk of you if you lose the horse or not." He said this scornfully as he wanted to ride away then. Kay bade him stay. He said, "I will lament to God, since I must tell my distress. Now I'll tell you who I am. My name is Kay — I serve King
Arthur as seneschal in his house. His sister's son, the noble knight Gawein, lent me this horse. I am sorry that he did not refuse me, for thus would my shame be less, which I must suffer now. Since my lord is not hunting today, (devil take it, I know myself that I won't live comfortably, I would begin to suffer, I have earned a bit of it). But save me from my distress, since I have asked loan of his horse. He lent it to me on the spot. If he hadn't done this for me, I would be free of the suffering that has come to me thus. Now may no one cause that to happen to him. Noble knight, now be so kind and for God's sake give it back to me, or I will get all the mockery from those who see me going home." Erec said, "It is done. I will give it to you on one condition: you should take it to Sir Gawein from me. You must promise me on oath." Kay said, "I will do that." And so he did, for he was happy of the outcome. As he got the horse back, he said: "I bid you, virtuous man, since you mean well to me, to do so in full measure I must know one thing of you, please you, sir tell me your name. It won't hurt you and will help me. I want to know your name on account of your goodness. It would always be a sorrow to me if I had to leave without knowing your name or what to call you. If I am to think well of you, for God's sake tell me who you are. He said, "No I won't tell you at this time. Perhaps later I will make it known to you."

Now they parted at once. Each of them went his own way, Kay and Erec. Kay rode to court, and his oath forced him not to remain silent. For he told completely his shameful story, how things had gone for him, and gave this defeat such a shameful appearance, that everyone took his shame as a reproach in itself, and left him unmocked.
When much was said about the manhood of this knight, they were all especially curious to know who this knight was. Kay said, "I cannot make him known to you; he didn't want to tell me his name. I heard his voice, for he spoke much to me. As much as I can discern, it is Erec fil de roi Lac." They all agreed that this was highly likely. King Arthur spoke then: "Now I would be really glad, and would praise whomever would get him for me with hearty thanks. Gawein, I will do that for Kay and for you. You have honored me so much today that I may not speak anything but good of you. If you will do this for me, I will hold that as worthier than anything, whatever you have done for my love's sake. Gawein, now know for a fact how it is with us, that you are my closest friend, and spare yourself no conflict for the sake of my love. So help me and the queen, so that we may see Erec again: nothing else so good could happen to me." Gawein said, "Lord, bid me not so earnestly, for I am willing to go on the journey. There is no one living whom I would rather see now. And may God make it go so well for me, that I come to him again. I tell you, lord, what I will do, I'll bring him, if I can bid him to do it."

Quickly they rode away. Kay brought Gawein right to the place where he had left him. With marvelous haste, they both hurried after him, always on his tracks. And as soon as he had caught up with him on his journey, Gawein the virtuous greeted him lovingly, with friendly words and not [4900] with fierce ones. Thereby it was to be seen that he meant well by it. He bid him good day. When Erec fil de roi Lac greeted him, he took note of his name, and as he recognized him, he named him. He embraced him tightly, as if his joy could not be
contained, from the love he felt for him, for he found him strong and well. He bid him and his lady welcome. He greeted him with such friendly humor, which his greeting bid him do, that loyalty compelled him to return it. As soon as he named him, he said to the guest: "We rode hard after you through the woods. If you should ask why we were in such haste, or what I wanted, sir, former companion, I won't be silent about it. I bid you, now let it be seen if my lord is dear to you. And I will tell you why. When our friend Kay brought my horse back to me at court and boasted about your great manhood, when he had told the story, we all wondered greatly who could have done this. But we decided in one accord on your name, as with one voice. Then the queen and my lord at once begged us so much that we hasten after you (that was the cause of our haste) and bring you home to him. If King Arthur is dear or worthy to you, see to it that you deny not his request. And so please you see him. If that happens, a man would never gain such love as he by that. Do this without demurring, if you are willing to serve: this would make us all glad." Erec answered him thus: "The king has well earned it, that my heart would always be subject to him. And whatever I fail to do for him, so that his commands are not obeyed, it's not that I am unwilling to do whatever he wants. This I must refuse to do. I will gladly do his will, if it comes to that, as it may very likely happen, that I will risk life and goods on his account. I won't deceive him, I will tell him rightly how it is with me. He should graciously let me ride on at this time. At this time I have quite enough comfort for one on the move. And it please you, wherever I go, I am at your service.
You must speak of my service to the king and the queen, and turn their anger away from me."

When Sir Gawein saw that Erec was so opposed to it, he was a bit displeased. He waved to his companion and ran to him. He said, "Noble knight, now act noble and well by me, as I and my lord have well earned it by you. I advise you this: ride your way in haste and say that Erec doesn't want to change his mind. My friend, I have thus devised a trick which is likely [5000] the best. Tell Arthur, if he wants to see Erec, it must happen as I tell you now. Bid Arthur go forth from there where he is staying in the woods, and have him make forth on the way that the knight Erec would be coming out on the other side. Meanwhile I can hold him up in the way with detours and crafty distractions, so that he won't come too soon." "May that happen without fail," said the knight Kay, "may that be in good will." Hastily he rode and did everything according to his bidding.

When King Arthur had heard this, he had the Round Table taken away, and went with great haste according to the advice of his nephew and placed himself right in the way, so that when Erec the knight would come by, he would have to ride right in front of him. Gawein, the virtuous man, delayed Erec with his tricks whenever he could, so that he lost an hour by detouring so, so that the king came well before him. However often he asked him to ride away, he said "Right away," until with delightful trickery he rode out of the woods with him and there was the king right in the way.

Now when Erec fil de roi Lac saw all of the pavilions, he was not pleased by any means, because the field was so full, and he recognized
them well enough, for he had seen them often. (He said, "How has this happened to me?) I ween that I have ridden the wrong way. You haven't done well by me. Sir Gawein, that is your doing. I have never seen such a misdeed from you. That I have come here was rather unexpected by me. You have brought me here in no good wise. Whoever comes to court as little prepared as I am now, it were better for him if he stayed home. Whoever wants to go to court should go gladly and expect they would do him rightful honor. I cannot do that now, and have to delay here as a hindered man. You can well see now that I am so tired and wounded and so unpresentable at court that I would gladly stay away, if you had allowed me. You have not done well by me." Gawein returned the anger with good. He fell about his neck and said, "Lord, soften your anger. A friend is indeed better off lost in a fine and upstanding way than kept otherwise than he should be. If he is a bit angry in haste, he will understand correctly afterwards and will be dearer than before. What else can I say now? If I have sworn to you, I have done it for a good reason. Do right by me as well."

Thus he comforted him virtuously so that his ill mood and regret began to leave. There was never greater worthiness nor honor shown to a man than was shown to him there at court. That they were glad to see him was well demonstrated by Arthur and the queen with their whole entourage. They were welcome there; they were both received with equal worthiness, Erec and Enite, who at diverse times had gone through difficulties on unknown ways. Guinevere the Queen [5100] made known her kind will when Lady Enite came. She took her in her care and led her away then from her husband to speak with her in private. Many womanly
things were expressed, much asked and said of the unaccustomed distress
that Lady Enite had undergone. The noble queen lightened the burdensome
things as long as she could. Erec as well was led away from the knights
where he rested from his weariness, wounded as he was. Knights went to
him and quickly disarmed him. There were many noble squires there for
him, none better could have been found at that time. They all served
him with one mind, as dutifully as they could.

Hastily the queen came to care for him and look after him with all
her ladies. She had a plaster with her: I will speak to you about it,
how good it was for wounds. Many a grievously wounded one was healed by
it. On whomever it was placed, over his wounds, they pained him no
more, and they healed not so painfully, but just in the right wise. No
bad thing ever dared attack; it drove away all suffering. Whatever it
found that was good, that stayed. And with those who were healed by it,
it cured scars, so that whoever looked at the skin, it was as if no
wound had been there. The queen bound the side of the knight with this
same plaster with her own hands. There was never any better plaster in
the world.

If any man wonders, and would gladly know where this plaster came
from, it was left long ago by Morgana le fay, the King's (Arthur's)
spider, when she died. What great power and arcane arts perished with
her!\textsuperscript{13} She was a goddess. Her wonders may not be told, we must be
silent about them, those wonders that that same woman performed. But as
far as I may, I will tell you what I can. When she manifested her magic
arts, she could travel with great speed around the world and quickly
come back. I don't know who taught this to her. Before you could turn
your hand or wink she could leave and reappear just as quickly. She lived just as she wished; in the air or on earth - if she wanted she could sleep on the waves or live underwater. It wasn't difficult for her, she could just as easily live in fire or dew; the lady knew how to do that. And if she wanted, she could turn someone into a bird or animal. After that she could quickly give him his usual shape. She knew all sorts of magic arts. She lived much against God: for under her command were the birds of the wild, of forest and field, and what is most important to me, the evil spirits, which are called demons, were all under her control. She could work wonders, for even the dragons of the air and the fish of the sea brought tribute to her. She also had kin deep in hell; the devil was her companion. He paid tribute to her, even from the flames, however much she wanted. And whatever she wanted from the earthly realm, that she took enough of without any bother. The earth would grow no plants, if her power were not manifested, as I move my hand. Since Sybil died, and Erecto perished, of which Lucian tells us, and sorcery which they could command had died away ages ago, it would resurrect completely (about which I don't want to say much at this time, since it would take too long). Since then, the earthly realm probably has had no better mistress of the magic arts than Morgan le fay, of whom I have already spoken. He couldn't be a wiser man, whoever wished to take away great suffering, that she could mix up a plaster for him. Yes, I ween that if a man looked everywhere he could not, however busily he searched out powers from books of magic, find such powerful arts that she practiced against Christ and thereto turned her mind.
That same plaster she made well, with all her skill, and there with the queen bound up Erec's wounds. He well received the benefit of the plaster, for when he was bound up, he began to think again of the journey. He thought he was completely healed, and didn't want to stay there any longer, however much they begged him and spoke about it, those that came to see him, knights and ladies. But they cared for them, those worthy guests, all night long, fully after their power as well they could, and would have done much more, if Erec had allowed it. But he didn't.

The bidding of King Arthur and the queen gained absolutely nothing, and they were by no means able to keep him any longer than early morning. Then no amount of imploring would help. When it was morning and he would stay his journey for no man, they thought that was unwise. After that, they brought the horses to him. Erec took his leave from knights and ladies, as was fitting for his courtliness. Then it could be seen finally by all of their gestures, how dear he was to them. For men and women wept from sorrow then when they were leaving. The king was so deeply moved that he could not remain in the woods any longer, but left for Cardigan.

Now knight Erec rode the way the path led, he himself knew not where; his only desire was to seek adventure. Now he rode a little while - at that point he had come a mile, when he heard a cry of woe on the way, one of great distress. A woman cried out piteously for help and mercy. When he heard her cry, he feared for her life, and wondered greatly what this matter might be. Here his manhood was evident. He bade Lady Enite to wait there in the way. She gave herself worriedly
into God's care, as her good sense taught her, as Erec left her. In that direction Erec went, through the pathless woods resounding with cries, only taking direction from the sound of the woman's cries until he came to her, who was sounding the sorrow she felt through the wild woods. Her grieving hands torn off her headdress in a violent fashion; she had ripped and torn herself so that the exhausted woman was covered with blood on her body and clothes. She had wept from such great distress, that if anyone having a hard heart had seen her at this time, he would have had pity on her, if I may truly say so. As he saw the poor woman quite beside herself, the virtuous man spoke, almost weepily: "Lady, for God's sake, tell me, why are you crying? And how is it that you sit alone here in these woods? For God's sake, tell me quickly, if I am to help you." Now bitter grief had almost taken away her voice. The words came brokenly through heart-sobs, so she said unsteadily:

"Great grief has driven me to tears. Lord, the best man that ever woman had is now dead."

Erec said, "Lady, how has this happened?"

"Lord, two giants have taken him from me, they kidnapped him from right in front of me as we were heading this way. Lord, they won't let him live, for they have been his enemies lo these many days. O woe, with great reason I wish to cry."

"Lady, have they gotten far?"

"They musn't have, dear sir."

"Now show me where they went."

"Sir, they went that way." With her finger she showed him the direction that he had been taken.
Erec said: "Lady, be of good cheer, for I will namely be dead with him, or if not I will deliver him from his peril." Now he commended the good lady with his heart and words into the care of Our Lord. Her prayer was manifold and indeed so was the blessing she said over him.

[5377] Now he came upon the trail, and hurried hard after them until he saw them. Now the two giants had neither sheild nor spear nor sword; he was rightly glad of that. They were weaponless. How were they armed? With two great clubs, large and long: the rims were edged with iron. I could not imagine a coward withstandng them. These vile creatures also held two great whips with strands the size of fingers. He whom they had captured they drove with these in a frightful manner. He rode without armor and as bare as your hand. His hands were tied behind his back and his feet were bound together. Many a whip blow he suffered, as he rode there in front of them. They struck him mercilessly, so much so that the poor man's skin hung from his neck to his knees. They completely broke the code of knighthood and manhandled the good man. And even if he had broken the law, and been caught in the act of being a thief, such treatment would be too much. He was struck until the blood quit falling, and he now had become quiet and left off screaming. Blood flowed like rain from the saddle to the ground. It was covered with blood. The knight suffered such torment, such unspeakable anguish, that never a man outside of death could have suffered greater torment than that which happened to him then. When Erec saw this, the knight's suffering so moved his heart, that he would rather have been slain with him before he would have allowed that to
happen to him. This showed in the color of his face. He said of the two: "You two men, I mean no harm. For God's sake, let me know, what has this man done to you that you, that you have captured him? Tell me what has he done? It won't hurt you and it will help me. Is he a murderer or a thief? Or else why has he deserved this of you, this terrible punishment that he suffers now?" One of them answered this (taking small note of his questions): "What right do you have, you stupid man, to ask what he has done to us? We don't want to let you know that. Now look, you perfect ape, you dishonor yourself by asking so many questions that no one will answer. Now why are you following me?" Erec said, "Sir, I am not." Then he spoke craftily, thinking to trap him thereby: "I heard him call from afar. Believe me, sirs, I haven't done it with evil intent, that I followed you here. I wondered what was happening. That shouldn't be burdensome to you. But I want to tell you truly. (I may not be silent about this), if this man is called a knight, then you must be shamed forever that you did not let him be, and then you wouldn't be shamed by this great injustice. Indeed, he has suffered punishment enough for whatever he may have done. Can you not let him be, for God's sake?" The giant spoke back in this way: "Your yapping is unpleasant to me. Take back your question. You play dangerously with your life. If I wanted any honor or fame from you, I would tear you apart like a chicken. Now, how does your question help him? Now, consider him as your kin and help him; his need is great enough. To show him, he struck him and bade him pack up on his way. Up to then, Erec wanted to win them over with kindness, so they would let the knight go. His bidding was a lost cause, for he kindled the giants'
anger. In their hate, they made the knight suffer worse than before, for they neither thought nor feared that he would dare withstand them.

When Erec, that brave warrior, saw that he would gain nothing, that grieved him sorely. He delayed no longer, for he packed his lance under his arm willingly - he spurred his horse - he vented his anger on them. That they had in no small measure, until one, moving slowly from overconfidence, received a lance-piercing in the head, putting out one of his eyes. The blow came with such strength that the shaft hung out the length of an ell from his eye. That his sight was damaged mattered little, for he sank down dead to the earth, just as the noble knight had asked it of God. When his companion saw this felling at the hands of the "little man", he turned around and began to swing his club about, holding it in both hands. Erec bent down then. The giant was glad of that, and sought to slay him quickly. (His thought will deceive him God willing.) His blows matched his anger; if Erec had not defended himself craftily, and protected himself well, he would have been slain at the first blow. He got by because of his cleverness. His shield he held in front of him; on it fell all the harm. When the club reached the shield, it damaged the hard board, so that it splintered in three pieces, so that that which had been sturdy flew up in the air like dust. The club was so heavy, and he swung it about so often, and swung it down so far, that he couldn't lift it quickly. Before he completed the blow, Erec had struck him quickly and stepped back from him again. Thus in four blows, Erec had struck him to his knees. Nothing had ever bothered him as little as this, if it had not been that he was the first to be struck down. Then that brave knave began to fight on his knees. Erec
went at him valiantly. But still that devil fought with unwearied hand. He struck so many grim blows, we might well wonder how Erec survived. If not that He was with him, the One who gave David the strength to be victorious over the giant Goliath...He helped him to victory then, so that he with strength felled him completely and struck off his head. That was the end of the battle. While Erec was winning the victory, that horse had taken the captured man into the woods, so that no one could say where he could be found. But this happened on the journey: wherever he had ridden, trees and grass had become blood-stained from his body, wherever he touched it where the horse led him. For he was bound up, so that he could at no time push away the trees, he had to run into them. Then the good knight tracked him everywhere by his blood for a long way until he found him. Then he loosed the bands from his feet and hands, and brought the suffering one back to his wife still alive and as well as he was when he found him, except for the whip blows. But he never had to complain, since he remained alive, and easily recovered from these pains. When his wife saw him, both love and dismay were enshrined in her heart, but not quite at the same time. When the good woman saw him streaked with blood, it grieved her heart, for she was unused to this heartache concerning him. She had never seen him in such a plight. After that, such love filled her, that it gained victory over sorrow; that was because he had come back alive. He the woman's sorrow of the heart was changed, as a glass, when it had been completely streaked with a dark color, is then completely wiped off. Thus, the [5620] color was gone, and it was pleasing and light, that which earlier had been dark. Thus was her heart a clear glass, which earlier sorrow
had darkened and had been well made light, with pure joy, just as if it never had known sorrow.

The two lovers were joyful. They said to Erec manifold thanks. They said, "Lord, we should put ourselves in your power as vassals - we owe our lives to you." Erec answered the knight thus: "Sir, I would always be glad of that, if I had done something worthy of that for you, which, God willing, may still happen, that which I haven't yet done. For I am well disposed to it. I don't ask any more of a reward, or honor of any type, than if you just tell me who you are." Cadoc, he called himself, of the land of Tabriol, and told him how it came about that those two devils captured him. He wanted to leave this country and go to the country of Britain, since he was known there, he and his lady, of King Arthur's company. Now his direction was through the woods. The aforementioned giants knew this. They had long been his enemies; whatever they had against him I don't know, for at that hour they had lain hidden on the way, and caught him as he rode by.

[5662] When Erec had heard how his tale had happened in good intent he spoke to take away his dismay: "Sir, don't take it amiss about this happening, what the giants have done to you. Indeed no one gets by with it, whoever uses force in this way, without something happening afterwards of which he must be very ashamed; it will be avenged on him afterwards. How often I have been worse handled?" With these words he comforted him. He said, "This is my advice, that you let no one prevent you from your journey, as you had intended, to go to the country of Britain. I tell you truly, that it is so there, that in no other land anywhere may a knight win better praise than there. Whoever can bring
anything to pass there, he will soon be a happy man. Now I want one honor from you and nothing more: when you arrive in that land, take your lady by the hand and go before the queen, and commend me to her. Make known your whole tale to her, and that I have sent you there to be in her retinue. I am called Erec; she knows me well." He promised that, and they parted. Cadoc travelled to the court and did as Erec bade. He bid the queen honor, just as he was taught, as Erec told him before. He commended himself into her power. The lady wanted to reward Erec with the crown, the most noble queen, so that he could be happy.

[5709] Virtuous Erec quickly left the woods again and sought the way where he had bid Lady Enite wait. Now he had fought in such a way that the wounds wouldn't take it - they had opened again. He was streaked with blood all over, the fight had exhausted him, so that he was pale, and his strength began to fade thereafter, so that he rode back only with great difficulty to the place where he bade his wife wait. If he had had to ride further, he certainly would have died. That was easily to be seen by this; when the half-dead man began to stoop, since he wanted to bend down to rest, he was so weary that he fell head over heels. He took such a fall that he lay there for dead. Now a bitter grief and galling pain rose up in Lady Enite's soul. In dismay the good lady raised up a pitiable, heart-rending cry. Her cry resounded so much that the woods echoed with it. No one else helped her cry out her heart sorrow, no one except the echo which resounded with like voice from the forest to the field. It helped her cry out her grief, since no one else was there. The good lady fell upon Erec and kissed him, then beat her breast, and kissed him, and wailed. Every
other word was "woe, o woe". She tore out her hair, avenging herself on her own body, as is customary for women. Thus, she avenged herself. Whatever pain he suffered, she could do nothing about it, except that she used both hands and eyes, with tears and blows of the hand, for she could do nothing else. For that reason, he must always be unhappy (I wish that on him) whoever causes sorrow for women; for that is neither manly nor good.

[5774] Lady Enite raged against God, saying "Lord, is this thy command, that such a good knight should perish on account of his good intent? If so, a strange anger has taken away your merciful compassion. I have heard that you are merciful. What a poor way you show that now to me, poor woman! If you want to have mercy on me, look, now is the time. Now look where my husband lies, dead or almost so. Now have mercy, there is need of it, for my heart is slain. Now see how I stand grieving. Have mercy, Lord, on me; that I, desolate woman, should live any more in such misery. If it were not that all your works are above reproach, Lord, I would call that a misdeed that you let me live longer, since you have taken him from me, so that I must live alone. If you, Lord, give the idea that all manner of hearts are visible to you (for nothing may be hidden from you), make your mercy known. And if I have caused judgment on my husband in the slightest since I first knew him, in thought or deed, something that is unseemly, if you take me by your power, let that judgment fall on me; for I would gladly bear it. If however, I have done nothing, you musn't punish me for it, Lord, so have mercy on me because of thy good will, and cause him to live. If you don't want to give him back to me, know, Lord God, that all the world
knows a saying that you have spoken, and I pray you let it stand, that a man and his wife are one flesh, so do not separate us. Otherwise, I would receive from you an unjust judgment. If your mercy is manifold, help me to death here. Where are you now, hungry beasts, both wolf, bear, and lion - one of you come here and devour us both, so that we don't perish separately. And may God have mercy on our souls, especially don't separate those, whatever may happen to our bodies."

Since she saw no animals coming, she called on them saying, "You dumb beasts, you've gobbled up many a sheep and pig, animals of many poor people, who couldn't resist you or defend themselves. If you were wise now, you would gobble up your food here and now, with a full mouth. For I have nothing against it - you would enjoy it very much. Now come, you may freely take me. Where are you now? Here I am."

None of them took up this invitation, since no beast heard it or came there. If, however, one had come there, and had fully heard her woeful tale, I know full well that however hungry it might have been, at the end it would have to help her cry heartily, and show so well that she was to be pitied.

Against her will she remained alive.

[5869] When she finally saw that she wasn't going to die, she began to wail at last and would have slain herself after that. No one ever saw such carrying on. She said: "Dear man, since I must lose you, then I will renounce all men forever, except one which I love with all my heart and all my being. I will soon become precious to him. If I have deserved it that he was pleased with me, I would always be a loyal wife to him. Dear Death, I love you now. It is from your teaching that I turn custom on its head, that I, a woman, pray about a man. I am in
great need of your love. Now be so kind to me, noble Death. O how well I, poor soul, befit your arm. You are well-wedded to me. Why aren't you going to take me at the right time? Since you must take me anyway, I advise you to do it right now. I am well fitting to be your wife. My body is still pretty and young. I am in my best strength. You cannot be too hasty with me. Now what good would I be later, both old and lame, my beauty and my youth gone? Now what good would I be then? I am still fitting for a good man."

[5908] When she had spoken much, and she had failed to convince Death with her plea, her mind was still set on his taking her in his power. She scolded him very much in a wifely way, as her will commanded her. She said, "Woe to you, evil Death! Accursed be you! What a picture you give of your lack of judgement! The world truly says of you you are laden with falsehood. You busy yourself with many sorrows for those to whom pain should never happen; I have seen that often with you. You have done many evil things: for you quickly take the life of such a man that the world cannot overcome, and let another go his way and grow old that the world wishes were dead. You show your power mercilessly. You have felled a virtuous man here and companioned me otherwise than you should, if you would earn my always speaking well of you. Poor wretch - I don't know what I should do. I was born to misfortune, for now I have lost both soul and body - rightly so for a woman for such a misdeed, who had betrayed her husband as I have done with my lord. He would not be dead, if I had not broken in on him. Indeed, he would never have thought up this miserable journey if I had safely guarded this suffering man, whom I took to be sleeping deeply that day as I lay
by him. Cursed be the day that I stirred up this affair! For I destroyed my own welfare, great honor, and comfort. O woe, what evil has happened to me! Now why did I, stupid woman, speak about it? However my heart wished to live, God would have given it to me, that all my affairs would be as I wished. I did what fools do, unwise of mind who begrudge their own honor and goods, and cannot abide it that everything is well for them, and accomplish what the devil wishes, thereby destroying their well-being: for he gladly bears away their honor. O woe, dear mother and good father! My great distress now is unknown to you. It was the wish of you both to have bettered my fortune. That was quite possible when you gave me as wife to a wealthy king. That intent has changed my life to misfortune. His mind deceives him, whoever thinks to hinder God from completing what he has ordained. No artifice will stop him; man must let Him have His will. It must also happen to me. I must be miserable. That has become well-known to me by bitter experience, which I have often suffered up to now. He has ill-fated my life, poor woman; I am well aware of that. What He has decided about my soul, I may not know. Whatever happens to my body now is of small concern to me, if only my soul can be provisioned for. I have seen this often, and have come to a full knowledge that whatever one does for one destined to misfortune, his luck will never be good. Whoever transplants the lindens from the way by lax attention and sets them in his garden and cares for them, so that they had stood in dry earth unnoticed, and had thought and intended to wait for them to grow to good fruit trees in his orchard, he could not awaken from a dream more deceived. For if they had not grown, however carefully they were
cared for, so that they would bear better fruit after their kind than ever before, when they were only up out of the bad earth on their way, where they were seen to be poorly cared for...However beautiful and noble a tree may be, much digging and dung-spraying must be used up in the effort. That should be an example to me, abandoned as I am by God. And may the world have mercy on me because of my misfortune. And even if all the world crowned me as Lady over all women, God has dealt with me so wretchedly that I must be sorrowful as long as I live. May God give me an end to my life. Since it stands thus with me, that God has taken the dearest man that ever lady had and Death doesn't want me, may he accomplish this: the tie between us should not be broken in this fashion. I will find the way that he will take me into his company without thanks. Why should I fall at his feet so devoutly when he won't have mercy on me? That I prayed to him earnestly about this I can testify well; I won't hear it any longer that he won't bring it to pass. By my faith, I have reached a good decision."

[6062] Her hand glided down to the earth, she gripped her husband's sword, pulled it from the sheath, since from sorrow she wished to stab herself, avenging herself for her husband's death, if not that God's command stayed her hand with merciful hesitation, so that she began to curse the sword right then and there when she saw it. That her heart didn't break from sorrow is a wonder. Her voice was turn into two tones, high and low from grim grief. Whatever she cried came back from the woods in fearful echoes. Many loud cries of "O Woe, O Woe" she spoke then with a loud shriek when she saw the sword, saying with piteous voice "O Woe, cursed be the hour that someone forged you! You have
slain my husband. That his life has been taken is your fault. For he did no perilous deeds neither here nor elsewhere except by trusting in you. Thus you have separated him from me. He rode on many a journey, his life in peril, and which he would not have lost, if it were not for the fact that my dear lord trusted you completely. Often he claimed that you were good; now you have protected him badly. I don't know if you rue it. You have completely broken faith with him. That will be avenged on you. You shouldn't get off so easily; you must still cause more deaths."

[6109] Well she kept that word, and turned the point against her breast, eager to die, as if she would fall upon it. Now a man came riding up who prevented her, for God had sent him. This was a noble lord - a count. His dwelling stood not far from there. Oringles was the name of the rich man, born in in Limors. God had chosen him to protect her as he would. He rode through the woods to save her; towards what place wasn't told me, except that I consider in my inmost heart, that it was for her salvation that he rode out that day. He had plenty of knights in his train. Fate took him to the woods the same way that Knight Erec lay in such deep distress and where Lady Enite cared for him.

When the lord was still far from her, he heard the woman lamenting her life with loud cries, and when he heard her voice, he came there in amazement, to the end that he saw what a strange thing was happening just at that moment when she placed the sword against her breast to slay herself. Now he came riding up to that place, and when he saw her gesture, her intention to stab herself, he was down from his horse in a
flash. For he greatly feared that when she finished speaking she would stab herself. He quickly seized her and prevented the slaying. He tore the sword out of her hand, threw it away, and said "Tell me, you marvelous woman, why do you want to take your own life, and let go to waste the most beautiful creature tame or wild, that man's eye ever saw?"

Lady Enite said sorrowfully: "Now see for yourself, dear lord, what is wrong."

"Do you want to slay yourself?"

"Sir, I have enough grounds for it."

"Now tell me, who has slain him?"

Now Lady Enite began to tell the story of what had happened to him.

[6187] Now the count took note and thought to himself that in his time he had never seen such a beautiful woman near or far. The knights also said this to him. He turned away from the woman. He held a short conference. He said to his companions: "One thing is apparent and may well be seen with this woman. Whether the Knight has stolen her away or however she may have come here, she certainly is a noble woman. That can be seen from her beauty. Now say, what is your advice? You know well how things stand with me, that I am without a wife. My mind strongly advises me to take her to wife. I think she would be seemly as lady over my land. I have recognized quickly in her that she is well-born enough for me. Also my heart has advised me to choose her as wife. Now I bid you that the matter remain in your minds without reservation, and that it please all of you equally (for I would gladly earn that from you as long as I live)." Now they all advised to that
purpose. That heartened the Count. He comforted Lady Enite well and with diligence, as one should do for a friend after a tragedy. He said, "You marvelous woman, why do you rue your life so grimly and sorely? Lady, do this for God's honor and for my sake: behave a little better than you have lately. I must admit that you do as women do, and I believe in my heart that you mourn your husband; in that, your loyalty can be seen. But you have done enough, for you can't change anything by it. This is the best remedy for sorrow, and is also virtuous, that one is comforted; for long grieving causes nothing but a miserable life. Think about it, lovely woman. And if it might be that weeping could give back life, we would all help you grieve and bear your burden alike. But unfortunately, that may not be. As far as I could tell, if I have done so rightly, your husband was not so noble nor so rich, so strong nor so handsome nor so noteworthy, that you may not be compensated for your grief. He will be replaced, if you agree to it with me. I think that God sent me to you at just the right time. This will be to your good. Often when a man has great misfortune, it changes quickly to pleasant things, as lady, your hope has done today; it must change to great honor. Your poverty must certainly change to great good. I am called a count, also lord over a rich land; you shall be lady over it. See, now it should be apparent to you that death advanced everything to your good; now it will finally go well for you. I have no wife; I wish to take you to wife. Your life can be more fitting than riding with a man over hill and dale unprotected, much against your rights. Knight, squires, ladies, wealthy vassals such that no count has more, these would I make subject to you, if only you leave off your crying."
The good lady because of sorrow and grief was not able to answer more than that which heart bid: "Please stop your long speech, sir. Lord, stop your jesting with poor me for God's sake. If you are rich, that is to your good. Know my mind, sir: I will make it known to you in short. It may never be that I will become your wife or anyone else's on earth, neither in the near or distant future. It would happen against my will. If God doesn't give me back my husband, the first that I ever had, he will also be my last. Believe it, lord: this will come to pass."

The count spoke then to the knights: "The women should speak thus. One should not reproach them for it. She will change her mind. I will yet bring it to a good end." He was attracted to the lady. He then bade the vassals, all those that were there, to hew out a bier. This was soon made ready. On it Erec was laid, held to be a dead man. They went their way to Limors, and took to guard him all those he might, and had candles brought that were to burn over him until he was buried. Bitter grief troubled Lady Enite, for she believed him dead.

It was so with the host, that when he could see her beauty fully, that he couldn't wait a long time for her husband to be buried. She wouldn't pass the night without being made lady over this land. However much his vassals may have thought it a shame, he sent messengers all over the land for the lords who served him to come to him at once, so they would participate in the wedding ceremony, in which Enite would be given to him, for the count felt sure that Erec wouldn't live much longer. So great is the power of love: he wanted to celebrate the nuptials that night.
Bishops and abbots came there, and many priests, however many could come in the space of one day. Even though the lady was against it, and in mourning, she would be given to him against her will. Her protests helped her not at all. He would have her as wife. Man proposes, God disposes.

Now it was time for dinner. The host had nothing against it, for he looked favorably toward the evening. He thought about that which probably wouldn't happen, to have a very pleasant night with her. It is just as well with me that his thoughts deceived him. The host went to eat. And when he sat down, he sent two chaplains and three of his servants after the lady, where she was crying for her husband lying on the bier, to order her to table, but I doubt that that helped anything, for she didn't look at them, when one of them spoke to her. They made this known to the host. Then he sent for her another time with many more vassals. He did that to honor her, thinking she would gladly come when she heard that the table was ready. Because of her heavy heart, she took no notice of the messengers. The host said: "I will have to go there myself."

When he had come to her, he took her by the hand and bade her go eat with him. The lady asked to be excused from this. She said: "If I eat now, and so quickly forgot the best man a wife ever had, that would be an unladylike meal." "O woe, how would that be seemly for me?" He said: "What are you saying? You grieve so much without cause. You have lost a man which, God willing, I will replace. I will gladly compensate with my life and my goods. I would gladly do it, except that you prevent me with gestures that ill befit you, so that no one may
comfort you in this long day. It is a shameful thing that you persist in your resistance. Your loss is not so great: I am nobler than he was, or at least as virtuous. My lady, come to me. I want to give into your hand myself and my land and such a mass of goods that you will forget your poverty and sorrow. Now please go with me to dinner." She said: "May God not allow that, since I had to lose my companion, I will swear a high oath, that before I would choose another I would rather leave the earth with him. I will always do without a husband since God took him from me." He said: "Be silent for my sake and go to dinner with me then, for I certainly will not refrain from this."

However much he begged her, she did not wish to leave that place until he forced her. He pulled her along against her will, for she could not resist him. He did not sit her in a chair; a folding chair was set over by the table, as he ordered, so that he could see the woman better. He bade her eat many times. But she was unable to forget her dear companion. Tears began to fall. The table became wet from her eyes at the end where she sat. She wrung her hands in grief, that woman greatly suffering; her wailing was constant. However much the host bid her cease crying, she was not able to stop.

[6466] Now he said to her: "Lady, you are wailing too much for us, and my dear guests are here to celebrate. And if you don't wish to be childish, you must leave off your weeping. And if you could only grasp that in a short while your station could improve greatly, you would agree that you have had little of ill luck. I have never seen such a great wonder, that you cannot be quiet and bear it well, since your fortune now stands so well and has changed for the better. Whoever had
succeeded as you have, he would much rather sing than weep and moan. I must say plainly that your grief is too great. If you compare today with yesterday, your fortune has changed. Before, you were poor. Now you are rich. Before, you were worth nothing to anyone, now God has granted you honor. Before, you were unknown; now you have control over a country. Before, you were in plain array; now - a wealthy lady. Before, you were unworthy of notice - now a mighty countess. Before, you wandered about aimlessly, until good fortune chose me for you. Before, you were without favor; now you are greatly honored. Before, you suffered much travail, now, God has led you away from that. Now God has given you all you could wish. Before, you were greatly vexed; now, praise our Lord that he has rescued you from that and leave off your foolish grieving. Before, you lived without honor. Now, you have more of that than any of the women of your country. You castigate your life without cause, if you want to know. Your poor man is dead; you can replace him with me. This same exchange you would gladly wish to have for always. I would advise this for all women, because they wouldn't want to strive against it, taking a rich man instead of such a man. I begrudge you your foolishness. Now eat, as I command."

Then the noble woman spoke: "Lord, you have said enough to me that would just as well been left unsaid. I will answer you briefly. Your long speech was in vain. I swear (believe it) that my mouth will never taste food, unless my dead husband eats first." Now the count could no longer master his senses. He made known his lack of virtue; his anger led him to great folly so that he slapped her with his hand and that good lady bled a great deal. He said: "Eat, you shrew!" Everyone
alike, both rich and poor, all thought to themselves and said aloud that this was a great misdeed. They also showed it in their faces. The others said secretly that this was done foolishly and he should have restrained from it. He was much rebuked for it. They made it known to him to the end that the roguish man became very angry. Their criticism displeased him greatly. He said quite roughly: "You lords, how strange of you to reproach me for what I do to my woman. It is not for anyone to speak good or evil of whatever a man does to his wife. She is mine and I am hers. How will you prevent me from doing to her as I please?" At that, everyone fell silent.

We shouldn't be silent about her actions after the Lady was slapped. She was glad of the blow, and never happier that day than then. You would be glad to learn why she could be joyful, because blows seldom make anyone happy! Her joy sprang from this: she would a thousand times rather be dead than alive. And when she received the blow, (because it came by a man's strength) she had hope and the consolation that she would lose her life, and whatever else she spoke, he would answer with blows until he finally slew her. Her wailing was highly unpleasant, and she screamed contrary to all decorum and thought thereby to earn death. She provoked him greatly by saying: "Believe me, lord, I take no notice at all of your abuse. And whatever may happen to me at your hands, even if you take my life, I will never be your wife. Be absolutely sure of that!" She spoke thus so often that he struck her on the mouth again. She did not flee his blows, she set herself especially in front of him so that she would receive more. She
thought thereby to fulfill her wish. She said: "Woe is me, poor woman! Were my companion still alive, these blows would not remain avenged!"

[6587] When she began to cry so loudly, Erec fil de roi lac [who still lay unconscious] apparently dead, and yet not so. He had rested a bit, but wasn't much better. He lay unconscious and was awakened by her screaming. When he awakened, frightened out of his heavy dream, he got up off the bier, moving about strangely, and his eyes began to see. He wondered what had happened to him and didn't know how he had gotten there. He heard her again, for she was screaming often "0 woe, dear lord, 0 woe! I seek your help in vain, for you are unfortunately dead." When she called his name, he recognized her at once, and knew well that she was in some kind of danger; he didn't know how or why. He lay there no longer. When he recognized her voice, he sprang up grimly and rushed right to her side. Now nearby hung many swords on a wall, one of them found its way into his hand. He was angry enough. At the first charge, he struck the host himself, and two others who sat by him. The others took flight. No one waited on propriety; one saw no one step back and say, "Lord, do you wish to go before me?", for whoever found a way, he got himself gone (it had to be so), the laity before the priests. However reverend he might be, he was shown little courtesy, be he abbot or bishop. Here, everyone fled the court; the great crowd pressed in to the narrow doors. The knight pressed in before his lord; they thought the way to the door out was very long. They had never gone to such a wedding — each step was like a mile. They all began to flee and retreat; many a good knight lay under the benches against knightly custom. One thing happened often, which doesn't surprise me, that
whoever feared for his life, for his safety fled in great company out of the castle into the valley. So these fled out of the house and scurried to their holes just like a mouse. For them, the wide castle gate was far too narrow, both inside and out. So that in the press they leaped over the wall (falling) just like hail, for they were driven by a grim fear. Limors stood deserted. They were driven to flee, for they feared death. They fled without shame. Whoever would think them cowards would be exaggerating. What would you think, if a dead man, lying on a bier with bloody wounds, bound from head to foot, holding a naked sword, suddenly leaping upon an unsuspecting company, crying "To arms!" over their heads? Whoever held his life dear would have taken flight. And if I had been there, I would have fled, however brave I might be. No one dared stay except Lady Enite. She gladly saw the dead man. Her grief changed to love and her joy increased. He clasped her by the hand, he went looking very carefully until he found his armor, as well as his shield and spear, and armed himself as before, as if he never had been injured. He couldn't find his horse. O woe, that this should happen! Must we go on foot now? We've seldom had to do that. Now God must needs send these two sufferers, Erec and Enite, a horse on which to ride out. When he couldn't find any horses, he did as well as he could do under those conditions. He took his shield and his spear in his left hand, at his right side he had Lady Enite and he hurried to the front of the castle gate. Then his horse was brought to him. The thought had never occurred to him, and he still did not know who was riding him now. In this his luck was readily apparent. One of the host's stable boys had led it to water. He was sitting on it. He sang a 'rotewange'. His
thoughts were very peaceful for he knew nothing of what had happened. He rode now on the castle road. Erec recognized the horse when it was still far away. It was to his good fortune and it worked God's will. Now he stood very still until the horse came so close to him that he could take by the bridle in his care again. Then he got himself on his way. He set the queen (Lady Enite) in front of him - it couldn't have happened any better - and thought to ride onwards through the country. Now the way was unknown to him; that it was night also hindered his journey. He also feared in this country to receive both harm and shame, if they would find out what he had done. Following Lady Enite's advice (for she taught him the way) he turned to the road that he had ridden on while on the bier. That happened on account of her perceptiveness.

There were these three countries bordering one another, and close enough (to each other) - the one in which he slew the count, and on the otherside, the one in which he got wounded by the dwarf, and the one in King Arthur's power. Only the woods separated these three countries. He rode into the middle of it after this trouble. And when they came into the woods, out of the power of sorrow, onto the known path again, King Erec asked Lady Enite [the story of] how he had come into the knight's power, the one whose slaying I just recounted. Now she did just this, her eyes full of grief and every manner of crying. Then these burdensome deeds were quickly ended, and the strange custom that he had practiced with her without cause up to that day - he pleasantly discharged her of this as he rode from the castle with her. That which had led to the deeds had come to an end and he knew this rightly without a doubt. It was done as a test to see if she was a faithful wife. He
had tested her as a man would purify gold in a crucible, then he knew right well that he had a loyal and faithful wife in her, and that she was a wife above reproach. He clasped her to his breast, he kissed her lovingly many times, and asked that virtuous woman if she would forgive all the lack of conjugal relations and great trials she suffered on the way. He promised her better things, which he truly would bring to pass. Now she forgave him on the spot, because he asked it of her in a friendly manner. She said: "Dear Lord, nothing could grieve me so much, no matter how often it happened (I hold it as nothing) compared to doing without you. If I had suffered that much longer, I would just as soon had given up my life."

[6813] As this miracle occurred at Limors, now look here where a young man ran by. He raced through the forest then for he wanted to make everything known quickly to the dwarf king, the one who was so bold. I have told you about him before; he was called Guivreiz, the same one who wounded Erec with his own hand. He was well-acquainted with the way. He made haste; it was all quite close for him - their two countries were only separated by the woods. He knocked on the castle gate. He didn't need to wait for long, he was quickly let inside. He went in and stood before the king and told him how Count Oringles was slain, and that a dead man had done it. Then Guivreiz understood by the news at last that it was Erec. At that time he hadn't gone to sleep. Loudly he cried "To arms! what a misfortune it would have been for the best knight alive today to have lost his life! If God does not grant him mercy, when the people of that country learn of it, they will kill him at once. O woe, if I may protect him, I would truly do so for my
friend - that will be done, if God wills." Now he quickly armed himself and whatever knights were available. In all, there were thirty knights in number. One brought them horses then. Troubled and sad, the king quickly sped to the forest to help the stranger to his country escape.

Now fortune placed them on the same road, on this side Erec, and on the other, one there, the other here, so that they couldn't help running into each other. Thus, fate brought it about. Now each of them knew nothing of the progress of the other. Erec travelled in fear of his life. When they were still far away, the stranger in that land was well aware of the armed company, because the clashing din from the shields was very great. He said to Lady Enite: "Lady, I hear a great host riding towards us. Now I don't wish to make a cowardly retreat from the road without arming myself. My strength is weak, but I will give them some measure of knighthood. Now dismount and leave the road until you see how things go." I deem that little of what happened before was more grievous to her, than seeing his weakened condition.

[6891] He stopped in the road in the meantime, while they were riding in that direction. The moon offered them a bright night, but was obscured by clouds. Now the king was aware of him first, because he was foremost in the company. He saw him halting in the road. Meanwhile, Erec had armed himself. Now may God save him. What do you think the king did? Why he made himself ready for jousting as he should, if he didn't wish to be cowardly. Of that I can assure you, he was no coward. He showed that there and often in other places. They tilted their spears down and began to show their strength. They charged their horses at one another. Then they did a splendid joust. Those good knights
both hit their target. Now it was only the strength of the better-rested man which caused him to do so well and win the prize. He knocked Erec down off the horse and behind it onto the grass, as far as the shaft was long. He dismounted to throw himself upon him. This was grievous to Lady Enite. This had never happened to Erec. No one would say it if he did not wish to lie, that anyone had ever unhorsed him down to the earth. He would soon have lost honor if he had been well. His strength soon left him, so that he had to suffer defeat at the king's hand. Guivrez unbound his helmet and would have slain him, but the lady would not suffer that. There she stood hidden, in great sorrow. She hesitated not a moment; she sprang out of the hedge and fell upon her husband. She said: "O no, good knight, if you ever had knightly virtue, don't slay my husband! And remember he is grievously wounded. You are completely without honor if you do anything more to him - it will be a sin to you." King Guivrez, if I have his name right, had wounded him in the side. Guivrez recognized Lady Enite by her voice, and it also helped that she named him. He quickly stood up. He said: "Lady, now tell me who this knight is, and also tell me from where you know me. I am he whom you named. Lady, you must tell me how things stand with you - Is your lord called Erec and are you Lady Enite? I have delayed too long: for I have come out for his sake, and I'll tell you that I heard grievous news of him, that he was in trouble in Limors nearby here. I feared he would be slain if I did not appear in mid-journey, as it was told me, me and my companions, we wanted to help him. I hastened to the woods - I was to come to him quickly. It would be a shame if he were slain." Now she told him and gave him signs that
he was still alive. She took off Erec's helmet; then he could be rightly recognized. Right gladly he looked at him. With good will he said: "Be thou welcome, Lord, and tell me the whole story - what has happened?" Erec said: "Nothing has happened to me: I am otherwise sound, except for being wounded by you." Guivreiz was glad to hear that. He took off his helmet then. [7000] These two men embraced each other then and kissed each other with loyalty. Guivreiz stood ruing Erec's pain, which he got from the joust. As he lamented that, Erec said: "You should be silent about that and forget it. You have done nothing amiss with me. Whoever acts foolishly gets what he deserves. Since I, stupid man, got the ridiculous idea, greatly out of proportion, that I would defend a road strange to me and hold out against so many good knights, it served me right. My punishment was too small, since I all alone wanted the honor of defeating all of you, I should have suffered a stricter punishment." Then everyone ceased speaking. Guivreiz bowed to Lady Enite and bid her welcome. The queen thanked him graciously. Now when they were well aware that he was not in danger of his life, everyone was joyful.

[7030] They mounted up then and rode a short distance. Guivreiz the lord led them out of the way in a lighthearted manner to a grassy meadow. Because of Lord Erec they remained there the night to rest up after his injury. They put everything in order, in the place that they had, with very good fire. It was very luxurious for them there. There was forest enough to put some of it on the fire.

When they had sat down there and forgotten a little of the troublesome tasks and Erec had told what sorrows he had suffered since
he had ridden away from Guivreiz, when they were both wounded by each other at the same time (I haven't been silent about that very event - I have told you as much as I knew) - these dear guests made much ado and thanked God grandly that Erec still lived. For often his life hovered in such peril, as if on a sea wave a shipwrecked man had come ashore on a plank; often he had experienced a precarious existence just like that. Now God in his mercy had sent him away from the waves of trouble, so that he won over all of his sorrow, and now he sat there full of joy. May God help him further, he has certainly done well so far.

[7078] Now it was time to sleep. Then the knights went together to spy out which place would be the most fitting for bedding down. When they went looking, they saw three beeches standing to one side of the fire. Wide and well-shaped, each the same height with copious clumps of leaves and broad branches. Our dear guests bedded under these. Under one especially Erec and Enite lay, who for a long time had not lain together or slept or eaten as companions. The unendurable enmity had come to an end, and they chose a better life. The host they bedded under the next tree, which stood in the middle close by, the knights under the third. 'Now tell us, what sort of blankets did they have?' In truth, the same as the forest has, beautiful leaves and clean grass, the best that there was in the woods. What use is long questioning, since they lay there?

Night came to a sweet end. As day arrived for them, they rode away from there. The little man, Guivreiz their host led them to better quarters, to one of his castles where he knew how to care for their
complete comfort. That very castle was full of all good things, just as I am going to tell you.

It stood in the middle of a lake; it gave him enough and then some of the best fish that ever decked a king's table, wherever one thought about. There was also the best hunting that we have ever been told of. The king had encompassed the lake with a wall two miles around or more. No gate led out from there except towards the lake. That same woods was also divided equally into three parts with walls. One of those three parts had plenty of red deer; the second had wild boars. Do you want to know what was in the third part? There was nothing but small game, foxes, hares, and the like. This hunting spot was well-stocked, and no man who truly wanted to hunt could ever claim he could find no game. The host had also well provided the hunting lodge with dogs that did man's will. And whenever someone looked out of vantage points to see how the dogs ran, even though he was inside, he saw everything just as well as those who ran with them. And who would deny someone the opportunity of watching the hounds run from the house in the company of the ladies? And at whatever time the red deer sprang to action, his last trip was always to the water in the lake, and he ran nowhere else except below the castle. And whenever someone was in the mood to hunt boars or bears, he would find plenty of stout, broad spears. And if he wanted to hunt hares, as you have heard before, he would find hare-hunting dogs to his heart's content. Now hunt whatever you wish! Here are hounds and game and what is required for hunting, nets and good weapons, and whatever else your heart desires. It was pleasant to spend time here.
This castle was called Penefrec, where one found no lack, and fish and venison in complete abundance, and both wheat cakes and wine. Whatever else there should be, there was little lack of that. For that reason the host had brought his worthy guest to rest, for it was his intention that he would nurse him back to health there with his wife. Also, there was a good supply of blankets. As a reward for his virtue, Erec was well-honored and cared for there, he and the queen. Who was to be his doctor now, to heal his wounds? For that, there were found two women, wealthy, noble, two of the king's sisters. They were joyful and cheerful in heart that he had ridden to them thus, so that he had to be taken into their care. The doctors were well-suited to him. They healed his wounds, since they well knew how. Also, good Lady Enite cared for him in loyal fashion. Because of that, his side healed splendidly and well. They had some of the plasters that Morgan le Fay made with her own hand, of which I have told you before. Lady Guinevere sent a portion of these to them as a gift. That was this man's cure.

[7232] King Erec stayed at castle Penefrec until he got better and his wounds healed; a good fourteen days. When his body's strength had fully returned, he thought again of the journey. However good the accommodations were there, it grieved him to be there. That virtuous man soon thought that it was as if he were in a forest without cover, alone, where wind and rain severely distressed this true knight. That came from the frame of mind that nothing in the world pleased him so much as knighthood, and he had to practice it with his own hand to the utmost. He had chosen this type of life, with that everything was easily made better, it was his sleep and his food. As a matter of fact,
the fourteen days seemed to him as many years. He no longer to sojourn
there, and would have ridden away sooner, if he could have.

[7263] Poor Lady Enite! What is this beautiful, well-born lady
going to ride now? She lost her horse when Count Oringles was slain at
Limors, as you heard about earlier, when she and Erec fled in great
haste. Since she lost it, she should have a replacement. She will have
to be compensated when they replace it for her, so that she will have no
grounds to complain with one that, as I will tell you, no one has seen
or owned one more beautiful. The king's two sisters gave it to her and
were quite pleased that she took it from them pleasantly, and it was
truly seemly for her.

Does someone ask if it were more beautiful than the one she had
ridden before? There is no comparison between them. Here is how it was
well-Adorned: It was multi-colored - the entire left side was white as
white could be, and it reflected back so beautifully that it dazzled the
eye. No one could look at it directly for very long, as my source told
me. Now they had concentrated all of their skill on the other side with
the complete opposite effect. This left side was so completely white
(the one I'm telling you about now) as the other was black where the
white part ended. It was both black and white. This multi-colored work
was marvelously different. Between the two colors was a band a
half-finger wide that was as green and shining as grass. It began on
the muzzle and ran between the ears like a paint-brush stroke very
evenly over the mane, towards the back to the hindquarters all the way
to the end of the horse. On the underside of the horse it ran the same
way, as is fitting. It was a marvelous thing. Around every eye went a
ring of the same color, it is true. It's hair was soft and curly, it hung down and was caught up in such a way that it was the right length - not too long - it didn't quite hang down to the knees. The tuft (of mane) that hung forward on the head was long, half black, half white as if the green band separated it. The tail was just the same.

I have told you how the palfrey looked - if it were different in anyway, you would have been told. It was pleasing in every way; neither too small, or too tall, neither too short, nor too long, neither too fat nor too thin. Its lean head carried it high as was fitting, with ears jutting out that were not long; one was black and the other white. The black one had a white ring around it; a black ring went around the white ear. Its neck was thick and held aloft, curved just the right amount, thin where it joined the head, so that it would have made you glad; strong and wide at the chest, with slender legs not too large, not too small - they were lean and smooth, as a proper animal should be. It had short fetlocks (since I must praise them) and high hooves. They were completely as they should have been; all were black. And even if a stable-boy never curried [7365] him, he would still be lovely and sleek. Thus, such was the case that he was so well crafted that if a worldly wise man who was capable of all things were to sit for eight whole years, and contemplate in his mind a beautiful and excellent palfrey, forgetting no detail, he would not be able to imagine a better one. That's how he was. And if he had the power of wishing anything into existence, whatever it was he thought about, so that it stood before him, and by his power was able to remove whatever was unseemly in it, the real one was so complete that he wouldn't have come within a hair's
breadth of it. Were someone to say "He's not telling the truth," I will clarify the tale better, so that he would rightly perceive that this story is not false.

[7393] The palfrey was not raised locally. I will tell you how it got there. The host himself had taken him from a wild dwarf in front of a mountain cave when he rode on his customary adventures in the forest. He had tied him securely to a branch and had left. Then this man (the host) found him and untied him from the branch. And when the dwarf returned and couldn't find the horse at the tree where he had tied him, great was his distress. And when he saw the horse in the care of a stranger, then manifold were his shrieks and cries, and the value of the palfrey to him became evident. He wailed deeply in great distress. The dwarf offered him three thousand marks of gold to get him back. But whatever the dwarf offered him as a guarantee, his wealth was not needed by the host. So he led the horse away from there. Now the little man raised such a great cry of dismay that the mountain echoed it back to him.

[7426] About the saddle that was on the horse - whoever were to weigh it up in gold, his scales would never even balance. I won't say anything more about the host, or else the tale would be too long, except the horse was too small for a grown man. And when he had brought it out of the woods to Penefrec, he gave it to those he thought about, his two sisters. In that it was very apparent that he loved them. For the horse trod softly and swiftly, and I will tell you just how. Wherever it set its hooves to the ground, it did so so quietly that no one was the wiser or could at any time hear the hoofbeat. Whoever sat upon it,
I tell you truly, it was as if he were hovering (in mid-air). But because it is not right and even a bit unseemly to speak too much about such a horse (and I want to leave it be), I could tell marvellous things about him, but I want to be silent about further praise. But say what one will, you could say many things and speak your mind, but such a good horse never came into any man's care. What else should I tell you about it?

[7462] As the master told us, a woman's saddle was laid on the palfrey on which was much masterful workmanship. The most talented man whoever practiced saddle-working worked on it many a day - a mastercraftsman called Umbriz, who put all of his skill into it for a good three and a half years, until he completed it to his satisfaction. If I were to tell you rightly about this saddle, how it was made, it would be too difficult for, as it were, a simple-minded boy. And if I could tell you rightly now, it would take one mouth too long to say it. And it also annoys me that I have never seen the saddle. But since he from whom I got the story backs me up, I want to let you know as briefly as I can a little bit of how it was made, as I read about it in a book.

"Now be silent, dear Hartmann, and see if I can guess".
"I will. Now speak quickly."
"I must think about it first."
"Now do it quickly. I'm in a hurry."
"Don't you think I am a wise man?"
"Of course! Now for God's sake, speak on."
"I want to tell this story."
"I will allow you to be silent about the rest."
"It was of good hornbeam."
"Yes. And what else might it be?"
"Oberlaid with light gold."
"Who could have told you rightly?"
"Very stoutly bound together."
"You have discovered the truth."
"On it was a scarlet cloth."
"You are making me laugh."
"You see that I can guess it correctly."
"Yes, you are a worldly-wise man."
"You speak as if in jest."
"Woe, it isn't so, for God's sake."
"But you are looking scornful."
"I enjoy smiling all the time."
"So did I guess it correctly?"
"I'm afraid so."
"Have I forgotten something, perhaps?"
"You obviously don't know what you are talking about today."
"Am I not correct?"
"Not even so much as a hair's breadth."
"Have I spoken falsely?"

"No, your childish thoughts deceived you. You should have let me tell it. There wasn't a grain of truth in it - it wasn't made of wood at all. It was made of ivory and precious stones, and also of the best gold that ever could be, purified in the fire; nothing impure was in it.
With these three materials the master craftsman worked the saddle with consummate skill. He made the ivory and precious stones into a pleasing arrangement, as his ability bade him. On it he inlaid gold in a special way which held the work together. On this saddle was engraved the long Poem of Troy. At the beginning was graven how Troy was founded, how it was defeated and how it was destroyed. One could hear that told on the saddle. On the other side was graven how the cunning lord Aeneas fled across the sea, and how he came to Carthage, and how the wealthy lady Dido took him in her care, and how he very cruelly left her, and performed nothing of what he promised - thus was the lady betrayed. On the back part of the saddle bow, on half of it was engraved her great grieving, and how she sent him messages, however little she could change things. Especially there were things he performed which would become legendary from that time to this - how he defeated Laurente. That would take too long to tell how he brought it into his power. On the other half there stood how he took Lady Lavinia as wife, and how powerful Lord Aeneas was in that country without any misfortune until the end of his life.

[7582] In addition the saddle was covered with a smooth cloth, the best there could be of silk and gold. The covering was just the right length, it swung down almost to the ground. On it stood all the wonders of the world without exception and all that spanned the heavens. And if it won't be tedious for you, I'll tell you a bit more and leave much more unsaid. The four elements stood there gleaming in their own special colors, and in each of them all that is ruled by them - this was also very cleverly done. Of the four elements, the earth stood there
with its beasts, whatever any man could recognize in woods or in the field, tame or wild. There were human beings, inworked with such skill that it seemed they could speak - contrary to what pictures normally do. By them hovered the sea, in it were fish and all manner of marvellous sea-creatures, and whatever lives at the sea-bottom. If someone could name them for me, I would gladly learn them and be able to call their names. So seek you a man who can name them for you - if you can't find him (which is quite likely) then follow my advice and get up quickly and go to the sea yourself. You will find a multitude of creatures in it. Go stand on the shore and bid them come to you on the sand. Thus, they would be made known to you. If that doesn't work (which is highly probable) then seek the sea-bottom yourself. Then you would know to you great harm and little success. Now I advise my friends all, that they leave curiosity be and remain here at home. Whatever a man can right easily pay for and never enjoy all day long - leave that be, my friends.

[7642] There was the third category on the saddle. Do you ask what that is? The air in its manifestations. All manner of birds flew in it, woven with such skill that they seemed alive, as if they would fly right off into the sky. The fire with its dragons and other things that must live in fire - one saw these hovering in it. The end of it was fastened by a band which went all the way down to the ground: it was as wide as a hand, inlaid with precious stones. The covering was rich enough. On it was Jupiter and the goddess Juno sitting side by side in their rich glory. As much as I want to tell you about this saddle covering, my words only compare to it as the moon does to the sun. You should believe that I am telling you the truth. The stirrups were both
good and well-made, wide gold rings in the form of two dragons. The hands of the goldsmith could make these very well when he turned his skill to the task. The dragons' tails twisted all the way to their mouths; their wings stood as if they were in flight, their eyes were stones - four small hyacinths. What were the saddle girts and stirrup leather like? You would have to see them before you would know what to say about them, if they were shot through with gold or undergirded with silk. If it were cloth-of-gold, you wouldn't be able to tell either from a picture or if you grasped it in your hand - it would always be unknown to you. The clasps were of silver. Why was this? That is so one could distinguish it clearly from the gold. The underside was excellent - not calf's leather, as were many that I have seen. No one could discern leather so much as a nail's breadth on it. It was excellent and well-made, seemly and it fit the saddle exactly, in a completely praiseworthy fashion. It was as soft as cotton, so as not to injure the horse. If one were to look at the front of the saddle, he would see it thickly sown with an excellent picture. On it was sown how Thisbe and Piramus, overcome by love, left their senses and came to a tragic end when they came to the fountain. Where the reins should be there was gold netting, fashioned of gold wire, sturdy and strong, spread all the way to the hind quarters. Many precious stones were inlaid on it where the threads joined, where the cross-stitching came together. On every knob a ruby was set in a lapis lazuli setting. The stones on it glistened on all sides, full of brilliant color.

[7730] The horse's chest-strap was good and fitting, strong and was well-made, a band of two-fingers breadth all the way to the reins which
controlled the horse. On it were inlaid the eleven precious stones in a beautiful fashion. The twelfth one was by itself in front on the bridle on a broad orb which hung under the forelock against the horse's head. It was a brilliant carbuncle; one can behold its usefulness (since it contains such light) that if one were riding on a dark night you could see by it. The other eleven were inlaid on the chest-strap, on either side of which were hung beautiful golden bells, which one could hear from a long way off. The saddle was made in this fashion and better even than I can imagine. If the complete story were told, it was simply more beautiful than any other riding equipment, because on it was truly the most beautiful woman who ever lived, noble Lady Enite.

[7767] Now it was time for them to ride, for the horses had arrived. Have they taken their leave from the King's retinue? From children and from the King's sisters alike? One would have to firmly agree that in no other women either before or since could one see all manner of good such as they had. They were well-bred. These ladies have such breeding that one would rightly think them in the forefront wherever good women are chosen. In whatever ways a woman should serve to well please both God and the world, that they did without falsity, my Lady Filledamur and her sister Genteflur.

[7788] Now they rode away from there, Enite and the two men, Erec and the host himself. The horse trod the road so softly that Lady Enite had never experienced a more comfortable time. He glided so evenly, just like the wind, causing a ship to sail peacefully. They thought to ride quickly to Britain, to the country of King Arthur. At that time they didn't know in which of his castles they would be sure to find him.
Then King Guivreiz said when he began riding: "We will find him at Karidol or perhaps at Tintagel." So they rode according to their belief, but without certainty until around mid-day. Their horses carried them to a beautiful heath at a fork in the path. They didn't know which one led to the country of Britain. They missed the right road, they took the better made one and when they had ridden a good five miles, they saw standing before them a large and well-made castle. And when Guivreiz had seen it, he became extremely distressed and cursed profusely the fact that they had come there. "Now, tell me why?" I know quite well and I will tell it the way I should. Now is not the right time. How impatient you are. Who should get ahead of his own story? I won't be silent about how the castle was built. Listen to the tale.

[7834] The castle was excellent. As is recorded in the tale, it was twelve hides in extent. It was made of smooth, round stone with no bulges, just as if they had been turned on a lathe, as well constructed as one could wish, as if it had grown out of the earth already polished. The hill was enclosed by a wall that was high and thick. Inside a knightly scene adorned it. Towers made of large quarry stones soared from the battlements. These stones were not bound together by a sandy plaster, but were tightly joined with iron and lead by three and three set together. In between this it did not lack timber. There the castle-dwellers lived in their high worthiness. The castle was replete with towers; there were thirty in all. Thus, was the castle divided into four sections. The towers were adorned with knobs of red gold on top, which gleamed in the country from afar. In that way a stranger who
happened to be travelling there would know when he saw the gleam from afar during the day that he had not gone astray in his journey. A river flowed beneath the castle. Its waterfall made a great noise because the water fell over a cliff. That valley was very deep; whoever would sit on the pinnacle and look down into the valley from the cliff would think he was gazing into hell; dizziness would quickly seize him so that he would flee the edge. On the other side that a man might ride to there was a pleasant place, well-timbered, half of which went down to the water; the other half enclosed the orchard both large and beautiful—neither before nor since was a more beautiful one seen. I heard the story-teller confirm this.

[7894] When Erec saw the castle, he spoke to his companions, asking that they tell him its name if they recognized it. Thus Guivreiz answered him. "I recognize it—we have ridden far away from our path. May God confound it! Every time I have ridden this way it has gone ill for me: I have made a serious mistake, as is evident by that dark wall." He said, "The land of Britain lies far away from here—let us turn around quickly. I will bring you to the path again.

King Erec said, "My noble sir, how is it fitting for us that we ride away in such fashion? Since we are so close to the castle I want to see it. This must be so. This dwelling is so wonderful and beautiful that I can tell it would certainly be worth a look inside to see if there are any ladies present. I want to look through the house. You should allow me this."

"It grieves me that I should grant you this. Woe to you if you should go through it."
"What do you mean, King Guivreiz?"

"I mean nothing but what I know."

"For God's sake, tell me what it is."

"Let's turn around. It would be better for us thus."

"I am baffled by your attitude."

"It would soon become clear to you, and you wouldn't be able to get out."

"I must certainly search this out. It couldn't be anything worse than death."

"You would so quickly come to grief that your friends would not be able to rescue you."

"Would you please tell me now, for God's sake? I am mystified by what it could be."

"For my friendship's sake, let it be. I always serve it as I should."

"It does not appear seemly to me that you should have the notion I would forego this journey because of fear. There is no peril that you can refuse to let me know about. And then if you were still of the mind that I should desist, let me be the judge of it myself."

"Noble King," said Guivreiz, "I will tell you as best I know how: the peril is not small: And on the basis of the promise your mouth has spoken, that you will drop the idea of this journey, I will let you know."

"This dwelling is called Brandigan, and many a good knight has come here on account of his bravery. They have all won grief and shame, (even) the best of all lands. For a long time now none has ever
succeeded, for all alike have been tragically slain here. What more need be said? I must needs kneel at your feet, so that you may turn back at my advice. An adventure in this place would win such things that it greatly troubles my mind, it would surely go the same for you as it has for all the others whoever came here before."

[7981] Erec immediately answered thus, "If I were a coward and had misgivings, this conversation would be at an end, and thus I would turn back. Will you let me find out what it is? What is its name? I would be ever ashamed if I feared something I didn't know anything about. Now why did you do it, being silent for so long and not telling me the whole of it? For whatever should happen to me because of it, of a certainty I will not go from here until I know the end of the tale."

Then King Guivreiz said: "I will now let you know what the mystery is all about, and how things rightly stand, since you won't listen to reason. It is called Joie de la Court." These words are unknown to us Germans: for that reason I will translate them—they mean Joy of the Court. He also spoke further to him: He said "Can you wait? Do you see the orchard that lies beneath the castle? Many a time a knight lies in wait in the midst of it. I will tell you how it goes with them. Whoever should stumble onto this place by right has got to fight him (the knight); the owner is his uncle. Apparently his equal in strength and manhood does not live anywhere in the kingdom. Whatever knight that has ridden against him wanting to fight him he has slain: No one is able to withstand him. Now turn back for the sake of my love."

At that point King Erec sprang on to the road, laughing. "Well now, noble knight! Is it only one man who stands to profit from it, it's
still a good prospect. Why do you make it such a big thing? Is he either a mountain or the size of a mountain that one should fear him so? I thought the house must be full of dragons and wild beasts who would quickly slay us defenseless ones [8040] if we went there. I still have plans for my life, if he doesn't allow this, or if God wills it, it will be proved in combat. If he slays me, then I will be dead: that is small peril in this world."

Guivrez, the good king, realized that Erec would continue on his way and no one could hinder him. This troubled him greatly. From the point that Erec had first noticed the castle, no argument could dissuade him from riding up to it.

They made their way then. And when King Erec, with his beautiful wife, rode to Brandigan to hazard his life, he saw a place there that was full of much joy, dancing and all types of pastimes seemly to young people. And when he came riding up, and they saw the lovely Enite, and after her the two men, they looked at the lady and the men said that they had never seen until then such a beautiful woman, and dressed so nicely, riding such an excellent and well-decked out horse. (But) quickly joy vanished among both the men and the women and they began to lament bitterly both the beautiful lady and that such a brave knight would certainly lose his life. They said "Bountiful Lord God, why did you command such a well-favored man to be created? It would have been more merciful to have prevented his making this tragic journey so that he would never have come here. For here he will be slain. Woe to you, poor woman! Well would you bewail your life if you knew what is to happen here. How your bright eyes would change to sorrow that you
should stand here so lightheartedly and without care; and your red mouth
the people here are smiling at now! And your sunny mood would change to
sorrow when you lose your husband." All of them said this. They did
not say this aloud, but murmured it, so that he would not be able to
perceive it. There was plenty of talk about it. Many women beat their
breasts; the others wept bitterly. Noble Erec knew what they were
thinking but didn't act as if he knew anything. Erec the determined one
thought joyful thoughts, as the brave ones should who are not easily
dissuaded. He thought no cowardly thoughts. He paid no attention to
the ominous murmurrings of thw women even as he paid no mind to his
dreams. He was not moved by weather omens, and it was all the same to
him if an owl or a hawk flew over his path of a morning. He also did
not employ fire augury or any such magic art. It was nothing to him if
the lines in his hand were narrow or far apart and he practiced no
arcane art. He was such a determined man whatever discomfitted the
people about him, did not alter his manly firmness one hair's breadth;
he treated it as a joke. He thought "As long as God has me in his care,
nothing may go wrong: and if he will not bide with me, then I will die
at this time, and my body will decay." His heart was free of care. He
rode towards them now and greeted them smiling. At this point he struck
up a cheerful song but the people murmured "Apparently you don't realise
what is going to happen to you here. Sadly, your cheerful song will
come to a mournful end: That will happen this very morning. If you and
your lady knew how short your joyful life will be, you would let the
singing be."
Then the courageous man rode from them towards Brandigan castle. There he was received properly and shown respect. The master went towards him along way from the castle gate. He and the castle dwellers saluted him. He was pleasant but heavy of mood towards his guests. He feared greatly his (Erec's) life would be taken. Other than that he was welcomed. It was plain to see that the two men and the woman were well received. Then there was a celebration.

When these worthy guests sat at the feast the host and the castle dwellers whiled away the hours for them as best they could with so many entertainments that they shouldn't be bored. After a while he asked if they wanted to see the ladies. This question pleased them greatly. Then he led them, the lady and the two men, to a stairway, if the master (source) does not lie – into a beautiful palace. The goddess Pallas (Athena) had she reigned here on earth would not have had a nicer chamber. It would have been good enough for her, had she been provided with such a dwelling. It was richly adorned, spiral not angular, of noble and pristine marble. The gleam which came from the marble as pleasing to the eye as one could wish, was yellow, green, brown, red, black, white, and blue. This multicolored glistening was so even and so pure, that it glistened like a glass made with clever art. Here were sitting the kind of women one would wish for: How could one describe them to you in such a way that you would still believe it? One could not see such a wonderful company anywhere else. There were eighty ladies, all dressed alike. They were clothed in garb richly fashioned, costly, but somber. In this way they made apparent that they were heavy of heart for some reason. One seldom saw them smile. Their skirts and
coverings were of black samite. Neither their arms nor their sides remained unbound. As I have been told they did not suffer from high spirits or pride. Their heads were bound, not as well as might be, with wimples that were white. No other workmanship was to be seen, they were just plain and smooth, without the glitter of gold.

When the guests went in, these ladies received them in a better fashion than they actually felt as many people do when they don't want to burden others with their sorrow if they can help it. The host went in to sit with them, and the guests Erec and Lady Enite sat with Guivreiz, there beside them. He let his eyes traverse the lot of them. He thought the first lovely, the second by her more lovely still. The third outshone her; the fourth was lovelier of form. The fifth was most praiseworthy, until he saw the sixth. The seventh outstripped all of these completely, until he saw the eighth. He thought the ninth was crownworthy; the tenth a still more beautiful work of God. The eleventh would have been to his taste, if he had left the twelfth go; the thirteenth would have been complete had he not seen the fourteenth. The fifteenth was a dream, but the sixteenth was a bit prettier by comparison. But he would rather look at the seventeenth that was sitting there. The eighteenth pleased him more than all the others, until he saw the nineteenth, but the twentieth pleased him most of all. Who could describe them all? The least lovely of all ladies would have graced a whole kingdom with her beauty.

When he had seen the entire wonderful company he thought to himself "Bountiful God the good, now I know why you are rightly called the very wonderful God, since your power and command has placed so many women in
such a small place, that many a wide land known to you would have been graced by them: So you have poured out much joy." He thanked him silently. Meanwhile the host told the ladies the recent tidings of why the guest had come there with his wife. When the ladies learned of this their sorrow increased more than ever. If any one had seen a joyful face that was changed completely. The blood left their cheeks: Nose and cheeks went pale, the (news) made their eyes rain tears.

Now Erec the warrior did not know what was happening here, that of which Guivreiz had spoken. He said "Can you make known why those noble ladies bemoan their lives so?" "They were the wives of the knights that were slain here. What more could I have told you to make you forego this journey? In such wise the lovely Lady Enite will have to remain here, should the fight go against you."

Now the ladies' grief moved Erec so much, since his life was much in the grip of joy that their youth was so given over to grief: for because of their loyalty, their sorrow was as new as when they first began (to mourn). For a while they stood motionless, looking at the sorrowing ones with mournful eyes and bemoaned their pleasant life and grieved that his wife should have to remain here: that would certainly be unthinkable. "May God forfend, that I should ever be in such peril that I would have to leave my wife here in this joyless company forever - May I live through it! Here both guests traded sorrowful looks, for they suffered much woe because of the ladies.

It was now time to go. The host led them to dinner. They were served in every sense of the word service - nothing was forgotten. They ate to satisfaction and then sat down and talked all around. The king
of the land asked them if there was any notable things that happened on their way. The guests then told him everything strange that had happened. Erec also said to the host "Noble Lord and host, people here and far told me of the manifold wonders and honor of this house. I won't ask any more now, since I have seen it myself and must rightly agree that they have spoken the truth. There are also tales told that there is adventure here with high stakes concerning a good knight. Now I would like to know fully what this is all about; please make this known to me, noble host!"

The king remained silent for a time; his head quickly sank, and he sat for a time in sorrow. That was because of his loyalty, and certainly because of his uprightness the guest's question grieved him: for he had perceived earlier that he had come here guesting for adventure. That put him in a heavy mood, and he thought of all manner of ways he could come up with advice so that he (Erec) would not lose his life and to put him in the right mood that was fitting for both of them. He finally spoke to him in the measured fashion "Lord, I will advise you well, as I should to a guest, the dearest that I ever had, for your own good after this let that question go and let this adventure go completely from your memory. It is late in the day and now a good twelve years since a great misfortune happened, as I tell you truly: We've both seen so many other things that we can while away the hours with; let's talk of other things."

Erec answered him as a fearless man whose heart is steadfast and harder than adamant. As is said of such strength, it is as if a diamond were laid between two mountains of steel (how much more amazing could
this be?) They would be worn down smaller before you would notice any such decrease of the stone. In such a manner his dashing mood was always there; so that only the blood of fighting could weaken this stone, thus not even the death blow could force his mind to cowardice. He began to smile at the tale. He said, "Whatever the things are that I dare not ask about, they must be truly gruesome. I have asked, so that it won't happen that I in any way would fail to win a reward for coming all the way here. For it would certainly be boring, whenever both men and women would ask me all about it, and I would be able to say nothing, even though I had been here: that would be false to my way of thinking."

Now the host believed that he was in earnest. He then let him know this tale, the whole thing that I have mentioned before the one his companion told him on the way, and if he (Guivreiz) had remained silent about anything, he told him the whole thing, and made it all clear. He said the orchard was enclosed, however open it looked. In it no one has any recourse to law except by hazarding life and honor. He said, "In there lives a knight with his lady-love, a knight so manly that with his strength he has slain all who would not refuse the foolish inclination of their heart; they looked for adventure. I tell you, whatever good knight comes here in that frame of mind seeks the gate, at his first words he finds it open: He may ride in or depart, the others remain outside. Then the gate swings shut. All speech must cease between both of them: there are no other arbiters. I don't know how it goes now: for a good half year or more no one has come, since he slew those knights which I can name. Indeed he slew three men here the best known
in any land. One was called Venegus, who refused nothing that was seemly for manhood. Opinaus who never fled, Libaut the third man, who won much praise previously. He was born a Wend. And they lost their lives, so you must try your luck, An it please you, I will give you the best advice, that you abstain from fighting. The strong man is like this, whoever he defeats, he strikes off their head. If you don't believe this, and want to see for yourself, the same will happen to you."

Then King Erec spoke, "I have always known the road of Fortune goes somewhere in the world, I haven't always rightly known where, but I ride seeking, in great uncertainty, until I have found it. God has done well to guide me here and I have found wonders to my heart's content which are little likely to upset the balance with one whack. I sought for it until this day: God be praised, now I've found it so that I may be able to weigh my penny against a thousand pounds. It is a lucky thing that I find such sport here. I will tell you the tale. I have perceived from you already that this man is a very manly warrior. His honor is widely known and known to be praiseworthy all over this land, for he has done wonders. In contrast, I have unfortunately not done these things and my honor is not so well-known, in the way a knight is known, to this date my hand has gained but little; I have been without praise until this day. For that reason I will gladly risk my weak honor, so that here I will either increase it until I stand complete in honor, or else it will all disappear. If God honors me by allowing me to defeat this man, then I will be honorable. And mark how unequal the contest is. It doesn't count for him one twelfth as much as it would for me. He sets it
against a false good, his gold against honor. He wouldn't gain very much by it to declare victory over me; it's happened to him frequently. I have also been warned: Let it be said to you indeed, if he is willing, I will stand against him." The host said, "Tell me, my lord, how could you be dearer to me than you are now? Let us sleep now, it it time. If we live till the morning, I will bring you to him if I may. But I advise you faithfully that you think better of it: that is my opinion, for if you go inside there, I would rue it dreadfully: for we would never see each other again. That would be the end of you."

"Lord, as God wills," said Knight Erec. At that point they all left to sleep in their chambers. It was well appointed with rich bed-coverings and other things. It was well hung with tapestries. The inlays were of rich gold. The pavement was spread with good rugs, as the wealth of the host could well supply and befitting his honor: for he was lord of that land, called King Ivreins. He commanded the chambermaids to serve them, as one ought to do for wealthy kings. Thus were these three guests well honored. Guivreiz the king lay in a nearby chamber and he was well served.

Erec and Lady Enite had a good time as they lay together and made love until the morning appeared. His heart was not completely free of human cares: for he wouldn't be completely a man who didn't fear, he would be a fool. Never was a heart so bold that it was unseemly for it to rightly fear. However, apprehensive a man may be when his life hangs in the balance, a man who is a coward is free from this kind of fear. His heart was free from this cowardly fear.
Since it was the day of his battle, he did as the wise do, for there was reason to fear. He got up very early. He came with Lady Enite to hear the Mass of the Holy Spirit, and petitioned God eagerly that he would preserve his life. His wife asked the same. He availed himself of the sacrament as a knight should who is to ride to do battle with a worthy opponent. After the mass, he left. Breakfast was ready now, with great service, all which he avoided, he didn't gobble his food. He dined on three bites of chicken, then he decided he had had enough. They brought him a drink and he drank the health of St. John. Our hero (the warrior) quickly weaponed himself and made ready as is proper, just as if he intended to ride into the orchard. Lady Enite's sorrow was now greater than it ever had been; tears flowed like rain from her eyes. Now the place was full of chatter: the people all knew well, as you know from before, that a knight would go there who had made known he wished to withstand the one in the orchard. For that King Ivreins of Brandigan had to wait. His fellow castle dwellers had no desire to wait behind him; the castle was emptied of people, except for the sorrowful train of women who remained there in entirety, for they already felt such sorrow that they were loath to see anything else that would grieve them more. It was their greatest distress that Death did not concern itself with them.

Now all the streets and roofs were full of people who greeted him as he rode by. Erec rode right in the middle of that castle street that would lead him to the orchard. Now he heard mistrust-a-plenty and people falling silent. The people did not wish him well, or a light peril, for they knew it was certain death for him. And if he were ever
going to quail before strong and sure peril, he, would have done so now. He treated it as a game and paid little attention to it.

If the book does not lie this was how the [8700] orchard stood, on a way that would make us wonder greatly, both wise and foolish. I tell you that around it neither wall nor ditch stood. No gate enclosed it, neither water nor hedge nor anything that one could see. Only a straight path led inside, and no man could ride inside except on one side at a very hidden place: there was a narrow path. Few of the people knew of it. Whoever reached that place and went in according to the tale, found what was seemly to him, an amazing collection of trees of all kinds, half of them barren of any fruit, and the other half had wonderful blossoms. His mood was also gladdened by the sweet singing of birds, and the ground itself was not bare so much as a hand's breadth, but was strewn with flowers of every color that gave out a sweet smell.

[8729] Even the air itself was good, what with the fruit and the blossoms and the bird chorus, which went on all the time. It was such a sight that whoever was sunk in melancholy and went there, would forget it on the spot. Of the fruit one could eat however many or whatever kind he would, but he was required to leave the rest of them behind. It was arranged so that no one could take any of it away. Would you like to hear how the orchard was so well protected? I know right well that few men would have the courage to do what was done at this time. One saw a cloud hovering there that no one was able to pass through, except in the way you already know.

Now the host rode in front of him through the hidden gate to show him the spot where the knight was, just as Erec had asked him. The
crowd remained outside, except Enite and Lord Guivreiz who had to ride
along; their company consisted of these four only. They quickly came to
the place where everyone agreed it was very strange. Here a wide ring
of oaken poles had been planted. Erec was amazed. Every single one was
adorned with a man's head on top. But one was bare! Why was that? A
large horn hung on it.

Erec asked why that was. "It would be better if you didn't know,"
said the host to the guest, "it would make you rue sorely that you had
ever come here. You will have erred in your way. Now see the truth for
yourself, that I haven't spoken wrongly. If you still don't believe it,
look, these are the heads that the knight struck off. And I will tell
you another thing: the place that stands empty, that is meant for you,
your head is supposed to go up there. If this doesn't happen to you or
any other man whom this knight has defeated (which couldn't happen - it
has waited there many a day) he is supposed to blow this horn three
times loudly (that is what it is meant for), thus signifying that he has
won. The honor would be permanent, and would be renown among all
countries and all men. But what is the use of talking about it? It
isn't going to happen. I believe there isn't a man born who could blow
this horn. All knights that have come previously have been useless
against him. Since you won't leave off this thing, noble knight, God be
thy shield and have mercy on your soul: No one will be able to help
you, it will be the end of your life."

The lovely wife then recognized this danger and felt such great
unease. Thus was her heart stripped of love and joy, if not actually
broken. Her strength failed and she turned pale, as pale as death and
in sorrowful distress. Bright day was as night to her for she neither heard nor saw. Her bearing spoke of her heart's dismay, as if it would never live again. The host and her lord refreshed her and shared her sadness.

When she was able to see again and came to her senses again, Erec said very manfully "Lady, dispense with your sorrow, my sweet Enite. Your weeping ill becomes you. What is the use of such dismay? Am I wounded or dead? I stand before you in perfect health. You may hesitate at the time you see me covered with blood, or my shield hacked to pieces or my helmet cloven asunder and me dead under them. You will have plenty of time then. Now there is going to be a battle here. We have no knowledge of who the victor will be just now. I have also heard that God is the same as he ever was. And how often he has saved those to whom he wished to show mercy. If he so wills, then I will surely be saved. Your weeping [8860] grieves me, and if you knew how things stood with me, you wouldn't lament so: for I tell you truly, if I only had as much as a hairsbreadth of manhood of that that I got from you, nothing would ever go amiss for me. Whenever I am reminded of you, my hand has the joy of victory, for your good love strengthens my will, so that nothing may go against me the whole day long."

At this point he had to take leave of his two companions and ride further alone. His departure deeply distressed them and they were in a sorrowful mood, Enite and the king, about Lord Erec. The host stretched out his hand and pointed with a stick to a path that he found: it was grassy and not very wide. They all remained: he rode alone. I don't know how he dealt with it: there was no knight more comfortless than
he: he went on an anguish journey. His companions were grieved because of it. Now may God's power preserve his life! His wife helped by praying for his victory to God.

Here King Erec rode forward along the grassy path the length of three horse's gallops, through the flowers and the birdsong into an orchard. He now saw there in front of him a pavilion, richly woven, both high and wide, of two types of samite, striped black and white, and painted very skillfully. Both men and women were woven into it, and birds, just as if they were flying; (But it was only an appearance), wild animals and tame of every kind pictured in gold. Where the top should be there was a well-wrought eagle, shot through with gold. Its wings were spread over the grass. The pavilion was honorable and useful. This canopy's binding ropes were all of silk, and of not just one color, but red, green, white, yellow, and brown. Under it was sitting a woman that his heart told him he had never seen one more beautiful in all his life, except for his wife Enite. Everyone would have to agree that her beauty would be prized above that of all other women who came before or would follow. If Enite was Desire's child, then nothing was lacking in her. The lady who sat there was very beautifully dressed. She was wearing a long ermine mantle - she was swathed in it. The top was rich samite, colored like brown glass, well wrapped in sable for the hands. A wimple bound her hair. What was her dress like? You would have to ask her clothier; I never saw it, God knows, for I didn't go to see her often. Erec couldn't see it either - that was because the coat completely wrapped her all around. The bed she was sitting on was
well made; the posts were large and of silver, and they shone with a well-polished glow.

When he saw her sitting on it in a well-bred manner the guest dismounted. He tied his horse to a branch. On the trunk he laid both shield and spear. He unbound his helmet and laid it on the rim of his shield. His head was bare of any covering, since he was well-bred. Thus he went and stood before her. She would rather he hadn't, for she feared conflict. But she greeted the lord and didn't allow the opportunity to go. She received him with these words: "Lord, I greet you well, since no one should offer another an ill-meant greeting. Except that you must receive shame and grief here, I would be glad to see you. On whose advice did you come here? Or did you do it from the pleasure of your own heart? If so you carry in your breast a disloyal giver of advice: for it has betrayed you your life. For God's sake, go from my presence. It will cost you your life if my lord sees you; he is not far away from us."

Before she had finished speaking and warning him, he heard a voice strong and grim, as loud as a blast from a horn: for the sound came from a very large throat. It was her husband. He had ridden away from her and was weaponed just as well as the guest so that nothing could harm him, (riding) through that orchard at his pleasure and waiting to see if he could find something to do. He saw at once this stranger standing before the lady. He thought that this was a foolish thing, and wished to humiliate him, and began to go to and fro in front of the stranger. Erec saw him ride a little way off. The lord of the orchard was very large and tall, almost a giant. He was about to make great
threats. His horse was large and very tall, and fiery red: his shield was the same color: so was his surcoat: and as I have read, he was red too, weaponed according to his mood. I think his heart must have bled when he found no one to fight; so deadly was his hand.

[9023] He now rode up to the stranger and greeted him curtly, just like a villain. "False knight, now tell me, who said you could go so close to the lady?"
"What have I done wrong there?"
"It is quite foolish."
"Why are you criticizing me?"
"You will learn soon enough."
"You speak of your prowess."
"Tell me, who brought you here?"
"Good friends."
"Now tell me, who?"
"My heart and my own will."
"Then you have been ill-advised by them."
"They have stood me in good stead thus far."
"That will stop here."
"No it won't!"
"For what purpose are you weaponed so?"
"Lord, that is my armour."
"Do you wish to fight me?"
"If you so wish, the I do as well."
"What are you thinking of, you stupid fool?"
"You'll see!"
"It will be a tragedy for you."

"Why don't you say, 'God willing'?"

"How dare you belittle my words so?"

"I pay no attention to your threats, and I compare them to two large mountains, that swore by their wits they would beget themselves a winsome child, one as large as they. But God decreed that it be the object of ridicule, and they bore a field mouse. Large castles are destroyed by little fires, and courage is often far from those who wish to act so grim. Well, we'll see about that. Before we part today the boast will be decided." "Yes, I am going to prove it to you," said the Red Knight. With these words Erec left him.

Very quickly he went back to where his horse had been left standing. He bound on his helmet and hastily made ready. He swiftly mounted his horse. The other man didn't neglect to do the same, he made ready in a similar fashion. Each one took his shield and bound it securely on. The host and the guest - their flanks really flew. They made no attempt to hide a grim anger. They spurred their horses on and rode at each other with all their might. Ashen shafts appeared for the fight - they were lowered and gripped tightly in the hands all the way to the fingernails. They both intended to unhorse each other, when they both met. The path of the spears held in front of them carried them both through the shield all the way to their hands. The strong shafts remained whole, for all that they were sorely tried. They both removed their spears in manly strength and rode away from each other. Both of them were just as eager to joust again. Their horses were strongly spurred on and sent in the direction of the other. Here arose the love
of the heart for strong victory. They loved without a bed; Love stood
to the challenge, whoever lay down would be dead. They kissed each
other with the shafts through the shields all the way to their chests,
with such love strength that the ashen shafts splintered all the way to
the hand-guard and the splinters smoked. With their burden of men, both
horses came together so violently that the 'battlefriends' were nearly
deafened, and the two horses bounced back and sat down on their
haunches. The reins were let go to fall down to the ground. Lord God,
now take care of King Erec. He is a steadfast warrior, full of manhood
and strength. For that reason I fear for him.

Now both of them loosed their swords from their sheaths and
brandished them in their hands. They came at each other over the edge
of the shield. They struck each other grim blows. They offered their
shields: they were splintered almost to the grip so that they couldn't
be carried away more stretched out in front of their arms and couldn't
serve as a defense any more. They cast them aside. Now their armour
shielded them from death. Fire flashed from the weapons when they met
each other. So many grim blows now happened that the world could well
wonder that helmet and sword withstood it all. It often happened that
the large man struck the smaller man back far away from him: But Erec
returned him in like fashion. They came at each other so often that
both flowers and grass were trodden down, so that they weren't any
greener than around mid-winter. This battle lasted from morning until
noon.

"Friend Hartmann, now tell us, how were their bodies strengthened?"
Their wives gave them the strength. They that were sitting there
strengthened their men, so that if either felt doubt, whenever they would look at their wives their beauty gave them new strength, so that he courageously regained his strength and fought as a revived man. He was unable to be cowardly. I will tell you about Erec. Whenever he thought about Enite, her love strengthened him both in heart and will, so that he fought with renewed strength in a manly fashion.

When they had carried on thus for a long time, and both still lived, the large man thought, 'It angers me that this little man is holding out so long against me.' He grimly grasped his battle sword and thought to fell his opponent. He swung the sword about in his hand, the mighty warrior nothing could move him to pity; his heart gave him plenty of mighty strength: he struck with singular will on Erec's helmet, so that it split the crest in two; so that the blow caused a bright flash of flame, just as when fire comes in contact with kindling. May God reward those who believe it, because I cannot swear to it. This grim blow struck Erec's head ringing, so that he became very pale and weak. His ears and eyes could not perform their duty, so that he neither heard nor saw. If the sword had not broken in two, it would have been the end of him. Quickly, the brave man won his strength back, so that he saw and felt and heard as before. He was pained by the injury and shame, that any man could have mastered him so. Though the mastery of his body had suffered great weakness, he was about to take revenge. Thoughts of his beautiful wife strengthened his body. He began to avenge his injury and grasped his sword grimly in both hands and fought for blood on the hard steel. Though the Red Knight appeared as a mountain against him, since his weapon had shattered, he had to protect himself against him
(Erec). He did so unashamedly. For I know this and nothing else so well, all would have been in vain for him if had not protected himself, even if his sword had been whole. He was soon met with strength by the guest. Erec completely avenged the great blow. He did not strike as before, his blows were grim, unlike the blows of cowards. He gave blow upon blow, so that one after another was struck. He struck the armour until the sword in his hand almost glowed, so that its edge soon dulled. Its brown color became pale and it broke as the other sword had done. Well, what else would you wish him to do? With the piece that remained in his hand, Erec threw him a blow that smote his chest so hard that the Red Knight was almost toppled, and almost fell headlong on the grass.

[9270] But the giant stood up again and noticed that Erec's hand was empty and his sword broken. "Now I shall be avenged," the Red Knight thought to himself. He wanted to fasten upon him as quickly as possible, lift him up and bash him with all the great strength he could summon up. But Erec, in his childhood in England, as the story goes, had learned to wrestle well and other handy things to his credit. It also helped that it is difficult to grasp a man in armor securely. Thus the Red Knight did not succeed; Erec slipped away from his grip, seized him by the belt, but kept himself just out of reach to keep the other man from drawing him close.

Erec demonstrated his strength. As the other man slipped down, he placed his shoulder over the chest of the other, so that he wasn't able to get up again. He pushed him away right smartly, and pulled on him again so quickly that the large man began to sink. He was so heavy he wasn't able to retrieve himself. He sought the ground. Here he enjoyed
honor, Erec the marvelous made it as difficult for him as he wanted. He
knocked him on the chest and gave him so many blows that the man that
lay under him wearied of life: He lost all of his strength.

As he began to despair, the large man asked him to give him a
little peace at least.

He said, "Knight, allow me to live a little while and then deal
with me as you like."

"Do you wish to yield to me now?"

"That cannot happen yet."

"What is it that you want then?"

"Noble Knight, stay there and tell me who you are."

"You have seldom seen such a thing, and it won't happen by me, for
that would truly be a miracle, that the victorious man should yield to
the vanquished. If you wish to live for a while, then follow good
counsel and tell me quickly who you are or where you are from, and
whatever else I may require of you."

The Red Knight answered him thus, "You are deceived by your words
for nothing can come of this even though you have defeated me and remain
over me forcefully, I would sooner be slain, than you should not tell me
who you are or what degree. Indeed if this shame has been caused by
such a man who has never won before I would sooner be dead. If a
non-noble man has done this I wouldn't want to live at all. If God has
seen to it that you are of noble birth, then please you end the fight,
for I swear to you I am ready to do all you command. By God, I will
carry your loyalty far, but if that may not be, then end my life: for I
am thus shamed. I feel strongly that it would be more pleasant to die honorably than that my honor should be overthrown."

The good man answered him thus smiling, "I will let myself be ruled in this matter although it is against the usual custom. I will let you know my father is a rich king; my mother is his equal, over the land of Destrigales, I am called Erec."

"May I be sure of that?"

"Of course."

"Then let me live and accept my oath: see I am ready to do it. Thus you may have my service, which you would have to do without if I were slain by you. I will tell you my name. I am called Mabonagrin."

Erec had mercy on him and let him live.

When he had received his oath, he helped him up with his hand. Each helped the other remove their helmet bands (for there was no one else to do it) and bared their heads. Now they were robbed of an attitude of enmity they graced each other with honor and good will, as companions should. They sat together on the grass: for each one [9400] was very tired from fighting. Now they were both rescued together at that time from many blows. King Erec spoke then, "I perceive how things stand with you, that the King of Brandigan, the host is your uncle. This is your situation if I have perceived correctly and know how things stand with you in the end: but one thing I still don't know. As long as you have remained here, tell me, how do you pass the time, when people don't come to you? As wonderful as it may be here, and whatever related good enthralls your mind so, so that love stays with love as you do with your wife, one should truly escape the company of women
sometime. I have heard it said in private from their lips that going and returning may occur without rancor. Even though they may not say so openly, they want men to seem new to them and not for them to be around all the time. It would also suit these ladies better, the ones who have been here for years, to be with other women. As noble a man as you may be (and I don't doubt it!), it is good to be with others. Now did someone command you to think this way? Or did you expect a reward from God? Were you always supposed to remain here?"

[9442] Mabonigrin answered him this way: "I will tell you the whole story. I have not chosen [9445] this life of my own free will: for there was never a man born who saw other people so gladly. Now hear by what circumstances I chose such a life for myself. I did not wish to be faithless, so I had to stay here and would have grown old here, if God had not altered events, as he did in his grace. It ends today, partly by mischance, but I will only complain lightly about that. Lord, I will now tell you to whom I gave an oath about this type of life. It so happened that I rode here in my childhood from another country; here I found this lady living with her mother, a child of eleven of noble stock. I never saw such joy from man or from woman as I perceived at that time. And when she looked into my eyes so nobly and joyfully, she stole away my heart: for we were both young and of the same age. I soon tried to win her love; it grew and did not fade, for she ran away with me. When I had brought her home (here to this very house), my uncle then would not delay any longer; I had to bear a sword.

"So I got myself a sword. But when my sweetheart and I sat at table, before we were half finished eating, she clasped me tightly,
'think, noble lord, what I have done for your sake' and she asked that I return the favor. I was begged very sweetly, and she had me promise to do whatever she asked. I always promised her firmly, just as Love prompted me: I didn't even have to think about it; if she requested something of me I did it willingly. But if she was firm in what she had desired that I bring or do, she did the same for me. I am the same way with her. Whatever she wants I want, and whatever I want she wants. How could companionship have any strong bond between man and woman, who are only good companions with their bodies but whose attitudes are so divergent that one will not do what the other wants whether little or much? Since that is unseemly, that does not happen between us. From today through the next hundred years I wouldn't change it one bit; her will is what is best for me. For that is the best part of true joy that I have; whatever I want to do, her will agrees: she doesn't refuse me. And if I didn't do whatever she asked gladly, I would hurt myself much more than I would her.

[9531] "And since I gave her surety she clasped me joyfully. She said it is well that I live in such joy that God has allowed me. All my heart has desired I have grasped. It has gone well for me. And I warrant that we possessed that other paradise. I praise this orchard above all others. As you may have noticed, here is much joy with all kinds of birds and flowers of every color. Everything in here is good. She said, "Here will I bind your love within me. This is the gift I request: Here I will contend that I will remain yours, without fear of other women. You will remain in here with me alone, we two, until such
time as another man defeats you, and that I would see this happen with
my own eyes."

"Now why did she do that? I will explain. She had no idea that
there could be found a man who could defeat me. She thought I was that
good. This very day I am free of that, which I may easily prove if you
don't believe me. Do you see those heads? I have struck all of them
off. And I will tell you more: the stave that stands empty, the one
without the head, the one the horn hangs on, that one awaits a new man:
I would have filled that place up by putting your head on it. God
prevented us from that happening. I think that today I have won a
painless shame, since your hand has loosed me from these restrictions.
God has sent you here; today is the end of my cares. Now I can go out
and travel to wherever I want. And may it be said truly your coming to
this court is great joy: for Joy was taken from me, all of his
pleasures, and was bare of happiness. Since Joy left, there were never
any good times; because of that my youth and my [9600] birth were buried
while I still lived, thus Joy de la court was completely overthrown.
Now they shall begin again, for now she is comforted once again. Your
noble hand has delivered this sorrowful land from its grievous wounds:
for that you should be honored forever. Lord, you should rise up now
and blow the horn joyfully; for it was decided that if someone were to
defeat me, he would at that time make it known to the people by blowing
three times on it. There it hangs now and I expected it not to be blown
for many a day, as long as I dwelt here." He now took it from the hook
and had Erec sound it. He straitway put it to his mouth. The sound of
it was very great, for it was long and large. Those who were waiting
outside of the orchard stared at one another, for there was no one who
had any idea that it would ever happen that the knight Mabonagrin would
ever be defeated: so the castle dwellers thought that this was a
deception until Erec blew again on the horn, and then a third time. Now
they knew there was no trifling with the ancient custom. King Ivrein of
Brandigan took Lady Enite and led her by his side into the orchard. No
one except him knew how to enter it, so they followed his lead. Now
they hastened with glad cries to where they saw the two men. Here were
the two men, Erec and Mabongrin, wonderfully greeted by the entire
throng, and the day was adorned with noble war-songs. In contrast to
the way their hearts had been mournful, they now practiced joy and
honored Erec well, his praise was increased. They shouted right then as
with one voice both man and woman "Knight, your life is honored. May
you live long and happily! God has given us comfort and made it known
in the land. May you be joyfully praised, most noble of knights! God
and everyone else has crowned you over all lands. You will prosper
until old age." Joy was manifold here.

Also this time Enite did not suffer sorrow of the heart. I swear
that these two women diverged in mood, she that sat under the pavilion
and the one that for whom the battle was more fortunate. Her mouth
drooped, her heart sank. One wore the crown of joy, the other had
sorrows a plenty laden with a downcast heart, since she and her lover
Mabonagrin wouldn't be in the orchard any more. She wrung her hands
because of the mischance that happened to her husband. When Lady Enite
saw her sitting there weeping, a womanly sympathy began to grow. A
great goodness of heart impelled the sweet Enite to greet her,
regardless of who she was. They exchanged many tales; both of them told of love and sorrow and comforted each other as women are want to do. They asked each other about their countries, their family and by talking became friendlier, and spoke of what they knew. They soon realized that they were related to one another. Now how much closer (related) could they be? Since Duke Imain, lord of Tulmein is Lady Enite's uncle, this lady was her cousin. As I have read, they were both born in the town of Lut. Here loyalties were exchanged. They both embraced each other, and had joy of each other's company: They made this known by weeping for joy. Weeping soon came to an end, and they laughed, which better befitted them. The ladies clasped each other by the hand, and went to find their husbands, for joy they could no longer remain silent but had to openly declare that they were cousins. After this recent news everyone said that God was wonderful for sending both of them to this country so far away.

The ladies and men left the orchard. The heads, which you have heard about, which had been struck off in there, were removed from the hooks (May God honor Erec for this), and messengers were sent for the priests in that country so that they could be buried with honor. Here began the first increase of joy at Brandigan. This was proper. When the news of this had gone out all over the country, such news that that joy that had been cast down was won again, the queen's relatives and servants all travelled to court with the ladies of the country to see this new good fortune. Here the best came together. The host with his guests, ones which he would bring, bid or coerce, made a festival with service that lasted four weeks. With joy they demolished the heavy
customs they had suffered under his nephew. The host forgot this (heaviness) here and replaced it with joyous strength.

Erec and his company were there at the festival; they would not allow the king to ride away. But he was without joy here, as if his heart would break from sorrow. When he thought about it, all of his will softened, as happens among the merciful: their eyes fill up openly and weep, whenever something happens that one must pity. And this was worthy of pity: there was never a man so rich in joy, who would never the less take pity on someone, I know this right well, if he were to see a grievous thing, he would weep for it. He pitied the grieving company, the eighty ladies who were orphaned of all their joy, one could see that they grieved deeply, because Mabonagrin the Red had slain their lovers. Both sorrowing and lamenting was their task all day long. Just as a hare shies away from his meadow, so they fled for sorrow's sake when they came there where they saw joy. They also from the bottom of their heart did not want to see the man who had caused them such sorrow.

Erec's sorrow helped them. It could be well seen that he had thanks from them such as he hadn't had in his whole time with Enite. He comforted their sorrow some what. Now what is more befitting to a man than when he comforts sorrow? That is what a friend should do for friends. He advised them gladly that they should no longer remain there and could spend their year better by taking leave and coming with him to King Arthur, for they would never be happy there at that house. They agreed to the leave-taking. The host was not loath to agree, for it was said of him that he remarked that so much sorrow had happened to him at the house of Brandigan that he was unable to have any joy. Now he
gladly gave leave if by so doing he could change their lives for the better. They wanted to be joyful, so they looked unwillingly back at the time under his care. Gladly they made ready to go on their way. The host wanted to care for them: since he had had them dressed according to their sorrowful mood, he made horses ready and such that both their hues, horses and dress, would be one and the same - both of them mourning black. The festival came to an end. Now the suffering one left there with these ladies. That was very courtly of him to take them from a place that ill-befitted them. The host of Brandigan sat on a lovely Castilian, and his entourage on their raven-black horses, now their condition was the best, and he led the guests away from the house at quite a distance. Then the lord bid Erec hale. Then he rode with the women and brought them to the house of King Arthur.

There he was warmly welcomed, and all could plainly see that they were all dressed alike, in garb as black as the horses, and rightly said that they had never seen such a strange company; so many women dressed in the same color. And since they didn't know why, they asked the guests why they were like that. Erec told them. Here all falseness fled from all the company. He received the crown of honor as a reward for his labors, they praised him by saying that never in the world of all mankind had come someone better or more pleasant: for no man in any country had experienced such great and rich adventures. For Dame Fortune gave her aid to his mother who cared for him when he still lay in the cradle, otherwise none of this would have happened. When they had seen the ladies, they thought it was a strange thing. Now they led
them to the chamber of the noble queen: for they did it gladly and
virtuously without being asked.

Now King Arthur bid the guests welcome to his house. And when he
had hesitated so long that they thought it was time for him to come to
them, here were Erec and Gawain and Guivreiz, the three of them and the
other company very joyful together; the king said to them: "You lords,
we should go and see our newly-arrived ladies and comfort their sorrow."
Both of them stood up, King Arthur and Erec. Side by side they walked
on the way to their chamber. The ladies had better conversation than
before. The host went in to sit with them. The others sat themselves
down quickly one here, one there.

And when they saw the king grieving at their distress the same
lament, the same sorrow, the same condition, the same loyalty, the same
beauty, the same youth, the same chastity, the same virtue, the same
dress, the same goodness, the same alertness, the same mood, they seemed
to him womanly and good and they moved him deeply and he liked them very
much. He said in front of everyone "Erec, my dear nephew, you should
rightly be honored and praised always: for you have increased the joy
of our court greatly. Whoever does not wish you well will never be
happy." "Amen," said everyone then, for they all wished him well. They
were overwhelmed, the very sorrowful ladies, so that their mood and
their life turned to joy, and the king honored them by taking their
dress, which was unfit for joy and had them clothed in a manner more
suitable, with silk and with gold.

Erec the Honorable and Guivreiz the Short were held in honor, and
had mastered the traits their names indicated, until news came to Erec
that his father had died. Now his country was in great need and he took off in great haste in the direction of home: that was fitting for his land and his people. He took his leave of King Arthur to journey home.

But when he left the court, he gave to the needy people who were dependent on his good will according to their several necessities even though they didn't seek it, so they all as one blessed the knight; may God shield his honor and keep his soul! The short man, King Guivreiz, left with him in the direction of his kingdom. Now they were worthily led until they came to the parting of the ways. Now they took their leave of one another, and I am certain that there never were better companions, without [10000] jealous enmity, Guivreiz went towards Ireland, Erec towards Karnant.

Now their people knew well both the day and the hour when they would arrive in their country. They quickly chose six thousand or more of the best in the land, for the honor of their lord, for they enjoyed seeing him and so they hurried to greet him three days in advance. It cannot be that this was misquoted, so that no one could ever that he had ever seen a more willing welcome party. As their proper loyalty moved them, they all received him in virtuous throng, with bedecked horses, and those that had power and were called knights, they especially had their rich banners and similar covers for their horses, cross-stitched in a strange manner. The fields were colored red, white, yellow like grass from their silk clothing, the best in the world. Those of Karnant from Destrigales greeted their Lord who came towards them, as is fitting for a rich king in his kingdom. He had lived so blissfully in many countries, as the truth is told about him, that no one's praise stands
so high among those who have accomplished manly deeds. His praise remains so that he is called Erec the Marvelous. It was so that widely through all countries went his fame and tales about him. Do you ask how that might be? If he appeared in one place, his praise went elsewhere (before him). The world was full of stories about him; no one was so well spoken of as he was.

When God had sent him home, he commanded a festival of joy in his country, such a wonderful one as had never happened there before, nor after with such great lords. Many of his friends came here, whom I would gladly name for you if I could only remember the names. Here he received the crown of the realm, the very crown his father, King Lac, had borne with honor before him, for he too had been very virtuous. Also, no noble father was ever better succeeded by his son. Who would be better suited for his place? May God bless his kingdom! He holds it rightly; we should wish him well, for he began it well with joy and diligence. There one might see a great company of knights and ladies for six whole weeks.

If one wanted to rejoice, whatever pleasures one could wish for, that one found in abundance at that time. He set everything just so that it stood in peace. He did as the wise do, who give thanks to God for whatever honor they receive and give him credit. Many are deceived by a thought that is indeed pernicious; their minds are directed so that if anything good comes to them, they think that that good fortune is only due to their own goodness, and never give God any thanks. That soon comes to an end! But this king didn't do that. Since God had honored him, he was moved to praise God at all times. Thus he was found
to be as noble as his heart had made him, for his honor caused him to follow the lord of heaven's commands until his death, without any backsliding.

Lady Enite had suffered many a trying time in foreign lands; all this was completely changed, for that ended here, and so must many a sorrow turn to pleasant things - honor and joy. For both of them, things changed for the better, for God had sent her to her own land rejoicing, to her father and mother. The king himself fulfilled her wishes whenever he could, and did not as he did before, when he treated her without pity; for he lived in an honorable fashion, so that God gave him and his wife the fatherly reward of eternal life after the earthly crown. Now all of you pray, for the sake of God, that we may be rewarded in like fashion, that will cause us to gain the favor that is more precious than gold after this life of suffering. Here the tale has an end.
Lacunae in MS of Erec

1. first 100 lines missing - one page of MS
2. 1. 1429
3. 1. 1675
4. 1. 1961
5. 1. 2055
6. 1. 3303
7. 1. 3673
8. 1. 3789
9. 1. 4079
10. 1. 4117
11. 1. 4238
12. 1. 4629 probably one page in MS - about 100 lines
13. 1. 5043
14. 1. 5545
15. 1. 6125
16. 1. 6589
Notes

1. This is the first of two major lacunae in Hartmann's Erec. Chrétien de Troyes introduces the character Erec and mentions the custom of the hunt of the White Stag in the first one-hundred lines. Unless Hartmann wished convey a great deal more background information we can assume his introduction was approximately the same length, indicating that we lack at least one page of manuscript.

2. This dwarf is bad-tempered and cruel. But compare him to the virtuous King Guivreiz who appears later in the tale.

3. Hartmann does not compare Enite with Iseult the Fair as does Chrétien de Troyes. Chrétien considers Enite more beautiful than even Iseult.

4. This foreshadows the care she will eventually have of the eight horses. At all times, Enite does this without bitterness or complaint.

5. In Chrétien's version, Coralus does not construe Erec's request for Enite's hand in marriage as a cruel jest, but gives his consent straightaway.

6. In Chrétien, the dwarf Maliclisier is not punished, but only has to go with Yders and his lady to throw themselves on the mercy of Queen Guinevere. Chrétien also does not name the dwarf.

7. Hartmann probably mentioned the stag hunt in the missing prologue.

J. W. Thomas translates this as "Not one of those people who entertain for pay was turned away." See Hartmann von Aue, Erec, trans. J. W. Thomas (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1982), p. 55. Actually, my translation is closer to the spirit of the original. The point Hartmann makes is that at the festival there was plenty of money and enough goods for all. The narrator is manifesting his upper class bias here by stating that the person who sought goods instead of honor was disdained; the entertainers were going to receive payment anyway. It was honor they should have been seeking. These compliments have an ominous ring - the medieval audience would no doubt make the connection between these worthies and their fall from high station due to the unbalanced attention they gave to the women in their lives.

Contrast Erec's fall from grace through too much attention to his wife with that of Iwein through too little.

In Chrétien's version this is the first time we hear Enite speak.

Second major lacuna in manuscript, possibly a hundred lines missing, or about one page.

Hartmann recounts much more of Morgan le fay's skill in the arcane arts than does Chrétien, who only briefly mentions the plaster.

Chrétien does not mention the strange origin of the palfrey.

Chrétien says seven years.

Sometimes Hartmann avoids wearying his audience with overlong, tedious details by claiming not to have the skill to describe the object in question. Here he anticipates the audience's overconfident familiarity with descriptions of this type and lets one of them
attempt it. The hypothetical person having failed even to come close, Hartmann reprimands him by declaring that one should let the poet tell it himself. 

Hartmann not only describes the castle and surroundings in greater detail than does Chrétien, but makes Erec's arrival there sound more ominous even before they enter it.

Bibliography


